



UNIVERSITY OF AMSTERDAM

**Strategic Plan 2015-2020**

# **Boundless Curiosity**



Strategic Plan 2015-2020

# Boundless Curiosity

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Alek  
David Cohen de Lara

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# Introduction

In March 2014, the Executive Board initiated the first round of formal and informal discussions with delegations of students, lecturers and researchers on the drafting of the new Strategic Plan 2015-2020. These discussions were expressly intended to be full and frank, and all participants were encouraged to voice their dreams and reflect freely on the major developments ahead of us, and to ponder how we can and should deal with them.

Embracing the digitalisation and democratisation of knowledge, integrating ICT in teaching, pursuing internationalisation more vigorously, ensuring academic and research-intensive education and forging lasting relationships with partners for the benefit of interdisciplinary and innovative research.

At the same time, there was apparently also a desire to stay the current course: steadily implementing improvements and fostering success, building on the last Strategic Plan while honing our ambitions, further developing our objectives and elaborating various aspects of our strategy.

The Strategic Plan was adopted prior to the occupation of the Bungehuis and Maagdenhuis and therefore also prior to the launch of the ten-point plan and the establishment of two committees. It was decided, however, to still present the adopted Strategic Plan because the fleshing out of the ten-point plan and the issuance of recommendations by the committees could still take some time. The outcomes of the ten-point plan and the recommendations can serve as a basis for adjustments to the Strategic Plan.

The UvA's mission is clear: to provide academic education for the vanguard of tomorrow, to conduct ground-breaking fundamental and applied research and to translate the results into relevant social applications. To be closely connected to Amsterdam, with a leading international position.

The UvA provides research-intensive education for a broad group of students, regardless of nationality, background or faith, and prepares them for the global labour market. The UvA provides researchers with the freedom and facilities necessary to conduct ground-breaking interdisciplinary research. And through this innovative environment, the UvA has a fundamental impact on society.

The key pillars underlying this Strategic Plan are education, research and innovation, which are supported by an effective talent policy/HRM, finances and infrastructure.

The University of Amsterdam is *the* place for national and international students, lecturers and scientists, and has close ties to researchers and institutions abroad. Our five thousand staff members and thirty thousand students from more than one hundred countries work at campuses that bring together a wide range of disciplines. We have an international perspective and inquisitive attitude, which explains the title of the Strategic Plan: Boundless Curiosity.

The UvA aims to secure a prominent national and international position in its education, research and innovation activities. This will require dedication, commitment, cooperation and unity. We would like to work with you to achieve this.

UvA-AUAS Executive Board,

Dymph van den Boom  
Huib de Jong  
Hans Amman

# Education

## Ambitions

Constant change in the world around us demands a lot of students. An inquisitive attitude. The capacity for reflection. Asking questions. Finding solutions on the basis of argumentation. And last but not least, the ability to cope with complexity and persevere in their search for answers. Education directly rooted in research must prepare students for their contribution to the world of tomorrow.

## Objectives


Our degree programmes challenge students to develop their talents to the fullest. Academic development is central to a UvA education.

## Strategy

The UvA will continue to offer research-intensive education founded on an integral relationship between teaching and research. Appointments combining teaching and research activities are a key pillar in this. Employees will rarely be exempted from their teaching or research activities.

Bachelor's programmes will increasingly offer activated learning and research-intensive education from the first year.

The UvA will apply selective admission to Master's degree programmes (selective Master's). For every Bachelor's programme, a 'follow-on Master's' will also be guaranteed based on cooperation with other Dutch universities - primarily within Amsterdam and among LERU members.



Education directly rooted in research must prepare students for their contribution to the world of tomorrow.

## Objectives

The UvA strives for differentiation both within and between Bachelor's degree programmes. Differentiation between Bachelor's degree programmes is harmonised with partner institutions in Amsterdam.

The UvA's range of Master's programmes is more effectively aligned with current research and societal demand.

A growing number of Master's programmes are awarded the internationalisation certificate, resulting in more joint degrees with international partners.

Inbound and outbound international student mobility is promoted by the UvA in all phases of education, including in Bachelor's programmes.

Evidenced-based ICT innovations are incorporated into the UvA's education policy.

A modular Lifelong Learning programme is developed.

