

Research Vision

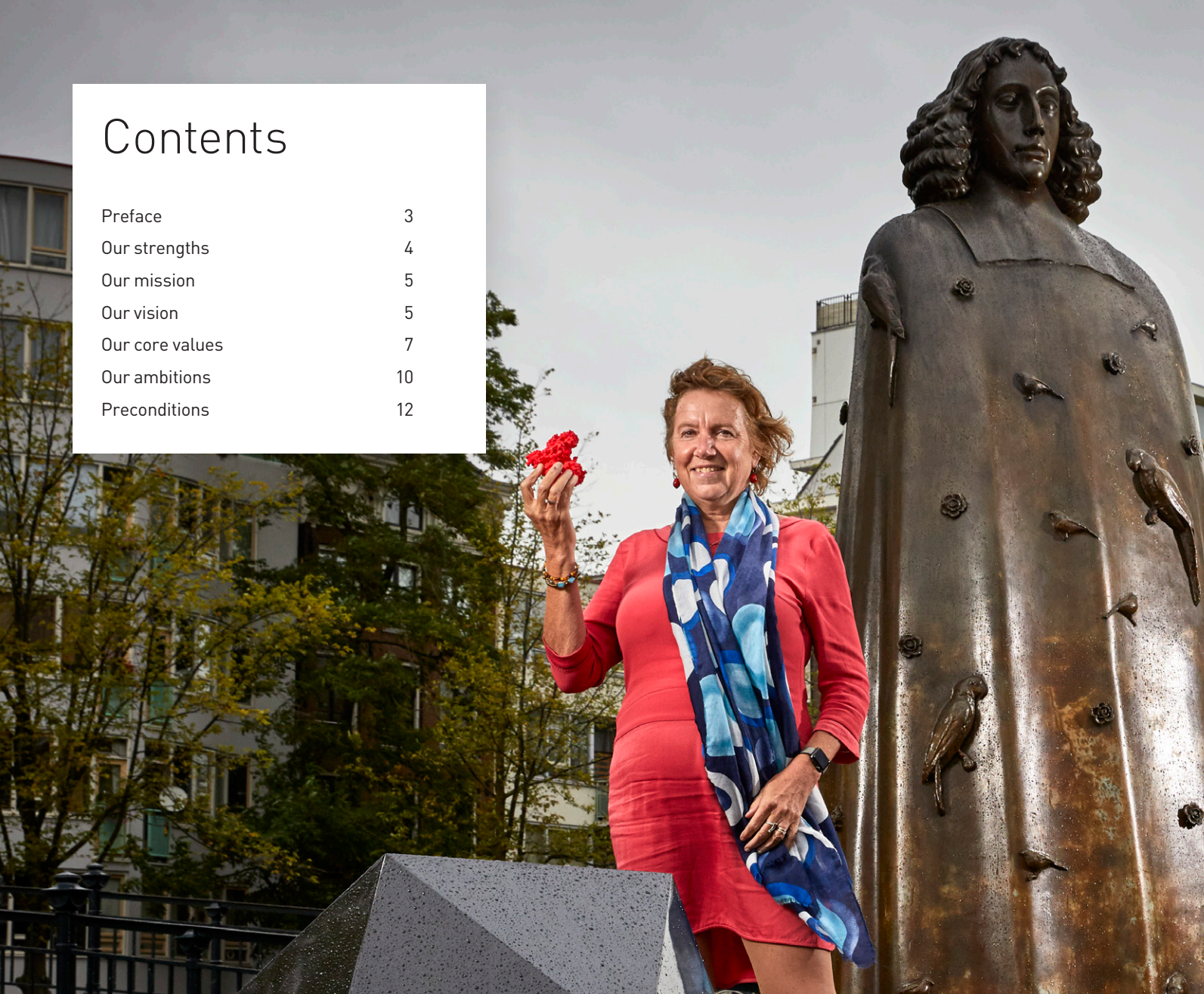
# Research that matters

Creating impact together. For a better world.



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# Preface

Taking its identity and core values as its starting point, Vrije Universiteit Amsterdam has formulated an ambitious **strategy** for 2020-2025. It focuses on three priorities: *Sustainable, Enterprising and Diverse*. These priorities direct our actions and the content of our primary tasks of education, research and knowledge transfer.

