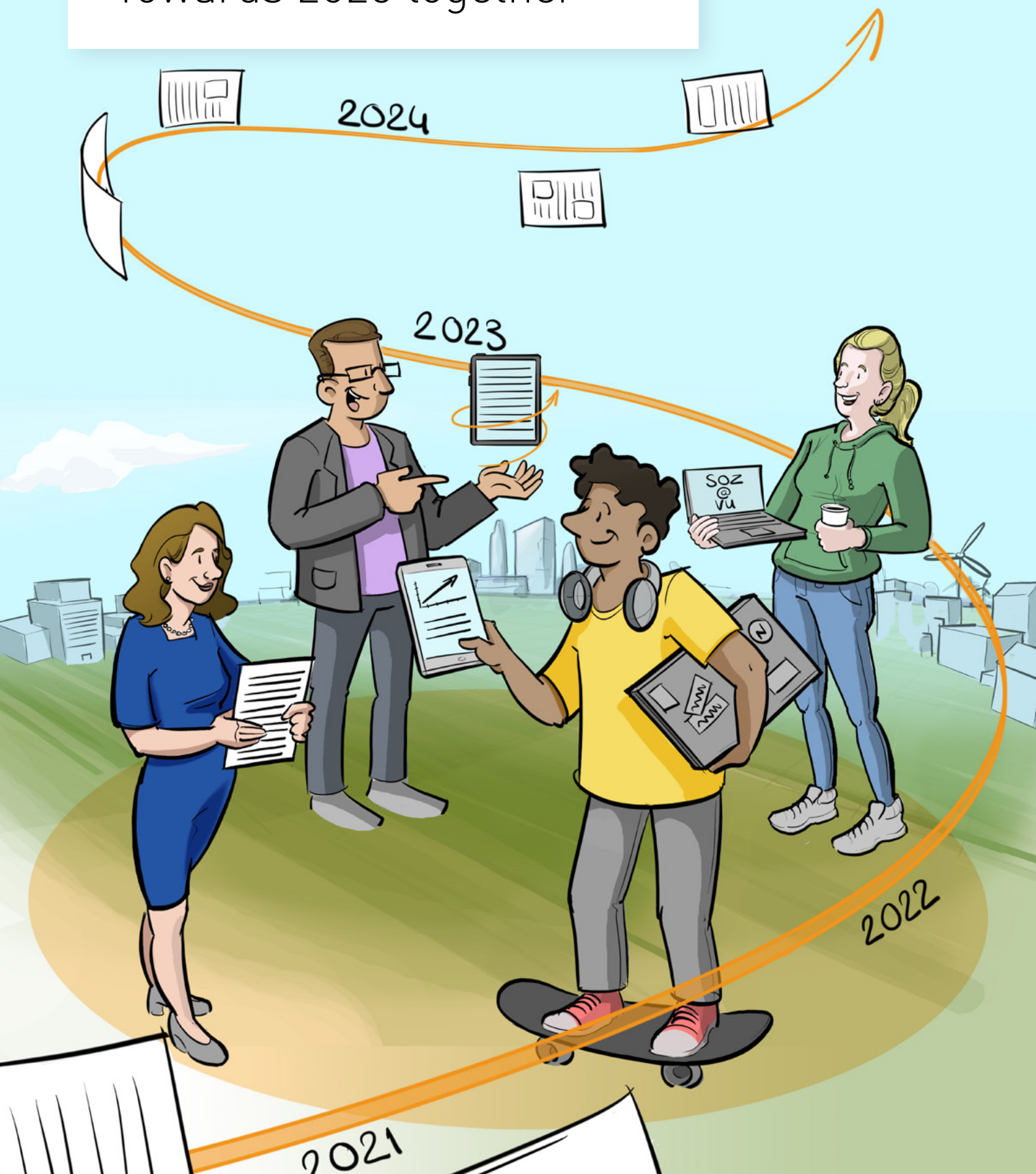


Prospectus for 2025

Towards 2025 together



Student & Educational Affairs, towards 2025 together

This prospectus for 2025 puts the focus on VU students, lecturers, administrators and our Student & Educational Affairs (SOZ) staff in 2025. Their future needs and expectations, and VU Amsterdam's specific responses, are the foundation of this long-term plan. That's why these target groups have been given space to make their views known in these pages.

What we will be doing has in broad outline been guided by the [VU Strategy 2020-2025](#), [VU Educational Quality Assurance Plan 2.0](#) and the [Education Agenda Edition 2021](#), with the [Education Vision](#) as the main driver.

People

First and foremost, we want to outline what our most important target groups — students, lecturers, administrators and staff — expect from us in 2025. Their needs and expectations form the basis for our actions as Student & Educational Affairs in the coming years. Their voices have therefore been included in this plan.

