

# Hanze Educational Concept



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# Introduction

How do we prepare students for a future that no one can predict? Or for jobs that do not currently exist or are fundamentally changing? And how do we contribute to solutions to issues that currently seem unsolvable?

The world is changing at lightning speed. Major changes in society in the areas of circularity, energy, care & health and digitalisation, bring complex challenges: both in the region and globally. We live in an age where we are constantly connected online, with instant access to a wealth of information. These developments are not only changing society and the field, but also how we work, develop and learn.

Our mission is clear: to make an impact on the world. We contribute to a strong region and to the development of people, at every stage of their lives. Together with our partners, we are committed to the societal challenges of our region, to the broad prosperity of the Northern Netherlands.

How do we do this in a society that is constantly changing? Our answer: by inextricably linking education, research and practice. We need each other to face the challenges of today and the future.

Working together and learning together is the key. We do this in learning communities where we learn from

and with each other, and in innovation hubs where students, lecturers, researchers, professionals from the professional field and residents work together on current issues. That's where that spark is created. It starts with curiosity: about each other, other perspectives and expertise, practice and societal challenges. It is precisely in meeting others that people develop and grow.

We create a learning environment that encourages students to grow into confident, skilled professionals who make a difference in their field and in society. Professionals who continue to develop through lifelong learning. And we conduct research with visible impact and direct relevance to the professional field.

This educational concept describes how we do this and what this means for the organisation of our education, research and our collaboration with the professional field.

## Reader's guide

**Chapter 1** describes what learning at Hanze entails.

In **Chapter 2**, we show how this learning takes place within learning communities and innovation hubs. In the next chapters we elaborate on what this means for our education (**Chapter 3**) and research (**Chapter 4**).

**Learning is not like filling a bucket, but like stoking a fire. All you need is a spark that ignites the desire to explore.**

(adapted from Plutarch)



**share your talent.**  
**move the world.**

# 1

# Learning at Hanze



Hanze moves along with a rapidly changing world. We are growing from a traditional university of applied sciences to a future-oriented knowledge institute, where learning is a continuous process. Students, researchers, lecturers, staff and professionals from the field learn from and with each other every day. Learning at Hanze means:

- **Together** - learning from and with each other
- **Practice-oriented** - learning and innovation in and with the professional field
- **Societal relevance** - learning to be equipped for society

## 1.1 Together - learning from and with each other

If we want to strengthen the region and contribute to solutions to complex societal issues, we must act together: by working together as well as learning together. At Hanze, students, lecturers, researchers and partners from the professional field are constantly learning from and with each other. We bring together different perspectives, experiences and expertise, within and across all fields. New insights, creative solutions and unexpected connections emerge precisely in this joint quest, where there is room to experiment, stumble and learn from mistakes. At Hanze, knowledge does not grow in isolation, but through the dynamics of interaction: we learn by asking questions and listening attentively, by being curious about others and new perspectives. This is how we build a community that learns, innovates and constantly adapts to a changing world.

## 1.2 Practice-oriented - learning and innovation in and with the professional field

Learning at Hanze is by definition practice-oriented: everything we do focusses on relevance and meaning for professional practice. That is our strength as a higher education knowledge institute: education and research are inextricably linked to real challenges from the professional field. We learn, work and conduct research, not only in practice, but also with our partners. This means that we determine what education we develop and what questions we explore in dialogue with our partners from the professional field. Together with the professional field, students, lecturers and researchers take a critical look at existing knowledge, products, processes and practices and actively contribute to the development of the professional field. This is how we help organisations and professionals stay versatile in a rapidly changing world, creating insights and solutions that have impact.

## 1.3 Societal relevance - learning to be equipped for society

We are a broad knowledge institute with multifaceted expertise. Through societal challenges in the fields of circularity, energy, digitalisation, and care and health, we contribute to a strong region. The Sustainable Development Goals are our compass they give direction to what we do, learn and research, as well as linking our regional commitment to global challenges. We thus aim for broad prosperity: economic, social, cultural and ecological (see annex 1).



