

Draft Policy Paper Faculty of Humanities 2021 - 2025 (version 3 November 2020)

Humanities is about what makes us human, about thinking and doing, in present and past, and with an open eye for the future. How we live together is in the broadest sense about language, culture, history and philosophy. The Faculty of Humanities elaborates this in a broad spectrum of disciplines, including linguistics, literature, media and communication studies; art & cultural studies, history and archaeology; historical, practical and theoretical philosophy. What people thought, did and made, what they think and do, believe and know, can never be captured in one humanities discipline. Interdisciplinarity comes first. It is essential for understanding choices and solutions to current social issues.

Humanities at the VU University of Applied Sciences promote independent thinking and critical open-mindedness based on a shared investigative attitude and aimed at reliability in knowledge development, increasing social equality in the present and as a contribution to a future-proof society.

That is the plus of humanities.

Future resilience, sustainability, is a substantive aspiration that affects society, and with it our field of study, fundamentally; it is also an organizational question with regard to the own organization and position of Humanities within the VU. On the basis of the collaboration between students and scientists within the Faculty, this will be elaborated here in the next five ambitions, which will also be further elaborated with other stakeholders in 2021*. This is what FGW wants to achieve in the coming years:

- (1) a stronger positioning of the humanities spectrum within the VU as a cornerstone of the other sciences;
- (2) the sharpening of existing themes and focal points in education and research, with special attention to interdisciplinarity within and from the humanities and a related strengthening of methodology development;
- (3) deepening and further elaborating the role of the humanities in questioning and contributing to solutions for current global (sustainability) issues;
- (4) the development and implementation of a strong humanities educational vision with an eye to innovation and flexibilization;
- (5) a future-proof, decisive organization, with a solid personnel policy and sound financial planning.

These five ambitions are based on the actions, policy and strategic points of attention for the future, as briefly formulated in the annual plan 2021 (see there).

*This memorandum is a sequel to the Annual Plan 2021 and a first reflection of continued discussions in the FB and the departments. See also reaction ODC (29-10-20), reaction AHA (including elaboration ARIAS, 19-10-20), Response of Philosophy (28-10-20), reactions media and journalism, English linguistics and amendments to TLC education note (2-11-20). From January 2021, the discussion will continue with all staff members, and with thematic 'interest groups'. In this way, behind a large number of the elaborations below, concrete files will be found and sharper choices can be made.

1. A stronger positioning of the humanities spectrum within the VU as a cornerstone of the other sciences

FGW is an indispensable faculty for the character of the VU as a broad university. Exact Sciences, Social Sciences, Movement and Health Sciences, Economics and Business Administration, Law, Medicine, ACTA: they cannot do without a Humanities component, including Religious Studies and Theology**. This connection with the humanities obviously concerns their history of science and visions of historical context, but also the countless aspects of language and cognition, visualization, representation and communication, of interaction and creativity, of reflection, ethics, perspectives and bias, of awareness of the built environment and institutional embedding, and so much more. Fortunately, this is also recognised as such in many places.

Disciplinary and interdisciplinary knowledge flourishes where the humanities are given room on their own and in interaction with other domains. In the coming years, FGW is committed to maintaining and renewing the independent humanities spectrum, as an important interdisciplinary domain in itself, and as an indispensable cross-disciplinary component of every science. Changes in the composition and size of the student population, in staff numbers, in insights, social questions and political contexts always lead to shifts in emphasis. They require careful attention, so that there are no gaps in the humanities spectrum, and where imbalance arises, adjustments can be made by seizing new opportunities. This is only very partly (and perhaps not at all) an organizational question with regard to faculty layouts (see also ambition 5); much more important is the substantive practice on which our work is based. A strong positioning of the humanities within the VU as a cornerstone of the other sciences requires a strong humanities core in the first place.

