



university of  
 groningen

Strategic HR agenda  
 2017-2020



Every talent counts







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# 1

## Introduction

*Think Bold* is the title of the Strategic Plan 2015-2020, in which the UG formulates 6 ambitions for 2020. Staff, students and administration will be realizing these ambitions through collaboration and coordination, including parties outside the UG. The faculties have, in turn, translated these ambitions into a suitable faculty strategy. What do we need in terms of staff, administrative and organizational quality, i.e. Human Resources strategy, to ensure the realization of these ambitions? Competent and passionate staff who experience sufficient levels of autonomy in their work distinguish the UG from other universities and enable the UG to fulfil its ambitions. **Every talent counts.**

This strategic HR agenda elaborates on the talent policy and organizational policy required. It is based on the fundamental principle that HR strategy-design is an ongoing process. For this reason, this agenda should be regarded rather as the outline of a series of HR objectives, with continuous amendments being made at the level of the policy programmes and action plans. In the conversion into policy programmes and action plans, the indicators and responsibilities, including Faculty responsibilities, will be clearly stated. The images in this agenda are a visual representation of “Every talent counts”.





# 2

## Mission, vision and values of the University of Groningen: translation into HR objectives

The strategic HR agenda is based on the mission, vision and values of the University of Groningen, as expressed in the Strategic Plan. The mission, vision and values have been directly copied from the Strategic Plan.

### > Mission

The University of Groningen is an ambitious international research university with strong roots in the North of the Netherlands. The University creates and shares knowledge through outstanding research and education and thus benefits society.

### > Vision

[...]Excellent teaching and research are only feasible with a different perspective on teaching and research and a university community encompassing different talents and nationalities. We achieve this by establishing a setting in which talent is recognized and can blossom. In keeping with the University's ambitions, talented staff and students from all over the world are attracted by the career prospects and challenging study programmes. Moreover, they are given ample opportunity to apply, train and develop their specific strengths. Our University thus delivers 'human capital' in the form of a knowledgeable workforce that can make a

significant contribution to a deeper understanding of the world and solving the challenges it presents. We believe that it is important to keep in touch with our alumni around the globe and to enable them to contribute to the mission of the University.

### > Values

#### **Academic freedom**

Teaching and research take place in a climate of freedom of opinion and expression: 'The right, without constriction by prescribed doctrine, to freedom of teaching and discussion, freedom in carrying out research and disseminating and publishing the results thereof, freedom to express freely their opinion about the institution or system in which they work, freedom from institutional censorship and freedom to participate in professional or representative academic bodies.'

#### **Integrity**

Integrity forms the basis of our actions. Integrity here translates into honesty, openness and transparency in our methods and reports, and is the foundation of our research and teaching. Integrity and academic freedom go hand in hand.





### **Diversity and social inclusion**

Diversity is an important aspect of academic success, and we embrace it by valuing and respecting the perspectives and contributions of all our staff and students, and stimulating a sense of connection in an inclusive academic community. By continuous interaction with staff and students and their participation in our governance, university wide commitment to university strategies and policies is realized.

### **Innovation and openness**

We continuously strive to improve in everything we do. We are receptive to new ideas and continually seek to increase our knowledge to unfamiliar fields. We operate internationally to expose ourselves to different views approaches, and are keen to initiate contacts and build relationships with new people. Open Access, Open Research and Open Data are important strategies for realizing these goals. They help us achieve excellence in research, teaching and societal impact.

### **Accountability**

Our credibility is built on our values with regard to innovation, inclusion and integrity and the way we operate to find answers to the societal challenges of today. This is reinforced by our commitment as

a public organization to be accountable for and transparent about all our actions.

