

Rewarding university teaching in academic careers

ICED 2026

25th June 2026
Dr Ruth Graham



University teaching refers to all activities relating to teaching and learning at universities.

Examples could include: teaching students; curriculum development; pedagogical research; student supervision and the development of university educational policy/strategy.



Structure of the presentation:

1 Does university teaching advance academic careers?

2 Where does the community look to for best practice?

3 Are reforms having the desired impact in practice?

4 What is the role of educational developers?

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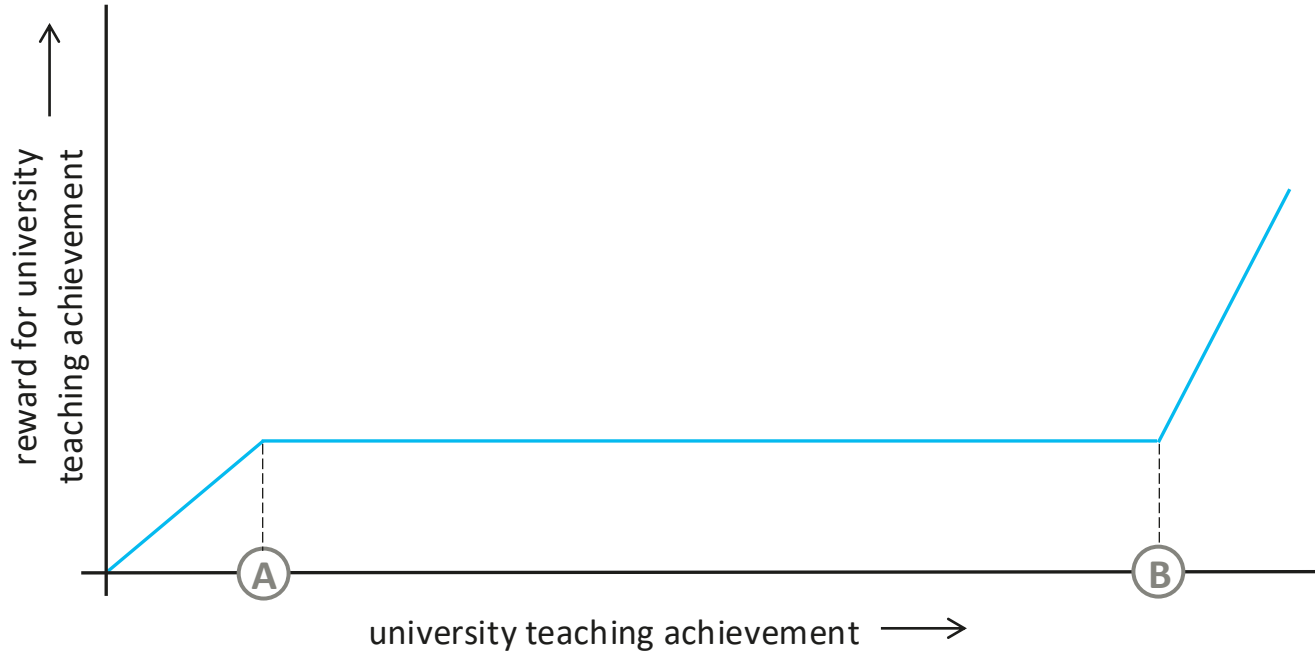
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Ⓐ

Threshold for acceptable level of university teaching

Ⓑ

Threshold for exceptional contributions to university teaching

National collaborations to reform academic reward systems:

- **Netherlands:** ‘bottom up’ collaboration, building on agreement of Rectors of Dutch research universities
- **Malaysia:** government-led initiative, asking all Malaysian universities to implement new academic career pathways
- **Norway:** introduction of pedagogical merit system, adapted from the Swedish model, now required by government
- **Austria:** Ministry-led national exchange launched December 2025, to strengthen reward of university teaching in academic careers



advancing teaching

Global initiative to strengthen how university teaching is valued and rewarded in academic careers





advancing teaching

- Bringing together change leaders and educational experts from across the world
- All resources and outputs are open-source
- Much of the activity is focused on **agency**: ensuring that changes to institutional policy are effectively delivered in practice
- Undertaking studies that respond to the key challenges faced by institutions working to improve the reward of university teaching

2014 – 2018

2017 – 2019

2018 – 2019

2021 – 2022

2024 – 2025

2024 – 2026

2014 – 2018

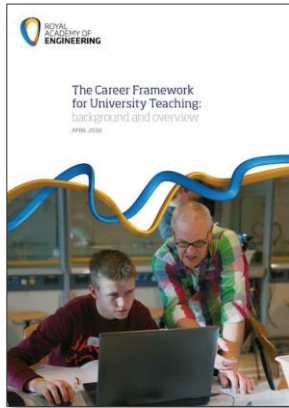
2017 – 2019

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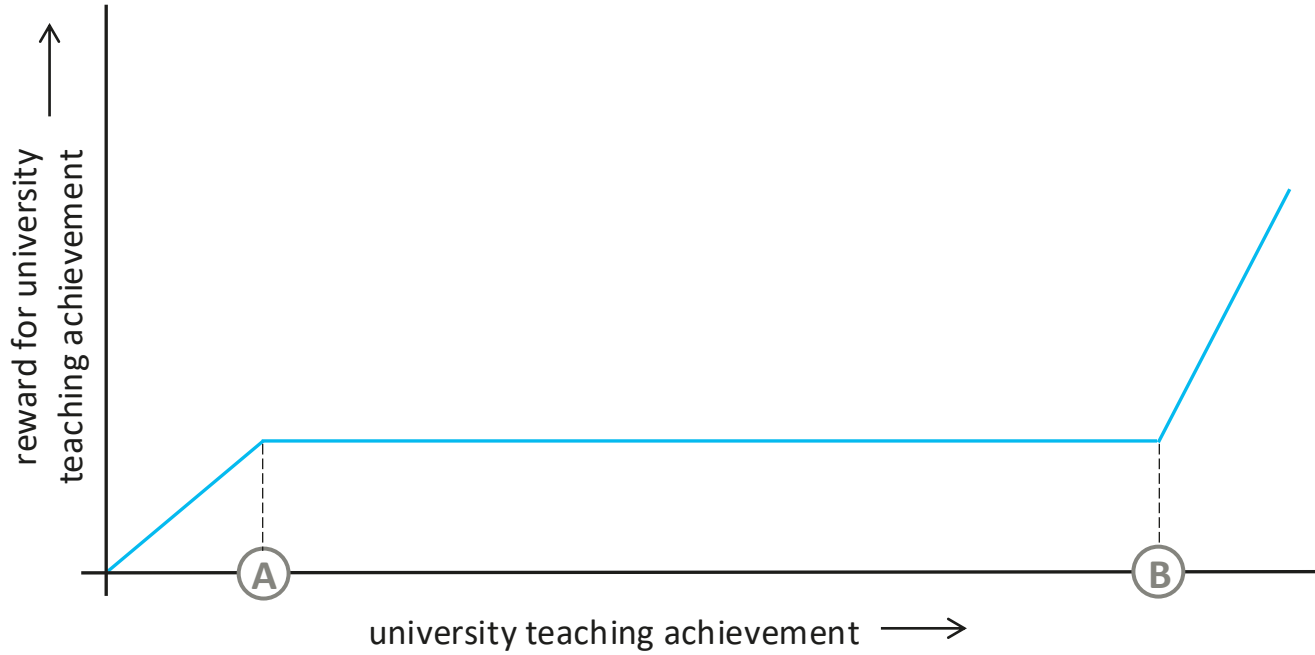
2021 – 2022

2024 – 2025

2024 – 2026



How can progression in university teaching be defined and demonstrated?

