



UNIVERSITY OF AMSTERDAM

A photograph of a group of students in a meeting. A man in a blue shirt is leaning over a table, looking at a document. A woman with long brown hair is looking down at the same document. Another person with curly hair is partially visible on the left. The setting appears to be a modern, bright room with large windows.

Midterm Review of the Strategic Plan 2015-2020

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University of Amsterdam

Introduction

When the University of Amsterdam introduced the current Strategic Plan for 2015-2020, it came with a conviction that a 6-year Plan must be reviewed roughly halfway through its term. These days, developments arise in short spaces of time and the world as a whole seems very volatile. Since 2015 we have seen dazzling developments in medical and biomedical sciences, the emergence of artificial intelligence (but also of ‘alternative facts’), the Paris climate agreement, increasing urbanisation, growing concerns about social inequality and injustice, Europe’s struggle to (re)define itself and geopolitical shifts in power and globalisation. And that is just an anthology. Nationally, these developments are reflected in the Government’s new National Agenda for Science and the Strategic Agenda for Higher Education, in a greater call to demonstrate societal relevance, and also in a shift in the social contract and in fears of widening gaps in society that affect the diversity and the emancipatory role of the University.

This is the world we prepare our next generations for, and the world our research aims to impact upon. A Strategic Plan that spans 6 years will then, necessarily, require an update around the halfway mark.

Here is that update. In it, we put a strong emphasis on what stakeholders expect from our University of Amsterdam. In other words, what is the University for?

For the review process, we have taken several months in late 2017 and early 2018 to evaluate both the ambitions included in the Plan and the performance on the key progress indicators (kpi’s) included in the Plan. From that, we have identified various themes to discuss with a wide range of students, teachers and researchers, and we have asked a number of people who work with us from outside our community to reflect on our performance from their perspective and on the goals we should set ourselves.

The results of these meetings have inspired us to propose this update, as an addition rather than a modification of the current Plan—the general terms and progress indicators of which remain valid and in place for its intended term until the end of 2020.

Our intention with the present document is to highlight the most important

themes and issues related to the Plan that the University of Amsterdam will focus on in the remaining years, while preparing the new Strategic Plan to be in place from 2021. Some other elements of the Plan will be deemed less important for the remaining period, either because they have already been achieved or because the momentum they responded to was lost.

About the Midterm Review

The Strategic Plan 2015-2020 was finalised in January 2015, when it received approval from the Works Council and the Students' Council, as well as from the Supervisory Board. Both Councils made their approval conditional upon a Midterm Review of some of the ambitions in the Plan, as it spans a period of six years where previous UvA Strategic Plans had envisaged a period of four years. In particular, the Midterm Review should address the ambitions in the Plan embodied in the key progress indicators, to see if these ambitions are still viable.

Apart from the external factors mentioned above and the agreement with both Councils, there are other reasons to renew the interpretation and impact of the Plan:

- Students and staff protests in 2015 exposed a number of drawbacks and side effects of the quality-driven policies pursued in the preceding decade. They cited, among other things a disproportionate use of temporary contracts, a potential loss of academic values, an unsubstantiated focus on reducing the students' time-to-degree and a lack of transparency as their concerns.
- UvA has undergone a near complete change of senior management since the presentation of the Plan, as well as several policy updates since its introduction in 2015 (e.g. Education Policy, Strategic Framework for Internationalisation, the upcoming Research Policy).
- In March 2017, UvA and AUAS (HvA) ceased to share their Executive Board as the primary expression of their close co-operation as institutes of Higher Education in Amsterdam.

All these reasons, however, do not invalidate the ambitions set out in the Strategic Plan, or in the covenants between the Board and the Faculties and Service Units which concretise these ambitions. Both the Plan and the covenants will effectively remain in place until the end of 2020. The Midterm Review seeks to identify ambitions in the current Plan that require an updated interpretation, reformulation, addition or clarification as a result of the reasons mentioned above.

The document also aims to address an important request that was voiced in all discussions in the course of the review process: the tone of the Plan. The current Plan is emblematic of a style of business-like strategy text, with short bullet point descriptions of policy goals, that does not resonate with UvA readers and consequently, does not inspire us to participate in achieving the ambitions we have set ourselves. This Midterm Review intends to reconnect with the UvA community and its stakeholders, to invite everyone's participation, and to help ensure that the concerns and issues identified in this document are taken up on every level of the University.

