

The FFNT 2012 Survey Report

INTRODUCTION

The bi-annual FFNT survey 2012 was aimed to inform FFNT members and the broader UT community about the current situation of gender balance at the UT, career perspectives of female academics at the UT as well as the needs of female academics as regards the FFNT events. We want to thank all colleagues who took their time to participate in the FFNT 2012 survey. We found the results interesting and beneficial to inform future FFNT strategy and activities.

The FFNT administered an online survey of female academics at the UT to receive feedback on the FFNT activities, to assess the possibilities for career progression of its members and to identify possible issues that FFNT can address in the future. The online survey was administered from 1 February to 2 March 2012. We received answers from 129 respondents (25% of total female academic staff at the UT).

Two questions were guiding our analysis to provide insights about the possibilities for career progression of female academics at the UT

- 1. What factors lead to satisfaction or dissatisfaction with the academic career at the UT among female academics?**
- 2. Are female academics encouraged to stay at the UT and which factors are important for them to stay?**

The survey covered the following topics:

- ***Career and Professional Development***
- ***Appraisal/Evaluation System (Jaargesprek en Beoordelingsgesprek)***
- ***Mentors and Role Models***
- ***Recruitment, Selection and Promotion***
- ***Work-Life Balance***
- ***FFNT Activities***

The report is structured as follows. First we introduce the distribution of respondents, then describe each of the topics covered in the survey and further answer the three earlier-posed questions. We conclude by summing up the overall findings and formulating suggestions for improving UT as a gender balanced organization.

DISTRIBUTION OF RESPONDENTS

The distribution of responses has been varied by career level and by faculty (N=129). The highest response rate was from PhD students, followed by Assistant Professors. In terms of faculties, the lowest response rates were obtained from ITC and CTW, while the rest of the respondents were distributed almost evenly between the other faculties (see Table 1):

Table 1: Distribution of the respondents by faculty and by position

CTW	25
EWI	26
GW	24
ITC	42
MB	24
TNW	21

PhD students	57
Lecturers	5
Researchers	15
Assistant Professors	35
Associate Professors	7
Full Professors	4

PhD students are considered to be a separate category when analyzing the results because many career related issues do not apply to PhD candidates compared to other academic positions. Therefore, PhD students filled in parts of the survey which were tailored to their needs. **Moreover, PhD students in ITC have not had the opportunity to participate in the survey, because they are considered to be students rather than employees of the university.**

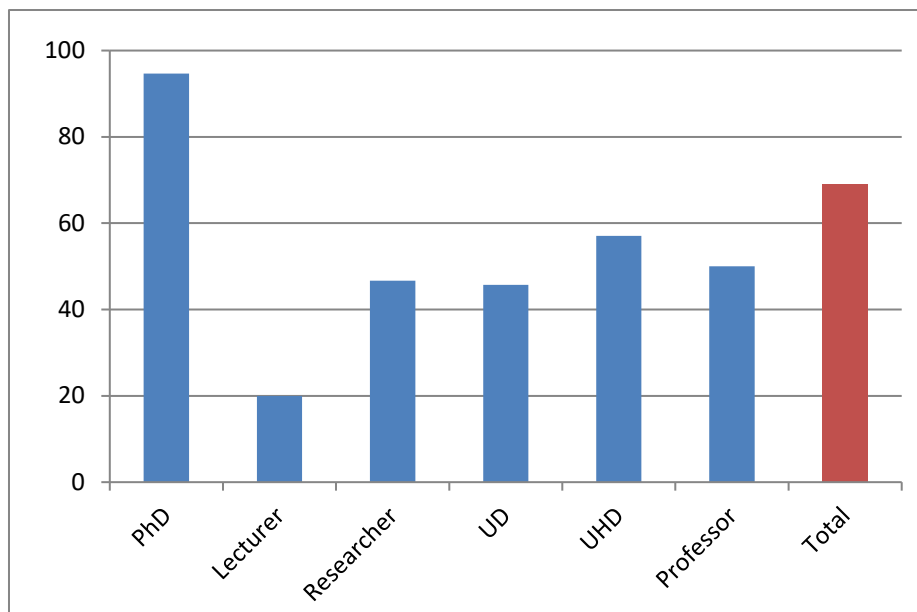
KEY FINDINGS

CAREER AND PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

The aspects covered in this section were general questions on type and stage of employment contract, access to career development opportunities (such as trainings and conferences) as well as the attractiveness of an academic career in itself and at the UT.

