

# Regulations for the VU-UvA Honours Programme

April 2024

## **Introduction to the VU-UvA Honours Programme regulations**

In 2013, the Executive Boards of Vrije Universiteit Amsterdam (VU Amsterdam) and the University of Amsterdam (UvA) decided to establish a joint programme designed to promote excellence in undergraduate education. This resulted in the VU-UvA Honours Programme. Students at both universities are given the opportunity to distinguish themselves by taking an extra programme in addition to their regular Bachelor's curriculum. The programme consists of a combination of more demanding educational courses (in part selected by the students themselves), developed to provide opportunities for more in-depth study or to broaden students' horizons by offering a more interdisciplinary approach.

The joint nature of the partnership between VU Amsterdam and UvA is expressed in:

- a) the use of an identical set of admission requirements for the Honours Programme;
- b) an identical set of requirements and standards for achieving an honours degree;
- c) shared requirements and standards for honours courses;
- d) opening the interdisciplinary (interfaculty) range of honours courses to students from both universities.

By making these agreements, VU Amsterdam and UvA are protective of the key terms 'honours course', 'honours programme', 'honours student', and 'honours degree'.

Both universities wish, in certain circumstances, to give first-year students the opportunity to take an honours course in the second semester of their first year of study. As a result, it was decided to draw up a revised version of the VU-UvA Honours Programme regulations to incorporate these changes. The other agreements in the revised regulations are in accordance with the previous version from 2013.

## **Article 1. Description of the VU-UvA Honours Programme**

1. VU Amsterdam and UvA jointly offer an Honours Programme for highly motivated students who meet the admission requirements. The Honours Programme consists of educational courses offered in addition to the Bachelor's programme and which do not form part of the Bachelor's programme. The educational courses are designed to broaden the range of knowledge that students acquire during their Bachelor's programme or provide opportunities for the in-depth study of specific topics.

2. The Honours Programme consists of faculty courses, which are specific to the relevant faculty and are determined annually by the Faculty Board, and interfaculty courses which are taught by VU Amsterdam and UvA.
3. The Honours Programme comprises 30 ECTS credits: at least 12 of these credits have to be obtained by taking faculty honours courses, and another 12 by taking interfaculty honours courses. The choices available to students are published on both universities' websites.
4. Notwithstanding the provisions of the first paragraph, courses that make up the standard Bachelor's programme may be designated as honours course, on condition that they are enriched with an additional honours component. When a student successfully completes an enriched undergraduate course, the student will receive the standard number of credits, plus the honours credits.
5. The interfaculty honours courses are accessible to honours students from both universities.

#### **Article 2. Characteristics of the honours courses**

1. The following characteristics apply to courses of the Honours Programme:
  - a) Demonstrable added value compared to standard Bachelor's courses.  
The language of instruction is English, unless the educational content requires it to be taught in a different language.
  - b) High-quality content.
  - c) Challenging teaching methods.
  - d) Highly creative and ground-breaking.
  - e) A focus on academic competences.
  - f) Offering a combination of intellectual, social and personal development.
  - g) Inspiring and stimulating interaction with teaching staff and guest lecturers.

#### **Article 3. Admission to the VU-UvA Honours Programme**

1. To gain admission to the VU-UvA Honours Programme, a student must have obtained all first-year credits with a weighted average grade of 7.5 or higher and a solid motivation.
2. In special cases, a student who does not meet the requirements of Paragraph 1 may be admitted. This is at the discretion of the Examination Board (VU Amsterdam) or the Director of Education (UvA) respectively.
3. First-year Bachelor's students may be admitted to honours courses after the first semester on condition that they have obtained 24 credits in period 1&2, with at least a weighted average of 7.5. First-year students are only permitted to take honours courses that are open to first-year students.
4. Students who have taken honours courses in their first academic year can be admitted to the Honours Programme if they meet the conditions stated in Paragraph 1.

#### **Article 4. Pass requirements of the VU-UvA Honours Programme**

1. A student who has met the requirements of the standard Bachelor's programme within the

prescribed duration of study with an average weighted mark of at least 7.5 for all components (excluding honours courses) and who has also met the requirements of the Honours Programme will receive a mentioning on the diploma supplement to the effect of having completed the Honours Programme successfully.

2. The completed honours courses will be listed as such on the student's diploma supplement.
3. The Examination Board may grant permission to deviate from the prescribed duration of study stated in Paragraph 1 in the event of exceptional personal circumstances as stated in Article 2.1 of the Higher Education and Research Act Implementation Decree or if the student's prescribed course of study has been extended as a result of an approved overseas study programme or student placement.

#### **Article 5. Opening honours courses to non-honours students**

1. Students who have not enrolled in the Honours Programme, but who meet the requirements for admission, can participate in interfaculty honours courses, provided that there are enough places available.
2. For participation in honours courses specific to a given faculty, the decision on admission lies with the faculty concerned.
3. The diploma supplement of students who have not enrolled in or completed the Honours Programme will include the details of any honours course successfully completed.

#### **Article 6. VU-UvA Honours Consultative Body**

1. The VU-UvA Honours Consultative Body is a group charged with consultation between the two universities on key aspects of the Honours Programme.
2. These consultations will, at the very least, involve the responsible dean at each university, the Director of Education of Amsterdam University College, one coordinator of the Honours Programme from each university and one honours student from each university.
3. The VU-UvA Honours Consultative Body is responsible for safeguarding:
  - a. the joint admission and pass requirements;
  - b. the range of education offered by the programme across the two universities and the avoidance of overlap in interfaculty courses;
  - c. the balance of costs and benefits between the universities;
  - d. the availability of information on the range of interfaculty courses offered jointly.
4. The VU-UvA Honours Consultative Body meets at least twice a year.
5. The responsible bodies within both universities report to the VU-UvA Honours Consultative Body on an annual basis on the matters referred to in Paragraph 3, in a format to be jointly agreed.
6. The Consultative Body submits a written annual report on the VU-UvA Honours Programme and its development to both universities' Executive Boards, in addition to formulating advice or recommendations.
7. The chair and administrative support for the VU-UvA Honours Consultative Body alternates between the universities on an annual basis.

#### **Article 7. Quality assurance for the Honours Programme**

1. VU Amsterdam and UvA each bear their own individual responsibility for assuring the quality of the education they provide as part of the Honours Programme.

2. The responsible bodies of both universities provide the necessary information on the quality assurance components in their annual reporting to the VU-UvA Honours Consultative Body.

#### **Article 8. Diploma supplement**

1. The diploma supplement to the degree certificate awarded to a student who has successfully completed the Honours Programme states that they have met the requirements of the Honours Programme. The supplement describes what the Honours Programme entails, specifies the honours courses the student has completed, the number of credits available for those courses and the student's grade for each course.
2. Only a programme consisting of honours courses can be given the designation 'Honours' or 'Honours Programme' on a diploma supplement. Other programmes of excellence run by a faculty are given their own clear and distinctive designation.

#### **Article 9. Entry into force**

These regulations will enter into force on 1 December 2018 and have been revised April 2024.