

Leiden University Council 2020-2021

This hand-out gives you the most important information about the University Council: who we are, what we do and what our shared ambitions are for the future of Leiden University.

How does staff and student participation work?

Participation is the right to have a say in decisions. This means that both students and staff have the power to influence decision-making on policies at Leiden University. The central body for staff and student participation is the University Council; on the faculty level, this is the Faculty Council and within the study programmes it is the Programme Committee. The central service departments have Employee Councils. Altogether, students and staff are able to advocate their interests at various levels within the university. This is important for the quality of the decision-making and the support for the decisions made!

What does the University Council do?

The role of the University Council (UR) is to critically monitor the Executive Board of the university, provide advice and, by exercising the right to consent, to play a part in decision-making on important issues. These are mainly issues that directly affect students and staff, such as the quality of teaching, staff policies, new buildings and sustainability. Council members can also write proposals or raise issues to be put on the agenda themselves. Their responsibilities are set out in the WHW (the Higher Education and Academic Research Act) and the Leiden University Regulation on the University Council.

How does the University Council work?

The UR convenes almost every week for meetings, working visits or training courses. The UR is divided into different committees: Teaching & Research, Personnel, Student Affairs & Internationalisation, and Finances & Premises. These committees prepare the content of the agenda items. The Council as a whole then adopts a position and, following consultation with the Executive Board, issues advice or grants consent. Would you like to know more about how this works? On the [website](#) of the UR you will find the agenda and all the meeting reports, recommendations and decisions. The meetings are in principle open to the public.

Who are the Council members?

The UR has sixteen members, who are elected in annual university elections. Eight members are from the staff and eight from the student body. The UR also has a registrar and a chairperson. If you wish to get in touch with us, you are welcome to [mail](#) us or come and talk to us!

What does the Council stand for?

The UR has identified a number of priorities for the coming academic year (see reverse). The aim of Council members is to bring important wishes and concerns to the attention of the Executive Board. It goes without saying that, besides these themes, other important issues will be addressed, such as the effects of the proposed changes in the funding system and the consequences of COVID-19.



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What is the University Council working on in 2020-2021?

❖ A fair assessment of tasks

One of the aims of the UR is to achieve a reduction in the pressure of work. At the present time, many members of staff are unable to complete their work within their contracted hours. The UR wants a realistic hourly norm to be set, based on the experiences on the work floor. This applies for both teaching and research and for support services and participation bodies. This hourly norm must include time for professionalisation. The norm will form the basis for a fair assessment of the working activities.

❖ Optimal support for motivated students

The UR is committed to promoting development opportunities for students. Many students want to develop their potential outside their study programme by taking an extra minor, spending a semester studying abroad, engaging in a sport at national level, doing an internship or carrying out voluntary work. To facilitate this, the UR endorses the ambition of making learning paths more flexible and removing barriers to following an extra programme or part of a programme at another faculty. The UR also wants to see improvements in the available information on gaining experience abroad and appropriate compensation for board or committee work. At the same time, a high level of attention must continue to be paid to student welfare and support for students experiencing study problems.

❖ Improved support for teachers

The UR believes that there are better ways of facilitating the work of teachers. The university still has too many temporary contracts in places where there is a structural requirement for work. In such cases, the UR wants permanent contracts to be implemented, while safeguarding the intermeshing of teaching and research by allocating time for research. The UR also calls for the use of constructions aimed at avoiding the awarding of permanent contracts (*draaideurconstructies*) to be monitored on an annual basis, so that efforts can be made to preclude this practice. PhD candidates who carry out teaching activities must be offered more opportunities for training and support. Greater urgency in the move to a fairer system of evaluating educational achievements is also needed.

❖ Towards an inclusive community

The UR endorses the university's ambition to be as inclusive as possible for all students and staff. The work of the Expertise Office for Diversity and Inclusion is therefore the focus of attention for the UR. The UR wishes to promote the university's aim of improving access for individuals with a disability. In addition, more attention should be paid to the integration and development opportunities of the international community, for example by promoting contact between international and Dutch students, better support for improving language skills and ensuring that more of the information provided by the university is bilingual.

❖ Broader attention for sustainability

The university is working towards greater sustainability, but there is still a long way to go. The UR is therefore fully committed to including sustainability as one of the core ambitions of university strategy. Among other things, the UR wants more attention to be paid to sustainability in education and research. According to the UR, the various sustainability rankings also offer points of departure for further improvement of the sustainability policy.

❖ Psychosocial wellbeing on the work floor

The university is responsible for taking measures to keep the risks of psychosocial problems at work to a minimum. The UR is a firm advocate of appointing an independent ombudsperson who will be accessible for all members of staff at the university. The UR also wants better support for PhD candidates and postdocs in view of the heightened risk of mental health problems within these specific groups.