

# A university of value(s)

Towards future-proof organisation and  
governance of the University of Amsterdam

## SUMMARY



## SUMMARY FINAL REPORT

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# Background

2015 was a busy and eventful year for students, staff, and executives at the University of Amsterdam. The occupations of the *Bungehuis* and the *Maagdenhuis* created quite a stir among both advocates and opponents. After a turbulent period the action groups, the representative advisory bodies, and the labour unions have made agreements with the Executive Board regarding a process of change. One part of this process was the establishment of committees on finances, participation, and diversity. The following report is the product of one of these committees: the Committee on Democratisation and Decentralisation (hereafter: Committee D&D). It was agreed that the findings of the Committee D&D should be presented to the university community, and that the Executive Board would be pledged to honour a clear result from this consultation.

It took months before the Committee D&D was completely installed (December 2015) and had the necessary budget at its disposal (February 2016). Preparatory arrangements were made, and a working plan was drafted and discussed at a public meeting and with the Contact Committee.<sup>1</sup> In accordance with the provisions of the mandate, this working plan emphasises discussion and consultation in the various faculties and within the community as a whole. In the working plan, three rounds of consultation and feedback were designed to provide regular feedback to the Contact Committee, the faculties, and at university meetings. By its mandate and structure, the Committee is first of all a deliberative body that combines study and discussion in its own ranks with conversations with staff and students from faculties and services, including the Works Councils, Student Councils, deans, and other directors.

Unfortunately, it proved impossible to implement the working plan to the letter. That the Committee became operational months later than foreseen plays a role in this, but the changing situation at the University of Amsterdam was also an important factor. Meanwhile, intense discussions concerning desired changes was already taking place in a number of faculties. The working plan stipulated that the Committee should avoid duplicating discussions and seek not to disturb ongoing processes. In other places it seemed that interest in discussions and debates about the problems and changes was limited, and that those who were interested had often already found other ways to take part in the discussions. Furthermore, most people were kept busy getting on with their work, which was to be expected in an institution where work-related stress is one of the most common complaints. This led to the conclusion that independently organised, open, and large-scale debates would provide little or no added value compared with what was already known or was being organised by the units themselves. Therefore, in March it was decided to make adjustments.

The committee D&D has organised many talks at various locations and has read reports and records concerning the situation at the University. As the reading and exchange of views progressed, the image of the problems at the University of Amsterdam became more polymorphous than unequivocal. Both between and within faculties and groupings (staff, students) there are points of agreement and of great disagreement. The same holds true for the solutions that were brought to the table. Moreover, the University of Amsterdam is not an independent entity, but is subject to Dutch law and regulation. For many policy choices, the University is dependent on decisions made in The Hague and in countless other places. The University is part of a complicated system of funding streams about which decisions are made outside the University. In 2015, in parallel with the work of the Committee D&D, the Dutch Parliament debated the question of strengthening the administrative capacity of the universities. The promise that this legislative proposal would increase the possibilities for more autonomy and more extensive democratisation in universities was realised only scantily.

<sup>1</sup> The following groups are represented in the contact committee/contact group (both terms are used interchangeably): ASVA, Central Workers Council (COR), Central Student Council (CSR), the New University (DNU), Humanities Rally, Rethink UvA and the University of Colour.

**2** Tom van der Meer, Thijs Bol, Christian Bröer, Linda Duits: Rapport Inventarisatie Knelpunten Medewerkers & Studenten UvA, Amsterdam, 24 April 2015. IVA Onderwijs, UvA Medewerkersmonitor 2015, Tilburg, 2015. In addition to a general section, also a large number of section reports with regards to specific faculties and services have been viewed.

The Committee D&D found two internal research reports especially useful for its work, namely an assessment made in the spring of 2015 of bottlenecks experienced by all staff members and students of the University of Amsterdam, and the Satisfaction Monitor 2015, in which 45 per cent of the university staff took part.<sup>2</sup>

The participants in the Bottleneck Research were presented with a list of 26 bottlenecks that were derived from discussions held during the occupations and compiled by the initiators after broad consultation. Of all the participants in the research, 95 per cent identified one or more bottlenecks as important.

