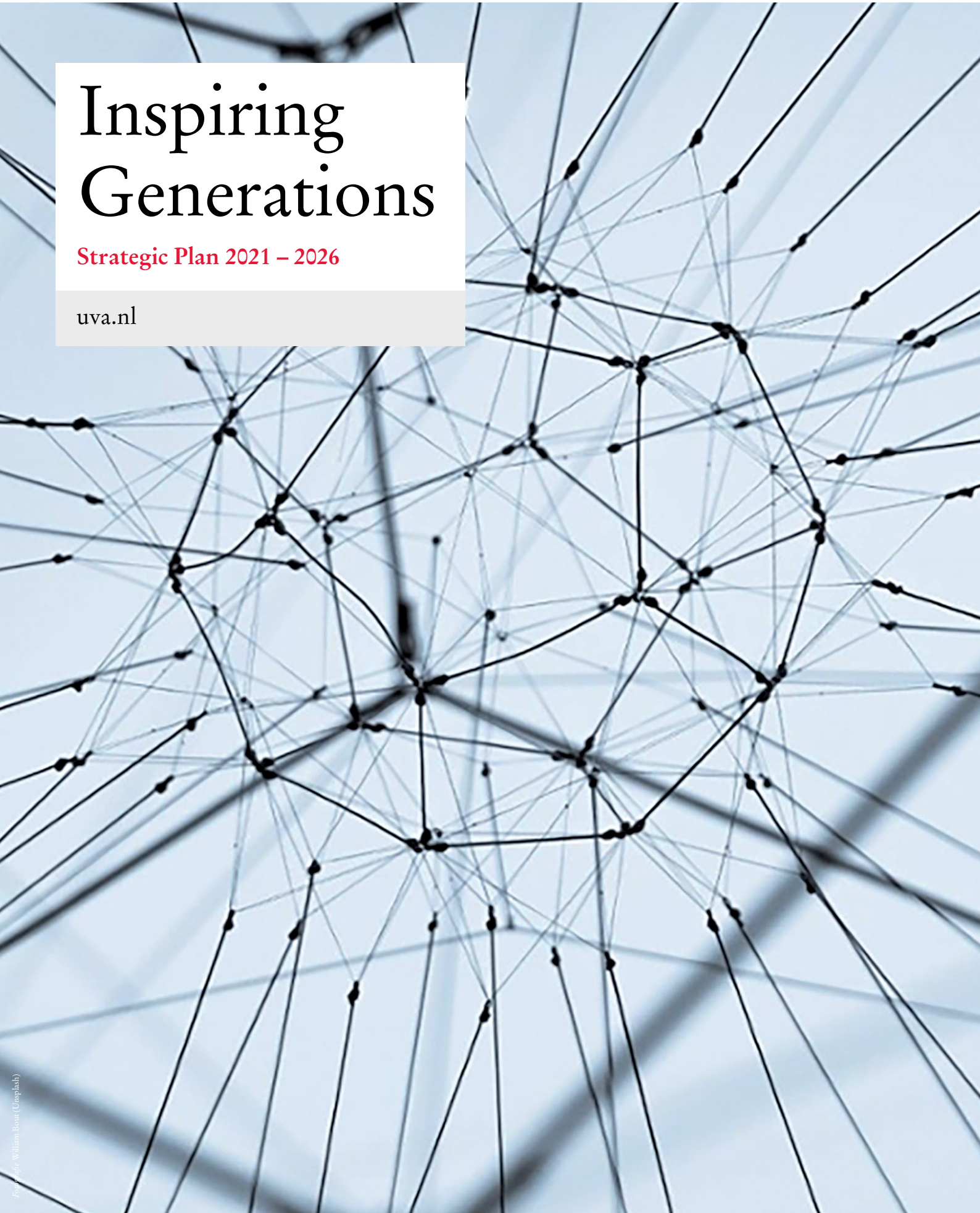UNIVERSITY OF AMSTERDAM

Inspiring Generations

Strategic Plan 2021 – 2026

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Inspiring Generations

Strategic Plan 2021 – 2026
University of Amsterdam

Introduction

At the UvA, we are proud to be among the best universities in almost all of our disciplines. Therein lies our strength. As a leading player, we have an obligation, together with other knowledge institutions in Amsterdam and beyond, to contribute to the resolution of complex, interdisciplinary issues. Think of the climate, historical and social inequality, migration and populism, freedom and the rule of law, and revolutionary medical and digital technologies. Or the coronavirus and the uncertainty about the future that it brings. The corona crisis is different to previous crises because, more than ever, bringing the virus under control requires global scientific collaboration. While our world is changing rapidly, our role remains at the leading edge of the changes. Our remit is to educate the next generation who will make changes happen and widen the horizons of the scientific knowledge they require.

In this Strategic Plan we explore what we must do to maintain the position that we have obtained and how we can realise our ambitions for the 2020s. Keywords in this respect are talent, agility, responsibility and digitalisation - concepts which we already intended to include in this plan even before the advent of the corona crisis. In spite of the as yet unclear impact of the corona crisis on international academic mobility and our budgets, we will continue to invest just as much time and intellect on the creation of a better world through science. And although our immediate future may look slightly different to what we anticipated at the beginning of 2020 - more digital and more agile - the ambitions in this plan have not changed significantly as a result.

We must, however, address the ongoing high levels of workload. For many people, these are even higher than they were before the corona crisis. Therefore we shall try to realise our ambitions in alignment with the available energies and time and with ongoing policies. The challenge lies in increasing the effectiveness and coordination of our efforts within existing budgets, whilst constantly being guided by the question 'what is the University's purpose?'. In addition, we must and will address the issues that our university, like many others, has around the social safety and mental health of students and staff.

This Strategic Plan has a layered structure. Chapter 1 outlines the strategy: the UvA's core values, the challenges that we face and six interrelated key ambitions that derive from them. This is followed by six chapters, each of which looks in detail at one of the key ambitions (Chapters 2 to 7). Each of these key ambitions is broken down into a number of sub-ambitions (the sections in each chapter), which conclude with a number of concrete steps that should help to achieve the ambitions. The table of contents, listing the titles of the key and sub-ambitions, essentially constitutes a brief summary of the Plan.

The points of departure and detail of the ambitions may differ. But this is only to be expected in a plan that looks ahead to the next six years. In addition, it offers scope to set priorities and make adjustments in the course of further detailing and implementation of our ambitions. Halfway through the period of the plan, in early 2024, we will review the progress we have made at that point and any adjustments that are required as a result of developments within the UvA and beyond.

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1. Strategy: our challenges and drivers for the coming years

The UvA's strategy over the next few years is based on the challenges that we expect to face and on the forces that drive us. We had already identified these challenges before the corona crisis. The need to address them has only increased as a result.

Our core values
The UvA conducts science that seeks to understand and serve the world, without being bound by political, religious or other constraints. We are an ambitious and creative public university in Amsterdam. We are both independent and engaged. We strive for a sustainable, prosperous future and champion justice and equal opportunities. We listen and give people the freedom to ask questions, to show curiosity and to debate. We do this with respect for the contribution, background and beliefs of each and every individual, and in an environment which is socially and intellectually safe. We will defend these values at all times.

Our challenges over the coming decade
As a university, we are committed to widening the horizons of scientific knowledge in our society. We want to get the best from ourselves and from our students, who will soon be tackling the issues our world is facing. This is the raison d'être of our research-intensive education, our doctoral programmes and our academic research.

In the 2020s, we expect to face the following major challenges in the (international) field of higher education and research.
- Digitalisation is a key driver for our ambitions – even more so than we had anticipated before the corona crisis. In the field of research, the smart use of digitalisation transforms or enriches methodologies in all disciplines. By combining and analysing data, all manner of processes can be mapped in innovative ways, as input for complex models that help solve societal problems, for example. The use of research methods fuelled by data science requires investments in new expertise, teamwork and state-of-the-art infrastructure.
- In education and assessment too, digitalisation is rapidly making inroads. Even before the advent of the corona crisis, it was clear that developments in ICT would require us to further revamp the content and format of our degree programmes. We must draw up a strategic framework for the digitalisation of our education: what is the optimum mix of online and face-to-face? The better we learn to exploit this increase in digitalisation – and new opportunities like adaptive learning systems and learning analytics – the better our future position as a provider of higher education in and from Amsterdam will be.
- Managing workloads is a complex task, in which many factors play a role. One such factor is the growing pressure of accountability and regulations. We strive to find the right balance between rules and professional freedom, and between legitimacy and efficiency. A more robust quality culture may help to achieve this balance and, as a result, to keep workloads under control.
- In the Netherlands, the funding of university research is linked only loosely to the funding of education. Yet it is the combination of both that is the essence of the University. It is, therefore, up to us to control the balance between education and research. Given the growth in the previous period, further growth in student numbers is not a general objective. In some disciplines the need to maintain resilience or the connection with the research programme may constitute a good reason for targeted recruitment of students.
- A further challenge is the growing competition around attracting, retaining and training talent. It is crucial here that we recruit staff and students with different skills and backgrounds; in other words, that we actively focus on diversity, inclusion and equitability.
- Another key issue is open science: the cultural shift towards transparency and openness around research data, because this is deemed better for science than the closed practices of the past.