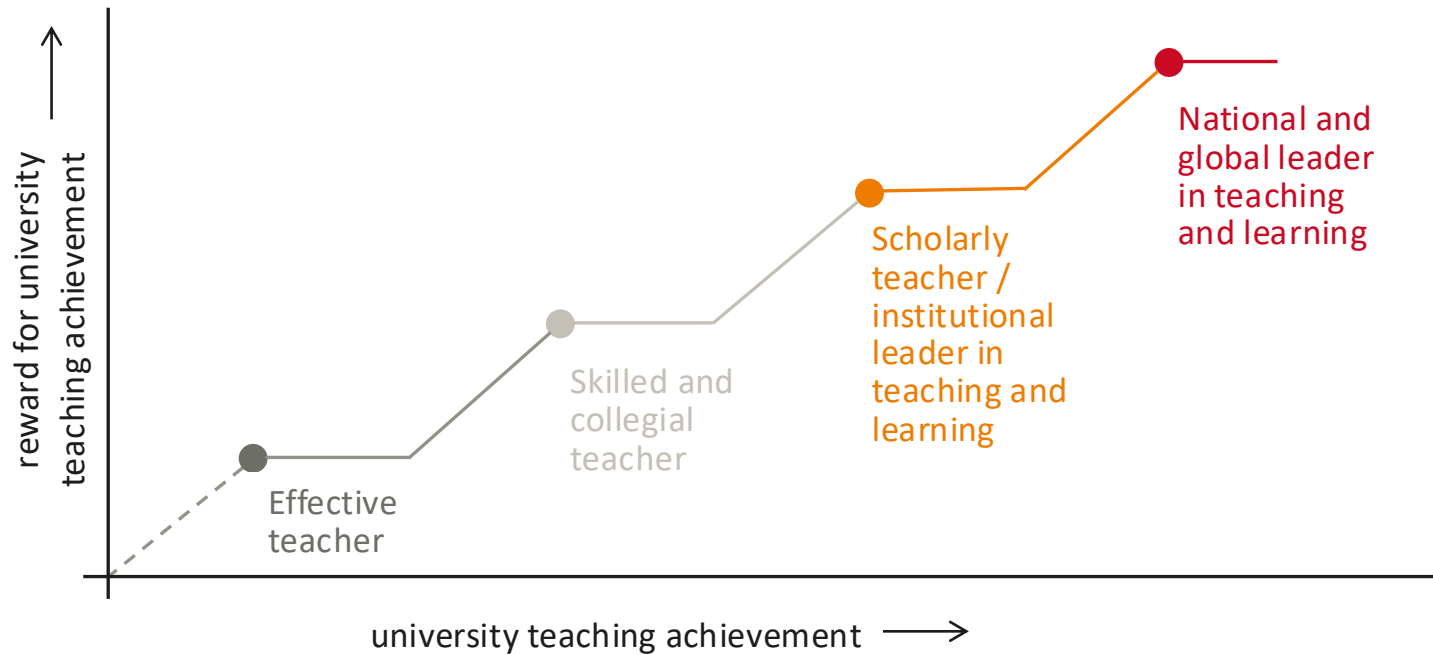


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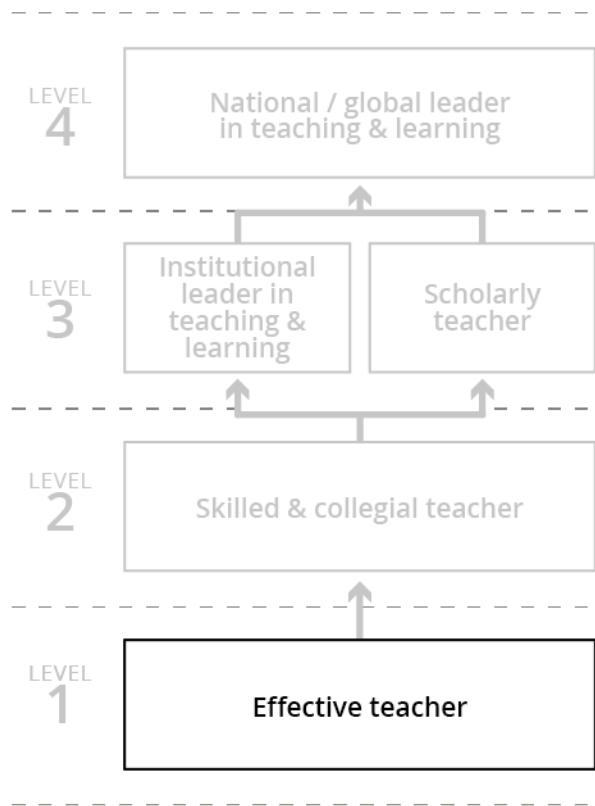
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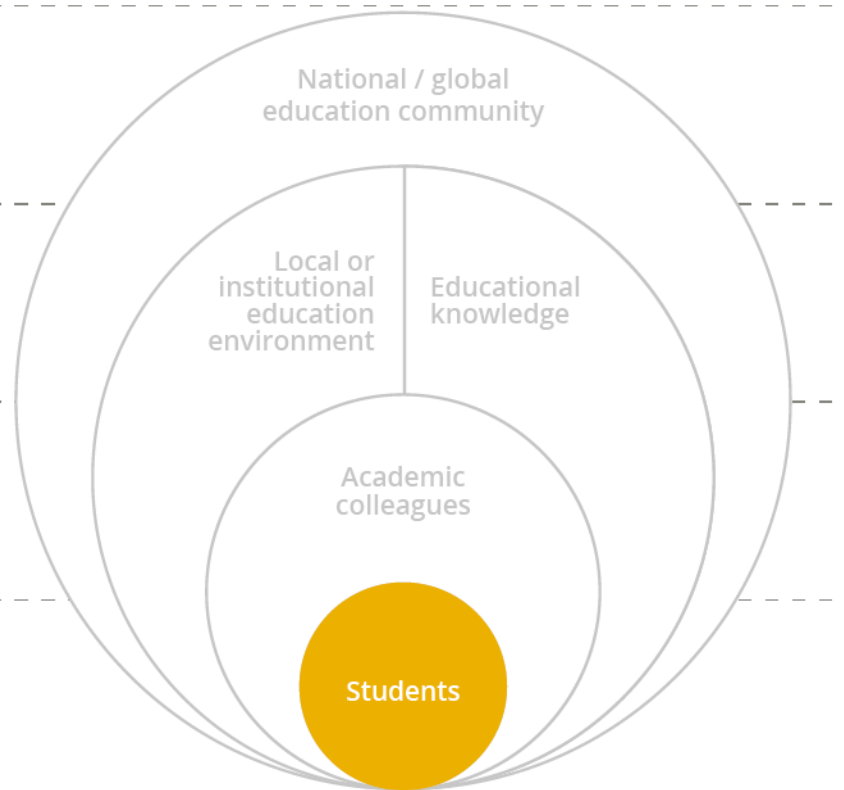
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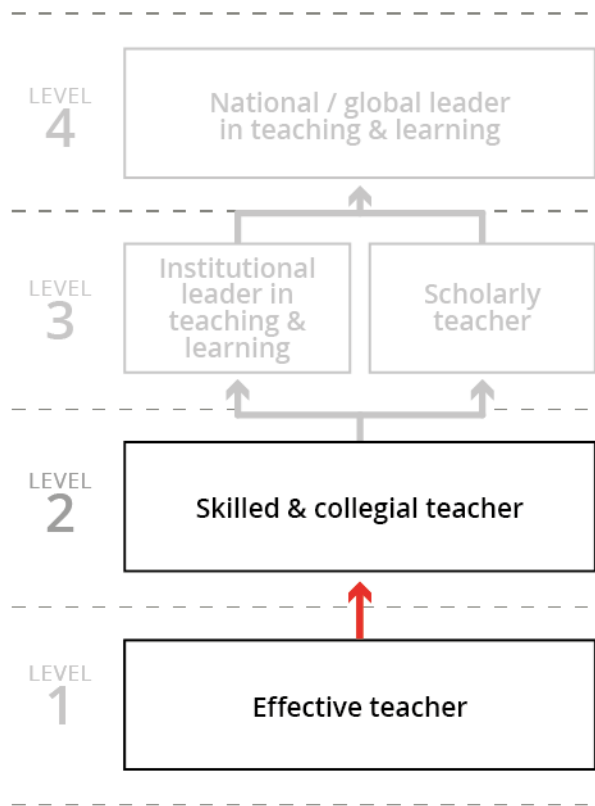
ROLES



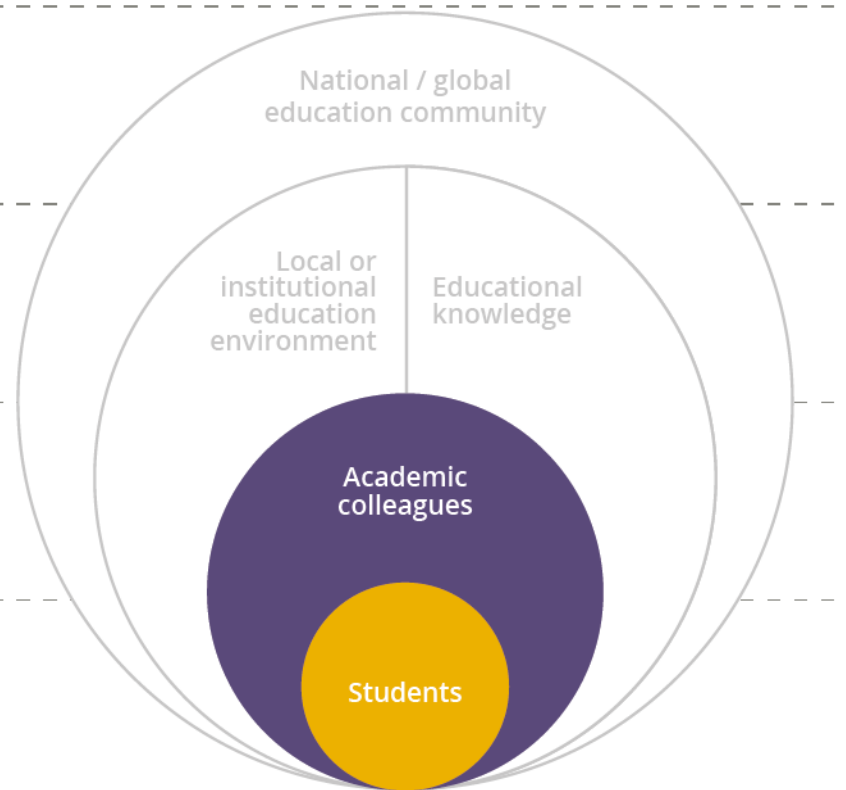
SPHERES OF IMPACT (CUMULATIVE)