Developments

In parallel, we see relevant national and international developments that will strongly influence our work in the years ahead. It's clearer than ever before that the world around us is changing at a fast pace. This makes it difficult to develop accurate predictions about the future. That's why the focus is on what is certain, necessary and logical going forward. At the same time, it is crucial to experiment so that we can continue to improve and innovate. The

student's educational process and the lecturer's needs are central to such experimentation. We also want to support administrators proactively, and give the wellbeing and development of our staff primary consideration.

Our ambitions and values

VU Amsterdam's three leading themes guide our efforts: *sustainability, entrepreneurship and diversity*. These are supported by the three fundamental core values personal, open and responsible.

In the VU Strategy 2020-2025, the focus is on two educational ambitions: (1) future-proof teaching methods (*A Broader Mind*; personalized education) and (2) lifelong development. It is crystal clear, especially because of the present COVID-19 pandemic, that Student & Educational Affairs must concentrate on supporting these two ambitions in the coming years.

Student & Educational Affairs also finds intersections with other ambitions in the VU Strategy 2020-2025: (3) a balanced system of recognition and reward within the university's organization; (4) further digitization of our operations, teaching and research; (5) further development of a lively and innovative campus; and (6) an effective and agile organization. These ambitions are not referred to directly in this document, but they have an evident role in all our plans.



As we said: nobody can predict the future. That's why we review the long-term plan each year for elements or aspects that need to be modified. The purpose is to keep our annual plans in line with the needs and expectations of our target groups as much as possible. They lead us forward to 2025.



It's clearer than ever that the world around us quickly changes.

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Global developments

We will have to deal with many issues in the years ahead. Some of these developments can be predicted. But other areas of development will accelerate in ways we cannot see right now. Despite this uncertainty, we want to briefly survey three reports on the future of higher education. It is important to note that these reports were written before or at the beginning of the COVID-19 pandemic. We were not able to address all the most recent effects of the pandemic in our overview.

International

The 2020 EduCause Horizon report (*Teaching and Learning Edition*) divides current trends into five categories (social, technological, economic, higher education and political). This report is strongly oriented towards the situation in the United States. In the category higher education, the following expectations are of significance: (1) *changes in student population*, with predictions that numbers will decline over the next ten years but diversity will increase; (2) *alternative routes to education*, among other things the development of *nano and micro degrees* required to meet the changing demands of students and the job market; and (3) *online teaching*, with the corresponding need to offer diversified student populations a mix of different forms of teaching and learning.

Europe

According to the *Digital Education Action Plan* update (30 September 2020), the European Commission is going to start promoting the development of a *high-quality digital educational ecosystem*. Furthermore,

the Commission wants to ensure that Europeans *learn the digital skills necessary for the digital transformation*. In order to move the development of a digital ecosystem and the corresponding skills forward, the European Commission has devised thirteen supporting actions. The COVID-19 pandemic is also discussed in the update. COVID-19 is seen as a large-scale experiment in online teaching and learning. The exceptional circumstances demanded that things be rolled out quickly. At the same time, effective and successful provision of online education requires a more thought-through approach.

The Netherlands

Lastly, the Dutch Ministry of Education, Culture and Science recently published their approach in *Agenda 2021-2025*. This identifies three *ambitions* for the Netherlands: *equal opportunity for everyone*, *aim at quality* (with and for essential regions) and *creativity, science and innovation* (preparation for the future).

We are keeping abreast of these and other developments, and also participating in the relevant networks. By doing so, we remain well informed and ensure that important subjects are discussed and put on the agenda in VU Amsterdam meeting rooms.

Reports

- [2020 EDUCAUSE Horizon Report Teaching and Learning Edition](#), EDUCAUSE, ISBN: 978-1-933046-03-7, 2020
- [Digital Education Action Plan 2021-2027](#), resetting education and training for the digital age, European Commission, 30 September 2020
- [Agenda OCW: Tasks for 2021-2025](#), Overview of the priorities of the Ministry of Education, Culture and Science (OCW) for the years 2021-2025, OCW, 24 July 2020