2. The sharpening of existing themes and centres of gravity in education and research, with special attention to interdisciplinarity within and from the humanities and a related strengthening of methodology development

Starting from the opening statement and referring to the concrete list of activities mentioned in the annual plan 2021, we briefly mention here the themes that require further research and elaboration in 2021. This choice of themes is prompted by (a) current priorities and expertise; (b) relationships with the profile themes (Connected World, Governance for Society, Health and Society and the Sustainable Development Goals); (c) opportunities for further cross-disciplinarity of importance for the entire VU. It goes without saying that, when selecting and tightening up, clear links between research of individual staff members or groups and the profiling of educational programmes will be pursued wherever possible. Here are the most important themes we are currently thinking about and working on:

**The fact that Religion Sciences and Theology have been accommodated in a separate faculty does not matter for this substantive argument. We are not suggesting a merger here, but they are an integral part of the humanities.

Language and language culture - Promoting multilingualism in science and academic community building

VU is a unique international community; within the VU community there is a great intrinsic richness of linguistic diversity, but we print it out rather than let it flourish. Dutch and English are the contact languages, only in our own circle do we also speak other (mother) languages, while these are just as many vehicles for living together and developing science. Increasing our sensitivity to linguistic diversity is therefore not only an important aspect of inclusiveness, of Connected World and protection of diversity, but also contributes to enriching the academic debate. From a humanities perspective, we know that it is important to stimulate students and staff to nurture multilingualism wherever possible in education and research. Each language opens a door to culture, underlying behavioral elements, and greater diversity.

The promotion of linguistic diversity can in many ways take shape as an aspect of the 'social campus spearhead' of the institution's plan. However, within Humanities and cross-disciplinary, such as with SBE, FSW, and physicians, we are also investigating possibilities to embed language diversity in research, educational vision, and offerings (see also ambition 4). In part, this concerns (perhaps extra-curricular) skills education. But such a policy cannot be achieved without also paying thorough scientific attention to linguistics and literature, media and communication sciences, visual literacy and philosophical reflection, as aspects of academic education. FGW wants to restore and strengthen the network of and appreciation for institutionalized and informal linguistic knowledge within the VU. This touches on the entire field of activity, from 1st and 3rd flow education, to research and valorisation, and the internal and external communication of the VU. Within FGW and across faculty boundaries, policy in this area is urgent. The activities of NT2 and ALP, and the discussions with Taalcentrum contribute to the further shaping of this ambition.

History, culture and heritage -- Promoting knowledge and critical reflection on Europe in a context of Global History

In the interplay of states, the political debate, the discussions about identity, inclusion and exclusion, heritage and space, Europe harks back a lot to classical and early modern times. How this happens calls for critical reflection. In the coming period FGW stimulates the strengthening of historical connections between humanities disciplines and across faculty boundaries, with a simultaneous critical reflection on the European character of our attention to antiquity, the Middle Ages and the early modern period from a historical, philosophical and religious science perspective.

We are still familiar with the older disciplinary classifications in (and within) History and Art & Cultural Sciences, Philosophy, Literature, Classical Languages, Archaeology, Religious Studies, Social and Physical Geography, History of Science. Each contributed and contributed to purposeful but specific knowledge development about the genesis of Europe and, to a lesser extent, the world beyond. Probably not for nothing that FGW was able to maintain broad educational and research groups in almost none of these areas, they are in danger of 'shrinking' to the specializations of a few staff members, and parts of educational programs within MKDA, History, ACASA, Philosophy and Literature & Society. Just as in the case of Languages, in the VU-wide interest we also want to make this color in the humanities spectrum fuller. We do this by strengthening interdisciplinarity across departmental and educational boundaries, enriched with critical reflection on the coherence of European developments and Global History. Different perspectives In addition to the transatlantic world, other regions, such as China, the Mediterranean and the Middle East, South-East Asia, Latin America, have an intrinsic importance and contribute to a better understanding of industrialization and imperialism, war and peace, processes of European unification, and Europe's place in today's world.

Philosophy -- Interdisciplinary speaking and thinking about morality and ethics, scientific knowledge and technology, the values of our higher education, diversity and identity

The relatively new educational program Philosophy, Politics, Economy in which FGW, SBE and FSW collaborate, and the role of philosophy in the development of the A Broader Mind program show in a nutshell how philosophy continues to connect with other fields of science from a historical position as a central interfaculty. This is explicitly linked to scientific reflection on issues of moral psychology, ethics and economics, logic and artificial intelligence, as well as our thinking and actions in health care and neuroscience.