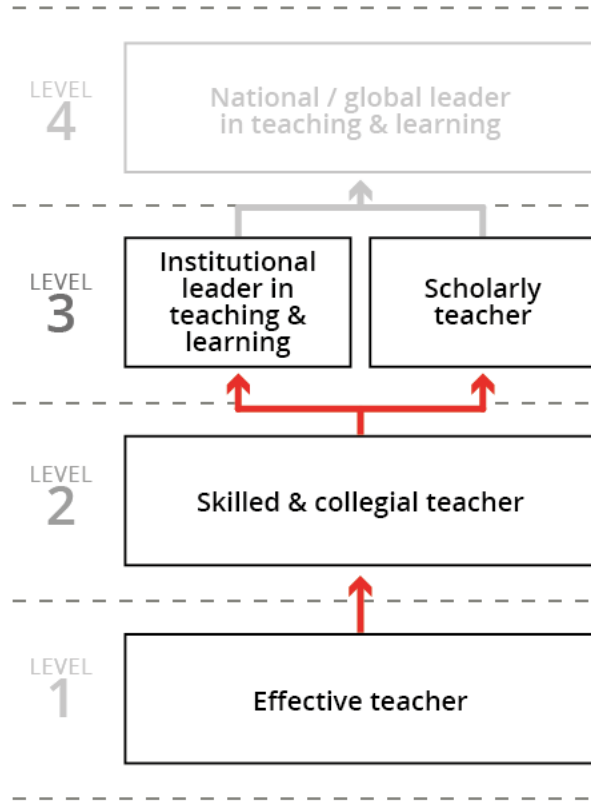
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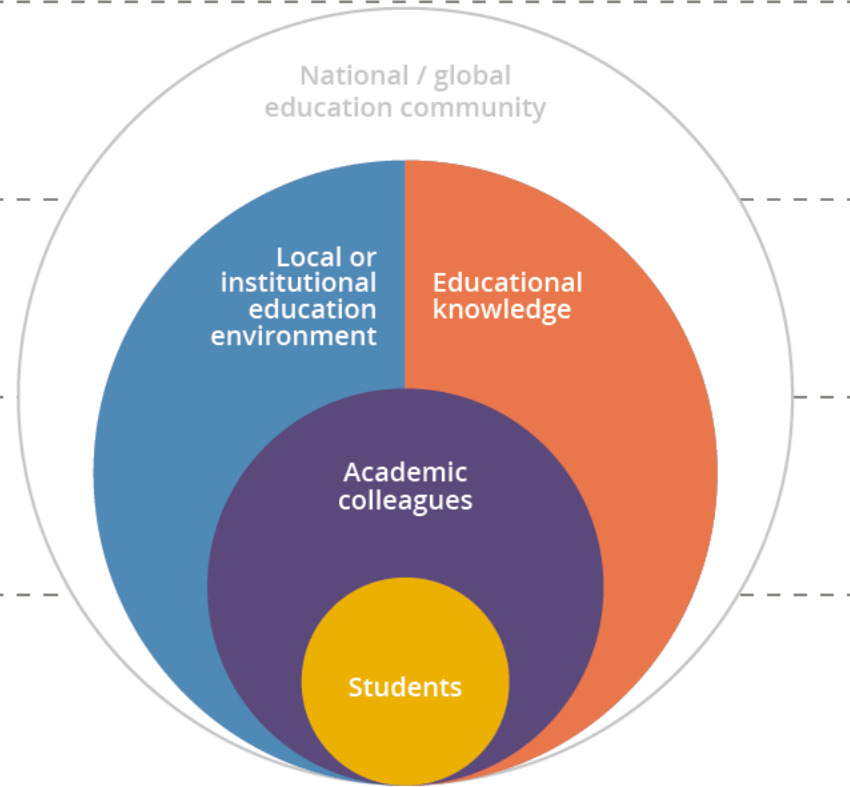
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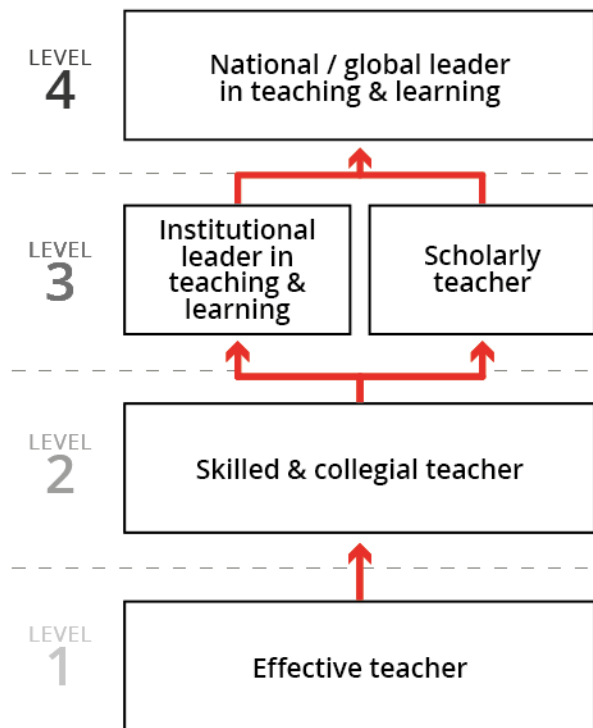
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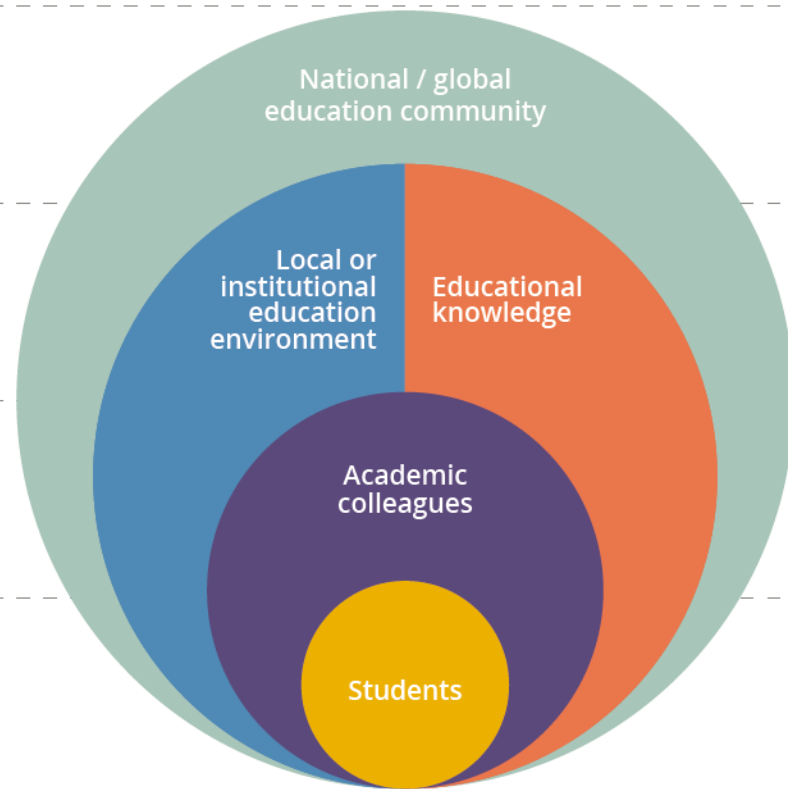
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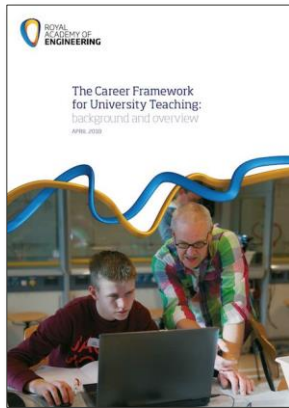
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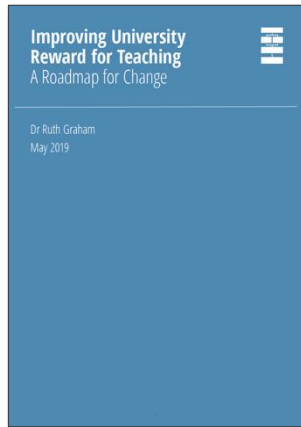
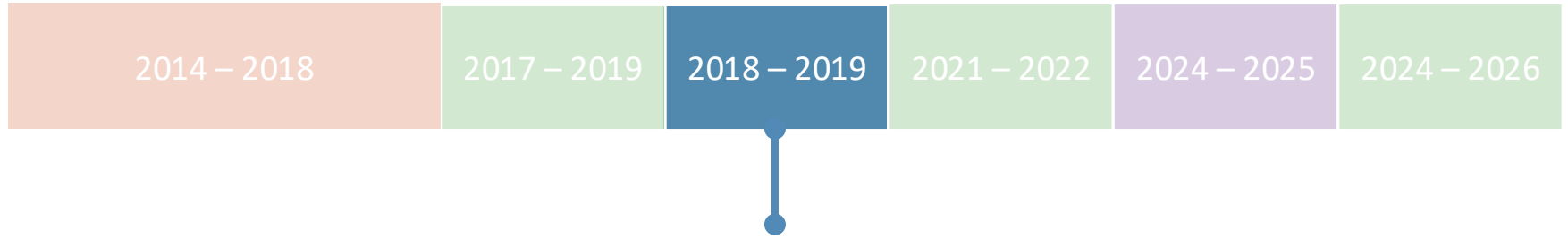
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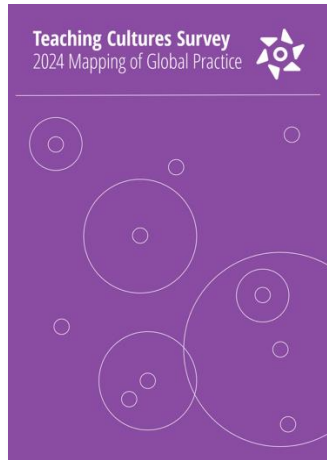
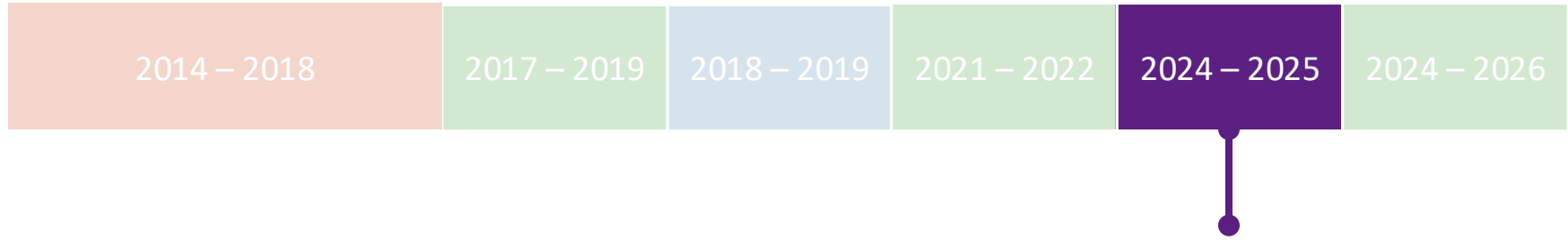
Career Framework for University Teaching

Adopted and adapted by over 50 universities and HE systems worldwide

Aims: to establish a flexible framework to guide and support the career progression of academics on the basis of their impact/achievement in university teaching



How can universities best manage the change process?



What can the community learn from global best practice in rewarding university teaching?

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1 Does university teaching advance academic careers?

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3 Are reforms having the desired impact in practice?

4 What is the role of educational developers?

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Does university teaching advance academic careers?

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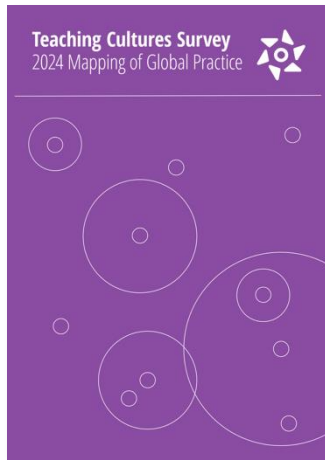
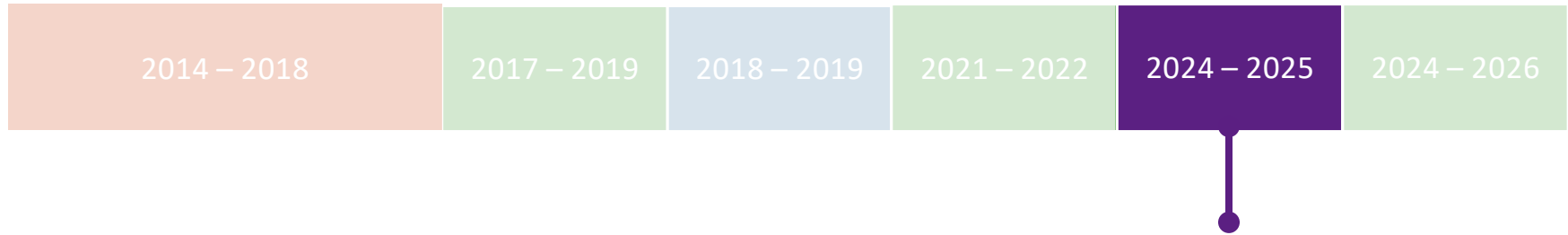
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Are reforms having the desired impact in practice?

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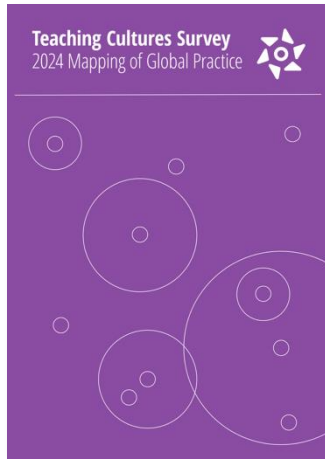
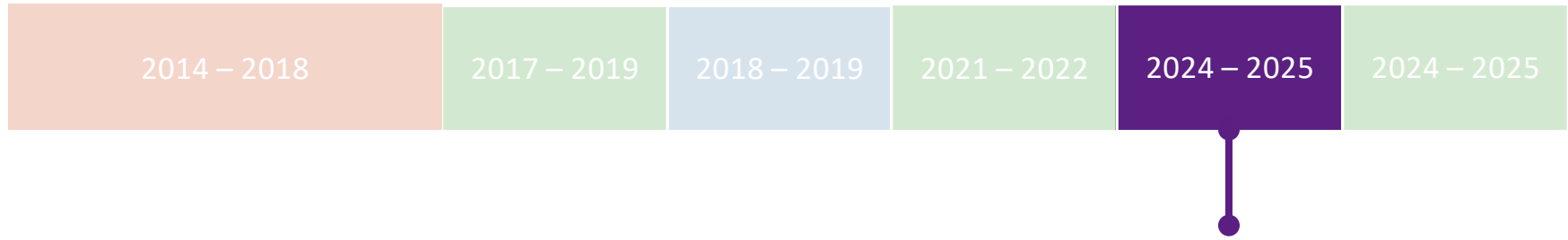
What is the role of educational developers?



Mapping of global best practice (January 2025)

Study conducted: October 2023 – November 2024

Drawing on one-to-one key informant interviews (n=130, from 26 countries) to capture views from change leaders worldwide to map the global movement for change to the reward of university teaching and showcasing best practice solutions from across the world.

