

Strategy
2026-2030



Free thinkers
for people,
society
and planet

Reader's guide

In this strategy document, we set out what we aim to achieve at VU Amsterdam in the years ahead. Our starting points are our mission, core values and vision, outlined in Chapter 1. Our ambitions for 2026–2030 build on the university's strengths – which is why Chapter 2 describes what makes VU Amsterdam unique. Chapter 3 sets out our ambitions for education, research, valorisation and impact – and for our people and organisation – as well as the guiding principle that underpins them. Finally, all these ambitions lead to Chapter 4, which looks at our hopes for the future: an inspiring picture of VU Amsterdam beyond 2035.



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Foreword

Knowing who you are, where your qualities lie, and where you draw your strength from are essential when charting your course – whether that's your path as a student, or your career as a lecturer, researcher or member of the support staff.

The same is true for Vrije Universiteit Amsterdam (VU Amsterdam) as an institution. We are firmly rooted in society and move with the times, but we always act from our own strengths. These stem from our history, our identity and our values – and they're the best guide we have for the future.

Focusing on what we do best will also help us face the budget cuts that are, unfortunately, inevitable. In the coming policy period, we will therefore focus on our strongest assets in education, research and valorisation.

The world faces major challenges. As a comprehensive university, we have all the expertise needed to help tackle them. We strive for scientific excellence that makes a societal impact. We are a community of free thinkers who are committed to the common good. We take each other into account, because one person's freedom must not come at the expense of another's. We aim to educate our students to become global citizens who are open to different perspectives. Because this is the best antidote to polarisation, especially in times of geopolitical tension.

To be able to use your strengths for the greater good, you must first discover who you are and seize the opportunity to grow and develop. With our ambitions for the coming period, 2026-2030, we want to make that possible for new generations of students, and for the VU Amsterdam community as a whole. Through our education, research and valorisation, this is how we contribute to creating a better world.



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1 Mission, core values and vision





VU Amsterdam seeks to make a difference to its students, staff and society as a whole. We're guided by our core values and our long-term vision for the university. This chapter lays the foundation for the strategic choices we will make in the coming years.

**VU Amsterdam
seeks to make a
difference** to its
students, staff and
society as a whole.

1.1 Our mission

Vrije Universiteit Amsterdam –
free thinkers for people, society
and planet.

In our academic education, research and valorisation, we're guided by our values. We take responsibility for people, society and planet. Studying at VU Amsterdam means not only acquiring specialist knowledge but also broadening your horizons. We are a community of free thinkers who value different perspectives and continually seek to learn from them. What unites us is our commitment to diversity, meaning and humanity, and our drive to carry out groundbreaking research.



Vrije Universiteit
Amsterdam –
**free thinkers for
people, society
and planet.**





1.2 Our core values

Open, personal and responsible – these are VU Amsterdam's core values, embraced by our entire community.

They are part of our DNA, rooted in our history. When we reflect on who we are, what defines us as VU Amsterdam, and which values should guide us through both good times and bad, these are the ones we choose.



Open, personal and responsible – these are VU Amsterdam's core values.

Open

We recognise the value of diversity in disciplines, cultures, perspectives and worldviews

VU Amsterdam is a meeting place.

We interact with one another on the basis of trust. We take an active interest in disciplines, cultures, perspectives and

worldviews that differ from those we're familiar with.

This can lead to fresh insights, sharper thinking and a broader understanding in both education and research.

Personal

We show care and respect for every individual in our community

Every member of the university community is valued and has the opportunity to flourish. You feel this when you study or work with us: in the personal attention students receive, in the passion with which lecturers teach, in the support offered by the organisation, in recognising and rewarding diverse talent, and in the commitment of colleagues. We help one another in our quest for what is good and true.

Responsible

We are engaged with people and society, and we act in a spirit of service

We align our education, research and valorisation with societal themes. We encourage our students and staff to contribute to a better world. We're accountable for our behaviour. We take responsibility for what we do, and we challenge one another to reflect and take action.

1.3 Our vision for 2035

VU Amsterdam seeks and nurtures societal dialogue, is a leader in research, and educates global citizens who contribute to a better world in both word and deed.

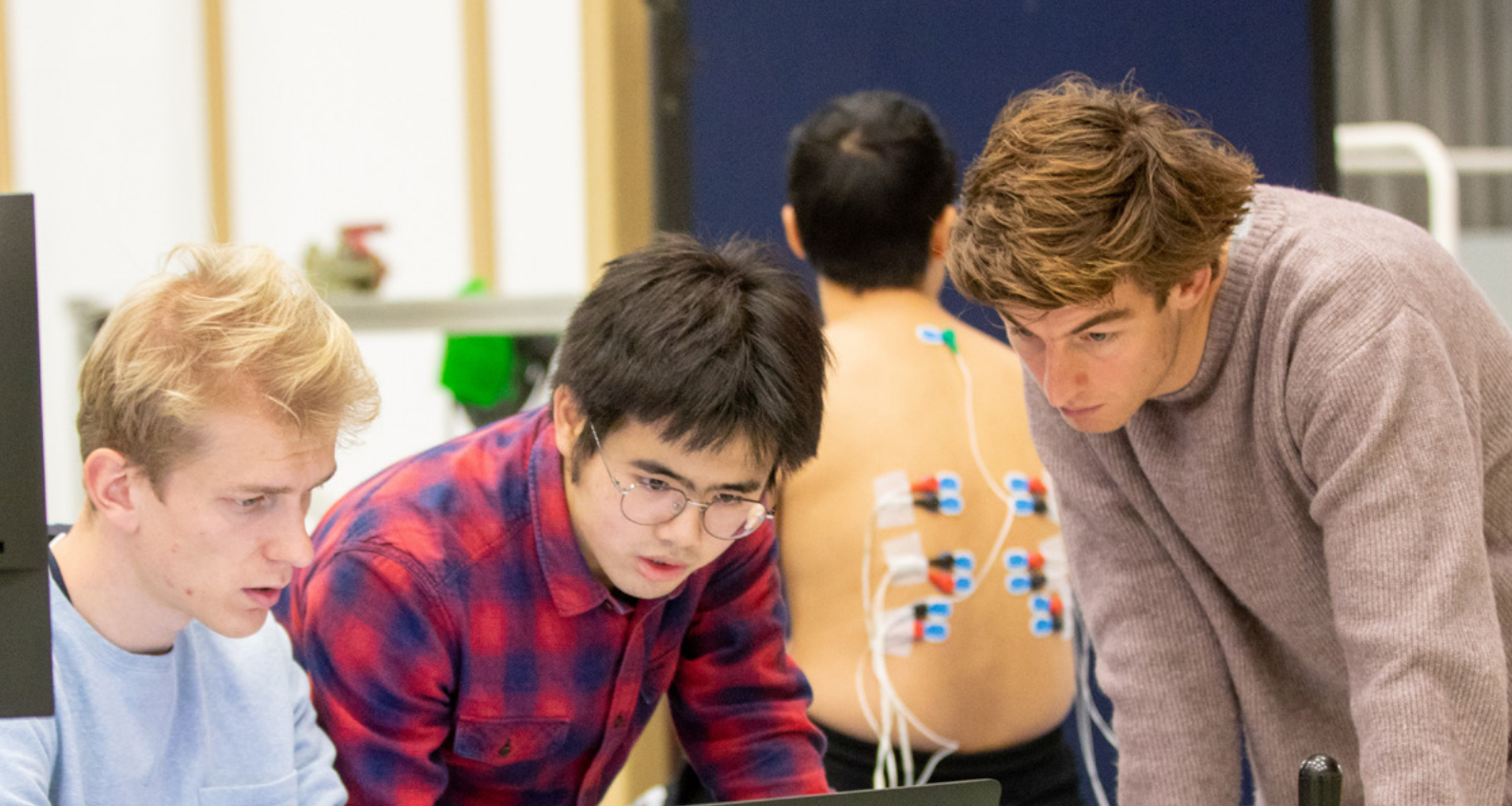
Our vision for 2035 is the point on the horizon that we're aiming for over the years ahead, setting the direction in which we – as the VU Amsterdam community – wish to move over the longer term. The first steps towards this goal will be taken in the coming strategic period, 2026–2030.

