

1 Summary

The mission of the Diversity Office (DO) is to encourage and support Vrije Universiteit Amsterdam to reach optimal diversity and maximum inclusion. By integrating more perspectives and accommodating for more talent, VU Amsterdam increases its academic quality and societal impact.

Review

Lately, the DO has made impactful results with its awareness campaigns and trainings, the Mixed Classroom programme, the Colourful Staff Action Plan, the Diversity Monitor and close collaboration with diversity networks and analysis of the impact of post-colonialism on the university.

Bottlenecks

These past activities revealed a number of bottlenecks. As the momentum of and the requests for advice for the DO increase, the team faces understaffing and limited collaboration between members of the DO and other departments within VU Amsterdam.

Preview

In 2023 the DO strives for optimal diversity and maximum inclusivity at VU Amsterdam by focusing on six general, VU-broad impact goals. The DO specifies these impact goals through concrete products and activities and connects them to change agents who carry the responsibility for each of these products and activities. Subsequently, the DO fulfils a supportive role until the product or activity has become a part of the regular processes within the university.

Necessary means

To reach the six impact goals, create products and activities and mobilise change agents, a number of bottlenecks within the DO must first be tackled. The DO requires more staff, project financing to support diversity networks and its own space with places to work.

2 Review

The main tasks of the DO are to grow awareness, to encourage faculties and service departments to spring into action, to develop inclusive policy and to offer support to implement new policy. The faculties and service departments carry the responsibility of implementing new policy, which helps the policy and its implementation to take shape as close to the primary process of the faculty or department as possible. Once new policy has become fully embedded with a faculty or department, the DO is relieved of its responsibility for the policy in question.

The DO is currently in an important phase of its development. After a phase during which only a few people and the Chief Diversity Officer (CDO) were at work, the DO now functions as a team. As a result of this collaboration in the past few years, the DO has reached the following impactful results:

- The DO has offered awareness events and trainings to HRMAM and SOZ and through the Aurora Alliance in Tetovo, North Macedonia.

- The DO has successfully worked to develop the Mixed Classroom programme despite the long illness of the Diversity Officer Education. Moreover, the DO has strengthened the programme's position in the organisation and carried it over to LEARN!, SOZ and International Office.
- The DO has developed the Colourful Staff Action Plan and the Executive Board has laid down the plan. To implement this action plan, the DO has organised talks to raise awareness and give advice and has set up specific pilots with SOZ, C&M, DURF, RCH and FSW. Additionally, the DO has recruited and trained bi-cultural and other-cultural employees to function as a critical friend in appointment advisory committees.
- The WBO has employed the Diversity Monitor to gain insight into the role of cultural diversity. The DO collaborates with diversity offices of other universities to prepare and conduct research together.
- The DO actively works with the Strategy Team and various diversity-related networks, such as FAM, WO&MEN@VU, VU Pride, GV-DIT, the Committee Integrated Safety, Project Group Student Wellbeing and 3D. It is partially thanks to these collaborations that people have an easier time finding the DO.
- The DO works with researchers and students to analyse the impact of post-colonialism on the content of our courses and research and on the processes and collaborations at the university (such as Open Access and student recruitment). Inspirational moments that played a key role in this were the student-driven, virtual colloquia with UCLA and UFS (Bloemfontein).

3 Bottlenecks

The achieved results offer many opportunities for further development. However, the DO has reached its limits due to a number of factors:

- The internal dynamics: the DO has actively improved the team dynamics and specified the joint mission.
- The availability of the current staffing: as a result of the growing momentum and the increase in the requests for advice, the DO has become short-handed and faces limited collaboration within the team as well as with faculties and service departments.
- Prioritising ambitions: how will we make transparent choices when ambitions, themes or interests conflict? Take, for example, the relation between the diversity policy and our legal policy and between our press policy and subject matters such as decolonisation.
- Large-scale implementation: which risks are we as VU Amsterdam willing to take? And how can we hold this conversation and share these decisions with the right stakeholders in a transparent manner? Additionally, how can we involve every department of VU Amsterdam in these topics and not just the departments that are already engaging with the topics in question?

When looking at our progress, the DO is at the brink of a breakthrough. Some faculties and service departments have carried out pilots on, among other things, inclusive recruitment. As a result, the next step is to implement this policy throughout the university. Here we face the challenge to take risks: a real danger is that VU Amsterdam loses its head start on this topic on a national level.

