The University of Antwerp in 2016-2020
Outlines for innovative policy

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SECTION 1 – OVERARCHING POLICY THEMES

The 2003 merger that resulted in the establishment of the University of Antwerp was a movement that required time and major effort on the part of all staff members. This was due to the necessity of carrying out the merger operation without supplementary structural financing, even as the student population was increasing sharply. To their great merit, the rectors Francis Van Loon and Alain Verschoren, along with their teams, ensured that everything proceeded smoothly.

The university has grown into a strong, stable institution. From this position, the new policy team aims to expand the university further. One way in which we will do this involves reinforcing our identity by refining our profile in education, research and services. We will also be devoting additional effort to the university as an organisation by ensuring appropriate policy is implemented with regard to staff, students and infrastructure.

In the first section of this document, we discuss overarching policy themes. In the sections that follow, we take a more detailed look at education (Section 2), research (Section 3), valorisation and development (Section 4), and services (Section 5).

1. Profile of the university

1.1. About our identity

The University of Antwerp could occupy a special place within the university landscape, and should use this special place to make itself known both in Flanders and throughout the world. The Antwerp region has metropolitan characteristics. Now, more than ever, the metropolis is the space in which the community of tomorrow will develop. We are positioned within a multi-faceted urban network that, despite its limited size, reflects the network contours of the metropolis of the 21st century. The University of Antwerp is thus anything but a local player.

This metropolitan character goes to the very heart of our identity, and it offers exceptional opportunities for positioning ourselves internationally and providing direction to the community. Wherever possible, we seek to expand our education, research and services further, beginning in the large laboratory that is Antwerp, with its significant cultural heritage – an engine for development and innovation, a crossroads, near industry, with a large migrant population, a world port and much more. All of these features correspond to the Sustainable Development Goals proposed by the United Nations: addressing global challenges from within the local metropolitan context, drawing upon the interdisciplinary potential of education, research and valorisation in the local universities and university colleges. In this process, sustainability will be adopted as a standard in every administrative initiative. This involves the university's mission to valorise education, research and services, on the basis of expertise and dialogue, while paying continuous attention to a three-fold focus: improving social welfare, ecological interaction with the world and an economy that serves the community.

This engagement is obviously neither colourless nor neutral. The University of Antwerp is a pluralistic university that aims to work towards democratic community development by contributing to a contemporary realisation of freedom, equality and solidarity.[1] And we can do this because of our geographic location – our calling as the laboratory of the metropolis.

Beginning from the profile described above, the university aims to give further shape to its slogan 'Rethink tomorrow'. In the coming years, it will therefore be focussing on certain points of emphasis.

1.2. Metropolitanism

1.2.1. A unique research platform

The University of Antwerp has a solid research tradition, which has been strengthened considerably since the unification in 2003. For example, we are currently a strong global performer in frontline research within nine domains: imaging; ecology and sustainable development; drug discovery and development; urban history and contemporary urban policy; harbour, transport and logistics; infectious diseases; materials characterisation; neurosciences; and socio-economic policy and organisation. It will be of crucial importance to support and

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[1] Cf. H. Van Goethem, *European Values and Higher Education. Academic address (...) Academic year 2016-2017*, Brussels 2016, p. 10-15.

ensure the continuation of these mainstays, while obviously facilitating growth in the other frontline domains.

Thanks to its specific position as a university in Antwerp, UAntwerp can also assume the role of laboratory in the metropolis, based on reflection and research. Its mission as a university therefore includes contributing to the conceptualisation and expansion of the modern city as an economic, social and cultural biotope in which people live together democratically.

From the perspective of metropolitanism, we can regard this community building as an underlying structure that is both a frontline area and a supporting interdisciplinary framework with a common theme that, because of our location, will always constitute the core of the university's identity: a laboratory of the metropolis. This common theme spans all domains and may involve a great many, if not all researchers at the University of Antwerp, to a greater or lesser extent: employment, housing, education, healthcare, culture and heritage, communication, traffic, sustainability, the environment, and so on.