Societal dialogue

These times call for connection, collaboration and the pursuit of truth. VU Amsterdam wants to actively foster broader societal dialogue through values-driven science. Excellent and relevant education, research and valorisation play a vital role in this. At the same time, we also seek dialogue within the university, so that we can learn from the wide range of perspectives in society and integrate them into our activities. Our research takes place in local, regional, national and international partnerships. We work in teams – and we see that team science works. We recognise the value of a plurality of voices and expertise, and we appreciate the diverse talent that comes together in our teams. We believe in the power of lifelong learning – together. On the university's campus, we invest in community spirit and in fostering honest, open and respectful dialogue, in which we learn to master the art of listening. It is precisely by engaging with each other in this way that we make change possible.

Leading research

Research at VU Amsterdam is world-class. We seek solutions to complex societal issues in a rapidly changing world. That's why we believe it's important for our researchers to have an open, flexible attitude that fosters connection, working together and with others in dynamic networks. These networks are always grounded in fundamental, curiosity-driven research, so that we continue to inspire one another with new and unexpected ideas. But scientific knowledge alone is not enough. It's essential to connect different insights and perspectives in genuine dialogue, and to co-produce knowledge across science, policy and society. This involves collaboration between disciplines as well as with partners outside the university. We're significantly expanding our research collaborations with partners from the field. Thanks to our societal engagement, valorisation is given full scope to flourish.



Educating global citizens

At VU Amsterdam, we educate our students to become responsible global citizens with a broad outlook and an open mind for what brings meaning and value. Here, you learn to look beyond your own position, interests and perspective. That's how we build towards a better – healthy, sustainable and just – world, together. We're rooted locally: in a strong, values-driven community. But we always keep the global perspective in mind, whether we're working close to home or further afield. At VU Amsterdam, we want you to feel able to be yourself. We're proud of our first-generation students, and we cherish the diversity of backgrounds and stories that enrich our community.

These times call for connection, collaboration and the pursuit of truth.

VU Amsterdam wants to actively foster broader societal dialogue through values-driven science.

2 Unique position



We are the *Vrije* – or free – Universiteit Amsterdam. Together, we invest in freedom for all. You choose to work or study here if you want to contribute to a better world – in both word and deed. If you want to be involved in leading research. If you want to engage in dialogue with other members of the VU Amsterdam community, or with people in society at large.

We are an **emancipatory university, the largest in health, with a broad range of disciplines – all brought together on a single campus.**



The griffin in our logo perfectly symbolises our institution: soaring **on the wings of imagination, yet with both feet planted firmly on the ground.**

VU Amsterdam represents the freedom to dream, but always in connection with society. The foundation for contributing to solutions to societal challenges is excellent education and research. To achieve this, we collaborate not only across disciplines and faculties, but also with other fields and civil society partners. This chapter sets out what makes VU Amsterdam unique: we are an emancipatory university, the largest in health, with a broad range of disciplines – all brought together on a single campus.

A photograph of two young women sitting at a wooden table outdoors, likely on a university campus. They are both smiling and looking at a laptop. The woman on the left is Black and wearing a blue and white striped shirt with a floral pattern. The woman on the right is white with long dark hair, wearing a dark blue jacket. In the background, there are concrete steps and other people, suggesting a public outdoor space. An orange speech bubble is overlaid on the left side of the image, containing text.

We educate our students to become global citizens, who are attuned to their environment, both locally and globally.

An emancipatory university

We have a long history of emancipation: for almost 150 years – and still today – we’ve welcomed many first-generation students. In 2025, this rich tradition received international recognition: VU Amsterdam’s archives – from Abraham Kuyper to Martin Luther King (1879–1972) – were included in the Dutch Memory of the World Register of UNESCO. They reflect the interconnection between university and society, and demonstrate how VU Amsterdam has repeatedly reinterpreted its distinctive identity over the years. We remain a diverse, inclusive and accessible university. Showing humanity and contributing to society are always our starting point. We educate our students to become

global citizens, who are attuned to their environment, both locally and globally. The same guiding principle applies to our staff: they ensure the high quality of our education and research; they inspire our students; and they strive for dialogue and collaboration to contribute to a better world. At VU Amsterdam, you do not become *something*, but *someone*. You discover your strengths, and you’re given every opportunity to develop yourself, both within and beyond your studies. Students and staff who want to make a difference to society are given the space to do so. For us, the focus on *how* we do things is just as important as *what* we do. This approach is what sets VU Amsterdam apart.