Given the multitude of views within the university community, it became clear that the Committee D&D had to look for an approach that would do justice to this plurality. The Committee sees its work and its final report as part of a comprehensive process of change that was under way before the actual committee began its work.

Following an initial assessment of the problems within the University of Amsterdam, quite soon the Committee D&D confronted an essential dichotomy between problems that are directly related to the way that management works at the University of Amsterdam (*governance issues*) and problems in a number of policy areas (*policy issues*). Both sets of problems are closely interrelated.

The Committee D&D was established to give advice on how democratisation and decentralisation can help to solve problems at the University of Amsterdam, and to propose a number of alternative models of governance. Governance and policy issues are interrelated, although it is not always clear how. They are also closely interrelated with the profound changes that the University has undergone in the course of the last 50 years. The Executive Board and the deans have gained more autonomy to ‘make policy’. However, the participatory bodies have gained only limited advisory powers, and their divided representation tends to emphasise the protection of interests rather than the development of the University as a whole. Moreover, a large part of the work takes place on a lower level where people appointed by the dean enjoy broad discretionary power, while the formal participatory advice of staff and students is absent.

## Policy Issues

To gain a clearer picture of how a more democratised and decentralised university could deal more effectively with problems in the areas of education, research, housing, finances, staff and recruitment policy, and how at the same time they could avoid new forms of centralised rule-making and bureaucracy, the Committee D&D has paid special attention to the following policy issues:

### Staff

The Bottleneck Research and the Satisfaction Monitor clearly show that the University as an employer is rated poorly. The main issues are the large number of staff members hired with temporary contracts and without the prospect of permanent employment, lacking the possibility to gain further qualifications, with limited career prospects, a heavy workload, especially in teaching, vague procedures for promotion, and little transparency in the processes of decision-making.

Feelings of uncertainty and dissatisfaction are amplified by the complexity of the governance structure, where it is often not clear who is making decisions and on what basis. Moreover, with regard to internal promotions, it often seems that more weight

is given to the winning of research grants than to the duties that normally take up most of one's time, namely teaching.

The university community wants a set of clear and widely endorsed general principles regarding good employment practices. These, together with principles for education and research, need to form the basis for a decentralised implementation of policy.

## Education

Students consider the quality of the education policy as by far the most important bottleneck. Education is organised strictly, especially in the first few years of study, and there is not much room for electives or the possibility of a different study pace. Within the student population, a distinction can be made between students who flourish under such a strict regime with a prescribed structure and students who look for a more open education with greater possibilities to study more broadly or delve into a single issue for a longer period of time. In combination with student grants that are often inadequate and the accumulation of substantial debt for 'long-term students', the strictly organised form of education is perceived by some staff members and students as a sign of the decline of academic culture. They fear that the idea of an enriching, molding, and rewarding education is being sacrificed in the name of efficiency measures that, to put it mildly, are directed only towards a one-sided operationalization of 'study success' measured in ECTS credits and diplomas awarded.

In addition to substantive and didactic quality, the University must make the variety in the attitudes of students regarding their ambitions and the form and duration of their studies a basic principle of its policy. This will only be possible if the relation between centralised and faculty policy on the one hand, and policy at the level of studies on the other, is revised in favour of much more autonomy on the 'work floor' for the sake of finding good solutions.