We will thus be investigating how the university can offer an infrastructure for research on contemporary metropolitanism – a platform that feeds research and from which projects can be initiated and supported. Existing initiatives will serve as a starting point. For example, a cluster surrounding the Urban Studies Institute, which currently brings together a number of groups and researchers from the University of Antwerp, could be expanded to all scientific domains. In this regard, we will also be consulting and collaborating with close partners, including the City and the Province; Antwerp University Hospital (UZA); the Institute of Tropical Medicine (ITG); the Antwerp Management School (AMS); UCSIA; VOKA and Alfaport, in addition to structural players in civil society that are active in the domain of culture mediation. Our focus on metropolitanism will also involve targeted efforts to collaborate with universities and centres of research and expertise both in Belgium and abroad.

1.2.2. A preferred partner: Antwerp University Hospital (UZA)

The Faculty of Medicine and Health Sciences promotes the health of the population through education, research and services, in addition to striving for broader academic collaboration and networking in both education and research, including with Antwerp University Hospital (UZA), the Institute of Tropical Medicine (ITG), other healthcare programmes and other hospitals and general practitioners in our education and training region.

UZA is a vital, high-priority academic partner for the university. Together with UZA, the Faculty of Medicine and Health Sciences fulfils a leading role within the region, including through the University Medical Campus Antwerp (UMCA) platform. UZA also collaborates with other hospitals and healthcare actors within the region to fulfil a crucial role in the physician training programme.

Our collaboration with UZA is a policy priority, particularly given the unique position of UZA as a separate legal entity and Type II research institution. A follow-up committee monitors the operation of the management agreement between UZA and the university, with the goal of ensuring future-oriented, complementary collaboration.

1.3. Innovation in research and education

Our profile will obviously lead us to devote efforts to innovative topics such as sustainability and healthcare within the urban environment; transport and logistics; and also the Internet of Things (IoT) and Smart Cities, in which we, as a Smart University, want to help push global urban development forwards.

We aim to respond to the demand for new programmes primarily according to the needs of the labour market. Priority will be given to new programmes that can make a positive contribution to the university, without creating internal competition for the other programmes. In addition to the support to be provided to the Smart-evolution programme, which can be translated into an IoT programme, the extension of the Master programme in Applied Engineering from 60 to 120 credits will obviously be a policy priority.

Another important area of attention involves the further reinforcement of the Faculty of Design Sciences, which is a very special element of our profile.

1.4. A broader vision of research output

In addition to continuing its efforts in all domains with regard to research that results in doctorates and A1 publications, the University of Antwerp would like to place additional emphasis on research valorisation and the recognition of work that has been accomplished. First, the quantification of research output should be accompanied by a well-considered qualitative estimate of the work that has been accomplished. In the evaluation of both research and education, this will allow us to do more justice to the specificity of all scientific disciplines than is currently the case. Second, this will increase our ability to include and

encourage non-traditional output (e.g. policy-supporting collaboration with governmental entities, cultural products, collaboration with companies, patents, spin-offs and design research).

The university will also devote considerable effort to networking in the Antwerp region (e.g. harbour, city, province, industry, policymakers and politicians), as well as in Belgium and beyond. We would like to increase our presence as a means of communicating and reinforcing the university.

It will obviously not be possible for us to be present everywhere. As an institution, the University of Antwerp will devote active and well-considered efforts to targeted collaboration with domestic and international universities and research centres that reflect what we stand for.

1.5. Strategic policy themes

In line with the emphases stated above, we endorse the previously established strategic policy themes of the University of Antwerp as broad, important themes for policy and policy operations, based on a culture of quality.

We will further reinforce the University of Antwerp as a 'research university'. For our programmes, we will continue to opt for 'activating, student-centred and competence-driven education'. We will devote further effort to 'diversity and participation', 'active pluralism', 'sustainability' and 'internationalisation and region', and we will add two new policy themes: 'entrepreneurship' and 'metropolitanism'.

Of course, these themes cannot be linked to individual core tasks. In the following sections, they will be addressed within the context of various policy options.

2. The university as an organisation

2.1. A culture of consultation and transparency, appreciation and trust

The university is currently conducting research on experiences of work, focusing on structural management and its improvement. The results and recommendations from the research reports will be evaluated and put into practice. The recently published report on the senior academic staff (ZAP) provides direction for policy options concerning education, research and services (see below). The following strategic choices, which are of a more general nature, have also been made.