The largest in health

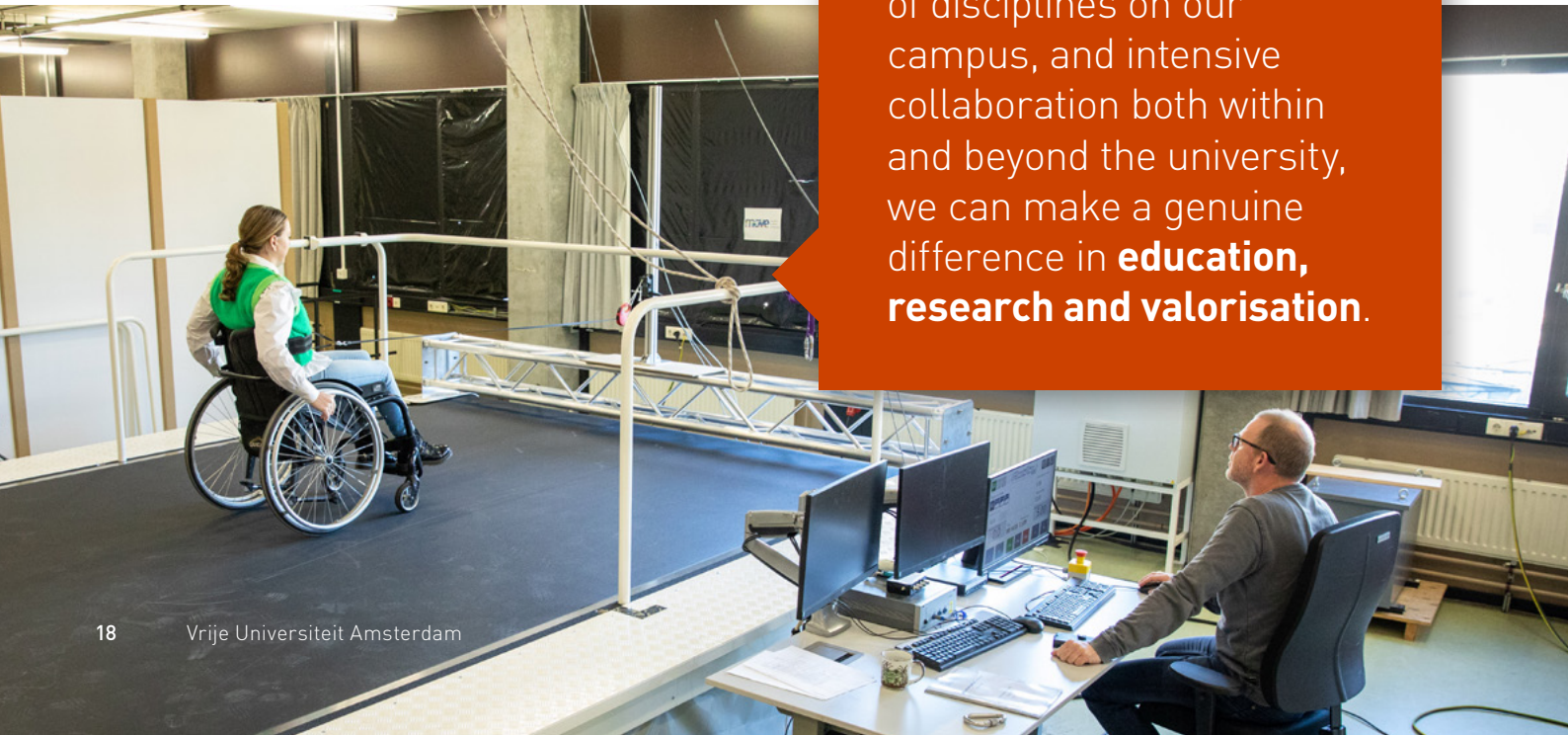
In the field of health, VU Amsterdam plays a pioneering role in the Netherlands – a leading position that we're proud of and that we intend to strengthen further in the years ahead. This theme aligns closely with what we aspire to contribute to people and society. Thanks to the wide range of disciplines on our campus, and intensive collaboration both within and beyond the university, we can make a genuine difference in education, research and valorisation. Moreover, the largest academic hospital in the Netherlands is affiliated with VU Amsterdam. This enables us to put innovations straight into practice, while giving our students the opportunity to test their skills.

A broad range of disciplines

Today's societal challenges are complex. Addressing them requires collaboration between academics from different disciplines – with each other and with businesses, government bodies, civil society organisations and other knowledge institutions. VU Amsterdam is uniquely

positioned for this. Not only because all fields of science are represented on one campus, but also because collaboration is in our DNA. A broad scientific view is necessary, especially in times like these, to provide students with a solid foundation and multiple perspectives. Through our large Faculty of Science, our strong focus on health and our innovative collaboration with institutions like the University of Twente, we're closely connected to the technological developments shaping our world. Yet technology that lacks the human element – a sense of "soul" – often fails to gain a foothold in society. That's why we're proud of our newly merged Faculty of Social Sciences and Humanities, which explores questions about people, humanity and society, and considers medical and technological advances through the lens of ethics, meaning, human perspectives and social structures.

Thanks to the wide range of disciplines on our campus, and intensive collaboration both within and beyond the university, we can make a genuine difference in **education, research and valorisation.**



One compact campus

Our campus is the beating heart of the university. Within one square kilometre, some 32,000 students and nearly 7,000 staff form an academic community. Whether you come here to study or work, you quickly feel at home on VU Amsterdam's campus. It's easy to drop by and visit one another, meet up on the green campus grounds, or come together around sport, culture and debate. This fosters a strong sense of belonging. Our community comprises almost 150 nationalities – people from a wide variety of cultures and backgrounds. The compact campus facilitates collaboration and serves as a hub for national and international research consortia and for enterprises (including VU Amsterdam's own enterprises) that translate knowledge into applications that are relevant for society.

Whether you come
here to study or
work, **you quickly
feel at home on VU
Amsterdam's campus.**



3 Strategic direction 2026-2030





In this chapter, we describe our ambitions for our core tasks, and for our people and organisation, alongside the attitude that underpins them. Especially in times of budget cuts, polarisation and geopolitical tensions, we will build on our strengths in education, research and valorisation. Conducting science for and with society, reasoning from multiple perspectives, and collaborating in the broadest sense of the word – these are now more important than ever.

Conducting science for and with society, reasoning from multiple perspectives, and collaborating in the broadest sense of the word – these are now more important than ever.

3.1 Global citizenship as our guiding principle

The foundation of our strategic direction is the desire to use our knowledge and networks positively, in service of the greater good. The guiding principle here is *global citizenship*.

We educate our students to become global citizens who contribute to a better – healthy, sustainable and just – world, in both word and deed. We also foster this principle among our staff. As a university, we want to serve as a place to practise global citizenship.

