

Erasmus Policy Statement

Vrije Universiteit Amsterdam has been awarded the Erasmus Charter for Higher Education for the Erasmus+ programme 2021-2027. The Erasmus Policy Statement (below) sets out our institutional strategy in relation to the Charter.

Vrije Universiteit Amsterdam (hereafter VU Amsterdam) believes to have an important role to play in today's society. It is our mission to educate our students not only to become something, but to become someone, as free thinkers. Our students and staff have a deep connection with one another while being fully engaged with society as a whole. This mission has been implemented in a Strategic Plan. The Erasmus Charter for Higher Education is catalyst to the realisation of our Strategic Plan and its priority areas. The coming years VU Amsterdam focuses on sustainability, social entrepreneurship and diversity as its core themes. We try to achieve our goals through innovation in education and research.

In order to fulfil these priority areas, we work together with like-minded partners, such as the institutions within the Aurora Alliance. The Aurora Alliance is a consortium of research-intensive universities deeply committed to the societal impact of our activities, and with a history of engagement with our communities. Our common purpose is to define, test and train the competences needed to bring about innovation for social change. We share new skills and mind-sets not only with our member universities, but also with other (Erasmus) partners and regions through an ambitious capacity development programme. The Aurora Alliance will change preconceptions about the nature of university education, developing a fundamentally European approach. Our innovative Aurora Network will facilitate experimentation, mobility and shared expertise, and our ambitious Capacity Development Support Programme will support cohesion and social impact. Through this step-change in collaboration, we will move significantly closer to our long-term Aurora Alliance vision of an inclusive and diverse inter-university campus.

Sustainability

The strategy of VU Amsterdam for the next five years, has been greatly influenced by the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDG). Inspired by the SDG goals, we feel that as a university it is our responsibility to help find solutions for present societal challenges. Sustainability is of great importance and has broad significance. It is about more than just the environment, it also includes economic, social, cultural and human aspects. Together with our partners from the Aurora Alliance, we have implemented an SDG research dashboard to monitor and analyse the societal impact of our research. We will develop an SDG educational dashboard serving similar purposes, but adapted to the specificities of education of our students. It will allow students and interested parties to see, at a glance, how our educational programmes serve to drive forward each of the SDG goals. Our efforts so far have been awarded with a second place in the Times Higher Educational impact ranking 2020 on SDG 13: Climate Change, and an overall 39th rank.

Social Entrepreneurship

VU Amsterdam wants to create added value for society. This obliges us to make full and proper use of the academic and practical expertise, competences and personal skills of PhD scholars and students, academic staff, and professionals. This calls for an entrepreneurial attitude. At VU Amsterdam that means seeing, creating and seizing opportunities, being creative and courageous, and taking personal responsibility. It means daring to take risks and not being afraid to experiment.

Social Entrepreneurship involves creating societal impact through entrepreneurship. If we are to tackle the major social issues successfully, we will need to combine expertise in a specific subject with the appropriate soft skills. Using an entrepreneurial approach, we will then be able to develop innovative solutions to social issues. Within the Aurora network, VU Amsterdam will lead the way in developing a teaching programme in this area.

Diversity

VU Amsterdam has an increasingly diverse and international population. We feel proud and privileged to serve the entire student population, regardless of background. The VU Diversity Office promotes networks that embrace the concept of diversity. The Aurora Inclusive Internationalization Programme aims to increase the international experience opportunities for students from underrepresented groups; the VU Mixed Classroom Education Model optimizes the learning experience for all students by building upon differences; VU One Community brings together different initiatives to improve student wellbeing, focusing on combatting crowding out effects and facilitating the integration of different communities at our university.

Innovation

With innovative educational concepts we introduce new learning and teaching methods. The VU Educational Lab advises on this educational innovation. Digitalization plays an important role, as it makes internationalization environmentally friendly and inclusive, while at the same time strengthening the quality of our education. Blended learning is one of the projects we focus on, where we redesign our curricula with a mix of teaching methods and educational activities. These different forms of education actually reinforce each other. In due course, these will be primarily offered online. Blended learning and innovative digital solutions in education also play a key role in our collaboration within the Aurora Alliance. There will be investments in facilities for blended learning, but the Alliance also acts as a training and learning development centre for professional digitalization of our educational activities. In achieving all of the above strategic objectives, the Erasmus Programme is of great importance. Collaborative innovation and development in partnerships, incoming and outgoing international students and staff all contribute to the intensification and modernization of our mixed campus environment. VU Amsterdam strongly believes that the Erasmus Programme helps our students and staff to contribute to solutions for the global challenges in an increasingly international world.