- The University of Antwerp will consider the well-being, safety and health of its staff, students and other stakeholders from a sustainable, long-term perspective, with the goal of ensuring that all levels of the university take responsibility consciously, both internally and with regard to society.
- A sustainable organisation requires a conscious approach to coping with growth. We would like to offer opportunities for growth while acknowledging that there are limits. We must invest targeted efforts, counteract fragmentation and assess the effectiveness, results and importance of initiatives whenever possible. There is no value in changes which are made just for the sake of change.
- We will examine the existing internal regulations, limiting and reducing them where possible and useful, which will result in the acceptance of greater degrees of freedom. Trust should serve as a basic principle in the organisation of the university.
- Transparency must therefore be increased in the 'rectorial space' for recruitments, to be distributed according to the policy priorities. All faculty recruitments will be allocated in consultation with the relevant dean's office.
- We strive for respectful interactions with each other. To this end, we will also reinforce our consultation model and increase the amount of input from staff and students. First and foremost, it is a question of openness in style, accessibility and meeting culture. But at the same time, the university stands to gain much by reconsidering its governance (see below).
- Support for staff members and students can be reinforced by having clearly visible points of contact. In addition to physical points of contact, alternatives can be established through individualised portal access that groups the various digital channels for the user.
- Wherever possible, we would like to improve the balance in the promotion policy for administrative and technical personnel (ATP), ZAP and teaching staff (OP) in order to counteract unnecessary competition and to introduce greater calm within the institution.
- We will invest in the recruitment of staff dedicated to supporting education and research. This will allow our scholars to concentrate on their core duties and ensure that the other

segments receive greater appreciation for their important supporting and policy-preparation roles.

2.2. Governance focusing on efficiency and long-term policy

The university's governance structure should be reconsidered with the goal of reinforcing the long-term perspective. How can we remain versatile and avoid investing excessive energy in following new trends? How can the university adapt to the major challenges that are emerging? At this point, it is certain that the far-reaching demographic developments resulting from population ageing and the expected major scarcity on the labour market will result in a thorough redefinition of the education landscape. We must prepare ourselves for this.

In addition to its necessary policy-control duties, the Board of Governors must therefore serve primarily as a 'reflection chamber' in which this perspective is a constant point of concern. The rearrangement of authority can make this possible. Operational matters will be shifted more to the Executive Board, which will meet more frequently than the more 'reflective' Board of Governors.

At the same time, it will be necessary to strengthen the position of deans within the higher administrative organisation, given that the faculties form the foundation of the university organisation. Whenever crucial decisions must be taken concerning faculties, the deans must be allowed to vote and participate in debates with full right to speak.

In some cases, we must also provide targeted support to faculties based on their specificity. For example, not every faculty has the same concerns with regard to recruitment the supervision of students.

The allocation model, which will be adjusted in 2018, is also of crucial importance to the faculties, as it is within this model that the integrated programmes must grow. The ongoing analysis of the financial contribution can offer new elements, including with regard to the relationship between education and research. In any case, the implementation of changes can occur only gradually.

2.3. Students

Students fulfil a central role as the most important stakeholders of our university.

We aim to train young people to become qualified, highly educated individuals who are able to assume positions within the professional field and accept professional and community responsibilities based on theoretical insight, professional knowledge and skills. We will expand our organisation in order to achieve balanced, high-quality programmes, conceived at the nexus of education and research, in which students receive sound supervision and support. This will be translated in the organisation of education, as well as in the organisation of research and services (see the following sections).

Education is the key to social promotion and progress within society. We therefore aim to devote major effort to optimising intake from the compulsory education system.

The education provided by the Antwerp University Association focuses on our own metropolitan context, and it does that by paying special attention to disadvantaged student groups, for example. We must support their intake into higher education through a fundamental democratic reflex, with the goal of attracting and guiding good students from all segments of the population.

In all specialisations, the intake from secondary schools in the Antwerp region differs from that elsewhere in Flanders. This important societal problem requires a separate policy. The University of Antwerp accepts its responsibility in this regard. All students are welcome and may count on our efforts in tutoring and other matters. Our own efforts in recruitment and guidance will be devoted primarily to increasing the intake of students from general secondary education and the STEM-oriented pathways of technical secondary education. The university will urge the competent ministers to allocate specific funding in the interest of the specific metropolitan profile.

