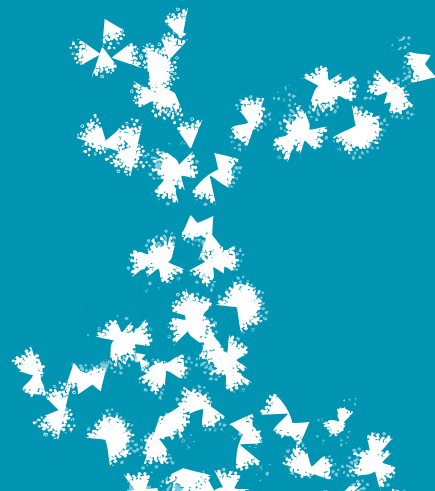


To make a societal impact as a fourth-generation university, we need to expand our focus from undergraduate and graduate education to lifelong learning (LLL) offerings. Our vision is that these offerings will need to be shaped in close collaboration between all relevant stakeholders to be effective and to operate at a pace aligned with technological developments.

We see it as our mission to develop and maintain a sustainable and competitive program for lifelong learning. Such a program will encompass many familiar forms of teaching yet also has a strong innovation pillar in which we explore new teaching and learning formats. To accomplish this mission, we developed four criteria for LLL at our university.



"Lifelong learning is "All learning activity undertaken throughout life, which results in improving knowledge, know-how, skills, competences and/or qualifications for personal, social and/or professional reasons". "

- UNESCO, International Bureau of Education:
<http://www.ibe.unesco.org/e> -

VISION

We are witnessing an unprecedented pace of societal transformations, to a considerable extent caused by technological developments, be they for good (energy transition), worse (climate adaptation), or both (digitalization). These technological developments impose an often-steep learning curve, along different dimensions, for current and future workforces.

Unfortunately, there is a persistent gap between what students learn in higher education and what practical skills, knowledge, cognitive competencies, and, in general, literacies they need in practice to carry out their jobs successfully during their life. Universities attempt to close this gap by revising their educational models, for example, by bringing practice and real-life learning context into their classrooms. However, fast societal and technological developments are expected to result in significant workforce transitions: new jobs and job requirements will emerge, and as a result, employees need to develop to remain employable continuously. The continuous engagement of professionals in lifelong learning activities is crucial for advancing their careers and forming and following transitions.

Our vision is that professional development occurs in a co-creation process between knowledge institutes and external stakeholders. The UT will excel by taking an outside-in approach that leads to LLL offerings in which technology is placed in societal and organizational contexts. Our offerings lead to “adaptive professionals”: professionals trained to deal with uncertainty and unknown situations, knowing how to select, adopt, and apply new knowledge to overcome challenges. These offerings will never be static, neither in their form nor how they are realized. They will be shaped in close collaboration between all relevant stakeholders, focusing on the learning needs and the daily as well as the future practice of professionals.

MISSION

An important consequence of our vision is that our professionals, well-trained teachers and researchers, will also need to transition towards, perhaps unknown, teaching and learning formats for professionals. This means we need to explore and experiment with new professional learning and development offerings.

We see it as our mission to develop and maintain a sustainable and competitive lifelong learning program that meets the UT’s profile and expertise. Such a program will encompass the many forms of teaching and learning that we are familiar with today, yet also have a strong innovation pillar in which we explore new formats.

To achieve this mission, we use four intertwined criteria to guide us in our efforts:

1. Lifelong Learning initiatives are **demand-driven**.
2. Lifelong Learning initiatives are **cost effective**.
3. Lifelong learning initiatives have **intrinsic value for the UT** and are connected to available expertise and capacity.
4. Lifelong learning initiatives are designed according to **effective and scalable lifelong learning principles**, by which, in principle, many professional learners are addressed.



CRITERIA FOR LLL AT THE UNIVERSITY OF TWENTE

1. LLL INITIATIVES ARE DEMAND-DRIVEN

An important guideline for any lifelong activity is that there is an external party with a need. Without clearly identifying that need, we should not start developing the activity. This is what we refer to as demand-driven. Note that such a demand-driven approach naturally aligns with the goals of having an impact: if an external party (be they a specific organisation or a group of stakeholders) can factually *commit* to our lifelong offerings, we can more easily claim that we are having an impact on the learners, the organisations, and society as a whole.

2. LLL INITIATIVES ARE COST-EFFECTIVE

For any initiative, we require that (eventually) the activities are cost-effective. There may be a period when dealing with more innovative and experimental approaches in which the UT needs to invest in development. Yet, even in those situations, a clear business case will have been drawn up from which investments can be explained and justified.