- Finally, there is the challenge of increasing society's trust in academia. With wealthy, knowledge-intensive players on the research market undermining the position of the traditional universities (in the field of data and pharmaceuticals, for example), this trust can no longer be taken for granted.

The University must redefine itself and innovate in ongoing dialogue between its leadership, strong Works and Students Councils and a committed academic community. Based on our core values and public position, we must find the right partners – knowledge institutes, businesses and social institutions – to enable us to achieve this.

Our strength
The UvA is a leading player in the academic world. We are unique in that we are ranked among the top universities internationally for virtually the entire spectrum of arts and humanities, social sciences, natural sciences and medical sciences. Driven by their boundless curiosity, our scientists conduct innovative and fundamental research in collaboration with the best in the world. Our research and education are closely interlinked and inspire each other. We offer a broad range of degree programmes which take an active approach to learning and encourage student engagement. Clearly, we are keen to maintain the strengths of the individual disciplines and degree programmes. However, we can make better use of the high quality that we achieve over a broad spectrum.

Our ambitions
If we are to maintain our position as a leader across this broad spectrum of disciplines, academic innovation is essential. Innovation will come from the disciplines themselves, but we can also make better use of the variety within the UvA for this purpose. We want to collaborate more intensively between disciplines, thereby enhancing innovation in each discipline individually. And we also need to collaborate to develop integrative methods and common approaches for tackling complex global issues which do not confine themselves to the boundaries of individual disciplines: the Sustainable Development Goals, for example, pandemics, the impact of rapidly evolving communication technologies and medical techniques, artificial intelligence or genetic modification and growing populism, nationalism and migration. With our interdisciplinary knowledge and research methods, we must be able to respond in an agile way to these and future issues, through effective collaboration between departments and faculties.

The innovative nature and agility of our research will also be reflected in the degree programmes that we offer. We educate students for a society which is characterised not only by ever greater diversity and complexity but also by inequality. Our students will soon take over the helm from the current generation, in science, government and industries. We are delighted to see that the young people of today want to see a fairer and more sustainable world, and that they expect their university to lead the way on this in conjunction with them. How can we teach our students to translate their ideals into results? By providing them not only with interdisciplinary knowledge and an understanding of data techniques but also with skills that go beyond the confines of their degree programme (such as effective project management or the ability to collaborate in a diverse context). The corona crisis has precipitated a review of the teaching and learning and digital methods that we use in our degree programmes. In education, as in our research, we want to be among the best. Broad accessibility and equal opportunities will continue to be crucial in this context.

We will only be in a position to make these ambitions a reality if our organisation as a whole becomes more agile. Processes, business design and systems must help, not hinder staff and students who work or wish to work beyond the boundaries of their discipline. As things stand today, anyone who liaises in their work or studies with multiple faculties has to contend with a wide range of different procedures and practices.

In the chapters that follow, the Strategic Plan explains what is required to enable innovation in our research and education, and in the related processes and facilities.
2. Education and research: we continue to deliver top quality across the board
3. Students: we invest in excellent and inspiring education
4. Partners: we enhance our work through external collaboration
5. Responsibility: we put our public values into practice
6. Staff: we are a magnet for talent
7. Organisation: we are agile thanks to our process and governance design

2. Education & Research: we continue to deliver top quality across the board

Virtually all of the UvA's areas of research rank highly on the international stage. In a rapidly changing world, however, what is good today may not be good enough tomorrow. That's why we will continue to invest in our strength: fundamental research in our disciplines. From there we will stimulate innovation in research and education through additional funding. Finally, we will put digitalisation at the top of the agenda.

If we want to continue to offer our broad range of research and education programmes at this high level a number of strategic choices must be made.

In the case of research, we will focus the choices we make in existing programming and investments. We will do this on the basis of two analyses: what makes the UvA's research stand out and which social issues inspire us? In addition, we will make our research more innovative by collaborating at the interfaces between disciplines. We will provide additional funding for this through four Themes. Each discipline can take inspiration from the Themes and gain enrichment from the insights and methods of other fields. Our strengths in the field of artificial intelligence (AI), data science and complexity will be particularly useful in this context. This will result in a combination of depth and breadth which we will use to exploit the competitive advantage of the UvA, build scientific knowledge around social issues and attract new talent.

The excellence achieved in research must be reflected in our education. This will be a key criterion when allocating the additional funding for the Themes. Our education is research-intensive: when there is innovation in the disciplines, this must be reflected in the content of the degree programmes. Innovations in the field of data science are relevant to every degree programme. We want every UvA student to have (at least) a basic understanding of this field.

In all of this, we will use digitalisation in a more effective way. In the case of education, the corona crisis has accelerated the use of online forms of learning but it has also demonstrated just how indispensable face-to-face learning processes are. We will put what we had already planned into practice sooner and more thoroughly, i.e. we will enhance our education further through a smart combination of online and face-to-face learning. And we will go a step further, exploring alternatives to the prevailing system of lectures and tutorials, with a view to making each contact between lecturers and students more intense and more effective.

In a nutshell, what we must do over the forthcoming years is:
1. focusing more strategically in our research programming
2. encouraging closer collaboration between disciplines
3. ensuring that our education reflects our research and societal questions
4. making effective use of digitalisation to renew our research and education

2.1   Focusing more strategically in research programming

The deployment of available research funding is dictated by the desire to be just as good tomorrow as we are today, i.e. to continue to lead the way internationally across a broad spectrum of disciplines. In the 2019 Strategic Framework for Research it was agreed that more careful choices would be made regarding the deployment of this funding. Two analyses are important here. The first is: where can the UvA's research be outstanding in the long term? The second is: how can we respond to social challenges for which indirect government funding (through the NWO and the EU) and contract research funding (from other sources, public and private, national and international) are available? Our research strategy will therefore be based on a carefully developed analysis of the UvA's strengths in all disciplines and subdisciplines. This will include both our own analysis of the situation and the view from outside of the UvA, and will indicate the intellectual footprint and the competitive advantage of all our disciplines.

Our point of departure, therefore, will be our existing strengths. From there we will generate innovation in both the course content and methods of research. As stated earlier, one source of innovation is interdisciplinary collaboration. Section 2.2 explores this in more detail.

The Strategic Research Framework specifies a number of other prerequisites for maintaining and strengthening our internationally leading research position. These are discussed elsewhere in this Strategic Plan:
- collaboration in teams (see Chapter 7)
- collaboration in (European) consortia (Chapter 4)
- strategic collaboration with civic partners on a reciprocal basis (Chapter 4)
- good research facilities and a good digital infrastructure (Chapter 7)
- open science (collaboration, transparency, reproducibility and general accessibility of academic output, see Chapter 5)

It goes without saying that we strive for the highest degree of scientific integrity and independence in our work, based on the recommendations of the Academic Integrity Working Group from 2017, which remain relevant in the 2020s. As we do in our degree programmes, at both Bachelor's and Master's and PhD level.

Things to do
- Make explicit the strategic position, opportunities and choices of all research institutes for the years ahead (based on intellectual footprint, competitive advantage and social significance and inspiration).
- Maintain the open internal dialogue around the independence and integrity of academic research and include it in education.

2.2   Encouraging closer collaboration between disciplines

As well as more strategic choices in our research programming, we will encourage collaboration between disciplines. We will use the financial room for manoeuvre in our budget (the overall university budget and the budget of the individual faculties) for this purpose.

The additional funds will be used to invite academics to formulate new and at times unexpected research questions at the interface between disciplines and faculties, and to incorporate these into our teaching. To this end, we have chosen four societal Themes, all of which play to the UvA's strengths:
- *responsible digital transformations*
  technology and ethics of regulation, algorithms, systems and platforms; their impact on trust, dependence and equality in society
- *healthy future*
  mental and physical health in relation to cultural factors, behaviour, greater participation in society and the creation of equal opportunities
- *resilient and fair society*
  participation, inclusion, inequality, safety and resilience of society, governance and democracy in relation to cultural and technological innovations
- *sustainable prosperity*
  sustainable, climate-proof progress through a reduction in ecological footprint, behavioural change and innovations in materials and resources

There are, of course, issues that span multiple Themes. The corona pandemic, for example, raises issues that cut across all of these Themes (e.g. the relationship between health, freedom and security or the use of digital means to bring the pandemic under control). Concepts such as artificial intelligence, behaviour, inequality, conflict and public domain provide common perspectives on the Themes, which align well with existing UvA research.

