

## **Executive Board's response to the results of the Coronavirus Monitor dated October 2020**

The second edition of the Coronavirus Monitor was held between 27 October and 10 November – this is the periodic survey we use to find out how staff at VU Amsterdam are coping during the pandemic. The response rate was once again high, with 55% of university employees taking part. We very much appreciate that so many employees have again taken the time to let us know how they have managed during the last few months.

### *Wellbeing*

After the summer, during which the measures were relaxed somewhat and we were occasionally able to work on campus, the guidelines were tightened up again in October. The results show that recent months have not been easy for many of our employees. Colleagues are missing each other more than ever and we feel our ties with VU Amsterdam weakening slightly. Fortunately, though, many colleagues are coming up with some creative solutions. Taking flowers to a colleague living nearby on their birthday, combining a work meeting with a walk, or simply just catching up over a Zoom coffee online – they all work, so keep them going and share your positive experiences. But remember to talk too when things are not going so well, and certainly with your manager. And do not hesitate to seek help, from a staff welfare officer for example, or a confidential counsellor. More information is available on the VUnet [Wellbeing and coronavirus](#) page.

### *Communication and workloads*

VU Amsterdam employees were less satisfied in recent months about communication, both across the university as a whole and in their own unit. After the initial months of the crisis, there were fewer direct reasons for communicating. However, the circumstances we find ourselves in remain exceptional. We very much acknowledge this signal from the survey and we will be intensifying our communication efforts. We call upon the units to do the same.

Workloads continue to be a cause of concern. The results from the survey show that for some employees, the coronavirus crisis has led to an increase in their workload. The digitization of work too, especially online teaching, has led to greater workloads. Flexible working hours and the combination of working on campus and from home have helped lighten the load somewhat. This offers potential benefits in the long term, but there is no easy solution for the time being. Keep in contact with your team and with your manager about your workload and possible solutions, for example by redefining your priorities or by finding different ways of allocating tasks in your team. Use the [workload matrix](#) for inspiration.

### *Longer term*

In the previous Coronavirus Monitor, most VU Amsterdam staff stated that they would like to continue working from home for some of the time, once the coronavirus crisis is over. From the results of the second monitor, it appears that the primary value of the campus is for meetings and discussions with colleagues and students. This is in keeping with our vision of the campus as a lively meeting place for exchanging ideas. We will take the results from the survey on board when drawing up plans for the long term. If employees were to work partly from home on a structural basis, this would require more from their managers, for example. In this survey, they stated that managing employees remotely takes more time and that it is more difficult to keep an eye on employees' wellbeing. A discussion guideline is to be issued for managers in the near future, and remote management and team-bonding training courses are being developed.

### *Concluding remarks*

Discuss the results with your colleagues and manager. Let each other know what you need in both the short and long term to be able to do your work as well as possible.

We realize that we have asked a lot of you in the last few months. We are proud of the dedication and resilience shown by VU Amsterdam employees and we are pleased that the arrival of a vaccine offers hope for 2021.

*Executive Board  
Vrije Universiteit Amsterdam  
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