### **Sustainability**

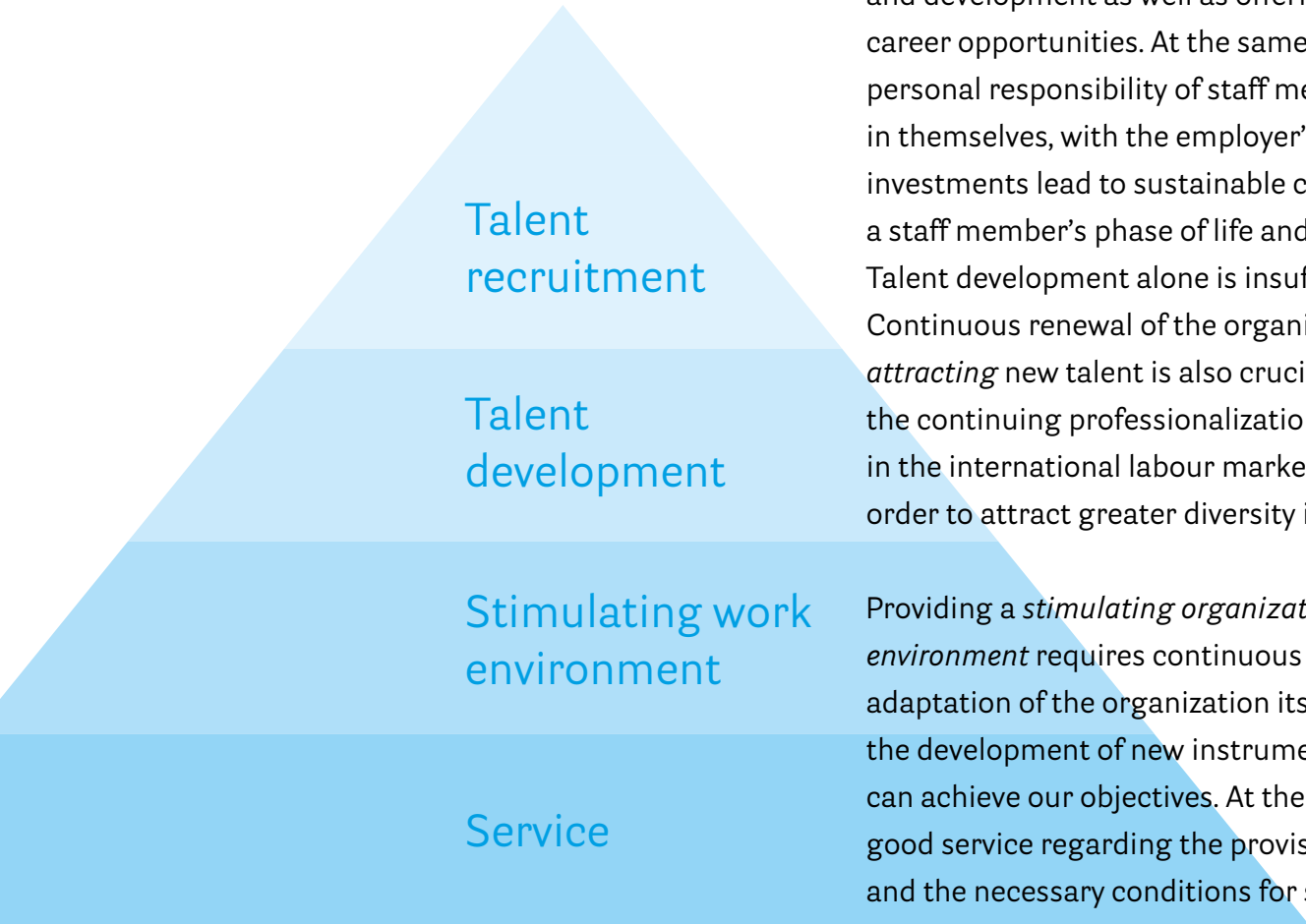
We integrate sustainability and responsible behaviour consistently in our teaching, research and administration. We believe that through cooperation with our students, staff and other leading partners in sustainability, the university can have a true impact in creating a circular economy and a sustainable society.