## Strategy

Large degree programmes will be subdivided into subgroups and tracks that are better aligned with a diversity of prior education/ability and ambition/motivation. We believe this will result in more motivated students and a higher academic success rate.

The UvA will further coordinate with partner institutions in Amsterdam and LERU in order to maintain a broad offering of Master's programmes.

The UvA will expand its range of scholarship programmes on the basis of financial resources provided by the UvA Holding and funds raised among businesses and alumni.

The UvA Summer School programme will be further expanded, opening up UvA courses to international students.

The use of Open Educational Resources – as part of blended curricula – will be one of the educational innovations implemented. ICT policy will be tailored in part to support the education process.

This programme will draw on the online courses in our blended curricula.

## Quality assurance

- Implementation of the programme aimed at embedding the Institutional Quality Assurance Audit will ensure that the quality assurance of teaching activities is maintained.
- We will also be implementing a programme aimed at obtaining a special designation for internationalisation from the Accreditation Organisation of the Netherlands and Flanders (NVAO).

## KPIs

- The first-year drop-out rate (excl. switches) drops to less than 15% (dropout rate reduction).
- The percentage of Bachelor's students who gain experience abroad within the framework of their programme increases to 25-30% (internationalisation).
- The number of re-registered students who earn their Bachelor's degree within five years increases at each faculty, to an average of 80% UvA-wide, because of previously agreed measures (Study Success Working Group). Of the Master's students, 90% achieve their degree certificate within the set time plus one year (academic success).



# Research

## Ambitions

The University of Amsterdam nurtures a culture of curiosity, creativity and academic integrity. The UvA is an internationally recognised, comprehensive research university where research can quickly be redirected to investigate new, often interdisciplinary research questions in an innovative way, thereby contributing to solving societal problems.

## Objectives

The UvA is an attractive partner for international consortia, increasing the opportunities for external financing.

The UvA fosters space for innovation and for disciplines that make fundamental contributions to the broad spectrum of research underlying our extensive range of programmes.

Quality and academic integrity serve as the leading criteria in the assessment of researchers and research.

## Strategy

Priority research areas will be developed further and extended. These priority areas constitute the building blocks of the UvA's institutional profile.

The UvA will create the conditions for innovation in 'breeding grounds' for young researchers from various disciplines.

Differentiated indicators will be developed in consultation with the faculties to measure academic quality.

Policies on academic integrity will be further developed and implemented. The faculties will elaborate on these policies in their covenants.



The University of Amsterdam fosters a culture of intellectual curiosity, creativity and academic integrity.

## Objectives

PhD researchers obtain their doctorates within a reasonable time frame and are well-equipped for careers in or outside academia.

The research budget is enlarged to realign it with the growth in government education funding in recent years.

## Strategy

The Graduate Schools will be responsible for creating communities of PhD researchers. They will monitor PhD researchers' progress and offer courses for those seeking careers outside academia.

The UvA will acquire more external research funding from both national and international sources and from private financiers.

## Quality assurance

- The UvA will apply the new Standard Evaluation Protocol (SEP) in all audit assessments and use it to evaluate research activities in its various research priority areas.

## KPIs

- An increase in the number of research project coordination appointments (organisational capacity).
- An increase in the number of personal grants and distinctions awarded by research councils (Veni, Vidi, Vici, ERC, NWO Rubicon and Open Competition, Spinoza, KNAW memberships and professors, ERC and Marie Curie grants) (individual quality).
- An increase in the number of high impact publications, as indicated by the CWTS normalised PP top 10% indicator – the proportion of a university's publications that, compared with other publications in the same field and in the same year, belong to the top 10% most frequently cited - or an equivalent KPI per faculty, tailored to the discipline(s) and criteria researchers use in their own research strategies as intended in the SEP (collective quality).

# Innovation and impact

## Ambitions

The University of Amsterdam makes a fundamental contribution to innovation by turning out well-educated students, disseminating knowledge and promoting cooperation between researchers, businesses and government agencies. The new knowledge generated by UvA research creates a fertile breeding ground for innovation. As a hub of leading international research, excellent academics and graduates, the UvA attracts enterprising talent, research-intensive businesses and investors to the region.

## Objectives

The UvA increases the societal impact of its research.

The UvA works with its partner institutions in Amsterdam to increase the region's innovative capacity and develop solutions for urban and social issues.