## Research

The University of Amsterdam is in many ways a success in terms of scholarly knowledge. Unfortunately, this success also has a downside. A one-sided emphasis on quantitative output measurements leads to frustration among some staff members. Moreover, the increased importance of external funding for research leads to problems both in the relations between teaching and research, and in relations among the content, staffing, and conducting of research. The old ideal that teaching and research are the

**Afbeelding 1**  
**The 26 bottlenecks from the bottleneck study**

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|--|---|---|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Measuring and evaluating education and research performance</li> <li>• Current UvA allocation model (allocation key internal finances)</li> <li>• Right of approval with regards to determination UvA allocation model</li> <li>• Decision making and participation in decision making of students and staff</li> <li>• Bureaucratisation and overhead</li> <li>• Cooperation with the VU</li> <li>• Study success rates</li> <li>• Temporary staff and contracts</li> <li>• Career opportunities of young staff members</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Financing and preservation of studies with a limited amount of students</li> <li>• Semester format: 884-system</li> <li>• Scale of education</li> <li>• Housing policy of studies and departments</li> <li>• Maagdenhuis: administrative centre or debate centre</li> <li>• Ratio education/research</li> <li>• Distance between staff/students and management</li> <li>• Cooperation with the HvA</li> <li>• Transparency of policy</li> <li>• A sense of fear to address issues</li> <li>• Quality of education</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Number of contact hours student</li> <li>• (De-) centralisation of the Board</li> <li>• Real estate development of the University</li> <li>• The selection process of board members on faculty and central levels</li> <li>• Workload</li> <li>• Other, namely...</li> </ul> |
|--|---|---|

warp and woof of the same fabric appears undermined by separate channels of financing and the competition for external funds. In staff policy decisions, fund-raising and publications seem to count more for career opportunities than teaching and planning curricula.

On closer inspection, education and research in contemporary universities appear, in terms of their systematics, to be two very different domains. How classes are given, organised, presented, tested, and assessed has little or nothing to do with the dynamics of the research profession that extends across university borders. What education means for the remuneration and appreciation of the teacher stands almost entirely separate from the factors that determine the reputations of researchers and their ability to find or free up the required time and funding for research and the advancement of their careers. For an acceptable reconciliation of the variety of professional ambitions and means, a suitable and transparent management and allocation model is needed, one that leads above all to functionally integrated strategies and policies and gives the ‘work floor’ enough discretionary space to develop and implement these policies in the form of both quality education and outstanding research. Many are convinced that both the current governance model and the allocation model need to be adjusted. The allocation model is currently under revision by a university committee that most likely will follow the advice of the independent Committee on Finances and Housing (COFH). Reform in governance is addressed in this report.

### Strategic alliances

The last few years have witnessed considerable tensions regarding a few large-scale, regional collaborative projects on the part of the University of Amsterdam, namely the collaborations with the Free University (*Vrije Universiteit*) and with the Amsterdam University of Applied Sciences (*Hogeschool van Amsterdam*). The goals envisioned by these projects differed, as did the fundamental idea of the University itself. Cooperation with the Amsterdam University of Applied Sciences was initially meant to accommodate the increasing diversity of the student population. When this did not work out, the idea emerged that more administrative cooperation and integration would help. Subsequently this idea became more of a goal in itself than a means to an end. In the meantime, it seems that the decision has been made de facto to end the administrative merger. The collaboration with the Free University was aimed more at cooperation in education and research. In this initiative, the focus was primarily on the natural sciences. The idea of actually merging the natural science faculties of both universities was dropped after resistance emerged, in favour of a common dean and cooperation on a smaller scale on the level of research institutes and departments. Scepticism arose within the university community regarding the added value of these two collaborative projects, both of which were deemed too far-reaching. Where success was achieved, it was primarily because of the realisation on the part of those directly involved of the desirability of cooperation. The most important lesson for the central level of administration is that stronger argumentation is needed for such external collaborative arrangements and their trajectories, and large-scale merger plans should be avoided. Successful collaborative projects in teaching and research employ a bottom-up approach and should not be scaled up to mega-projects prematurely. This is the most important lesson of recent years, not only for the University of Amsterdam. In addition one has to put in place an appropriate monitoring process that is at least partly independent, with a broad accountability and a willingness to change course when necessary.

Largely outside the view of the University of Amsterdam community, an important administrative merger is taking place between the AMC and the VUmc. Unless one wishes to accept the increasing independence of the Faculty of Medicine as a given,

this merger deserves more attention. Furthermore, policies involving the development of further regional and international cooperation are not just the business of the Executive Board and a few deans and trustees, but involve the University of Amsterdam as a whole and the entire sub-community that is directly involved.

