



Programme

ProVU focuses on academic staff and in particular on PhD candidates, post-docs and young teachers. Although this group is quite large - the academic staff in the Netherlands accounts for more than half of academics under 35 and one third of the academic staff of the VU are PhD-candidates - this group is also the most vulnerable. The majority of these young employees, after all, has a temporary contract. Moreover, being an independent party, ProVU attempts to open up the debate in the participatory bodies of the university.

Because of its nature as an advocacy organization for young researchers with temporary contracts, ProVU has a keen eye for the many and rapid changes in today's academic world. ProVU knows better than anyone the importance of the quality of flexible working conditions, increase in temporary contracts, increasing workload, swelling leave reservoirs, and hiring freezes. ProVU makes the case for the accessibility of participation for everyone working at the VU: this includes temporary and seconded employees and non-Dutch speaking staff.

In the next term, ProVU wants to focus on these issues:

Research Environment

We believe it is high time to move away from the exaggerated focus on efficiency and managerial styles of thinking in research and education. Quality, instead of quantity, should be the guiding principle behind research. As a result of budget cuts, PhD candidates and young researchers are increasingly asked to teach, often at the expense of their own research time. Nevertheless, research output usually remains the main criterion of their assessments. Teaching should never come at the expense of research time. ProVU therefore calls for a directive on how much PhD-candidates can be asked to teach. We also believe PhD candidates must be compensated for their teaching, if the teaching exceeds the maximum. The best way to do this would be to offer the PhD candidate a part-time job as university lecturer (for example, 0.2 FTE), while extending their PhD contract proportionally. Here everyone wins: the department has no teacher shortage and the PhD candidate gains teaching experience, which is a prerequisite for a career within the university and is also useful for a career outside the academy.

Secure Future & Sustainability

In recent years the number of temporary contracts has considerably increased, especially for young teachers and researchers. ProVU is committed to more permanent employment for current temporary employees. Furthermore, we want PhD candidates to retain their employee status, like the Executive Board promised us during the past OR term. In addition, there should be more attention during the PhD program for career prospects and career orientation (also outside the academic world). Finally the funding for PhD candidates must be critically examined. Whereas a university is financially rewarded for accepting PhD candidates, they are not for post-docs. This leads to universities hiring more PhD candidates than there are jobs available in academia. This situation is detrimental in the long term.

Diversity

The university is doing well when it comes to diversity. The term "emancipation university" is certainly appropriate in comparison to other Dutch universities. The VU attracts more students and PhD candidates with a migration background. ProVU not only wants to protect this diversity, but also wishes to expand it so that there are more positions for women and people with a migration background in top positions. We also strive for an open atmosphere for people regardless of sex, color, creed or sexual orientation.

Internationalization

In their last term in the Works Council, ProVu made sure the debate on internationalization was constantly on the agenda. Quite a few international employees complain about the limited guidance in the university bureaucratic jungle. While there is an International Service Desk for students, it only limitedly available for international employees of the VU. ProVU sees it as its responsibility to also take care of this group of employees. The university communication must also be in English and not solely in Dutch. For example, the VU-zine, which is currently only available in Dutch, should also be published in English. Furthermore, ProVU wants to promote the exchange of academics, for example using the Aurora network and VU fellowships.

Social Involvement and Academic Excellence

In recent years the VU has paid much attention to community involvement. ProVU recognizes the importance of contributing to the broader community. In order to continue (and improve) this path, more collaboration with local governments and other social partners should take hold. When the question of valorization is raised administrators and policy makers often only think of the economic value of research, while researchers think broader: they experience activities such as giving lectures and exchanging information with other researchers and knowledge users as an inherent component of valorization.

The importance of academic excellence (producing top-scientists) must also not be forgotten. Social involvement and academic excellence can coexist perfectly. For example, research shows that valorization and academic excellence go well together: when researchers in the same field collaborate, they are able to learn from each other which leads to research of higher quality.