In this research vision, we describe how we see the future of, and our ambitions for, research at VU Amsterdam, with a view to inspiring the research community within the university and beyond. This enables VU Amsterdam to fully express its identity as a comprehensive university offering a wide range of academic programmes with a strong emphasis on societal engagement.

# Our strengths

In a history that spans almost 150 years, Vrije Universiteit Amsterdam has become a fully-fledged university with nine faculties on one single campus. Across a number of academic disciplines, researchers at VU Amsterdam are among the best in the world. Our university offers an attractive environment for research with the potential to have a major impact, both scientifically and in society as a whole.

VU Amsterdam has three particular strengths that set it apart from other universities.

## Identity and history

Academic freedom has always been a cornerstone of VU Amsterdam's philosophy. The university attracts free thinkers who are connected with each other and with society. VU Amsterdam encourages a deep awareness of diversity and a wider sense of purpose. The university sees and values others for who they are. We are curious, dynamic and societally engaged. In our research we are meticulous, responsible and transparent. We have a critical attitude and are open to criticism. All of these aspects find expression in our three core values - *Responsible*, *Open* and *Personally engaged*.


## Leading multidisciplinary, interdisciplinary and transdisciplinary research

In the Netherlands and abroad, VU Amsterdam is a pioneer in multi-disciplinary, interdisciplinary and transdisciplinary collaboration across all fields of research. We believe in the power of collaboration between disciplines and between science and practical application. At the intersections between disciplines and between science and the wider world, new insights, impulses and perspectives lead to scientific and societal innovations. That is why we encourage cooperation in our interfaculty and interdisciplinary research institutes and in academic collaborative centres. Together with our collaborative partners, VU Amsterdam has all it takes to ensure that its research leads to scientific progress and helps solve complex societal problems.

## Local roots with regional, national and international connections

Amsterdam and the VU campus are our home. Our campus offers an open and free-thinking place where curious minds can meet. VU Amsterdam forms a close-knit research community together with

 We believe in the **power of collaboration** between science and practical application

 Our research culture **encourages openness, transparency, cooperation and diversity**

the Academic Centre for Dentistry in Amsterdam (ACTA) and Amsterdam University Medical Center, connected by strong networks amongst researchers. Their doors are open to each other, and to colleagues and collaborative partners from outside the university. The research conducted on campus contributes to the further development of Amsterdam and the metropolitan region as a cultural, social and economic centre of international standing. A region where knowledge development, knowledge sharing and innovation are the driving forces. As a renowned research institution, we connect the city to the rest of the Netherlands and the rest of the world through our regional, national and international collaborations.

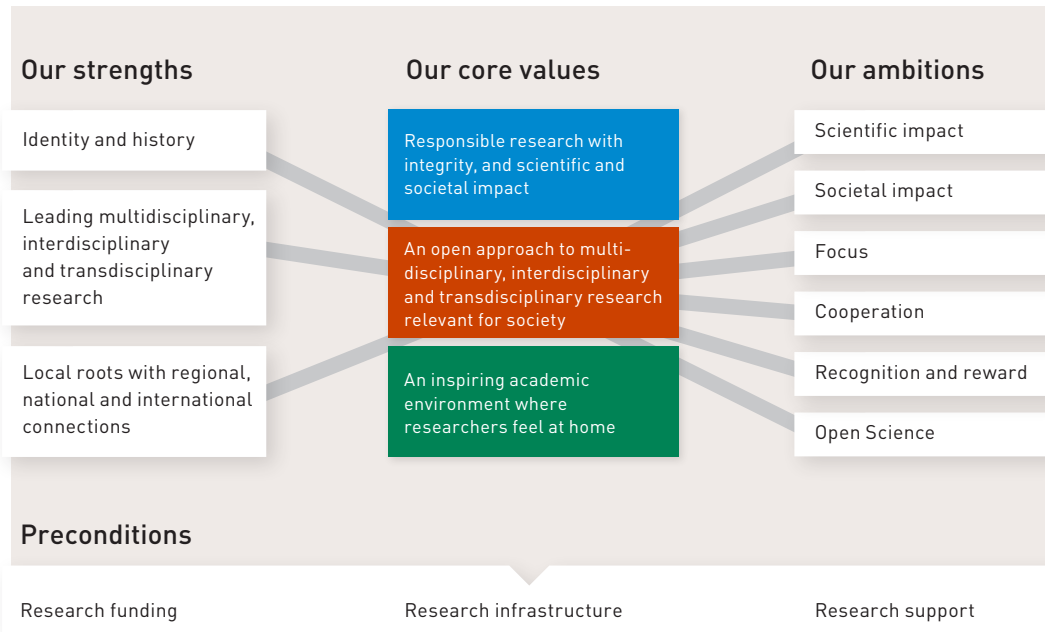
# Our mission

Vrije Universiteit Amsterdam carries out high-quality research with a significant scientific and societal impact. Our research is ground-breaking: in our academic research, the university takes its responsibility for the future of humanity and the future of the planet.

