

AMBITION DOCUMENT

# VU-UT COLLABORATION

PHASE 3 – 19 FEBRUARY 2021, PUBLIC VERSION

UNIVERSITY  
OF TWENTE.

**VU**  VRIJE  
UNIVERSITEIT  
AMSTERDAM





# CLOSER AND UNIQUE COLLABORATION VU AND UT:

IMPACTING UNIVERSITIES, STUDENTS, LABOUR MARKET AND SOCIETY

Vrije Universiteit (VU Amsterdam) and the University of Twente (UT) have agreed to collaborate more intensively in the areas of education, research and valorisation. We have a strong shared drive to make a difference in four societal areas: **“Resilience”**, **“Sustainability”**, **“Talent”** and **“Smart Societies”**.

Working together more closely will yield other important benefits, too: bringing together alpha, beta, gamma and technology sciences in order to develop multidisciplinary solutions to societal issues; a better answer to the shortage of highly educated technical staff; better connections between the ecosystems of Eastern Netherlands and the Randstad, and more collaboration with companies; a stronger employer position for both universities; stronger and more viable joint propositions to Dutch and European funds; and new impulses for higher education.



## FROM THE FIRST SPARK IN 2019 TO THIS AMBITION DOCUMENT

VU and UT first joined forces in 2019, with the launch of a joint Bachelor's programme, Mechanical Engineering. By offering academic technology education in the heart of Amsterdam, we wanted to ensure broader geographic availability of this type of education in the Netherlands, while helping to answer the need for highly trained technical personnel. Market analysis showed that secondary school students in the Amsterdam region are relatively under-represented in higher technical programmes.

The VU / UT Bachelor's degree in ME caught on. Currently, approximately 100 students attend the programme. The collaboration has led to all kinds of new ideas and proposals between our two universities. The potential is huge. In this Ambition document, we outline the horizon up to 2030 and how we actively work together on our ambitions between now and 2023.

## WHAT DO VU AMSTERDAM AND UT HAVE IN COMMON?

VU Amsterdam and UT are complementary, like-minded universities.

- ✓ We take a **personal approach** to education and research
- ✓ We want to serve **society** to the best of our ability
- ✓ We attach great importance to the **academy as a community**.

Society is facing increasingly complex challenges. The setting in which we operate is becoming more turbulent, more complex, more uncertain. This also applies to the world of higher education and research. Competitors are emerging on all continents. Private investors are making inroads in higher education. Society is placing new demands on universities, and so are students. We recognize a need to base our education and research increasingly on societal challenges: from climate change to social inequality. Increasingly, we must be able to bridge the gaps between disciplines and integrate scientific domains.

At VU University and the University of Twente, we believe we can reach further together. By joining forces, we can educate the right talent, and develop relevant educational programmes and research projects. Our very complementarity enables us to build new bridges. Between disciplines, from humanities to natural and social sciences, life sciences & health, and technology. And also between societal stakeholders, from students to government and/or the industry. New bridges that will bring society closer to the core of the challenges of our time.

## WHY COLLABORATE?

### SOCIETAL IMPACT AND TALENT DEVELOPMENT

In broad terms, we have two goals with the intensification of our cooperation: **greater societal impact, and a larger tech-educated talent pool**. In a later section of this document, we take a closer look at four societal areas in which we want to have a major impact. As far as talent is concerned, we want to meet the labour market's need for widely deployable (tech) students: broad-minded specialists, with an eye for their societal contribution. We want to increase the annual inflow and outflow of technology students in the Netherlands, and educate the talent needed to tackle future societal challenges.



### ADDED VALUE IN MANY AREAS

In addition to this dual contribution to a better equipped and more sustainable society, there are other goals we want to achieve through collaboration:

- ✓ A wider geographic spread of academic technical education in the Netherlands, with more opportunities to interest students in the Northern Randstad in technology;
- A more effective contribution to socio-technical issues in society, thanks to the broadening and deepening of our complementary offer in the field of education, Life Long Learning and research
- ✓ A relevant contribution to new challenges in higher education, against the background of a society in which technology's impact is growing
- ✓ Better connections between the ecosystems of East Netherlands and the Randstad and the economic powerhouses of Europe
- ✓ New relationships with, and impulses for, companies in both regions, through joint research and innovation projects
- ✓ More powerful, and more viable, joint propositions to Dutch and European funds;
- ✓ A stronger employer position for both VU Amsterdam and UT, making it easier for us to attract and retain scientific talent.