A matter of global importance

Both within and beyond academia, we face immense challenges and unprecedented change. Social polarisation and geopolitical tensions threaten division and instability. Contentious issues such as climate change and migration give rise to deep rifts. Major challenges, such as inequality, poverty and conflict, cannot be solved through simple findings or individual perspectives. More than ever, we're therefore called upon to think and act as global citizens.

Global citizenship is so important to us because the world needs people who embrace complex issues and approach them from a broad, holistic perspective. People who understand that every action has consequences for the greater whole. People who realise that they need each other – and each other's expertise and insights – to find healthy, sustainable and just solutions to society's

challenges. People who recognise that even smaller issues can be enriched when viewed from multiple angles. In short: citizens of the world who are open to different perspectives and interests, from the local to the global.

The university as a place to practise

At VU Amsterdam, we believe in the power of working together. Engagement with people and society is woven into the DNA of our academic community. With our educational philosophy, *A Broader Mind*, we challenge ourselves and our students to look beyond the boundaries of our disciplines and degree programmes – at society and at ourselves. As a comprehensive university with a compact campus, we foster collaboration across disciplines. Global citizenship therefore aligns closely with our values and strengths. By cherishing and strengthening these, we believe that as a community and as an organisation, we can contribute even more to a better world. That's why, as a university, we want to be a place to practise global citizenship.



Global citizenship is so important to us because **the world needs people** who embrace complex issues and approach them from a broad, holistic perspective.

Locally rooted, globally oriented

Science knows no borders, and academia has therefore always been an international breeding ground. The VU Amsterdam community is locally rooted, yet with a broad outlook that transcends boundaries, both literally and figuratively. We're involved in issues and initiatives at local, regional, national and international levels – because today's challenges have both local and global dimensions, and influence each other. Our staff are active in a wide variety of international networks and partnerships, and many of our students will be in their future careers, too. We therefore emphasise the importance of multilingualism and intercultural competence. At the same time, we're firmly embedded in Dutch society, and want to support the integration of international students and staff.

For VU Amsterdam, global citizenship also means maintaining our appreciation of international and cultural diversity. We take a thoughtful approach to the principle that we're a bilingual institution. Our language policy aims at inclusivity towards students and staff in all domains. In the coming period, we will be fully revising our language policy to meet new legal requirements. This will also include reassessing the expectations and requirements around Dutch and English language proficiency of students and staff.

A reflective and active attitude

To remain engaged with the complex and rapidly changing world around us, we invest in ourselves. We continue to develop and grow. We create space for shared dialogue, in which we reflect on what we consider important and why. We examine ethical questions and consider how we arrived at our own positions. Driven by curiosity about people, society and planet, we adopt a learning mindset that ensures we continue developing.



At VU Amsterdam, global citizenship is also a practical and active attitude. The realisation that our actions, however small, are part of larger movements calls for perseverance and motivation – driven by both knowledge and values – to contribute to a better world. As global citizens at the university, we are free thinkers who look at the world with an open mind, and who are aware that freedom comes with responsibility. We take care of ourselves and of one another. We use our own freedom to safeguard the freedom of others.

Open dialogue

We support our staff and students in experimenting with meaningful dialogue in safe and creative ways. Such dialogue can only flourish when all parties feel free to engage in it. Respect for others, their views and backgrounds is the



Our campus is a society in miniature, which we use as a testing ground for sustainable innovation.

basis for constructive conversation. Global citizenship requires courage, but also gentleness – towards both others and ourselves. Academic debate should be critical and may be challenging. In dialogue, we accept that differences exist, we try to address conflicting interests in a respectful way, and we aim to learn from each other's perspectives. That's how we move forward, together.

As global citizens at VU Amsterdam, we're aware that multiple perspectives are essential to find healthy, sustainable and just solutions. That's why we test our own views and enrich them with other perspectives. We draw on the strength of our diversity and see differences as opportunities to learn and grow together –through our *Mixed Classroom Model*, for example. We actively

seek out perspectives that do not automatically align with our own. Thanks to this open attitude, coupled with dialogue as a tool for learning and transformation, the different viewpoints within our academic community can lead to surprising new insights.

A healthy, sustainable and just world

As global citizens at VU Amsterdam, we want to contribute to the transition towards a healthy, sustainable and just world. We set a good example ourselves: our campus is a society in miniature, which we use as a testing ground for sustainable innovation – including initiatives led by our student-run Green Office. In our education and research, we focus on three domains: health and well-being, climate and environment, justice and resilience. This broad approach is aligned with the United Nations' Sustainable Development Goals, as well as our role as coordinator of the Sustainable Development Solutions Network (SDSN) Netherlands. In this way, we play a leading role in collaboration between universities, think-tanks and other knowledge institutions to develop workable solutions for sustainable development. We also actively build new partnerships, in the Netherlands and abroad, with organisations dedicated to scientific diplomacy and peacekeeping.

The ripple effect

Educating students to become global citizens has enormous potential. Every year, thousands of our graduates enter the world carrying not only knowledge, but also the VU Amsterdam ethos and its associated connectivity skills. Our graduates have a positive influence by showing what can be achieved when people are open to other perspectives and actively engage in dialogue. The same multiplier effect applies to our dynamic networks: the people our researchers work with experience the huge strength that lies in diversity, and how dialogue can take the place of polarisation. Through this ripple effect of our global citizenship, we truly make a world of difference.

3.2 Our ambitions for our core tasks

We remain a leader through our innovative and distinctive education, and our open and accessible research. These increase our impact on both society and science.

Education

We educate our students to be free thinkers who, as global citizens with *A Broader Mind*, contribute to solutions to complex societal challenges. This is our ambition for education.

VU Amsterdam seeks to make a difference in society. We encourage our students to view the world with a broad perspective. At the same time, we equip them with the tools to be agile professionals, so that they can apply their expertise to current issues.

We aim to achieve our educational ambition through three objectives:

1. We offer a portfolio of degree programmes that meet the needs of society and science.
2. We prepare our students for a rapidly changing world with state-of-the-art technologies, the latest educational insights and up-to-date content.
3. We support the continuous growth of professionals and civil society partners with a distinctive offering for lifelong learning.