Much like the Strategic Plan itself, the draft has been discussed with the deans in the Central Executive Council, the Works Council, the Students' Council and the Supervisory Board. Staff and students at large have also been invited to share comments on the draft Review through online consultation.

The Ambitions of the UvA: Then & Now

The ambitions in the Strategic Plan are structured in chapters on the three primary functions of the University: education, research and innovation, and on the three enabling domains of staff, budget and infrastructure. In the ensuing paragraphs we consider these ambitions in view of subsequent developments and insights in the UvA. These include important remarks from the round table discussions on key themes in the Plan.

The prevailing conclusion is that most of the ambitions of 2015 are just as valid today, taking into consideration changes in the external environment, but that the Plan itself and the performance indicators selected, do not provide an inspiring narrative to support them. Also, some ambitions deserve more operationalisation. Meanwhile, we are well on our way to materialising many of our ambitions, though to a varying extent.

1. Education

The principal ambitions of high quality education were and are: motivating and challenging ambitious students, continued commitment to our students and their learning outcome, securing a stable or at least predictable enrolment, and attracting a sustainable number of talented international students for the benefit of a comprehensive and diverse student experience.

Considering the already skewed balance between education and research, it is important that—law and regulations permitting—UvA keeps its enrolment steady around the current level.

Within this number, the ambition is to attract those students who are willing to make a genuine investment in their studies and in our community of learners, and will therefore be best able to reap the benefits from the UvA way of teaching and the UvA research base. Fair information to schools and prospective students, *UvA Matching* and good guidance through the first 8-week block of landing at UvA are all aimed at optimising the fit between the student and her UvA programme choice. As a progress indicator, the Plan aims at a reduction of the

first year drop-out rate from 20% to 15% on average, allowing for some variation between programmes. This goal seems within reach by AY 2019-2020.

Once past their first year, we are committed to guiding our students through their degree programme while offering them a wealth of choice, of subjects, honours and minor programmes. As stated in our Vision on Teaching and Learning of 2017, all our teaching is academic and research-intensive, by professional teaching staff, and differentiated to suit different types of learning styles. In close co-operation with our Students' and Works Councils, we are directing the increment in Government funding ('studievoorschotmiddelen') primarily towards these ends. To be effective, this also requires an ambitious and self-directed attitude from the student.

At the transition from the undergraduate level to a graduate programme, selection is introduced in order to obtain the best fit for the student's academic and professional ambition—much like UvA Matching attempts to do in the undergraduate programmes. Selection is not intended to bar students from enrolling in programmes based on their past performances, because evidence shows that the undergraduate GPA does not correlate to successful completion of a graduate programme. However, master programme selection is needed to regulate the number of admissible students from outside the UvA, to complement internal demand and contribute to steady enrolment figures, particularly as many programmes are being taught in English. (Some expensive and research master programmes with a limited capacity will need to apply additional admission criteria). At the same time, when forced to select we heed concerns regarding the accessibility of our university to a diverse body of students, including students with another prequalification than the regular VWO or university BA/BSc degree. To achieve that is one of our main objectives in the coming years, which includes considering ways to organise efficient orientation and pre-master programmes and seeking national attention for their financing.

In the Strategic Plan 2015-2020, as in the Plan before, a higher graduation rate with no more than one year of delay was adopted as the principal indicator of successful education delivery. It makes perfect sense to expect the greater part of our students to graduate without losing more than a year. It makes equally perfect sense to expect programmes to be doable without much loss of time, for the normally qualified student (barring the occasionally inevitable waiting periods).

But timely graduation is not necessarily in the interest of every student, nor in that of the UvA; and the current student loan system already contains powerful incentives against unnecessary delay. Moreover, analysis shows this indicator to be affected by characteristics of the student body by gender, gap year and age of enrolment. Also, it represents a narrow and one-dimensional view on the ambitious attitude of students. It is often our most ambitious students who take extra courses, engage in extracurricular activities like internships, courses abroad or students' association work, or have a job or enterprise on the side.

Though it remains a relevant measure of quality that most students who have completed the first year successfully can and do graduate within a reasonable timeframe, other indicators are equally important measures of our commitment to the success of our students, particularly those who lack neither the ambition nor the qualification to succeed. Reversely, an increasing effort will be required to help ambitious students cope with the combined pressure of earning their living and following their ambition.

