



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.