Leidse Academische Gemeenschap

| Leiden Academic Community |

ELECTION PROGRAM
2024-2026

Leiden Academic Community (LAG)

In a world undergoing rapid changes due to national and global shifts and technological advancements, our university inevitably faces tough choices in the coming years. We are determined to ensure that the perspectives of *every* member of our academic community, support staff and faculty are seriously considered in these decisions. Our goal is for all employees to receive the support and recognition they deserve, acknowledging our unique contributions and identities. A university is more than a production facility; it is a place made by its community, where the talents of its members can flourish. We recognize the urgency to address issues such as workload, social and physical safety, fair recognition and rewards, and the pursuit of professional development for all. In response, building on our track record, we pledge to continue prioritizing well-being, inclusivity, and a healthy work-life balance, understanding that our institution thrives when its members do. Our stance on climate change and sustainability underscores our commitment to the planet and our leadership in fostering a sustainable future. As we navigate multiple and converging crises, we are dedicated to fostering an environment conducive to empowerment and participation. In this period of turbulent transformation, we stand united in our commitment to developing an academic community that encourages open dialogue, integrity, collaborative spirit, and critical thinking.

In this document

Our candidates

MARK Dechesne (Dual PhD Centre, FGGA)
Over the past two years, I have served on the university council representing LAG, and I have now become the faction leader. I have been working at Leiden University since 2008. In the coming years, I aim to contribute to a university community that embraces autonomy and academic freedom, where everyone feels safe and involved, and has the opportunity to develop and realize their dreams. Let's make the university a true community of knowledge. The challenges of our time call for fundamental discussion and a critical eye. We must urgently find answers to developments in artificial intelligence and digitalization, changing relations in the Netherlands and the world.

VERONIQUE de Gught (Psychology, FSW)
My focus is strongly directed towards workload. At our university, this is increasing due to further flexibilization of education, a rise in bureaucracy and the associated administrative tasks, on top of publication pressure. Another development exacerbating workload is the ongoing centralization of support services within the university. This has led to increased distance from these services, a lack of personal contact points, and unclear responsibilities, ultimately resulting in even more workload. While some developments are inevitable, the burden caused by work and regulatory pressure must always be balanced with the capacity to preserve the motivation, job satisfaction, and health of employees.

TIMOTHY de Zeeuw (LIAS, FGW)
Before starting my current PhD project at the LIAS, I had been a lecturer (UFO docent) at the Faculty of Humanities' BA International Studies for several years. During my time on the council, I have fought for permanent contracts for structural work for lecturers and others, for a more socially and ecologically sustainable university, for better involvement and representation of employees in policy making and key decision-making processes and for more autonomy for and trust in each staff member in our community. I intend to build on the progress made on these issues these past few years. My primary focus will be on building stronger co-participation bodies at all levels and improving the network between the chosen representatives and our community, so we, the whole academic community, will shape the future of our university together.

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JOOST Augusteijn (History, FGW)

I have been working for the university for more than 23 years. Presently as an associate professor in the Institute for History. I have had a long career in co-participation and administration, fulfilling roles at all levels below the University Board. I am a critical unconventional thinker who is not afraid to say things that need to be said, especially if those in authority rather not hear that. My main objectives as member of the University Council are: putting people central in the organization and not rules or procedures; giving staff members as much agency as possible; transparency about everything especially about things that go wrong; creating more diversity in the organization and acknowledging the benefits of that; taking decision on ethical grounds, such as equality, transparency, inclusivity, human rights, etc. I believe my wide experience give me a certain edge in knowing how to achieve things in the university.

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GERRIT Schaafsma (Leiden University College)

I am a lecturer at Leiden University College, where I teach climate politics and political philosophy. I believe the academic community needs to take an active role in responding to climate change. This means making the resources available for climate and sustainability initiatives to succeed. In my view, it also requires the university to act in a responsible way in conducting research on how to respond to the climate crisis. This means crafting new policies and more ambitious targets to minimize our environmental impacts and maximise our contribution to solutions.

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NIKOLETA Yordanova (Political Science, FSW)

Since joining the Institute of Political Science in 2019, I've taught courses and led a research group on EU politics, served as Director of Studies and Board Member of the Institute, and co-founded the new cross-faculty Europe Hub. Extraordinary colleagues and students have helped me fulfil and enjoy these tasks. Now I want to give back. As a member of the University Council, I want to help build a better work environment where everyone is appreciated for their unique qualities and special skills, rewarded adequately for their work, enabled to maintain a healthy work-life balance, and feels welcome and connected to a strong academic community.

