

# VISION DOCUMENT



LIJST VUUR

[WWW.LIJSTVUUR.NL](http://WWW.LIJSTVUUR.NL)

# INTRODUCTION

The world is constantly changing. Major social issues such as climate change and geopolitical developments affect all aspects of society, including education.

Educational institutions are playing a growing role in guiding and teaching about such issues, including Utrecht University. Societal issues that previously seemed beyond the borders of Utrecht University are coming closer and closer and are intertwining with our education.

Lijst VUUR is a **progressive** and **constructive force** within the university. We do not only identify problems, but also actively push for structural and impactful changes.

This requires a socially critical attitude on the part of the participation council. To stay on course and guard the core values of our party, it is essential to formulate our positions sharply and define our vision clearly. **Only in this way can we give direction to the future.**

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# SUMMARY: OUR POSITIONS

## QUALITY OF EDUCATION

- Cutting-edge, diverse and innovative education
- Personal attention and tailoring for students
- High educational quality and support for lecturers

## SOCIAL AND CLIMATE RESPONSIBILITY

- Social responsibility
- Climate neutral university
- The university should never let internal or external financial incentives guide it
- Creating awareness

## INCLUSIVITY & EQUITY

- Accessibility
- Facilities for students
- Internationalisation

## STUDENT WELLBEING & SOCIAL SAFETY

- Mental health
- Social safety
- Preventive care in informal ways
- Liveability on campus

## DEMOCRATISATION

- Strengthen student representation
- Facilitating political expression
- Right to demonstrate
- Democracy within VUUR



# QUALITY OF EDUCATION

VUUR considers good education very important. Not only should there always be investment in the **quality of education**, but also in its accessibility, timeliness and progressiveness.

Diversity and innovation are central to VUUR's vision for the education of the future. There must always be sufficient support for the individual student and lecturer. By investing in good education, we are building a future in which every student has the opportunity to develop to their full potential.

## CUTTING-EDGE, DIVERSE AND INNOVATIVE EDUCATION

VUUR advocates for an educational approach that moves with society. Social problems and current issues must be given a structural place in education. **Students should not only acquire knowledge, but should also develop solutions themselves and learn to think critically.** Therefore, it is important that the content of education is constantly renewed and attuned to a rapidly changing world.

This includes a **diverse curriculum with room for different perspectives and worldviews.** Everyone should be able to identify with our education and be enabled to study different perspectives on science. lecturers should be encouraged to engage in educational innovation, both in terms of content and didactics.

## PERSONAL ATTENTION AND TAILORING FOR STUDENTS

Every student learns differently and has different needs. That is why VUUR is committed to providing **more personal attention and customisation** within our education. Small-scale seminar groups, interactive lectures and room for individual guidance are essential. This does not only increase the quality of education, but also the wellbeing of students.



## HIGH EDUCATIONAL QUALITY AND SUPPORT FOR LECTURERS

Quality of education must be paramount at all times. This means that the university must invest in enough lecturers, good facilities and less workload.

Lecturers play a crucial role in education and deserve good support so that they can focus on what really matters: **guiding and inspiring students, with education that is as current as possible through their research.** This requires more investment in both students and lecturers, so that we can achieve a learning environment that does everyone justice.



# SOCIAL AND CLIMATE RESPONSIBILITY

VUUR believes that the university has a crucial social exemplary role in promoting social justice and addressing social issues and challenges. VUUR believes that Utrecht University should make maximum efforts in this regard and use its prestige and position to achieve progress.

The university should stick to its **idealistic attitude** and **strive for a better world**. This means taking pride in its university values and actively promoting them. The climate crisis is one of the most urgent issues of our time: it threatens the survival of human and nature. Therefore, action must be taken now.

## SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY

"*Sol Iustitiae, Illustra Nos*": the university community should be the 'light of justice' and **speak out against injustice** both inside and outside the university. Collaborations should be tested against ethical standards. The university does not cooperate with partners who do not abide by international agreements and treaties, partners who commit human rights violations, or partners who restrict academic freedom.<sup>1</sup>

## CLIMATE NEUTRAL UNIVERSITY

Lijst VUUR believes the university should be a **pioneer in climate neutrality**. The goals of the Paris Climate Agreement must be met. The university should set an example in this regard. The university is transparent about its progress and integrates sustainability issues into all sides of its policies, for example in real estate renovations.

## UNIVERSITY SHOULD NEVER LET INTERNAL OR EXTERNAL FINANCIAL INCENTIVES GUIDE IT

The university is a **public institution at the service of society** and is therefore **non-profit**.

The primary goal of the university is to promote knowledge, education and research for the common good. Here, knowledge as a public good, cooperation with social partners and accessible education are the central core values.

1: VUUR understands '**academic freedom**' to mean that scholars can conduct independent research, share their findings and teach without external influence or barriers, but that this freedom is not unlimited. Scholars must take into account principles such as safety, honesty, diligence and the impact of their work on society. Universities and the government have a duty to protect this freedom without interfering in the content of research.



## CREATING AWARENESS

Utrecht University cannot solve social problems such as climate change, disinformation and social inequality on its own. **The entire university community must be involved in the changes needed to achieve a sustainable and just future.**

Therefore, the university must actively contribute to raising awareness and changing behaviour within the organisation and beyond. This means structurally integrating themes such as sustainability, disinformation, ethics and social responsibility into education and research.

Students and staff should not only gain knowledge, but also learn to think critically about **their role in society** and the **impact** of their choices.

By creating awareness of pressing issues and providing students with tools to analyze and address them, the university prepares them for an ever-changing world.



# INCLUSIVITY & EQUITY

VUUR strives for a university where **everyone has equal opportunities, feels at home and can grow.** Diversity enriches education: the university must ensure a diverse and inclusive university community.

## ACCESSIBILITY

Accessibility to education is a fundamental right for all students, regardless of their identity, background or physical circumstances. All students should have the same opportunities to flourish, even when this means they need more support. Therefore, student support should focus not only on academic achievement, but also on students' **wellbeing** and **personal development**.

In addition, the university and its community should also be physically accessible to all. Thus, all students can fully participate in the university community and fulfill their potential.

## FACILITIES FOR STUDENTS

An inclusive university requires appropriate facilities that contribute to a safe and welcoming environment for all students. This should include **extra attention** to students for whom participating in the university community is less obvious, such as students with a disability, students with a migration background or first-generation students.

## INTERNATIONALISATION

International students are an essential part of the university community. They bring new perspectives and enrich the learning environment, which advances the university.

The **international classroom, cultural appreciation** and **gaining intercultural knowledge and understanding** are a great added value of education.

Cohesion between Dutch and international students should be encouraged and facilitated as much as possible by the entire university community.



# STUDENT WELLBEING & SOCIAL SAFETY

Utrecht University should take an active role in **improving and enhancing both the physical and mental wellbeing of its students**. Not only academic growth, but also personal growth is part of studying at Utrecht University.

## MENTAL HEALTH

Mental health is a priority for VUUR. The university has a duty to **provide care** for its students. Therefore, the university should support and guide students with mental issues.

This requires providing them with the right tools and facilities to alleviate mental issues, such as trainings and student psychologists.

Efforts should also be made to provide care in a preventive manner, for example by investing in personal development to prevent mental suffering. This includes reduction of performance pressure and accessible, effective and adequate support for students. In other words: **learning instead of performing**.

## SOCIAL SAFETY

The University should be a place where everyone is free to be themselves and thus express themselves within a safe environment, both within the walls of the university and outside. Therefore, VUUR stands for an **inclusive and (socially) safe atmosphere** within the university and all its affiliated (student) organisations.

It is important that clear codes of conduct and regulations are implemented in all parts of the university. Their enforcement and monitoring must be adequately arranged to prevent transgressive behaviour.