Students' views in 2025

VU Amsterdam has set up the curriculum so that I have the freedom to design my own programme. This gives me a chance to make the best use of interdisciplinary options. For each semester I can choose whether I want to participate in my programme-specific courses or make use of flexible education. Besides placements, practicals and fieldwork, for each period I can choose whether I will attend classes and exams on campus or sign-up for online teaching. This includes group assignments too. Although I much prefer doing those on campus, it's easy to use digital resources if I have to. I understand that a big institution like VU Amsterdam can't make special arrangements for each student, but I feel like there are more and more options for individuals to choose. Both within my programme and within an individual course. When I look at this from

different perspectives, I can see that for new students or new Bachelor's students the flexibility is a bit tricky. That's why it's good to have set learning paths available. As an upper-year student, more flexible teaching and learning is a good option. Based on the modules, I can put together my own course package, selecting from course offerings that are not limited to VU Amsterdam. Even if I'm a student from a different university, I still feel welcome. VU Amsterdam has really proved itself in the areas of diversity, sustainability and entrepreneurship. There are so many interesting things to discover, and the things I've chosen will be widely recognized. It will be really clear to the outside world, like a future employer, what my diploma means. I've learned a lot from experiences in the mixed classroom (with

other students from this country and abroad). I now understand multiple perspectives and feel more open to different views.

The VU online portal has been set up in a way that allows me to arrange everything for my degree online, at any time I want to. I can see whether I'm on track, and I get tips when I've missed something. VU Amsterdam is careful when using my academic records and presents everything very clearly.

I understand how everything works at VU Amsterdam. If I take courses offered by another faculty, I'm not taken aback by different rules. Even though I'm up for a challenge.

I can always find the answers to my questions online because the websites are accessible and easy to navigate. It's also nice that there is one place I can go when I have questions. And being able to see at a glance whether it's better to login somewhere else. I get the help I need quickly, the problem is fully solved without getting the run around. I can find the information I need, when I need it, in a logical location. And if I can't find it, I just get in touch with the VU staff. They always take the time to help me out. I also really appreciate the way they care about my wellbeing. I always get the feeling staff take a real interest in me and my issues.

The campus has plenty of inspiring places for studying, working in groups and meeting other students. The teaching and learning spaces have been designed so I can participate in innovative forms of education, whether I'm physically on campus or sitting in front of my laptop. I've become very comfortable with online education, but the essential part of my study programme is still on campus.

As a Dutch-speaking or foreign-language student, I feel at home at VU Amsterdam, even though some of my courses are given as distance learn-

ing. Even if I only take one course because of my job, I feel connected to the VU community. I'm glad that online education and proctoring are so well organized. VU Amsterdam communicates with me in a clear and timely way, and they inform me right away if there are any technical disruptions. Luckily, this doesn't happen so much anymore.

VU Amsterdam is an inclusive university where I feel comfortable. It doesn't matter if I'm not sure exactly what's involved in a university education, have a disability or have only been in the country a short time. I'm a full member of the VU Amsterdam community. I feel that before and while completing my course work, but also afterwards I know I can count on a supportive transition to the next phase. It doesn't matter if it's a Master's or going on the job market.

VU Amsterdam is educating me to become a responsible, critical and engaged student, who can continue to develop on my own, with awareness of what is happening in the wider society. While studying there are plenty of opportunities to expand my horizons and situations that challenge my personal perspective. Or opportunities to gear up to a higher level if I can and want to. I really feel that the focus is on student learning at VU Amsterdam, and this is meaningful for my own responsibility and activities.

As a Dutch or international student, I have extensive opportunities for (international) work placements and access to bridging pathways. VU Amsterdam is helping me understand Dutch culture quickly. Even though I'm an international student, I know what is expected of me and what I can expect if I study abroad. I think it's great that there is an (online) VU platform where national and international students can meet each other. This platform is easy to find and logically connected with all the other VU information. It also gives added value that we work on socially relevant themes.

What we do

We train our students to be responsible, critical and engaged academics who are always trying to broaden their horizons. We strive to not only to impart knowledge to our students, but also to imbue them with wisdom. A broad perspective, 'A Broader Mind'. Our teaching focuses on our students' personal development, in-depth academic knowledge, and orientation on society. Vrije Universiteit Amsterdam is a committed, open and inclusive educational environment where teaching staff, academics, PhD scholars and students meet to collectively formulate questions and to reflect on them. These encounters make our educational activities personal – our students matter to us and we offer them customized guidance and supervision. This also means that we will continue to invest in the ongoing development of our lecturers. Wherever possible and relevant, the personal background and experience of students and teaching staff are incorporated into the educational experience. The education we provide links to the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). We take every opportunity to share our knowledge and experience by means of open access. In this way, we promote social progress while further augmenting our educational activities.

Our academic community is characterized by great diversity. We see this diversity as an added value, and embrace it as such. Everyone involved feels a shared responsibility for the quality of the education we provide. Our students are proud of their degree programmes and their university, while the university – in turn – is proud of its students and staff.

