



University of Amsterdam Recognition & Rewards

Position paper Recognition & Rewards University of Amsterdam | June 2022

The Recognition & Rewards Committee advises the Executive Board to set up a long-term programme to give direction to the envisaged cultural and organisational changes on the basis of this recommendation. Where possible, it recommends building on existing policy initiatives, reviewing policy and developing new policy. As part of this process, the Committee recommends the introduction of a broader focus aimed at policy in relation to PhD candidates, postdoctoral researchers, lecturers and support staff.

1. Introduction

Both nationally and internationally, there is a need to rethink the system for recognising and rewarding academics. There is a widely held belief that the current recognition and reward system fails to do justice to the full spectrum of academic tasks. Although almost all academics acknowledge the importance of a balanced reward system for performance in the areas of teaching, research and social impact, a different system of recognition and rewards is challenging to implement in practice. In this position paper, the Recognition & Rewards Committee advises the Executive Board on the next steps in the Recognition & Rewards project within the UvA for the period 2022-2027.

1.1 Outline of the issue

In rewarding academic performance, the focus is largely placed on research and a limited set of quantitative quality indicators (such as number of publications, journal impact factor and h-index). The advantage of using such quantitative indicators is that it ensures consistency and creates clarity. The danger, however, is that the evaluation of academic performance is reduced to what is measurable and objectifiable. This means that too little attention is paid to both performance in the areas of teaching, social impact and leadership (also patient care) and less easily measurable performance in the area of research.

It also means that there is less focus within the organisation on the development of the knowledge and skills needed for these tasks. At the same time, the emphasis is on individual performance whereas academia is increasingly characterised by multidisciplinary teamwork.

All of this results in a system in which academics are not evenly rewarded and that is marked by a structurally high workload. This fails to contribute towards the quality of teaching and research and has consequences that include the departure of young, talented academics from the university.

1.2 National and international frameworks

A different Recognition & Rewards system means a culture change: a shift away from the one-sided focus on quantitative indicators and towards a system that takes into account the entire spectrum of academic tasks and results. This has implications for all parts of the organisation and is not something for which one clear path can be identified or that will be achieved in the short term. It requires change at various levels of the University of Amsterdam (UvA) and a fundamentally different perspective on the part of those responsible at these levels. It also requires coordination throughout the academic world at local (university), national and international level.

The commitment to Recognition & Rewards is also clearly evident from the national position paper ‘Room for everyone’s talent’¹ (2019). This paper sets out the following ambitions:

- To diversify and energise career paths;
- To achieve a balance between the individual and the collective;
- To focus on quality;
- To promote open science;
- To promote academic leadership.

The principles behind Recognition & Rewards also come to the fore in the 2021-2027² Strategy Evaluation Protocol for the evaluation of research and research policy.

The importance of change in the area of Recognition & Rewards is also being emphasised at international level. A good example is the paper ‘A Pathway towards Multidimensional Academic Careers’ (2022) published by the League of European Research Universities (LERU)³, which makes recommendations to achieve a more balanced reward system for academic performance. Other examples are the ‘San Francisco Declaration on Research Assessment’⁴ and the ‘Career Framework for University Teaching’⁵.

1 Position paper ‘Room for everyone’s talent’ (2019) of the VSNU, NFWO, KNAW, NWO and ZonMw

2 Strategy Evaluation Protocol (SEP) 2021-2027 adopted by VSNU, NWO and KNAW 2020.

3 A Pathway towards Multidimensional Academic Careers - A LERU Framework for the Assessment of Researchers 2022

4 San Francisco Declaration on Research Assessment (DORA) 2012

5 Career Framework for University Teaching - The Royal Academy of Engineering/Ruth Graham, London 2018



2. Reader's guide and purpose of this paper

In this paper we outline the issues in the area of Recognition & Rewards as they specifically apply to, and are experienced at, the UvA.

Following a description of the Committee's assignment, we suggest a number of potential solutions and make recommendations that can support the necessary culture change. Our suggestions and recommendations are based on discussions with representatives of the academic community and UvA support staff. The Committee has also taken into account the results of a digital dialogue among UvA academic staff. Additional information on the working procedures and composition of the Committee can be found in the appendix.