69% of all respondents were clearly positive about the satisfaction with academic career at the UT/ Thus satisfaction with the UT career is rather high among respondents. However, a closer look at the level of satisfaction according to employment status shows that satisfaction can vary strongly among career levels (see Figure 1):

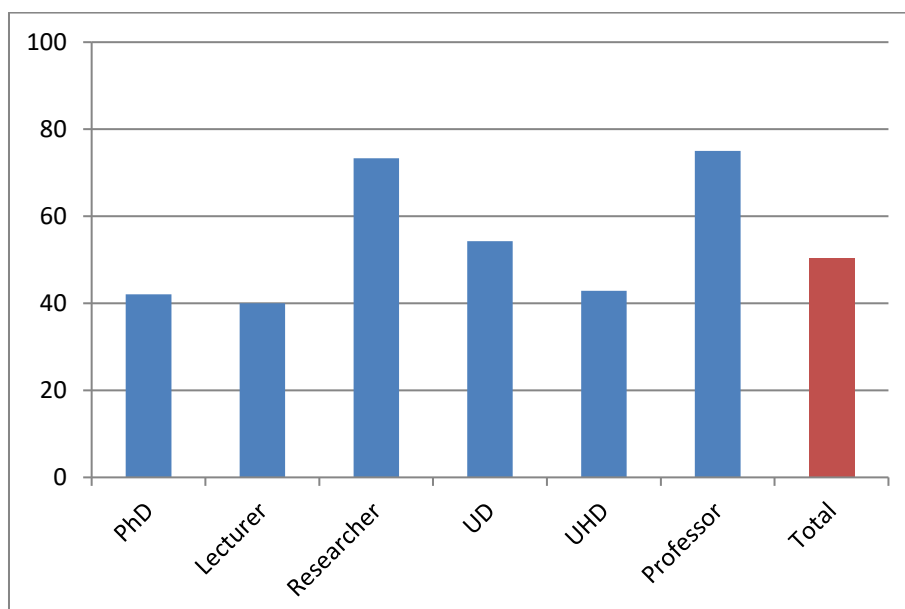
Figure 1: Satisfaction with UT career per employment status (in %, N=123)



The most satisfied group of academics seem to be PhD students, whereas academics at higher career levels show a below-average level of satisfaction. The least satisfied employment group is that of the lecturers (docenten).

Despite the high overall level of satisfaction, more than half (50,4%) of the respondents indicate that they would be willing to leave the UT for another employer. This is particularly high among researchers and professors (see Figure 2).

Figure 2: Willingness to leave UT per employment status (in %, N=123)



Answers to the other questions in this section are summed up in Table 2 below:

Table 2: Career and professional development indicators (% agree and strongly agree)

	PhD Students	Senior academics
My professional development is supported with time and/or finances by my superior	78,6	45,2
Academia is an attractive career option for women	66,1	56,1
I have an ambition to become a leader in my field	--	67,1
I have an ambition to become a senior academic	48,2	--
Females have equal access to career development and training opportunities	71,4	57,6
I am supported financially to raise my profile externally by attending and presenting at conferences	86,7	63,1
I am encouraged to contribute to my department's research seminars	80,3	61,6
I am encouraged to apply for research funding	37,5	68,5
Having consecutive temporary contracts discourages me a lot	--	39,7
My career has been constrained by a "glass ceiling"	--	22,0
N	56	73

A majority of respondents have indicated to receive sufficient support for developing their professional career, whereas PhD students seem to receive significantly more support than their senior colleagues do.