We shall develop a more balanced composite indicator of study success that takes into account that the primary counter indicator of success after the first year is the drop-out rate of a programme. At the current rate of 10%, this stands rather higher than at other Dutch universities and should be susceptible to a reduction towards 6%. Other (numerical) indicators of an ambitious attitude in students who need more time could be a reduction of the number of resits, the number of credits earned annually, or an upward trend in the student's GPA. Furthermore, in view of the significant gender gap, programmes are invited to seek how they can reduce the difference between female and male student achievement, by reverting to other programmes where that gap is low or non-existent.

Lately, internationalisation and the proliferation of English taught programmes have sparked much debate around the country. The UvA view is that we are a bilingual university. This means that our first language in programmes is Dutch, and that our Dutch students are expected to develop their Dutch proficiency on an academic level. It also means that UvA, as a civic university, feels a duty to prepare students for a future in an international city and world, by using study

materials and employing teachers in English¹. For this reason, students are required to possess or reach level C1 in their passive proficiency in English, while teachers must also possess C1 in active proficiency. Obviously, international students enrolled in these programmes are required to have an equally good passive knowledge of Dutch. Students are, however, free to choose between English and Dutch for both spoken and written course work. A number of our programmes and tracks are fully taught in English. —These programmes are international in character; they use the concept of the international classroom, and require level C1 in active proficiency. In these programmes, there is no requirement for the level of Dutch proficiency, but courses in Dutch are offered to those who want to participate in other academic programmes and activities such as council or board work.

Key theme: The Programme Portfolio

This theme is closely connected to improving the balance between education and research and to putting proper value on teaching. Developing academic teacher training beyond what is currently on offer, supporting staff as they transition from teacher to programme co-ordinator to programme director, and providing benchmarks and tools to do this well, are important ways to improve and support UvA's educational programmes as we welcome an increasing variety of students.

For students, we seek to provide opportunities to discover and develop new talents even as Government tightens funding, grants and loans. UvA's great asset is the breadth of disciplines on offer. Some rightly challenge us to find more ways for students to profit from this wealth, for instance by programming the same number of credits for elective courses at the same moment in all curricula. This opportunity to participate in shaping your own educational programme, while being given a very solid base in a chosen subject, can and should be our unique offer to students.

¹ Some programmes require knowledge of an additional language or languages.

Key points for the remaining years of the Strategic Plan:

- Maintain and improve the accessibility of education, while securing a good fit between students and their chosen programme
- Less focus on timely graduation as the only 'proof' of ambitious learning, and more focus on the quality of education, in particular on the learning process, participation and knowledge sharing (as set out in the Vision on Teaching and Learning)
- Address the opportunities and issues that come with internationalisation, including the concept of the international classroom, language policies and student housing
- Provide the opportunities for a great and lasting student experience as a member of the academic community (by participating in campus life, by chance meetings and exposure to new rituals)
- Increase the level of student engagement by viewing students as talents in our community rather than passing clients or customers

2. Research

The principal ambitions of the Strategic Plan for high quality research with a societal relevance are: extending third party funding, building on interdisciplinarity and enhancing co-operation.

To counter the skewed balance between education and research in the government grant, UvA must make use of all sources of funding, and therefore ensure that third party funding, both from the EU and NWO and from industry increases, given the distinct lack of serious growth in direct Government funding over the next number of years. Traditionally, UvA researchers excel in obtaining individual grants, but seem less inclined to compete for the larger project grants which require intensive collaboration, yet form an increasing part of the monies on offer in Brussels and The Hague, where they relate to societal challenges and such programmes as 'NWO Zwaartekracht' or the National Agenda for Science. That requires our continued effort.

A cultural factor at heart here is UvA's individualistic nature, which promotes competition. As there is enough competition outside, UvA should internally promote co-operation rather than competition. We feel that UvA can and will benefit from teamwork and good team composition, in such varied respects as tackling workload issues or fostering preconditions for interdisciplinary research.

The Strategic Plan calls for further development of our Research Priority Areas (RPA's), which represent UvA's competitive advantages in the international sphere of science. The RPA's entered UvA policy about ten years ago as an incentive to recognise and reward quality in research, particularly in new and interdisciplinary fields of work. They responded to the call of that time for more focus and mass in Dutch research and according to the evaluation undertaken in 2017 they have been slightly more successful at creating focus than mass or visibility. Nevertheless, over these ten years the policy was instrumental in making UvA arguably² the best comprehensive university in the Netherlands, and one of the best in the world in some disciplines (such as Dentistry or Communication and Media Science); the challenge is to not sit back and relax.