## Strategy

All research priority areas will further clarify their innovative capacity and demonstrate their impact. Each faculty will specify the valorisation indicators against which their contribution can be benchmarked.

An Institute for Advanced Study will be established where the academic community, business sector and public sector can jointly develop innovative solutions.

The UvA and AUAS will take joint responsibility for training excellent secondary school teachers.

A larger number of UvA students will carry out research work placements and projects at businesses and institutions in Amsterdam.





As a hub of leading international research, the UvA attracts enterprising talent, research-intensive businesses and investors to the region.

## Objectives

The UvA stimulates entrepreneurship amongst its staff and students.

The UvA develops public-private partnerships as a part of its efforts to stimulate innovation. This is also done within the context of the Amsterdam Economic Board.

The UvA continues to develop a strong public profile and contribute to social innovation.

## Strategy

The UvA will engage knowledge workers from outside the University to teach entrepreneurship courses. And the UvA will continue to facilitate regional spin-offs and new enterprise with the help of the Innovation Exchange Office (IXA) and UvA Holding.

Further development of Amsterdam Science Park will enable the UvA to create optimal conditions for technological innovation.

The UvA will work on expanding and intensifying ties with businesses and institutions with an international dimension.

The UvA will encourage academic staff to take part in public debates and sit on national advisory councils and research committees. By playing an active role in society, our academics and alumni can make a key contribution to building a culture of innovation.

Social innovation and societal entrepreneurship will be stimulated.

### Quality assurance

- Implementation of the policy paper ‘Valorisation at the UvA’ and monitoring of the 12 valorisation indicators selected in November 2013.

### KPIs

- Increase in external funding from contract research funding and funding generated in the commercial exploitation phase (cooperation).
- Increase in the number of students taking more than 6 ECTS credits in entrepreneurship courses (people).
- Increase in the number of licences on patents and know-how (results).

## Talent policy (HRM)

### Ambitions

The UvA is a professional employer capable of recognising, developing and challenging talented staff at all organisational levels, and is recognised around the world as a breeding ground for talent. The job market is changing rapidly and job mobility, both within the Netherlands and internationally, will continue to grow. The UvA expects staff members to take steps themselves to improve their long-term employability and to further develop their skills and talents. The UvA provides assistance in the way of education budgets and training programmes.

### Objectives

The UvA refines its strategic HR framework. The UvA strives for a good mix of academics. To achieve this, the recruitment of national and international talent with 0-12 years of experience is intensified.

The UvA is an attractive place to work for international researchers, including top talent, due to its excellent research facilities and the magnetism of Amsterdam.

### Strategy

The UvA will develop targeted policies for the recruitment, supervision and retention of exceptional talent.

The UvA will strengthen its career development policy by vigorously paying attention to career development and education in annual consultations.

The UvA will develop a career service for PhD candidates and researchers seeking employment outside the University.

The UvA will recruit leading international researchers, such as AAA fellows, to work at the UvA for several years.

The quality of working conditions and terms of employment will therefore also be tailored to international employees.



The UvA is capable of recognising talented staff at all organisational levels, and has an international reputation as a breeding ground for talent.

## Objectives

The UvA places great value on the quality of its education, and wants to enable academic staff to also build careers as educators.

The UvA ensures effective support for education and research.

The UvA strives to achieve an appropriate balance between temporary and permanent contracts for lecturers and researchers. (At the time of writing, the number of temporary contracts appears to have somewhat overshoot the mark and is not balanced in all cases to fluctuations in financing.)

The UvA works to improve the employability of temporary staff.

## Strategy

The UvA will continue to help lecturers strengthen their teaching competences.

The UvA and AUAS will jointly develop a fellowship programme under which PhD researchers and recent PhD graduates with a UvA research appointment will teach at the AUAS.

The UvA will continue to invest in the employability of its support and management staff. Training plans will be a fixed part of annual consultations. Employees must spend their entire annual training budget.

A suitable balance will be sought in consultation with the representative advisory bodies.

Staff members with a temporary contract will be able to acquire transferable skills that will serve them in the rest of their career.

Training and sabbatical leave will remain accessible to employees with a temporary employment contract.

## Objectives

Service provision to students and staff is fully bilingual. All support services have sufficient employees with a good command of written and spoken English.

## Strategy

Support and management staff will be encouraged to increase their English language skills.