# 3

## The HR objectives



The UG’s strategic objectives are research, teaching, societal impact and talent development. The *talent development* of UG staff is at the heart of this strategic HR agenda and is the focus of policy, following the emphasis of recent years on performance management, planning and control cycles and Result & Development interviews. Central topics in talent development include training and development as well as offering interesting career opportunities. At the same time, it is the personal responsibility of staff members to invest in themselves, with the employer’s support. Such investments lead to sustainable careers that reflect a staff member’s phase of life and personal situation. Talent development alone is insufficient, however. Continuous renewal of the organization by *attracting* new talent is also crucial. Innovation and the continuing professionalization of recruitment in the international labour market are necessary in order to attract greater diversity in talent.

Providing a *stimulating organization and work environment* requires continuous change and the adaptation of the organization itself, and demands the development of new instruments with which we can achieve our objectives. At the core of all this is good service regarding the provision of information and the necessary conditions for staff, managers

and administrators to do their job and foster the development of talent. Responding adequately to the internationalization process within the UG and ensuring that everyone feels at home, i.e. social inclusion, is the common thread woven into all HR themes.

The above demands proper and moral leadership on the part of managers and administrators, and contributions from every staff member, whatever his or her position, towards these objectives. We appeal to everyone to achieve this, both academic staff and support staff; **Every talent counts.**

The overview presents the four goals together: talent recruitment, talent development, offering a stimulating work environment and offering proper service. Each of the four triangles referred to are briefly described below, together with the existing and new measures or programmes that will contribute to the objectives.

# 3.1 Employer branding and recruitment

## ➤ Employer branding and recruitment

Talent attracts talent. This makes it important to further strengthen the existing solid international reputation a 'great place to work' to attract talent with different backgrounds and with different ideas. Current and former UG staff members can serve as ambassadors and talent scouts in academic networks. New talents contribute to the joint realization of the UG's strategic objectives. This applies to support staff as well as academic staff. The most suitable recruitment strategy is determined for each vacancy. The UG prefers to identify talent through multiple channels. A targeted and strategic scouting and recruitment plan per faculty creates intake opportunities for young staff pursuing an academic career. In addition, there is open recruitment for academic UG positions such as Assistant and Associate Professors and Full Professors. This leads to a good mix of staff who have pursued their career within the UG and staff who have proven themselves externally and were recruited at a later stage.

Talent  
recruitment

Talent  
development

Stimulating work  
environment

Service



HR EXCELLENCE IN RESEARCH

In 2015 the UG obtained the HR Excellence in Research logo from the European Commission for its action plan indicating how the UG implements the principles of the Charter for Researchers and the Code of Conduct for the Recruitment of Researchers. The UG subscribes to the principle of basing its recruitment and selection procedures on, preferably, open recruitment, process transparency and quality-based selection (OTM-R; Open, Transparent, Merit-based Recruitment).

### Measures

- Combining offline and online campaigns modelled after the Rosalind Franklin Fellowship and for multiple positions simultaneously, if necessary with the help of a search agency.
- Structured internal and external scouting of talent.
- Data analysis of recruitment campaigns based on quality, nationality and gender.
- An eye for onboarding and dual career support/ partners.

# 3.2 Talent development

The UG will continue to invest in the development of its academic and support staff. Every talent counts. All staff members are encouraged to get the best out of themselves and are stimulated to develop further. The UG wishes to be clear about career prospects and supports the development of staff members during their UG careers.

Providing interesting work with optimal learning and development opportunities is the main motor of development. While this goes for UG top talent specifically, in fact it applies to everyone. For academic staff, we propose a combined range of duties consisting of teaching and research. In order to excel at every level, it is essential to differentiate between tasks in the fields of teaching, research, societal impact and organization.

