



Jury report - VU Amsterdam's Education Awards

New Year's Gala 26 January 2023

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Contents

The Thesis Awards	4	Van der Duijn Schouten Teaching Award	9
Conditions	4	Conditions	9
Criteria	4	Criteria	9
		Finalists	10
Bachelor Thesis Award	4	Sebastiaan Dönszelmann (FGB)	10
Finalists	4	Yolande Voskes (GNK)	10
Nikita Kors (Faculty of Science)	4	Yvette Taminiau (Faculty of Social Sciences)	11
Philipp Sommerhalter (Faculty of Science)	5	Winner:	
Regina van de Wall (FRT)	5	Yvette Taminiau (Faculty of Social Sciences)	11
Merel Stroes (SBE)	5		
Winner: Merel Stroes (SBE)	6	Teacher Talent Award	12
		Conditions	12
Master's Thesis Award	6	Criteria	12
Finalists	6		
Bjørn Kwee (Faculty of Science)	6	Report of the University Student Council (USC)	12
Tahmina Arzomand (GNK)	6	The finalists	13
Charlotte Parree (Faculty of Law)	6	Geert Schenk	13
Winner: Charlotte Parree (Faculty of Law)	7	Lachezar Yanev	13
		Wiebe de Jong	13
Student Talent Award	7	The winner: Lachezar Yanev (RCH)	14
Conditions	7		
Criteria	7		
Finalists	8		
Michael Elizabeth Gasior (Faculty of Behavioural and Movement Sciences)	8		
Valerie Dupuits (SBE)	8		
Amarylle van Doorn (GNK)	8		
Winner: Amarylle van Doorn (GNK)	9		

The Thesis Awards

Only the best theses from VU Amsterdam are eligible for the Thesis Awards. It is important to remember that the students nominated for this award have already undergone and won an internal selection procedure at the faculties. When choosing a winner, the jury not only considers the academic quality of the thesis but also assesses its societal and scientific relevance, originality and management summary.

This year, the jury received 13 bachelor's theses and 10 master's theses. Of these, the jury selected four finalists for the Bachelor's Thesis Award and three finalists for the Master's Thesis Award. A separate Thesis Committee, comprising one full professor, one teacher and one alum, subsequently chose a winner of the Bachelor's Award and a winner of the Master's Award. According to the jury, the nominees have every reason to be extremely proud of the theses they have written. The winners of the Bachelor's and Master's Thesis Awards each receive €2,000 and are linked by the Office for University Relations and Fundraising (DURF) to a VU Amsterdam alum who may be of interest to them.

Conditions

To be eligible for the Thesis Awards the student must in any case satisfy the following conditions:

- The final projects of the following types of degree programmes at VU Amsterdam are eligible for the Thesis Awards: Bachelor's, Master's and Research Master's.
- The final projects are nominated by the Faculty Board; students are not permitted to nominate their own final project.
- Ideally, the final projects nominated should have been awarded a grade of 9 or above. An exception may be made for final projects that have been awarded a grade of 7.5, provided that they are accompanied by a thoroughly substantiated recommendation.
- The final projects nominated must be accompanied by a management summary in Dutch or English. The summary that has already been included in the final project may form part of the management summary.
- A final project produced by several students is also eligible for an award. Any sum awarded will be divided among all contributors. In that context, it is advantageous if the group of students is diverse.
- Projects coproduced by students and staff are not eligible.
- Eligibility is restricted to final projects graded in the 2021-2022 academic year.

Criteria

To be eligible for the Thesis Awards the students were assessed on the basis of the following criteria:

- Research quality and originality, with the following subcriteria:
 - Internal logic of the text
 - Originality
 - Readability
- Societal relevance and relevance to the field
- The ability of the student to make a management summary of the thesis that can be understood easily by laypeople.
- Alignment with one of the three values of VU Amsterdam: open, responsible and personally engaged.

Bachelor Thesis Award

Finalists

- **Nikita Kors (Faculty of Science)**

Thesis title: The Added Value of Local Treatment for Patient with Multiple (≥10) Colorectal Liver Metastases (CRLM): An Amsterdam Colorectal Liver Met Registry (AmCORE) Based Study

In her thesis, Nikita examines the usefulness of the topical treatment methods radiofrequency ablation and microwave ablation in colon cancer patients with a large number of liver metastases. Nikita shows with her research that if sufficient functional liver tissue is retained, there is no upper limit to the number of metastases that can be successfully be treated topically. Consequently, topical treatment using radiofrequency ablation and microwave ablation is shown to be a valuable treatment option regardless of the number of metastases. Previously, there were no alternative treatment options for colon cancer patients with many metastases. Through this research, Nikita gives them the chance of greater life expectancy and potential long-term benefits.

The jury's views

The jury describes Nikita's research as a breakthrough in medical science and very societally relevant, as well as clearly documented. However, the jury does make the critical comment that a small part of an ongoing research project is presented in this thesis. Consequently, the jury would have preferred to have seen what value Nikita herself added to the research as a whole. The jury would also have liked to have seen a greater degree of creativity in the thesis.