The policy issues discussed above have led to the conclusion that institutional policies can only be successful when long-lasting agreements are made concerning both strategic interests and substantive goals. For this reason, it is essential to develop a fundamental and sufficiently shared idea of what the University of Amsterdam actually wants to be and wants to become.

## Governance issues

Many of the governance issues identified by the Committee D&D are closely related to the substantial changes in university governance that took place in the 1990s, as set forth in the MUB law of 1997 (*Wet Modernisering Universitaire Bestuursorganisatie*). This law strengthened a shift in the philosophy of governance that involved restricting the participation of staff members and students and substantially increasing the numbers of professional administrators.

In the days of the predecessor of the MUB, the WUB (*Wet Universitaire Bestuurs-hervorming*), the university and its faculties were governed by university and faculty councils, by analogy with public administration. The Executive Board and the deans — chosen by the councils — prepared and implemented university policy. The MUB gave these councils the opportunity to revise the policy through a system of legally defined rights to consultation and consent.

The new professional administrators argued, more than in the past, on the basis of a centralised and managerial paradigm: sometimes by specifying detailed rules, but also by formulating all sorts of quantitative indicators as a starting-point for measuring the success of teaching and research, as well as budgetary and personnel policies. With these kinds of indicators, and the specific ‘performance targets’ derived from them, the productivity and efficiency of lower units would be boosted and a target-oriented policy determined. A so-called flexible layer, consisting of staff with temporary contracts, would absorb fluctuations in the numbers of students and the external finances available for research. In all this, the idea of a university community was left behind.

Almost everyone the Committee D&D has spoken with mentioned shortcomings in governance, but these references were varied and diverse. Usually they reflected the speaker’s personal experiences with the system and its executives. Many of the problems can be grouped under the following headings.

### Limited power of the representative advisory council

The formal establishment of participation in law has both pros and cons. The system of representative advisory councils is based on a certain ‘right’, such as the right to consultation or consent. In current law, the right of initiative is to a large extent non-existent and is made more difficult by the lack of information and facilities. On important issues — such as the budget — the right to consent is suspended. The right to consent on, for example, the main outlines of the budget, leads to a discussion of the limits of this right. Because the representative advisory council is bound by strict rules, much time is wasted on discussions about procedures and authorisations. Procedural pressures and the bureaucratisation of decision-making are among the major disadvantages of this system. A flexible approach towards a growing labyrinth of rules is needed, but this

flexibility depends on the willingness of the leadership to share governance and on the willingness of the representative advisory council to be accommodating. This type of flexibility is generally lacking. Discussions about reforms easily become discussions about procedures and the fine-grained regulation of rights and obligations, producing rules that are often conveniently ignored when others are not paying proper attention.

Another problem is that ordinary staff members and students who are not members of the representative advisory council or the Board of Studies have little or no influence on the governance of the programme, the faculty, or the institute. A large number of staff members and students want more influence over matters they feel strongly about, or with which they have to deal directly. The existing governance and participatory structure offers them only a very limited platform. The result is disinterest and unwillingness to take seats in councils, and a low voter turnout for elections. It also allows certain members of the representative advisory council to extend their terms again and again.

### **Top-down governance and the governance model**

Those familiar with the University of Amsterdam over a longer period of time speak of a progressive but significant shift of authority from the level of the (former) institutes, departments, and faculties to that of the Executive Board and the deans of the mega-faculties that emerged because of the increase of scale. The separation of teaching from research and from personnel policy and management has increased the concentration of authority at the faculty and university level; after all, everything comes together on the level of faculty management. That authority is also delegated within the faculty does not change this fact. The implementation of a matrix organisation with separate and formally independent organisational units for research, Bachelor's education, Master's education and personnel policy under a monocratic leadership leads to the concentration of power in a small, partly informal group and a lack of clarity for the rest of the staff members and students involved. The result is an exceedingly complex and diffuse organisation with too much consultation both inside and outside the representative advisory council, on which most teachers and students have little influence.