2.1 Purpose

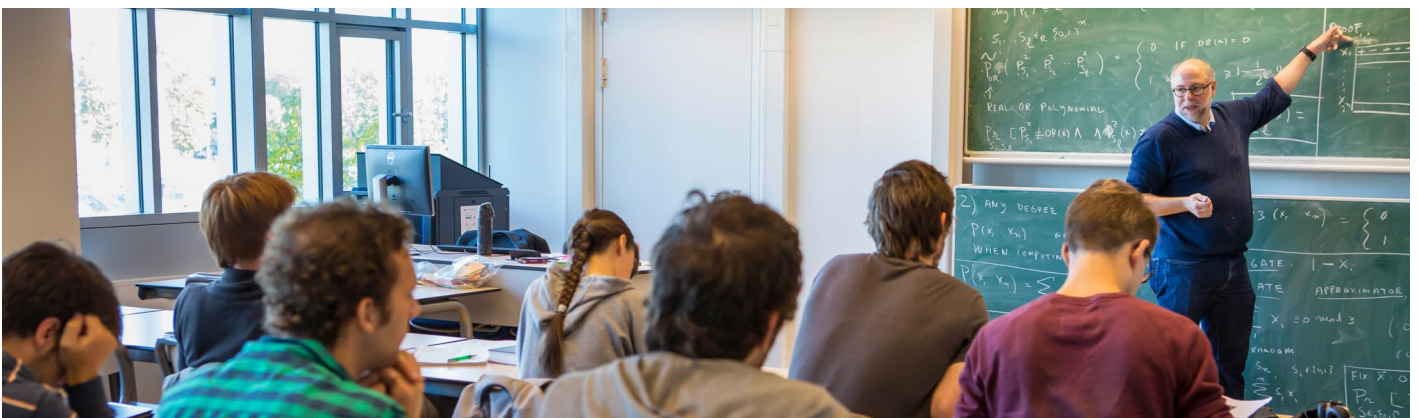
This position paper has a dual purpose. Firstly, it reports on the findings from the discussions the Committee has held with representatives of the academic community in a number of forums. It then goes on to outline a path forward. The purpose of the Recognition & Rewards project is to ensure that we are a university where staff feel appreciated and that provides scope for everyone's talent to flourish without everyone having to excel at everything.

This means that, in both our communications and actions, we must promote the message that excelling is much more than meeting various quantitative research indicators. In doing so, it is important that a mutual dialogue is established and maintained within the UvA community about the values that should be prioritised in academia and about how we can give tangible substance to these values.

3. The Committee's assignment

In response to the national position paper 'Room for everyone's talent', every Dutch university set up a committee to stimulate discussion about Recognition & Rewards within the institution. The UvA Committee was instructed to start to give concrete form to Recognition & Rewards within the UvA, thereby encouraging and supporting the process of change.

The assignment given to the UvA-wide Recognition & Rewards Committee centres around three themes: Firstly, differentiated career paths focusing on the reward system for core tasks in the area of teaching, research and social impact/valorisation, but also on leadership and organisation. The Committee places a special focus here on the reward system for teaching – in both the 'conventional' career paths and in careers in which teaching is the central area of interest.



Secondly, due to the increased technological capabilities and complexity of interdisciplinary social challenges, teamwork between groups of academics in an interdisciplinary and often global context has become a more important element of modern academia. This requires skills such as the ability to function well within, and to lead, interdisciplinary teams, however it also requires ways in which team performance can be rewarded.

Thirdly, the importance of leadership for the creation of a culture that centres around individual wishes and variation and that allows a responsive approach is evident. The question is, on the one hand, how supervisors at the UvA are educated and trained in this culture and, on the other hand, how they are supported in daily practice.

This does not mean that other topics that are covered by or associated with the Recognition & Rewards debate should be ignored. However, these topics are discussed in detail elsewhere and have therefore been left out of the scope of the Committee's assignment. For example, a considerable number of steps have already been taken in the area of open science under the guidance of a university-wide coordinator, while the UvA faculties and services are addressing workload in the context of the 'Managing your workload' project.

Although this paper focuses on academic staff in the line of assistant professor/associate professor/full professor, the Committee emphasises that the principles behind Recognition & Rewards also apply to both the other academic staff and to support staff.