From: [VU Strategy 2020-2025, Introduction, chapter 'Education'](#)

I understand that I'm responsible for my own learning process and my own educational career. If I want to be influential, there are study associations, student panels and student councils for me to get involved in. These allow me to share my opinion or standpoint as a representative of others. I expect a lot of VU Amsterdam, but VU Amsterdam can also expect a lot of me.

I love the way the campus is always buzzing with activity, even in the evening and during the holiday period. The campus is an important place for meeting other students and attending classes, and it is also a great feeling knowing that I can run into friends there by chance or develop new networks. The campus offers plenty of space for recreation. The

range of extra-curricular activities is huge: from culture (the Griffioen and Rialto), debate (3D – dialogue, debate and diversity) and summer schools, to sports in the Sports Centre, on the Bosbaan, at the Jaap Eden skating rink, or walking and biking in the area around Amsterdam.

With the arrival of the Griffioen Cultural Centre on campus, and collaborations with the film theatre Rialto, the cultural offerings are extensive and give me a lot of pleasure. I grab a coffee from Doppio, get my groceries at the Spar and workout in and around the Care and Welfare Educational Institute (OZW) building. I feel really at home on campus.



Lecturers' views in 2025

Developments in active and flexible university teaching and lifelong development will be changing my role in the educational process in the coming years. I embrace this change and take inspiration from my experience exchanging best practices via the Network for Teaching & Learning (NT&L) and the LEARN! Academy. I'm happy that I get the right support for focusing my attention on the student's learning process, because that's of central importance.

I help students with their learning process and in their broader academic development. This helps them enter the job market or continue in academe with critical and engaged minds. I offer them a variety of han-

dles for learning (e.g. blended learning), and make greater use of peer review, peer reflection and peer feedback assignments. I try to enter into a student's experience and understand what VU Amsterdam expects of me as a lecturer. I find concepts like the mixed classroom very productive.

Designing my courses is easy and intuitive, as is setting (digital) tests and exams, submitting scheduling preferences and seeing how many students are enrolled in my classes and their names. It's also easy to assign students to groups, enter marks, update study guides, communicate with students in the online learning environment and make use of course evaluations to improve my teaching.

When I teach for different faculties, I don't want to be surprised by new procedures.

I understand that I'm expected to make sure teaching runs smoothly and I know what that means. VU Amsterdam values – personal, open and responsible – fit my own thinking, and also allow me to include my personal ideas to the educational process. That means it isn't 'one size fits all' for my students.

I get good teaching support when I want to innovate and improve my courses. It helps me feel properly prepared for teaching quality inspections. I know where to go when I have questions, which are answered quickly and directly.

The right kind of rooms are available on campus for my classes and exams, set up with properly working equipment. For on campus exams, I can count on everything being set up properly and running according



I help students with their learning process and in their broader academic development.

dents smart scheduling applications.

I understand what VU Amsterdam means by educational leadership, and I know how to guide my own self-development.

When I want to relax, I use the facilities of the Sports Centre and cultural centre at VU Amsterdam.

to protocols. The systems for online education and exams are secure and user-friendly. They work without glitches and, when needed, good technical support is available.

Open education has been made a central focus at VU Amsterdam. I've been involved over the past years in the substance and impact of this development. Where possible, I use open educational resources. Reusing existing resources saves time and money. In order to make a contribution to the dissemination of knowledge, I also make my teaching materials available to others when I can.

Students often ask me about administrative matters. These vary considerably and I can't answer all of them, but I can refer them to the right (online) helpdesk. If I notice a student is exhibiting behaviour that is worrying, or if I see that someone needs some extra attention, I know how to get in touch with the academic advisor in my

faculty. Moreover, lately I can consult with the student psychologist or Student General Counselling Service. It's great that VU Amsterdam helps its students with their schedules not only when they start their first year but also later on, and that they offer stu-

What we want to do

In 2025, Student & Educational Affairs will offer an integrated teaching support centre for lecturers, where they will be able to find support for various aspects of their role as teachers. This will include support with educational innovation (online teaching, blended learning, flexible intercultural competences), educational logistics, quality assurance, student guidance and international collaboration. Student & Educational Affairs will also offer support for the health and vitality of teaching staff (Sports and Culture).

Developments in flexible university teaching and lifelong development will be changing the role of lecturers in the coming years. Student & Educational Affairs will be modifying its support and dedicating its expertise to meet these changing needs.



Student & Educational Affairs staff's views in 2025

It doesn't matter where I work, on the VU campus or elsewhere, as staff member I'm always in contact with my colleagues, and I feel I'm getting the best support. For me, the SOZ @ VU gatherings are a time to grab a cup of coffee or tea and join the discussion about personal or work-related issues. In comparison with a few years back, I come to the VU campus less frequently. But I still have a good idea of what's going on and I still feel like part of the team.