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YANNICK Feld (Tax Law, FdR)

With a background in Tax Economics and Public Governance, I joined the university 1,5 years ago. Over this brief period, I have met many amazing students and colleagues with great ideas and initiatives. I envision these ideas being less burdened, and more supported. I believe in better and more transparent career perspectives and in a university that takes responsibility for the (financial) wellbeing of internal and external personnel. Finally, the university's current financial situation requires us to make difficult decisions. I stand for doing so consciously, with a strong focus on stability and the people behind the numbers.

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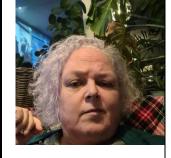**JELLE Buijs (Honours College, FSW)**

I stand for authenticity, integrity, and wholeness for myself and for others. As a skills lecturer and coach at the Honours College track Science, Society and Self of the Faculty of Social and Behavioral Sciences, I source my values for the entire university community. My interests include transformation towards sustainability and transformative pedagogy. As a member of the university council, I want to contribute to systems and cultural shifts towards a university that focuses more on the well-being of people and the planet, including the well-being of its own students and employees. Measurable results can be achieved more strategically by connecting well-being with diversity and inclusion.

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TANJA de Bie (LLinC)

I have worked in online learning for the past 10 years, supporting teachers, and currently am the chair of the Dienstraad of LLInC. I believe we should support all university staff better. The work pressure, the lack of development time for courses, the needs of lower pay scale staff that struggle to survive in today's economy, the strong hierarchal nature of the university leading to toxic behaviour, we can do better than this!

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REMCO Breuker (Korean Studies, FGW, Member of the Local Consultation for the AOB)

Universities are crucial for democratic societies. All the work (research, teaching, outreach) conducted at a university is fundamentally aimed at societal benefit at some point. However, the university has increasingly become a hierarchical, rigid, and undemocratic organization, which compromises the primary tasks of research and teaching and undermines social safety. I believe that the university can best fulfill its societal duties as an open and flat organization, where work is fairly assessed and power and responsibility rest with those who carry out the work, rather than with a governing body that is increasingly detached from the workplace.

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ANNE Urai (Psychology, FSW)

In my research as a neuroscientist, I investigate how humans and other animals make decisions in complex environments. Within the complex environment that is our university, I work towards decision-making that does not just serve short-term goals, but also creates an academic community that is future proof – in particular with respect to sustainability.

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ARNOUT van Ree (International Studies, FGW)
I am a lecturer at International Studies and the FNV union representative at Leiden University. In both roles, I see how colleagues struggle with an increasing workload, social safety and the social and political issues at play. Leiden University needs to support its staff better and cannot remain aloof. For this a strong employee participation in the University Council is of great importance.

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CLAIRE Weeda (History, FGW)
Having joined Leiden University in 2016, I have since served as program chair and currently as director of studies within the Institute for History. I'm also an active campaigner for better funding of higher education in the Netherlands. I believe that a stimulating academic environment chooses collaboration over competition and gives staff a distinctive voice in decision-making processes. A diverse and open community enhances producing new knowledge and a flourishing teaching environment. Adequate funding of teaching and research are a sine qua non to create such an environment.

Our Principles

1. The University Is Its Community

We are determined to ensure that the interests of every member of our academic community, from students to staff and faculty, are considered in decisions and policy making. Our main goal is simple: a healthy academic community at Leiden University, where everyone – students and staff members from every segment alike – feels at home, with their voices heard and respected. A university is more than a production facility; it is a place made by its community, where the talents of its members can flourish. It is a community of knowledge and practice. We envision a university that is accessible and welcoming to all, regardless of background, appearance, sexual orientation, identity, gender, conviction, or creed. We emphasize the importance of being a community where debates and diverse academic opinions thrive and where students and staff feel safe to participate in such discussions.

2. More Autonomy, More Trust, More Collaboration

To achieve this, we will work towards a healthy workload, independence in research, education, and development, and a fair acknowledgment and compensation for work. We are aware that ambitions and practices may vary across faculties and always strive to represent the whole community's interests. We recognize the critical need and will leverage our track record to address issues such as work pressure, social and physical safety, fair recognition and rewards, and the pursuit of professional development for everyone, including university teachers and support staff. We will foster organizational change to facilitate interdisciplinary connections and address administrative hurdles.