In its active quest for an inclusive policy, our university also stands to learn a great deal from the university colleges in our Association. Their expertise is interesting. In some cases, students can significantly increase their chances of success by transferring to the university from a programme in a university college. Conversely, university students may re-orient themselves towards the university colleges if needed. The movement is mutually reinforcing. Based on the metropolitan context alone, all university colleges in the region stand to benefit from coordinating with each other. We should therefore make systematic contact with all university colleges in the greater region for the purposes of consultation on curriculums, bridging programmes and other possible forms of collaboration related to education and research.

2.4. Business operations

A university is one of the many larger legal entities within our community. Although each of these organisations, whether in the for-profit or non-profit sector, has its own mission, they are all subject to the same or similar legislation in areas including finances, tax, employership, safety, sustainability, privacy and litigation. Staff members charged with business operations thus perform core tasks that are expected of any legal entity. Like the professors and faculty staff members, they must also be professionals, albeit in another area.

2.4.1. Finances

Carrying out the mission of our university in the areas of education, research and services calls for maintaining sufficient degrees of freedom (discretionary funds) within the operating budget. This will require monitoring income and expenses, with 'reasoned growth' playing a prominent role.

Reasoned growth in education and research will take place largely within the contours of the Flemish funding model. Discussions concerning the future model will thus be of crucial importance to our university. One important point of attention in this regard concerns how we should respond to the metropolitan problem. With regard to research funding, the question of how the Flemish government will integrate supplementary research funding into its allocation model will come into play in the short term. With regard to education funding, realising our mission will require maintaining or increasing our financial market share in order to optimise both the intake and progress of our students. The metropolitan problem should be on the agenda in this regard as well.

Another issue in the area of education concerns the range of non-funded programmes (e.g. Advanced Master and post-graduate programmes). Reasoned growth implies striving to achieve balance between the costs and the benefits of this range of programmes. A similar strategy is needed for internationalisation and the recruitment of students from outside the EEA. For these students, tuition fees should be in proportion to the cost price of the programmes offered.

With regard to research, we should at least maintain our market share within the other funding flows, as well as in basic (first-flow) funding. In addition to increasing our efforts in existing and new markets, reasoned growth implies the fairest possible coverage of the indirect costs associated with such research. Within the context of third-flow funding (primarily from

Flemish and international governments), this will mean ensuring maximum coverage of the indirect costs within the given arrangement. In addition, efforts will be made (preferably within an inter-university context) to achieve a structural increase in the overhead percentage. Within the context of fourth-flow funding, we draw a distinction between private research and valorisation. With regard to private research, covering the indirect costs of the research would be a healthy starting principle. The valorisation of research is of a different nature. Our institution has considerable room for growth in this regard, although some supporting investments will be needed in the short term.

With regard to costs, it would be wise to use the existing capacity and expertise to increase the efficiency and effectiveness of the organisation and reduce the workload.

2.4.2. Staff

The university aims to operate according to a motivating staff policy, with due attention to all career phases, from intake to mobility to exit, adjusted to specific target groups of staff members. For all of its employees and in both the short term and the longer term, the University of Antwerp strives to be an attractive employer and to offer sustainable substantive career enrichment. Growth and development will play a central role in this regard for individual staff members, as well as for the university. For each individual, growth in knowledge and skills involves more than achieving results now. It is also important to be prepared for the needs of tomorrow, both within the university and in society. Collaboration and entrepreneurship should play a central role in this regard.

Within an expanding landscape of competition, the university's intake will depend on continuing to attract the talent needed to fulfil its basic mission. To this end, the university will be maximising its efforts with regard to the 'employability' of all staff members within the university itself, as well as in society. Being a good, attractive employer is not enough. We must also communicate this to the outside world, including internationally. We will therefore work on 'employer branding', coordinated to the recruitment of students, along with a special interpretation aimed at the recruitment of junior and senior-profile researchers, as well as supporting profiles. In these efforts, we regard diversity in all areas (e.g. gender, culture, nationality, ideology, background) as an enrichment, and we devote explicit consideration to the metropolitan and international context within which the university operates. This will be translated into an adapted reception policy.

