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**Abstract**

The Dutch higher education and research system has incrementally changed during the last decade. Several reforms, initiated by the government, have hinted towards influencing the basic processes within universities, such as research programming. However, it is largely unknown how these reforms have been implemented at the university shop floor level. Are the core activities of academics influenced by the reforms? Do academics still enjoy the academic freedom as they used to do? In this paper, we address the responses of four research units to changed institutional environments (two units in biotechnology and two in medieval history). Based on 33 interviews, we mapped their views on present-day research programming and problem choice in their units. The results show that the research units preserve their own research agenda to a large extent: the academic credibility process is paramount. (HRK / Abstract übernommen)