The past years I was able to create a good balance between work and private life. I know there's confidence that I will achieve my results. This means that sometimes I workout in

the morning at 10 o'clock and then spend an hour doing my email in the evening. Our work is guided by trust, not by control, and I understand that this entails a lot of responsibility. When I'm doing my work, I'm able to focus properly and I feel secure about getting the right support.

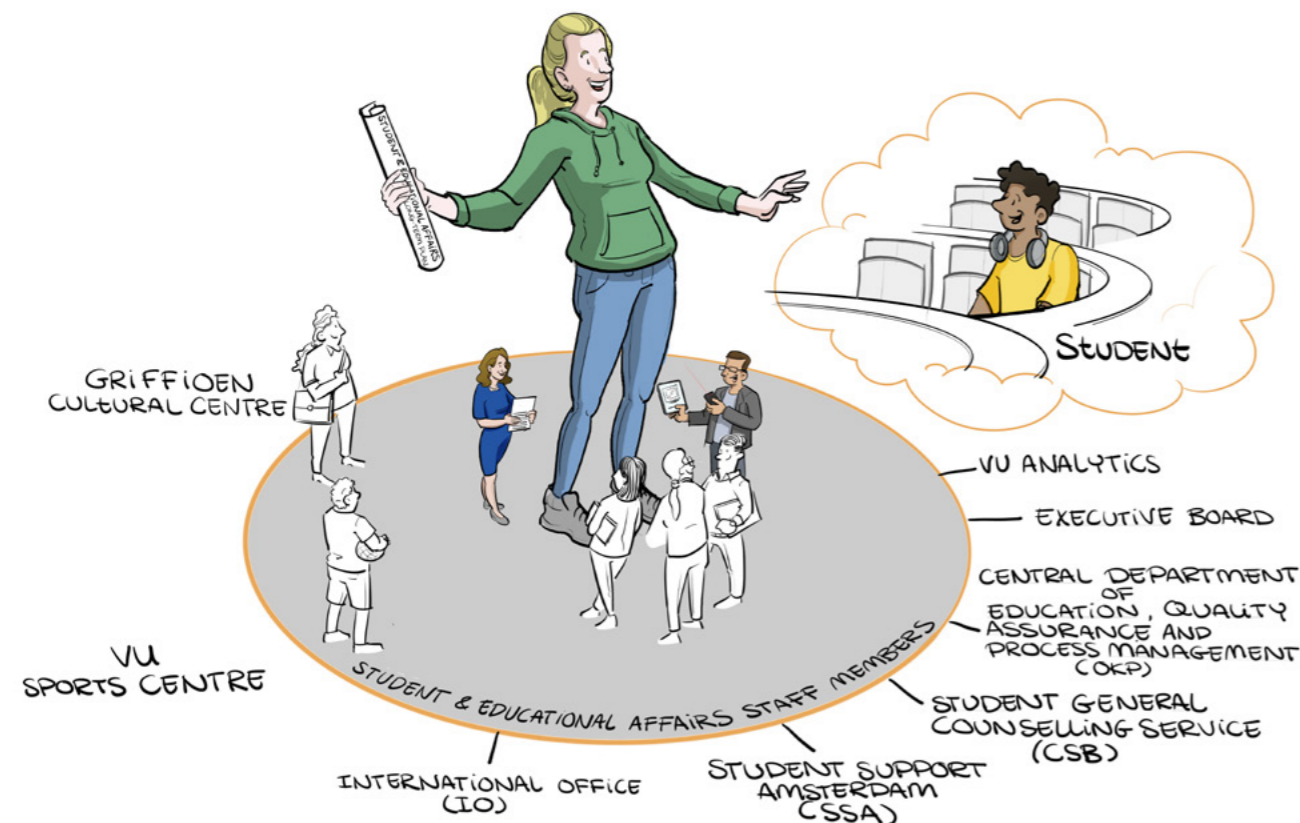
I still remember how things were a few years ago, when we had lots of meetings with many people. Luckily, we've been able to reduce that somewhat, and I now have much more control of my own schedule.

We regularly discuss my professional field in my team. I like that and I like

participating in these discussions. I understand how I contribute to a larger picture. I get and take enough time for self-development. Lifelong development is important to me. I often take a training course or workshop as an online webinar, sometimes along with my team. Each team has a training course budget, and there's transparency about what it's spent on. As Student & Educational Affairs staff we have identified what our general development skills are, and digital and network skills form a particularly important part of our competencies.

