

Leiden University Council 2021-2022

This hand-out gives you the most important information about the University Council: who we are, what we do and what our shared ambitions are for the future of Leiden University.

How does staff and student participation work?

Participation is the right to have a say in decisions. This means that both students and staff have the power to influence decision-making on policies at Leiden University. The central body for staff and student participation is the University Council; within the faculties this is the Faculty Council and within the programmes it is the Programme Committee. The central service departments have staff committees. Altogether, students and staff are able to advocate their interests at various levels within the university. This is important for the quality of the decision-making and the support for the decisions made!

What does the University Council do?

The role of the University Council (UR) is to critically monitor the Executive Board of the university, provide advice and, by exercising the right to consent, to play a part in decision-making on important issues. These are mainly issues that directly affect students and staff, such as the quality of teaching, staff policies, new buildings or sustainability. Council members can also write proposals or put issues on the agenda themselves. Their powers are described in the WHW (the Higher Education and Research Act) and the Leiden University Regulation on the University Council.

How does the University Council work?

The UR convenes almost every week for meetings, working visits or training courses. The UR is divided into different committees: Teaching & Research, Personnel, Student Affairs & Internationalisation, and Finances & Premises. These committees prepare the content of the agenda items. The Council as a whole then adopts a position and, following consultation with the Executive Board, issues advice or grants consent. Would you like to know more about how this works? On the [website](#) of the UR you will find the agenda and all the reports, recommendations and decisions. The meetings are in principle open to the public.

Who are the Council members?

The UR has sixteen members, who are elected in annual university elections. Eight members are from the staff and eight from the student body. The UR also has a registrar and a chairperson. If you wish to get in touch with us, you are welcome to [mail](#) us or come and talk to us!

What does the Council stand for?

The UR has identified a number of priorities for the coming academic year (see reverse). The aim of Council members is to bring important wishes and concerns to the attention of the Executive Board. Of course, other important subjects will be addressed as well as these themes, such as the effects of COVID-19 and the lessons learned, and the options available for students to broaden their experience outside their studies.



E-mail: UR@leidenuniv.nl

Website: www.universiteitleiden.nl/ur

Social media: Leiden University Council on [Twitter](#), [Facebook](#) and [Instagram](#)

What is the University Council 21-22 working on?

*The University Council is striving for
an **open, sustainable, and socially engaged** community
in which everyone is treated **equally**
and can develop her or his talents in **freedom and health**
through **high-quality education and research and ancillary activities.***

❖ **Towards a healthy way of working and studying**

The University Council aims to reduce work-related stress and enhance the psychosocial well-being of students and staff. The UR wants a realistic allocation of hours for the various tasks that need to be completed, based on workers' own experiences. This applies to research and education as well as support, employee participation and scope for professionalisation. This is the only way to assess people's performance honestly. We need a better balance in the recognition and appreciation of research, education and other work done on behalf of the organisation.

❖ **Towards the education of the future**

The University Council believes that academic education should be based on on-campus teaching in smaller groups. As that ideal drifts further and further away, however, we need to increase pressure on the government for better funding. Students need all-round development, and their education should include a focus on social issues. The University Council therefore supports the ambition of making learning pathways more flexible and wants to see themes such as sustainability integrated into our education. The harmonisation of educational logistics only serves as a means to this end, and control over content must remain with teaching staff and the study programme. We must make the most of the opportunities for innovation in education, based on transparency and proper facilitation for teaching staff.

❖ **Towards more attention for academics starting their careers**

The University Council believes that the university still has too many temporary contracts for teaching staff members, even in cases where demand is structurally high. In such cases, the UR would like to see permanent contracts, and the interdependence of education and research should be ensured by providing time for research. The UR is also working hard to ensure that the Graduate Schools work in a harmonised way and that they are clear about the rights and responsibilities of (external) PhD students. PhD students and postdocs must be given the opportunity not only to work on their research but also to develop their teaching skills, and they should be given career development support.

❖ **Towards an inclusive community**

The University Council wants a safe, inspiring and equal environment for all students and colleagues. This calls for stronger leadership skills across the various levels of our organisation. An independent ombudsperson for staff is essential. It is important that there is a broad approach to diversity and inclusion; no dominant focus on a single characteristic. The UR wants more focus on integration and development opportunities for the academic community, for example by promoting contacts between Dutch students and international students, providing more support for improving language skills and full bilingualism in the provision of information. Employee participation must be made as easy as possible.

❖ **Towards the campus of the future**

The university's three campuses should be pleasant places to work, study and meet, and study facilities must keep pace with increasing student numbers. More focus is required on this point, especially in The Hague.



The University Council supports the ambition of achieving climate-neutrality by 2030; however, many steps still need to be taken. When refurbishing buildings, the well-being of staff and students, and the nature of the work done in these buildings, must be paramount. Decisions on this should be made in consultation with those affected, as low down in the organisation as possible. Even though the pandemic has shown that working from home has its advantages, staff must have the option of having their own workplace.