Within this context, we aim to gain maximum advantage from the interaction between our universities and ecosystems. Bachelor's students of the VU Amsterdam can enrol in Master's programmes of the UT, and vice versa. Partnerships are deepened through complementary research. We link research and innovation projects to Life Long Learning initiatives. The added value of collaboration is significant and richly varied.





## COLLABORATE IN WHAT WAYS?

### IMPACT COALITIONS

Taking our areas of expertise as a starting point, together with our Deans, we have identified a number of growth opportunities for our collaboration. We are committed to a society that is digital and sustainable, social and entrepreneurial, safe and healthy.

There are four themes within which we are to collaborate in education, research and valorisation. For each theme, we have formed a coalition of specialists from the VU Amsterdam and UT. Together, they will explore opportunities, make concrete proposals and develop and implement them.

Below, we briefly explain the four themes and the associated "Impact Programmes".

#### 1. RESILIENCE: "CREATING SECURE SOCIETIES"

*Crisis management, polarisation & subversion, resilience & security*

The theme "Resilience" is all about resilience, flexibility and resistance. With the accompanying Impact Programme, 'Creating Secure Societies', we aim to contribute to strengthening the resilience and security of our contemporary society, enabling it to survive and adapt in difficult times – such as the corona crisis.

#### 2. SUSTAINABILITY: "CREATING RESPONSIBLE SOCIETIES"

*Circular economy, net-zero emissions, climate change*

The theme "Sustainability", with the Impact Programme "Creating Responsible Societies", revolves around complex issues linked to sustainability challenges. Here, we aim to link a broad social-scientific approach (environmental policy, behavioural economics, cultural anthropology, business administration, design) and engineering and technology to design and assess possible solutions. Crucial to this is our collaboration with industry, government and consumers or end users.

#### 3. SMART SOCIETIES: "CREATING SMART SOCIETIES"

*A smart, digital society*

The theme 'Smart Societies', with the Impact programme 'Creating Smart Societies', focuses on developing (digital) technology for society and evaluating its effects on society. Our aim is to contribute to a fair, sustainable digital society.

#### 4. TALENT: "CREATING TALENT FOR SOCIETY"

*Multidisciplinary education, cross-university talent development*

The theme "Talent" is a broad concept for us. The impact coalition 'Creating talent for society' will be involved in setting up multidisciplinary education, but also with talent development among both students and employees. Our students and staff will have the opportunity to use the ecosystems of both our universities as a (team) development platform. With sustainable public-private partnerships and citizen science we aim to ensure sufficient critical mass to be, and to remain, innovative.

# AMBITIONS UNTIL 2030

We have summarised the above overview in a table (below), with our drivers on the left and our ambitions for the years between now and 2030 on the right.



## DRIVERS FOR OUR PARTNERSHIP

## RESULTING AMBITIONS FOR 2030

Meeting the **LABOUR MARKET'S NEED FOR WIDELY DEPLOYABLE (TECHNOLOGY) STUDENTS**, who have an eye for their societal contribution **AND POSSESS A BROADER MIND.**

AN ANNUAL JOINT INFLUX OF  
**750-1,250** BSc STUDENTS

with the help of:

1. Joint and innovative educational programmes
2. The realisation of a Tech Campus in Amsterdam.

AN ANNUAL INCREASED INFLUX AT UT OF  
**300-500** TECHNICAL MSc STUDENTS

by introducing:

1. New Master's tracks and programmes; and
2. Offering transfer programmes and minors for the transfer of Bachelor's students from the VU to the UT's technical Master's programmes.

Leveraging our shared offer of alpha, beta, gamma and technology programmes to ensure we are better equipped for **THE LIFE LONG LEARNING (LLL)** market.

**WE ARE EXPLORING POSSIBILITIES** for improving our national and international lifelong learning (LLL) proposition by unifying our **CURRENT OFFER AND DEVELOPING NEW JOINT PROPOSITIONS.**

Contributing to solutions for **COMPLEX SOCIETAL PROBLEMS**, such as climate change or social inequality, which **REQUIRE A MULTIDISCIPLINARY AND INTEGRATED APPROACH**, combining alpha, beta, gamma and technology.