# 2 Learning in learning communities and innovation hubs



**In the previous chapter, we described what learning at Hanze entails. Learning together is the key factor in this. The form we have chosen is learning in learning communities. We organise collaboration and learning with practitioners in innovation hubs. In this chapter, we explain both concepts.**

## 2.1 Learning communities

### What is a learning community?

A learning community is a group of people working together on a common goal, learning from and with each other. To achieve this type of learning, it is important that both the learning process and the final outcome are a joint responsibility. Participants need each other to work towards the common goal and together take responsibility for everyone's development. It is not just about student development. All participants, whether students, lecturers, professionals, researchers or residents, feel committed to the common goal and are willing to actively learn from and with each other. The composition of a learning community depends on the content and complexity of the issue. Sometimes students and lecturers learn together with the professional field; sometimes researchers from our professorships or local residents also participate. Sometimes one discipline suffices, sometimes several are needed to reach new insights and co-create solutions.

### Learning communities in education and research

Learning communities provide a powerful learning environment in which we encourage collaborative learning and working around an issue. In doing so, it is essential that the issue is relevant to all participants. For students,

it should match their interests, programme and learning objectives. When researchers participate in a learning community, the issue must match the theme and intended impact of their research. Moreover, when setting up a learning community in education, it is important to take into account the learning stage of the students, the complexity of the issue and the composition of the group. We ensure that these aspects are in proper alignment.

Working and learning in a learning community is a means and not an end in itself. We deploy this where it really adds value in education and research. Moreover, learning together requires that participants first learn to work together: organising the collaboration, paying attention to how the group interacts, and reflecting on both content and process. Interdisciplinarity in learning and working together also requires attention and practice. We guide students in this and also ensure that lecturers are well equipped to fulfil their role in this new educational setting. Researchers are provided with the tools to use learning communities in applied research. This will enable us to make the most of learning communities as rich learning environments.



### 2.2 Innovation hubs

#### What is an innovation hub?

An innovation hub is a way of working together at a physical location in one of our buildings or in the region. Consider it the 'home' for our collaboration with the professional field. In an innovation hub, there is room for learning communities to come together and work on current, complex practical issues from different disciplines. This is how we encourage interaction between students, lecturers, researchers, professionals and residents. Sometimes all parties are involved (education, research, professional field and residents), sometimes two or three, but the focus is always on learning and working together and a mutual strengthening of efforts.

#### The added value of learning and working in innovation hubs

It is the interaction between education, research and the professional field that fosters innovation. For **education**, this means that students develop an inquisitive attitude, and that they already contribute to solutions to current issues during their studies. Education remains current and relevant, while students learn to collaborate across disciplines to tackle complex problems. **Research** gains in impact because practical questions can be easily collected and the outcomes directly applied and tested in practice.

The involvement of research also ensures that the latest insights are readily available to all participants.

**Practitioners** benefit not only from that knowledge and concrete and practicable solutions to current issues, but also from getting to know and collaborating with future professionals early on. This way, collaboration between education, research and practice leads to results that are in tune with reality in the professional field and societal challenges of today and the future.

#### Innovation hubs within Hanze and in the region

We distinguish two types of innovation hubs. In **innovation hubs within Hanze**, on campus or in other Hanze buildings, we work on issues linked to our research themes. As Hanze, we take responsibility for and direct these innovation hubs. In addition, there are **innovation hubs in the region**: these focus on region-specific issues, arising from the demand of partners from the professional field or the region. In this, Hanze acts as a partner.



# 3

# Education



In the previous two chapters, we described what learning at Hanze entails and how we shape this in learning communities and innovation hubs. In this chapter, we elaborate on what this means for our education:

- What do students learn at Hanze?
- What characterises the learning environment?

## 3.1 What do students learn at Hanze?

In this section, we describe the core of what students learn at Hanze. These are elements essential for training competent and confident professionals who make a difference in their field and society. Each study programme implements this in a way that suits its field and the student's development, either as a separate component or woven into the sector-specific components of the programme.