I know that I'm part of an academic community; it's great that, as support

We regularly discuss my professional field in my team. I like that and I like participating in these discussions. I understand how I contribute to a larger picture.



staff, we can be nurtured by researchers. We're connected with them simply by being proud of the wonderful results of their academic research. I also get along really well with our colleagues in other service departments; after all, we support our target groups together. The more we work together as services, the better it is for students, teaching staff, researchers and administrators.

Diversity, the art of engagement, sustainability and entrepreneurship; open, personal and responsible. In recent years, VU Amsterdam and Student & Educational Affairs have defined and exhibited what these mean. I'm aware that these values are important, and I'm proud to be part of the VU community.

It's become more common to encounter international colleagues in support services. This means English is more commonly the language of our conversations and communications.

In a service department where sports and culture are embedded in our service provision, it's obvious that we feel we have the space to keep our bodies and spirits healthy. I also know who to talk to if I have problems combining my workload with my private life.

We give more attention to our successes together, what we have achieved collaboratively. And naturally, we know we're allowed to make mistakes, because, after all, that's how we learn. We're also open about that.

Who we are

VU Amsterdam helps undergraduates, postgraduate students and PhD scholars, academics, and professionals – both inside the university and elsewhere – to develop into individuals with A Broader Mind. These are people who • are aware of their own personality, motivation and frame of mind while, at the same time, being open to these qualities in others • are able to combine in-depth professional expertise with a broad multi-disciplinary view and a corresponding skill set • are able to think critically and from different points of view • are able to see, think and work 'outside the box' • as engaged professionals and skilled and informed citizens are able to help shape a better world – today and tomorrow.

From: VU Strategy 2020-2025 section 1.1, Identity

Administrators' views in 2025

Student & Educational Affairs advises me on a broad range of the latest issues pertaining to student and educational support. This takes place within a framework of wider VU participations (VSNU, Aurora, EUA, occasional meetings, bilateral relations with University of Amsterdam, University of Twente, and many more), reviewing proposals and in discussions on participation in governance.

Student & Educational Affairs responds directly to my requests with the pertinent information, and is proactive in putting subjects related to policy, decision making or requiring

other kinds of action on the agenda. For the administrative staff of our university, Student & Educational Affairs functions as the eyes and ears of teaching and education. As an administrator, my dealings with Student & Educational Affairs convince me this is a department that offers me solid advice based on its expertise and experience in the educational world. Student & Educational Affairs is always alert to whether policy decisions can be implemented.

As an administrator, I know exactly where Student & Educational Affairs' expertise lies, and I trust them

to make the right decision when weighing up continuation of regular procedures versus innovations or improvements. It's great that Student & Educational Affairs gets input in the necessary expertise from other services, such as the Administration Office, Communication & Marketing, Finance and Corporate Real Estate and Facilities, in advance, and that proposals are developed in conjunction with the faculties.

I'm flagged in a timely fashion by Student & Educational Affairs if any exceptional developments arise in the areas of student and teaching support

that could influence VU Amsterdam's reputation or entail other risks. What I really value is that these notifications come accompanied with direct proposals for mitigating actions, and clear advice based on a number of scenarios, if necessary.

I notice that Student & Educational Affairs points out possibilities to me that would make our education support even more 'typical VU'. The message is: teaching support can also distinguish VU Amsterdam from other institutions. The Student

Financial Support Fund Committee already is such a distinction, but grant programmes, honours programmes, exchange programmes and VASVU (foundation year for international students) could all be given a stronger VU flavour, in my opinion. The recently finalized strategic plan thus also has consequences for stronger profiling of our education support.