APPRAISAL/ EVALUATION SYSTEM

In this section respondents were asked whether the evaluation talks (functioneringsgesprek) are based on clear indicators and whether they lead to concrete steps for promotion. Most respondents are evaluated every 12 months (92,9%, PhD students 88,7%).

MENTORS AND ROLE MODELS

Both senior academics and PhD students have been asked in this section whether female academic role models are available in their work environment and to what extent they benefit from mentors in their career progression. Respondent's reactions to questions on mentors and role models indicate that improvement is needed. Most female academics lack a strong female role model in their immediate work environments and the benefit they get from mentors in career progression is fairly low (PhD students seem to profit more from mentorship in their career development) (See Table 3).

Table 3: Mentors and role models indicators (% agree and strongly agree)

	PhD Students	Senior academics
I have strong female academic role models I can follow	33,9	30,1
The female role models are accessible in my daily work	37,5	30,2
I strongly benefit from my mentors in my career progression	48,3	27,3
I want to become a mentor for other female academics	44,7	42,5
N	56	73

The survey also included a question on the willingness to participate in workshops related to female role models: 41,1% of senior academics and 32,8% of PhDs have agreed to do so.

RECRUITMENT, SELECTION AND PROMOTION

Satisfaction with the recruitment and promotion policies at the UT was the central topic of interest in this section. The respondents were not very positive about recruitment and promotion aspects of their careers at the UT. Only a minority of senior academics perceive the guidance for promotion and appreciation for individual contributions as sufficient (See Table 4):

Table 4: Recruitment, selection and promotion indicators (% agree and strongly agree)

	PhD Students	Senior academics
The university's recruitment and promotion policies are fair to female academics	--	42,5
I have a clear view on what is expected of me in order to be promoted	42,9	45,2
My voice regarding my promotion needs is heard and acted upon in my faculty	34,0	31,5
The dedication of the department head for equal opportunities is demonstrated	46,5	53,4
Sufficient guidance and feedback are provided for potential candidates for promotion	42,8	24,6
Individual's contributions to teaching and administration are recognized, valued and rewarded for promotion	--	21,9
In my department females are seen as "rare species"	23,2	21,9
N	56	73

WORK-LIFE BALANCE

The workload between teaching and research, time spent on various activities as well as questions on balance of work and private life were covered in this section. The compatibility of family and work remains an important issue for female academics at the UT. Most senior female academics have stated to work overtime during weekends and evenings. Moreover, career break is seen as a jeopardy for future career prospects, and UT does not provide opportunities for partner's employment for a vast majority of our respondents (see Table 5).

Table 5: Work-life balance indicators (% agree and strongly agree)

	PhD Students	Senior academics
The workload between teaching and research is balanced in my current position	49,1	25,0
Time spent on teaching per week (above 40h)	3,5	40,6
Time spent on research per week (above 40h)	71,2	48,6
Time spent on administration per week (above 40h)	3,5	4,2
Time spent on others per week (above 40h)	1,8	8,4
I have flexible working hours now	90,9	84,3
I have to work overtime during evenings and weekends	38,6	69,6
I have compromised my career for the sake of my partner's career	6,5	6,3
I prefer less work related travel	18,2	20,6
I think that a career break for women can damage their future career prospects	60,7	69,0
The UT provides opportunities upon hiring also for my partner's employment	10,3	7,0
Lack of adequate child-care is an obstacle to my career	26,9	27,3
My superior considers parental leave when measuring my scientific	25,0	12,8

output		
N	56	73

FFNT ACTIVITIES

In this section we asked about involvement of respondents in the FFNT activities, their wishes and needs for future FFNT activities. 54,3% of respondents indicated they have never participated in the FFNT activities, the rest have participated at least once a year, 10,9% participate in even 3 or more activities a year.

We learnt that more than half of respondents (59,7%) would be interested in join lectures (about 2 hours) providing new knowledge, (62%) of respondents would be interested in workshops for half a day, on e.g. *assertiveness, presentation skills, and networking*. Around one third of respondents (31%) would be interested in half-day social activities such as *painting or fashion*. Some respondents have also mentioned activities like *mentoring* and *network meetings*. Only 6,2% were not interested in any activity.