## Quality assurance

- The UvA continues to organise training and peer reviews for lecturers and to stimulate educational leadership. In addition to the University Teaching Qualification, lecturers are encouraged to obtain the Advanced University Teaching Qualification and complete the Educational Leadership course.
- Three service provision standards are recorded in the covenant for each unit.

## KPIs

- All employees have constructive annual consultations, in which HRM policy-line agreements are made at the individual level. 100% of employees in service for more than a year have an annual consultation.

# Finances

## Ambitions

In order to be able to provide high-quality education, research and innovation, a sound financial basis is required. The UvA is working on restoring the balance between teaching and research financing. In order to achieve this, the UvA is striving to stabilise student numbers and to increase its research budget through the expansion and differentiation of revenues from channels other than direct funding.

The government subsidy that the University receives per student continues to decrease. The UvA is carefully assessing new opportunities to share costs in order to maintain the quality of its degree programmes. To this end, the UvA is also expanding and diversifying its revenues from research grants, indirect government funding and contract research.

## Objectives

The UvA's financial policies are keyed to facilitating excellence in education.

The UvA acquires more external funding for research, and makes decisions based on gross revenues (including transfer to subcontractors).

## Strategy

Where possible, the UvA will charge differentiated tuition fees for intensive small-scale programmes and Colleges.

The system of fee management for (degree programme) services will be the same for all programmes offered at the UvA.

Financial and administrative systems and processes will optimally support the acquisition of external research funding.

The UvA will further stimulate entrepreneurship amongst students and young researchers.





The UvA offers students a stimulating academic environment that motivates them to make the most of their potential.

### Objectives

The UvA improves the cost recovery of grants and contract amounts (research grants, indirect government funding and contract research).

### Strategy

The allocation model will be further aligned with the UvA's external sources of funding.

The UvA will consult with grant providers and provide cost-effective project management.

### Quality assurance

- The relationship between content and finances is properly ensured with adequate and current insight into finances at all levels of the organisation.

### KPIs

- Generic overhead costs (as defined in the performance agreements with the Ministry of Education, Culture and Science) drop to less than 20% of total FTE costs (overhead).



# Infrastructure

## Ambitions

The UvA has been inextricably linked to the city of Amsterdam for centuries. The UvA is developing four open city campuses with good study facilities and research labs, and areas for interaction and relaxation. The campuses cluster related academic disciplines, support knowledge exchange and recognisability, and contribute to the blurring of traditional boundaries – they are meeting places for students, staff and residents of Amsterdam. There is a varied range of services, including stable, high-quality ICT support. The UvA is proud of its city campuses, a fact reflected in its recruitment efforts. The UvA contributes to the development of the city, economic and otherwise, by stimulating education, research and entrepreneurship.

## Objectives

The UvA ensures that education and research activities optimally benefit from high-quality, efficient, sustainable and attractive buildings on its campuses.

## Strategy

The development of Amsterdam Science Park, the Roeterseiland Campus and the City Centre Campus will be continued and completed over the course of this period.

The accommodations plan for the post-2020 period will be discussed with partner institutions in Amsterdam.



The UvA is developing four open city campuses with good study facilities and research labs, areas for interaction and relaxation.

## Objectives

The UvA offers an excellent environment for teaching and research talent from the Netherlands and abroad.

The UvA reduces consumption and increases sustainability in energy and materials use in its operations.

The UvA aligns its ICT policy to support education and research policies and ICT investments are coordinated at a strategic level.

The open sharing of information, sources and data contribute to the quality of education and research results. The University Library acts as a driving force, innovator and centre of expertise.

## Strategy

The UvA will continue to invest in high-quality research infrastructure.

The UvA will strive to ensure sufficient housing capacity for its researchers and students.

The UvA will inform students and staff in a consistent and transparent fashion. The information will be disseminated using their channels of choice.

The UvA will create testing grounds for sustainable innovations at its various campuses.

The UvA will further improve its ICT infrastructure by facilitating developments such as Bring Your Own Device, high-speed computing and data crunching (in collaboration with SurfSARA).

The University Library will manage data, collections and publications (long-term, findable, usable) and provide open access where desirable/appropriate. The motto here is: open where possible, closed where necessary.

## Quality assurance

- The UvA actively monitors the quality of service, the level of satisfaction with the facilities and the stability of ICT support.