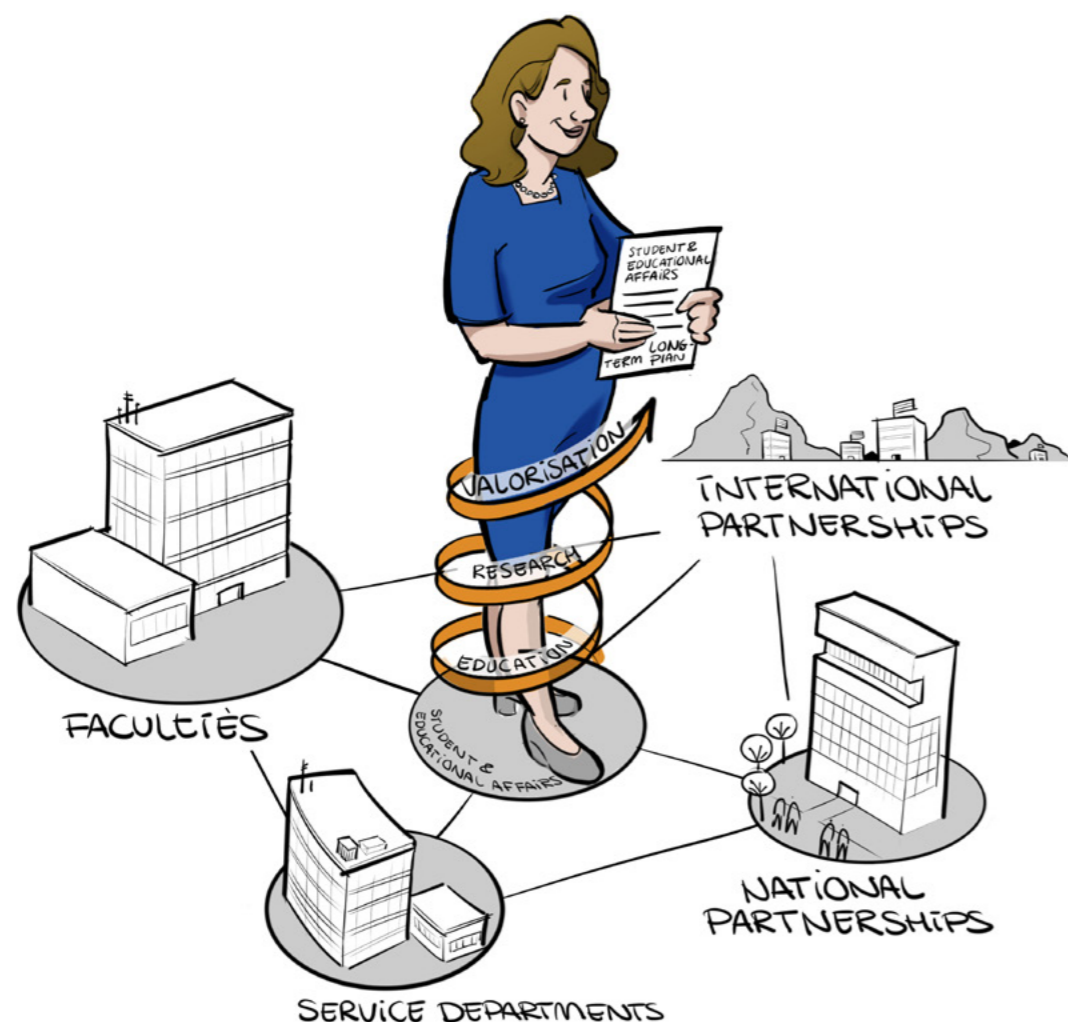
But there's more than education support alone that differentiates us as a university. Our VU Sports Centre and Griffioen Cultural Centre also stand out. On campus and on Uilenstede, the Sports Centre contributes to the health and vitality of students, staff and local residents by promoting physical activity and participation in sports. The collaboration between the Sports Centre and Human Movement Sciences reinforces the name that we already have in that area. The cultural offerings of the Griffioen Cultural Centre reflect the diversity and international makeup of our staff members and student body. The Griffioen Cultural Centre makes the campus a lively place to be in the evenings, weekends and during holidays, where everyone can feel at home. This was something noticed by Rialto film theatre too. By opening a campus venue they help to make it even livelier. As an administrator, I'm really happy about that.

How we do it

Our educational vision has been translated into the way we approach teaching and learning. The education on offer at VU Amsterdam has been designed in accordance with five principles which embody the university's core values:

- Teaching and education **activates** students. We activate students with innovative teaching methods, which we strive to deliver by achieving a good balance between face-to-face and digital forms of teaching.
- Each **student has primary responsibility** for their own educational career and academic success. We stimulate students' autonomy and self-actualizing capacities with our teaching.
- VU Amsterdam is **inclusive**. We want to be a welcoming place for students from different backgrounds. The diversity of our student body and teaching faculty is integrated into classroom practices by making use of the principles of the mixed classroom, among others.
- Societal issues are studied and addressed from a **multidisciplinary** perspective.
- VU Amsterdam is fully aware of its **social responsibility** and gives expression to this in its teaching.

From: the VU Educational Quality Assurance Plan 2.0, (Kwaliteit-splan 2.0) Chapter 3, section on design principles.



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March 2021



Mission and Profile

We take responsibility for people and the planet by delivering value driven education, research and knowledge transfer. We imbue students and professionals with knowledge and 'A Broader Mind'. We pursue pioneering research, both within and across disciplines. As free thinkers with a focus on diversity, purpose and compassion, our students and staff have a deep connection with one another while being fully engaged with society as a whole. This is Vrije Universiteit Amsterdam's mission.