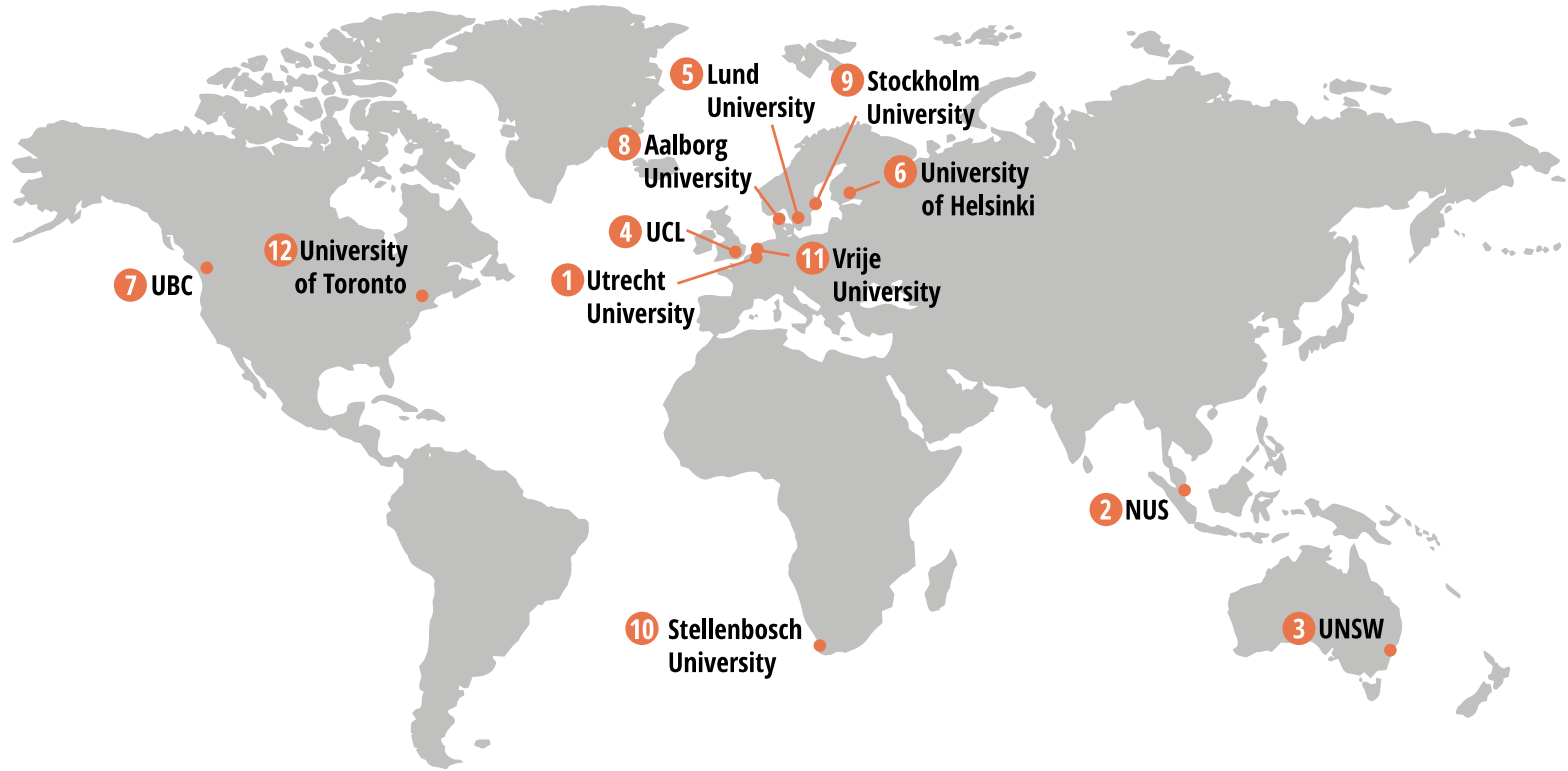


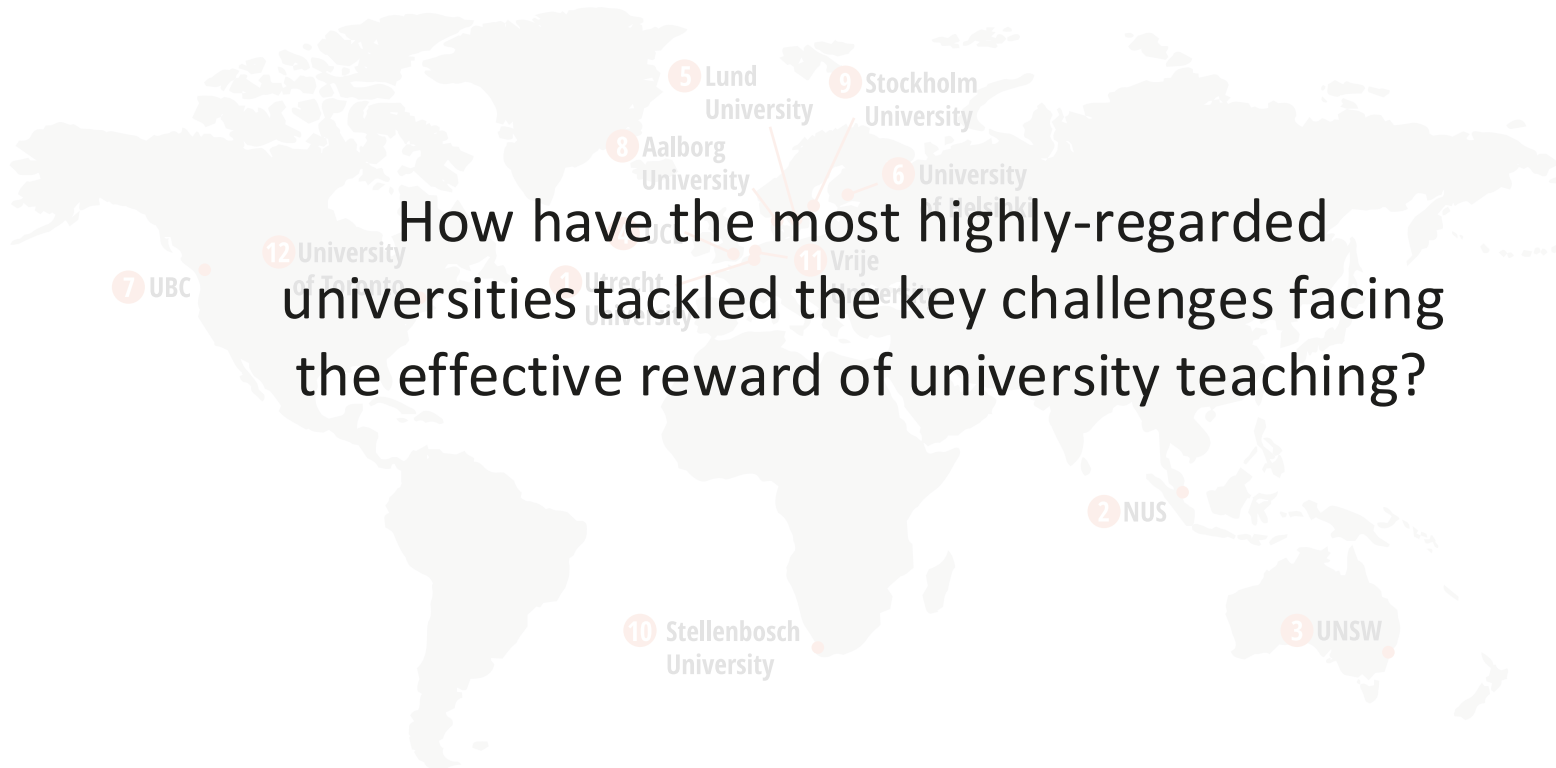
Mapping of global best practice (January 2025)

Focus of interviews (n=130):

1. Practice at their own institution, including priorities and plans for change as well as challenges faced
2. Practices outside their own institutions, identifying and exploring the universities and systems that they look to for inspiration

Most highly-regarded universities worldwide





How have the most highly-regarded universities tackled the key challenges facing the effective reward of university teaching?

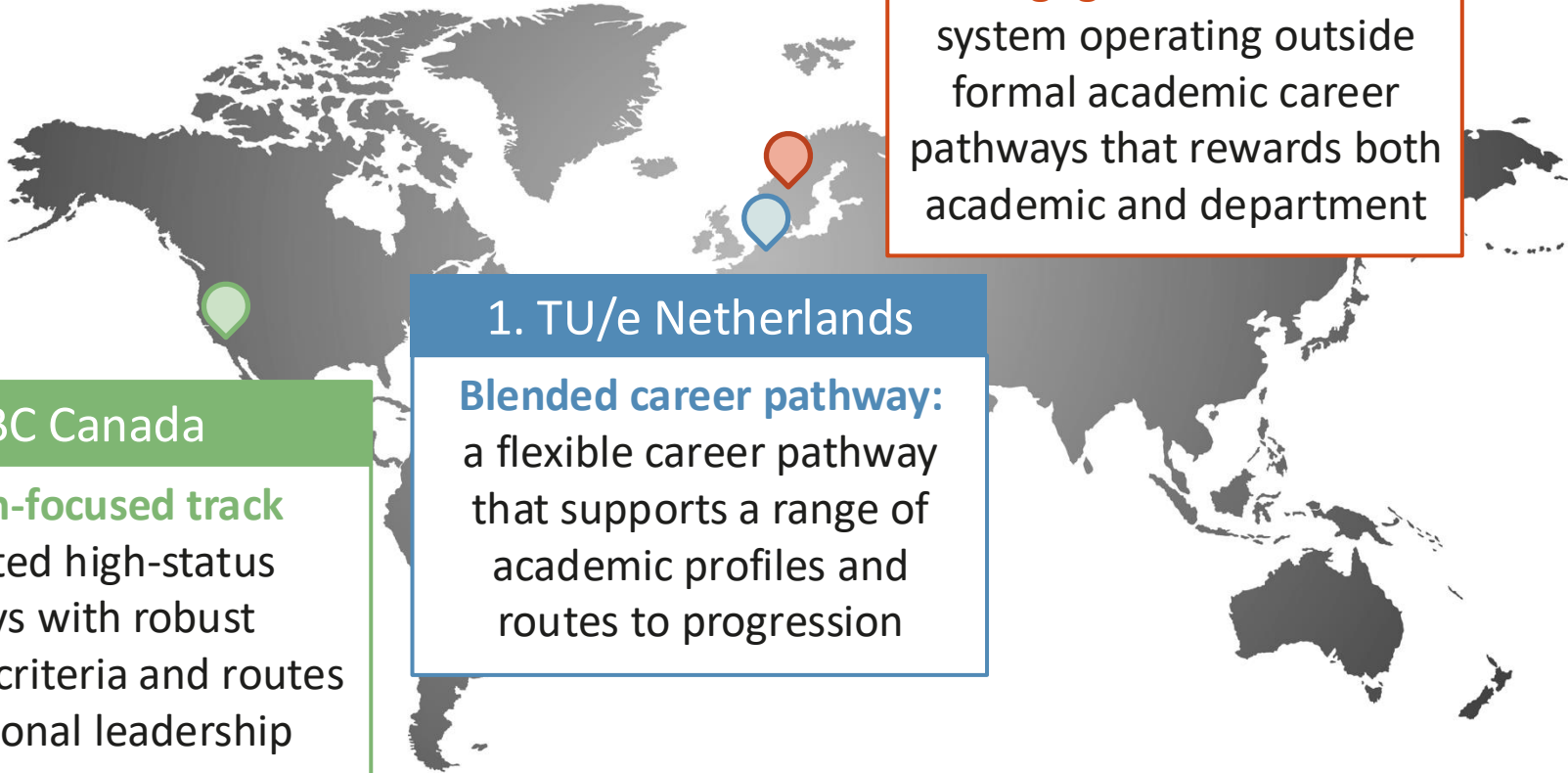
Common challenges identified across institutions