4. Findings

Based on discussions with representatives of the academic community and the broad dialogue among UvA academics, the Committee notes that the ambitions in the area of Recognition & Rewards are broadly shared within the UvA. Although experience of the issue differs for each individual, position and field of expertise, the academic community in general supports a more balanced system for recognising and rewarding academic performance. Particular reference was made to a greater appreciation of teaching and team performance. In this context, a number of important observations are made that must be taken into account in the further development of Recognition & Rewards within the UvA:

- The current Recognition & Rewards system is partly inherent to the academic system and the context in which academics work. Actual change requires an integrated approach at all levels within, but most importantly also outside, the organisation. Although improvements are possible in the context of the university, external stimuli maintain the current culture. The structural underfunding of university education and research, the criteria applied to the awarding of grants (and the application pressure this creates), plus career prospects in the international



context in which academics carve out their careers are factors that strongly influence the scope for change in the area of Recognition & Rewards.

- The use of a permanent staff position principle is diametrically opposed to the idea behind Recognition & Rewards. A fundamental change in the area of Recognition & Rewards means that advancement from, for example, assistant professor to associate professor, cannot be dependent on the availability of teaching posts, but must instead be based on the development and performance of the individual academic.
- Quantitative quality indicators are a valuable tool for measuring academic quality, provided they are applied responsibly and support a qualitative evaluation.

The Committee also notes, however, that a great deal is possible in the context of the Recognition & Rewards programme based on the tools already available (e.g. through strategic personnel planning and career development policy). Nevertheless, the use of these options differs within the UvA. There are also good practices at faculty and departmental level that are consistent with Recognition & Rewards and that form a good starting point for the envisaged change. One example is the 2019 Faculty of Science guidelines on appointment and promotion criteria. It is important that these initiatives are used to improve the Recognition & Rewards system. This means that we can learn from each other and should facilitate the mutual exchange of knowledge and experience within the UvA.

The following sections first describe the guiding framework used by the Committee in this advisory report. We then go on to take a closer look at the three previously mentioned themes (diversification of career paths, team science and leadership) from the perspective of Recognition & Rewards.

4.1. General: guiding framework

In structuring this advisory report, the Committee assumed the following principles as a guiding framework:

- Any change in the Recognition & Rewards system must not compromise the quality of teaching and research. We therefore assume incremental adjustments that do justice to the task of the academic and the rewarding of this task.
- The Committee's recommendations must not lead to more work for the individual academic. There is a risk that a broader view of Recognition & Rewards will result in a larger number of (new) criteria used to assess academics.
- A change in the Recognition & Rewards system means a culture change that will affect the entire organisation. Adjustments to procedures and policy can facilitate, promote and embed this change, however its success depends on the willingness of the organisation, its senior officials and the individual academic to put such change into effect;



- It is a case of both recognising and rewarding the performance of tasks in the area of teaching, research and social impact and recognising and rewarding leadership and contribution towards the organisation;
- Promotion to a higher job level is not the only way of recognising and rewarding academic performance. Other possibilities include horizontal career moves or a switch to a non-academic position. However, recognising and rewarding starts with how staff experience their work as a team and how successes are celebrated within the team. Informal communication and being noticed by supervisors and colleagues play an important role here;
- Assessments must be supported by both qualitative and quantitative indicators, whose use and mutual consideration are guided by common sense. The quantitative indicators ideally support a qualitative picture, whereby the importance of the indicators can differ depending on the academic's career level and specific range of duties;
- The University Job Classification areas of activity are a framework within which emphasis can be placed. Academics do not need to excel in all areas at the same time, however we always assume the combination of teaching and research (and patient care for those with clinical responsibility) in the case of a career in the line of assistant professor, associate professor and full professor;
- In order to do justice to differences between disciplines, the UvA-wide vision of Recognition & Rewards must allow scope for differentiation between faculties.

4.2. Theme: differentiated career paths

In the current system, academics are expected to excel in both teaching and research, to carry out research that is socially relevant, and, on top of this, to carry out administrative tasks. However, these expectations are unrealistic given the differences in talent and expertise between academics. They also lack the time required to pay sufficient attention to all these tasks. This can result in work stress and academics that leave academia early.

By allowing specialisation in teaching, research and leadership, we acknowledge that the university's core tasks are carried out as a team and nobody needs to excel in all areas. This means that academic teams are composed on the basis of complementarity of knowledge and skills to ensure that the core tasks are carried out at team level. The guiding principle here is that there always needs to be a combination of teaching and research. Moreover, to ensure consistency, transparency is a key requirement when it comes to career prospects, appointments, promotions and other tokens of appreciation.