### Collaborative learning

Collaborative learning is at the heart of this educational concept. It isn't something that just happens; it takes time, attention, practice in working together and specific skills. It's important to learn how to develop a common language, to ask probing questions and to make an effort to understand each other's perspectives. Collaborating and learning with other disciplines requires additional skills, such as recognising where your discipline ends and another's begins. We pay attention to all these aspects in our education.

### Competent professionalism

Today's changing society requires versatile professionals who contribute to solutions to complex issues from their particular fields of expertise. Building competent professionalism is the basis for our education: acquiring professional expertise and skills. We train professionals who are not only experts in their field, but also help develop and innovate their field. Professionals who have the ability to see the bigger picture, reflect on the consequences of their work for others and act accordingly. Professionals who continue to learn and develop within their expertise and have the ability to apply what they learn in new and changing contexts.

### Transition skills

Besides professional expertise and skills, transition skills are also crucial to navigate in a rapidly changing society and professional practice as well as to contribute to sustainable transition. Transition skills involve knowledge and skills that are future-oriented. We encourage competences such as systems thinking, anticipation, collaboration and integrated problem solving. Digital and data literacy are also gaining increasingly in importance. Therefore, we guide students in developing critical digital literacy. This includes understanding capabilities; using artificial intelligence, data and digital resources critically and consciously; and being able to assess opportunities and risks.



#### Epistemic agency

As future professionals, students need skills to deal with unexpected situations, a lack of professional knowledge or with complex issues. This is why we focus on developing epistemic agency in our education. This means, firstly, that they learn to recognise, in a professional situation, where essential practical knowledge is missing, and what exactly is missing. They also learn to determine which strategy is needed: to look up, find out or investigate; how to answer questions with appropriate thoroughness; and how to make the result usable for the professional context.

#### Personal development

To truly be meaningful for the world around you, it is important to have an understanding of who you are, what you can do and how you stand in the world. You can only make a difference when you know what influence you have and are motivated to contribute. This is why learning at Hanze also focuses on personal development: developing an understanding of the person you are and how you relate to others. The skills involved are autonomy, responsibility, critical self-reflection, identity formation and involvement in society. We guide students in the development of these skills, while allowing them the space to shape and interpret them independently.

#### Agency

We believe it is important for students to take control of their own learning process. This means we encourage them to actively, purposefully and reflectively shape their learning process and environment, in collaboration with teachers, fellow students and the professional field. Students learn to understand how their environment influences their behaviour and learning, and in turn, how they can give direction to this themselves. We help them learn to make deliberate choices, choose strategies, reflect and evaluate, and take initiative. When students learn to regulate and adjust their own learning process and to contribute proactively to their environment, their confidence in their own ability, as well as their motivation to continue to develop and make a difference, will grow.

#### 3.2 What characterises the learning environment?

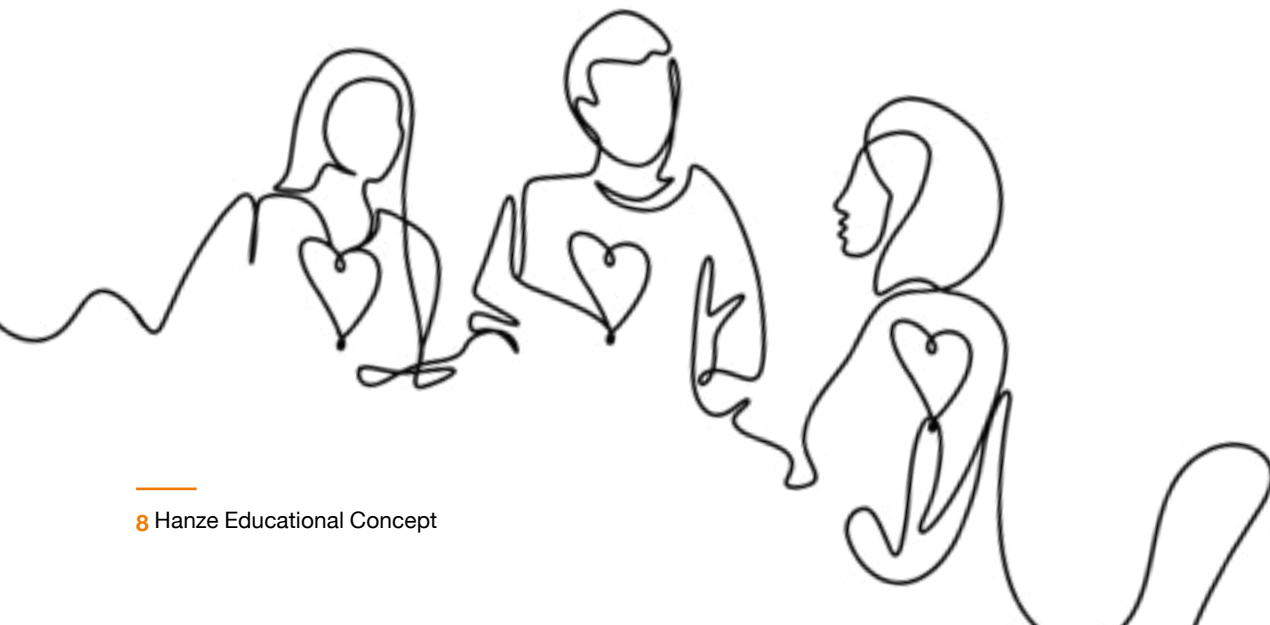
Having described what students learn at Hanze, we now turn to how we enable that learning. We show what characterises our learning environment and how it contributes to the development of competent and confident professionals.