We offer a portfolio of degree programmes that meet the needs of society and science

Our programmes respond to society's needs. At a time of hardening attitudes and polarisation, our programmes contribute to the foundations of democracy, for example, by teaching students to engage with different perspectives and to conduct open dialogue. When developing new programmes, we explore how different disciplines and perspectives can be brought together – enabling students to come up with fresh contributions to pressing issues through their education. Our portfolio of programmes encourages students to develop *A Broader Mind*: to continue to grow as responsible, free thinkers with a moral compass, imbued with resilience in their lives. This happens along three lines, which are inextricably linked:

1. In academic training, we encourage students to be open to diverse perspectives and ethical questions, and we foster independent, critical judgement. That's how they discover the meaning of science and truth-seeking, and develop their own wisdom.
2. Through our education, we encourage students to take social responsibility, with a broad perspective on societal issues. Students learn to

look across disciplinary boundaries, to collaborate in bringing different viewpoints together, and to apply their knowledge and skills in the search for solutions to complex challenges.

3. We foster students' personal development. During their studies, they learn to take responsibility for their own learning process. They learn how to deal

with mistakes and uncertainties, and how to interact constructively with others. This enhances their resilience, agility and self-awareness, enabling them to make the most of the diversity in their environment. When they feel good about themselves, they can face complex societal problems with confidence.

A photograph showing a female student in a grey t-shirt wearing a blue VR headset and holding a blue VR controller. She is standing and looking into the headset. A male professor in a blue shirt is sitting at a desk, looking at her. On the desk is a computer monitor displaying a software interface. In the background, there is a whiteboard with some diagrams and text. A green speech bubble is overlaid on the bottom left of the image.

We encourage our students to **view the world with a broad perspective**. At the same time, we equip them with the tools to be agile professionals, so that they can apply their expertise to current issues.

We prepare our students for a rapidly changing world with state-of-the-art technologies, the latest educational insights and up-to-date content

VU Amsterdam aims to excel globally in innovative education, with the goal of enhancing the learning process for students and preparing them as effectively as possible for society's complex challenges. We invest in strong teaching teams. The Recognition & Rewards programme contributes to this, enabling our lecturers to deploy their talents in teaching and focus on their educational role. Internationally, VU Amsterdam is praised for its commitment to Recognition & Rewards and for developing career paths in education. Our students not only benefit from the most modern learning tools, but also acquire the digital skills they need in the labour market. At the same time, we raise their awareness of the impact of technology on people, society and planet, as well as the ethical aspects of technology. Our students learn to work creatively, but also responsibly, with digital tools and artificial intelligence.

We support the continuous growth of professionals and civil society partners with a distinctive offering for lifelong learning

Developments in society are happening rapidly, and the professional skills that organisations need are changing with them. Through our offering for lifelong learning, we're responding to the needs of the labour market. Our research, our educational philosophy *A Broader Mind*, and the innovative mix of disciplines on our campus underpin our lifelong learning programmes, just as they do our regular portfolio of degree programmes. This enables us to give professionals the opportunity to gain relevant, up-to-date knowledge at any point in their careers. This is important not only for our alumni, but also for our civil society partners, which can benefit from employees with the right skills. At the same time, our lecturers and researchers are exposed to topical societal issues through

this interaction, prompting them to reflect more deeply on their own fields. In this way, VU Amsterdam creates impact at both individual and societal level.

At SpringLab, students from VU Amsterdam's Faculty of Medicine are driving educational innovation. Guided by experts, they enrich the medical curriculum with additional modules tailored to their own learning needs – and to the latest developments in healthcare and science. Students experiment with advanced technologies such as the digital "Anatamage" dissection table, which renders the human body in intricate 3D detail. They also explore themes such as sustainable healthcare, encouraging critical reflection on the impact of healthcare on people, society and planet. Our pioneering SpringLab initiative is currently being rolled out to other faculties. **By 2030, it will have evolved into a university-wide network of educational innovation hubs, where students and lecturers co-create new learning concepts.** Virtual reality and AI-driven simulations will allow complex scenarios to be experienced as if they were real. Students will co-design their own curricula and collaborate across disciplines to develop groundbreaking solutions.







Research

VU Amsterdam conducts open and accessible scientific research to find responsible solutions to complex issues. This is our ambition for research.

We see our power of connection, our team-oriented approach and our values-driven way of working as our greatest strengths in achieving this ambition.

We aim to achieve our research ambition through three objectives:

1. We work together as researchers in dynamic networks to find solutions that improve health and well-being, tackle climate change and environmental challenges, and create a just and resilient society.
2. We have an open attitude and conduct accessible science responsibly and with integrity.
3. We provide inspiring supervision and effective support for our strategic research at both national and international level.



Researchers at VU Amsterdam work together with societal partners to build a just world. Criminologist Yarin Eski, in collaboration with social psychologist Hans Boutellier, mapped the nature and approach of drug-related crime in the Port of Amsterdam and the North Sea Canal area. In collaboration with security agencies such as the police and customs authorities, they developed an innovative approach in which port mariners play a key role in strengthening cooperation between agencies. This has made it easier to detect and combat criminal activity. The research has paved the way for a new project aimed at tackling crime that reaches even further – into space itself, where new threats and security risks are emerging. **By 2030, VU Amsterdam researchers will be pioneers in security policy: their insights will be reflected in international treaties.** Through collaboration with agencies and technology companies, they will contribute to a just and secure future.

We work together as researchers in dynamic networks to find solutions that improve health and well-being, tackle climate change and environmental challenges, and create a just and resilient society

At VU Amsterdam, we believe in the power of collaboration. Today's complex challenges call for a joint approach, with the nature of the challenge determining which combination of expertise – whether fundamental or applied – is needed. That's why we work in dynamic networks: flexible collaborations between researchers from different fields and disciplines, together with civil society partners. This enables us to respond quickly to societal changes. We want to facilitate thinking and acting fast in order to keep up with – or even stay ahead of – global developments. Dynamic networks are often interdisciplinary and always include a core of curiosity-driven research that can generate innovative ideas. This is how we avoid stagnation and continue to approach new challenges with an open mind. Collaboration in dynamic networks has implications for the entire organisation. It's important, for example, that researchers remain in close contact with each other and with their support staff, and that they pass on their enthusiasm for this way of working to their own networks. By breaking down barriers between organisational units, we create the conditions for scientific breakthroughs.

We have an open attitude and conduct accessible science responsibly and with integrity

Our researchers are interested in each other's ideas, inspire one another and want the best for each other. We are transparent in our research, and conduct open and accessible science as much as possible, responsibly and with integrity. This brings countless benefits. First of all, it ensures accountability for research carried out using public funds. We show how our results have been achieved, which helps build public trust in science. By sharing as much data as possible, we can collaborate more effectively and ensure equal access to knowledge.