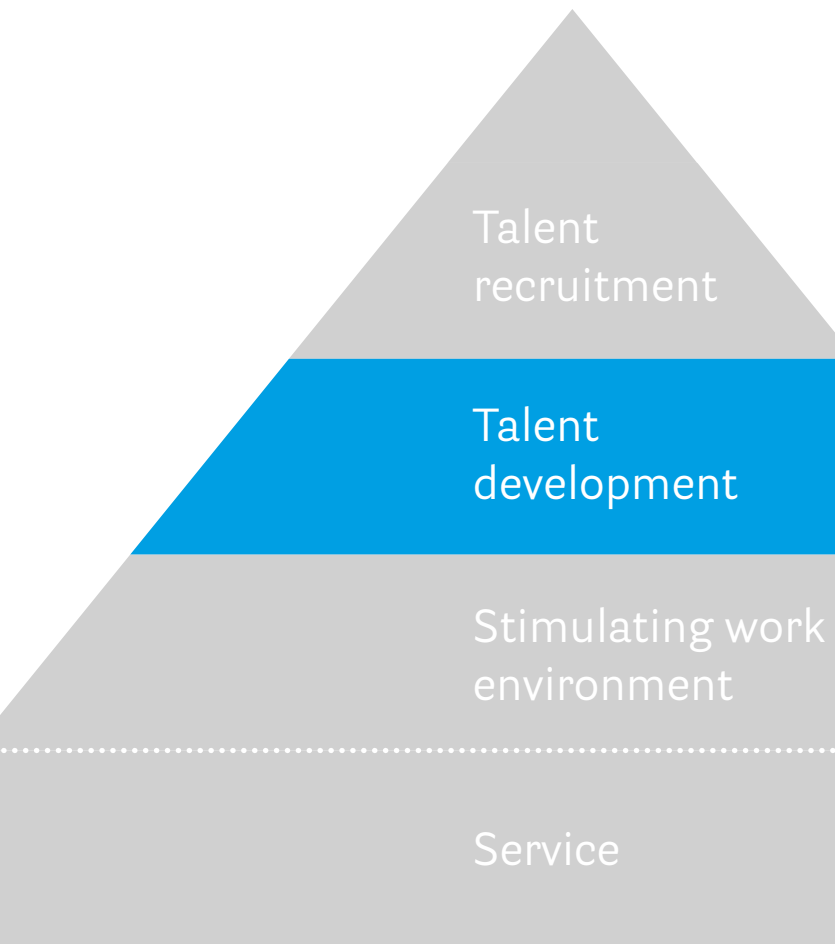
Academic careers with a clear focus on teaching will be promoted more. While some faculties primarily design their academic HR policy through tenure tracks, other faculties choose a less structured career policy of individual promotions to higher positions. Communication throughout the career path and good expectation management are indispensable. An important role in this process is reserved for academic and other managers so they can develop further into strategic supervisors.

The UG aims to supplement what staff members are learning on the job with appropriate support and training programmes, for example in the field of lecturer professionalization. These training programmes have been presented together clearly in the Corporate Academy section of the UG website.

## ➤ Talent development in teaching and research

In addition to the classic academic skills, the current academic context requires that staff members are enterprising and able to collaborate across disciplines. They should have good communication skills, the ability to enthuse others, to cooperate, network and obtain external funding. Teaching and research are not solitary activities but usually take place in collaboration with others, both in the UG and beyond. Talent is manifested not only in skills but also in qualities such as drive, motivation and perseverance.

The UG intends to invest further in the employability of temporary staff members specifically, in order to facilitate their transition to the external labour market. Post-doc platforms and professionalization programmes for temporary lecturers are concrete instruments to this end. Communities such as YoungRUG and the Young Academy facilitate







connections and exchanges between faculties and link young talent to the strategic top of the organization.

### Measures

- Implementing the institution-wide support programme for tenure-track candidates.
- Optimizing the support programme of the Dean Talent Development, aimed at helping young academic talent obtain personal scholarships and grants.
- Optimizing the training offered regarding the UTQ, STQ, Educational Leadership and Lifelong Learning.
- Elaborating a support programme for temporary academics, such as PhD students, lecturers and post-docs.
- Revitalizing mentoring as an instrument for stimulating the development of young academics.
- Establishing an environment that promotes multidisciplinary thinking and entrepreneurship by incorporating these ideas in our various leadership programmes.