3. Creating A Socially, Ecologically And Academically Sustainable University

We are committed to shaping a future that prioritizes sustainability, embraces technological advancements, and fosters a strong sense of global community. This is reflected in our active engagement with green initiatives and integrating sustainable practices throughout our university life. We're also heavily focused on leveraging technology, ensuring our community remains adaptable and forward-looking by adopting the state-of-the-art in digital tools and infrastructure. Recognizing the specialized needs of different community members, we encourage active participation in developing our IT systems. For Leiden University, having a global outlook is not just historical; it's a deliberate approach that enriches our educational environment with diverse perspectives and encourages collaborations that reach beyond geographical boundaries. We are committed to supporting the rights and welfare of all our community members, including international community members, ensuring an inclusive, supportive, and fair environment for everyone.

4. Doing Things Differently: Less Bureaucracy, Full Transparency, More Humanity

As we navigate political unrest and the digital revolution, we are dedicated to fostering an environment conducive to empowerment and participation. Our party, consisting of experienced and first-time candidates, will keep a constructively critical approach to governance, focusing on the long-term consequences of decisions and ensuring they reflect the academic values of our community. We seek to bridge the gap between high ambitions and realities on the ground, offering a critical perspective on the feasibility of ambitions. LAG considers accountability and transparency to be key benchmarks.

Our Plans

1.   The University Is Its Community:

We are determined to ensure that the interests of every member of our academic community are considered in these decisions. Our main goal is simple: a healthy academic community at Leiden University, where everyone – students and staff members from every segment alike – feels at home, with their voices heard and respected. A university is more than a production facility; it is a place made by its community, where the talents of its members can flourish. We envision a university that is accessible and welcoming to all, regardless of background, appearance, sexual orientation, identity, gender, conviction, or creed. We emphasize the importance of being a community where debates and diverse academic opinions thrive and where students and staff feel safe to participate in such discussions. Specifically, we will seek to:

- Foster a Culture of Respect and Inclusion: LAG strongly supports initiatives that foster an inclusive and respectful university culture where every member both is and feels valued and heard. This includes forums for open dialogue, and support systems for members of the university community who face discrimination or harassment.
- Review and Reform Employer Responsibilities and Working Conditions at Leiden University. LAG critically considers the delegation of employer responsibilities onto employees, particularly concerning workspaces, work-from-home feasibility, and the personal burden of professional costs such as library fines. We will critically evaluate and adjust employee workload expectations and support structures.
- Promote Research and Educational Independence: LAG will seek to safeguard the autonomy of academic staff by setting clear guidelines that protect their freedom to pursue research and educational activities without undue interference. This includes establishing a supportive framework for academic inquiry and development, regardless of external pressures or influences.
- Leiden University: One University in Two Cities. LAG acknowledges that Leiden University has bases both in Leiden and The Hague. As the The Hague Campus expands, it becomes crucial to more fully recognize the interests of Leiden University's employees in The Hague and to ensure that the Leiden and The Hague campuses operate as a unified entity, maintaining a singular community spirit.
- Safeguarding the Interests of International Employees: LAG is attentive to the government's plans for internationalization and their potential impacts on international faculty and staff at Leiden University. LAG is committed to supporting its international community members by actively seeking measures to protect their positions.
- Expand Co-Participation Structures: LAG will seek to strengthen the mechanisms for co-participation at all levels of university governance, ensuring staff and students have meaningful input into decision-making processes. This will involve expanding the role and influence of representative bodies like faculty and employee councils, and ensuring their recommendations are taken seriously by the university administration. Another way we will seek to expand co-participation is through the strengthening of co-participation bodies at the institute level, creating formal institute councils with similar rights concerning decision making processes on their level as faculty councils have vis-à-vis their faculty boards and the university council has vis-à-vis the executive board. We will also seek to more proactively reach out to the academic community for input.

2. More Autonomy, More Trust, More Collaboration

We will work towards a healthy workload, independence in research, education, and development, and a fair acknowledgment and compensation for work. We are aware that ambitions and practices may vary across faculties and always strive to represent the whole community's interests. We recognize the critical need and are committed to leveraging our track record to address issues such as work pressure, social and physical safety, fair recognition and rewards, and the pursuit of professional development for everyone, including university teachers and support staff. We will foster organizational change to facilitate interdisciplinary connections and address administrative hurdles.

