The AUAS's Strategic Research Policy

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Through applied research, the Amsterdam University of Applied Sciences focuses on providing solutions to problems in society and on the role of professionals in that context. This allows us to make a direct contribution to addressing and solving social issues and to innovation in professional practice. In addition, we contribute to knowledge development within the relevant research domains. Being able to do this successfully requires connectivity and alignment between teaching, research and professional practice/society. To achieve these goals, we have formulated a Strategic Research Policy, which is based on the Amsterdam University of Applied Sciences Strategic Plan, the 2021 external Evaluation of AUAS Research (Dutch information) and the evaluation of the AUAS Strategic Research Policy 2015 – 2020.

Centres of Expertise

The Centres of Expertise – partnerships of universities of applied sciences, companies, government bodies and other public and civic society organisations – are an important link in realising the aims of AUAS. The seven Centres of Expertise coordinated by the AUAS focus on social issues in Amsterdam. In addition, our Professors of Practice strengthen cooperation with professional practice on three strategic issues: sustainability, diversity & inclusion, and digitalisation. After all, these issues form part of the Strategic Plan.

▶ Centre of Expertise for Applied Artificial Intelligence
▶ Centre of Expertise for Creative Innovation
▶ Centre of Expertise for Economic Transformation
▶ Centre of Expertise for Urban Governance & Social Innovation
▶ Centre of Expertise for Urban Vitality
▶ Centre of Expertise City Net Zero
▶ Centre of Expertise Urban Education

The Strategic Research Policy is comprised of six key commitments. Three commitments focus on the further development of the three functions of applied research, and the other three deal with framework conditions: quality, research support and funding. The duration of the policy is linked to the Strategic Plan, which applies until 2026. Each commitment has one or more action lines that steer research development.

COMMITMENT

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Our applied research should contribute to social change

▶ Our research will be set up in such a way that research results find their way into society.

▶ Our research groups, Centres of Expertise and Professors of Practice help solve major complex social issues. In doing so, they align with the agenda of the Amsterdam metropolitan area and national and European agendas.

▶ We will be creating new indicators to monitor and communicate about the impact of research.

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AUAS aims to contribute to understanding and solving major social issues through applied research. It is therefore vital that the knowledge we develop finds its way into professional practice and society. We also want that knowledge to be put to good use. Professors, lecturers and researchers have a crucial role in this regard, exchanging knowledge with partners from professional practice during the research process. They also make the findings of their research as accessible as possible (open access).
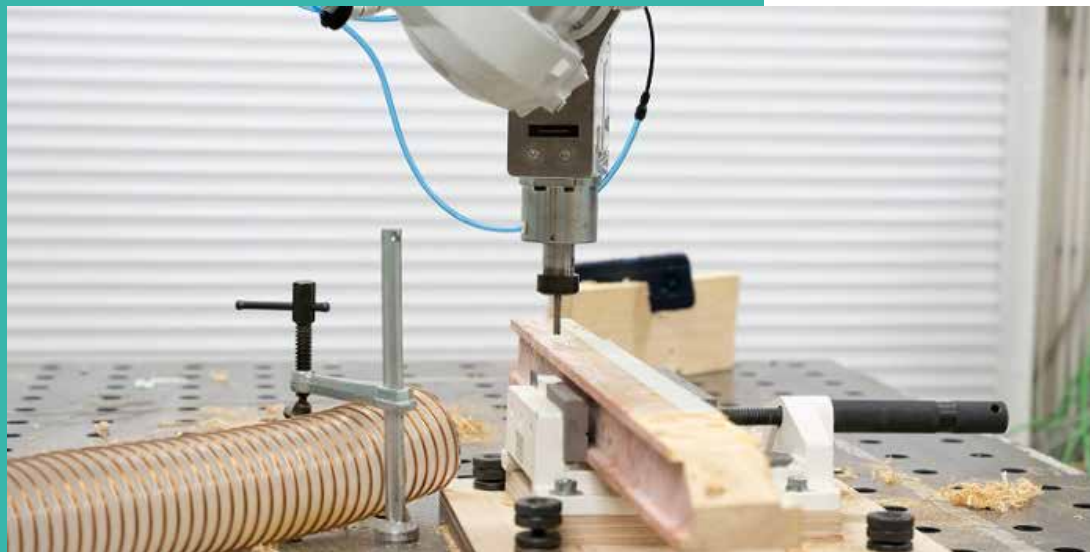
Setting up processes