By boosting innovation through these Themes, we aim to achieve the following additional benefits:
- the research collaboration must attract other income, which will ideally lead to long-term partnerships with internal and external researchers and with interested businesses and philanthropists. The additional funding will come from the EU, the NWO, the Growth Fund or the region, for example;
- the innovation must filter through into our degree programmes (both undergraduate and postgraduate), enabling us to attract new students with programmes that relate to the new research questions. That way, we continue to present the UvA as a leading research-intensive university;
- the research collaboration will enable us to attract talent from both the Netherlands and abroad through an inter-faculty approach.

The financial incentive will be in addition to the existing provision for Research Priority Areas (RPAs). In principle, a quarter of the additional funds will be available for each of the four Themes. The funds will be used to support the establishment of project-based research areas over a period of five to ten years. Thereafter, the research areas will fund themselves (from research council and contract funding and through the education and research parameters of the internal allocation model). The rector will liaise with the deans of the faculties involved over how and to which principal researchers and educators the additional funding will be entrusted.

Things to do
- Invest additional funds in a fundamental innovation of research and education through inter-faculty collaborations.
- Attract new, young and mid-career talent to the UvA and delegate responsibility for recruitment to inter-faculty appointments committees.
- Use the fellowship programme of the UvA Institute for Advanced Study (IAS) to give researchers the time and opportunity to master another discipline, through sabbaticals, for example.

2.3   Reviewing the connection of our education to research and societal questions

In conjunction with research, we will review our degree programmes and update them where necessary. Ensuring that our degree programmes tie in with the Themes described in Section 2.2 is important in this context, but it is not the only factor to consider.

We want to ensure that our portfolio remains futureproof and distinctive and that the breadth that it offers is affordable. In practice, it has been easier to add programmes and modules than to discontinue them. By the end of 2021, every faculty (college/school) will analyse the degree programmes that it offers, the diversity of its student population and its 'market position'. This portfolio analysis will indicate how the existing offer aligns with our research priorities and our values, and with the requirements of students and society. It is clear, for example, that demand for interdisciplinary programmes is increasing, as is the demand for mainstreaming (i.e., converting electives into permanent components), e.g. modules on sustainability, social justice, cross-cultural perspectives or artificial intelligence. The range of minors that we offer in particular must demonstrate the width of UvA's disciplines. We want to make our minors more accessible and attractive to students from both within the UvA and beyond (including international students). We will take this into account when timetabling. We are looking into the possibility of offering (parts of) our degree programmes internationally through 'unbundling'. This is the trend for regrouping educational components and re-delivering them or delivering them in combination with other international educators by digital means. Courses and modules which are closely related to our research lend themselves particularly well to this practice.

We will ensure that our best academics lecture on our Bachelor's programmes too, because, after all, our Bachelor's programmes have an academic, research-intensive focus. And, as far as the format of our degree programmes is concerned, we will strive for a 'human dimension'; within the constraints of available resources of course (Chapter 3 explores this in more detail).

In the Master's phase, we want to align our degree programmes more closely with our research priorities (including the RPAs). The innovation incentive described in Section 2.2 contributes to this. The alignment of the master programmes' admission criteria with the end terms of interdisciplinary bachelors also requires attention. Moreover, according to some faculties, in some cases a one-year Master's is too short to achieve the required specialisation. We are exploring possibilities of extension with the faculties.

Things to do
- Explain the strategic choices behind each degree programme: what is the purpose and the target group; what are the learning objectives and the range of honours on offer; how inclusive and diverse is the programme; how does it link up with secondary education, the labour market and our research; what is the language of instruction; how does it stand in terms of accessibility, study programme feasibility, teaching methods employed and digitalisation, workload and compliance with the 2018 Institutional Quality Assurance Audit?
- Review the range of minors on offer (aspects to consider: extent of freedom of choice, international profile). Experiment with extending the duration of a number of one-year Master's programmes.

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2.4   Renewing research and education through advanced digitalisation

We have seen during the corona crisis the extent to which (and, indeed, how much more than five or ten years ago) a wide range of processes can take place digitally and remotely. And, since the previous Strategic Plan, the technical capabilities of computers and information technology have increased enormously. At the UvA we generate knowledge that is relevant to the digitalisation of many areas of society. We do this, for example, in conjunction with QuSoft, the research centre that focuses specifically on quantum software (a joint initiative between the UvA and VU Amsterdam) and with ASML in the ARCnl project. We have made new and scientific questions – raised by the technical possibilities – into a key area of focus. In 2022, for example, we will open the ICAI building on Amsterdam Science Park, bringing academia, education and business applications in the field of AI under one roof. We have already appointed four university professors on the interfaces between AI and a range of other disciplines. But we won't stop there. Data and methods which can enable radical innovations in research are available for all disciplines. We are setting up a data science function to help researchers acquire skills for data-based research, even if they have not grown up with it.

We also recognise the huge impact that digitalisation has on freedom and privacy, and how important it is to take care in this regard. The students we are currently educating will get nowhere without a (basic) knowledge and understanding of digital technologies, and must be familiar with the use of data, images and algorithms and the ethical issues that this entails.

As far as the way in which we deliver our education is concerned, the effectiveness of learning is at the top of the digitalisation agenda. While the 'Blend IT & Share IT' report from 2015 invited UvA lecturers to experiment with the concept of 'flipping the classroom', now, online forms of learning are an integral part of the learning process (globally). The new Teaching & Learning Centres play a key role in the development of these forms of learning for the UvA. Rather than simply moving existing learning online, we want to genuinely make use of digitalisation to provide different, innovative forms of learning, including the opportunities that this brings in terms of accessibility, internationalisation and distance learning. We will consider carefully what constitutes the optimum mix of online and face-to-face learning. Exploring alternatives to the prevailing system of lectures and tutorials opens up opportunities for organising our degree programmes on a smaller scale and increasing student engagement. Chapter 3 explores this in more detail.

Things to do
- Set up a data science function that helps researchers conduct data-based research securely.
- Include relevant learning outcomes regarding digital methods or data science in every Bachelor's degree programme; make one or more minors in data science widely available.
- Make more use of ICT resources for active learning (knowledge clips, tools for feedback and independent study), for digital forms of assessment, for eliminating deficiencies and disadvantages and for new forms of learning (both online and face-to-face).

3. Students: we invest in excellent and inspiring education

The additional funding, portfolio analysis and vigorous digitalisation (see Chapter 2) will ensure that the degree programmes that we offer remain up-to-date and relevant. There will also be an incentive to innovate from the demand-side, i.e. from students and society. The student population is becoming ever more diverse. We want to ensure that our degree programmes reflect this diversity and the world around us. This includes giving graduates from all disciplines the opportunity to participate in lifelong learning.

In recent years our degree programmes have improved significantly: study success rates have increased, dropout rates have decreased, the 'international classroom' has been introduced and we have expanded the range of interdisciplinary programmes and minors that we offer. This provides us with a firm foundation as we take the next step towards excellent education with an ambitious study culture (as set out in our Vision on Teaching and Learning) in a rich learning environment that embraces intercultural perspectives.

Excellent education requires effective interaction between curricula, lecturers and students. Firstly, interaction between lecturers and students, and between students themselves, is vital. We will intensify this interaction by thinking carefully about the types of learning that we use: what can take place online and what cannot, where is face-to-face contact essential? Secondly, we must and want to pay more regard to differences between students. We already made this clear in the 2019 Diversity Policy Document. A number of the measures outlined in this document have now been put in place but there is still more to be done. Actively striving for diversity means that we no longer assume that 'one size fits all'. Students differ from each other in terms of their experiences, their prior education, their background, their language proficiency (Dutch, English, other languages) and their cultural awareness and interest. Moreover, the majority of students learn and process information differently to the way students did ten or fifteen years ago. We embed (in the portfolio analysis in Chapter 2) inclusion in the learning objectives and course content, and adapt our didactics, teaching methods, materials and assignments accordingly. In so doing, we improve people's ability to work with others both within and outside of the university, to think and act outside the box and to keep an open mind with regard to other people and groups in society. Our degree programmes also offer important academic skills which not all incoming students nowadays automatically have, such as reading multiple languages or algorithmic thinking. At the opposite end of the spectrum, for students who want to stand out, we offer a range of honours programmes and a number of different extracurricular activities.

We expect students to engage with their learning, with their fellow students, with the university and with their environment – both close to home and further away. We encourage this engagement in part because it increases the chances of academic success: of successful completion of the degree programme with rich and meaningful learning outcomes (see also the Study Success 2.0 programme from 2017).

Over the next few years, in line with our Vision on Teaching and Learning, we will focus on:
1. organising more intensive and smaller scale learning to enhance interaction
2. encouraging an engaged and proactive attitude in our students
3. further enriching our teaching environment through internationalisation
4. connecting a professional offering in Life Long Learning to our research

3.1   Organising more intensive and small scale education

More intensive, smaller scale learning enables effective contact between students and lecturers. Students who feel that they can be seen and heard grow in self-confidence and engage with their learning. This is even more important now that the differences between students are increasing and more and more learning is taking place remotely. More effective contact can also help prevent study completion delays and dropouts. UvA Matching and taster days (Proefstuderen) have only succeeded in improving the match between student and degree programme to a limited extent. In large degree programmes with high levels of dropout or study completion delays in particular, small-scale learning can help improve the match and avoid anonymity.

