



Jury report UvA Lecturer of the Year 2020

We, the jury for the UvA Lecturer of the Year 2020 – comprising Taimoor Baig (CSR), Tijmen Dietvorst (CSR), Hanna Blom (ASVA), Elio Baldi (Lecturer of the Year 2019) and Karen Maex (Rector Magnificus UvA) – would like to show our gratitude and praise to the seven nominees. The seven nominees have already earned their title as faculty Lecturer of the Year through the voting process. We congratulate our seven nominees with their title!

We can see clearly why the students and staff from each of the respective faculties named these seven lecturers on their (online) voting ballot. All seven nominees show their commitment to teaching by engaging with their students; they know how to actively involve their students in their teaching. Their commitment to students and the learning process truly shines through in their lectures, their written work and especially through the many warm recommendations and messages of praise sent in through the voting tool.

Therefore, we had a difficult task at hand. We had to determine who deserves the title of UvA Lecturer of the Year 2020, from seven very talented, but very different lecturers. We enjoyed the lecture recordings and the course manuals, as it reflects the diversity of disciplines and teaching styles within the UvA. Below, we announce our winner. Thereafter, we present our findings on the nominees. We discuss the nominees in alphabetical order.

For the way in which he engages with his students, his clarity in teaching and his heartfelt involvement in the learning process of his students, the award of **UvA Lecturer of the Year 2020** goes to: **René Smits** from the Faculty of Law!

René Smits (Faculty of Law)

René succeeds in making complex subject matter accessible to his audience. René teaches EU Financial and Monetary Law – a subject in which we as a jury had little expertise. But in his lecture recording, we managed to comprehend some of the complex aspects of EU banking regulation – no easy feat! René puts in a lot of extra effort, which shows in the heart-warming messages from students. Many students mentioned the additional support René provides, “crossing the box” of his own course and the encouragement he gives students to delve deeper. René does more than address the theory of his research discipline; he allows students to think about the real-life applications. We read a lot of comments praising René for emailing students (even after the course had ended) whenever certain developments came up related to his course. It is the combination of complexity, clarity in teaching and meaningful connections with students that make him this year’s winner of the Lecturer of the Year-award.

Alex de Koter (Faculty of Science)

Many lecturers attempt to incorporate some humour in their lectures, with varying degrees of success. Alex, who teaches Physics and Astronomy, is one of those lecturers who succeeds terrifically; he uses humour and creates an open atmosphere in which students feel free to ask the

difficult questions. The open atmosphere also comes from Alex' honesty and directness. He takes his students seriously and is honest about what he expects from his students. Many of his students wrote how much they liked how Alex is always asking the right questions to keep everyone involved. We also saw that Alex takes practical issues into account, by asking seemingly simple questions, for instance: if all students were able to afford the syllabus. We believe that these elements in Alex' teaching – honesty, empathy and a great sense of humour - are the reasons why he is so popular among his students and colleagues.

Andrea Weihrauch (Faculty of Economics and Business)

Course manuals are important for students' understanding of the course structure, how and when they will be tested, etc.. But not many course manuals are so well-structured and thoughtful as the manual for Andreas course *Disruptive Innovation Marketing*. It's in the little things, like a social safety disclaimer, that Andrea shows she truly cares about her students. We read a lot of comments from students explaining her flexibility and creativity during the transition to online teaching due to covid-19. The fact that so many students show their gratitude and praise to Andreas way of dealing with the situation, shows her helpfulness and empathy towards her students. In the lecture recording, we saw that Andrea is an activating lecturer, who approaches her teaching as an engaging performance. Her thoughtfulness, creativity and energizing lectures are probably why students talk about her course as "simply mind-blowing", and about Andrea as "the best lecturer ever".

Bart Wallet (Faculty of Humanities)

In general, students seem to either hate or love philosophy of science. However, as one of Barts' students explains, Bart has single-handedly transformed his course *Philosophy of Science* (Wetenschapsfilosofie) into one of the most popular courses in the curricula of the language & culture programmes. His students describe Bart as an erudite, intelligent, "bizarrely knowledgeable", genius, driven, and passionate lecturer. Bart thrives in teaching by making very complex subject matter accessible for students. In his lecture recording, we saw how Bart discusses a seemingly simple question ("what are humanities?"), discusses the theoretical contributions from the relevant scholars, but also connects to real-world discussions. In doing so, he makes philosophy accessible to all students, or as one of his students wrote: "With his enthusiasm, he knows how to activate even the most demotivated students!".

Myrna Roks (Faculty of Dentistry, ACTA)

From the messages we received from students and staff, two central themes arise: Myrna is a dedicated innovator, and is always willing to run the extra mile for her students. Myrna has played a major role in the innovation of the dental educational programme, or as one observer puts it: "Myrna turned the clinic from a war zone into an oasis." She teaches in the master Dentistry, and has had an important role in the improvement of the Evidence-Based Kliniek (EBK). Despite a changing environment, either from within (educational innovation) or from external factors (covid-19), she stays on top of her game. We are very impressed by the level of flexibility and enthusiasm with which Myrna faces the new challenges, while keeping her affairs in perfect order – and its shows, from the many kind messages we received.

Sharon Klinkenberg (Faculty of Social and Behavioural Sciences)

It seems a near-impossible task to get students enthusiastic about a 9am lecture on statistics, but Sharon has pulled it off. One student explains that “for no other lecturer than Sharon [s/he] would have woken up for 9am lectures”. Sharon teaches the course *Scientific and Statistical Reasoning* in the bachelor Psychology, and makes his lectures a true joy to follow. He uses props (a hammer, pincher, a coin or LEGO) to conduct experiments during his lectures. He uses the props to show statistical principles in practice, in a very fun and creative way. In addition to his creative and activating way of teaching, he shows a deep understanding of the subject matter – this allows him to teach statistics in a comprehensive step-by-step manner. Making statistics comprehensive and fun shows that Sharon is a very skilled lecturer.

Vincent Odekerken (Faculty of Medicine, Amsterdam UMC)

We have great admiration for how Vincent has worked on the transition to online teaching. Vincent teaches Neurology, and has shown to run the extra mile for his students – in the last couple of months he created a variety of online clips on YouTube (reaching around 6000 views per week already). He also hosted live webinars, as an addition to his teaching, in cooperation with the study association. This shows us Vincent is an innovative lecturer, who has made a major contribution to the transition to online teaching for both the bachelor- and master-programme. He puts his students central to his teaching and his enthusiasm shows; around 80% of messages we received about Vincent mention his enthusiasm for teaching. He is a gifted speaker, with a very calm and clear teaching style, which allows him to combine enthusiasm with clarity. Both elements make being a student of Vincent's a real educative pleasure.