- **Philipp Sommerhalter (Faculty of Science)**

Thesis title: Labels, Cards, and Simulation-Based Analysis for Energy Efficiency and Sustainability in Data Centers

How can we make the increasing number of data centres more energy-efficient? That is the question at the heart of Philipp's thesis. He is developing a tool for this, which on the basis of eight different criteria and real-time measurements can generate data cards that index the energy efficiency of data centres. The purpose of these DCE Efficiency cards is to communicate the sustainability of data centres at different knowledge levels to the widest possible audience.

Secondly, Philipp is studying how the knowledge he has gathered can be deployed to design and run data centres more efficiently. To that end, he has developed a model that allows the sustainability of European data centres to be measured. This has been achieved by considering a variety of methods of electricity generation, greenhouse gas emission and real-time network energy consumption. This model, in combination with real-time data from data centres, can simulate complex scenarios. One of the outcomes of the simulations is that the location of data centres and the times at which they are overloaded have a drastic effect on the emissions of the data centres. With his thesis, Philipp generates awareness of the energy consumption of data centres and provides a tool and model that allows this also to be monitored by diverse stakeholders.

The jury's views

The jury considered that, with his tool and model for energy-efficient data centres, Philipp has created something special. Moreover, his research is well embedded in theory and his considerations on the roles of different stakeholders are strong. On the other hand, the jury felt that the thesis could have been written in a more accessible style and that the added value of the research could have been set out more clearly.

- **Regina van de Wall (FRT)**

Thesis title: A New Armenia

In her thesis, Regina investigates how Armenians in the Netherlands use religion to cope with the transgenerational trauma of the Armenian genocide. She has looked in particular at lived religion, i.e. religious activities and traditions that take place outside the sphere of the church. Regina collected data for her research by conducting semi-structured interviews with a small but diverse group of Armenians in the Netherlands.

Three important themes emerge from the outcomes of her research, which together provide an answer to her research question. These themes are the overestimated cultural influence of the double diaspora on the formation of a new collective Armenian-Dutch identity and community; the different ways in which Armenians in the Netherlands use theology to reflect on the genocide; and the resilience shown by Armenians in the Netherlands by using social media to build a community with other Armenians in the diaspora. Regina's research can serve as an example for future research into the relationship between transgenerational trauma, diaspora and religion in a variety of cultural contexts.

The jury's views

The jury considered the way in which Regina links the old and the new in this thesis to be ingenious. It covers a very wide range of aspects and the research is very interesting and original in terms of subject matter and structure. However, the jury was unable to agree on the readability – some found the structure clear and logical, while others found it hard to follow and would have liked the thesis to conclude with a clear answer to the main and subsidiary questions.

- **Merel Stroes (SBE)**

Thesis title: Matching in the mental health care sector: The effect of improved matching on the waiting time

The objective of Merel's research is to cut waiting times in healthcare by reducing the high dropout percentage among patients. In Merel's view, the high dropout percentage can be reduced by improving the matching process between patients and care providers by means of a personality test that gauges their compatibility.

Merel developed three algorithms that enabled her to optimise the balance between the quality of the match, the relationship between the care provider and the patient, and the waiting times. When applied to the data, it turned out that two algorithms resulted in a reduction in patient dropout of between 17.5 and 22 per cent, thereby also shortening the waiting lists and waiting times. With her thesis, Merel demonstrates that techniques used in Econometrics and Operations Research can be deployed successfully to solve pressing problems in other fields.

The jury's views

Surprising, original and creative were words that frequently crossed the jury's lips when discussing Merel's thesis. The jury was unanimously enthusiastic about the unexpected way in which, in her thesis, Merel applies econometric concepts to a major, societally relevant healthcare problem. Furthermore, her research is rock solid in terms of structure, readability and logic.

The winner of the Bachelor Thesis Award is Merel Stroes (SBE)

The jury felt that assessing the Bachelor's theses was like comparing apples and oranges. Each of the theses had its plus and minus points. In reaching a decision and selecting the winner of the Bachelor's Thesis Award the jury attached great importance to the criterion of originality. Which thesis shows the greatest originality? When this question was asked, the jury thought immediately of Merel's thesis. The jury members feel that with the cross-disciplinary approach to her thesis Merel demonstrates a high degree of creativity and problem-solving ability. In addition, the jury was very pleased to see that in Merel's thesis a problem could be tackled using an apparently simple approach. In the opinion of the jury, that made Merel the deserved winner of the Bachelor's Thesis Award.

The jury members wonder how Merel came up with this subject and are very keen to see the application of her model in practice. They would also like to hear Merel's views on how physicians will react when confronted with this model.

Master's Thesis Award

Finalists

- **Bjørn Kwee (Faculty of Science)**

Thesis title: Bidirectional Encoder Representations of the TCR-pMHC interaction improve prediction of CD8+ T cell specificity

T cells have receptors, which allow them to recognise the short protein sequences of antigens in the blood, known as epitopes. To recognise epitopes, T cells trigger an appropriate immune response. However, because of the great diversity of receptors and epitopes it is hard to predict which epitope will be recognised by which receptor.