In a broader sense, there is also a recalibration process with respect to diversity and identity of the academic community and the university business, with a focus on the VU profile themes and VU's international positioning. In this way, FGW is looking for answers to social questions about greater diversity and 'decolonization' of the curriculum, as also addressed above in the first two points for attention with regard to Language and History. The same applies to questions about truth, individuality and identity. This is an exciting interplay of Amsterdam, national and international developments. FGW tackles this by, for example (in collaboration with SBE) strengthening a global history perspective from the earliest antiquity to the present, developing visions on citizenship (glocal citizenship) in Media and Journalism, giving new impulses to current themes in philosophy (Diversifying Philosophy), seeking new perspectives in Literature and society / Literature and society (Multatuli Chair); postcolonial literature), broaden the regional scope of antiquity studies, promote visual literacy and strengthen critical heritage studies including a global perspective on Unesco policies. In addition, from the perspective of the profile themes, this also includes critical reflection on an anthropocentric worldview.

Linguistics -- between Exact and Social Sciences in

The digital society and the availability of digital data is accelerating opportunities and research for a number of humanities disciplines. Moreover, the humanities are leading in some aspects. The development of ever richer language models and even multimodal models that represent our communication and interpretation of the world will take off in the coming years. These models can be used in other disciplines, such as in the collaboration of media and journalism with social sciences, including research into filter bubbles, fake news, the meaning of social issues, media impact. They are also particularly relevant in the field of Artificial Intelligence when it comes to the research lines of the Hybrid Intelligence project: collaborative, adaptive, responsible and explainable (CARE). In all these areas multimodal communication, and often also language, plays a role, in which classic hermeneutical humanities questions are addressed: identity, reference, perspective and imagination. Furthermore, the humanities contribute to major methodological issues concerning data oriented empirical research such as data bias, methodological questions concerning data oriented empirical research such as data bias, data sampling, hypothesis driven or data driven, black box and clear box models, and top-down versus bottom-up models and finally perspective and the explicit modeling of subjectivity.

Digital Humanities -- Technology at the service of the humanities

Nowhere (though: perhaps with the exception of the medical sciences?) does it become so clear what modern technology does to how we live together as in the rapidly evolving field of 'Digital Humanities', with the strongest components being Computational Linguistics, Artificial Intelligence, Human/computing interaction, Mapping and imaging techniques, etc. In addition, we see the unstoppable advance of mediatization in mutual communication, new issues relating to big data, source criticism and reliability questions, or new forms of science in which the scientist no longer needs to be in the lead.

FGW approaches Digital Humanities on the one hand as a rapidly developing field of science in which exact scientists and humanities scholars work together. On the other hand, it is an area in which technology is at the service of the humanities, thus contributing to an urge to scrutinize the scientific methods of many humanities disciplines and to better understand how qualitative and quantitative research, as well as empirical, data-driven and hypothesis-driven research, relate to each other. Practice-relevant research requires methodological reflection. This also applies to art practice-based research, which is gaining momentum at the same time, in the context of the ARIAS collaboration between Amsterdam universities and art schools.

Cross- and interdisciplinarity that is demand-driven and can start from the living world of students.

The stronger positioning of the humanities within the VU as a cornerstone of the other sciences requires dialogue and creative curiosity, in which humanities scholars both 'bring' and 'take'. Even more than is already the case with, for example, *Wijsgerige Vorming*, *Academic English*, or *A broader Mind*, or in the many research programmes in which there is collaboration across faculty boundaries, FGW strives to strengthen shared recognition as one of the cornerstones of the other fields of science as well. Humanities stimulate 'out of the box' thinking at its core, because the laws of the primary research object are often not precisely determinable, but are shaped by needs, behaviors, knowledge and experiences or expressions of individuals and groups. For research this has a fundamental and applied side.