3. LLL INITIATIVES HAVE INTRINSIC VALUE FOR THE UT AND ARE CONNECTED TO AVAILABLE EXPERTISE AND CAPACITY

Lifelong learning activities should form an integral part of the tasks of our scientific staff. Indeed, it comprises the fourth pillar of the UT. This standpoint has significant consequences. For one, it means that what we deploy as activities should, content-wise, always be tightly connected to the education and research programs of the UT.

Second, how we deploy activities is done through that same scientific staff: they are instrumental in organizing activities. We deliberately want to avoid a separate organization within the UT with its own educators.

Thirdly, being connected to available expertise and capacity implies that, no matter what, lifelong learning activities cannot be merely added to existing packages of tasks. If added, then other tasks will have to be dismissed. This also means that we may need to reprioritize agendas in the supporting departments.

We foresee that many tough choices will have to be made to meet this criterion.

4. LLL INITIATIVES ARE DESIGNED ACCORDING TO EFFECTIVE AND SCALABLE LIFELONG LEARNING PRINCIPLES

Where the first three criteria are arguably practical and applicable for any lifelong learning activity, designing activities bearing effectivity and scalability are not. In essence, this criterion states that we target those activities that explicitly consider effectiveness for professional learners while at the same time considering that many professional learners can be addressed. Effectiveness and scalability are generally needed to have a broader impact but can easily be at odds with each other: MOOCs are scalable, but are often not effective for reaching learning goals; intensive supervision is effective, but not easily scalable.

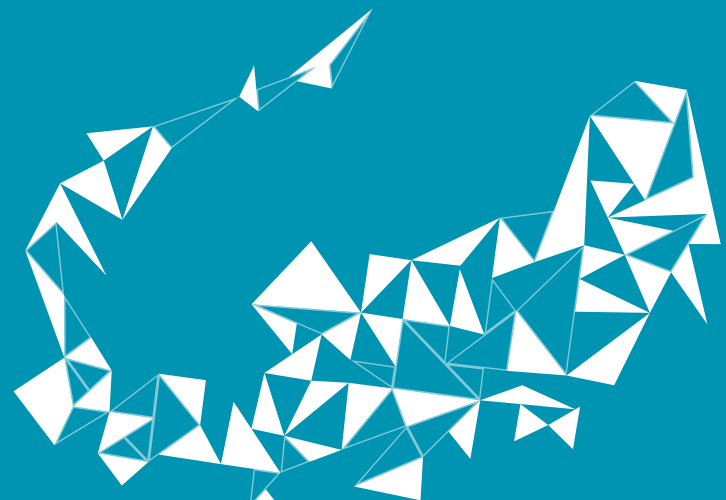
Effectiveness for professionals requires more than the acquisition of knowledge and skills. It is usually established when they can exchange perspectives with other professionals, and their learnings can be integrated with their work practice. This means that we will need to design increasingly for multi-directional learning (where learners get and bring knowledge) and involve our partners in the design and execution of the programs.

Secondly, we need to find alternatives to traditional classroom teaching to design for scalability. This form of teaching assumes synchronization in time and space. However, many professionals are not full-time or even part-time students. They need self-paced trajectories, as they simply do not have the time to travel to a single location to meet during a specific time slot. To address many professionals, we need to carefully design adaptive programs with maximum flexibility for learners.

SUPPORTING LLL AT THE UNIVERSITY OF TWENTE

To achieve our mission of a competitive and sustainable university of lifelong learning, we need an excellent, professional support structure, if only to assure that external stakeholders commit and continue to commit to our offerings. We suggest the following way forward:

- Every faculty appoints an **LLL coordinator**, who can represent the faculty in discussions regarding LLL strategy and ambitions. The coordinator not only oversees internal capacity coordination but also ensures swift responses to new requests.
- As lifelong learning activities often cross the boundaries of our faculties, we aim for a clear division in responsibility: every LLL activity has **one faculty in the lead (penvoerder)** en that faculty appoints for each LLL activity a **programme lead** who can take responsibility for the content and organisation of the activity.
- A **small LLL management team** coordinates vision and strategies with faculties and service departments, steers the virtual centre, and manages coordination among and between faculties and service departments.
- Setting up a **'virtual centre'** for the development of expertise and procedures. A virtual centre means that is not an organisational structure, but rather a few key members who are on secondment for other organisational units. They are responsible for consolidating expertise, developing work procedures and providing on-demand support. A flexible group of experts provide on-demand support.



WANT TO KNOW MORE ABOUT LLL AT THE UNIVERSITY OF TWENTE?

Join our Teams Channel

Stay updated on the latest developments regarding Lifelong Learning at the University of Twente by joining the Lifelong Learning UT Teams channel with the code: **w72op2e**.