##### A safe learning environment

A safe learning environment is a basic requirement for developing as a person and a professional. An inclusive learning environment where everyone feels comfortable, supported and encouraged to learn and grow. Where everyone has the confidence to take risks and make mistakes and to express themselves honestly and voice opinions - regardless of their backgrounds and beliefs. Where we value differences and everyone treats each other with respect.

For students, positive relationships with each other and their teachers are important for their well-being and the development of a sense of connection. We pay attention to the need for 'social integration' to ensure that students feel welcome and at home in their areas of expertise and at Hanze. A safe learning environment is also one in which students feel that what they are learning is achievable and that they have a say in the learning process.

Fostering a learning environment with attention to autonomy, positive relationships and competence can have a positive effect on students' motivation and ownership and on their success as students. To create this safe and supportive learning environment, teachers provide sound didactic support and student guidance and individual support if needed.



### Development-oriented

Our education focuses on the development of students as individuals and professionals. This is why we offer students development-oriented education, with an emphasis on growth and the learning process instead of results and marks. This approach to education ensures less performance anxiety and greater success.

The main principle of development-oriented education is the zone of proximal development. In a nutshell, this is the difference between what can be achieved alone versus what can be achieved with help. Learning occurs when we are challenged just beyond our current ability and level. How much guidance someone needs varies depending on their stage of development. Students with less prior knowledge will need more support, which can gradually be reduced. Students with more knowledge and experience can manage a greater level of independence and complexity. Thus, it is important to align the timing of certain activities and contexts with the student's needs.

We use formative action as a didactic approach. This enables both teacher and student to obtain more clarity about the ongoing learning process. This means that the teacher continually determines where a student is in their learning process and bases subsequent steps on these observations. In this way, the teacher does not need to wait until the end of a period of study to evaluate a student's progress but can, together with the student, adjust the learning process as necessary. Actively involving students in their learning process helps them develop to become agentive learners, who make informed decisions about potential learning pathways during their study.

Part of development-oriented education is learning-orientated assessment, which means every assessment is designed to spark learning. In our curriculum, we ensure that our education and assessment align with the intended learning outcomes.

### Tailored learning pathways

Each student is unique, with different interests, needs, and particular learning styles. To help all of our students reach their full potential, we take their uniqueness into account in our education by offering tailored learning pathways. These pathways should fit students' backgrounds, wishes, and needs and also meet the requirements and wishes of the rapidly changing professional field.

Students who can choose their own path will experience greater agency, leading to increased motivation. In this way, education also aligns itself better to the diversity of student characteristics and needs, such as different needs in terms of where, what, how and when learning takes place, and the connection to previously acquired competences. Tailored learning pathways offer students increased possibilities to combine their study with work or family life and make our education accessible for students with different physical and psychological support needs.