Humanities deepening social issues cannot be done without cross-disciplinarity in order not to give predictable answers to less essential questions within too rigorously defined frames of thought. We join in the search for solutions that live with the medical profession, the media, politics and society, and as they also play a role in the world of students. In addition to 'language culture,' and 'media wisdom,' humanities scholars also contribute to 'image wisdom,' the focused approach to visual and material culture. This is about the critical and contextual understanding of complex cultural expressions with strong textual, visual and spatial expressiveness. Within the iOZI's Network Institute, CLUE+) and the ASI, and linked to the profile themes, FGW wants to work on a more integral humanities contribution in this area.

Partly this concerns user-oriented research, partly valorisation. In the humanities, different 'speeds' of impact play a role. These are often direct, such as NT2, insights into deafness, a debate on moral economics, an exhibition catalog, contributions to opinions or advice. But just as often it concerns long-term valorization, such as the contribution to changes in cultural, literary and historical canons, partly in the context of 'decolonize the curriculum'. FGW commits itself to both, and for both, further elaboration of policy and content is important for the entire VU University.

3. Deepening and further elaborating the role of the humanities in questioning and contributing to solutions for current global (sustainability) issues

Our behavior and our culture leave traces in the history, the media we create and use and the language we share. Humanities study those traces in all facets given the cognitive and biological beings we are. This makes the humanities par excellence a broad discipline deeply rooted in society. Cultural richness, history, language data, etc. grow over time and with it the complexity of the relations between artifacts and developments increases. Global connections and dynamics are becoming stronger and stronger and expose what previously remained hidden, for the present, the past and in the perspective of the future.

FGW sees it as its task to make those connections and dynamics visible and to support society as a whole in interpreting the worlds of then, now and tomorrow. The disciplines can provide insights and solutions to current issues that affect our values and world view, such as cultural diversity and identity, health issues and their ethical implications (Health and medical Humanities), the environment and sustainability (Environmental Humanities), the digital society, filter bubbles, dis- and disinformation, artificial intelligence and communication, epistemic values in debates, ethical dilemmas, changing living environments, decolonization, the dehumanization of society based on systems (both market and capitalism and administrative/institutional thinking based on the principle of the rule of law), regulation and artificial intelligence, while at the same time questioning our anthropocentric worldview.

Themes within the Connected World profile but also within other profiles such as Health & Society or Government for Society fit in well with this. Within these, the Sustainable Development Goals form natural islands where research and valorization can come together.

We expect that cross- and interdisciplinary collaboration will lead to broad knowledge about available data and the various methods. This will contribute to the discussion on how qualitative and quantitative methods complement each other, how the public debate can be deepened and supported with data (evidence-based), how perspective plays a role in interpretation and awareness. Ultimately, we expect that this will also make the minds ripe for the following goals:

- 1) Impact:** making visible the impact of the humanities in society and developing concrete examples and instruments on the basis of which this significance for social issues can continue in the future. be explored and rolled out. This will be linked to VU-wide initiatives such as the start-up village and the innovation center, but also towards cultural centers and academic/artistic platforms or media in the Amsterdam region.
- 2) Research:** developing (new) humanities perspectives in other areas of research (health, economy, artificial intelligence) in addition to maintaining one's own disciplinary strength.
- 3) Education:** problem- and action-based education based on social issues, explored if possible with partners in appealing research projects, can contribute to strengthening the relationship between research and education. This leads to greater social involvement of students and shows them the way in the future to play a role in society as humanities scholars.

4. The development and implementation of a strong humanities educational vision with an eye to innovation and flexibilization

Goal 1: Educational offer: Based on a mix of tradition and new specialisms, FGW provides conscious and analytically sharp humanities scholars who find their way in a broad field of work. With this in mind and with this ambition, it is essential for students to have a varied range of education, with options to suit individual needs and talents, and in which small-scale settings are important. FGW cherishes this small scale within the existing tight financial frameworks. Tightening up and renewing the content of programs is in line with this. Student involvement in the design of education is stimulated. Differentiation of didactic educational concepts takes place with attention to career orientation, also in connection with Community Service Learning (CSL), A Broader Mind (ABM) and Practice-relevant research, which imply a self-evident link with humanities university spatial thinking.