With regard to mobility, we would like to realise sustainable growth and development in our staff policy through attention to career guidance by reinforcing individual follow-up in performance appraisals with the supervisor, as well as in coaching tracks and competence development through a variety of working and learning methods. In recent years, we have been devoting considerable effort to realising a structured career policy for members of the ATP, ZAP and OP. One important component of these efforts is the updated promotion policy for these three target groups.

In a subsequent phase, the academic assistant staff (AAP) and contract research staff (BAP) will be addressed, with the necessary refinement of the various statutes. Given the inherently temporary character of these target groups, special efforts will be made in the area of employability, with particular attention to mobility both inside and outside the organisation and to adapted counselling initiatives, in collaboration with the Antwerp Doctoral School and other internal partners. Another special point of attention concerns the large group of voluntary, unremunerated or affiliated staff.

We would like to devote considerable effort to the well-being and work experiences of all staff members. Research on the work experiences of AAP, BAP and ATP members will allow the elaboration of even more concrete and suitable anti-stress measures. In addition to the structural measures stated in Section 2.1, other measures will include information sessions on stress, attention to greater support, 'refuelling' sessions for ZAP, OP and ATP, and continuing attention to psycho-social risk analyses and counselling. We are following the gender issue closely, and we would like to work to achieve a culture shift from within a long-term vision. We will also be working to develop a family-friendly policy. Within the framework of enhancing well-being, we will develop an expanded illness-management programme, corresponding to trends including attention to the integration (and re-integration) of people with long-term illnesses.

Exit is another point of attention. We are continuing to implement the recently revised end-of-career policy (e.g. by sharpening our efforts to involve emeritus and retired staff members in specific activities where the expertise they have accumulated over many years of hard work can be used to the benefit of the university and the community).

In its policy, the University of Antwerp explicitly reflects the European Union's HR Framework Strategy for Researchers. The HR Excellence in Research award that the university received in 2013 will be further supported in this manner.

We also aim to assist supervisors and the Executive Board with their responsibilities in the area of HR by providing accessible, high-quality personnel data and analyses.

Efforts will be made to develop tools that facilitate the various personnel processes and adjust new forms of communication and working methods for job applicants, staff members and supervisors. The following should be mentioned in this regard: improvements in the e-curriculum; recruitment and selection using a new ATS (Applicant Tracking System); the implementation of a training and education module; and the further expansion of reporting (e.g. calculation models, more accessible Business Intelligence, sick-leave and absence reports). External developments (e.g. with regard to ORCID, Google Scholar) will be followed and integrated wherever possible.

2.4.3. Digitisation

The advancing digitisation of our society is offering new opportunities and posing new challenges to our university. New staff members and the current generation of students have grown up with rapid communication resources and social media. They have high expectations for the IT infrastructure, which should be flexible and of high quality. In the short term, therefore, we will be expanding the Wi-Fi network across all campuses, updating the audio-visual equipment in the auditoriums and making further efforts relating to the recording of lectures. Digitisation is also accompanied by new challenges in the area of security and privacy.

The electronic learning environment constitutes an essential aspect of making teaching materials available, as well as facilitating communication between students and lecturers. New initiatives (e.g. blended learning and flipped classrooms) will be fostered, as will electronic examinations. We might expect the student of the future to experience less face-to-face teaching, with more activating online experiences and greater personalisation, along with a mix of directed and self-directed learning.

Students and staff members are increasingly bringing their personal smartphones, laptops and tablets with them to campus. These mobile devices are constantly connected to the internet, as well as to fellow students, colleagues, corporate data and other sources. Our existing

applications need to be translated into mobile versions that are suitable for smartphones and other devices. This manner of working obviously requires greater attention to data security. Most mobile devices are not built with the strong security that should be expected of a business environment.

The office of the future is no longer the only working environment. The 'New World of Work', which centres around flexibility in both time and location, is increasingly penetrating our society. Despite the efforts that have been taken in recent years with regard to automation, the dream of a paperless office remains far away. Information on paper impedes the ability to work independently of time and location. Priority should also be assigned to eliminating the greatest streams of paper. The further expansion of IP telephony with such options as instant messaging and video conferencing will support this flexible manner of working.

