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## **Design and development**

The function and place of research activities  
in universities of professional education

August 2005



The Minister of Education, Culture and Science  
Ms M.J.A. van der Hoeven  
Ministry of Education, Culture and Science  
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Dear Ms Van der Hoeven,

You asked the Advisory Council for Science and Technology Policy (AWT) to issue advice on the place and function of research activities in universities of professional education. Your specific questions were as follows:

**Your request for advice**

- How can we define or describe the research activities that we expect from universities of professional education? Where is the dividing line between those activities and university research?
- How can we give research activities at universities of professional education a recognisable place in funding and accountability systems?

**Demarcation**

The AWT advises you to position the research activities of universities of professional education as activities that should help to maintain and develop professional practice. The emphasis in this connection should be on design and development. This is partly to differentiate them from the activities of research universities, which are supposed to help advance scholarship.

**Contribution to training is central**

Design and development can also help professional practice in two other ways: they can offer an environment in which students bring their skills up to standard, and they can answer concrete problems. The AWT believes that the first of these possibilities should predominate in universities of professional education. Training well-educated people is the core task of universities of professional education. Solving concrete problems is a supplementary task.

### **Funding and quality control**

The AWT advises you to fund design and development activities in two ways. Design and development for the benefit of training should be funded via the Knowledge Development Foundation for Higher Vocational Education (*Stichting Kennisontwikkeling HBO (SKO)*). Design and development activities that help to solve concrete problems should be funded via a separate, project-based flow of funds. The AWT also advises you to have the SKO supervise the quality of design and development for the benefit of training. The AWT does not consider it necessary to set up a separate quality assurance system for design and development activities that help to solve concrete problems.

### **In conclusion**

In order to properly carry out their research task, universities of professional education will need more personnel with research skills. Until universities of professional education can offer a fruitful research climate, research universities will have to meet this need. With this in mind, the AWT advises you to provide research universities with powerful incentives to experiment with abridged research training courses.

Yours sincerely,

J.F. Sistermans



Chairman