In the central hypothesis of his thesis, Bjørn suggests that accurately predicting receptor-epitope recognition requires a model that is able to recognise the patterns of amino acids efficiently. Bjørn developed a deep learning model that focuses on understanding the role that those amino acids play in the interaction between T cell receptors and epitopes.

He then created a database with annotations of T cell receptors and epitopes that could be used as input to train the model with supercomputers. The research results show that, by teaching it amino acid patterns, Bjørn's model is more successful than other models in predicting receptor-epitope recognition. With this research, Bjørn makes a significant contributing to the advancement of research into immunotherapy for infectious

diseases, cancer, autoimmune disorders and organ transplantation.

The jury's views

The jury considered that Bjørn has made the added societal value of his research very clear in his thesis. In the opinion of the jury, the unexpected way in which Bjørn has used a language model to solve an obstacle in medical research speaks volumes about his creativity. However, the jury would like to have seen a concrete link to practical applications – what can we do with the model now that we can make a better prediction of the T cell receptor-epitope interaction?

- **Tahmina Arzomand (GNK)**

Thesis title: Wave-CAIPI is an efficient and sensitive method for paramagnetic rim lesion detection

The aim of Tahmina's thesis research is to improve the diagnostic procedure for multiple sclerosis. According to Tahmina, the biomarker Paramagnetic Rim Lesion (PRL) has the potential to make a diagnosis of MS both more accurately and more quickly. Researching PRLs in a clinical setting is, however, both labour-intensive and time-consuming. The relatively new MRI sequence Wave-CAIPI could reduce the time it takes to investigate PRLs by 65%.

It emerges from the research results that Wave-CAIPI is just as good as other standard MRI sequences in detecting PRLs and is also more time-efficient. Unfortunately, the results showed no connection between PRLs and the invalidity suffered by MS patients. However, Tahmina is greatly encouraged that this connection has been demonstrated in other research and she recommends Wave-CAIPI as a research method for future research into PRLs.

The jury's views

The jury found that the societal relevance of the research is well reflected in Tahmina's thesis. It was clear from her presentation that the subject of multiple sclerosis has concerned her for a long while and that she has pursued it tenaciously here. This is apparent from her lucidly written thesis research.

- **Charlotte Parree (Faculty of Law)**

Thesis title: Lijden kent geen leeftijd: actieve levensbeëindiging wel (Suffering has no minimum age; active termination of life does)

In her thesis, Charlotte examines a gap in euthanasia law for young children. A focal point of her research is a bill put forward in 2020 by the then Health Minister, Hugo de Jonge, that extends the ground for exemption from criminal liability

for physicians who actively terminate the life of children aged between 1 and 12.

The context of this bill is harrowing: terminally ill children aged between 1 and 12 are outside the scope of the current euthanasia legislation and cannot therefore submit a legally valid request for euthanasia. Their legal representatives cannot do it for them either and it is a criminal offence for physicians to honour such requests. Consequently, these children have to suffer unnecessarily until they die.

In Charlotte's view, de Jonge's bill in its present form leans towards the legal perspective of the physician and less towards that of the child. Her research demonstrates that the bill is inadequately aligned with the rights of the child, as provided for in the International Convention on the Rights of the Child and the European Convention on Human Rights. At the end of her thesis she makes six recommendations for improving the bill. Charlotte has thereby made a valuable contribution to complementing Dutch euthanasia legislation and to a dignified end of life for terminally ill children aged between 1 and 12.

The jury's views

The jury commends Charlotte for exposing a distressing gap in the euthanasia legislation that deserves more attention. The jury was impressed by Charlotte's interdisciplinary approach to critically examining the bill that aims to close that gap. Her comfortable writing style and her clear argumentation and logic make her thesis very easy to read and follow. With her thesis, and the moral and ethical aspect and potential political impact of the research, Charlotte stimulates the societal debate about euthanasia law.

The winner of the Master's Thesis Award is Charlotte Parree (Faculty of Law)

The jury was spoilt for choice when deciding the winner of the Master's Thesis Award – all three theses have clear societal and professional relevance, be it medical or legal. Additionally, all the theses are well structured in terms of logic and readability and are in keeping with the values of VU Amsterdam: open, responsible and personally engaged.

In its final verdict, the jury therefore took particular account of the tangible link between the research and society. Which thesis includes results or recommendations that have concrete societal impact? In that respect, Charlotte's thesis stood out. In her thesis Charlotte makes concrete recommendations for improving former minister de Jonge's bill. The jury also considered that, with her thesis, Charlotte stimulates the debate on a topic about which there is still a lot of unease in society.

Student Talent Award

The Student Talent Award is an award relating to a student's exceptional societal, sporting or cultural achievement. Candidates for the Student Talent Award distinguish themselves by their ability to act as a role model for other students. The core competencies required are a talent for organisation, resilience, a sense of enterprise and an intrinsic motivation to push the boundaries. The winner of the award is therefore also an ambassador for young talent at VU Amsterdam.