KEY FINDINGS

The FFNT 2012 survey shows some interesting points of attention for the University of Twente to become a more attractive employer. In order to find out the factors influencing ***the satisfaction with the academic career at the UT and willingness to stay at the UT***, we have conducted several correlation analyses with the above mentioned aspects of career at the UT. Moreover, we did content analyses of open ended questions on the reasons for satisfaction and willingness to leave to further ascertain the findings. We distinguish the findings between PhD students and academic staff members.

1. SATISFACTION WITH ACADEMIC CAREER AT THE UT

The senior academic respondents have indicated that the main reasons for satisfaction included: 1. Transparency, equality, responsiveness in promotion 2. Gender equality 3. Career development perspectives. For PhD respondents the key main reasons for satisfaction included: 1. Career development perspectives 2. Assistance by mentors and role models 3. Measures for ensuring work-life-balance.

Other reasons for satisfaction mentioned in the open questions were: the nature of scientific work (such as independency, creativity, and intellectual challenge) and the work atmosphere in terms of collegiality, international environment and interdisciplinary collaborations. Satisfactory career development aspects and good superior relationships also belong to the mentioned reasons for satisfaction with the UT career.

Reasons for dissatisfaction among senior academics included: 1. Constraints for career advancement (experience of 'glass ceiling') 2. Low promotion frequency 3. Work-life balance related issues. For PhD students reasons for dissatisfaction included gender equality issues; especially in faculties involved in "male-dominated" research areas. The answers to the open-ended questions supported the above findings to a great extent. Most respondents indicated workload imbalance as the main reason for dissatisfaction with their career at the UT. Particularly, the amount of time spent on teaching and non-research activities, the high work load resulting from high expectations and work pressure were seen as the most important factors for dissatisfaction. The following quotes were typical:

"Little time for doing actual research yourself (research time mostly spent on proposal writing and guiding PhD students), spending time on teaching is not truly valued from faculty level (may be in words, but not in appointed budgets per course)" (Assistant Professor)

"Even if my supervisors see good career opportunities for me and support me in achieving them, the UT in itself seems to want to drive away people (very marginal temporary contracts (even with external funding) and clarity in communication about these contract possibilities is very dissatisfying)" (Post-doctoral Researcher)

2. WILLINGNESS TO LEAVE THE UT

The main reasons for senior academic respondents for willingness to leave the UT are: 1. Low attractiveness of academia as a career option for women 2. Temporary contracts 3. Lack of recognition for individual efforts; especially for promotion 4. Lack of equality in recruitment, selection and promotion.

For PhD respondents the reasons for willingness to leave are: 1. The stage of PhD program 2. No help from mentors in career progression 3. Ambition to become a senior academic.

Most of the answers to the open-ended questions show that respondents would leave for another research institute or job as they think that taking up a new challenge or changing work environment would be good for the career, as can be illustrated by the opinion of the Assistant Professor:

"I'm still enjoying my job, but after .. years, I think that it might be good to start looking for another job, preferably at another university" (Assistant Professor)

Apart from this, most mentioned factors were promotion and career development related issues such as temporary contracts, yet this aspect has to be approached with caution: Most people who have indicated that they want to leave the UT have done so not necessarily because they are not willing to stay; rather, they *have to* go because their contract expires:

"...I do not want to leave. But if after two more years my contract is not extended, I may have to leave involuntarily" (Associate Professor)

CONCLUSIONS

To sum up the findings of the FFNT 2012 findings it is possible to indicate the following factors for career satisfaction and willingness to stay at the University of Twente among the respondents::

- Providing career perspectives (avoid glass ceiling)
- Providing clear criteria for promotion and recognition for individual efforts;
- Providing support: from superior, mentor, courses, financial incentives

While the satisfaction of the UT as an employer is generally high, it can be further increased by improving workload balance and paying more attention to issues about promotion. Based on the FFNT 2012 findings, the UT's efforts to provide a work-life balanced environment can be further improved by assistance with career break management and assistance with spouse employment.