This contributes to a better world, but it is not without risks. We carefully consider ethical and legal dilemmas, and we play a leading role in the national debate to create a framework for responsible open science.

We provide inspiring supervision and effective support for our strategic research at both national and international level

For VU Amsterdam, “we” is more important than “I”. We provide PhD candidates and junior researchers with inspiring and effective supervision, and we train senior researchers in honing their supervisory skills. Our “sense of we” is also reflected in the way we take care of each other – for example, by giving feedback on one another’s research proposals or by including others in our networks. Our researchers are supported in seizing opportunities to fund their research, drawing on a broad spectrum of funding options. As a result, we excel in research within national and international, multidisciplinary consortia. Roles within these networks are shared: sometimes you’re the leader, sometimes the follower. One person may excel in the lab, another in securing new research funding. We do not all need to be good at everything: within our teams, everything comes together.

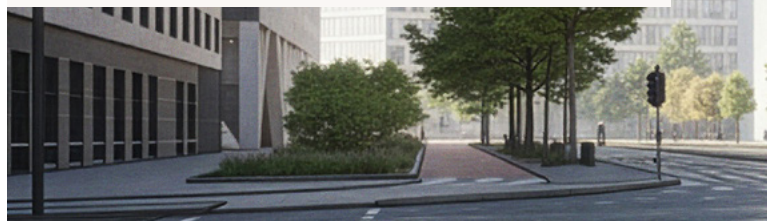
Valorisation and impact

By 2030, VU Amsterdam will have a distinctive profile as a catalyst for socially responsible solutions *with and for* the world – solutions rooted in academic research and education. This is our ambition for valorisation and impact.

The major, complex problems of our time can only be solved if we work together. We have unique opportunities to bring parties together and to create value for society: excellent education and research; a diverse academic community; a compact, smartly designed campus covering the humanities, sciences, social sciences and medicine; and a strategic location on the Zuidas. Amsterdam itself holds a strong position as a healthy and innovative region,

where many technological innovations take place, and where we collaborate as a proud partner of the Amsterdam Economic Board alongside government, businesses, civil society organisations and other knowledge institutions. We see this as our greatest opportunity in the area of valorisation and impact. We will strengthen these qualities and communicate them more effectively to the outside world. Not only do we actively seek collaboration with a wide range of partners, but we also aim to make VU Amsterdam the natural choice for others to involve when developing solutions to complex issues.

VU Amsterdam spin-off Optics11 has grown into an international scale-up. During experimental research, physicist Davide Iannuzzi and his team of fellow researchers developed an optical fibre sensor that measures vibration, pressure and force with extreme precision – even in situations where other sensors fail. Together with entrepreneur Hans Brouwer and a dedicated team, he brought this technology to market. Today, there are two companies: Optics11 Industrial Sensing provides optical fibre sensors for underwater surveillance and for monitoring fire hazards in high-power transformers. Meanwhile, Optics11 Life delivers optical fibre instruments for mechanobiology research, helping scientists better understand complex diseases, such as cancer and heart dysfunctions. **By 2030, our new Matrix Building will be an international symbol of innovation, and VU Amsterdam will be renowned for its spin-offs that address society’s challenges.**



We aim to achieve our valorisation and impact ambition through three objectives:

1. We embed valorisation firmly in career development and financial policy.
2. We promote an entrepreneurial mindset that generates new partnerships and funding.
3. We're an internationally recognised, pioneering hub of knowledge and impact, making a difference through VU Amsterdam initiatives such as start-ups and social enterprises.

We embed valorisation firmly in career development and financial policy

Through the Recognition & Rewards programme and associated academic career paths, we make it attractive to work sustainably towards valorisation and societal impact. Crucially, researchers must be able to develop an impact profile, and to be given the time, recognition and reward for doing so. To reward researchers for valorisation, we are drawing up both qualitative and quantitative criteria. We also provide professional support for valorisation. Our valorisation specialists are properly trained and equipped with the tools they need to make an impact.



We promote an entrepreneurial mindset that generates new partnerships and funding

For us, having an entrepreneurial mindset means recognising and seizing opportunities to make the greatest possible contribution to society. This includes taking risks, sometimes failing, persevering and learning from experience. It goes far beyond merely seeking applications for research results based on the content. As entrepreneurially minded researchers, from the very start of a project we ask what society needs, which partners we can involve, and which sources of funding are the best fit. We consolidate our successes by forming new external collaborations and public-private partnerships, and by expanding philanthropic donations and funding opportunities.

We're an internationally recognised, pioneering hub of knowledge and impact, making a difference through VU Amsterdam initiatives such as start-ups and social enterprises

Our value to society increases when we share and apply our knowledge and expertise here. This takes shape in a variety of initiatives – for example, in the form of social entrepreneurship or public engagement – rooted in research and education at VU Amsterdam. Complex issues require an approach that integrates scientific knowledge with a wide range of perspectives in developing new solutions. Our university is internationally recognised as a hub of knowledge and impact, where dynamic networks of researchers, lecturers and students work in equal dialogue with civil society partners to develop new solutions, products and services for a sustainable society. We make our valorisation results visible to external stakeholders, who in turn recognise their value.

We have unique opportunities to bring parties together and to create **value for society**.



3.3 Our ambitions for our people and organisation

We structure our organisation in a way that enables us to achieve our ambitions for education, research, valorisation and impact. Through our talent development policy, operations, services and campus, we focus above all on productive collaboration.

We're a diverse community that seeks to draw on everyone's knowledge, skills, insights and perspectives. We're smart in our use of digital technologies and financial resources, as drivers to strengthen our core tasks, operations and services.

Talent development policy

Everyone counts. We harness all the available talent that contributes to our organisational goals, with a particular focus on teamwork. This is our ambition for talent development.

VU Amsterdam has a wealth of talent in-house. It therefore pains us that, due to budget cuts imposed on our university, we must let go of talented colleagues who we'd prefer to keep. We're acutely aware that achieving our ambitions with fewer people is no easy task. That's why we're pursuing

a talent development policy that makes us agile in a rapidly changing world. We do so by making clear-sighted choices, aligning the talent available with our organisational goals: what do we want to achieve, and what knowledge and skills are required to do this? By working together in teams that draw strength from diversity, we reach the best results..

We aim to achieve our talent development ambition through two objectives:

1. We oversee the further implementation and adoption of Recognition & Rewards, and we provide career development paths for all VU Amsterdam staff that converge in teams. Teamwork and development as a team are actively encouraged.
2. We place the right people in the right positions, centred around the work context and contribution to the bigger picture.