This year, the jury received a variety of nominations for the Student Talent Award from the faculties. Along with their excellent academic results, outstanding presentation and drive, this year's nominees have surprised the jury yet again with their activities. The jury is therefore of the opinion that all three candidates are among the very best that VU Amsterdam has to offer and encourages all the participants to continue their fantastic work.

The winner of the Student Talent Award receives €4,000 and is linked by Alumni Relations to a VU Amsterdam alum who may be of interest to them.

Conditions

To be eligible for the Student Talent Award the student must in any case satisfy the following conditions:

- A final-year Bachelor's student or Master's student
- Registered as a full-time student at VU Amsterdam
- No more than 30 years old
- Study delay of no more than one year
- An average grade of at least 7.0.

Criteria

To be eligible for the Student Talent Award the students are assessed on the basis of the following criteria:

- The student makes an exceptional societal or cultural contribution.
- The student has a talent for organisation, administrative talent, creative talent and/or sporting talent.
- The student has a pioneering spirit, is enterprising, intrinsically motivated and resilient, and wants to utilise all their talents.
- The student possesses qualities that enable them to act as a role model for other students.
- The student is a bridge-builder and is committed to VU Amsterdam.

Finalists

- **Michael Elizabeth Gasior (Faculty of Behavioural and Movement Sciences)**

When Michael came to Amsterdam in August 2020 to study at VU Amsterdam as an international student, her clear intention was to get as much as possible out of her student days. While taking a Research Master's course in Clinical and Developmental Psychopathology she not only achieved outstanding grades but was also very involved in a variety of roles at the Faculty of Behavioural and Movement Sciences and within VU Amsterdam as a whole. She worked for services such as the Student Wellbeing Point, she represented VU Amsterdam as a member of the Erasmus Student Network and she acted as an ambassador for international students. Both teachers and students praise Michael for her unmatched work ethos and the genuine pleasure she gets from helping others and seeing them succeed in their undertakings.

Away from VU Amsterdam, Michael also does high-level voluntary work for various non-profit organisations. She is associated with the Hugh O'Brien Youth Leadership Program and HLAB Japan, two educational non-profits that organise and facilitate cross-cultural teaching in America and Japan respectively for international secondary school pupils from across the world.

The jury's views

Even though Michael had to attend the interview round for the Student Talent Award digitally and remotely, her enthusiasm for VU Amsterdam made the jury members feel that she was actually in the room with them. Her comprehensive CV demonstrates not only dedication and compassion but also an enormous drive and zest for life that she is only too happy to share with others. The Faculty of Behavioural and Movement Sciences describes Michael as a role model – someone you can turn to in times of crisis, as well as when you have something to celebrate. The jury could not agree more.

- **Valerie Dupuits (SBE)**

Valerie is a real go-getter, a sportswoman with an international orientation. After graduating from secondary school, Valerie received a scholarship for her hockey skills and moved to the American city of St. Louis to study at Lindenwood University. During her year there she trained unsparingly as an athlete for the university team and learned the value of dedication, good time management, positivity and perseverance. She clearly took those qualities with her in 2018 when she started a Bachelor's programme in Business Administration at VU Amsterdam.

During her studies she committed herself to helping her

fellow-students in many different ways, for instance as a member of the Business Administration Programme Committee, as a mentor for freshers and as vice-chair of the Faculty Student Council of the School of Business and Economics. In the latter role Valerie made a big impression on the Faculty Board with the tenacity she showed in helping her fellow-students and the Education portfolio holder throughout the COVID-19 crisis. In addition, she carried out voluntary work for the VU Amsterdam buddy programme for international students and the VU Association.

Away from VU Amsterdam, Valerie is involved in societal issues, both here and in far-flung corners of the world. In 2022 she did voluntary work in Cambodia for various projects of the NGO SAUCE. This is an NGO with a focus on development aid with special attention to vulnerable communities in Cambodia. In 2021, as a volunteer for the Senior & Student Foundation, Valerie spent time every week for a year with a vulnerable elderly person who had need of company. In 2023 Valerie is going to the Philippines to contribute, along with her fellow-students, to the Amsterdam Research Project, a project in which talented students are selected to carry out special projects in developing countries. In the Philippines she will investigate, as part of a team, business opportunities for Dutch organisations and companies.

The jury's views

The jury really appreciated that, in the interview with Valerie, she gave concrete examples of how she adds value for her Faculty, for VU Amsterdam and for society. Her two tips for fellow-students and the Executive Board resonated strongly with the jury members. Tip 1: Put less emphasis on attaining high grades, so you will have enough energy left to give something back to the community and to enjoy your student days. Tip 2: In your first year, put more focus on finding out about all the extracurricular activities that students can undertake during their studies. More exceptional all-round talented students will then rise to the surface. The jury heartily endorses those fine words.

- **Amarylle van Doorn (GNK)**

Amar is a student who is not afraid to speak out against injustice. Moreover, she is willing to take action to remedy that injustice, always looking first at what she herself can do to bring this about. Both inside and outside VU Amsterdam she takes a very proactive and engaged stance when it comes to societal issues such as systemic racism, LGBTI+ rights, war, and climate change.