Recommendations: differentiated career paths*1. Dynamic academic profiles*

We strive for flexibility and a tailored approach through the use of dynamic academic profiles. This means that each academic can have different duties in the areas of teaching, research and leadership, resulting in differentiation in academic careers. The guiding principle is that the thresholds for teaching and research established for the role at faculty level are always met. Because wishes and needs can vary over the course of a career, it must be possible to make different choices in consultation with a supervisor. The new profiles are then integrated into the recruitment & selection, appointment and promotion procedures and the annual appraisal cycle;

2. Indicators and measurement tools

By creating a better balance within the appointment and promotion criteria, we ensure that less easily measurable performance in the areas of teaching, research, valorisation, organisation and leadership is also recognised and rewarded. This means that we need to develop new indicators or measurement tools where necessary;

3. Academic portfolio

In the case of appointments and promotions, we recommend the use of a portfolio that addresses performance in the areas of teaching, research, social impact, leadership and contribution to the organisation. Contribution towards the team should also be reported for these areas. The portfolio also looks at the employee's personal ambitions and development;

4. Additional funding from the Ministry of Education, Culture and Science

To encourage the faculties to work on differentiation in career paths, the Committee recommends spending additional funding from the Ministry of Education, Culture and Science in a way that demonstrably contributes to the desired differentiation in career paths.

4.3. Theme: teamwork/team science

The performance of the university's core teaching and research tasks is entirely dependent on collaboration between individual academics. All academics at the UvA function within the context of various teams in which the tasks are divided (e.g. the department, research groups and lecturer teams). In addition, academics collaborate at national and international level in multidisciplinary research projects. A balanced system of Recognition & Rewards also means that both the individual contribution and the contribution towards the various teams of which the academic is a member are recognised and rewarded. Part of the evaluation of individual academics must therefore take place at team level.



It should be noted here that the Committee acknowledges that the scope to assemble a team is limited in practice. There is often not enough time or scope to find a candidate who meets all requirements as well as perfectly complementing the talents and skills already present within the team. The use of a permanent staff position principle certainly does not help. It is therefore desirable to be able to anticipate changes and adapt the workforce to such changes in a timely manner.

Although this paper does not focus on support staff, the Committee emphasises that a balanced basis for recognition and rewards means that the contribution of these staff towards the university must also be recognised and rewarded. An important difference here is that the permanent staff position principle applies to support staff, whereas this is often not the case for academic staff.

Recommendations: teamwork/team science

5. Strategic personnel planning

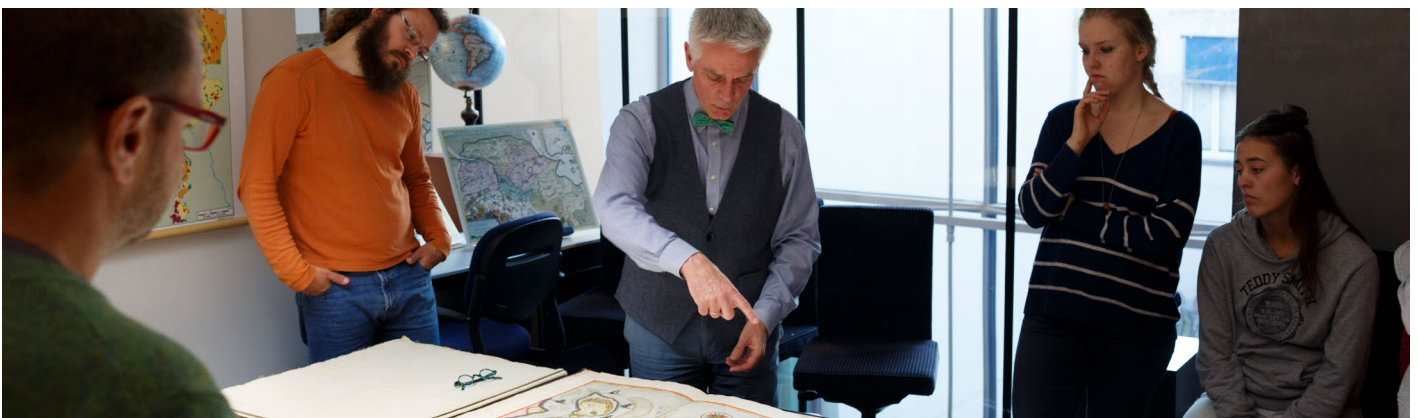
The division of tasks in the areas of teaching, research, valorisation and organisation/leadership must take place at team level. The guiding principle is complementarity of knowledge and skills, which requires a periodic reassessment of the division of tasks in response to current events and changes in the wishes and needs of the team members. This can be done using the strategic personnel planning tools already available within the UvA. We therefore recommend that differentiation of career paths and team science are included in the strategic personnel planning framework.