The Impact of Practice-based Research research group examines how we can ensure that our knowledge has a greater impact within society, for example, through HR instruments that stimulate the role of impact in research teams. In addition, the research groups, centres for applied research and CoEs will devise approaches to make this impact part of the research process, for example within grant applications and project plans. They can also develop a method to systematically get feedback from industry partners: how relevant do they find the research and what do partners do with the knowledge produced? In addition, they can establish criteria and indicators to report on impact.

Monitoring and communication

Our external communications will focus on the social issues of the centres of expertise: digitalisation, diversity & inclusion, and sustainability. We will record research findings and the impact of our research on online platforms.

A wood recycling project involving multiple partners

A large number of parties are involved in the Circular Wood for the Neighborhood project, which aims to showcase the value of reusing wood sourced from properties of housing associations. For example, tenants have been given furniture made from their old window frames. On a larger scale, playground equipment is made from reclaimed wood. On a larger scale still, reclaimed wood is also being used to furnish communal areas of housing association properties. The project is taking place in partnership with the City of Amsterdam, manufacturers, housing associations, TU Delft and senior secondary vocational education, as well as other parties. All these partners will receive the results of the research project. An exhibition was also organised that could be visited in public spaces.

COMMITMENT

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The impact of applied research on education and teaching should be self-evident

▶ Degree programmes and research groups will incorporate knowledge from research into the curricula.

▶ Students will participate fully in research. Alongside staff and external partners, they will form a diverse and stimulating community in which learning, development and innovation connect us. This will take place at various AUAS locations – in the city and online.

▶ We will align our research agenda and teaching portfolio with, and meet the needs of, the state-of-the-art professional sectors in Amsterdam.

In order to properly prepare students for their future, it is vital that the knowledge we develop through applied research finds its way into our programmes. Students should be exposed to current research and its impact in every academic year of their programme. We will teach our students to take on an inquisitive attitude, a willingness to engage in research, which will allow them to respond to the ever-changing professional practice. Professors, lecturers and researchers will therefore have responsibilities in the field of teaching and research.

The Higher Education, Research and Innovation research group examines how our teaching and research and professional practice can reinforce each other to create a high-quality professional landscape. Our Professors of Practice, each of them leaders in their fields, are likewise crucial in this regard.

Research in curricula

In terms of degree programmes and research groups, any knowledge generated by research will become embedded in teaching as a matter of course. To that end, research teams and programme department teams will work together to embed current applied research in the curricula of our degree programmes, including when designing, redesigning and/or updating them. Professors, lecturers, senior lecturers, researchers and senior researchers in research teams will have a role in teaching.

Student participation

Students will have the opportunity to participate in research, for example through the Netherlands Institute for Applied Research (SIA) innovation traineeship. Training courses will be provided to lecturers and researchers, giving them the tools they need to supervise students in carrying out research assignments responsibly. Students should be able to discover and learn in the process. In order to be visible and accessible, degree programmes, research groups, centres for applied research and centres of expertise will bring research topics to the attention of students. To clarify where applied research takes place together alongside teaching and professional practice, we will be using uniform designations such as *living labs* and *communities of practice*. We will also encourage knowledge-driven entrepreneurship among students, with the AUAS Venture Centre and the Entrepreneurship research group.

Alignment of research, teaching and professional practice

In order to ensure that knowledge from applied research is relevant to degree programmes, we will be aligning the research agenda (the plans of the research groups) and the teaching portfolio in terms of content. In the months to come, we will develop a system to ensure that we remain in tune with current social issues. In order to achieve all this, we need a sufficient number of lecturers and researchers in the research teams. There are agreements on this issue in the strategic staff development plan (see also Commitment 3).