### **Bureaucratisation and lack of autonomy**

The idea that the concentration of power at the top has reinforced uniform regulation is widely shared. It finds expression in protocols, accountability diagrams, model regulations for education and exams, appeal procedures, etc. Many on the teaching staff perceive the relevance of these rules for the quality education as doubtful. Some of them consider 'disastrous' an even more appropriate term; while others, often members of management, do not agree, and point to advantages and positive effects. Many teachers feel 'professionally' mistreated by all these rules and controls. Something similar applies to students; they too are confronted with strict study programmes, controls, border guards, and a wilderness of regulations. The uniform academic year — the 8-8-4 model — has been cited dozens of times in talks with the Committee as an example of overregulation and a rigid measure to speed up the pace of study. Others sometimes note that many of the issues mentioned in the complaints have nothing to do with the 8-8-4 Model, but this does little to mitigate the feelings of frustration and incomprehension.

The representative advisory council evokes, in short, two images: on the one hand, an open discussion of the arrangement of teaching and research and the organisation of democracy in the workplace; on the other, a political governance strongly dominated by procedural battles about money and everything that has to do with 'man-

agement'. The first image is generally seen as more appealing, and there is a desire to strengthen it, even — if necessary — by diminishing the formal role of the representative advisory councils.

## Two core problems

Obviously not everything can be arranged informally on the work floor. The biggest challenge of the University of Amsterdam is a re-balancing of, on the one hand, the need of staff members and students for more control of their own working conditions, and on the other, the establishment of a complementary governance model that creates clear, acceptable, and democratically legitimised frameworks.

With the above in mind, two core problems identified by the Committee D&D with regard to the governance of the University of Amsterdam can be formulated as follows:

- The insufficient involvement (in the sense of both being involved and feeling involved) of the members of the academic community in essential policy matters — and especially of those members who do not sit in one of the councils.
- The excessive meddling by board members — with or without the agreement of representative advisory bodies — and executives in matters which staff members and students are confident they can arrange by themselves and among themselves.

To research these two core problems, the Committee D&D has initiated two projects. The *Democratisation and Participation Project* was designed to evaluate the development of participation and control in Dutch universities since the 1960s, in order to develop a reliable image of the pros and cons of the various policy models. The *Decentralisation and Autonomy Project* was designed to explore how the importance of self-organising and self-management on the 'work floor' can be enhanced, and to measure the medium-range effects for the entire organisation. The findings of these projects have played an important role in the development of the final proposals by the Committee D&D. Short summaries are included as annexes 2 and 3 of this report.<sup>3</sup>

<sup>3</sup> The reports of both projects can be found at the website of the committee D&D. *Decentralisatie en Autonomie*: [commissiedd.nl/wp-content/uploads/2016/10/Verslag-Ontwerpproject-decentralisering-en-autonomie.pdf](http://commissiedd.nl/wp-content/uploads/2016/10/Verslag-Ontwerpproject-decentralisering-en-autonomie.pdf); *Democratie en Medezeggenschap*: [commissiedd.nl/wp-content/uploads/2016/06/Verslag-Democratie-en-Medezeggenschap.pdf](http://commissiedd.nl/wp-content/uploads/2016/06/Verslag-Democratie-en-Medezeggenschap.pdf)

## Towards a different approach

The problem-analysis of the Committee D&D raises a number of questions:

- How can the governance structure of the University of Amsterdam be changed in such a way that governance-related complaints are resolved and a better framework and more support is generated for dealing with the many problems attending a specific policy?
- How can the coupling of governance structure with substantive policy desired by the university community be clearly and coherently articulated, stipulated, and — after evaluation — adjusted?

- How can the desire for democratisation and decentralisation — which underlies the agreements between the representative advisory councils, the occupants of the *Maagdenhuis* in 2015, and the Executive Board, as well as the formation of this Committee — be realised?