We guide students in creating a tailored learning pathway that leads to a recognised qualification. In the process, we consider the student's development, the possibilities within the curriculum, and the characteristics of the professional field. Quality personal guidance from academic advisors is essential to help students take control of their own development and learning pathway.

### Real-world challenges

What students learn only becomes relevant once they have applied it in practice, seeing the relevance and added value. We think it is important that this takes place during students' studies before they enter the workforce. This is why students learn by working on real-world challenges arising in the professional field. This makes students see the added value of what they are learning, which increases their motivation. At the same time, they are already contributing to their chosen professional field during their studies.

Real-world challenges should be realistic, meaningful, open-ended, and challenging. The more realistic the problem, the more motivated students are to solve it. Meaningful problems are those in which students can recognise the added value and impact of their contribution. Ideally, we should encourage students to work with open-ended problems because this is an important characteristic of complex issues. These open-ended problems have multiple possible solutions, requiring students, potentially in collaboration with others, to use their epistemic agency to find the most suitable solution.

### Learning communities and innovation hubs

Finally, students learn together with other students, lecturers, researchers and professionals from the field in learning communities and innovation hubs, as detailed in Chapter 2 'Learning in learning communities and innovation hubs'.





Having described what our view on learning means for education at Hanze, in this final chapter we do the same for applied research:

- What is our ambition with regard to applied research?
- How do we conduct applied research?

#### 4.1 What is our ambition with regard to applied research?

In this section, we describe the core of our ambition with regard to applied research. We address what we see as essential for doing research with visible impact and direct relevance to practice. Each knowledge domain contributes to this effort in its own way, in a way that suits the field or the interface between fields.

##### Impact

Impact is the starting point of our applied research. We make impact in different ways: by delivering knowledge, by developing practical products, through personal development (awareness or learning experience) or through systemic change. This is how, through practice, education and science, our research makes a positive contribution and we continue to learn not only as individuals, but also as a region and beyond, our whole lives.

Together with governments, companies, organisations, knowledge institutes and residents, we determine which issues we tackle, also taking into account the environment and the natural world. We also ensure that we involve each other closely in performing the research itself. We prefer to do this in long-term collaborations, by which we help build the Northern Netherlands innovation ecosystem. In doing so, we are not only guided by existing research agendas. We anticipate tomorrow's questions and challenge the status quo. We dare to go against the grain and help set the agenda ourselves.

We go out into the field, get people moving there, also listen to people who are often overlooked and know how to make use of the right moment to make a difference. Together, we develop applicable knowledge, products, interventions, processes and practices, as well as education aimed at practice. We conduct research

to understand, analyse and interpret and to design and implement practice interventions. In doing so, we contribute to solutions to concrete challenges, while seeking broadly applicable effective principles.

This way, we match what is needed in the region and beyond. Moreover, by always working together, we not only create impact at the end of a research project or learning pathway, or only in a target group. Positive change happens along the way, in all stakeholders, in the interaction between partners from professional practice, students, lecturers and researchers.

##### Leading knowledge partner

By making meaningful impact, we build our position as a leading knowledge partner. We see this as an important catalyst: if we are recognised and appreciated, we can make even more impact. Our professorships are crucial in this regard: they are leaders in their field and make our knowledge and expertise visible. They are at the forefront of innovation, contribute substantially to knowledge and innovation development and actively link insights from their field to developments in the region. This makes them significant for professional practice in their field, for education that trains for their field as well as for science. They are known for their expertise, in the region and beyond. They are asked to interpret developments, inspire peers and participate in relevant collaborations. In doing so, they strengthen Hanze's position as a leading knowledge partner.

Professors are at the forefront of social innovation. To do so, they constantly update their knowledge. As recognised experts, they help guide regional research and innovation agendas. They also actively participate in national and international expert groups, where they advise on research agendas and policies. At all these levels, they maintain their own network of peers and partners. In doing so, professors connect professional practice with the research community.

Within Hanze, professors lead their research groups and actively contribute to Hanze's strategy, research agenda and the content of education. They are visible in education and play an active and inspiring role in learning communities and innovation hubs. In doing so, they contribute to the development of knowledge and skills of students, lecturers, researchers and professionals.