6. The annual consultation

When assessing academics, we assume a balance between individual performance and contribution towards the various teams to which the academic belongs. We therefore integrate team contribution and team performance into the annual appraisal cycle.

7. Team spirit and sense of community

It is important to cultivate a sense of community and team spirit at all levels of the organisation. This process starts when a person enters employment and remains relevant throughout their UvA career. Interpersonal recognition and rewards are very important in this regard. Examples include giving and receiving compliments, expressing gratitude, showing empathy and actively listening. Although supervisors and other senior staff play an important role in this process, by adopting these behaviours everyone can help to transform the Recognition & Rewards system.



4.4. Theme: leadership

Much is expected of supervisors in achieving the ambitions in the area of Recognition & Rewards. The differentiation and energising of career paths largely depends on how supervisors put together their team and recognise and reward employees' various talents and contributions. Supervisors must also ensure that the various talents and competences in the team are in keeping with the requirements of the teaching and research programmes and the objectives of the unit. In addition, supervisors are responsible for ensuring a safe and healthy working environment in which academics have the scope to develop their talents and teamwork is encouraged.

Recognising and rewarding staff with a leading role or position means recognising leadership as a craft.

Recommendations: leadership

8. *UvA vision on leadership*

Leadership does not happen automatically. This means that we need to actively look for academics with leadership qualities and pay attention to the development of leadership skills throughout a person's academic career. It is also important that leadership programmes explicitly focus on how supervisors are expected to implement the Recognition & Rewards system.

9. *Recognition of administrative duties*

Leadership is not just a condition for achieving change in the area of Recognition & Rewards. It is important that we also recognise and reward leadership performance itself. We expect senior academics to take on extensive administrative duties during certain periods in their career, for example in the role of head of department, research director, director of education or programme director. Recognising and rewarding of these duties means that we must assume a realistic time spent carrying out these tasks, but also that we need to take these tasks into account in the appointment and promotion process.

10. *Proper administrative support*

It is unrealistic to expect academics who take on a temporary management role alongside their academic duties to have a command of all aspects of management. We therefore recommend that supervisors are supported as much as possible with expertise from support staff and user-friendly digital tools.



11. Leadership qualification

In view of the expectations we have of supervisors, we recommend that those who take on formal management roles are required to obtain a leadership qualification. Although leadership qualities are important for all academics, they are all the more important for those who fulfil a formal leadership role. This requires a focus on the development of leadership skills throughout a person's academic career.

5. Conclusion

A great deal is already happening within the UvA that fits in well with, or is in keeping with, the Recognition & Rewards project. The Committee therefore recommends that, where possible, existing policy initiatives are built on and Recognition & Rewards is seen as an opportunity to review this policy and to develop new policy. In terms of HR policy and practice, this includes a reassessment of recruitment and promotion practices, result and development interviews, leadership development and reward systems. In general, the programme must result in a new system of diversified, honest and transparent academic careers with a focus on personal development, team performance and team strategies.

However, a shift in the Recognition & Rewards system cannot be achieved through policy changes. The result is dependent on the willingness to implement such a shift both inside and outside the UvA. It requires a cultural and organisational change whose effects should become noticeable in the coming years. It is important here that there is sufficient scope in the next stage of the Recognition & Rewards programme to address the concerns and doubts of the academic community.