In other words, small-scale learning improves the quality of the learning processes. This is one of the three themes over which the UvA (pre-corona) has made agreements with the Ministry of Education, Culture and Science (in the Quality Agreements for 2019-2024). We are receiving additional funding for this. The UvA has added the majority of these funds to the allocation model; agreements on their deployment have been made with the student council of each faculty. Because, clearly, not every student goes through the same learning process, it is up to the faculties and degree programmes themselves to decide how they will make their education smaller scale and more student focused.

Even with this additional funding for education, the budget is limited. We must seek to create more interaction between lecturers and students within the overall budget (which amounts to approximately one lecturer hour per ECTS obtained). It is conceivable that the effective contact time can be increased within the same teaching load. Currently, more than half of teaching time is spent on preparation, marking and course development, i.e. not on contact with students (with, in addition, significant differences between degree programmes and faculties). The smart application of digital resources (the use of which has been precipitated by corona) and a review of the existing system of lectures and tutorials may help in this context. It is important that lecturers are given effective help with redesigning their teaching, a reduction in workload being a key factor here.

Given the available resources, teaching and learning must be as effective as possible and as enjoyable as possible for both students and lecturers. We don't want to make it cheaper, we want to make it better. A prerequisite here is that education and research are equally recognised and valued as part of the academic function. Chapter 6 of this Strategic Plan explores this in more detail.

Things to do
- Create a better balance in the ratio between contact time and total teaching time.
- Explore alternatives to the current system of lectures and tutorials.
- Differentiate learning modes to achieve a better match between student and degree programme.

3.2   Encouraging an engaged and proactive attitude in our students

Excellent education goes hand in hand with commitment and engagement: it encourages students to share responsibility for the content of their degree programme and to invest in their own academic success. In our Vision on Teaching and Learning we expect students to invest also in their personal and academic development. Students can be more involved in:
• improvements in the curriculum
• the study associations and the academic community
• decision-making and governance of the University or faculty
• our wider environment, through community service learning

Currently, it is essentially up to students themselves to take the initiative and get more from their degree programme than simply the specialist knowledge that is imparted to them. We want our students to acquire in or alongside their degree programme the cognitive and social skills which they were not entrusted with at home. After all, we are educating them to take over the helm in science and society. Students are under financial pressure due to student loans; they often have a part-time job or continue to live at home. We have noticed that, for many, this hinders participation in non-mandatory components of the curriculum, particularly where there is no immediate return (in the form of credits or financially).

We also wish to enhance the links between student and academic community and between alumnus and university. Some ten per cent of students feel involved in the University as a whole (based on the turnout in the elections for the Central Student Council). A slightly larger percentage feel involved in their degree programme or faculty and are active in a study association, for example. In the case of the programme committee, which works on improvements to the curricula, there are often insufficient candidates to allow an election to take place.
Greater involvement of students with the UvA should also mean that, after they graduate, they remain actively engaged with the University and their school or college (in particular). It is important that our alumni are kept up to date with the latest developments in research and education. Conversely, they can provide a valuable contribution in this regard, based on their experience of professional practice or as donors.

Finally, it is preferable for students to live in or close to the city of Amsterdam. This is, after all, where academic life takes place. Consequently, student housing will remain high on the agenda in our meetings with the region in the 2020s.

Things to do
• Tailor the curriculum to encourage students to participate in academic life and research.
• Formulate learning objectives which make students aware of different social backgrounds, inequalities of power and processes of discrimination and exclusion.
• Include community activities in the elective element of the curriculum, e.g. entrepreneurial activities or social activities with a learning component.
• Encourage students from all backgrounds to participate in extracurricular activities.
• Increase interaction and sharing of knowledge with alumni and the connection between students and alumni at personal level.

3.3   Further enriching our teaching environment through internationalisation

In 2020, 25% of students studying at the UvA were international students. 30% of these students came from outside the European Economic Area (EEA). Clearly, we don't yet know what the (long-term) impact of the coronavirus measures will be on these percentages. For the time being, the objectives of our 2017 Strategic Framework for Internationalisation continue to apply. This states that we want to improve the quality of our education through the 'international classroom', in order to:
- prepare students for an ever more international environment
- incorporate non-Dutch cultures, backgrounds and perspectives into our education
- encourage mutual understanding of differences in values and worldviews.

If these objectives are to be achieved, Dutch and international students must mix effectively on a day-to-day basis, not only in the classroom but also outside it (the corona restrictions pose an additional challenge in this regard).

Our student population has not only become more diverse but, since the launch of English-taught Bachelor's degree programmes and tracks, has also rapidly become more international. Compared with five years ago, there are now five times as many international students in multiannual degree programmes. This means that they live in Amsterdam for an extended period, which is good for the 'international classroom' and for the Dutch labour market. International students also provide the UvA with a network of alumni and ambassadors. All this will only happen if we give these students the opportunity to acquire positive experiences and to engage effectively with Dutch students. A warm welcome on arrival is not enough. Degree programmes must clarify what objectives they are aiming for with internationalisation and how these are reflected in the exit qualifications. Whether or not a programme is internationalised is an integral part of the portfolio analysis referred to in section 2.3. Study associations have a key role to play in activities which encourage intensive interaction between Dutch and international students.

Moreover, the aim of our internationalisation policy is not to attract more (or significantly more) students as a source of revenue. Rather it is to offer students who choose our university in the global, digital world of education a sense of context. We also work with European universities in an alliance (EPICUR) which strives to produce a new generation of European citizens and to increase student mobility through digital transformation of educational processes. Language proficiency to the internationally recognized B2 level in at least three languages is part of the programme.

The UvA is a bilingual university (Dutch/English). We expect staff and students to have a passive knowledge of both languages (to B2 level) and to have an active knowledge of one of the two languages (to C1 level). For degree programmes that deliver their teaching in Dutch or English only, the requirement to have a knowledge of the other language is not mandatory but still desirable, as it facilitates participation in academic life.

Things to do
- Work on increasing interaction between Dutch and international students, both at the start and throughout the academic year, in conjunction with the study associations.
- Offer a summer course in Dutch for new international students.

3.4 Connecting a professional offering in Lifelong Learning to our research

Knowledge acquisition doesn't stop when a student obtains their Master's degree. The boundary between initial (Master's) education and lifelong learning is blurring. Students must be able to postpone their Master's degree to gain professional experience first. And graduates in the workplace may feel a need for refresher courses, further training or information about the latest developments in their field. The knowledge they acquired during their degree programme will no longer last them a lifetime.

It is part of our societal remit to provide for these needs, thereby promoting innovation in society, long-term employability and personal fulfilment. Just like our regular degree programmes, we want to structurally link our lifelong learning offer to our research. This will enable us to reinforce the research-intensive nature of our degree and non-degree programmes. In addition, this link with research facilitates the dissemination of up-to-date research results from all faculties through our alumni or through graduates of other universities.

The structure within which this takes place is the UvA Academy. Under this shared brand, we offer short programmes for (working) adults, such as masterclasses, courses and webinars. The UvA Academy makes the latest insights from science and professional practice available to professionals. In that way, we also contribute to Amsterdam as a hub for academic knowledge and intellectual exchange.

For the UvA, the benefit of the lifelong learning offer is that:
• we contribute (as part of our public remit) to the long-term employability of academics on the labour market by equipping them for the major transitions that occur every couple of years.
• we foster the link between science and academia on the one hand and professional practice and the workplace on the other
• it reinforces the societal relevance of our education and research
• it can lead to closer collaboration with businesses and institutions regarding research and work placements
• it gives the faculties additional income to support the wide range of degree programmes that they offer

Things to do
• Include lifelong learning in the strategic choices of the teaching portfolio of each faculty.
• Further professionalise the offer through development of the UvA Academy platform and a dedicated building on the Roeterseiland Campus (catering, rooms).

4. Partners: we enhance our work through external cooperation

In order to innovate on an ongoing basis, we must encourage not only internal but also external collaboration. We realise that knowledge (including fundamental knowledge) is generated in interaction with others. We will expand and strengthen our external partnerships: at international, national and local level. At the latter level – that of the city and the region – we can contribute more to improvement of the living environment.

More collaboration with external partners will help us realise the ambitions set out in Chapter 1 (at the heart of which is academic innovation). Partners could include applied research institutions, universities of applied sciences, intermediary organisations, business and industry, and public and social organisations both in the Netherlands and abroad. External collaboration is useful because it:
• stimulates fundamental research, through private investments, for example
• fuels our research and education with insights, data and real-life issues
• helps us disseminate and utilise knowledge
• recognises the quality of our work and raises our profile
• helps us work towards a sustainable, prosperous and fair future for all

We already have a wide range of connections and networks in society – international, national and local – which we could utilise more effectively and/or expand. For example, we collaborate with leading international universities, among others in the League of European Research Universities (LERU), and in Amsterdam we participate in the City Deal Making Knowledge (City Deal Kennis Maken). In addition, every year, thousands of alumni start work or set up new businesses. Academics launch spinoffs or take their place on boards and committees. We want to make it as easy as possible for researchers and employees to engage in external collaboration.