We are developing multidisciplinary impact programmes, centring on three societally relevant themes:  
**RESILIENCE: CREATING SECURE SOCIETIES**  
**SUSTAINABILITY: CREATING RESPONSIBLE SOCIETIES**  
**SMART SOCIETIES: CREATING SMART SOCIETIES**

**CONNECTING OUR TWO COMPLEMENTARY ECOSYSTEMS**, Randstad North and East Netherlands, and **STRENGTHENING THE EMPLOYER POSITIONS** of the VU and the UT alike.

Successful implementation of our – largely shared – **APPOINTMENTS IN EDUCATION, RESEARCH AND VALORISATION, WHICH WE NEED TO REALISE THE AFOREMENTIONED AMBITIONS** (each of which also contributes to this fourth aspect).

## BETWEEN NOW AND 2023: CONNECTION, BROADENING, DEEPENING

We will use the coming years to create stronger connections (between our separate educational and research activities, and our two ecosystems), and to broaden and deepen our collaboration. We will develop activities to increase employee engagement, to further develop our story, and to intensify interaction and engagement with our stakeholders. Our collaboration is based on a growth scenario. That said, we remain realistic, especially given the workload and the current impact of the corona crisis on both universities. Depending on what opportunities and developments emerge, the concrete plans outlined here for the next three years can be scaled up or accelerated in joint consultation.

## AMBITION A.

### INNOVATIVE BACHELORS WITH AN INFLOW OF 750 TO 1,250 STUDENTS PER YEAR

We are starting a number of new, joint Bachelor's programmes. Physical educational activities in these programmes will mainly take place at the VU Amsterdam.

#### » **Mechanical Engineering**

We are working on the further growth of our joint Bachelor's Mechanical Engineering, which we started in 2019. By 2023, we want an increased influx of 125 students, and by 2026, of 200 new students.

#### » **Creative Technology**

We will start a joint Bachelor's programme in Creative Technology (CT) in 2023 at the VU Amsterdam. After completing this programme, students must be able to directly enrol in 15 UT Master's programmes, by making smart use of the flexible space in the curricula. In the first year, we aim for an influx of 80 students, followed by rapid growth to 150 new students.

#### » **Industrial Engineering and Management**

In 2023 or in 2024, we will start the Bachelor's programme Industrial Engineering at the VU Amsterdam. We will aim for an influx of 80 students in the first year, followed by rapid growth to 200 new students.

#### » **Additional Bachelor's programmes**

In 2021 and 2022, we will explore the possibilities for starting additional joint Bachelors, based on the experiences in the aforementioned programmes.

## AMBITION B.

### 300-500 NEW STUDENTS PER YEAR IN UT'S TECHNICAL MASTERS

To meet the demand in the labour market for highly educated technical staff, significant growth in the numbers of students enrolling in UT's technical Master's programmes is required. This is why we aim to develop an effective system of bridging programmes between the VU Amsterdam and the technical Master's at the UT, by 2030. We will also investigate the added value of working with combined MSc-PhD programmes. Between now and 2023, we will take the following steps:

#### » **Connection scan for Bachelor's and Master's VU Amsterdam and UT**

We will jointly carry out a scan of the options for linking Bachelor's and Master's programmes at the VU Amsterdam and UT, and map out possibilities for facilitating transfer through transition programmes and minors, and for making these transfers more attractive.

#### » **Transfer from VU Bachelor's to UT Master's programmes**

For the transfer of VU students to technical Master's at the UT, we will focus on information, bridging programmes and minors.

#### » **Launch of a Master's specialisation in Sports Data Science**

The Master's specialisation 'Sports Data Science' will start in 2021 at the UT, and in 2022 at the VU Amsterdam. Depending on enrolment numbers (and market analysis), we will investigate whether it is desirable to convert the track into a new Master's programme.





## AMBITION C.

### A REINFORCED LIFE LONG LEARNING PROPOSITION

As partners, we explicitly aim to contribute to the new challenges that higher education faces. We are exploring possibilities with which we can improve our national and international Life Long Learning proposition in the socio-technical academic education, by unifying our current offers, and developing new joint propositions. We want to combine the strengths of both institutions more effectively through the following steps:

» **Knowledge exchange digitisation**

From 2021, we will explore how we can exchange and share knowledge and experience regarding the digitisation of higher education and research.