## KPIs

- In the annual National Student Survey (NSE), the satisfaction level of UvA students regarding their facilities is at least equal to the national average (student satisfaction).



## Strategic theme

# Internationalisation

### Ambitions

Amsterdam is ranked among the top 20 most attractive European university cities and attracts talented Master's students, PhDs, researchers and lecturers. The UvA's international student intake at the Master's level grows to 30%, while that of international PhDs remains stable at 50%. International Bachelor's student intake also increases. International students and staff members are better integrated into the academic community.

Top researchers see the UvA as a stepping stone to an international academic career. Leading academics are eager to obtain a permanent appointment in research areas in which the UvA is internationally acclaimed. The UvA successfully retains a large portion of these excellent scientists and scholars. The UvA positions itself internationally also by taking the lead in a number of major European research networks.

UvA graduates are equipped to continue their development at universities around the world that belong to the top 200 or to pursue an international career.

## Strategic theme

# High impact and low imprint

### Ambitions

The UvA invests in a socially, economically and ecologically sustainable future, aiming to maximise its long-term impact and minimise its footprint. Building a future-proof UvA, Amsterdam and world is an issue that concerns us all.

All curricula include general and specialised modules - organised by the Institute for Interdisciplinary Studies (IIS) - based on the latest science in the area of sustainability and aimed at increasing awareness. Education, research and valorisation are all drawn upon to help build a sustainable future. As part of the Science for an Urban World agenda, the UvA and AUAS work together on the themes 'sustainable future' and 'the future of Europe' to develop economic, social, political, technological and logistical solutions for the metropolitan area. Logistics and big data-based solutions play a key role in this regard. The UvA itself provides a testing ground for research and concept proofing by students and employees. The UvA runs its energy operations in collaboration with urban partners, making the most of its position in the city and its expertise in the areas of law, administration and behavioural sciences.

## Strategic theme

# Student experience

### Ambitions

The UvA offers students a stimulating academic environment that motivates them to make the most of their potential. Our students are independent and well-informed, and actively develop social and intellectual networks over the course of their studies, for instance by joining study and student associations. Students continue to serve as ambassadors for the University after having completed their studies.

The city is a natural and ideal habitat for the University of Amsterdam: 'Amsterdam is our campus'. Our city campuses serve as meeting places. UvA students actively seek information and know their way around the organisation for matters relating to academic support, participation in decision-making and extracurricular activities (sports and culture).

Our student population is increasingly international and intercultural. Students who play an active role in the academic community, for example by participating in representative advisory bodies or student associations or by working as student assistants, are encouraged and valued. Digitisation and the latest forms of social media are used to communicate with the entire academic community and serve to increase its involvement.

We also stimulate our students to develop on-campus entrepreneurship. Companies, public organisations and research institutes deploy students much more frequently in their research, R&D and innovation projects. They offer students work placements (including summer placements) and collaborative research opportunities, contributing to courses, and investing in student businesses.

## Strategic theme

# We are U, the academic community

### Ambitions

Providing a university education for tomorrow's vanguard, conducting ground-breaking and fundamental research and developing practical applications for society – all this calls for an effectively functioning collective. Through its education, research and innovation, the UvA wants to play a prominent role in the Netherlands and internationally. This requires engagement, a sense of community and effective participation in decision-making within our academic community.

Engagement is reflected in the close ties between science and society. UvA staff are visibly active outside the University, are directly and indirectly connected to thousands of researchers and hundreds of institutions in the Netherlands and abroad, and participate in societal and academic debates. As an organisation, the UvA itself is a constructive and reliable social partner for government bodies, knowledge institutions and businesses and actively seeks out partners for new alliances.

The UvA is known for its individuality and for its open culture, in which freedom and inspiration flourish. This is a reflection of our tradition, of the city of Amsterdam, and of the institution's independent and original organisational culture. Our organisational units are given the freedom to develop their education, research and innovation activities within set frameworks. We offer flexibility within a greater whole. At the same time, the whole – the collective – is greater than the sum of its parts, and the UvA can achieve far more by working together than we could ever hope to do individually.

A sense of connection between management, researchers, lecturers and students is of vital importance. To foster that connection, management has to be founded on participation, both in formal and in informal decision-making procedures. In such a culture, decision-making processes and management evaluations are transparent and consistent, while offering sufficient room for innovative input.