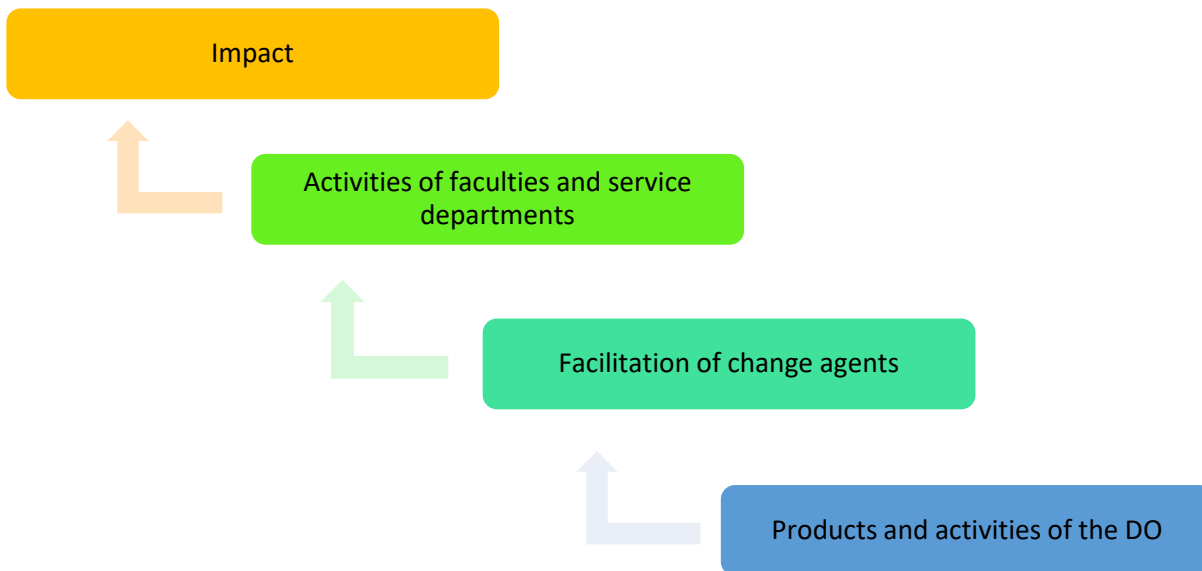
4 SWOT analysis

STRENGTHS A lot of knowledge and experience Integrated vision on diversity policy Accomplishments regarding: • Colourful Staff Action Plan • I Belong @VU • Continuation of Black Lives Matter • Mixed Classroom • Bridging Programme for student organisations	WEAKNESSES Too few resources for awareness campaigns Too much variety in the tasks of Diversity Officers The VU Community has trouble finding the DO
OPPORTUNITIES Strong basis for diversity policy Momentum for implementation Opportunities for valorisation, both internally and externally Strong image	THREATS VU Amsterdam may lose its head start Frustration due to resistance within VU Amsterdam Willingness to change is under pressure Fragmented attention to diversity Many personnel changes in the core team of the DO

5 Vision for the future

The DO has developed a strong vision for the future, one in which the DO functions as the driving factor for change. The mission of the DO is to encourage and support VU Amsterdam in reaching optimal diversity and maximum inclusivity. The goal is to integrate more perspectives and accommodate for more talent, which increases the academic quality and societal impact of VU Amsterdam.

The DO works with an intervention model where the team focuses on a particular impact on VU Amsterdam as an organisation. VU Amsterdam strives to achieve this impact with activities that faculties and service departments have initiated. To organise these activities, the DO supports VU Amsterdam by facilitating change agents, which the DO does by initiating products and activities.



5.1 Impact goals

The goals of the DO are optimal diversity and maximum inclusivity at VU Amsterdam. The DO has specified these goals through six domains, which are population, belonging, strategic ambitions in the area of education, research ambitions, facilities and processes. These domains have resulted in the following ambitious impact goals:

1) Staff diversity equals student diversity.

VU Amsterdam has a very diverse student population, but our staff population is less diverse. That means that there may be structures and mechanisms that inhibit some groups and favour others or that there is a lack of role models who make diversity at VU Amsterdam visible. We want to change that.

2) Students and staff experience that VU Amsterdam acknowledges and values individual differences.

To make VU Amsterdam even more inclusive, students and staff must experience that individual differences are actively put to use in college rooms, teams and research groups. Moreover, they must experience that their contributions that stem from their background and capacities are valued. As a result, we critically investigate any implicit norms on what the 'average' student and staff member entails. We also consider individual differences during group activities to ensure nobody is left out.

3) Curricula are inclusive in terms of student backgrounds, knowledge perspectives and student success.

At VU Amsterdam, students should have equal opportunities to be successful in their academic development, regardless of their background and resources. Moreover, diverse knowledge perspectives enrich students' academic knowledge. Consequently, the DO strives to enrich curricula with various knowledge perspectives, for instance by including marginalised voices and the knowledge and experiences of underrepresented groups.

- 4) VU Amsterdam is a leading university in the Netherlands in research on justice, equity, diversity and inclusion.

Over 200 VU scholars research diversity, some of whom are frontrunners in their field of study. For VU Amsterdam to become a leading figure in this field, the university needs more synergy, coordination and a focused research policy.

- 5) The facilities at VU Amsterdam are accessible for all bodies and minds.

The buildings, interior, IT and other facilities of VU Amsterdam must be accessible by design. Accessible facilities indicate that the university takes the variety of bodies and minds into account, among which visible and invisible disabilities. An accessible university meets the needs of students and staff in their learning and working environment. By doing so, our students and staff will thrive at VU Amsterdam.

