

Coordinating visits from international delegations

Vrije Universiteit Amsterdam (VU) is well connected on an international level and maintains relationships with partners from all over the world, including other universities, research institutes, high schools, (non) governmental organisations, businesses, and scholarship/funding organisations.

VU Amsterdam regularly welcomes representatives from these partner institutions (or organisations), as well as representatives from prospective partners, who visit our campus. These representatives visit VU to strengthen existing collaborations, explore future partnerships, or for other reasons related to our education, research, or administration.

This guideline will help you in deciding whether to host a visiting delegation by weighing the benefits and costs of the visit. It also provides practical tips for hosting a delegation, while helping you assess the request from the perspective of knowledge security and reputation. At VU Amsterdam, a [knowledge security framework](#) has been implemented to help you scan whether a (prospective) partner is considered risky. Please answer the obligatory 6 guiding questions under the 'VU Amsterdam Knowledge Security Framework' to determine if the visit is classified as low or high risk. In case of an outcome indicating medium or high risk, or if you require guidance, please contact the international office.

For all international visits, make sure you contact the International Office for advice, tips and (co-) organisation: delegations@vu.nl.

STEPS IN COORDINATING A VISIT

PHASE 1

DEFINING THE PURPOSE OF THE VISIT

A simple and compelling reason for welcoming a visiting delegation is to show hospitality. However, to assess whether the visit is relevant and beneficial to both your activities and to the VU, the aspects below should be considered:

1. Is it a current partner? If yes, what kind of partner? [Exchange partner](#), [Aurora partner](#), [USRN partner](#), MoU/contract partner, Research- and/or education collaborator, other?
2. Is it a new relation? Reasons for visiting VU Amsterdam vary; it could be to establish collaborations in the fields of research, education, and valorisation. It could also be part of a study/learning program to see how other universities organise their activities. Additionally, it could involve a group of students exploring exchange and/or internship opportunities. To decide whether you wish to host the delegation, it should of course align with your ambitions.
3. What is the level of the delegates? If it concerns a high-level delegation, please make sure you involve matching profiles at VU in a timely manner. If the Board is to be invited, please ask the International Office for advice.
4. If a VIP/politician, such an Ambassador, is visiting, make sure to follow the [visiting dignitary protocol](#). [If you intend to take pictures or make a recording, please request permission here](#).

5. Profile of visiting organisation: Check their profile, their position in global rankings, and search the VU research portal if VU colleagues are already collaborating with them.
6. Also, further inquire about the purpose of the visit (courtesy, exploring collaborations, setting/signing MoU/exchange contract, PhD agreement, research projects), and determine if this aligns with your ambitions? For information on such contracts, please contact the IO.

PHASE 2

ORGANISING THE VISIT

Set up a provisional program

Involve/invite relevant stakeholders: the Board, Dean, International Office, and academics.

Consider inviting students or PhDs from the country of origin as part of the welcoming delegation.

Create a provisional program:

- Presentation time for the visiting delegation
- A VU corporate presentation is available; you can inquire with IO
- A campus tour could be considered as part of the program
- If the visitors are categorised as risky based on VU's knowledge security framework, but the delegation's visit is agreed upon, please consider [these](#) practical aspects and coordinate with the relevant supporting safety team via (kennisveiligheid@vu.nl)

Practical issues

1. If the visitors need a visa, IO can provide an invitation letter for that purpose.
2. You can share hotel recommendations if desired.
3. Please book a venue for the welcome well in advance, e.g. the Global Room, a Forum room, Agora room
4. Arrange catering for lunch or dinner
5. Exchange contact details/name cards
6. Consider exchanging gifts
7. If necessary, be aware of hierarchical sensitivities
8. Consider a dress code
9. Ask yourself, in general, what will be seen as culturally appropriate and what is not; consult with a 'country specialist' at the university or outside the university
10. Consider providing a translator if needed; prepare the translator well and discuss your interests
11. Consider whether it is important to 'read between the lines': how direct the discussions will or can be

Communications and PR

Depending on the visiting representative(s), disseminating information about the visit may be useful for reputation management. You could consider contacting the [VU press officers](#) and/or [AdValvas](#), and communicating about the visit via social media or other (online) media, such as [your faculty website pages](#).

Follow up

Although not part of the visit itself, the follow up is of great importance regarding relationship management and translating intentions into actions and results.