During her Bachelor's programme in Medicine at VU Amsterdam, Amar has devoted herself in various ways to her student association, ASC/AVSV, the VU Amsterdam Medical Faculty

Association, the student-run clinic at the Amsterdam UMC, and the VU Green Office. She was also secretary of the Amsterdam Student Association for Medical students. Now that she is in the Master's phase of her programme she is associated with the CO2 Assistant project, which aims to create greater attention for the climate in the medical curriculum.

Outside VU Amsterdam, Amar has been organising activities for the United Nations Children's Fund since 2012. In 2020 she took part in daily anti-racism protests for a whole year and in 2022, all on her own, she brought humanitarian and medical help to Poland and Ukraine, subsequently also rolling up her sleeves at a mobile medical unit. For the last two years she has been taking part in demonstrations organised by Extinction Rebellion. And amidst all that, Amar successfully completed her degree programme and residency.

The jury's views

In her interview with the jury Amar demonstrated an authenticity that touched the jury members. With her well-considered answers and ability to deal with critical questions she showed that she is not lacking in confidence. The jury thought it was wonderful that by reciting a short poem by Toon Hermans she had the guts to present her vulnerable and philosophical side. The jury admires the outspoken activism that shines through in all her activities. The jury's opinion is that, in its nomination, the Faculty of Humanities says justifiably that Amar is someone who is at the forefront of student life, at the forefront of the medical world and at the forefront of society.

The winner of the Student Talent Award is Amarylle van Doorn (GNK)

It was a difficult decision, but in the end the jury chose Amar as the winner of the Student Talent Award. In the view of the jury she most strongly embodies everything VU Amsterdam stands for: entering into debate and dialogue in an intelligent manner. The jury sees in her an articulate, proactive and socially engaged ambassador who can enable VU Amsterdam to push the boundaries.

In presenting this award the jury is aware that Amar is associated with Extinction Rebellion, a climate movement that is sometimes guilty of criminal acts. The jury has great respect for the fact that in her interview with the jury Amar had the guts to elaborate on it, making it clear that in her activism for Extinction Rebellion she adopts a moderate approach that is in line with the values of VU Amsterdam: open, responsible and personally engaged. With this reassurance the jury unanimously voted her the winner of the Student Talent Award.

Van der Duijn Schouten Teaching Award

The Van der Duijn Schouten Teaching Award is awarded every two years to the teacher with the clearest vision on education and the best innovative teaching skills. As it is awarded only to teachers who have worked at VU Amsterdam for at least ten years, the Van der Duijn Schouten Teaching Award is regarded as a career achievement award for experienced teachers. The award is made in even-to-odd years (e.g. 2022-2023 & 2024-2025).

This year the jury received five nominations for this award. The jury selected three finalists from among those nominees. The finalists were invited for a personal meeting with the jury at which they had to start by giving a brief pitch about their vision on education. In choosing the winner, the jury took the pitches, the interviews and the overall presentation of the candidates into consideration.

The winner of the Van der Duijn Schouten Teaching Award receives €7,000 to be spent on their own teaching. To be eligible for the Van der Duijn Schouten Teaching Award the nominated teachers must in any case satisfy the following conditions:

Conditions

- The teacher has worked for at least ten years at VU Amsterdam.
- The teacher has not previously been nominated for this award.

Criteria

To be eligible for the Van der Duijn Schouten Teaching Award the nominated teachers will be assessed on the basis of the following criteria:

- Quantitative data, such as course evaluations, nominations for other awards (teaching or otherwise), and qualitative criteria (regular guest in the media, symposium speaker) show that the teacher is nationally and/or internationally recognised as an outstanding teacher and/or educational innovator.
- The teacher has a clear vision on education and makes a significant contribution to didactic and substantive educational improvement. He or she makes a demonstrable contribution to maintaining the quality of teaching, not only within the field but also throughout VU Amsterdam and at the national level.

- The teacher is able to present the essence of their specialist field in a compelling and effective manner, has an integrated vision of the relationship between teaching and research or teaching and society, and is capable of implementing this vision in an educational context.
- The teacher encourages students, challenges them to take responsibility for their own learning and development – both personal and professional – and enables them to rise above themselves.

Finalists

- **Sebastiaan Dönszelmann (Faculty of Behavioural and Movement Sciences)**

Sebastiaan describes himself as one of the happiest teachers in the Netherlands. He is a didactician in the broadest sense of the word – he trains teachers and is himself a teacher. Sebastiaan has worked for the VU Amsterdam Teaching Academy since 2004. He is the coordinator there and, as senior lecturer, he is responsible for implementing three courses that are at the heart of the teacher training programmes at VU Amsterdam. He was the driving force behind the development of the blended learning path General Teaching Methodology.