In this context, we also want to focus more on the link with our immediate environment: the city and the region. As a public institution, we are part of the Amsterdam Metropolitan Region, to which we contribute through knowledge transfer and by educating a highly qualified, assertive workforce. Conversely, the region provides us with fertile ground for education (real-life projects, internships, community service learning) and scientific research (inspiring ideas, living data, living labs). We also make the region more sustainable by promoting the transition from a linear to a circular society in conjunction with partners. We want to make it clearer to people what we (can) bring to the city and the wider surroundings, to strengthen our urban partnerships and to take advantage of the opportunities offered by the proximity of other Amsterdam-based knowledge institutions.

In the next few years, we are going to do three things:
1. substantially increasing partnerships for research and education
2. improving support for knowledge transfer
3. strengthening links with the city and the region

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4.1   Substantially increasing partnerships for research and education

Impact and collaboration are increasingly important parameters in the quality assessment (SEP) and funding of research. They apply not only to applied research but also to the innovation of fundamental research and of research methods which are linked to social challenges and issues. At the UvA, we can take greater advantage of our location and of our good reputation in the field of research and education to substantially increase our collaborations and partnerships, in compliance with our core values. This requires us to invest (more) in external relationships and in our role in the European scientific ecosystem. Knowledge transfer is one of our core tasks. In addition: if we spend a little of our time on positioning ourselves and raising our profile in the academic world and in the community (regional or otherwise), this will generate more public and private funding in the future.

Many of the UvA's collaborations are based on specific projects. Our ambitions for the 2020s require us to invest in more meaningful, long-term partnerships that add value to society and to our academic standing. Undertakings of this type have in the past led to the establishment of ARCnl, the ICAI and Sarphati Amsterdam, and, in the case of education, to Amsterdam University College and a number of other joint degree programmes with VU Amsterdam. We also participate in the Knowledge Hub for Urban Inequality (Kenniscentrum Ongelijkheid in de Stad) (see Section 4.3). In addition, our academics can play a more significant role in administrative partnerships in the knowledge sector, such as, for example, the Knowledge Coalition (a partnership of umbrella organisations in the field of science/academia and business/industry). This will put us in a better position to influence political decision-making in the Netherlands and Europe.

In addition, in the 2020s we will invest more resources in demonstrating to prospective students, alumni, government and society how we are inspired by social challenges and the needs of society. To do this, we will use both existing channels (e.g. the work-study degree programmes and OPeRA, the schools outreach programme) and new mechanisms.

An active, outward-looking attitude is also needed when raising funds or in political and policy circles. The more visible our work and the more tangible our ambitions, the better we will be able to establish partnerships with public and private partners, which may lead to more (financial) contributions from social institutions, businesses and philanthropic organisations and donors.

Things to do
- Substantially increase partnerships, among others by releasing funds for the development of collaborative programmes.
- Value participation in external committees and lobby groups as an integral part of the university employee's role.
- Further professionalise fundraising as part of an integrated approach with external partners, partly in order to highlight the importance of the UvA's work to society.

4.2   Improving the support for valorisation activities

Many academics realise that both the societal value and impact, and the economic benefit of their research is becoming ever more important. They understand the importance of more large-scale strategic alliances and more stakeholders (from local to global scale). The UvA has now created a number of successful spinoffs, some of which have spread their wings. Nonetheless, there are undoubtedly more opportunities in this field than we are currently identifying in our research and education. In the 2020s we want to establish a more structured mechanism for this. We will compare successful knowledge transfer models of sister institutions with our current support structures IXA, UvA Ventures Holding, Matrix IC, ACE and Science & Business Amsterdam Science Park.

Until now, the UvA has allocated a modest budget and toolset to its third statutory task: the valorisation of research (knowledge transfer). In recent years this budget has amounted to around 3 million euros (just over 1% of the research budget), using direct income and external grants, including the IXAnext programme, which will come to an end in 2021. This 3 million euros is enough to cover the growing demand from UvA academics for advice on grant applications and legal issues and support for the setting up of a business. It will not, however, be sufficient to enable the planned quantum leap in knowledge transfer. And we don't want to wait until researchers themselves see opportunities to increase the impact of their research. As a university, we want to take an outsiders view to assess the value of our research to society.

Knowledge transfer activities benefit not only from funding but also from convenience, from the availability of space, for example, (other) facilities and start-up capital for new businesses (e.g. the Amsterdam Student Investment Fund and the Proof of Concept Fund). We are intensifying investments in a productive environment for research and innovation on our campuses. Examples of this include Amsterdam Science Park, the Humanities Lab AVS (Amsterdam Venture Studio) and the Amsterdam Law Hub on the Roeterseiland Campus. We are elaborating on this for the Roeterseiland Campus and the University Quarter in the concept of the Amsterdam Research Based Campus (see also Section 7.1). UvA Ventures Holding concentrates on innovation and spin-offs.

Things to do
- Substantially increase investments in knowledge transfer, using the central budget, contributions from the faculties, as clients, and from UvA Ventures Holding.
- Organise knowledge transfer models more efficiently through coordination between the UvA (IXA) and group companies such as UvA Ventures Holding, Matrix IC and Science & Business ASP.

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4.3   Strengthening ties with the city and the region

Together, higher education and science are one of the strengths of the Amsterdam Metropolitan Region. There is no other city in the Netherlands where this sector has such a strong presence, with more than 10,000 academics and 100,000 students combined between the UvA, VU Amsterdam, AUAS and other universities of applied sciences, NWO and KNAW institutes, SURFsara, institutions such as Sanquin and NKI-AvL, and the recently established AMS. We plan to make better use of this situation in the future than we do at present.

In the city centre, we want to complete the University Quarter as a central location for the Faculty of Humanities. Our intention remains to provide a base for the relevant KNAW institutes in the vicinity wherever possible. This will ensure that Amsterdam continues to be a leading European hub for the humanities. In Amsterdam Science Park we are investing in an innovative sustainability space (Sustainalab). We are also collaborating with AUAS' Faculty of Technology and we are building LAB42 for the information sciences and ICAI. We continue to invest in the AI technology for people initiative, which focuses on the opportunities and threats of artificial intelligence for society. This is an Amsterdam-based partnership between knowledge institutes and the City of Amsterdam but it has a global impact. As the UvA we want to be a hub for AI. We are intensifying collaboration with businesses and institutions in the fields of AI for Health, AI for Business and AI for Citizens and are obtaining national and European funding for this. In the field of quantum software, we are also collaborating in a world-leading Amsterdam-based initiative (with VU Amsterdam): the QuSoft research centre.

We continue to participate in initiatives that encourage close collaboration between academia, professional practice and policy. An example of this is the Knowledge Hub for Urban Inequality (Kenniscentrum Ongelijkheid in de Stad), which brings together data from and on the region with academics from a range of different disciplines to strengthen the basis of municipal policy. Another example is the Amsterdam Educational Research Centre (WOA), which brings together professionals, policymakers and academics in the field of education.

In our education too, we are putting the city and the region high on the agenda, giving students opportunities to get involved in real-life projects, undertake internships and participate in various forms of community service learning. This encourages the engaged, proactive attitude that we expect of our students (see Section 3.3). The UvA's broader collaboration with the city will also be strengthened through our alumni policy.

The region must know where to find us. Innovation Exchange Amsterdam (IXA) is currently the shared 'front door' of the UvA, VU Amsterdam, AUAS and Amsterdam UMC for anyone looking to collaborate with researchers. At policy and staff level, as things stand, there is no such link yet between the UvA and the region.

Things to do
- Make existing initiatives (University Quarter, Amsterdam Science Park, Knowledge Hub for Urban Inequality) a success and expand on them.
- Expand collaboration around AI technology for people and a start-up system with Amsterdam-based knowledge institutions, the Amsterdam Economic Board and the municipality of Amsterdam.
- Make the UvA more accessible as a collaboration partner for the city and the region.

5. Responsibility: we put our public values into practice

The UvA educates people who can tackle societal problems and develops the knowledge that enables them to do so. In so doing, we actively help shape the world of tomorrow. Not for nothing do we call this our raison d'être. And that means putting the public values which we hold dear into practice ourselves.

Our position within academia and our metropolitan location mean that whatever the UvA does is visible to all. We want to translate insights from our research and values that we uphold into our own behaviour. This ensures that we play our part in creating a liveable, safe, just and sustainable environment – both close to home and further away. And that we practise what we 'preach' to our students. We refer to the following values (in no particular order).