To that end a new Vision Statement on Research is being drafted, which takes as its core UvA's unique characteristic of combining strong science and medical faculties with the largest and strongest social sciences and humanities faculties in the country, and from the close presence of NWO, KNAW, Sanquin, NKI and VU institutes. If ever a university is well positioned to swiftly adapt to the varying and interdisciplinary demands put by societal challenges, we are. One key initiative in the Strategic Plan was the establishment of the UvA Institute for Advanced Study, which was inaugurated in September, 2016, and adopted complexity as its central theme. A very recent move is the plan to establish an Innovation Centre for Artificial Intelligence at UvA's Amsterdam Science Park, as one example of the ways in which UvA will contribute to the swift developments in artificial intelligence from technical, logical, ethical, legal, economical and societal perspectives. Among other themes that create a junction between UvA RPA's in the upcoming Vision Statement on Research are data science and sustainability (including the energy transition). Following the general quality improvement achieved and the provisions of the Standard Evaluation Protocol 2015-2021, it is now time that quality and teamwork, rather than the individual's quantity of research output will be deemed relevant to academic careers. This is partly reflected in the choice of the Strategic Plan to monitor (citation) impact rather than the volume of scientific publications as an indicator of progress, while allowing for more tailor-made indicators in disciplines. Our average citation impact has indeed been on the rise over the last few years.

² as testified by the Times and QS rankings

The Strategic Plan also calls for strengthening the link between teaching and research, as our research is the firm base of research-intensive teaching. In this respect a change will be applied to the internal budget formula from 2019, by adding the budget for education as a direct parameter in the allocation of research budget. In addition, an experiment was started with PhD positions directly placed with and contributing to our interdisciplinary programmes, which by nature are less easily connected to the disciplinary structure that prevails in research.

Key theme: Research Practices

While ‘alternative facts’ sometimes seem to question the authority of scientists, academic integrity and good research practices have received much interest from the public in recent years. Therefore they present a sensitive and crucial topic. There is a consensus that these principles, which are at the very heart of research, must be continually and openly discussed throughout the University. Research comes with many complex questions, potential conflicts of interest, or grey areas where difficult decisions must be made and criticisms must be expressed with academic courtesy, as well as answered. It is vital to research institutions that such a discourse is possible at every level of the research community, in a career-safe environment where the rules of engagement are clear to all. Therefore, these principles must be taught, from the very start of any academic programme. Good research practices are closely connected with academic integrity, but these are not the same and it is paramount that they be clearly distinguished. All academic staff should feel called upon to contribute to the discourse: it must be central to the daily practice of all our research and teaching.

Key points for the remaining years of the Strategic Plan:

- Improve teamwork and co-operation in our competitive and individualistic organisation, with a view to stronger performance in (inter)national grant programmes and in interdisciplinary research
- Strengthen and develop RPAs along the lines of current and interdisciplinary challenges (artificial intelligence, data science, sustainability, inequality) and start a fundamental debate on the research strategy for the next Strategic Plan, with emphasis on enhancing our flexibility
- Continue the focus on the reach and impact of our research, rather than on volume

- Tighten the link between education and research, e.g. through PhD-positions connected to interdisciplinary programmes, allocation of funds, appointments of professors etc.
- Distinguish between good research practices and academic integrity, and create an open climate to discuss grey areas with a focus on transparency and independence in research practice—of which integrity should be an integral part. This is not solely a matter for the Executive Board; all scientists need to participate
- Teach good research practices and the complexities of academic integrity from day one of every course. The programme committees can play an important role here

3. Innovation and impact

The modern university, with its impact on society and innovation, plays a key role in progress and development. Anything we do should have some sort of impact, be it shallow or deep, global or local, short term or longer term, directly or through the creation of human capital. A large comprehensive university like UvA, at times working closely with the AUAS (HvA) and the VU, may be expected to create impact on any and each of these levels, even though we are not yet used to showcasing our impact as a means to enhance its effect.

This is true of research as well as of teaching. For example, The University Charter for Sustainable Development (Geneva, 1994) states that “Universities and equivalent institutions of higher education train the coming generations of citizens and have expertise in all fields of research, both in technology as well as in the natural, human and social sciences. It is consequently their duty to propagate environmental literacy and to promote the practice of environmental ethics in society.”³

This vision guides the Strategic Plan, but there is no single master plan for innovation and impact, due to the ties that individual scientists and students have with business and society. We expect research units to present narratives of their impact, according to the Standard Evaluation Protocol, and to value impact as an inherent aspect of excellence.