The aim is to realize a concrete educational offer (BA, MA, Graduate School) in the field of (1a) Environmental Humanities, which investigates man's sustainable relationship with his living environment from the dynamics between culture and nature, and Digital Humanities, which is developed and

researches social problems with digital techniques and datasets from a historical, philosophical, linguistic, artistic and spatial perspective; (1b) a vision and study of multilingualism, as an essential component of all cultural and philosophical expressions within the humanities and an example of an inclusive and diverse university community ('Connected World'); (1c) across the board (ba, ma, graduate school) ensuring a balanced interaction between education and research.

Goal 2: Implementation of education: (2a) The development of Blended Learning takes place in conjunction with the further development and renewal of didactic approaches to education that invite inquiry-based learning and the activation of students' self-activity. The development of critical thinking goes hand in hand with critical data analysis. (2b) The inclusive approach of Mixed Class Room is implemented both offline and online. (2c) A coordinated and comprehensive mentorship where attention is paid to the development and well-being of the student during the study and with an eye for possible future careers. (2d) A reassessment of the thesis policy as a crucial aspect of humanities education.

Goal 3: Profiling the humanities: student recruitment is more than just information about humanities; FGW wants to re-establish more substantive contact with schools in areas that are under pressure. (3a) The value of the humanities in society is clearly communicated within the study programs and students are involved in research into social issues from the study programs and the faculty's science agenda (see also under goal 1, CSL, ABM, Practice-relevant research). (3b) The faculty will continue to develop and offer, in collaboration with other faculties, courses that address philosophical and ethical issues on the one hand, and engage in discussions outside the faculty on the other hand, for the purpose of crossovers in the field of history, evolution and methodological development of current scientific fields, including cross-disciplinary pathways. (3c) From the cornerstone idea (or perhaps to build bridges) FGW promotes cross-disciplinary minors, Summer courses and Winter courses.

Goal 4: Professional development: (4a) On the basis of a personal development plan, teachers are allocated sufficient hours per year to spend on professional development such as BKO and SKO, as well as language proficiency courses. (4b) Innovation with own education is stimulated and actively supported. (4c) Learning to work with digital education as a performing art.

Goal 5: Impact: FGW is a knowledge center for a changing society and culture and ethical issues, and makes this a reality in stimulating debate and discussion, for example through (5a) the A Broader Mind program is connected in an appropriate way to the educational offer, extra-curricular and where possible as part of a profession. (5b) Good practices in the areas of inclusiveness, decolonization of curricula and teaching methods, and sustainability issues are shared internally and externally.

Goal 6: Quality assurance: (6a) The quality of education is improved by directly involving students in the innovation of education delivery. (6b) Deploying data analytics to identify bottlenecks and opportunities so that targeted adjustments can be made.

5. A future-proof, decisive organization, with a solid personnel policy and sound financial planning

In this multi-year vision, business operations and personnel policy are closely related to the aforementioned ambitions and policy intentions. We distinguish between organizational issues, internationalization, valorization policy, personnel policy, financial policy. In all these areas, what is stated in the annual plan 2021 also applies to the spearheads of employee participation (section 2.3) and personnel policy (chapter 6).

Organization: Consolidating the organizational embedding of the humanities within the VU: FGW

is involved in the discussion about a decisive, agile and future-proof organization, and recognizes (itself created only 5 years ago from a merger of two faculties) that VU-wide current faculty layouts are not necessarily fixed. However, FGW wants to approach this in the first place in terms of content, aimed at strengthening the cross-faculty opportunities for collaboration in R&D and through-flow opportunities for OBP (and WP) personnel. In this respect, we have experience in collaborating with Onderwijsbureau (FGW/FRT), career services (FGW/SBE), PPE (FGW/SBE/FSW) and other courses together with FSW, AUMC (VU), SBE, or (in preparation) Beta, or on the contrary transferring tasks related to teacher training (FGW/FGB).

In addition, FGW will work to further improve the faculty embedding of central staff working 'for' FGW (C&M, Personnel Policy, Finance), and to strengthen the substantive interaction between the humanities as a knowledge domain and the tasks considered as services at central services. The clearest example is, of course, the University Library: FGW supports the long-term plan of the University Library, in the field of exchange between the University Library, the faculty with education and research, and heritage policy. UB focuses on cooperation in the Network for Teaching and Learning and the new Network Research Data Support, and seeks more exchange between library staff and teachers, researchers and students. The active Faculty Library Committee is an important tool in this respect. But this also concerns C&M, IT, FCO (social campus), BZ (impact hub, alumni policy), Diversity Office, etc.