The first is the independence of science from (among others) the interests of public authorities and industries. In our data-driven society, this value is under pressure. Digitalisation brings opportunities but it also brings threats. We are exploring this issue and, together with partners, we are leading the debate within society. Topics include the over-dependence of universities on commercial ICT providers, for example, or the impact of digital technologies on privacy (see also Section 2.4).

A second value that we put into practice is sustainability. As a vanguard player, the UvA has a vital role to play in the transition to a sustainable society. This is reflected in our research and education, and also in our efforts to make our own ecological footprint sustainable.

The third value that we uphold is inclusion. We actively participate in the dialogue around inequality of opportunities, social injustice and exclusion. We help combat these phenomena, by exposing the mechanisms behind them. Within our own organisation, this means giving students equal opportunities, whatever their background, and making sure we are inclusive in everything we do (see Chapter 3). As far as staff are concerned, a more diverse mix of backgrounds is important, both when recruiting new employees and in the composition of teams (see Chapter 6). This improves the quality of our work. These ambitions will be pursued in close co-operation with the Works and Students Councils.

Last but not least, we are responsible for providing a healthy, safe and stimulating working and study environment. Key factors here include reducing workload and ensuring social safety.

In short, for the next few years, this means:
1. building guarantees for the independence of science
2. increasing our understanding of sustainability and putting it into practice
3. championing inclusion and equal opportunities
4. providing a healthy, safe and stimulating working environment

5.1 Building guarantees for the independence of science

Independence is one of the core values of science. Today it is under pressure as a result of the rapid digitalisation that is taking place in international higher education and research.

For example, we are seeing in education the emergence of digital learning environments, plagiarism detection tools, online bibliographical databases, intensive use of tablets and laptops, social networks for academics and digital learning platforms. The majority of these are commercial services, which jeopardise the public values on which higher education is based. In addition, if large, wealthy players enter the degrees market, our virtual monopoly on the awarding of degrees may be undermined. The UvA sees it as its responsibility to lead the political and social debate around these issues, identify risks and outline potential solutions.

If digitalisation in education is to be 'responsible', educators must retain ownership of their work when they collaborate with platform and data storage companies. Their independence must always be central. In addition, we will consider carefully how we can avoid malicious lock-in situations. Because situations like this are a precursor to large-scale dependence on the commercial partner that supplies the services or the equipment. If we are to guarantee the independence of our education whilst, at the same time, working with the digital systems of dominant private players, we need agreements and regulations.

The same applies to our research. Even with extensive digitalisation, our independence must be key. In our role as a public university, we participate in shaping open science and open educational resources. This is based on the conviction that the research that we conduct and the education that we provide are paid for from public funds and that the results should therefore not be monopolised. We believe that open science provides both opportunities for science to strengthen its self-cleansing capacity and threats to its independence. We will implement the principles of open science in a way which benefits scientific progress. Here too, attention must be paid to the relationship with large, data-processing companies and the legal framework around 'data'. In close collaboration with other research-intensive universities in the Netherlands (VSNU) and in Europe (LERU), we are working on drawing up conditions governing the purchase of information services, the development of alternative publication platforms and an infrastructure which guarantees the independence of research data and metadata.

Things to do
- Put the public values of academic education and research on the agenda and safeguard them when procuring platform services and collaborating with third parties, including publishers and data technology companies.
- Make research data as FAIR (findable, accessible, interoperable and reusable) as possible and work towards making academic publications 100 per cent open access.

5.2 Increasing our understanding of sustainability and putting it into practice

We are making the theme of sustainability a permanent feature of our education and research. Among other things, every student can choose from the courses offered by the Institute for Interdisciplinary Studies (which include sustainability). Sustainability is also an integral part of the portfolio analysis of the degree programmes (see Section 2.3). In research, sustainability will be boosted through the four Themes (see Section 2.2).

The UvA has a responsibility to accelerate sustainable change in society. We are therefore endeavouring to reduce our ecological footprint, too. Essentially, based on the World Footprint Network's findings for the Netherlands, the current impact of our footprint must be reduced by two thirds. This will take us longer than the next six years. We will adapt our business processes and our daily behaviour by making the desirable choices attractive. In the case of processes, this includes reduced consumption of non-recycled resources, such as paper, packaging materials or disposables, and extending the useful life of IT equipment. In the case of behaviour, it includes, for example, making conscious choices in areas such as catering or travel. A White Paper on Sustainability (which also includes education and research) sets out measures for reducing our footprint over the next few years. We have set an ambitious but feasible pace for each environmental factor.

According to the Paris climate targets, by 2050 (at the latest) our energy consumption must be a maximum of 70 kWh/m2 annually (compared with almost 200 kWh/m2 currently). We are looking into the possibility of achieving this target by 2040. We will be 'Paris-proof' if the actual energy consumption – of all the equipment in our buildings – meets the target. This means that all users can and must help us achieve this. Financial incentives must make energy-saving worthwhile. We will accept a slight increase in our cost of space per square metre in view of the investments required to improve sustainability (an increase of 2 per cent, based on the UvA's Built Environment Sustainability Plan (Plan verduurzaming gebouwde omgeving UvA), which was drawn up in 2020).

Things to do
- Implement measures from the White Paper (for operations, research and education).
- Reduce energy consumption in kWh/m2 by 20 per cent over the planning period.
- Make our efforts to create a sustainable UvA visible on all campuses, among others through the construction of the Sustainalab and strengthening of the UvA Green Office.

5.3   Championing inclusion and equal opportunities

There is a strong movement under way within society to (finally) tackle the mechanisms behind exclusion, social injustice and inequality of opportunities – both globally and in our own university community. We educate people who can do this, conduct research into these mechanisms and put our core values into practice within our university.

Our interdisciplinary capability allows us to have input into every aspect of the dialogue within society around inclusion and equal opportunities, in that we understand the legal, industrial, colonial, social and psychological factors involved. Inequality and barriers in society are increasing. Groups of people differ from each other, not only in terms of their socio-economic backgrounds, but also in terms of their religion, the language that they speak or their attitude towards family, authority and government, for example. It is our job as a university not only to prepare our students for this reality but also to contribute to less inequality, fewer barriers and – at minimum – equal opportunities for all.

Within our own university community, we engage in a dialogue around inclusion and equality in a manner which is fitting for an academic institution. In other words, based on well-informed arguments, self-reflection, consideration for (the perspectives of) others, equality and the desire to find solutions that work. We realise that the UvA has its own blind spots in this regard and that incidences of exclusion, discrimination and prejudice occur at our university; sometimes they are deliberate, but often they are subtle, unintentional, or even unwitting.

Including different perspectives and embracing differences between people enhances the academic quality and objectivity of our work. It requires a stable, safe working and learning environment in which everyone within the UvA can and must be allowed to voice their opinion unabatedly, whilst respecting and showing consideration for others. Universities are the ideal place to be confronted with facts and opinions which one might find challenging and potentially even offensive. Consequently, the debate around inequality and injustice is closely linked to the policy on maintaining and increasing social safety and resilience (see Section 5.4).

Things to do
- Promote and broaden the dialogue around equality/inequality and justice/injustice within the University.
- Include a broad spectrum of perspectives in education and research, among others in minors and in the curriculum of degree programmes where this is relevant.
- Raise awareness of bias through professional development programmes such as the University Teaching Qualification (BKO) and through leadership training.

5.4   Providing a healthy, safe and stimulating work environment

The health of our staff and students is always important to us, and even more so during the corona crisis. The measures to bring the virus under control are restricting the group-based, face-to-face teaching that is so important for students' academic development more significantly and for a longer period than we had hoped. It is not clear how education, research and academic life will pan out over the coming period and what this will mean for the interior design of our buildings.

Irrespective of the corona crisis, work-related stress among employees is an ongoing area of concern. The workload at the UvA (and in the education sector as a whole) has been increasing for years. Reasons for this include:
• the gradual decrease in the average funding per course
• the greater differences in the background, prior knowledge and skills of students
• the growth in course-related and administrative obligations required by the law and by the NVAO
• the work involved in and the low chance of success of applications for external research grants
• our own procedures, which at times have grown disproportionate, our consultation culture and the pressure to be available at all times

Under the Managing your Workload (Grip op Werkdruk) programme, extensive analyses were performed. These indicate that workload is a complex issue and requires a combination of measures; more money for higher education is essential but this is not always a solution. The reasons vary by faculty or department and also within faculties and departments. Work-related stress derives in part from choices that are made internally. Valuing research output more than teaching, for example, can be a source of stress for lecturers who spend most of their time on teaching. Some factors, however, are not of our own choice. The nature of a degree programme (arts or science) can, for example, play a role. In the case of support staff, work-related stress is caused, among other things, by an increase in external regulations and accountability requirements.

The health of students and their stress and burnout problems will continue to be a major focus for us. We will continue existing initiatives such as UvAcare and the Health Week. The small-scale learning discussed in Section 3.1 is intended in part to minimise isolation and stress in education and to take greater account of differences between students.