Sebastiaan also engages in many activities away from the VU Amsterdam Teaching Academy. He obtained a doctorate in his specialist field of Modern Foreign Languages in 2019 with a thesis on the use of a target language in the classroom. His research and expertise are used in many places at VU Amsterdam and elsewhere to reinforce the subject and the curricula of bilingual teaching – and language teaching in general. In addition, he has his own consultancy firm, which provides educational coaching, training and advice for teachers and managers in secondary education and high-risk schools with a poor inspection report. He can also be found on committees, panels and editorial boards and is a regular guest at conferences in the field of language and teaching.

‘Learning landscapes theory’ is a focal point of Sebastiaan’s vision on education. That theory describes the educational learning landscape as comprising three islands: practice, research, and design. Building bridges and polders between these islands creates room for innovation and for professional and organisational development. Sebastiaan says that the polders are the places where practitioners, researchers like himself, and developers come together to work on education from the perspective of their own field of expertise. Consequently, he tries to conduct his teaching activities in the polders of the learning landscape whenever possible.

The jury’s views

The interview with Sebastiaan demonstrated to the jury once again the extent of his knowledge in the field of didactics. The jury was gratified to see that the themes from the learning landscapes theory came through very consistently in his answers to the jury’s questions. On a more critical note, the jury felt that in the interview Sebastiaan put a greater emphasis on secondary education and less on VU Amsterdam. As a result, the jury did not get a totally clear picture of what exactly he wants to do as an ambassador for the teacher community at VU Amsterdam. The jury believes that he can play a role as a strongly content-focused ambassador by disseminating his knowledge of educational theory.

- **Yolande Voskes (GNK)**

Yolande started in 2009 as scientific researcher and teacher at the department of Metamedica of VU University Medical Center Amsterdam. After completing her PhD in 2015 she became assistant professor in Ethics, Law and Medical Humanities. During her academic career she has given a variety of lectures and tutorials at the Bachelor’s and Master’s levels at VU Amsterdam, as well as teaching and providing further education on medicine and ethics at other educational institutions and health organisations. Over the years Yolande has supervised 24 Bachelor’s and Master’s students in writing their thesis and 9 PhD students in writing their dissertation.

Both the Board of the Faculty of Medicine and her colleagues describe Yolande as a very committed and passionate teacher. Yolande is also popular among her students, as evidenced by the fact that she won the award for most committed teacher and the award for best course coordinator at the Teacher Awards for Medicine at VU University Medical Center Amsterdam, both on two occasions. That is acknowledgement of the innovation she shows with the sometimes unorthodox way she designs her courses. This is apparent from, inter alia, one of the learning paths she has developed, ‘Physician and Patient 2.’ By getting both patients and students to give lectures on their experience with illness, Yolande demonstrates in that course that the difference between physician and patient is smaller than we think.

Yolande’s vision paper is entitled ‘looking beyond traditional medicine.’ Healthcare in the 21st century is undergoing rapid changes that entail huge challenges. These include population greying and the growing importance of autonomy and self-reliance. Yolande believes that to tackle these challenges we need to train doctors who have broad interests, skills and knowledge outside their area of expertise. With this goal in mind, Yolande has four spearheads that recur regularly in her teaching: social engagement, normative professionalisation, interdisciplinary learning and academic training.

The jury's views

In its interview with Yolande the jury was very aware of the enthusiasm and commitment that typify her, according to her colleagues and students. The jury was very impressed by Yolande's intention to bring the Faculty of Medicine, Amsterdam UMC and VU Amsterdam closer together. The jury concurs with her view that these bodies still frequently act independently of one another. The jury members were very appreciative of the fact that Yolande, as an ethicist, has clear ideas on improving teaching by constantly engaging students in dialogue. However, the jury also felt that in her vision on education she focused primarily on the perspective of the Faculty of Medicine, whereas it could have concentrated more on VU Amsterdam as a whole.

- **Yvette Taminiau (Faculty of Social Sciences)**

Yvette has worked at VU Amsterdam since 2001 as a teacher of Organisation Sciences. She has a broad educational background, with a Bachelor's degree in French, two Masters in Communication Sciences and International Relations, and a PhD in Business Administration. Additionally, since the start of her career at VU Amsterdam she has continued to hone her teaching skills by following teacher training programmes and seeking coaching. To date, Yvette has taught 13 different subjects at the Bachelor's, Pre-Master's, Master's and PhD levels, five of which she designed herself. She has been a member of the Examination Board of the Faculty of Social Sciences since 2021 and has held the title of Professor since 2022.

The focal point of Yvette's vision on education is valorisation of teaching activities by involving external partners. In her career as a teacher, Yvette has built an extensive network, in particular at financial, legal and consultancy-related organisations in the Amsterdam Zuidas business district. Over time, she has been able to strengthen this network by maintaining contact with departing students who go to work for these companies. Yvette realised that she could integrate her network in her teaching in such a way that both her students and her network partners could derive reciprocal benefit from it.

Consequently, she organises her courses in a way that allows students to apply the subject matter straight away in real-life cases and can gain professional experience in the business environment of her external partners. Conversely, by offering study assignments, thesis subjects and work placements the external partners get a good idea of potential future employees. Yvette's approach has been a success – students are wildly enthusiastic and value the preparation for their working life that they get from Yvette's courses. Six years ago, Yvette became alumni coordinator for the Department of Organisation Sciences so that she could further strengthen the network with

external partners by actively maintaining alumni relations.