1	Career pathways	Career paths that reward university teaching and foster career diversity, collegiality, and routes to educational leadership
2	Evaluating impact	Defining, evaluating and assessing impact in university teaching in ways that are robust, clear and consistent
3	Support systems	Institutional processes that support continuous educational development for all academic profiles and career stages
4	Cultural change	Cross-community cultures that value university teaching, support individual pathways and foster 'trust' in the system

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Most adopt one or more of these models:



2. UBC Canada

Education-focused track

A dedicated high-status pathways with robust progression criteria and routes to educational leadership

1. TU/e Netherlands

Blended career pathway:

a flexible career pathway that supports a range of academic profiles and routes to progression

3. Lund University

Pedagogical Merit model

system operating outside formal academic career pathways that rewards both academic and department

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Cultural change

Common challenges identified across institutions

- 1 Career pathways
- 2 Evaluating impact
- 3 Support systems
- 4 Cultural change

- A. Define:** expectations and frameworks (at institutional levels and increasingly at national levels)
- B. Evaluate:** metrics and tools used by academics to both identify and present evidence their impact
- C. Assess:** the ways that a candidate's impact in university teaching is assessed by universities. Often reliant on judgement of two groups (i) external referees and (ii) internal appointment/promotion committees

Shared national frameworks/definitions:

- **Ireland:** national framework under development by the HEA, built through sustained consultation with the academic community
- **Sweden:** shared national definition of 'pedagogical competence', embedded in universities across the country
- **Denmark:** national framework, co-designed by the academic community, now embedded across all eight Danish universities
- **Spain:** national *Marco de Desarrollo Académico Docente*, developed by REDU to guide academic development across Spanish universities

Common challenges identified across institutions

- 1 Career pathways
- 2 Evaluating impact
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- A. Define:** expectations and frameworks both at an institutional level but also national level
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C. Assessing candidates:



Promotion committees
TU/e, Netherlands

Pilot to align the **composition of appointment and promotion committees** with the candidate's profile, in line with the university's new 'blended' career pathway

External referees
Sweden

Training national cohort of **Pedagogical Assessors** to act as external referees to assess candidates' teaching and learning portfolios

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Institutional processes that support continuous educational development for all academic profiles and career stages

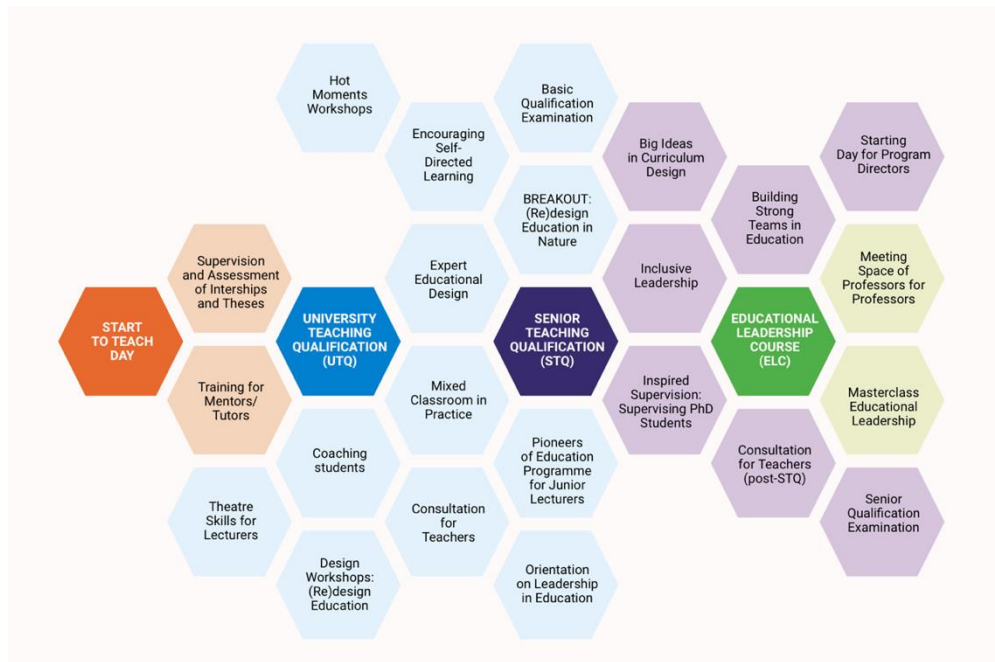
4 Cultural change

Supporting individual interests/specialisms:

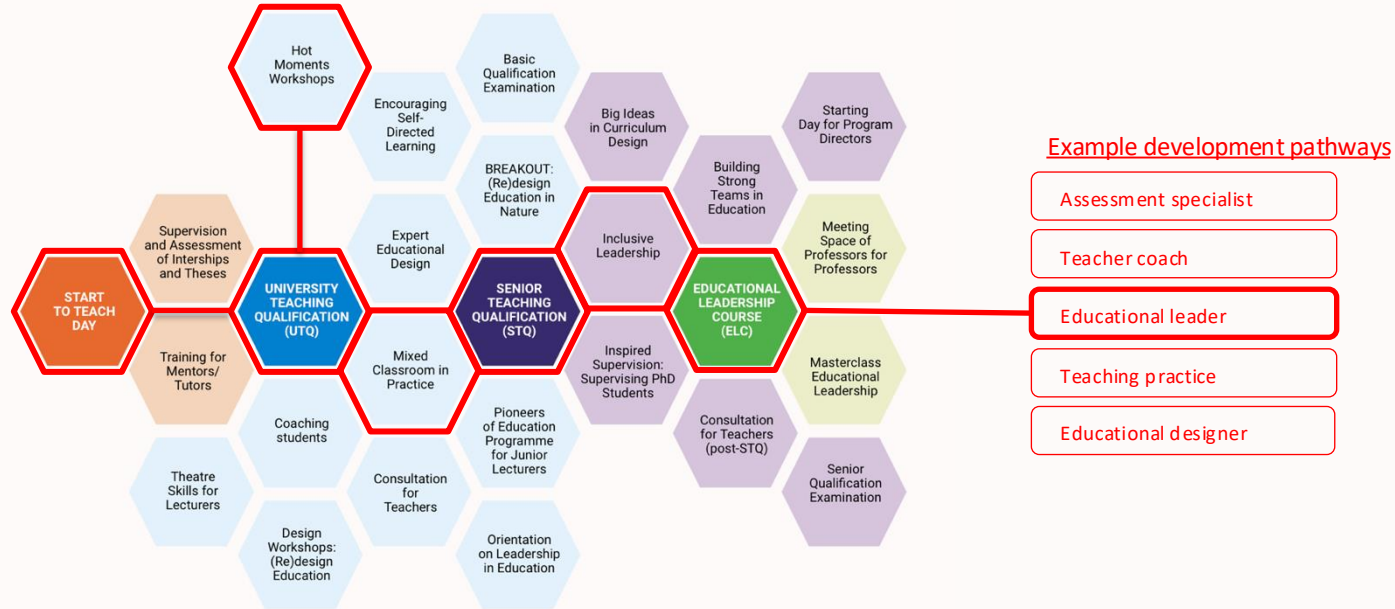


Vrije University
Netherlands

Vrije University Continuous Development Path:



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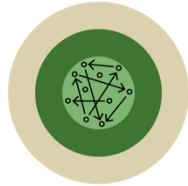
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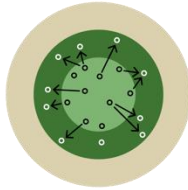
Cross-community cultures that value university teaching, support individual pathways and foster 'trust' in the system

Building educational communities

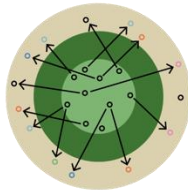
Education-focused track UNSW Australia



connectivity within the
education-focused community



connectivity with the wider
UNSW academic community



connectivity with external
educational communities



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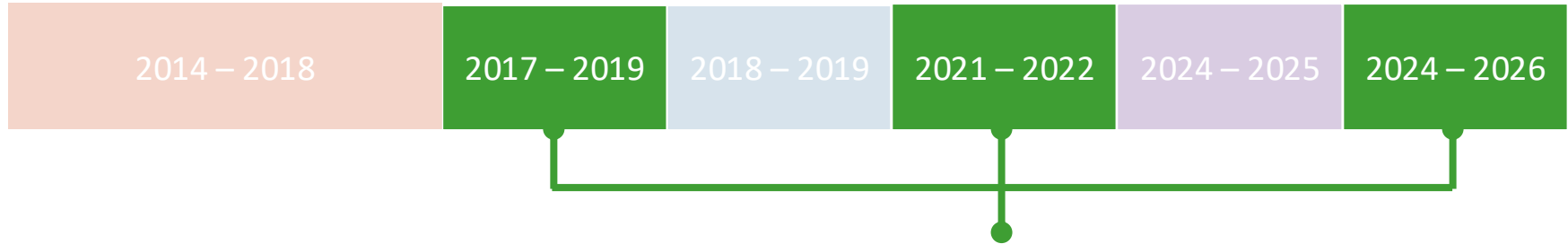
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Teaching Cultures Survey

Three survey runs: 2019 – 2022 – 2025

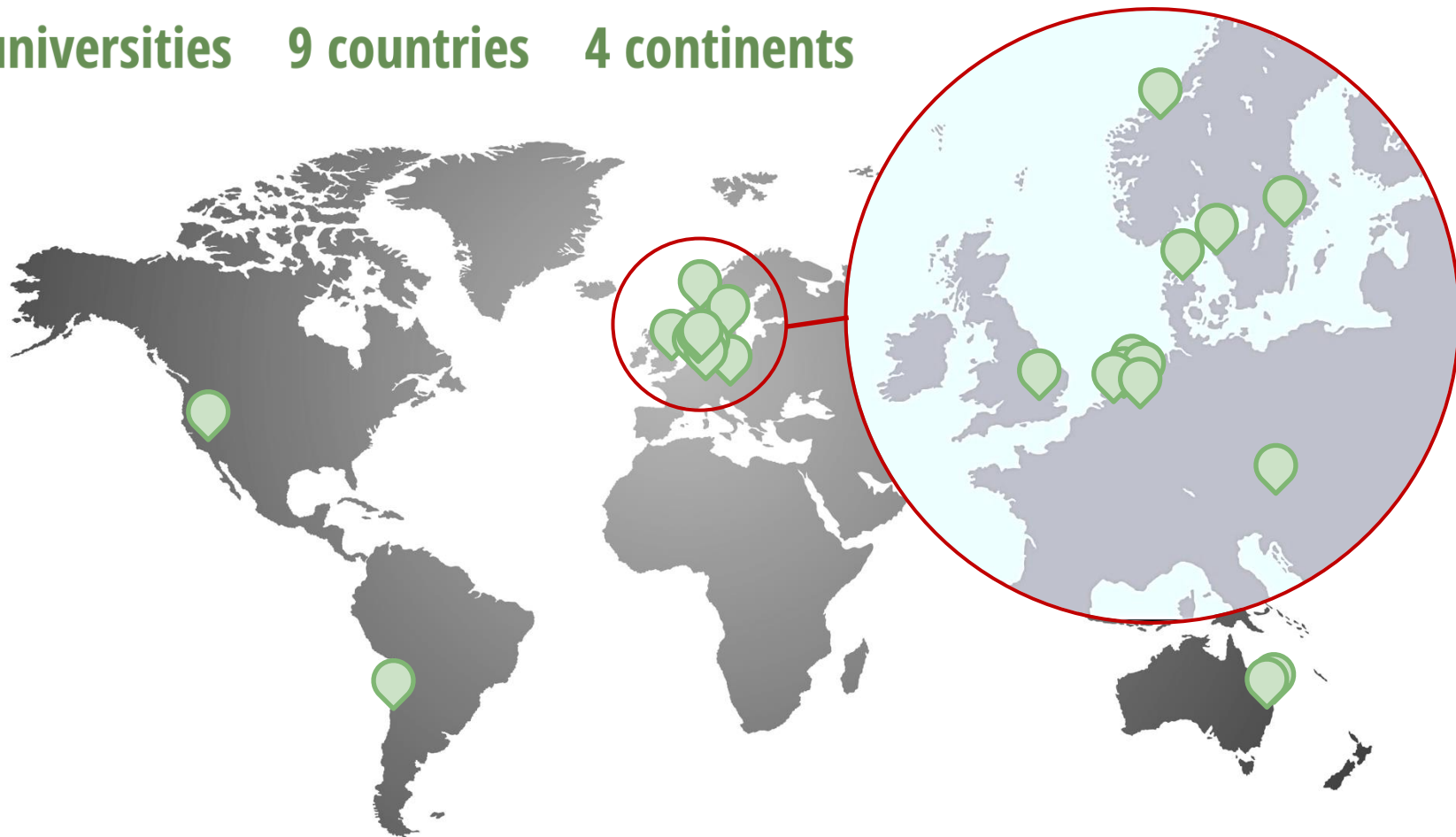
Aims: to enable universities to explore and track the culture and status of teaching at their institutions and compare outcomes with peer research-intensive universities worldwide