³ Copernicus - The University Charter for Sustainable Development (Geneva, 1994)

The Strategic Plan provides some examples of fields where our impact should be enhanced: teacher training, community based learning through internships and student entrepreneurship, active participation by our staff in societal debate. Potential impact is also likely to be of growing importance to Research Councils and other sources of funding, including Government. A higher visibility of impact will provide students and young researchers with role models and examples of how to communicate with market and society on innovative new insights and tools to mutual benefit. It will inspire social initiatives within and by the University, and open it up to our metropolitan environment. In the round table meeting, was a strong call for UvA to highlight and claim, rather than hide or downplay, the impact of its many and diverse successes in science and research.

Meanwhile, good progress has been made in establishing an innovation infrastructure: the development of the Amsterdam Science Park, Venture Labs and the availability of entrepreneurial support to research staff through the Innovation Exchange Amsterdam (IXA), our collaboration with the AMC and VU-VUmc partners. Increasingly, scientists from UvA and societal or business partners pool resources to augment fundamental knowledge and its application. By sharing these experiences with colleagues across the university, these methods and tools can be leveraged to explore further opportunities.

As impact takes so many forms, a large choice of indicators to measure progress is conceivable. The Strategic Plan has selected three of them: the amount of income from industry to represent ‘impact through collaboration’, the volume of entrepreneurship teaching to represent ‘impact through people’ and the number of patents to represent ‘impact through scientific results’. However, faculties were left free to choose in their covenants other indicators that they felt would better represent their strategic goals.

Key points for the remaining years of the current Strategic Plan:

- Increase the visibility of scientific success stories and top research groups, create role models, and strengthen UvA's reputation with business and society
- Support and facilitate co-operation between science and business: provide formats for contracts that provide guidance on co-operation without compromising academic independence; actively promote successful examples of public-private partnerships (PPPs)

- Add innovation, impact and entrepreneurship to HR-policies and offer courses to alumni on the subject as part of our Life Long Learning offerings

4. Talent Policy

A central theme to our talent policy in coming years is the diversity of both the student body and our staff, in all its forms. We believe that diversity in itself is an aspect of quality—especially so in the formative years—and a great source for innovation and lateral thinking. In 2017 we have appointed a Chief Diversity Officer, who is currently working to create a network within all units. This network will be instrumental in ensuring we do all we can to become our best and most inclusive self. One expression of this renewed commitment to diversity is promoting the visibility of our excellent female staff. Another is developing a good multi-criteria indicator of diversity, based on modern theories of inclusion and diversity.

The Strategic Plan acknowledges that before its time Human Resources (HR) policies have lagged behind the academic development of the UvA. In that respect the subsequent protests of staff and students came as no surprise. For the new Board, drawing up a strategic HR Agenda was a top priority. It was discussed with the Works Council, along five lines of improvement: strategic HR planning, the academic career policy, academic leadership, temporary positions, and annual career consultations for each member of staff. The central notion is that the relation between each individual and the University must be a naturally reciprocal one, and that individuals best contribute through group or team work. Within this notion and for work with a permanent nature, those who comply to basic academic standards (i.e., owning a PhD and a BKO-certificate and having proved their skills for 1-3 years) should as a rule be employed on a permanent contract—allowing for some necessary flexibility to adapt to fluctuations in enrolment and demand.

Most of the Strategic Plan's ambitions are included in the HR Agenda in one way or another. In particular, it is paramount that teaching and societal impact (along with leadership) are equally valid and valued constituents of an academic career compared to 'fundamental' research. Ensuring this requires, for instance, developing tenure career paths in which teaching performance is equally or more

important than research. Achieving this shift from a focus solely on research is devilishly difficult to accomplish in an established world-wide system which makes upward career mobility dependent largely on research output and funds earned. Nevertheless, we at UvA hold a firm belief that education needs to be properly valued as the principal *raison d'être* of the University and our greatest contribution to the future of the world. Tackling the imbalance will require constant attention: the focus on research is innate and insidious, as PhD-students report receiving subtle hints from their professors from the very start that research should take precedence, when in a pinch. Some improvement can be sparked and supported by HR-measures, reward schemes and incentives, but any real change requires a cultural shift, which notoriously does not come from a simple turn on the knob.

Key theme: Workload

In addition to the HR Agenda, a central theme for the current Executive Board and a focal point of debate is workload and work-related stress. Increasing workloads for staff are a serious concern, as many researchers call attention to the damage wreaked by a variety of pressures and obstacles on the academic career path. Publication targets; the growing importance of winning research grants and subsidies through competitions, which are then severely oversubscribed; institutional bureaucracy created by governmental calls for increased control and political micromanagement; growing numbers of students and tightening Government funding; external ambitions such as Open Science; they all add up to take energy and attention away from the core tasks of research and education. This severely threatens the quality of our delivery as well as the health of both organisation and staff.