The jury's views

During the interview with Yvette the jury members felt her enthusiasm growing the more she talked about the cooperation with external partners in an educational setting. The jury was struck by the originality of using her own artworks as an illustration when describing her vision on education. The jury was pleasantly surprised by Yvette's proactive attitude. For instance, when the jury suggested that Yvette should contact the Office for University Relations and Fundraising to get support for her alumni network, it turned out that she had already done so. It is not hard for the jury to imagine that Yvette's approach to teaching will be implemented throughout VU Amsterdam and that Yvette will play a unifying role in it.

The winner of the Van der Duijn Schouten Teaching Award is Yvette Taminiau (Faculty of Social Sciences)

Choosing the winner of the Van der Duijn Schouten Teaching Award was a tough assignment for the jury. All three finalists are very experienced, very passionate and very popular teachers in very different ways. Sebastiaan, Yvette and Yolande also each have a clear vision on education that has its roots in their personal background, convictions and competencies.

To reach a decision, in its assessment the jury therefore focused on the ambassador's role that is associated with winning the award. The question was which of the finalists could best represent the teacher community at VU Amsterdam over the next two years, both on the campus and away from it.

The jury came to the conclusion that Yvette is the candidate best suited to that role. In her presentation, her vision on education and her interview with the jury Yvette was able to link her ideas on valorisation very specifically to her approach to teaching and her alumni network, aiming at interchange with external partners. The jury members see in Yvette a proactive standard bearer who can make connections between existing parties inside and outside VU Amsterdam, using her unique vision and approach to take the teaching provided at our institution to a higher level.

Teacher Talent Award

The Teacher Talent Award goes to the best young teacher from the perspective of the student population. The University Student Council is responsible for organising the assessment process and choosing the jury for this award. The Faculty Student Councils nominate candidates.

The winner of the Teacher Talent Award receives €4,000 to be spent on their own teaching.

Conditions

To be eligible for the Teacher Talent Award the teacher must in any case satisfy the following conditions:

- The teacher has no more than ten years' experience at an educational institution. The preference is for teachers who have not previously won an award.

Criteria

To be eligible for the Teacher Talent Award the nominated teachers will be assessed on the basis of the following criteria:

- The ability to inspire;
- Involvement of the teacher;
- Didactical qualities of the teacher.

Report of the University Student Council (USC)

The contribution written, in English, by the University Student Council about the Teacher Talent Award can be found below. When organising the Teacher Talent Award the USC drew on the theme 'Wellbeing on Campus.'

Foreword

Wellbeing on campus is a VU-wide subject that is very relevant to all students of VU. In the past year, lockdowns and going back to campus have had a large impact on the wellbeing of students. Statistics show that students, on a large scale, are struggling with mental health problems. This issue is not limited to the campus, of course, however a listening ear or a helping hand from teachers can often make a significant difference for those students who are struggling. Therefore, we looked for a teacher who added a personal note to education; making sure that students felt, and feel, heard, someone who brought attention to the subject of personal wellbeing, checked in with their students.

The central emphasis in the theme is that we are all going through our own problems and struggles; and that especially

throughout the last years a small gesture could make a large difference.

The Teacher Talent Award is given to teachers on behalf of the student population. The students from the different faculties nominate a teacher they find to be deserving of the award. We would like to thank all nominated teachers for their care for not only the professional, but also the personal life of their students.

The jury

The jury consists of four members of the University Student Council and two other students.

Joep van Dijk

My name is Joep van Dijk and I am a fourth year Political Science student at VU. In addition to this, I chair the University Student Council (USR). This implies leading a team of 11 passionate and involved students that want to improve the university for the student population. Being in this jury taught me how many different ways there are to show caring and personal involvement in the lives of students, all the while teaching them at the same time.

Sylke van Kempen

My name is Sylke van Kempen and I am a first-year master student of Medicine (GNK). In addition to this, in the current year I have the honor to be the Vice-Chair of the University Student Council. Being a part of the jury taught me about different ways a teacher can improve the mental wellbeing of students, and how much conscious thought goes into the subject next to the primary focus, teaching.

Rebecca Maayeshi

My name is Rebecca Maayeshi and I am a second-year Philosophy, Politics and Economics (PPE) student. This year, I can be found at VU a lot, as I am a committee coordinator of the University Student Council, and also enjoy hanging out with friends at VU while studying. For me, having a good and fun teacher really determines whether I like the course. That's why I really enjoyed being on the jury of the Teacher Talent Award. It was a good opportunity to meet many inspiring teachers.

Vincent Mesrine

My name is Vincent Mesrine and I am a third-year student of Political Science at VU. As of currently, I fulfill the role of Communications Coordinator in the University Student Council. This means I bear responsibility for the external and internal communication of the council. Being part of the jury has been an honor and showed me how hard many teachers work on providing high quality education, but also on making the university a better place for students.