We oversee the further implementation and adoption of Recognition & Rewards, and we provide career development paths for all VU Amsterdam staff that converge in teams. Teamwork and development as a team are actively encouraged

At VU Amsterdam, the three core tasks of education, research and valorisation are of equal value. We therefore recognise and reward the achievements of

our academics under each of these tasks in the same way, in line with the national Recognition & Rewards programme. We offer academic career paths that give staff – from assistant professor level upwards – the opportunity to focus on one of these three core tasks. We also now have career paths for teaching staff outside the “U-line,” and by 2030 we’ll have created a range of career paths for our support staff as well.

Through strategic workforce planning, we ensure that all the necessary skills are represented in our teams. Employees flourish best in teams where they complement and inspire one another, work towards a greater goal and celebrate successes together. We actively promote teamwork and provide resources to help teams develop. We make sure that managers are well equipped to build and maintain diverse teams. We live by the motto: Do what you do best, and you’ll deliver your best work and enjoy it the most.

We place the right people in the right positions, centred around the work context and contribution to the bigger picture

Talent flourishes when employees are in the right place. That’s why we pay close attention to the context of our people placement. The emphasis here is on collaboration. You’re encouraged to think in terms of the greater whole: where can I add value for VU Amsterdam? This applies to everyone – whether a professor supervising a PhD candidate, a technician contributing to a project, or a staff member supporting the core tasks. In this way, we all use our talents to the fullest, achieving the best results as the VU Amsterdam community. This also means you don’t always have to stay in the same position; you could move because the context requires it, or because you want to keep learning and developing.

Operations and services

We enable excellence and optimal collaboration, by advising and supporting students, lecturers and researchers in a professional manner. We do this by making the interplay between the primary process and its support more effective and efficient, thereby strengthening it. This is our ambition for operations and services.

We aim to achieve our operations and services ambition through two objectives:

1. We ensure integrated services based on the outcomes of the VUture programme.
2. We foster execution power and ownership in all our activities.

We ensure integrated services based on the outcomes of the VUture programme

In recent years, through the VUture programme, we have explored how faculties and services can collaborate more effectively to strengthen education and research, while reducing bureaucracy and the burden of reporting and regulation. The insights gained are now being translated into an integrated service model. The optimal user experience and the added value for VU Amsterdam form the starting point of every service process we design – within the financial means and resources available, of course. Seamless collaboration between all parties involved is crucial to this, and we invest accordingly. We also ensure that students, lecturers and researchers know exactly what expertise and support we provide, while responding to new needs that are valuable to the VU Amsterdam community.

We foster execution power and ownership in all our activities

Nothing is more frustrating than a great idea that gets bogged down in bureaucratic processes. There are so many good initiatives that VU Amsterdam could benefit from, if only they were carried through – whether in our day-to-day work or in specific projects and programmes. That’s

why we remove obstacles and create genuine ownership. If you've been given the task of getting something done, you're free to do so within the agreed framework. Everyone in the organisation respects this agreement. We also show that we value execution, by recognising and rewarding it. And of course we want to know whether an activity has truly added value. That's why we evaluate the outcome: we assess whether stakeholders are satisfied with the result, and whether the activity has delivered what was intended from the start.

VU Amsterdam researchers develop in directions that match their strengths and ambitions. An academic career here is not a ladder where recognition depends solely on research output, but a forking path where everyone's unique contribution counts. We work together in dynamic teams where each researcher has a different impact profile. For example: business scholar, econometrician and philosopher Bas Bosma brings experience from the corporate world to the development of education for professionals; physicist Imran Avci combines technological research with education and entrepreneurship; and theologian-economist Jan Jorrit Hasselaar collaborates with societal partners on hope-driven transitions for sustainable development. Our support staff also take a proactive approach to shaping their careers, driven by individual aspirations but always in collaboration with others. **By 2030, VU Amsterdam will be a model of inclusive, impact-oriented talent development. Colleagues will be able to choose from a range of career paths that reflect their personal mission and the university's challenges.** Interdisciplinary collaboration and societal engagement will be the norm. VU Amsterdam will be a breeding ground for leadership that contributes to a healthy, sustainable and just world.





Campus

Our campus is a place of connection and innovation – a place where all research disciplines come together in a diverse academic community. With so many passionate free thinkers within just one square kilometre, we want to make the most of the advantages and opportunities that our uniquely compact campus offers for connection and innovation. This is our ambition for the campus.



Through **dialogue with one another**, we foster a culture in which everyone at VU Amsterdam feels at home.

We aim to achieve our campus ambition through two objectives:

1. We ensure that the campus is a diverse, inclusive and (as far as possible) accessible place for study and transformative dialogue, with space for both physical and hybrid collaboration and interaction.
2. We ensure that the campus is a place where everyone feels at home. Together, we stand for safety in every respect, with social safety and academic freedom at the forefront.

We ensure that the campus is a diverse, inclusive and (as far as possible) accessible place for study and transformative dialogue, with space for both physical and hybrid collaboration and interaction. At VU Amsterdam, people with different cultures, backgrounds, beliefs and genders – with or without disabilities – study and work together. We cherish that diversity, because different perspectives on an issue lead to better solutions. But diversity can only show its true strength in an open and inclusive environment where everyone feels invited to contribute. We therefore create a climate where multiple voices are a given, where people show genuine interest in one another, and where dialogue is both ongoing and actively facilitated. We invest in greater collaboration between the dialogue hubs on campus, resulting in a dialogue agenda made up of current issues that matter to us. And we make sure everyone can find their way in our organisation, without cultural, physical or other barriers to participation.

Our campus offers excellent physical and hybrid facilities for our students and staff. Because our faculties are located close to each other, we can make smart investments in shared facilities. Particularly in today's financially constrained times, this is a major advantage. By working well together, we make the most of the scarce space available. This ensures that our students, lecturers and researchers benefit from state-of-the-art facilities. The campus also serves as a hub for collaboration with other organisations. We proudly showcase our innovations and the impact we create. This enables us to profile ourselves as an attractive partner in new national and international collaborations, thereby increasing our contribution to solving the complex challenges the world currently faces.

We ensure that the campus is a place where everyone feels at home. Together, we stand for safety in every respect, with social safety and academic freedom at the forefront!

On our campus, people with a wide range of backgrounds study and work together. The academic world has a hierarchy, with relationships of dependency that can affect collaboration and career development. In short, there are many factors that can create feelings of tension and a lack of safety. Yet people can only perform at their best if they feel valued as members of the community and free to express themselves – with respect for others. Through dialogue with one another, we foster a culture in which everyone at VU Amsterdam feels at home. Safety in the broadest sense is a key concern, ranging from knowledge, cyber and information security to physical and social safety. We openly discuss what we mean by social safety and how we can ensure it together.