Workload is not the only determinant of the health of the working and study environment. Within the naturally competitive environment of academia, everyone must feel physically and emotionally safe. If they do not, they must feel able to discuss the situation without fear of consequences for their studies or career. We take any report of an unsafe situation seriously and investigate it thoroughly, and we put our code of conduct into practice, addressing, not ignoring any inappropriate behaviour. If situations or the behaviour of staff or students fail to live up to the UvA's values and code of conduct and, as a result, someone feels unsafe, appropriate action must be taken. Where there is a structural lack of safety, structural change is essential. Finally, it is important that everyone can access and understand the values and code of conduct, as well as the system of procedures and confidential advisers.

Things to do
• Include specific, direct measures to reduce workload in the faculty strategic plans (including measures to counter the negative impact of online working).
• When adopting new policies, put more trust in the implementers, thereby reducing internal regulations.
• Establish a 'house of social safety' ('huis van de sociale veiligheid') (code of conduct, complaints regulations, network of confidential advisers, training on addressing unsafe situations), based on the recommendations of the Social Safety task force.

6. Staff: we are a magnet for talent

The UvA's capital comprises the knowledge, talents and motivation of both its academic and its support staff, working in line with our core ambitions for education and research. If we are to remain a broad-ranging, top-level University, we must attract talented people with a variety of skills and allow them to flourish, retain them but also let them go. A prerequisite for this is an attractive working and learning environment which centres on sustainable employability and which appeals to people with a wide range of backgrounds and perspectives.

Each UvA unit draws up its own strategic HR plan with a view to respond effectively to developments in education and research and on the labour market. Together, we strive to provide an attractive working and learning environment which offers a good balance between the autonomy and responsibility of the employee.

Being a good employer means investing in professional expertise, in the field of digitalisation, teaching skills and innovation, for example. It also means fulfilling the need for purpose, creating a pleasant, safe and challenging working environment, realising that not everyone has to be good at everything and enabling a good work-life balance. Inclusion helps create an attractive working environment: it gives people with different backgrounds equal opportunities and enhances the overall quality of our work through the input of a wide range of perspectives. We are deliberately working on diversity and inclusion, among others by appointing more female professors and employing more staff with different cultural backgrounds or physical disabilities (see Section 6.2). Being a good employer also means taking a balanced view of the direct and indirect tasks that contribute to education and research. As an employer, the UvA strives to keep workload and bureaucracy under control.

A career at the UvA is attractive in many ways. Research groups and degree programmes have a relatively large degree of autonomy. All staff work on issues which are socially relevant and constantly evolving. Conversely, student numbers and project grants can fluctuate and, as a result, the tasks that UvA staff are required to undertake can vary. We expect employees to be flexible and to be able to adapt to this. Sustainable employability is a challenge for the University in itself. Constructive job consultations are key to discuss career prospects and the division of tasks. With sustainable employability in mind, the UvA will continue to work on the career prospects of temporary staff – as previously agreed with the unions and the Central Works Council for teaching roles. Striking an appropriate balance between staff on permanent and temporary employment contracts will continue to be an important focus.

We implement the HR agenda and invest in academic and support staff:
1. using leadership to achieve our goals and create an attractive working environment
2. increasing diversity and inclusion in our workforce and culture
3. recognising and rewarding all relevant talents and tasks

6.1   Using leadership to achieve both our goals and a good working environment

Leadership plays a key role in achieving the core tasks and objectives of the UvA and during transitions. We will therefore continue to invest in coaching and connective leadership. Because it plays a key role in talent development and is an integral part of being a good employer. Good leaders make the most of entrepreneurship, diversity and team spirit. They give employees autonomy and ownership to achieve goals, to keep workload under control or to balance personal and collective ambitions, for example. We realise that tackling workload is difficult and that the problem has its own characteristics in each faculty and service unit. We expect managers to understand the importance of effectively designed work processes and transparent decision-making involving formal and informal employee and student representatives, so implementation does not give rise (once again) to discussions. We believe it is important that every manager has followed a relevant Leadership course and, if possible, has performed relevant administrative roles or a role in a representative body.

We also believe that every employee, including those who do not fulfil a formal leadership role, should develop personal leadership skills. We realise that academics often work as managers for a limited number of years, and often only as part of their role. In the services and faculty offices too, managers generally also take part in the day-to-day operations. Most UvA managers are motivated in the first instance by their subject. That is a good thing. It is important, therefore, that we give them as much help as possible with their management tasks. That way, managers may be responsible for academic, financial, operational and HR decisions (integrated management), but they will receive high-quality support from secretariats, personnel advisers, operational managers and other members of staff. Digital applications too can make things easier for managers and help us achieve our ambitions in the field of talent management, learning and career policy. Over the next few years, therefore, the UvA will develop digital tools for recruitment and selection, annual consultations and personal development.

Making a leadership role sufficiently attractive (in terms of both reward and support) that it can also be performed in a professional manner on a part-time basis is a constant challenge.

Things to do
- Incorporate leadership development into strategic HR planning.
- Structure support for and reduction in the workload of managers by effectively coordinating tasks, powers and responsibilities.
- Draw up and disseminate UvA Principles of Leadership.

6.2   Increasing diversity and inclusiveness in our workforce and culture

Section 5.3 explains how we intend to contribute to inclusion and equal opportunities both within and outside the UvA: by educating people, conducting research and leading the debate around these issues in a respectful way. Of course, our policy on diversity also extends to our HR policy. We wish to better reflect social reality in the composition of our staff. The fact that people are different enriches our academic environment with a broad spectrum of perspectives (rather than merely Anglo-Saxon perspectives) and reduces the inequality of opportunities.

The 2019 Diversity Policy Document has this to say on the subject:
"If we wish to optimise students' academic development and further the course of science as a whole, we believe it is vital to facilitate communication and knowledge sharing within an inclusive environment that is geared towards everybody's welfare and embraces interpersonal differences instead of avoiding them. It is the university's job to prepare our students to play leading roles in the dynamic and ever-changing society of the future and to blaze a trail at the forefront of this change. This requires a more pro-active strategy than simply addressing how to manage the increasing levels of diversity among our student body and staff."

As we work towards a more diverse UvA, we will focus on attracting (or retaining) employees with a wide variety of backgrounds. It is important that our staff reflects the diversity of society and that students have the opportunity to engage with a diverse range of staff. The recruitment of new staff is instrumental for the UvA to be a reflection of the future. The appointment of more female professors and associate professors is a key objective. The recruitment and retainment of more staff with different origins and socio-cultural backgrounds and of more staff with disabilities is equally important. The challenge is to translate these objectives into appropriate selection criteria, in addition, of course, to the role-specific job requirements.

Moreover, we want lecturers and other members of staff to have a keen eye for what is obvious for our students: a focus on digitalisation but also on diversity and intercultural skills. Our young talents and their platforms (e.g. Jong UvA, Amsterdam Young Academy and the PhD Council) can play a key role here. Ultimately, it is important that every UvA employee is mindful of the background of students – so students feel they are 'seen'.

We are, therefore, working consciously and proactively on diversity and inclusion, but these are not objectives that can be achieved exclusively through policy documents or by managers. An inclusive body of staff – and students – from diverse backgrounds requires a change in the culture and related behaviour within the UvA. Inclusion is more than an individual, moral issue. If we are to prepare ourselves and our students for participation in a diverse world, everyone in our university community must show the necessary conviction, commitment and sensitivity.

Things to do
- Increase staff diversity and include it in the strategic HR plans.
- Translate the promotion of diversity into the criteria and channels for recruitment and selection.

6.3   Recognising and rewarding all relevant talents and tasks

In academic culture, academics are primarily valued and rewarded on the basis of their research output. We want to change this. Within the UvA we want to recognise and reward work in other areas – education, social impact, acquisition and contributions to team and organisation – just as much as research. The topic of recognition and rewards is closely linked to strategic staff planning: which skills and expertise will be needed in the long term? For us, a career as a professor (assistant, associate or full) is in principle only possible for those who undertake or have undertaken both research and teaching tasks. The balance between the two is not set in stone; it may vary by career phase and is determined in consultation. We are developing a specific (career) policy for the roles of lecturer and tutor. In other roles too (both academic and support), consultation is required between employee and organisation over career development and long-term employability. It may, for example, be conducive to collaboration within the UvA if staff in key positions swap roles on a regular basis.

As a rule, and given the breadth and agility that the UvA wishes to sustain (see Chapter 1) we work with a broad selection committee when recruiting staff from grade 11 upwards (i.e. the level of assistant professor). We certainly do this when recruiting for a management position. The committee will always include at least one colleague from another discipline (and possibly several colleagues from other disciplines). In the case of support and management staff, we include a colleague (or several colleagues) from another faculty or service unit. The idea behind this is to increase the variety of skills and backgrounds in the composition of the team to which the person is being recruited. An added advantage is that, as a result, career decisions will be more objective because they are not made by internal parties only.