- Towards a Healthy Workload Framework: LAG will contribute to the development and implementation of guidelines for workload management across all departments. This includes setting clear expectations for work hours, providing tools for better work-life balance, and ensuring equitable distribution of tasks. Regular assessments and feedback loops will be established to monitor workload levels and adjust policies as needed.
- Promote Fair Recognition and Reward System: LAG will promote a transparent system for recognizing and rewarding the contributions of all university staff. This system will consider both academic achievements and contributions to the university community, ensuring fair compensation and opportunities for professional advancement. We believe this is an especially important issue for teaching staff and non-academic personnel, such as lecturers (UFO docenten) and support staff, whose contributions have historically been underappreciated in and stifled by the university's criteria for recognising and rewarding work.
- Safeguarding Independence in Research, Education, and Development: Both the university (a Praesidium Libertatis for all) and its staff must be able to perform the tasks of research, education and outreach without outside interference or influence. Similarly, students must be able to study and develop as independent and critical individuals. Everyone should be able to express themselves as befits staff and students of Leiden University. LAG remains committed to safeguarding independence in research, education and development.
- Addressing Administrative Burden and Bureaucracy: Streamline administrative processes to reduce bureaucracy and make it easier for faculty and staff to focus on their core activities. This might involve digitalization of paperwork, creating a one-stop support center for administrative requests, and engaging in dialogue with administrative staff to provide efficient and effective support. This also involves radical transparency.
- Addressing Social and Physical Safety: LAG will continue to advocate programs that address both mental and physical health concerns. This includes providing access to mental health services, creating safe and inclusive workspaces, and implementing policies that prevent and address harassment and discrimination.
- Fostering Organizational Change for Interdisciplinary Connections: Break down silos between departments to foster interdisciplinary research and teaching. LAG recognizes that there is still a big gap between university board's ambitions and practice in this context.

3. Creating A Socially, Ecologically And Academically Sustainable University

We are committed to shaping a future that prioritizes sustainability, embraces technological advancements, and fosters a strong sense of global community. At the core of our values is a deep-seated dedication to protecting the environment. This is reflected in our active engagement with green initiatives and integrating sustainable practices throughout our university life. We're also heavily focused on leveraging technology, ensuring our community remains adaptable and forward-looking by adopting the latest in digital tools and infrastructure. Recognizing the uniqueness of our community's needs, we encourage active participation in developing our IT systems. For Leiden University, having a global outlook is not just historical; it's a deliberate approach that enriches our educational environment with diverse perspectives and encourages collaborations that reach beyond geographical boundaries. We are committed to supporting the rights and welfare of our international community members, ensuring an inclusive, supportive, and fair environment for everyone.

Sustainability

- <u>Support Campus-wide Green Initiatives</u>: LAG supports the development and launch of comprehensive programs aimed at reducing the university's carbon footprint, include energy-saving measures, sustainable waste management, and the promotion of green transportation options among students and staff.
- <u>Campus Infrastructure and Operations:</u> LAG supports investment in sustainable infrastructure, including energy-efficient buildings and renewable energy sources. We also support the implementation of a system for monitoring and continuously improving the environmental performance of campus operations.

Technological Advancement

- <u>Invest in Emerging Technologies:</u> Explore and invest in cutting-edge technologies such as artificial intelligence, extended reality, and virtual reality to enhance all aspects of academia, including education, research, and campus life.
- <u>Upgrade Digital Infrastructure:</u> LAG is supportive of updating and expanding the university's IT infrastructure to support the latest digital tools and platforms, ensuring high-speed internet access, state-of-the-art laboratories, and making digital learning resources available to all community members.
- <u>Encourage Community-driven IT Development:</u> LAG will support the creation of exchange platforms where students and staff can contribute ideas and feedback on the IT systems, fostering a sense of ownership and ensuring that technology meets the diverse needs of the community.

International Community

- <u>Diverse and Inclusive Academic Offerings:</u> LAG advocates a curriculum reflective of global perspectives, incorporating courses that cover international issues, languages, and cultures.
- <u>Support for International Community Members</u>: LAG will advocate comprehensive support services for international students and staff, including language classes, cultural orientation sessions, and assistance with administrative processes.
- <u>Advocacy and Support for Global Rights:</u> LAG will support and actively participate in initiatives that promote human rights, diversity, and inclusion on a global scale. This could involve research initiatives, public campaigns, and collaboration.