### ➤ Development of long-term employability

Staff members bear their own responsibility for the development and retention of their employability

in the future, for sustainable employability. The UG aims to stimulate support staff to increasingly take their own development into their own hands. Staff members are appointed in a specific position in principle for a term of 5 years, after which an interview takes place about the options for change. This does not necessarily imply a job change but may entail performing different activities within the current position instead. It is of course necessary to take into account the life stage of the staff member too. When developments at home consume too much energy, it might be better not to make changes at work.

The professionalization of support staff will also be examined in detail, with particular attention to improving the quality of the support processes and strengthening professional skills.

### Measures

- HR draws up an implementation plan for the temporary appointments of support staff.
- HR is the contact point for development: mobility centre and Corporate Academy.
- Implement the roadmap to sustainable employability.
- Remove obstacles to staff mobility.



### ➤ Development of vitality and energy/drive

The current work culture at the UG requires people to get the most out of themselves and their surroundings. Both the effort and the results should be evident. This means that staff members should be able to monitor their work-life balance and keep it healthy. It is important that aspects of a job which give energy, such as the sense of autonomy, the job satisfaction, support and feedback from colleagues, keep in check the more stressful aspects such as workload, negative emotions and role conflict. Managers and staff members can make appropriate agreements together within the given framework. It is our explicit intention to try to accommodate staff members who are asking for a customized package, based on their personal or family situation.

#### **Measures**

- Health, Safety and Sustainability to offer a preventive and curative package.
- Monitoring absenteeism rates and offering guidance.

### ➤ Development of language skills and intercultural skills for an 'inclusive university'

Forming an inclusive university with talent from different backgrounds requires special attention to language and culture, specifically adequate English skills and Dutch as a second language, to suit the context in which staff members work. Key is the awareness of cultural differences and the development of intercultural skills to benefit from those differences. Making information accessible in both English and Dutch, making the UG networks accessible to all and offering proper supervision to new staff members during their introduction.

#### **Measures**

- Optimizing the written and oral English language skills of staff members, as well as Dutch as a second language.
- Optimizing the intercultural skills of staff members.

# 3.3 / Stimulating work environment

Talent can thrive in a stimulating work environment. An attractive work environment has pleasant buildings and work spaces, proper IT facilities and an organizational structure that functions well. Most important, however, is the social environment in which staff members function. The manager and team members play an important role in giving staff members the feeling that they belong.