Student grants

Three startups initiated by AUAS students have received an HBO Take-Off grant from the Taskforce for Applied Research SIA. The Rollar, WasteBase and SwitchCase startups will each receive €40,000 to work on their innovative, sustainable and socially impactful ideas. This grant will allow the startups to better identify technological and economic opportunities. Rollar has developed a roller ball for canes used by the blind and visually impaired, whereas WasteBase is a marketplace for residual materials generated by industry and SwitchCase rents out sustainable travel cases.

f.l.t.r. Sabrina Hangweyrer, Stijn Diephuis, Romaike Slikker, Klaas-Jan van der Poel and Milan de Milliano

COMMITMENT

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Lecturers and researchers should develop professional skills and seize opportunities for career development in research

▶ Research teams will have a diverse composition and will be large enough to achieve the goals.

▶ There will be sufficient resources available for professional development in the field of research.

▶ Career pathways will be available for employees involved in research.

▶ Staff and partners from professional practice will be able to follow a Professional Doctorate track.

AUAS will encourage the professional growth of its employees, who should be able to deepen or broaden their role as connectors of teaching and research. We have made a professionalisation programme available for lecturers and researchers aimed at research. Faculties will often organise their own workshops. In addition, IXA, the Library and the AUAS Academy will offer training and support at the various stages of research.

Larger and more diverse research teams

We will be expanding the capacity for research and research support in the faculty centres for applied research, with lecturers and researchers who have both teaching and research skills. The faculty centres for applied research will ensure diversified research teams in order to guarantee the impact on education and society and the contribution to knowledge development (Commitments 1 and 2). Diversity relates to gender, cultural background and expertise in research, teaching and practice. In addition, the centres for applied research will also provide sufficient support capacity and expertise (see Commitment 5).

Sufficient opportunities for professionalisation

In order to facilitate lecturers and researchers in developing further in the area of research, the number of training courses will be increased. In addition, professors and senior researchers will train their colleagues through learning-on-the-job. Researchers will also undergo

professionalisation by participating in international research projects. To ensure that professionalisation activities of lecturers, senior lecturers, researchers, senior researchers and professors match their development needs, we rely on the new European Competence Framework for researchers. Faculties will provide a broad approach to professionalisation for novice to advanced researchers and will likewise ensure enough time and flexibility for that purpose.

Career opportunities in research

Lecturers, researchers and their supervisors are not yet making enough use of the various opportunities for research positions and pathways. That is why we will draw more attention to the benefits of these career opportunities. Faculties will be drafting a strategic staff development plan that clarifies what positions and roles are needed in research teams.

Professional Doctorate pilot

The Professional Doctorate (Dutch information) is an extension of the range of higher education available, after the Bachelor's and Master's programmes. Professionals with a relevant position and experience will be able to use this pathway to develop into an inquisitive professional who can intervene in complex practices. AUAS will start the pilot with 12 candidates.

Atelier

Within the Atelier project, AUAS has been collaborating with various European cities to develop energy-positive districts. Amsterdam and Bilbao are the pioneer cities where these districts are already being developed. The relevant district in Amsterdam is the Buiksloterham area. The surplus renewable energy that these neighbourhoods will produce will be traded on the local energy market.

AUAS researchers have been organising the partnerships with other Smart City projects and have been contributing to monitoring and evaluating the project and supporting the dissemination of the results in other European cities.

COMMITMENT

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The quality of our research should be up to par

▶ The quality of our applied research will be guaranteed: all centres for
applied research will explicitly define their quality standards and integrate
quality assurance into the primary process.

The quality of applied research is paramount and will be based on the Dutch Code of Conduct for Academic Integrity and the six-yearly evaluation according to the Sector Protocol for Research Quality Assurance (links to Dutch information). The impact of research on teaching and society determines the quality of our research (see the knowledge clip Applied research at AUAS, Dutch with English subtitles). Centres of expertise and centres for applied research will therefore be developing indicators to report impact accurately.