Social safety and academic freedom go hand in hand, and come with responsibility towards ourselves and others. We are mindful of one another, because one person's freedom must never come at the expense of another's. Social safety means a culture of interaction based on openness, respect, equality and tolerance. In our diverse VU Amsterdam community, views on what behaviour is acceptable or unacceptable may differ by generation, culture or personal situation, for example. Such differences can lead to enriching insights but also to misunderstandings. In a socially safe environment, people are willing and able to engage in dialogue in ways that foster mutual understanding. Social safety also means recognising and reducing risk factors within the organisational structure, and having an effective reporting and complaints system to support those affected and to repair relationships.

VU Amsterdam's campus has been renewed and made greener, with space for nature, culture, sport and relaxation. Between lectures and meetings, we meet up in the Tiny Forest, at the picnic tables or on the lawns. We challenge our minds with a game of chess, and we train our muscles on the beach volleyball court, basketball court or calisthenics area. Life is thriving on our green roofs, too: among flowers, plants and insects, our academics are working on solutions to climate and environmental challenges. Together with local residents and visitors, our students and staff make the campus a vibrant place for connection and dialogue – for outdoor lectures and open labs, citizen science and community initiatives. **By 2030, VU Amsterdam's campus will be a green, energy-neutral, urban oasis. Here, students, researchers and local residents will co-create solutions to urban challenges.** The campus will be a living laboratory for sustainability, culture and inclusion, where science and society strengthen one another every day.





**Our campus offers
excellent physical and
hybrid facilities** for
our students and staff.



We're smart in our use of digital technologies and financial resources, as drivers to strengthen our core tasks, operations and services.

Digital technologies

Digital technologies act as a driver for our core tasks, operations and services. VU Amsterdam conducts research *into* AI and applies that knowledge internally by working smartly *with* AI. We build bridges between AI in our education, our research and our organisation. Knowledge of AI and digitalisation more broadly is crucial – not only for our students, researchers and lecturers, but for all our staff. We provide broad education in AI literacy, ideally combined with training in e-security and privacy. AI researchers, lecturers and support staff form a campus-wide network in which they collaborate on innovations. Students learn about developments in

our AI research, and how to use AI tools effectively and responsibly. Researchers, in turn, receive feedback from lecturers and students on the use of these tools. In our operations and services, we implement data-driven working practices based on the latest insights from our AI researchers – with responsible AI use always top of mind.

Finance

We also use financial resources as a driver for our core tasks, operations and services. Our financial policy is aimed at enabling excellent education and research, and at creating the best possible conditions for valorisation and impact. Our ambition is to be, and



remain, a financially healthy organisation, in which the financial decisions we make add value to our core tasks. Of course, we comply with current and future requirements from government, society and other financial stakeholders when it comes to financial accountability, control, transparency, and laws and regulations.

We are shifting from registration to analysis, using data and indicators as the basis for meaningful dialogue

The greatest opportunity we see in financial processes for 2026–2030 is the use of data, indicators and AI. We aim to link financial data with indicators from our core tasks, such as the number of students, staff members,

publications and PhDs. AI helps us to produce more accurate forecasts. All this data forms the basis for constructive discussions between faculty boards, service management, our controllers and the Executive Board. We consider our investment plans in light of what the organisation actually needs. This enables us to reach financial decisions that bring the greatest added value to VU Amsterdam. We will also make much greater use of data and AI in our work processes, with the aim of making them more robust and efficient, and reducing the amount of manpower spent on registration. Instead, we will focus on analysis. The results of our analyses will serve as the basis for meaningful dialogue and for the planning and control cycle.

We use these indicators to ensure a financially healthy organisation:

1. We meet the financial ratios required by external financiers:
 - a. Solvency I: minimum 30%;
 - b. Debt service coverage ratio: minimum 1.3;
 - c. Loan-to-value ratio: maximum 50%.
2. We meet the benchmark values set by the Dutch Inspectorate of Education.

As a university, we're a frontrunner when it comes to accountability for sustainability

As a university committed to people, society and planet, we invest in sustainability. And we're keen to show how we do that and what the results are. We therefore aim to be one of the first Dutch universities to publish voluntary sustainability disclosures. These will be based on the mandatory sustainability disclosures required of large companies under the Corporate Sustainability Reporting Directive.

4 Future outlook



Our hope for the future is that the strengths that already exist at VU Amsterdam will reach their full potential. We will continue to cherish our origins and follow our own course, over the long term. Our core values – open, personal and responsible – are timeless. They will continue to guide us, but always in a way that aligns with the spirit of the times. From our tradition of scientific curiosity and societal engagement, we will keep working closely together – with each other and with others – towards a better world.

From our tradition of **scientific curiosity and societal engagement**, we will keep working closely together – with each other and with others – towards a better world.

VU Amsterdam is the university where you want to study, not only because you develop academically, but also personally. Our education is designed to help you learn to the fullest, using all the latest techniques available. It's the university where you come to study or work if you want to contribute to health and well-being. If you want to explore solutions to climate change and environmental issues from a broad perspective. And if you want to build a just, resilient world with equal opportunities – not imposed from above, but together with those involved. Teamwork and dialogue are your tools for this: at VU Amsterdam, you don't learn to prove yourself right, but to reach the best solutions together.

Our education is designed to help you **learn to the fullest**, using all the latest techniques available.





Our scientists are driven by curiosity, even in applied or demand-driven research.

Societal issues determine their focus.





VU Amsterdam is known as an organisation at the heart of society. A university that actively engages in dialogue on the basis of leading scientific research. One that helps society have difficult discussions in a constructive way, as a facilitator and process leader. One that interprets developments and leads the way towards a better world. Our scientists are driven by curiosity, even in applied or demand-driven research. Societal issues determine their focus. As a learning organisation, VU Amsterdam is able to respond quickly to new developments. We can bring this picture to life together by building on the strong foundations already in place.

We are a community of global citizens – of free thinkers committed to people, society and planet. What unites us is the conviction that together we can achieve more than each of us could alone. So let's continue to connect with one another, to combine our strengths, and to keep talking about what drives and unites us – and in doing so, to make a world of difference. Together, we are VU Amsterdam: a university at the heart of society, inspired by shared values, and committed to a healthy, sustainable and just future.





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Colophon

Text	Vrije Universiteit Amsterdam
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