### 4.2 How do we conduct applied research?

Now that we have described our ambition with regard to applied research, we elaborate on how we do research, and how this contributes to the impact we make together with our partners.

#### High-quality

Applied research only makes a difference when it is carefully executed and of high quality. Therefore, all the research we conduct is methodically thorough, practically relevant and ethically sound. We work according to the Netherlands Code of Conduct for Research Integrity and base our research on the principles of honesty, diligence, transparency, independence and responsibility. These aspects guide every stage of the research, from collecting and formulating the question to sharing the results.

Because all research is different, we pay attention to choosing the most appropriate, science-based method. In doing so, we follow the quality standards that apply within different research domains and for different types of research. Moreover, when conducting research involving human subjects, we ensure that we perform medical ethics reviews beforehand and that we work inclusively. Every voice counts: we involve people in vulnerable situations, listen to people who are often overlooked and use the knowledge people bring from experience. We make space for not-knowing, we reflect critically on our own thinking and actions, and sometimes choose to slow down.

To make our research open and accessible, we work according to the principles of FAIR data and Open Science. Our way of working is transparent, making the research replicable. In principle, we publish open access, making our work freely accessible to the general public. We share results, data, software and other scientific information as soon as possible. In doing so, we always pay particular attention to knowledge security, privacy, and intellectual property. This is how we encourage collaboration both inside and outside the scientific community and increase the impact of our research.

#### Regional, national, international

We conduct applied research in close cooperation with partners and stakeholders: regionally, nationally and internationally. We are particularly committed to the region and are an important knowledge partner in the Northern Netherlands. This means addressing regional issues, but also knowing how to translate larger issues and research results to the region.

At the same time, our research extends beyond the region, both in approach and relevance. We cooperate nationally and internationally with regions facing similar challenges. Through our networks, we also make regionally applied knowledge products relevant in a wider context. We take a visible and leading role in national and international research communities within our areas of expertise. This way, we contribute to the international knowledge base as well as learning from the diversity of contacts.

To collaborate long-term and effectively, we join regional, national and international research programmes and agendas. At the same time, when engaging in conversation with our partners, we voice our own opinion on what is urgent and relevant. We do not allow ourselves to be fully guided by existing programmes, but deliberately make room for the uncertain and exploratory phase of research, an important starting point for innovation and change.



### Interdisciplinary approach

The societal issues we research at Hanze are complex and consist of several interconnected issues. Usable and sustainable solutions require knowledge, methodology and expertise from multiple fields. This is why we often take an interdisciplinary approach. By connecting disciplines, we better understand the origin of problems, resulting in new insights that lead to qualitative outcomes and innovations with lasting value.

Interdisciplinary research only works if it is supported by strong disciplines. Therefore, we do not only work interdisciplinary, but also conduct applied research within our separate fields. This keeps our knowledge base up to date and in line with what is needed in professional practice and for education. When appropriate for the issue, we also involve local residents, professionals, patients and others in conducting research (transdisciplinary).