Answering these three questions requires a thorough consideration and explication of the values for which the organisation of the University of Amsterdam stands. The more diffuse these values are, the greater the confusion will be when discussing the problems related to them. The university community has therefore to search for common values and formulate and explicate their implications. Only then will a well-organised administration be able to find satisfactory solutions for problems of policy.

What applies to policy problems also applies to governance issues: a solution is only possible after explicating of the underlying ‘organisational values’.

That does not mean that no action is possible in the short term. For a number of problems provisional solutions can easily be found that do not require structural changes. The university will only function more flexibly as a result. The Committee D&D therefore proposes a number of measures for improvement. These measures are discussed in part 3 and should be seen as closely connected with the preparation of more definitive measures.

## The proposed measures on governance reform

Based on its observations, discussions, and deliberations, the Committee D&D has decided to offer five proposals for the modification of governance at the University of Amsterdam. Namely:

1. The establishment of a broadly composed deliberative forum, hereinafter referred to as the ‘Senate New Style’, that by means of broadly representative working groups will provide recommendations and opinions on policy issues regarding matters that concern the University as a whole. The charter mentioned below is meant to guide the work of the senate.
2. The drafting of a charter in which — by means of a process of broad deliberation — the core values of the University are set forth, to which the university community shall consider itself bound.
3. A choice from among three models, or combinations thereof, each of which will be based on principled assumptions concerning the organisation and management of the university. A fourth model amounts to continuance of the current status quo. These models can be characterised as follows:
  - Dual governance (with executives and representative advisory councils appointed by separately elected councils for students and staff members) in combination with a matrix organisation at faculty level. The differences from the current model include greater responsibilities (such as the right of consent on a greater range of subjects) and improved facilities for the representative advisory councils.
  - Final responsibility rests with the Executive Boards at university, faculty, and departmental levels who appoint Executive Committees to prepare and implement policy.

- Relatively autonomous institutes with a large measure of self-government by students and staff members collectively. The coordinating structure and relations will be determined once this basic level has been arranged.
4. A proposal for the decision process, implementation, and evaluation of the above-mentioned recommendations in phases, in which the results of a written University referendum will provide the starting-point, and progress, deliberation, and decision-making will be organised openly. It is also proposed that the realisation of the intended goals and agreed deadlines of the reform process should be closely monitored, and that the process of reform should be directed transparently and openly.
  5. A number of improvements regarding the existing situation that can be realised in the short term, awaiting the implementation of more extensive structural changes.

## Elaboration of separate recommendations

### The 'Senate New Style'

Stipulating core values in a Charter is not enough. Values and their implications need constant discussion and reflection. The Committee D&D is convinced that the councils as presently constituted — or in the future — are not adequately equipped for this task. There is a real danger that the discussion of values will be driven too much by specific aims, special interests, and the actual situation as it exists at a given moment. Therefore, the Committee D&D recommends the formation of a 'Senate New Style': a representative deliberative forum to safeguard the normative goals of governance and policy of the University of Amsterdam.

In terms of composition, the Committee thinks that there should be seats in the Senate for tenured academic staff (including professors), temporary academic staff, students, PhD candidates, the deans of the faculties, members of the Executive Board, and staff members from the supporting services. Because their recommendations are meant to serve the entire university community, the participation of those with administrative responsibilities is both possible and useful. As an influential body focused on the long-term that can consider and compare a variety of scenarios for the future, the Senate New Style can provide for a good interaction between deliberation and formal decision-making. This Senate will convene several times each year in plenary sessions. These meetings will be prepared by working groups in accordance with an agenda approved by the Senate. Preparations will take place with ample opportunity for consultation with the entire university community and with experts. For the sake of efficiency, the Committee envisions a new Senate with a total of 60 members.