### > The role of the direct manager

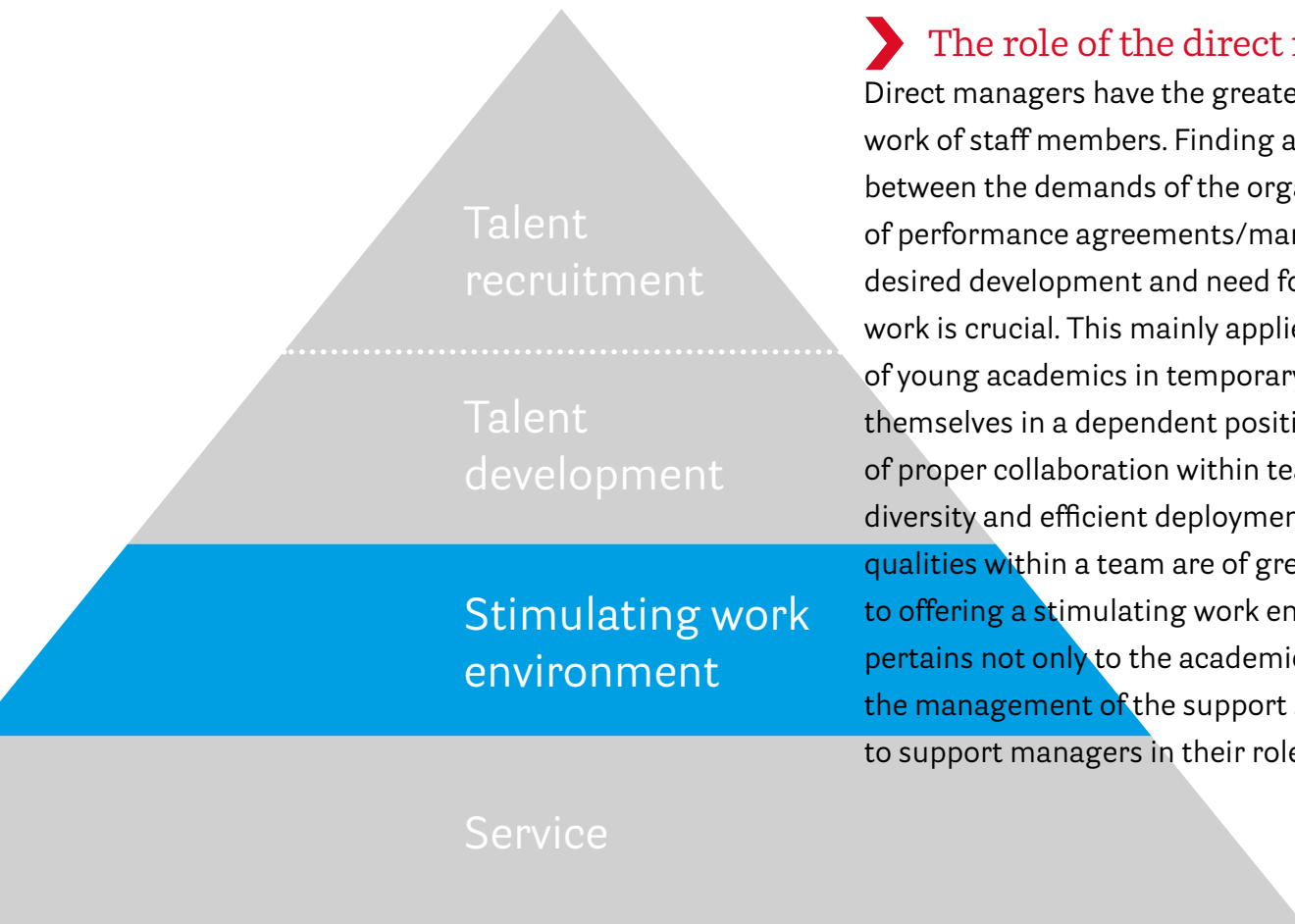
Direct managers have the greatest influence on the work of staff members. Finding a proper balance between the demands of the organization, in terms of performance agreements/management, and the desired development and need for autonomy at work is crucial. This mainly applies in the situation of young academics in temporary positions who find themselves in a dependent position. Stimulation of proper collaboration within teams, attention to diversity and efficient deployment of the various qualities within a team are of great importance to offering a stimulating work environment. This pertains not only to the academic setting but also to the management of the support staff. The UG aims to support managers in their role.

### Measures

- Creating a UG culture of high aspirations and performance with attention to the development of a broad variety of leadership skills to achieve those aspirations.
- Identifying and recognizing diversity in talent, e.g. male/female and international, in order to prepare these staff for future management roles through proper coaching.
- Development assessments, 360-degree feedback, placements, work experience through 'shadowing'.

### > Modern employment relationships

Trust as a prerequisite. The UG aims to provide an open and inclusive work environment to a diverse workforce: young and old, men and women, from the Netherlands and abroad, on a temporary or a permanent contract. Cooperation in an organization such as the UG revolves around properly merging organizational interests with staff interests, so that an optimal employment relationship may develop, based on mutual trust. 'One size fits all' is necessary to a certain degree to ensure equal treatment for everyone. The need for customization will increase, however, with a more diverse workforce. This involves not only customization in terms of time and money, but also agreements with regard to work







and staff development opportunities. Negotiation skills are required on the part of managers and staff members to enter into a proper dialogue about wishes and expectations and to reach agreements that benefit individual staff members, the organization and the relevant team. Modern employment relationships in which dialogue and customization are key components of the individual employment relationship are supported by properly functioning participation councils that reflect the workforce and the student body.