# Our vision

Through its research, Vrije Universiteit Amsterdam serves the interests of society as a whole and supports public values. VU Amsterdam stimulates research into challenging scientific questions, research that is aimed at finding solutions to complex challenges, as expressed in the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). VU researchers work closely with knowledge institutions, the business community, civic organisations and citizens. They are driven by a passion for scientific progress, whether it is directed towards solving fundamental questions or addressing the problems that face society. Our research culture encourages openness, transparency, cooperation and diversity in the research community. This culture is backed by an appraisal system that recognises and rewards the wide range of contributions by and qualities of our researchers, both individually and, most importantly, as a team. VU Amsterdam offers researchers freedom of self-development.

# Our core values



The basic philosophy of Vrije Universiteit Amsterdam is expressed in three core values: *Responsible*, *Open* and *Personally Engaged*. These values are reflected in how we carry out our research. These central convictions also lay the foundation for the way in which VU Amsterdam supports and recognizes its researchers, and they sum up VU Amsterdam's expectations of how researchers relate to each other and to students, support staff and other stakeholders of the university.

We strive towards maximum transparency in our research. Our researchers are open about their research activities, in their communication with other researchers, and with students, societal partners and wider society. Academic integrity is of fundamental importance to VU Amsterdam. This means that research at VU Amsterdam is reliable. Our integrity furthers scientific progress and ensures broader trust in science.

## Responsible research with integrity, and scientific and societal impact

VU Amsterdam is a societally engaged university with deep roots in the community, from the metropolitan region of Amsterdam, to the Netherlands and the wider world. Through dialogue and collaboration, we accelerate the search for answers to scientific questions and the discovery of solutions for societal challenges. Bringing together different perspectives and backgrounds helps advance science, while new knowledge provides a strong foundation for the application of knowledge in society. This is also reflected in the transfer, sharing and assessment of knowledge in the education we offer to students.

## An open approach to multidisciplinary, interdisciplinary and transdisciplinary research relevant for society

VU Amsterdam gives ample scope both to long-term research on fundamental questions and to research aimed at solving specific problems or providing innovative solutions to specific issues. We attach great value to research results with the potential to benefit society, even if they are uncertain and sometimes take years to come to fruition. We recognize the crucial interplay between fundamental and applied research: both are essential scientific endeavours that reinforce each other.



At VU Amsterdam, education, research, knowledge transfer and leadership are **valued equally**

And that's not all: VU Amsterdam is increasingly determined to involve societal partners from the earliest stages of its research, so that the process of sharing and accumulation of knowledge becomes circular. With new tools, facilities and expertise, we also support our researchers in carrying out collaborative, data-driven research and making the results accessible to a wide audience.

Increasingly, VU Amsterdam's researchers work closely together in academic collaborative centres, field labs and R&D labs, with other research institutions, the business community, civil society and citizens. The university is committed to developing these kinds of interfaces between science and society, to enable the VU campus to evolve into an innovation district.

## An inspiring academic environment where researchers feel at home

The research community at VU Amsterdam is characterized by increasing diversity and inclusivity. VU Amsterdam is committed to further strengthening and reaping the rewards of diversity to enrich all dimensions of its research community and raise the quality and impact of its research. We work on the basis of mutual trust and respect.

We are convinced that outstanding education and excellent research reinforce each other. We offer students a vibrant, safe and supportive environment where education is fuelled by newly acquired knowledge from teaching and research. This approach enables us to educate our students to become skilled members of a community that values academic integrity. Our campus and state-of-the-art facilities provide an inspiring academic environment for carrying out research. Anyone with ambition will have the opportunity to reach their full potential at VU Amsterdam. We attract motivated and committed researchers – from PhD candidates to full professors – and make sure that they feel at home at our university so that they can pursue their passion. To this end, we create an appealing academic climate where the individual is valued and teamwork is appreciated.

