

## **Response by the Executive Board to the results of the third Corona Monitor**

The Corona Monitor was held for the third time in April – this is the periodic survey we use to find out how staff at VU Amsterdam are coping during the pandemic. This time, 51% of employees took the time to complete the Corona Monitor – another great response rate! Many thanks to everyone who took part.

### *Health and well-being*

For more than a year we have found ourselves mostly having to work from home. We see a continuation of the adverse effects of this on the health and well-being of employees, such as missing the enjoyment gained from being part of a group, working in partnership with colleagues, and the disruption to the work-life balance. A slightly positive note is that it appears that the effects have not become much worse. This is also consistent with the results of nationwide surveys. Even though the prospects for improvement may be increasing, we nonetheless continue to focus in particular on the importance of being part of a group. Keep in touch with each other and ask people how they are doing! Instead of yet another Zoom or Teams meeting, phone people up or arrange to meet for a walk.

Let us all hold on to that group feeling in the VU Amsterdam community. The Executive Board will also continue to actively pursue this approach. We would like to remind you of the resources that are available. If you are at a loss or if you are feeling lonely, then do not hesitate to seek help, from a staff welfare officer for example, or a confidential counsellor. More information is available at VUweb on the [Wellbeing and corona](#) page.

### *Workload*

As in previous Corona Monitors, employees stated that their workload is too heavy. The large amount of overtime reported also confirms that measures really are needed in order to relieve people's workload. The Executive Board released funds for this purpose just before the third Corona Monitor was held. Faculties and service departments have planned measures, such as postponing certain activities or taking on extra colleagues. The Executive Board, too, has taken certain measures, such as allowing more time for implementing the VU Amsterdam strategy and having meetings-free weeks in order to inject some 'peace and quiet' into people's diaries. We will be keeping an eye on whether all these measures do actually relieve people's workload. If you are not familiar with your unit's workload plan, ask your manager or HR advisor and discuss with your team what you need in order to lighten your workload.

Some VU Amsterdam employees are actually working fewer hours because their work has been suspended, either wholly or partly, because of the coronavirus restrictions. This aspect has perhaps not received as much exposure in recent times, but we fully realize that it is very difficult to stay motivated and involved if you are not able to perform your duties in the manner you are used to. We ask managers and colleagues to keep a dialogue going with regard to what effect having too little work can have on you, and to see if there are any ways in which duties can be redistributed until people are able to resume their own work.

### *Leave and recovery*

During the past year, we have witnessed how employees have been enormously dedicated to their work. Their loyalty and involvement are a source of great pride to us all. At the same time, we urge everyone to take good care of themselves and allow yourself time to recover. We have noticed that colleagues are using up less of their leave. Colleagues with additional care responsibilities who require extra leave are not taking it because their work does not allow them to or because they do not wish to place a heavier burden on their colleagues' shoulders. Discuss this with each other –

there may very well be more options available to you than you realize. The measures taken for lightening workloads are also intended to give employees the opportunity to rest and to recover. Do not put this off too long and discuss your options with your manager or your unit's HR advisor.

#### *Support and communication*

Employees are satisfied about the support and communication at the various levels – the university itself, their units, and their managers. In particular, support given by managers is very highly valued. Other results from the Corona Monitor also show that contact and collaboration between employees and their managers are of a good standard. That is definitely worthy of a compliment.

#### *Working from home and hybrid working*

After working from home for more than a year, we were curious to learn how employees would feel about doing so post-pandemic. VU Amsterdam staff state that they would like to continue working from home for some of the time, once the coronavirus crisis is over. We will take these results onboard in the [Hybrid working programme](#), in which we will be looking at how we can best facilitate the combination of working from home and on campus. Employees are reasonably satisfied about their home work spaces. See VUweb to learn what the [options](#) are for improving your home work space, with the help of a desk or lighting, for example.

#### *Concluding remarks*

We are on the right track towards being able to meet up again on campus, but there is still some way to go. Discuss the results of the Corona Monitor with your colleagues and your manager and keep talking about your needs, especially with regard to workload, rest, and recovery, and what you yourself can do!

In the autumn, we will again be asking all VU Amsterdam employees to share their experiences in the detailed employee survey. We hope we can count on your response once again.

Thank you for your dedication, perseverance, and resilience!

*Executive Board*

*Vrije Universiteit Amsterdam*

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