The management of work stress and employability in the long run of each member of staff, both academic and support, is a joint responsibility of the individual employee and the UvA as the employer. UvA offers a range of support functions, including career counselling, proficiency training in English, sabbaticals, budgets and professional development schemes (such as SKO and MD). Most of this support is also available to PhD students and postdoc researchers and to other staff members on temporary contracts. The Plan of Action put forward by the Taskforce on Work Pressure in late 2017 is currently being implemented along four courses of action.

The current system of Government support to students, which has been capped at the nominal programme duration and then largely been converted into a loan facility, is proving to be quite detrimental to the more ambitious among our students. Taking extra time for a second degree programme, an honours programme, a year of student union work, a period of study abroad or the start of a spin-off company: these have all become options of an immediately costly nature to the student who doesn't have recourse to family support. It would be contrary to our Vision on Teaching and Learning if this would impede students from exploiting their talent and potential to the full. Therefore, one of our challenges is to help students cope with these pressures and find other ways to support the cost of their ambition.

Key points for the remaining years of the Strategic Plan:

- Implementation of the HR agenda, with particular focus on: better quality of job appraisal consultations; balancing permanent and temporary appointments; improving career development; continuing leadership development; and strategic staff planning
- Create a good balance between the perceived value of teaching and that of doing research in an academic career; identify where policies or regulations hamper rather than help balancing education and research and correct them
- Enhance diversity among staff and students

5. Financial Policy

Effectively, the Strategic Plan extends the prudent financial policy of the previous period. One thing that the external Review Committee on Financial and Housing Policy (2016) made clear was that UvA could do much better in showing the prudence of its financial policy. The principal adjustments announced in the Strategic Plan are: a review of the internal budget formula, better support for entrepreneurial activity and a homogeneous solution for teacher time costing across faculties. The latter adjustment becomes more urgent with the growth of interdisciplinary programmes.

After in-depth consultations within UvA a decision has been made on the revision of the internal budget formula, with effect from 2019. The most important alteration is the better rate and timeliness with which the volume of teaching will be reflected in research income. Other changes include: a closer

link to the external (governmental) funding formula, capacity funding of some specified research facilities and a continued commitment to financial autonomy at the faculty level. Along with the revised formula, an increase of about 10m€ will be added to the funding, to the effect that no faculty will be adversely affected by its introduction. These monies are available as a result of financial stewardship over the past years.

As a means to support entrepreneurial activity, the treasury policy has recently been updated to focus more on simplifying the financial structure and increase funding for research, while providing support for research and innovation through co-operation with the UvA Ventures Holding.

Part of UvA's financial policy is containment of housing costs (at under approx. 11% of total income) and of the expenditure on generic and administrative overhead functions (at under approx. 20% of FTE's). This is to ensure that these costs do not eat away resources that should be spent on teaching and research.

Another issue that UvA is addressing in response to a wider societal concern is solvency. In recent years, Government has tended to increase its requirements regarding the solvency ratio of HE institutions, including universities. While the university's solvency ratio is at all times in compliance with these requirements, we shall develop a policy line that will further underpin this important factor in financial stability.

Key points for the remaining years of the Strategic Plan:

- Demonstrate the greatest possible financial transparency, as exemplified in recent practices (e.g. with the Budget Letter, the Annual Budget, and the Internal Funding Formula)
- Continued containment of housing costs and generic and overhead costs
- Make sure that from 2019 the additional Government funding pursuant to the Sector Agreement on Education Quality is effectively and visibly used towards educational quality

6. Infrastructure

The main objective of the Strategic Plan with respect to our infrastructure is to complete the comprehensive Housing Plan 2005-2020, resulting in a concentration of the University on four main campus locations in the city. The decision on the investment in the University Quarter, where the new Library and the Humanities Faculty will be brought together, was pushed back by several months to enable a thorough discussion within the UvA community on this development. On the whole, we intend to have taken all main decisions by 2020 and that the full Housing Plan is completed by 2024. Meanwhile, UvA is a living and still growing community with a constant demand for adaptation of available spaces. The success of the Amsterdam Science Park prompts more investment in learning space and a building for the new Innovation Centre for Artificial Intelligence; at the Roeterseiland an extra building with flexible large classrooms is being planned. After 2020, a sizable amount of investment funding is available within the financial constraints, which means that these improvements can be made without depleting resources for teaching and research. UvA's wishes to better understand the future needs of staff and students and make sure that investments are aimed at these needs, sharing best practices between faculties.