To further develop the culture of quality, all centres for applied research will explicitly define their substantive quality criteria for preparing and conducting applied research. They will also conduct regular evaluations of this quality. They will ensure that there is familiarity with the quality criteria as well as compliance and that they are integrated into the primary process. A good example of a quality standard is the Open Science Research Manual of the Faculty of Health.

Open science

As a knowledge institution, we strive for open science as the norm. We are therefore developing a plan:
• to update the Open Access policy;
• in respect of the FAIR data principle;
• to recognise and appreciate the uniqueness of applied research;
• in respect of academic integrity awareness.

Ethical review

We will be further developing the ethical review of research proposals. The Research Ethics Committee will be making its procedure more stringent. When working with external partners, we will be verifying the data management security in place at that partner. The Research Ethics Committee will also weigh the acceptable burden of research participants against other relevant interests, which may include commercial interests, diversity, inclusion and safety interests. The ethical review process will become part of the *Research Management Services* portal (see Commitment 5). Once the review criteria have been clearly defined and the infrastructure for review is in place, we will make ethical review mandatory.

Embedding knowledge security

Knowledge security relates to protecting sensitive knowledge and technology developed in research projects. We want to structurally increase security awareness and resilience against knowledge security risks. We will be conducting a risk assessment of cooperation with non-EU countries where fundamental rights are not respected, as a basis for a project plan to avoid ethical issues. In addition to a dashboard with an overview of partnerships with high-risk countries, we are considering an e-learning programme focused on knowledge security.

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Research support should be effectively set up and state-of-the-art

▶ The back office for supporting research processes (research data management, privacy, information security, ethical review, open access, registration of research results, grant advice) and for supporting open science will be effective, easy to find and accessible.

▶ Digital facilities for research will be fully integrated into AUAS' digital ecosystem.

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AUAS will have invested in good research facilities to ensure the quality of research processes, which includes research data management, open access publication, ethical review, handling issues of violation of academic integrity, and the storage and accessibility of research products and activities. Research and the associated facilities will be growing, which is why digital support and support capacity require our attention.

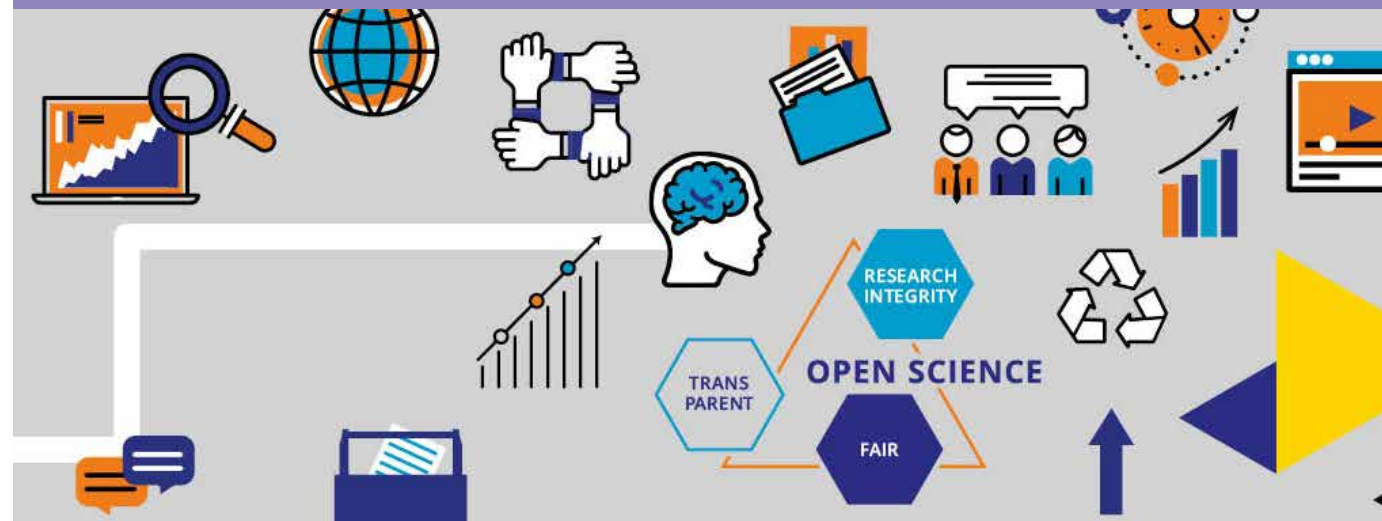## Back office will be effective and easy-to-find