Core Values

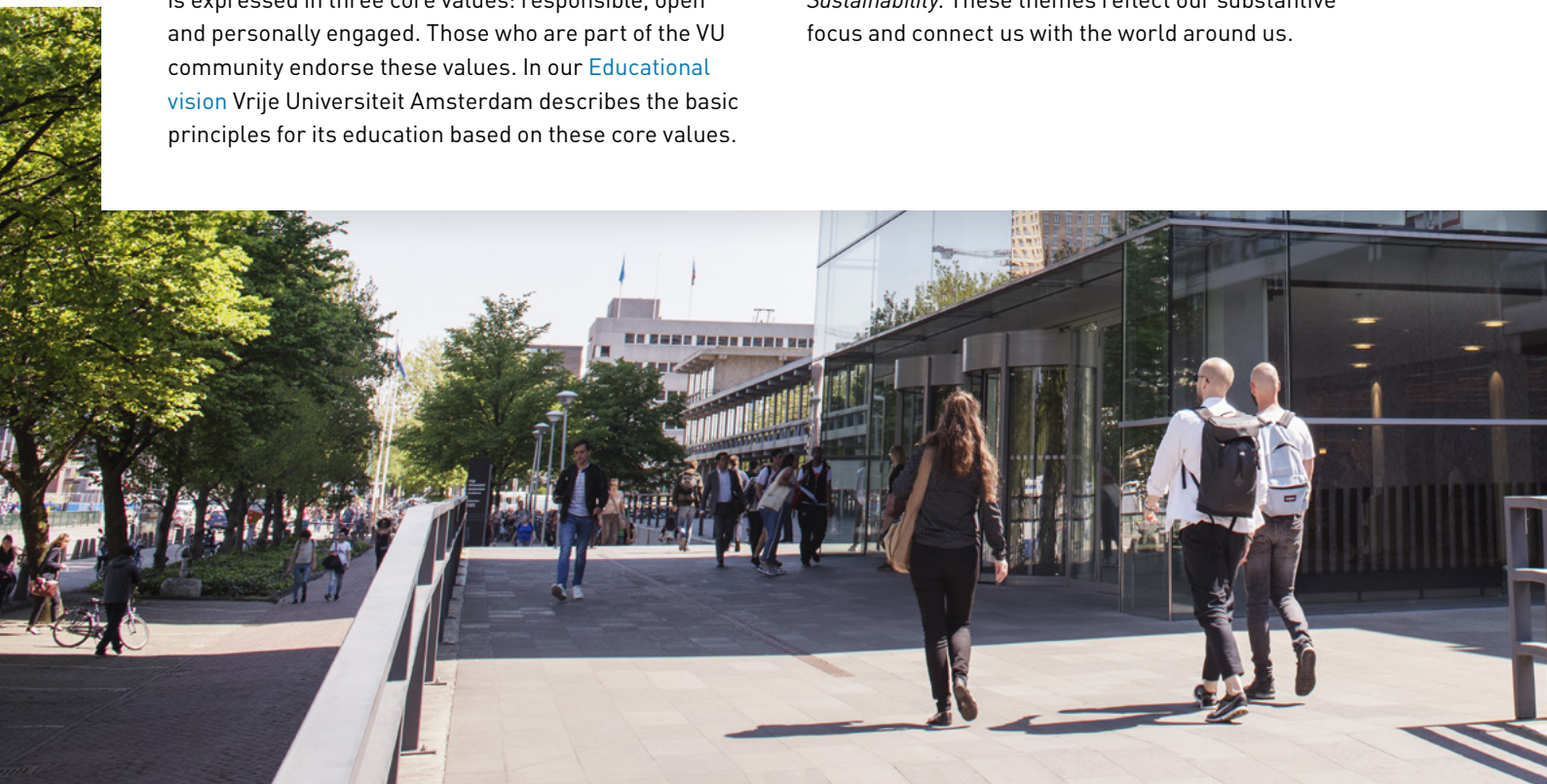
The basic philosophy of Vrije Universiteit Amsterdam is expressed in three core values: responsible, open and personally engaged. Those who are part of the VU community endorse these values. In our [Educational vision](#) Vrije Universiteit Amsterdam describes the basic principles for its education based on these core values.

VU Ambitions


Vrije Universiteit Amsterdam has an ambitious strategy for the coming years: [VU Strategy 2020-2025](#). It focuses on three priority areas: **sustainable**, **enterprising** and **diverse**. These give direction to our actions and to the content of our core tasks of education, research, knowledge transfer and operational management.


Within our core tasks, we have formulated nine aspirations that we are concentrating on throughout the duration of this strategy.


The strategy also outlines four substantive profile themes - *Human Health and Life Sciences, Connected World, Governance for Society and Science for Sustainability*. These themes reflect our substantive focus and connect us with the world around us.



Would you like to know more?

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