2.4.4. Buildings

Buildings are a source of constant concern. As planned, we are working on the further expansion of the remote campuses, with a new chemistry building on Campus Groenenborger and the further grouping of the life sciences (including biology) on Campus Drie Eiken. Industrial-chemical research will receive additional stimulus through the Blue App project, which will be a new building of and for the university on the Blue Gate site. A shared accommodation will be leased in the city centre for all of the researchers who are collaborating with Imec on the Smart City and Internet of Things.

Of the projects being carried out on the Stadscampus, the most important involve the location of the Faculty of Arts in the Brantyser and the incorporation of the Paardenmarkt site. Following a thorough renovation, half of the Paardenmarkt site will be used by Product Development, with the other half being intended for future expansions.

Additional funding will be allocated systematically from the basic funding for investments in major projects, for improvements in sustainability and for the renovation of our buildings, also in consideration of the well-being of staff members and students.

SECTION 2 – EDUCATION AT THE UNIVERSITY OF ANTWERP

Our institution can be proud of its high-quality teaching, provided and supported by qualified staff in all of the faculties, as well as in the central administrative departments. The university has succeeded in maintaining its tradition of student-centred education for individual students throughout the merger and scale expansion that has occurred since 2003. We differ from other universities in this regard. The combination of quality and a student-centred approach is something that makes us unique.

We would like to extend our guarantee of quality, with a view to making meaningful and future-oriented improvements, within a dynamic process that retains the balance between accountability, efficiency and sustainability. We will continue the fine initiatives of recent years, while adopting new emphases, based on major and minor good practices. The education policy should proceed from consultation and transparency, appreciation and trust.

In this section, we position the education policy for the next policy period within a broad perspective. The primary goal is obviously to continue and reinforce our education, in order to respond to needs within society and to ensure the well-being of all members of our university community. For students, we would like to assign priority to efforts to improve intake, study progress and successful graduation. For staff members, recognition and support take the highest priority.

1. Outlining education together

The education vision and the strategic policy themes remain current, and they were identified as a strength in the recent institutional review. We would therefore like to proceed from this base in the further outline of the education policy. Whereas the central education policy serves as a common guiding framework for the entire institution, the faculties and programmes play a crucial role in their realisation, in collaboration with the Education Department, which provides broad support. Within the global policy, faculties and programmes are able to specify their own emphases (cf. subsidiarity), with regular

consultation and feedback being essential to achieving a proper balance between management and streamlining (top-down) and further development (bottom-up).

Intensive collaboration on the realisation of our objectives calls for continuous, positive communication. In this regard, we strive to have clear points of contact, realistic deadlines, transparency in policy and easily accessible information (e.g. through Pintra).

More specifically, we would like to follow and reinforce the collaboration between the faculties and the Education Department continuously, particularly with regard to the collaboration with the Antwerp School of Education (e.g. in the revised teacher-training programme) and the Antwerp Doctoral School (e.g. in following the double PhD programmes and the range of programmes offered to PhD students).

The working groups of the Education Board strive to achieve even broader structural consultation, with input of expertise from all segments. The exchange of good practices (e.g. through education-policy days) can ensure appreciation and efficiency in this regard.

External communication is also of great importance. In collaboration with the Communications Department, therefore, we will be launching more systematic press releases concerning new educational initiatives. We will also attempt to improve the representation of the prominent quality of our programmes.

In the coming policy period, we would like to increase the involvement of students, in all their diversity, in the development of and follow-up on the policy. The student organisations are important mediators. We will ensure faster feedback after evaluations and educational adjustments. Support for student representatives will be continued, including with regard to professionalisation.

We will evaluate our communication to students (e.g. website, emails, information flow) and contribute to the introduction of a portal site with a central login for each student, in which the diverse, widespread communication from the university will be grouped and adjusted to the profiles of individual students.

2. Education and the organisation of education

2.1. Student career

2.1.1. Intake: entering higher education

We will expand our activities with regard to recruitment in secondary education and reinforce our networking with teachers and directors. We will work to develop clear and relevant information (e.g. with regard to study choice counselling), to explore how we can develop a broader range of workshops and seminars for students and teachers, and to make targeted efforts in specific areas of study (e.g. concerning STEM).