From 2023, the centres for applied research will begin using the Research Management Services online environment. Within the environment, research teams will be able to do a number of activities, including drafting data management plans, ensuring protection of personal data and ethical review, in an efficient and secure manner. We need expertise for the RMS, ranging from data stewards to privacy officers and experts on research and ethics. Each faculty will therefore provide professional and easy-to-find support with clear roles for an integrated approach to the policy areas of research data management, privacy, information security, knowledge security, ethical review, open access and registration of research results. In addition, the library will support open science. We will provide an internal help desk for research teams, where they can find information on what support is available and who can advise or support them.

Digital facilities

Applied research increasingly relies on data and calculations, which is why we will be providing IT solutions to meet the growing need for storage, management and efficiency of research data and computing power. We will also be deploying ICT applications that help connect research, teaching, professional practice and society and open science. We will be building a professional organisation for this purpose.

Urban Vitality Open Science Support Desk

The Open Science Support Desk (Dutch info) advises and supports researchers with questions on qualitative and quantitative research, disclosure, data management, copyright and more.

COMMITMENT

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Our research acquisition portfolio should be broad and diverse

▶ Since 2022, we have been using the more extensive funds from government funding to realise our research ambitions, in line with the spending targets of the administrative agreement with the Minister of Education, Culture and Science (2022).

▶ Structural partnerships with public and private partners in the centres of expertise also ensure an additional larger palette of indirect and contract research funding at the regional, national and European level.

▶ Acquisition support and framework conditions will be in place.

More money from government funding

In order to realise the substantive ambitions of research groups, centres of expertise and centres for applied research, structural investment is needed, for example with regard to career development and research capacity and support, as well as, for example, in the development of the Professional Doctorate, professionalisation for research and further integration into the knowledge ecosystem. From 2023, our government funding budget for applied research will be €7.6 million higher for a period of 10 years because of the administrative agreement with the Minister of Education, Culture and Science. This will allow us to realise our research ambitions.

Structural partnerships for indirect and contract research funding

Grant schemes and national and European programmes (indirect and contract research funding) increasingly focus on applied research. Research teams at AUAS have already been exploiting this, and we will be expanding this strategy further. We will be participating in major project applications inter alia to the National Growth Fund and Horizon Europe with the coalitions of our centres of expertise and research groups alongside other universities of applied sciences, research group platforms, universities and partners from the U!REKA network (see Commitment 1). To strengthen the relationship with research institutions, we will be appointing L.INT professors (professor positions at institutes) whenever possible through SIA's L.INT scheme. In the coming years, our centres of expertise will be committing themselves to cooperation partners to ensure more continuity in contract research funding.

Support and framework conditions

We will be ensuring efficient financial and project administration that provides effective management information and a corresponding professionalisation programme for project leaders. Due to the rules on transparency, we will be equipping the research management organisation to engage in public-private partnerships. We will be using part of the funds from the administrative agreement for support needed to participate in large project applications (such as Horizon Europe and Growth Fund projects) and to act as a coordinator for large projects.

Bridge builder

As climate consultant at the Royal Netherlands Meteorological Institute (KNMI) and a professor in Climate Literacy, Jannette Bessembinder builds bridges between climate researchers and professionals who use KNMI's research data.