### Charter

In many companies and institutions a change is occurring nowadays in our understanding of how policy should be made.<sup>4</sup> The current shift is away from *objectives-driven management* and towards *value-driven management*. The image that formed within the Committee D&D was that the University of Amsterdam needs a number of shared values that can function as a permanent frame of reference for policy on all levels. Therefore, the Committee D&D has formulated eight values, each with a number of possible implications (see box below). The Committee proposes that the 'Charter of the University of Amsterdam' should function as the foundation for future policy.

<sup>4</sup> Based on personal communication with prof. Strikwerda. Emails and conversations until June 30th 2016.

## Designing alternative governance models

Five of the values listed the charter function as the foundation for democratic governance of the university. These are values concerning the university's community, decentralisation, autonomy and effective governance. The values combined do not imply one ideal model for a democratic university. This is because of tensions between values that require additional choices to be made. Emphasising certain values leads to different choices. The Committee distinguishes some of the fundamental themes within which choices will have to be made. Figure 2 lists these choices and themes.

The Committee D&D has developed three governance models, which are the result of consequent choices in the prioritisation of certain values within the various themes. These three models are set against the existing model, which is the blue university.

- The green model for a self-organising university emphasises the importance of local autonomy: teams of staff and students develop and implement education and research partly together, as well as goals, guidelines and relevant preconditions.
- The yellow participatory model emphasises academic self-governance as well, but chooses to put this into practice by installing joint executive boards for students and staff. Like the green model, the yellow model strengthens autonomy on the basic level.
- The orange model for the dual university cares for the value of 'voice', but also for the contrasting value of effective governance. The orange university wants to realise effective governance by appointing professional executives that have a certain degree of independence with respect to the representative councils.

By choosing different accents within the themes, one can construct a model that matches one's own preferences whilst also strengthening the democratic character of the university.

The models presented here are based on, but not identical to, the four models that the Committee proposed to the university's community for discussion in June 2016.<sup>5</sup> The most important difference concerns the foundation of the various models, which are now based on emphasising different values within the five core themes (figure 2).

## Advisory Referendum

The referendum encompasses a number of questions the answers to which will give a powerful impulse to the process of change. This process will be coupled with the necessary supplementary decisions that will be shaped by the results of the referendum. For this reason, the Committee D&D speaks of an advisory referendum. This referendum will address the following key propositions of the Committee:

1. The establishment of a Senate New Style as a forum where the university community can reflect and deliberate on the core values of the University. This deliberative forum is the body that must prevent these values and their implications from 'getting stuck'. Is one in favour of the establishment of such a deliberative forum?
2. The plan for a charter. The Committee D&D wants to determine if the university community agrees with the idea that an assortment of shared values can in time help to bring about more convergence with regard to ideas on policy. Also, the Committee wants to measure the extent to which there is agreement on the values proposed in this report.
3. The models of governance. A number of questions will be used to test reactions to the above-mentioned central themes. The choice of one of the described models in its entirety is also possible.

<sup>5</sup> The results of this consultation can be found here: [commissieedd.nl/wp-content/uploads/2016/10/Enquete-uitkomsten.pdf](http://commissieedd.nl/wp-content/uploads/2016/10/Enquete-uitkomsten.pdf)

# Charter for the Universiteit van Amsterdam

- 1.** Academic research and teaching at universities are public goods and they are inextricably linked with critical distance and academic freedom.
- 2.** Academic research at universities is aimed at developing and applying new scientific knowledge in a (trans)national context.
- 3.** The most distinctive feature of universities is that they aim to foster the capacity for critical thinking and academic reflection, both for students who want to pursue a career in academia and those whose future brings them elsewhere.
- 4.** The university is a community composed of academic staff, support staff and students. Mutual respect and plausible arguments are more important than formal positions within a hierarchy; it is a community that respects the differences between its members concerning ambitions, personal circumstances and cultural and intellectual backgrounds.
- 5.** The university keeps the levels of governance to a minimum. The authority and task description of each are clearly distinguishable in order to ensure that students and employees have authority over and ownership of their own work environment.
- 6.** Employees are facilitated as much as possible in organizing their activities both independently and in consultation with their colleagues.
- 7.** The democratic influence of employees and students is aimed at formulating collective and shared ambitions and collaborating with the board of executives in establishing policy that corresponds with these ambitions.
- 8.** Those who take on an administrative or executive function should respect the distinct characteristics of universities and the freedom of staff and students to use public resources for the betterment of teaching, research and society as a whole.