How we position the UvA as an attractive employer is crucial, because we need to attract new talent to achieve our objectives in terms of innovation. We are developing a transparent system of recruitment. In other words, we will actively seek out talented individuals with an attractive employment package. The main factor here is the UvA's standing as a leading university but other aspects also play a role: the scope for personal development that we offer, for example, our location in or close to Amsterdam and the prospects and careers of partner and family. The employment package on offer can be utilised more effectively than we do at present to meet the wishes of new employees. A shortage of talent is particularly evident in areas where we compete directly with business and industry: IT and artificial intelligence, law and economics.

Things to do
- Ensure that the work of all areas of the University is rewarded and recognised equally: education, research, social impact, knowledge transfer, managerial tasks, teamwork and organisation.
- Wherever possible, include someone from another discipline or faculty/service unit in the selection committee for appointments and role changes from grade 11 upwards.
- Make our (job) offer more attractive to talent.

7. Organisation: we are agile thanks to our process and governance design

In order to achieve our ambitions, we must be able to adapt our broad range of research and education quickly and at any time. As an academic environment, the UvA must challenge staff and students to be the best they can be and to think beyond the boundaries of their own discipline. We can only do this if our organisation is lithe in terms of change processes and agile in its daily operations.

This requires a degree of flexibility and team spirit that is generally found in each of us but which is not easily brought out due to the complex, pyramid-shaped professional organisation that characterises the UvA as a whole. In the field of education in particular, agility in operational management is a challenge due to the quality requirements, digitalisation and the changing student population. Over the next few years, we want to encourage teamwork, entrepreneurship and agile management in the field of research and education within the UvA.

An effective operational management set-up makes collaboration and entrepreneurship easier for end users (students, lecturers, researchers, partners, decision makers). The challenge in operational management is to achieve, with the available resources, the right balance between responding flexibly to opportunities on the one hand and efficiently implementing standardised processes on the other. The art is to use standards ('ISO standards') that enable research groups and degree programmes to maintain their autonomy, while, at the same time, being able to carry out their activities anywhere in the UvA. Only for very good reasons should staff and students feel restricted by specific faculty procedures and practices.

Internal mobility and the long-term employability of staff help build and establish standardised processes. We want to encourage both. As things stand, employees who change roles within the UvA regularly have to contend with different procedures and practices; they can help identify and tackle any issues that arise. Together with the revised Social Charter, job rotation helps make the organisation more agile. In addition, wherever possible, it avoids formal reorganisations.

The agile academic system that we are striving for requires us to:
1. making the most of creativity through teams and entrepreneurship
2. using standards for business design and operational management processes
3. narrowing the gap between professional service providers and end users

7.1　Making the most of creativity through teams and entrepreneurship

Individual employees possess a great deal of creativity, which helps us identify and take advantage of opportunities in education and research. Scope for creativity, and the feeling that this scope exists, is therefore crucial. This requires trust, mutual commitment and the freedom to take (responsible) risks. At the same time, we want to achieve our shared objectives. In order to strike a good balance between the two, we want to move towards more programmatic and 'fluid' work practices in teams, and towards co-creation between academics and professionals from operational management. We will focus more on what needs to be achieved and less on how we must achieve it. This requires entrepreneurship, and clarity over what is fixed (legislation and regulations, finance, quality system) and the extent to which there is scope for professional autonomy. Clarity can help keep rules and regulations to a minimum and let employees have more ownership over the primary process.

Another thing that helps improve the organisation is the recognition that not everyone has to be good at everything. We work in teams which are more than the sum of their parts. It helps if we are proud of both our own achievements and those of others. If we realise that teaching and learning cannot flourish without effective operational support. If not only our work practices are fluid but we also enable periodical changes in individual roles both within and outside of teams. We are all jointly responsible for the degree programmes that we offer, the research contracts and programmes entered into and the care given to our patients and clients – not just for our own particular area.

Investing in teams demands a fair amount from managers. They must be able to inspire, lead and motivate a group of people. Managers must put their trust in people, give team members the opportunity to deploy their various talents and to jointly evaluate collective performance. As far as team members are concerned, this way of working requires them to take a stand and show commitment, in a spirit of collective responsibility for their work and based on the trust that has been placed in them.

We will be a better, more agile organisation if we embrace a culture which values entrepreneurship and experimentation and understands that time needs to be devoted to them. It's okay to make mistakes – because we can learn from them. Entrepreneurship is what is known as an outside-in principle: employees are given the autonomy to respond to a perceived need or opportunity in the outside world and take responsibility for the result. This is different from performing a task handed down from the top and being accountable for the process. As an organisation we are working towards an open atmosphere in which this can be done safely, within clear conditions.

This requires a specific mindset. In formal organisations, new initiatives often end up at the back of the queue for facilities and accommodation, whereas what you really want to do is to embrace them and take them forward. If we are to encourage internal entrepreneurship, we must be aware of this.

Things to do
- Invest in tools for project-based working (for managers and employees) and in familiarity with flexible working practices.
- Encourage internal entrepreneurship and value teamwork by including it in the HR policy and toolset.
- Further expand the Amsterdam Research Based Campus concept on the Roeterseiland Campus and in the University Quarter, i.e. link innovation to accommodation strategy. This could follow the example of Amsterdam Science Park, where researchers, students, businesses and social partners are all based at a single location and can easily interact with each other.

| Strategy | Education & research | Students | Partners | Responsibility | Staff | Organisation |

7.2   Using standards in operational management

We can only make the most of the variety within the UvA and collaborate effectively beyond the boundaries of units (and even across the boundaries of other Amsterdam-based institutions) if the design of 'systems' is sufficiently flexible to help rather than hinder people. Examples of this include digital assessments, or the way in which costs are settled for lecturers in interdisciplinary courses. The need for elimination of barriers to collaboration in governance models and administrative procedures is clear not only from the educational collaborations within the UvA but also, for example, from the joint degrees with VU Amsterdam and from the merger of AMC and VUmc into Amsterdam UMC.

The needs of education and research constitute our point of departure. Over the next few years we must continue to work on effective standards and definitions ('ISO standards') for our process chains and on collaboration between the service units themselves and between the service units and the faculties. Not everyone needs to do exactly the same but we must eliminate historical differences in the operational management of faculties and degree programmes where they get in the way of our agility and our ability to respond to change. We are already doing this in the Teaching Logistics programme, for example.

We are supplementing the UvA governance model with a mechanism which, where differences are identified between existing practices, enables us to determine which minimal standards must be adhered to. We will also ensure that the choices we make are coherent. The executive committee (BVO, which comprises of directors of operational management of faculties and services) will play a greater role in this. As an 'alliance' of commissioners, the BVO already plays a major role in the design of the operational management processes. This will continue to be the case but we will strengthen this role and ensure that decisions regarding desired standards are prepared by an authoritative, specialist advisory board.

Things to do
- Adopt standards for the UvA's operational management. Be wary of differences that we see as 'that's just how it is at the UvA'.
- Strengthen the role of the BVO in the governance model as a forum for collaboration between the faculties and with the service units.
- Set up a UvA Standards Board (USB) to provide authoritative advice on administrative standards and definitions in the business processes, which also make external collaboration easier.

7.3   Narrowing the gap between professional service providers and end users

Top-quality teaching and learning requires not only the flexible business processes described above, but also professional service providers who develop, manage and improve the processes. This includes both people who work in education and research (such as study advisers, laboratory staff, library staff and business developers) and people in general services (such as ICT, administration, secretariats and facilities). They too are committed to education, research and knowledge transfer. The aim is that each and every one of us will be genuinely proud of our work ('at the UvA, things are well organised' – even if sometimes things don't go quite right). If all goes well, support and management staff will be doubly proud, of the professional quality of their own work and of the academic quality and reputation of the UvA as a whole. To this end, we are working towards two objectives: carefully considered standards and an awareness of quality in the process chains (as described in Section 7.2) and, at the same time, less distance between operational management and the primary process. The latter can be achieved, among other things, by aligning the work of the service units more effectively with faculty operational management and vice versa.

In 2017, on the dissolution of the administrative merger, an implementation plan 'Samen Doen' was drawn up for each of the four services that work jointly for the UvA and AUAS in order to maintain the collaboration and benefit from economies of scale. This includes, for example, higher quality, sustainability and/or lower costs per unit. Once 'Samen Doen' has been evaluated, we will continue to work on successful shared services.

Supply of and demand for the 'products' the services provide are defined in the Service Level Agreements (SLAs) which the faculties and service units enter into on a periodical basis. Generally speaking, the unit supplying the product has an excellent understanding of the quality and costs of the product, as well as a professional opinion regarding potential improvements or savings. However, it is important to better organise the demand side. This will allow the professional expertise and needs of users to be taken into account more effectively both when improving operational management and when improving products.

Things to do
- Develop a vision on the value of operational management to end users and the primary process and for the division of tasks between shared service units and faculty operational management.
- Draw up a new implementation plan for the services shared between the UvA and AUAS (following their relocation in 2021) for the remaining period of the plan.
- Complete the upgrading and professionalisation of the SLA cycle in 2022.