This also means working toward a **healthy culture within all student organisations**. By this we mean that sexually transgressive behaviour is not tolerated, and alcohol and drugs is handled responsibly. Problematic signals are taken seriously and addressed in a timely manner.



## PREVENTIVE CARE IN INFORMAL WAYS

**Community** plays a significant role in preventing mental health problems. Those who are part of a community are more resilient. The university ensures that all student organisations (next to social and study associations and foundations, this also includes sports and cultural associations) can flourish within its institution.

This includes proper support and appropriate compensation. Facilities should be available and of good quality, which also applies to students who are not members of a student organisation.

## LIVEABILITY ON CAMPUS

Utrecht Science Park should be a **liveable and dynamic environment** for all residents, staff and students. The university is taking a proactive role to increase the livability on campus and provide adequate facilities.

The **housing shortage** among students causes the campus to fulfill a different function than before. For many students, Utrecht University is like their second home as they have to come from further and further afield and therefore spend a lot of time on campus between lectures and other activities.

Solving the housing shortage is a task that is beyond the reach of the university, however, the university should keep this problem in mind when designing the campus and facilities for students.

Also, in addition to it being conducive to liveability, structural attention should be paid to **green spaces** on campus from the sustainability and biodiversity standpoint.



# DEMOCRATISATION

VUUR sees the university for what it can be: a place where democracy is the foundation, a figurehead for other corporations, institutions and even states to see how governance can be done together with the people it concerns. At VUUR, we stand for our democratic rights and believe that institutions should be tested at all times.

## STRENGTHEN STUDENT REPRESENTATION

At VUUR, we believe in the power of **representing the student perspective** in all levels of university governance, both formally and informally. Students should be involved in policy making and choices that affect them: **not policy about students, but with students.**

VUUR stands for student representation that extends beyond the current representation structure, where the perspective of every student and staff member is also included in the university's decision-making. We hold Utrecht University to its legal duty to work towards the proper functioning and strengthening of the power of representation.

This includes **facilitating student participation for all students**, including international students

## FACILITATING POLITICAL EXPRESSION

The university is a breeding ground for different ideas and opinions. Students and staff have the space to express themselves politically, inside and outside the university. As VUUR, we encourage a **constructive and safe way of having politically charged discussions**. Both in education and research, this should not be avoided. Adequate physical space should also be provided for this.

## RIGHT TO DEMONSTRATE

VUUR sees our right to demonstrate as an essential part of our democracy. VUUR believes there should be room to express dissatisfaction through peaceful protest and thus make your voice heard, even in disruptive form. Students should be given the freedom to **protest as they see fit**, as allowed by the right to demonstrate.



Demonstrations are essential to ensure that the administration hears and considers your point of view and demands. Students must be able to mobilise and organise for the purpose of peacefully standing up for something.

VUUR therefore protects the right to demonstrate and wants to help ensure that activists are heard. Therefore, VUUR wants to work to **bridge** and maintain contact between activist groups and the student representation.

## **DEMOCRACY WITHIN VUUR**

VUUR draws strength from both the connection between councils and the network of members. The party should always maintain an active connection with the various fractions and the association as a whole. **Within VUUR we share the same ideals, but there will be room for diverse perspectives on how we achieve these ideals.** Again, the party will only grow stronger from this, and all those perspectives should be listened to. This is why VUUR always strives to adopt a democratic attitude within its own party when major decisions have to be made.



## ABOUT LIJST VUUR

**Lijst VUUR (United Utrecht University Councils)** was founded in 2006 out of dissatisfaction with the quality of the candidate list for the University Council. A number of University Council members, together with LinQ and USF Studentenbelangen (which have now merged to form the student union VIDIUS), took the initiative to draw up a list that aimed to take **quality as its starting point** when determining the order of the list. From the start, VUUR has been committed to the issues of educational quality, diversity & inclusion and sustainability.



 @vuurlijst

 Lijst VUUR

bestuur@verenigingvuur.nl

Heidelberglaan 8  
3584 CS Utrecht