4. Doing Things Differently: Less Bureaucracy, Full Transparency, More Humanity

As we navigate political unrest and the digital revolution, we are dedicated to fostering an environment conducive to empowerment and participation. Our party, consisting of experienced and first-time candidates, will keep a constructively critical approach to governance, focusing on the long-term consequences of decisions and ensuring they reflect the academic values of our community and facilitate its wellbeing. We seek to bridge the gap between high ambitions and realities on the ground, offering a critical perspective on the feasibility of ambitions. LAG considers accountability and transparency to be key benchmarks.

- Establishment of LAG Engagement Platforms: LAG will organize regular offline and online events to gather diverse stakeholders from the university community, including students, staff, faculty, and external partners. These events will help to build a platform for discussion, debate, and feedback on university policies and leadership decisions.
- Transparency and Accountability Matter: LAG commits to enhancing transparency in decision-making processes and establishing accountability mechanisms for decisions that markedly deviate from the community's values or neglect to account for long-term consequences.
- Autonomy and Authority Always Accompany Responsibility: LAG has always been a strong proponent of a more horizontal university and community with less hierarchy and bureaucracy. A key part of this lies in the principle that those who are held responsible for a task should have the autonomy and authority to fulfil that task in ways they deem appropriate. Those with a leadership role at our university, be they director, manager, supervisor, or otherwise, should have more trust in the expertise, experience and dedication of the members of our community.

Our Achievements

Permanent contracts for structural work.

LAG has consistently been a driving force behind the advocacy for permanent contracts for employees whose roles are structural in nature. Despite facing opposition from other parties within the university council, LAG secured a significant victory when more lecturers were granted permanent contracts in 2022 and 2023. This ultimately led to the executive board's decision to officially revise its policy on permanent contracts for lecturers.

We made workload ("werkdruk") a central issue for the council and the executive board

LAG has played a pivotal role in increasing awareness about the urgency of addressing workload pressures at the university. More resources have been allocated for addressing these concerns, and the urgency to manage workload issues is more widely recognized than ever before. The slogan from our 2022 election campaign, "reasonable task demands, control, and support," is now official policy.

Critical change in the university's ties with the fossil fuel industry

LAG has been a pivotal advocate for environmental responsibility at Leiden University, vigorously promoting the dissemination of up-to-date scientific knowledge on climate change and advocating for a reduction in the university's ecological footprint. LAG played strategic roles by participating in key discussions that examined the university's relationships with the fossil fuel industry, influencing significant policy revisions. Through robust connections with the University Leiden Sustainability Network, LAG continues to push for sustainable development within the university community, underscoring its commitment to a more responsible and sustainable future. These initiatives reflect LAG's crucial role in advancing the university's environmental and ethical standards.

Removal of the "Classroom Scanners"

LAG and its members have always been staunch advocates for autonomy and trust. This commitment was evident when they promptly raised critical questions and ultimately rejected the use of "classroom scanners" in 2021. At that time, several founding members of LAG were still part of the staff party FNV Overheid. Their opposition led to the decision to temporarily deactivate the cameras for further tests on privacy and security concerns. Approximately a year later, the results of these tests were unsatisfactory, and no compelling arguments were made to justify such advanced and potentially invasive surveillance technologies. Consequently, LAG became one of the leading voices in the university council advocating for the permanent removal of these devices.

Balance between harmonization Minors and the autonomy and viability of programmes.

LAG has been the leading voice in the University Council advocating for exemptions from the new university-wide policy on harmonization. This policy mandates that all BA programs dedicate their fifth semester exclusively to teaching Minors. LAG's efforts were crucial in safeguarding the viability and high quality of education for programs that required these exemptions.

Creation of an ombuds officer for employees

LAG has significantly contributed to the development of a more robust, transparent, and accessible system for handling misconduct at Leiden University, reflecting a strong commitment to justice and institutional accountability.

Actively supported and represented staff during organisational changes.

LAG has consistently served as a supportive and attentive advocate for the interests of Leiden University employees during reorganizations and other challenging periods. For instance, we have steadfastly supported and championed the interests of members from LURIS, LLInc, UFB, and USC. This commitment underscores our dedication to ensuring that the voices of staff members are heard and their concerns are addressed effectively.

Where to find us:

www:

https://www.organisatiegids.universiteitleiden.nl/en/staff-and-student-participation/university-council/staff-parties/leidse-academische-gemeenschap

X:

https://twitter.com/LAG_Leiden

Linkedin:

https://www.linkedin.com/company/leidse-academische-gemeenschap-lag-lac/