In addition to these propositions, the report contains a large number of propositions and suggestions that are not part of the referendum but should be considered. There are also a number of measures for improvement that in our view could be implemented quickly and without objection regardless of the choice of a governance model. These will be discussed at the end of this report.

## After the referendum

After the referendum, the result must be examined in terms of its significance for the further process of change. Arrangements must also be made for the implementation of those proposals for change that are clearly supported by the university community. The Executive Board has pledged to implement the recommendations of the Commit-

tee if: a) the referendum shows that the university community agrees with these propositions; b) the propositions are possible within the confines of the law. If the latter is not the case, the law must first be changed.

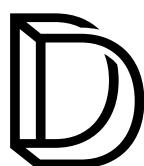
The Committee notes in advance that in all likelihood there will be no question of an ‘automatic’ acceptance of the results. In any event, one must first address the question of the extent to which the two conditions described above have been met. Answering this questions is not only a matter of the opinions of those who have raised their voices, but also to a large extent about the representativeness of the group of participants. A large turnout and a high degree of participation from the university community as a whole will be in everyone’s interest in order to maintain the tempo and progress of the debate on reforming the University. This is true regardless of the ultimate substantive judgement on the propositions. The Committee is hoping for a huge turnout.

The Committee D&D sees this report as part of a process of reorientation and reform at the University of Amsterdam that will take several years. It is a step, but not the final step. According to the Committee, the continuation should be based on broadly shared agreements on matters of design and monitoring, and on the roles of different groups and parties in this process. The Committee will address these aspects in the final chapter of this report, but with the referendum and a short reflection on the results, the task of this Committee will be accomplished. Hopefully, this report and the results of the referendum will provide a good starting-point for a constructive and shared continuation of this process.

	The green self-organising university	The yellow participatory university	The orange dual university	The blue existing university
<b>1. Strengthening democracy at university and faculty level</b>	Governing boards (undivided), in which staff and students have equal voice. Councils determine policy. Elected board members are accountable to these councils (for the green model, this situation awaits the evaluation of the relation between decentralised units and faculty within four years).	Representative advisory councils (divided) with far-reaching accountability and correcting competencies. Right of consent, right of information, and right of initiative will be extended. Right of amendment will be introduced.	The existing situation with regards to right of consent and the right to be consulted will be maintained.	
<b>2. Strengthening organisation and governance at the basic level</b>	Units within a recognisable discipline that is responsible for both teaching and research programs. Elected supervisors prepare and implement policy.		Independent education and research institutes and departments with appointed directors or chairpersons deriving from faculty level (current situation). The dean appoints supervisors after advisory or employee participation. The deans decide but are being advised.	
<b>3. Strengthening democracy at the basic level</b>	Staff and students will develop organisational design and set-up of units on the basic level. Starting point is as much self-management and distribution of leadership as possible.	Councils that seat staff and students equally will govern units on the basic level.	In addition to directors/chairpersons there will be a new form of participatory counselling on the departmental level and teaching and research institutes to be determined later.	How consultation with representative advisory councils is managed is decided by directors/chairpersons.
<b>4. Openness and participation on all levels</b>	Representativeness of councils and participatory bodies will be encouraged with transparency, online platforms that stimulate discussion, meetings for discussions and decision making, thematic conferences, and other forms of providing and sharing information.			Existing situation, with improved representative-ness and accountability.
<b>5. Continued existence of the faculties</b>	Units on the basic level function within existing faculty structures for the next four years. Thereafter, evaluation on if/how faculties will continue to exist.	The choice for or against the persistence of existing faculties is not part of the choice for one of these three models.		

Figure 2: Central themes and their relation to the governance models

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