- 6) Institutional structures at VU Amsterdam and international cooperation are defined by equality, mutuality and social justice.

Long-standing and seemingly self-evident processes have resulted in systemic favouritism and discrimination to become entangled in structures and processes within the university. Examples of such structures and processes are international collaborations, recruitment, open access and funding models. The DO analyses these structures and processes as well as how VU Amsterdam encourages honest and equal relations, both internally and externally.

5.2 Change Agents

The change agents in the intervention model fall into one of five categories:

- 1) Service departments and faculties

In the end, the teachers, the researchers and the supporting staff carry out the work. The DO considers these staff members to be the change agents of their own domain. The DO supports them with its expertise and analytical questions and by explicitly taking the expertise of researchers and service departments into account.

- 2) Decentralised diversity officers and work groups

Decentralised diversity officers and work groups function as the link between the DO and the units of VU Amsterdam. Additionally, they are the primary conversation partners of the managers of these units. After all, service departments and faculties have an internal organisation where diversity policy is relevant. The DO provides training and information and communicates with the decentralised diversity officers or work groups.

- 3) Student organisations

Students come together in associations to experience bonding, by feeling at home, and bridging, by meeting other student groups. Both bonding and bridging are necessary for a close-knit VU Community. Furthermore, students are an important force for change in education and on campus, and they are often the first who raise the alarm when something goes wrong.

4) Diversity networks

The DO works with groups who come together and share various diversity characteristics, such as VU Pride, WO&MEN@VU and FAM. These groups call attention to the needs of their target group, organise opportunities to meet one another and encourage awareness and change.

5) Student ambassadors and critical friends

The DO has recruited and trained a group of students and staff members who, when needed, assist with activities, recruitment and selection.

5.3 Products and activities in 2023

To reach the impact goals, the DO has put the following activities on the agenda:

- Awareness
 - acknowledging important dates in the diversity calendar with Communications and events;
 - carrying out awareness campaigns on diversity and inclusion, for instance with the Roadshow campaign with which we visit each faculty and service department;
 - updating the website of the DO and actively utilising social media and the Campus Radio;
 - utilising the roadmap and manifest to reflect on decolonisation throughout VU Amsterdam;
 - developing a help centre for advice and support regarding diversity, discrimination and inclusion in collaboration with, among others, Social Safety, FCO, confidential counsellors, SOZ and LEARN!.
- DO Education
 - developing a framework for the curriculum scans in collaboration with, among others, LEARN! and VU Pride;
 - discussing diversity aspects of quality of care and religious holidays in collaboration with, among others, SOZ, faculties and exam committees;
 - discussing diversity aspects of student recruitment with IO and C&M.
- DO Research
 - making VU-wide research into diversity, equity and inclusion visible by organising an academic conference;
 - monitoring aspects of diversity policies, specifically Colourful Staff Action Plan;
 - encouraging diversity in research teams by, among other things, holding a meeting with VUO;
 - encouraging an inclusive working environment for PhD students, most of whom are international students, by, among other things, holding a meeting with Graduate Schools.

- DO HR
 - implementing the Colourful Staff Action Plan;
 - supporting the implementation of the Gender Equality Plan;
 - offering trainings to the heads of department and team leaders.
- DO Campus & Community
 - supporting diversity networks;
 - setting up a meeting on the integrated Campus Accessibility scan;
 - strengthening the bond with Social Safety and tackling alarming behaviour;
 - facilitating Bridging activities with student associations.

5.4 The intervention model of the DO

The discussed impact goals, change agents and activities of the DO define the intervention model for the time being as follows:

Impact	Activity of faculties and service departments	Change agent	Activity or process of the DO
Diverse staff	-	- heads of department - HRM - HR advisors	- Colourful Staff Action Plan - facilitating the training 'Becoming a Critical Friend' - facilitating a training for the heads of department
Inclusive community	-	- team leaders - student associations and diversity networks	- facilitating the pilot 'Inclusive Teams' - facilitating Bridging Success activities - facilitating diversity networks - facilitating a training for decentralised diversity officers.
Inclusive curricula	- carrying out the Curriculum Scans; - improving curricula.	- teaching teams - programme directors - programme coordinators	- framework Curriculum Scans - facilitating trainings for FSR's
A leading figure in research	listing research into diversity, inclusion and equity (DEI).	- key players DEI research - faculty portfolio managers Research	- listing DEI research - Cultural Barometer
Accessible facilities	facilitating gender-inclusive toilets;	FCO	inventory VU-broad accessibility

Impact	Activity of faculties and service departments	Change agent	Activity or process of the DO
	• making buildings accessible; • making the IT infrastructure accessible.	• IT • GV-DIT • SOZ	
Honest processes	• reflecting critically on content; • analysing the policy on international recruitment and collaboration; • analysing the policy on OA.	• Staff and students • IO • C&M • UB	• roadmap and manifest on decolonisation