An aspect of our infrastructure which has received more intense focus since the publication of the Strategic Plan is the quality of our services. Following the decision to dissolve the administrative union between UvA and AUAS, the service units were tasked with improving their value-for-money in co-operation with students and staff. The aim of this project is to more effectively tailor the services to the needs of teaching and research in the various units. In realising improvements to the services, emphatic attention will be paid to improving the co-operation between the various service units. The implementation plan that resulted, makes use of best practices and thematic evaluation over the course of the implementation period. The first effects of this plan should be identifiable in 2019, when we hope to find greater satisfaction about the level of services among both students and staff.

The quality of our infrastructure and facilities is monitored in a composite indicator drawn from the National Student Survey NSE: student satisfaction with facilities (which include learning spaces, IT and the educational support organisation). The ultimate ambition is to get this indicator on a level with the

average of Dutch universities, but it is difficult to analyse why and where UvA students express lower satisfaction than the national average, despite the actual volume of our attention and investment. The students' councils, programme committees and student associations will be involved in increasing our understanding of the mechanism and working out further improvements, perhaps by better regulation of expectations, improving information quality and streamlining the logistics connected with education.

Key points for the remaining years of the Strategic Plan:

- Detail the decisions on the investment in the University Quarter
- Find better ways to understand UvA's low marks for student satisfaction in the NSE, and improve satisfaction.

7. Strategic Key Themes

Two very important answers to the question 'what is this university for?' have not been explored in the previous sections, precisely because they are relevant to all of them. One is: the city and region; the other: the sustainable future.

The Greater Amsterdam Metropolitan Area

In recent years, the university has sought new ways to co-operate with, and contribute to its immediate environment, inspired by a wider movement in society to meet complex challenges together.

We have developed initiatives with our partner institutions, VU and AUAS, and have participated in the Amsterdam Economic Board from its inception. Our very breadth, encompassing as it does a world class academic hospital in the AMC, makes us a great partner in tackling societal issues. It is, however, time to step up our game.

There are a great number of wonderful initiatives between individuals in the university and the city government, yet they are insufficiently visible or known. Bringing these initiatives together, collecting them as it were, will provide us with inspiration, role models and best practices. It will allow us to get our potential partners interested in working with us, as we show them how academic research can help solve the complex challenges of the 21st century metropolis. It will also provide us with ways to explain how Amsterdam is enriched by the

presence of several strong HE institutions, and what research can (and sometimes cannot) contribute.

UvA remains unreservedly committed to providing the Amsterdam Metropolitan Area with a well-educated work force: graduates equipped with ample knowledge and a critical mind, and the ability to articulate their ideas. The great importance of this resource for society and business in Amsterdam has been underlined during the discussions for this Review and in the recent study of our economic contribution by Biggar Economics, who valued that contribution at 4.4bn GVA p.a.

Key points for the remaining years of this Strategic Plan:

- Higher visibility for the many projects in which UvA participates with the city of Amsterdam and other regional partners
- Make clear offers to the city of Amsterdam for co-operation on issues that the city has identified as key (such as, for instance, tackling social inequality in a new institute for the study and tackling of urban inequality)

The sustainable future

A topic of great importance to many in the university and close to the heart of many more, sustainability has many incarnations. Both students and staff have shown passionate involvement with various but diverging aspects of sustainability, yet we have struggled to find comprehensive ways to improve our offering. The vision of the 1987 UN report *Our Common Future*, which defines sustainable development as a “development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs” is equally valid today as a guiding principle for our sustainability efforts. Conversely, it was noted in many discussions that we are not sufficiently aware of what UvA teaching, research and staff are already doing to contribute to a more sustainable world.

Much has been done in recent years by our Estates and Facility Services, for instance by installing renewable energy sources in new and renovated buildings, through our contracts with energy providers and with the use of electric vehicles for deliveries of goods to our buildings.

Researchers are naturally working on every conceivable aspect of sustainable use of raw materials, e.g. the reuse of CO₂ emissions, and students have started

a Green Office which aims to make UvA a greener place in community, communications, research and campus.