In the Antwerp region, intake into higher education is lower than it is elsewhere, and this applies to all fields of study in the compulsory education system. Efforts to expand and reinforce this intake will thus be an absolute necessity. We would like to collaborate closely with the university colleges of the greater region with regard to bridging programmes (see Section 1.1.4), opting for inclusive measures whenever possible.

Intake guidance (e.g. *Aan de Slag*, *Monitoraat op Maat*, entrance tests, Centrum WeST) will be continued and reinforced (e.g. for language support).

The platform '*Aan de Slag*' primarily provides leverage for contacts with our future students. We will improve accessibility and design, expanding the platform further as needed and using it as an information tool, with instructions for orientation instruments, calibration tests, admission tests and bridging education.

2.1.2. Study progress

We aim to develop study programme counselling further into study career counselling. We will make procedural efforts to achieve a clearly graduated system (e.g. with clear manuals, properly functioning help desks, shared information sessions and individual counselling for more complex situations). In substantive terms, we would like to reinforce the collaboration between faculty and central services, to examine the range of offerings from the student

perspective and to assess the feasibility of implementing a system of coaching and mentorship.

In the interest of study progress, we will also be following up on the study programmes and the associated regulations. Particular attention will be paid to flexibilisation, evaluating the combination of study progress monitoring and continuity requirements, making adjustments as needed. We would also like to reconsider the operations and powers of the Examinations Committees and to call upon them in our efforts to limit study delays (e.g. through interim deliberations and recommendations concerning study progress or reorientation). In this way, we are moving towards development-oriented evaluations.

2.1.3. Exit: graduation

The graduation process for our Master students is underpinned by active career counselling. Based on the available channels and activities (e.g. Talent on Track, career coaches, the talent forum, support for start-ups), we will expand the range of services offered and combine the provision of information with self-direction. We will also reinforce career development for PhD students.

Close and good contacts with the working field are of great importance. We will encourage the Education Committees to work with sounding-board groups in order to determine whether our programmes are actually responding satisfactorily to professional and social developments.

2.2. Supporting and encouraging students

2.2.1. Supervision

One absolute strength of the University of Antwerp is its extensive range of services in the area of student supervision. We must further improve the representation of this range of services and improve the availability and accessibility of the information. Close collaboration between all services involved is necessary, including with our partners in the Association.

The over-arching portal site that is to be developed will play a crucial role in this regard. It should be positioned prominently, with quick, manageable links to the many initiatives and opportunities, including the following: information and testing material in *Aan de Slag*;

counselling with regard to course content and monitoring in the faculties; language support through *Monitoraat op Maat*; counselling offered by Study Advice and Student Counselling Services; social and financial support by the Social Service Office; bridging activities for the transition from secondary to higher education; student career counselling in the faculties; initiatives of student associations; peer coaching by students and activities for specific target groups.

Support provided to working students through Centrum WeST is unique in Flanders, as are the combination with career coaching and the collaboration with the Open University. We would thus also like to continue these services and ensure further follow-up and supplementation of the range of services offered to working students by the faculties.

2.2.2. Honours activities

Honours activities are intended to offer additional opportunities to high-level students. We are expanding the current range of activities and investigating how to enhance the visibility of these initiatives. Four target groups are relevant in this regard: students in secondary education (e.g. workshops, summer schools), Bachelor students (e.g. honours programmes, interdisciplinary lectures), Master students (e.g. participation in research projects, leadership) and alumni (e.g. additional training).

2.3. Instruments and processes

2.3.1. Key indicators

In recent years, considerable investments have been made in a Business Intelligence system. We will continue to work on this, making adjustments as needed. We will report about it in a more systematic manner and forward the data as efficiently as possible to programmes and faculties.

2.3.2. Administrative simplification

We will re-examine the efficiency and effectiveness of procedures and offer them in a searchable online digital version. We will simplify the procedure for curriculum adjustments,

sharpening the focus on the information in the education portfolio. The regulations concerning student enrolment could also be relaxed in some places. We would like to increase the bundling of expertise from the faculties for the various help desks.