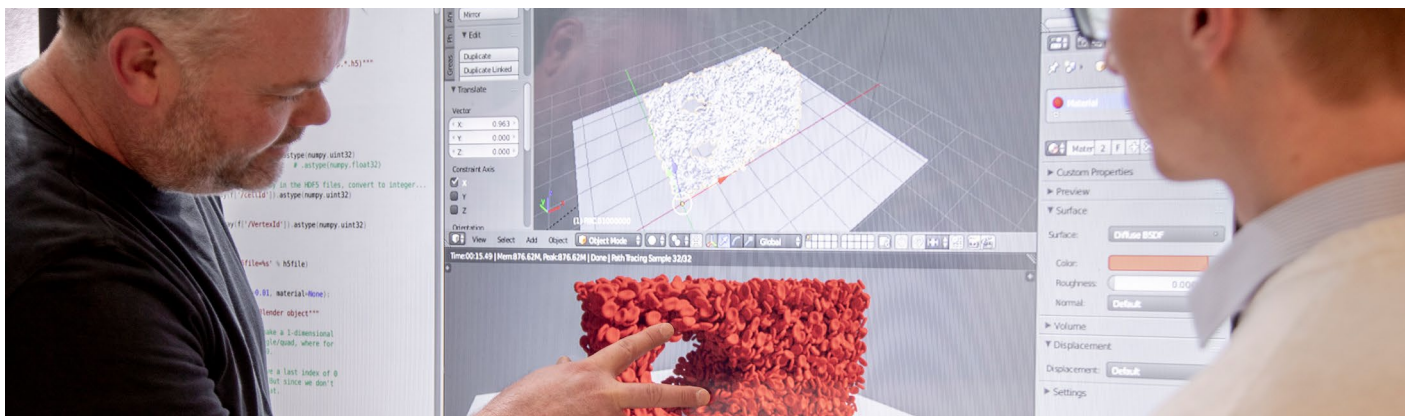
Although the recognising and rewarding of lecturers, PhD candidates, postdoctoral researchers and support staff fell outside the scope of the Committee's assignment, it is clear that the principles behind Recognition & Rewards are also relevant to these groups. With regard to lecturers, major steps are being taken with the development of the lecturer policy. The Committee recommends that the next stage of the Recognition & Rewards process includes an evaluation of the policy and regulations in relation to PhD candidates and postdoctoral researchers.



Next stage

In the UNL Teaching & Research Steering Committee, the Dutch universities undertook on 1 October 2021 to commit at least two FTE per university to achieving the ambitions in the area of Recognition & Rewards over the next four years. Since the publication of this paper marks the end of the Committee's duties, it has the following recommendations with regard to the next stage of the Recognition & Rewards project within the UvA:

- That a professor with administrative experience is appointed Recognition & Rewards leader within the UvA. This professor should also represent the UvA in national consultative structures in the area of Recognition & Rewards;
- That a senior academic within each faculty is appointed Recognition & Rewards ambassador;
- That a Recognition & Rewards project leader is appointed to support and bring together the various initiatives in the area of Recognition & Rewards;
- That one or more UvA-wide focus groups of academics are set up to test the various policy initiatives in relation to the basic principles behind Recognition & Rewards.



Appendix 1: Working procedures and composition of the Recognition and Rewards Committee

Committee working procedures

The Committee was launched in 2021 and, as a result, had to deal with COVID-19 measures. It was not possible to organise physical meetings and the switch to working from home was not always easy. In addition to the Committee's monthly meetings, three focus groups were set up to explore the themes of differentiated career paths, team science and leadership in the context of Recognition & Rewards. These groups were made up of committee members supplemented with expertise from the faculties and Executive Staff. The team science group rapidly reached the conclusion that, in the context of Recognition & Rewards, 'team science' related to collaboration as a team in a broad sense (teamwork) and not solely to collaboration within a research project (team science). Although the rewarding of academic contribution in large research projects is an important theme, the differences between disciplines are such that it makes little sense to make general statements on this subject. In addition to the conversations within the Committee and the focus groups, discussions were held with other forums such as the Doctoral Students' Council and the Senate. A digital dialogue was also organised among all academic staff employed by the UvA. This paper has been drafted on the basis of input from all these discussions.

Composition of the Committee

In addition to the Chair, the UvA Recognition & Rewards Committee is made up of representatives of each faculty, supported by an HR project leader and policy adviser.

R. (Rens) Vliegthart (Professor in the Faculty of Social and Behavioural Sciences) Committee Chair

D. (Denise) Duijster (Assistant Professor at the Academic Centre for Dentistry in Amsterdam)

J.L. (Hans) Tol (AMC Professor)

E. (Elinor) Fry (Assistant Professor at the Amsterdam Law School)/ M. (Maria) Weimer (Associate Professor at the Amsterdam Law School)

C.T. (Corine) Boon (Associate Professor in the Faculty of Economics and Business)

J. (Jacques) Bos (Associate Professor in the Faculty of Humanities)

T. (Thijs) Bol Associate Professor (Associate Professor in the Faculty of Social and Behavioural Sciences)

P.J. (Paul) de Jong Professor (Professor in the Faculty of Science)

M. (Marjan) van Hunnik HRM Project Leader (until 2022)

P.C. (Peter) Boelsma HRM Policy Adviser