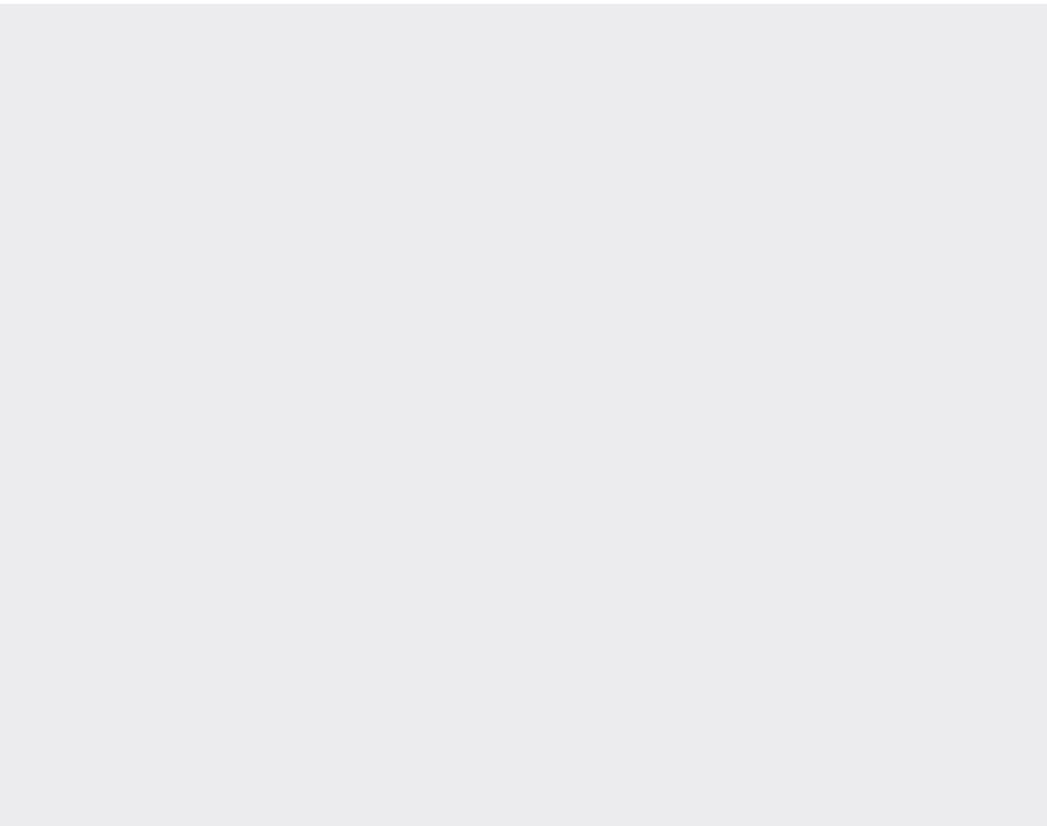
It is, however, abundantly clear that UvA can do more and by doing so, provide knowledge and inspiration to our partners in the Metropolitan Area and beyond. Accordingly, the university wishes to assume a pioneering role and adopt a clear and ambitious vision concerning sustainability. This includes further integration of sustainability concepts into all aspects and layers of the UvA.

Key points for the remaining years of this Strategic Plan:

- Design a comprehensive sustainability programme (across education, research, impact and infrastructure) with a clear and ambitious vision, shared goals and concrete strategies
- Designate appropriate and competent staff and management who are made responsible for the implementation of the programme, and who will help secure the inclusion of sustainability aspects in all UvA's agendas
- Ensure that the current status, successes and initiatives regarding sustainability are clearly and regularly communicated to both students and staff, and create transparency on the implementation of the programme and the general status of sustainability at the UvA
- Offer sufficient opportunities to students and staff to voice their opinions and ideas on the implementation of sustainability policies.

A summary of the key points from the midterm review:

1. Offer high quality, bilingual education to all eligible, motivated and ambitious students.
2. Engage our students in preparing for a global and sustainable future.
3. Enhance domestic and international diversity as a driver of educational quality.
4. Strengthen the impact, visibility and quality of our research through open science and interdisciplinarity.
5. Ensure equal valuation of teaching and research effort.
6. Recognize academic leadership and professional and personal development, including reduction of workload related pressure, among our academic values
7. Foster the discourse on good research practices and academic integrity at all levels, from students to professors.
8. Forge stronger bonds with partners in the Amsterdam area, our living lab.
9. Extend a welcome to organizations and businesses with an interest in working with us.
10. Engrain the Sustainable Development Goals in every day UvA life, including services, campuses, education and research.



Credits

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