In operational management, in coordination with the central services, the organization will be strengthened with regard to the support of blended learning (digital education workplace) and research (data steward, open science and more). Implementation of the policy on quality funding will be linked to the educational ambitions. The processes required to facilitate research applications in the 2nd and 3rd flow of funds will be strengthened.

Responsibilities will be placed as much as possible at the departmental level. The departments are the lowest result responsible unit: designers and implementers of the otherwise properly framed primary process. At the same time, department heads play an active role in the design of strategic policy across departmental boundaries, as is reflected in many parts of this multi-year plan. If a financial, personnel-technical or content-related dilemma arises, this should be solved in consultation between FB and FMT. In that sense, none of the departments is completely autonomous.

Finally, in the context of the cooperation that exists between TU Twente and the VU, FGW will investigate whether cooperation (O and or O) between the humanities and TU Twente (and in Enschede) is also possible.

Internationalization - Deepening international cooperation relations: Internationalization concerns the university's own student population and its own staff; a change that requires educational and human resources policy/corporate management focused attention. PPE has taught us a lot in this respect. Humanities scholars often already work in international networks, especially in the context of research projects. Erasmus, Erasmus+, and Marie Sklodowska-Curie networks are important in international research and to a lesser extent in education (teacher and student exchanges); there has been little contact with the Aurora network. Existing North/South collaborations focus on South Africa, Indonesia, China and transatlantic networks (United States, Caribbean, Latin America). FGW wants to promote exchange; however, the question is whether with the current size much more is possible than we already

do. For our internationalization policy, we also look at NT2 education in relation to policy on multilingualism, which contributes to the international character of our work.

Valorization: Strengthening the valorisation side of our work: for the time being this mainly concerns helping to build a more solid structure for all possible forms of 3rd GS education (executive education, consultancy, post-graduate education, but also NT2 and HOVO), which is currently being worked on under the heading of lifelong development LLO. Valorization structures are being developed in conjunction with the LLO agenda. Here, too, cooperation with other faculties is of direct relevance to FGW.

FGW wants to contribute to increasing the attention for a more 'musical' image of the campus, as elaborated in the theme group social campus and also disseminated by various services, media and debate forums, (study) associations, and student initiatives. FGW is also investigating whether, together with cultural and media partners, an experiment can be started in the proposed Impact Hub.

Personnel policy: in addition to, or more explicitly than in the FGW Annual Plan 2021 that addresses work pressure, PhD policy, social security and more, with this 2021-2025 multi-year plan FGW intends to take our substantive ambitions seriously in its policy in dealing with and opportunities for personnel, OBP and WP. This concerns vacancy policy, career policy and a training policy (LLO) for WP and OBP that pays attention to a range of issues with regard to age and career positions, gender and other diversity aspects. Staff members are encouraged to draw up a personal development plan that does not necessarily have to be linked to a career path.

The faculty actively takes up the policy objectives from the Amsterdam Agreement on Higher Education (October 2020 co-signed by the VU) that is aimed at promoting inclusive and diverse education. In view of the rotating leadership, the faculty is working on timely succession for administrative positions. Those directly involved will be involved in decisions on (the method of) succeeding professors and other managers who will retire in the coming years.

Finally: financial sustainability - FGW works with expectations regarding financial development, which only allows growth between 2021-2025 within the given financial framework. Due to the current covid-19 pandemic, the situation is currently uncertain. However, we have confidence in the current financial basis and reserve position of the faculty, the state of our education, most of which has recently been re-accredited, the energy of the staff regarding the consolidation of innovation and the development of new initiatives for student numbers that are slowly increasing again, and the good relationship between education and research funding that the staff is always able to achieve.

Note:

Where necessary, references will still be made to official documents (Institutional plan/strategy VU 2020-2025, Annual plan FGW 2021 (this multi-year plan is part of it) Strategic foresight FGW (2018), Education Agenda VU 2018-2023; Revised Quality Plan VU 2019-2024).