

The Executive Board's response to the 2022 VU Work Perception Survey

In March 2022, the latest employee survey was held among the staff at Vrije Universiteit Amsterdam. The survey helps us keep track of what our employees think about their jobs, their working conditions and VU Amsterdam as an employer. What are we getting right and what improvements need to be made? The report presenting the full range of results can be viewed on the [VU Work Perception Survey](#) theme page. The survey was completed by 2197 employees, a response rate of 42%.

We would like to start with an observation that is a great source of pride for us: a large proportion of our employees Amsterdam enjoy their work. The survey shows that the work is challenging and that we work well with our colleagues, supervisors and managers. We are proud that VU Amsterdam offers an inspiring and enjoyable working environment, a place where employees feel fulfilled and where they work and collaborate effectively. Even when faced with the most trying of circumstances, such as the coronavirus crisis and the complex transition to new operational processes.

Zooming in on the various outcomes, we can also identify issues that give cause for concern. Our employees experience high work pressure. The workload is substantial and the bar is set high in terms of the level of performance and ambition. Relevant information often proves difficult to find and the transition to hybrid working calls for additional focus. The impact of the new operational processes is making itself felt, not least among managers who do not feel that they are receiving sufficient support.

One topic in particular that we wish to highlight is social safety. It is a matter of grave concern to us that employees have had to deal with inappropriate conduct more frequently in recent years. A concerted effort has been made to improve social safety, including training in how to engage with one another and how to be more alert to inappropriate conduct. Additional confidential counsellors have been appointed to lower the reporting threshold. Unfortunately, we are not yet seeing these measures reflected in the perception of employees. This is clearly an area that requires renewed action. That said, we sometimes see cases in which a difference of opinion or negative feedback is perceived as inappropriate conduct. Let us be clear, any perception of inappropriate conduct should be taken seriously. Yet at the same time, in a safe environment, we need to be able to hold each other accountable and trust each other to listen without prejudice, to ask each other questions, and to be respectful in cases where differing views are expressed. So keep practising the principles of the [Art of Engagement](#) and, above all, seek to maintain an open and constructive dialogue with each other.

Where do we go from here? Each faculty and service department will soon receive a report detailing their own outcomes. Employees who took part in the survey will also be given access to a digital dashboard showing their own scores, those of the department, the unit and the university as a whole. Discuss these results with each other: do you recognise the picture that emerges from the survey? What is your faculty, unit or department getting right and what could be done better? We intend to explore a number of topics in greater depth by conducting additional analyses, not least on the issues of workload and social safety. The next step is to come up with an action plan to improve performance in these areas of concern. In the time to come, we will keep you informed about following up on the survey's outcomes. Keep an eye on vu.nl, VUZine and our other channels of communication.

Finally, a word about the diversity questionnaire that was sent out to VU employees with questions about their background. This questionnaire was completed by 1127 employees, a response rate of 22%. We will provide you with further details of the outcomes and follow-up at a later date. For now, thank you to everyone who completed the VU Employee Survey and the diversity questionnaire! Your participation is very much appreciated.

*Executive Board
Vrije Universiteit Amsterdam
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