# Our ambitions

Through our research, we aim to find answers to scientific and societal questions. We want to push boundaries. To achieve our research vision, we have formulated six ambitions. Through these ambitions, VU Amsterdam wants to create an attractive research environment that drives both scientific and societal advances.

## Scientific impact

VU Amsterdam is a nationally and internationally recognized university with the highest standards. VU Amsterdam is committed to strengthening the scientific impact of its research. VU Amsterdam is dedicated to advancing its scientific position and reputation in the world.

## Societal impact

Through its high-quality, ground-breaking research, VU Amsterdam serves the wider interests of society and makes a lasting contribution to public values. VU Amsterdam encourages thoughtful research, both applied and aimed towards solving societal issues and basic research that does not focus directly on a specific target group or application.

## Focus

VU Amsterdam determines the direction of its research based on four profile themes: *'Human Health & Life Sciences'*, *'Governance for Society'*, *'Connected World'*, and *'Science for Sustainability'*. These themes reflect our focus and connect us both

internally and with the world around us. A mission, vision and strategy have been formulated for each theme, taking full account of the [United Nations Sustainable Development Goals \(SDGs\)](#). The profile themes therefore invite intensive interdisciplinary cooperation in research across faculty boundaries, leading to a better world and forming a platform for cooperation with our societal partners.

## Cooperation

To achieve its scientific and societal ambitions, VU Amsterdam encourages cooperation between its researchers, with researchers from other knowledge institutions, and with businesses, civic organizations and citizens. VU researchers therefore have to be able to work together professionally, proactively and constructively, in a spirit of teamwork. By emphasizing cooperation, VU Amsterdam aims


to advance the quality of research. Cooperation should also contribute to a sense of community and connection in the region, the Netherlands and around the world. By working together, we can maximize VU Amsterdam's value to society.


## Recognition and reward

Through a forward-looking appraisal system and recruitment policy, VU Amsterdam recognizes and rewards diverse roles and teamwork. At VU Amsterdam, education, research, knowledge transfer and leadership are valued equally. Various career paths are available within teams, so that researchers are able to develop their specific talents and make a difference within those contexts.

## Open Science

Based on the conviction that knowledge and science should be accessible and transparent, we stand for the principles of Open Science. VU Amsterdam strives to publish exclusively in open access. As research becomes increasingly data-driven, research protocols, data and analyses have to be made accessible across the full breadth of the university and in compliance with the *FAIR* principles: they must be *Findable, Accessible, Interoperable* and *Reusable*. By taking this approach, we explore the opportunities that digitization and datafication offer for research, while maintaining awareness of the threats to data ownership and the public values on privacy and security.



 Through our research we want to **push boundaries**

# Preconditions

The local, regional, national and international landscape in which VU Amsterdam operates is changing rapidly. The same applies to how we carry out our research. In maintaining our position and achieving our ambitions, talent makes all the difference: we want to attract ambitious, talented researchers and forge a bond between them and our university. To respond effectively to the latest developments, we are modernizing the ways in which our research is financed, equipped and supported, so that we can operate flexibly and decisively.

We are also experimenting with new ways of working in the post-Covid era: these include alternating between working from home and on campus, new facilities for meetings, and deploying new technologies that further our sustainability ambitions. Through new ways of working and new facilities, we want to make it as easy and attractive as possible for our researchers to work effectively, collaborate and to be part of the VU community.

## Research funding

Solid research funding is essential to enable research into reflective, fundamental and topical areas, and to earn and maintain our position at the forefront of science. Through cooperation and bringing in assignments from outside the university, we will intensify our focus

on obtaining indirect and contract research funding. We will also use the VU Fund to increase the financial security and stability for research funding.

## Research infrastructure

State-of-the-art research facilities are crucial to high-quality research. Independently or in collaboration with others, VU Amsterdam is investing in specific research facilities that reflect its scientific and societal mission. VU Amsterdam is working to ensure that these resources are used as intensively as possible by internal and external parties.

## Research support

With knowledge and expertise we support our researchers in their efforts to find and apply for research grants, in the execution of grant projects awarded and in the knowledge transfer of results. In addition, VU Amsterdam supports its researchers with tools, facilities and technical support in all other research-related areas, such as research data management, access to and maintenance of technical equipment, the use of software and compliance with policy and regulations. We achieve this through personal advice, training and technical support.



We want to **attract ambitious, talented researchers** and forge a bond between them and our university