Six-minute survey focuses on the following areas:

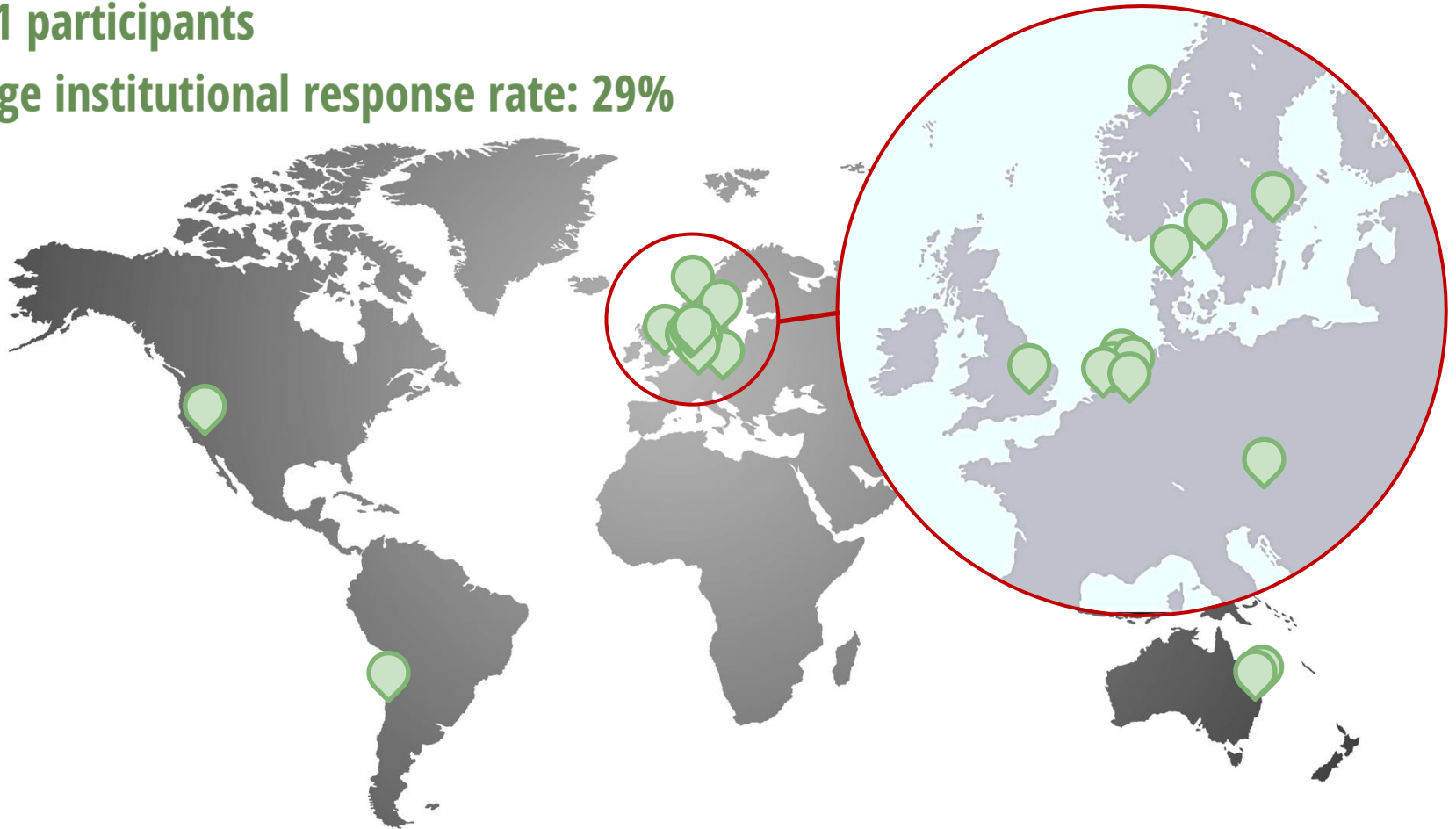
1. The university's educational environment
2. Institutional culture and commitment to rewarding university teaching
3. The role of university teaching in formal review and promotion processes
4. Future priorities for change to the reward of university teaching

17 universities 9 countries 4 continents



12,071 participants

Average institutional response rate: 29%





Participating universities are each undertaking systemic reforms to strengthen the reward of university teaching in academic careers, including:

Establishing new standards for university teaching

Redesigning all academic career pathways

Redesigning education-focused pathways

Introducing pedagogical merit programmes

Change is possible within years not decades...

Survey respondent feedback: at my university...

1. **institutional leaders** are committed to rewarding excellence in university teaching
2. university teaching is explored in depth during **annual reviews**
3. university teaching is an important consideration in **professorial promotions**
4. the **measures** used to assess quality and impact in university teaching are robust
5. education-focused roles are **career-limiting**

Change is possible within years not decades...

...but what sets apart universities with the strongest culture for rewarding university teaching?

“Time spent on university teaching has a positive impact on the career progression of academics at my institution”



Strongly
agree



Agree



Neither agree
nor disagree

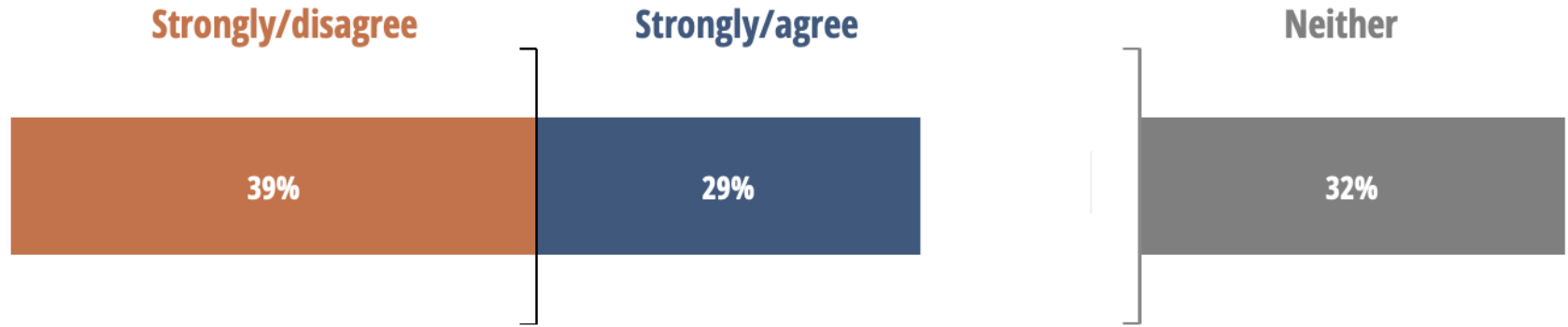


Disagree



Strongly
disagree

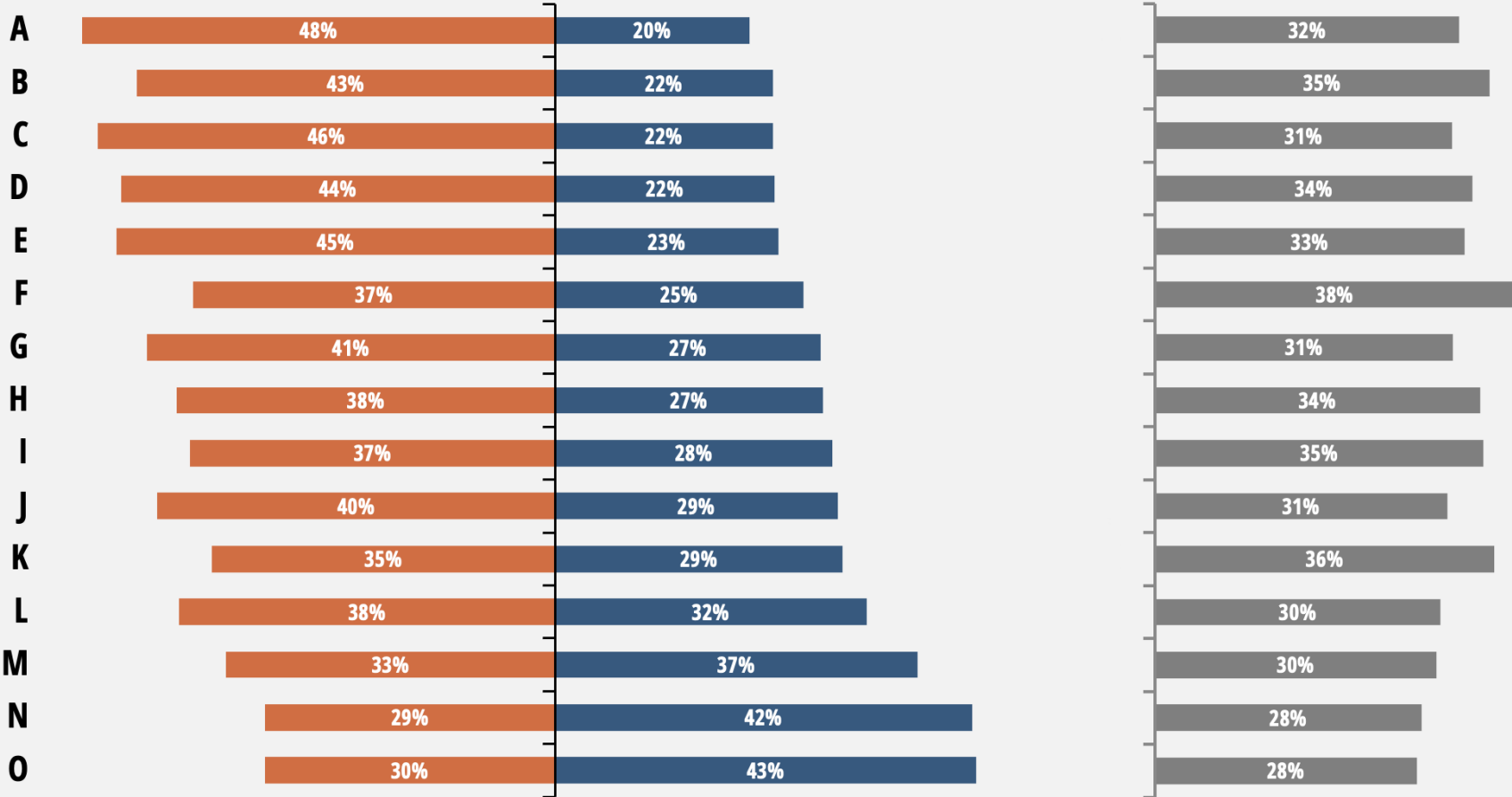
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Strongly/disagree