Pieter van Rossum

My name is Pieter van Rossum and I am a Master's student of Education in Economics at VU. For my studies, I teach high school students and I follow courses on the theory and practice of secondary education. Besides my studies, I've been active in recent years as a board member for the SRVU student union and as treasurer for the University Student Council. In these roles, I've also influenced VU policies on education and student well-being. Because of this, it has been a valuable experience evaluating teachers at VU as a member of the jury.

Guido Groenescheij

I am Guido Groenescheij, Education Officer at the Faculty Student Council of Social Sciences 2022-2023. I am 19 years old and a second year Anthropology student here at the VU. When I am not at VU I can be found on the track in Utrecht coaching kids and adults or running myself.

I believe teachers' talents should be recognised and rewarded and the DocentTalent prize offers one way of doing so. I decided to take a position on the DocentTalentprijs jury this year to contribute to a healthy way of valuing teachers' efforts!

The process

Firstly, all FSR's were contacted to nominate a maximum of two nominees. They went on their quest, and came back to us with names and background information about the teachers they nominated. This led to a total of nine nominations.

The nominees

- Atze van der Ploeg (BETA)
- Geert Schenk (GNK)
- Jacek Buczny (FGB)
- Lachezar Yanev (RCH)
- Mike Winterwerp (RCH)
- Peter Bloem (BETA)
- Rosario Paradiso (SBE)
- Sjoerd Bruijn (FGB)
- Wiebe de Jong (FSW)

The finalists

On the basis of the information provided by the FSR's, the jury members graded the candidates on the basis of requirements relevant to the topic. As a result of this, the jury formulated a shortlist of three candidates. These were as follows:

- Geert Schenk (GNK)
- Lachezar Yanev (RCH)
- Wiebe de Jong (FSW)

Geert Schenk

Geert Schenk is a teacher, lecturer and course coordinator of the course 'brain and senses', and is also coordinator of the minor neurology, in the faculty of Medicine.

Geert Schenk clearly puts a lot of focus on activating students and making them part of the discussion during lectures. A large focus in lectures is also on peer-to-peer interactions, building social connections. This social part of education is crucial, as many students report feeling lonely and are in need of social contact, especially on campus. Geert Schenk showed a well-thought out vision towards his education, which was laid down to a very coherent vision.

Lachezar Yanev

Lachezar Yanev is a teacher and lecturer for law in Society, a new bachelor programme in the faculty of Law. Lachezar Yanev immediately grabbed our attention with his interactive way of teaching, in which he used video footage to get the message of the lecture across. In 10 minutes, Lachezar managed to explain us about subjects that seemed very difficult to the whole jury, in a very accessible manner. In addition to this, Lachezar told us of asking students for their needs during lockdowns, and making lectures hybrid on the basis of this, when students stated they needed more moments of physical interaction.

Wiebe de Jong

Wiebe de Jong is a teacher, lecturer and course coordinator for several courses in the cultural anthropology and developmental sociology bachelor in the faculty of Social Sciences. Wiebe de Jong showed a great engagement into the personal life of his students. Making time before and after lectures to listen not only to questions, but also to private concerns and problems students experience and making sure to redirect them when necessary. His short lecture showed us an accessible approach to starting a project, which came across as very useful for students that might struggle academically. This showed personal attention, not only to those that excel, but also to those that have a harder time with their studies.

These three candidates were invited for an interview, in which they were requested to give a short, 10-minute lecture and would afterwards answer some standardized questions. All three teachers thoroughly impressed us with their stories, educational visions and teaching strategies, though a choice had to be made. Making use of ranked choice voting where the candidate with the least amount of votes was eliminated until a candidate achieved 50%+1 votes, a winner was decided in round 2. An important matter to clarify here is that members of the jury were not allowed to vote on any teacher from their own faculty at any point in this process until the final round of voting.

The winner of the DocentTalentprijs is Lachezar Yanev (RCH)

All three teachers had varying but similar teaching strategies, emphasizing the multiple roles a teacher can have. While all emphasized the primary goal of education secondary aims such as providing extracurricular challenge, facilitating student-interaction and keeping student mental wellbeing into account quickly came to the foreground. We were impressed by the various strategies employed by these teachers to help students achieve their goals, and do so in a healthy way.

As the teachers were all educationally strong we had to make a decision based on these secondary aims. We ultimately valued Yanev's structural approach to these themes the most. He both recognizes his limitations within his role as a teacher, and simultaneously attempts to help students structurally, doing so, in our eyes, more convincingly than the other nominees. We believe the impact of structural changes in teaching methods and course structure on themes such as student wellbeing as opposed to personal attention and 'aftercare' are often overlooked. Lachezar Yanev emphasizes this impact in his teaching strategy which, next to his educational prowess, earned him the present judgment. Another thing we would like to emphasize is that Yanev also has less experience than the other nominees, for which we'd like to show our appreciation.

In conclusion, Yanev shows many aspects that make him a dedicated, enthusiastic and passionate teacher. His positive approach towards making the university a comfortable and social place for students is apparent. Finally, the way Yanev teaches is interactive and was unanimously seen by the jury as engaging.