» **Life-Long Learning offer from Impact programmes**

We will determine whether and how we can work together as of 2022, to initially develop an offer based on the themes reflected in our three shared Impact Programmes. We want to use each other's locations and facilities as much as possible.

» **Privileged access for alumni and employees**

We are exploring whether and how we can grant staff and alumni privileged access to this Life Long Learning offer from 2023. We will examine the possibilities and relevance of promoting each other's offerings under a single banner.

## AMBITION D.

### THREE MULTIDISCIPLINARY IMPACT PROGRAMMES, TWO LINKED ECOSYSTEMS

Within our Impact Programmes, we will organise joint research projects and strategic partnerships to realise solutions for local, regional, national or international issues. We will actively involve public and private partners from both ecosystems.

A coordinator is appointed for each Impact Programme, with the task of helping these impact programmes to achieve sustainable growth. In the autumn of 2021, we will decide whether and how to set up joint internal research calls for (young) talent, starting in 2022. We are committed to co-funding the research. In the second half of 2021, we will determine how we can link both Young Academies, as of 2022. Together with these Young Academies, we will further explore opportunities to collaborate. This will certainly include stimulating joint activities. Budget will be made available for this.

The following Deans /Coalition Leaders and Coordinators are associated with the Impact Programmes:



CREATING  
SECURE  
SOCIETIES



Karen van Oudenhoven (VU)  
Theo Toonen (UT)  
coördinator: Rosanne Anholt (VU)



CREATING  
RESPONSIBLE  
SOCIETIES



Bart Koopmans (UT)  
Philip Pattberg (VU)  
coördinator: Peter Chemweno (UT)  
& Daniël Petrovics (VU)



CREATING  
SMART  
SOCIETIES



Joost Kok (UT)  
Guus Schreiber (VU)  
coördinator: Carolien Rieffe (UT)



CREATING  
TALENT  
FOR SOCIETY



Joost Kok (UT)  
Guus Schreiber (VU)  
coördinator: Floor Elsenburg (VU)

## AMBITION E.

### SUCCESSFUL IMPLEMENTATION OF JOINT APPOINTMENTS

With our ambitions, we will continue to keep an eye on the workload felt everywhere in higher education. We will also strive to reduce that workload. In our collaboration, we will aim for as many joint appointments as possible in education, research and valorisation. We assume that we will benefit from a significant number of double appointments for ambitions A to D. This is partly linked to the joint education we envision in the Bachelor's programmes (based on a student-staff ratio of 19.7). It is also linked to new research and valorisation (based on a total projected external funding in the long term of EUR 10-15 mio / year from the three coalitions). Up to and including 2023, we will therefore take at least the following steps with regard to this ambition:

» **Joint labour market proposition**

For the first half of 2022, we will develop a joint labour market proposition for attracting academic staff.

» **Double appointments**

We will launch an incentive programme in 2021: ten (new) double appointments for the three coalitions. The appointments will be divided between the various stages of an academic career and between the core tasks of education, research and valorisation. The new colleagues will have a combination of these tasks in our partnership. We will explicitly ask for co-financing from the faculties. The first appointments will commence in 2022.

## MONITORING, INDICATORS, AND ADJUSTMENT WITH TWO-YEAR PROGRAMS

Up to and including 2023, we will evaluate the progress made in the past year at the administrative level at the beginning of each calendar year. In doing so, we will pay attention to the results with regard to the goals we have set. Any adjustment of the goals for the next two years needed to achieve the 2030 ambitions will be determined, as well as the extent to which the 2030 ambitions do or do not need to be adjusted. We will pay attention to the following indicators:

- ✓ Growth in enrolment numbers for joint Bachelor's programmes at the VU and the UT
- ✓ Growth in enrolment numbers of technical talent for UT Master's programmes
- ✓ Pull power of the partnership on (new) partners and funding: growth of the number of €50,000+ joint ventures with private and public organisations under the VU-UT banner
- ✓ Pull power of the partnership on talent (within education, research and valorisation)
- ✓ Growth of the partnership's visibility and reputation.

### READY FOR THE NEXT STEP

With this Ambition Document, we express the common desire to take the next step in our collaboration. We do so in the shared confidence that together we will increase our impact on society, our ecosystems and our organizations. We will build up our collaboration step by step, taking workload reduction into account. We will analyse the results achieved in the second quarter of 2022. Based on these results, we will draw up a two-year programme for 2023 and 2024.



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