Strongly/agree

Neither



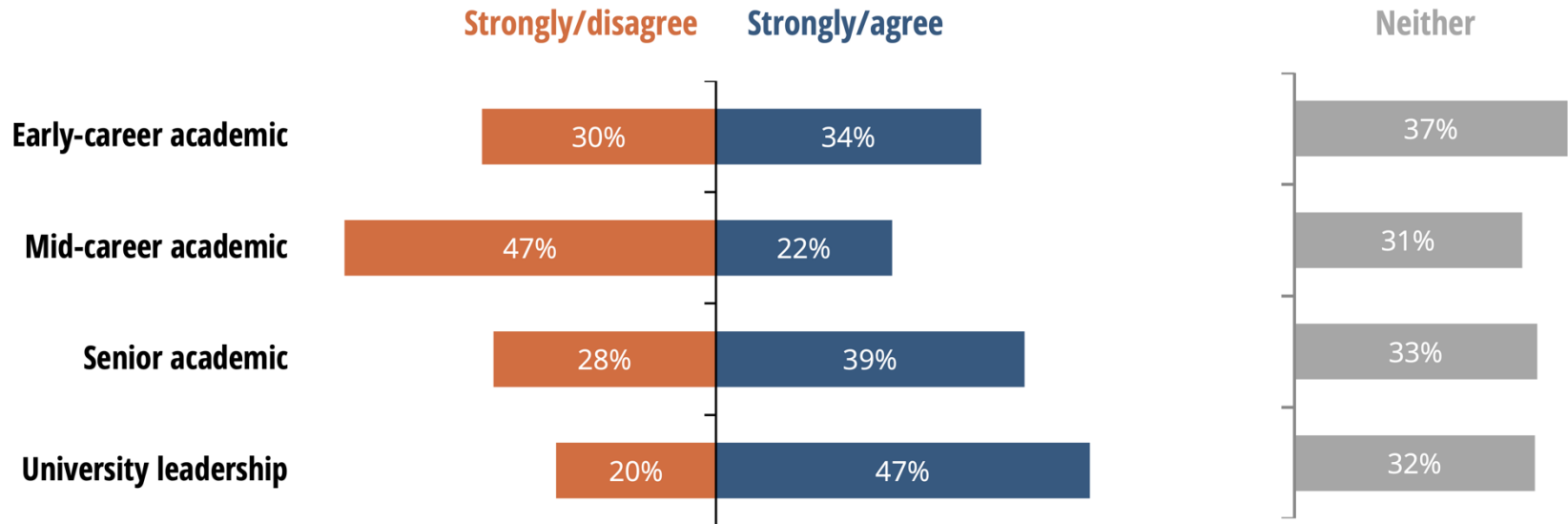
What sets apart strongly performing universities?

- 1 Early-career academics show **less uncertainty** about how their institution values university teaching
- 2 Mid-career academics are **less likely to be sceptical** about how university teaching is rewarded in practice
- 3 The views of education-focused academics and R&T academics are **closely aligned**
- 4 Department heads are widely viewed as **committed** to rewarding university teaching

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Academics who see their department heads as **committed to rewarding university teaching** are much more likely to give a positive assessment of university teaching culture overall ...



**Department
leaders'
commitment to
rewarding
university
teaching**

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1
**Priority on
teaching in
annual
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2
**Teaching time
aids career
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3
**Supportive
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4
**Robustness
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“How committed are your department leaders to rewarding excellence in university teaching”



**Very
committed**



**Somewhat
committed**



**Not very
committed**



**Not
committed at
all**



Don't know

“How committed are your department leaders to rewarding excellence in university teaching”



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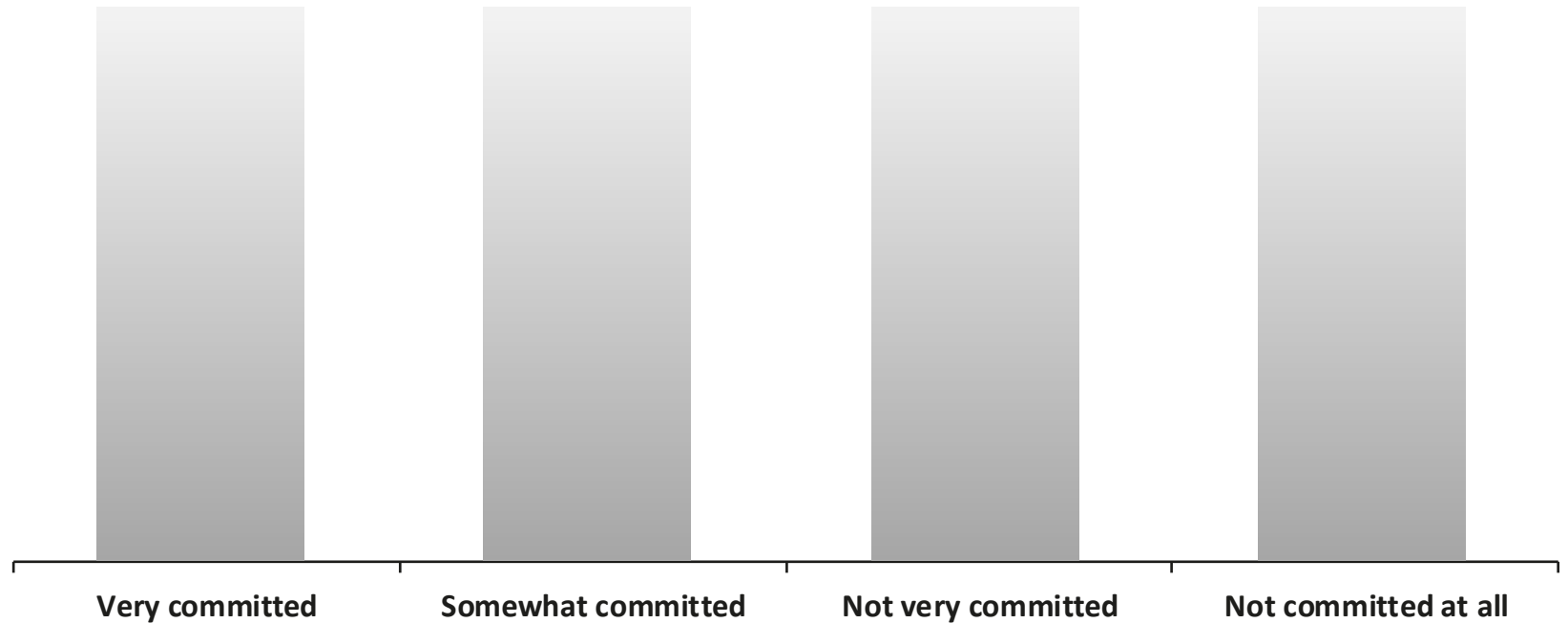
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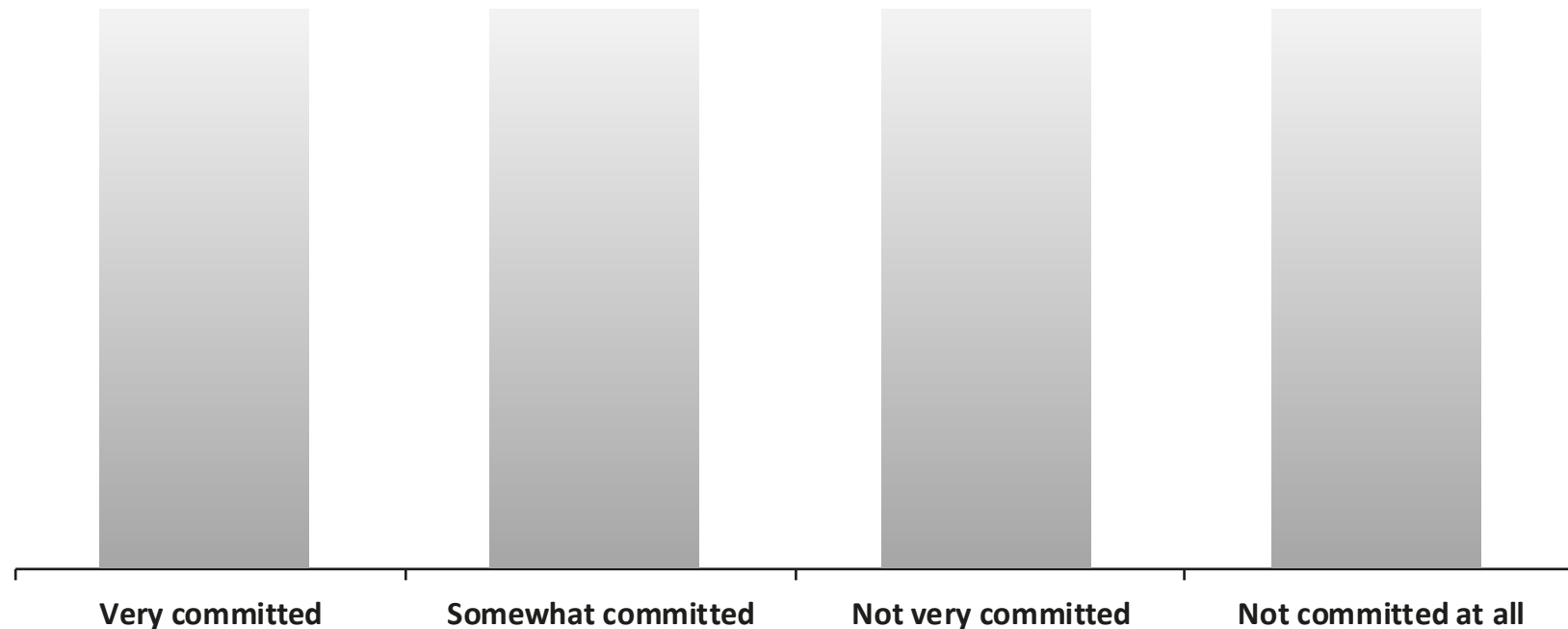