#### Measures

- Strengthening the dialogue between staff members and managers by focusing on the quality of both the formal interviews and the informal conversations: the interview or conversation encourages, is about the 'real' issues and reinforces the bond between manager and staff member.
- How staff members achieve their goals is also a topic for discussion, meant to draw the attention to issues such as (academic) integrity and contributions to the collective, e.g performing organizational tasks, becoming a member of a consultative participation body, making a contribution to a project group.
- Discuss existing and new HR policy in focus groups.

- HR communicates on the possibilities for customization within the approved HR policy.
- Normalization of the legal status of civil servants under the VSNU (Association of Universities in the Netherlands).

#### ➤ An agile organization

Every talent counts. The extent to which the UG is agile is largely determined by the quality of its staff members and the extent to which the UG succeeds in recognizing, deploying, further developing and rewarding staff talents. Staff members should, in turn, be familiar with the goals and strategy of the faculty and unit that employs them. The volume and quality of temporary staff also helps keep the organization agile.

#### Measures

- Stimulating a faculty and services culture in which talent scouting takes place as part of a structured process.
- Identification of talented staff members takes place not only on the basis of (academic) accomplishments but also on the basis of personal competences such as drive, reflective and learning skills, perseverance, resilience, originality and networking skills.
- Monitoring % temporary lecturers according to the definition from the Collective Labour Agreement.



### ➤ Gender balance: more women in higher positions

Every talent counts. Diversity is not only about differences in nationality and cultural background. Gender balance on the shop floor is also necessary. The UG aims to employ 25% female full professors by 2020. Although there is sufficient female potential in the positions of University Lecturer and Assistant Professor (40%) and Associate Professor (32%), active policy is still required at all levels and from all parties involved to avoid perpetuating the current male-female ratio. Identifying female talent through a 'fleet inspection', drawing attention to unconscious bias and offering opportunities for keeping the work-life balance manageable are issues which will be further elaborated in a gender equality plan.

#### Measures

- Implementation into faculty gender-equality plans.



# 3.4 Service

The aim is to serve staff members and managers in a modern way and to support them with proper HR services. Continuous improvement of service provision comes first. The HR department primarily advises managers and administrators on the performance of their managerial and administrative duties as well as integral management. In addition, the HR department informs and supports all UG staff in the areas of HR policy and HR regulations and is responsible for the administrative processing.

Good provision of information on all sorts of issues that are important when working at the UG comes first. This includes duly informing staff of new regulations or policy changes through newsletters or e-mail messages. The MyUniversity portal is the main source of information for staff members. Its motto is: *click, call, face*. In addition to the website, staff members can ask questions by phone or in person. The HR information desk can answer questions about regulations, provide general information and refer to specialists in the areas of employment conditions, social security and pensions. Employees can consult HR advisers on matters of a more personal nature, such as mobility or complaints about cooperation in the department.

*Timely and efficient administrative handling of all HR processes* is the foundation of HR service provision. The use of self-service tools by staff members and managers as a starting point for HR processes ensures smooth administrative handling. The leading principle is maximal data entry at the source, i.e. by staff members themselves, their managers or secretariats. This demands state-of-the-art self-service tools, offered in a user-friendly digital environment. User-friendly tools deliver key indicators to managers and administrators. It is our aim to provide staff members insight in their records and their position in the organization throughout their UG career. They will receive digital access to their personnel file at a later stage.

*Staff-satisfaction measurements* provide the organization with feedback on how staff members perceive working at the UG on team, faculty/management and institutional levels and provide the organization with suggestions for continuous improvement.

#### Measures

- Optimizing operational management processes and systems.
- Ensuring up-to-date communication with and information provision to staff; bilingual

Talent  
recruitment

Talent  
development

Stimulating work  
environment

Service





communication in Dutch and English exudes inclusiveness.

- User-friendly staff-satisfaction measurements quickly provide an overview of satisfaction and of the desired improvements in the organization.
- Internal checks of administrative handling and documentation have been implemented.
- The privacy impact analysis has been done and secured.