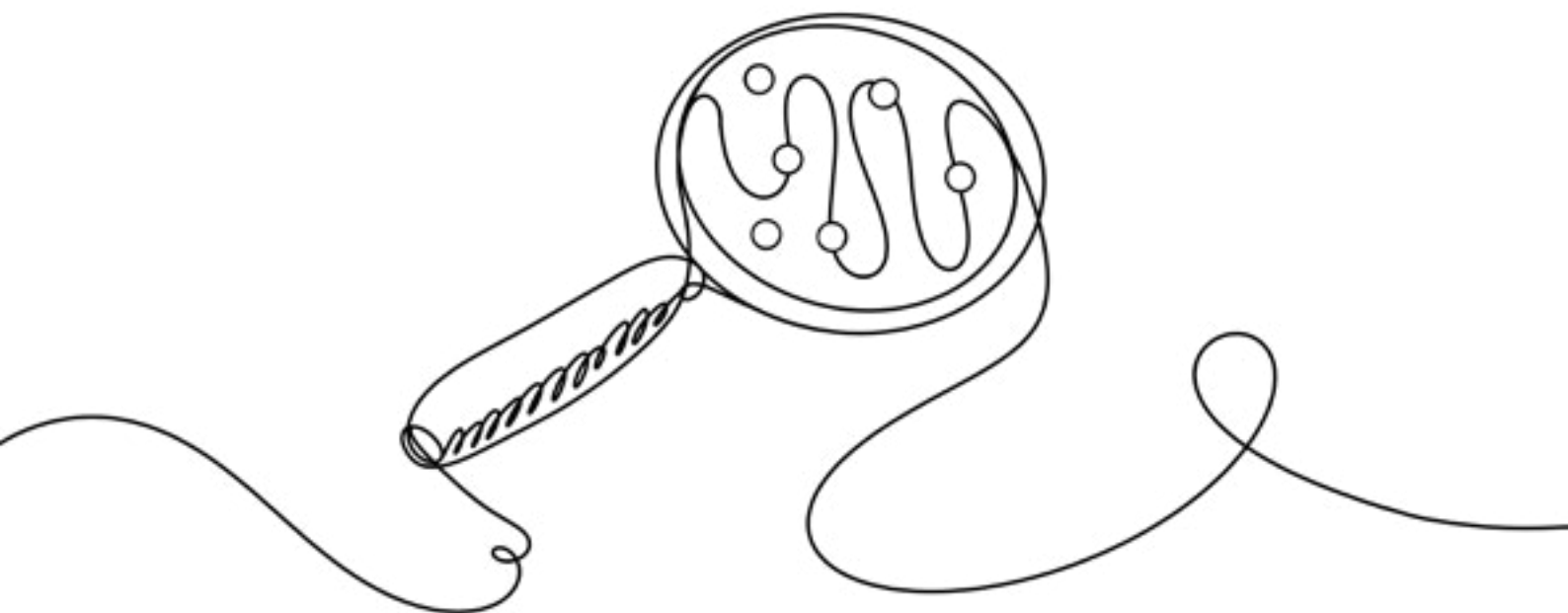
### Layered

Our research is layered. This means conducting research at different levels, which reinforce and complement each other. Professors and senior researchers set up lines of research and maintain national and international networks. Together with partners from professional practice, they formulate relevant research questions. They conduct this research with (junior) researchers, PhD candidates and other students. They also supervise Professional Doctorate (PD) and PhD candidates, who work on building a solid practice-oriented as well as scientific knowledge base of their field.

Students also conduct applied research during their associate degree, bachelor's or master's programmes. This is how they develop the research skills they will need in their future work. At the same time, their research contributes to filling knowledge gaps and solving issues in their professional practice. The context, complexity and approach differ for each stage of the programme, but all aspects contribute to the whole. This creates a rich interplay of types of research, from practical solutions to in-depth knowledge development, always aimed at innovation and advancement in professional practice.

### Learning communities and innovation hubs

An important form for how we conduct research is working in learning communities and innovation hubs. Hanze professorships are involved in these collaborations, although not all research is conducted in these forms. What this looks like is shown in Chapter 2 'Learning in learning communities and innovation hubs'.



## Themes for education and applied research

Hanze is a broad knowledge institute with multifaceted expertise, which is reflected in the themes of our education and research.

### Themes for education\*

- Economics and management
- Behaviour and society
- Health and sport
- Technology
- Education
- Arts and Culture
- Exact and computer science
- Language and communication
- Law and governance
- Earth and environment

*\*This list is based on the areas of interest for prospective students posted on our website, which relates to the national thematic classification of Studiekeuze123. In 2025/2026, we are working on a list of Hanze themes for education, tailored to the societal challenges and the needs of our target groups and the professional field – as already exists for research.*

### Themes for applied research

- Vulnerability and suitable care
- Equal opportunities and participation
- Healthy lifestyle and living environment
- Talent and learning
- Sustainable and circular society
- Energy Transition
- Sustainable production and farming systems
- Bio-based and circular economy
- Labour market
- Entrepreneurship and innovation
- Digital transformation
- Arts and Culture
- Safe and sustainable liveability

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