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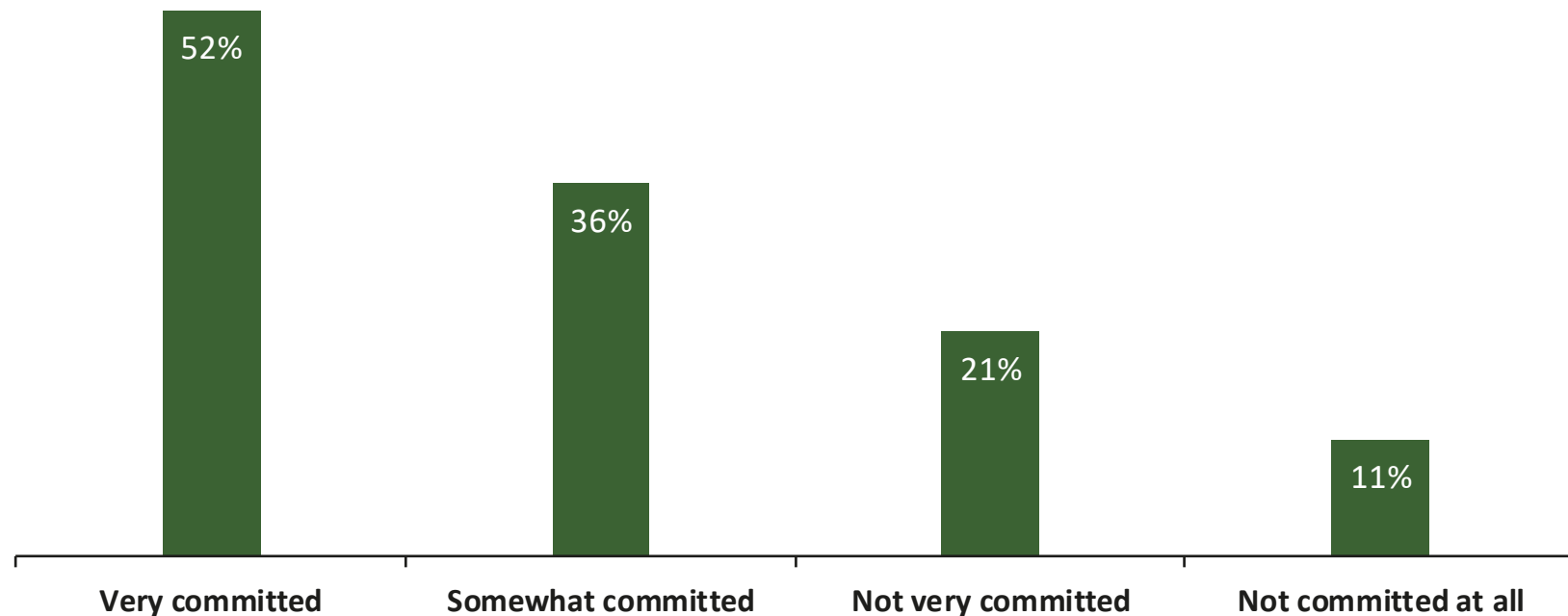
“How committed are the leaders in your department to rewarding excellence in university teaching?”

Proportion identifying the sources of evidence used to assess the quality and impact of university teaching at their university as **very robust** or **somewhat robust**



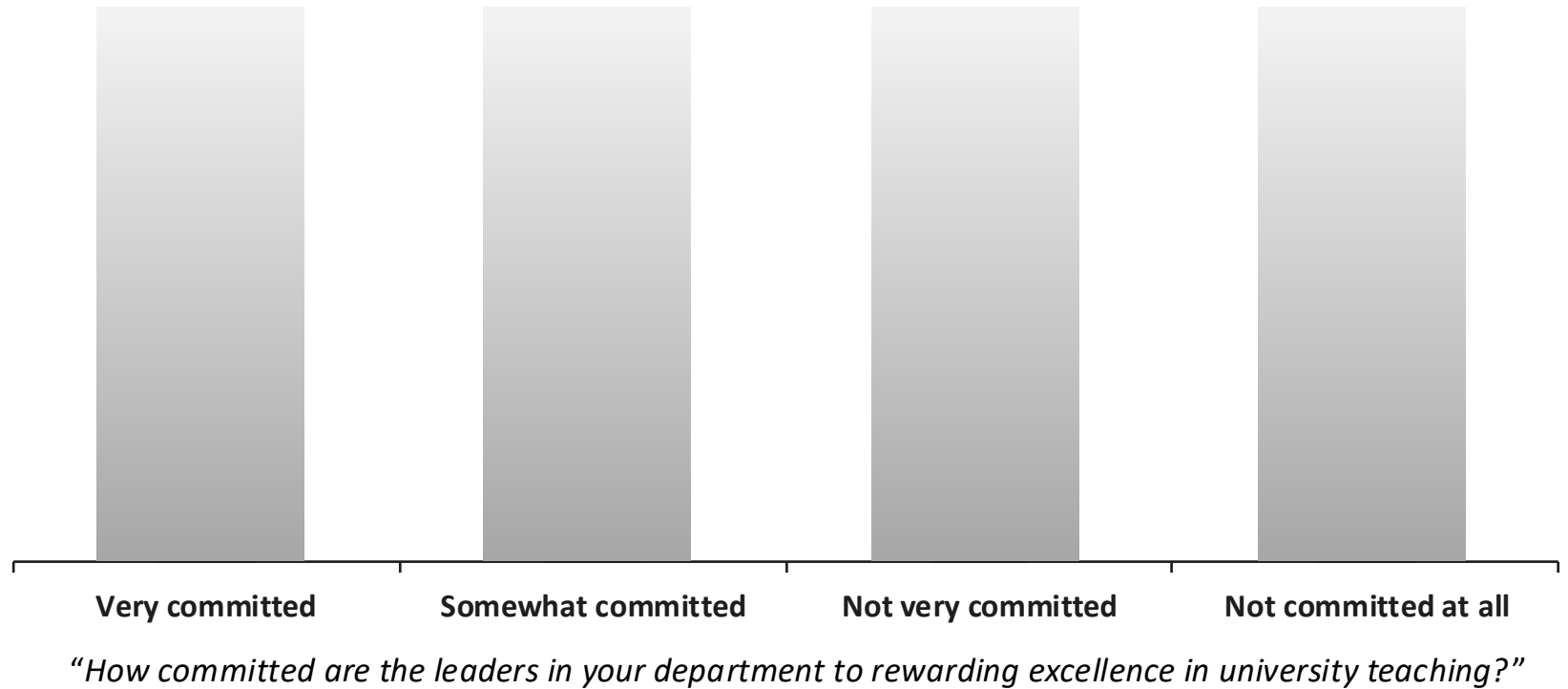
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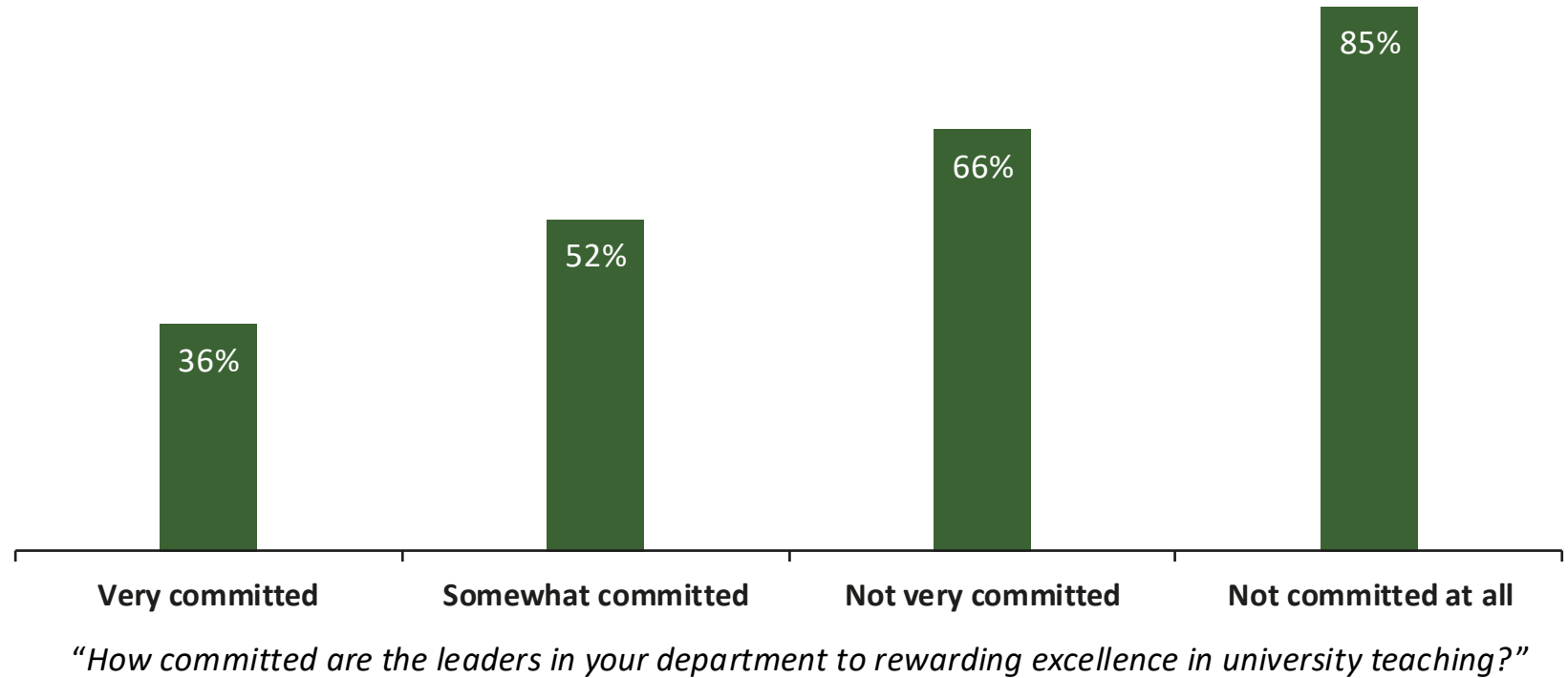


“How committed are the leaders in your department to rewarding excellence in university teaching?”

Proportion agreeing that education-focused roles are 'career-limiting' at their university



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What is the role of educational developers?

Educational developers play a crucial role in all the changes I have highlighted... they lie at the heart of translating **policy into practice**, bridging communities and driving structural and cultural reform.

... but reform activities are often only possible when **other stars align**:

- leadership support and commitment to change
- institutional investment (for CoPs, seed grants, etc.)
- institutional willingness to work across departments and disciplines
- cross-institutional collaborations...

... but this isn't something all educational developers benefit from.
Agency is crucial, but it is also constrained by context.

Where these conditions exist, what are educational developers focused on?

Shared priorities

- Building commitment of and trust in department leaders
- Collegiality and collaboration
- Unified institutional-wide standards
- Strengthening prominence of university teaching in annual reviews
- Diversity and flexibility in careers

Shared challenges

- Strengthening the experience of mid-career academics
- Improving trust in how university teaching is measured
- Protecting academics' time for educational innovation and leadership amid increasing workloads
- Building the capacity of promotion committees to assess university teaching

Next steps for Advancing Teaching

- Follow-up case study review (due to launch in October 2026):
 1. *What institutional strategies and conditions underpin successful efforts to strengthen the reward of university teaching – and what can other universities learn from these approaches?*
 2. *What are the factors shaping academics' views of how university teaching is valued and rewarded – and what can these tell us about the levers for driving cultural change?*
- Requests for additional 4th wave of Teaching Cultures Survey in 2028

Thank you

Weblinks for studies highlighted in the talk:

- Report for the Global Mapping study: <https://www.advancingteaching.com/mapping/>
- Report for the Teaching Cultures Survey: <https://teachingcultures.com/Findings/>
- Career Framework for University Teaching: <https://www.teachingframework.com>

- All further information and resources are given on the **Advancing Teaching** site: <https://www.advancingteaching.com>