2.3.3. Consultation

In the Education Board, we will retain the system of working groups, which allows a widely supported and dynamic educational policy, and we will consider establishing two new working groups: a Curriculum Working Group in connection with the follow-up to and management of curriculum adjustments and changes in education offerings, and a Professional Development Working Group that will help to support the Centre of Expertise for Higher Education (ECHO).

2.3.4. Protocols

We have started to develop protocols for education, examination and fraud committees. We will examine which additional protocols would be useful for reducing work pressure, create greater clarity and enhance efficiency, supplementing them with patterns or templates.
The legal support provided by the Legal Follow-up Centre (JOC) for appeals and disputes will be reinforced.

2.4. Educational innovation and learning environment

We will be drawing on the University of Antwerp Fund for Educational Development (UFOO) to take further action on educational innovation. Where needed, we will make adjustments to ensure the smart use of funds, taking the diverse faculty needs into account. It will also be important to improve the distribution and implementation of the results.
We will adopt a holistic and pragmatic approach to continuing our efforts in the area of blended learning, without viewing educational technology separately from educational content. When providing support to colleagues, we will proceed from their own educational practise and needs, and/or from the emphases of the faculty. We will also draw upon the expertise of E-campus and the UFOO teams.
We are investigating the use of tele-classing to support distance education and collaboration with other institutions (in Belgium or abroad).

We will follow up on the survey of lecturers and students concerning our learning environment, and we will consider the suggestions from the working group when deciding on further investments.

We will retain the practical training fund for innovation in the practical training, but we will evaluate its operations and results. In addition, we will ensure proper educational and education-technical support for colleagues who would like to make more intensive use of Blackboard.

3. Quality culture and quality assurance

3.1. Quality culture

High-quality education demands a strong quality culture, with important roles for the Unit for Innovation and Quality Assurance in Education (CIKO) in each faculty.

In the coming policy period, we would like to make the testing policy self-explanatory, with attention to transparency, validity and reliability, with due consideration for the individual character of faculties and programmes. Wherever possible, we would like for the actual testing to develop into a more developmentally oriented evaluation. Amongst other implications, this will require us to encourage self-insight in students through regular feedback. Benchmarking remains the most appropriate method for following up on the final level.

3.2. Programme evaluations

Following the adjustments to the Flemish Higher-Education Quality Assurance System in 2015 and the institutional review of 2016, we will be directing the deployment of the programme evaluations, as proposed to the review panel. Trust and appreciation are important basic principles in a development-oriented and formative system, with a high level of ownership for the programmes. In the elaborated programme evaluations, it will also be important to limit the administrative burden as much as possible, while creating transparency for the outside world. Efforts to ensure educational development will be managed within a

six-year cycle, based on a substantive peer review with external input, preceded by internal process monitoring and direction.

One crucial factor in the success of our own direction will be the education portfolios, for which the faculties have already taken important steps. The Education Department will provide intensive support and close follow-up. We should ideally work with flexible databanks, which would simplify the exchange of good practices between colleagues.

3.3. Instruments and processes

The Handbook for Quality Assurance in Education will also serve as the foundation for our quality assurance in the coming years. Actions to be taken include re-examining and adjusting questionnaires, validating a brief questionnaire and making more systematic use of key indicators to promote quality assurance.

Our students are also crucial players in quality assurance. We will attempt to achieve substantial increases in the response to surveys and questionnaires, and we will strive for quick, clear feedback on improvement actions. A more elaborate survey of alumni could contribute to the reinforcement of the Alumni Office.

3.4. Professional development

The teacher training programme (ECHO) has undergone thorough revision, based on input from participants in previous series. We will coordinate the further elaboration of our efforts in the area of educational professional development to specific needs. For example, we would like to outline a customised range of services for more experienced lecturers and elaborate a substantial range of blended learning experiences. We will also adopt a more pro-active approach to professional development, involving external experts when it would be useful. For example, we will provide lecturers, assistants and other colleagues with professional development in the area of diversity.

The new Working Group for Professional Development will make it possible to position the educational professional development provided by ECHO within a broader framework. For a global range of services for lecturers and educational support staff, we will collaborate more closely with E-campus (e.g. educational technology), with the Human Resources Department

(e.g. management, peer coaching) and with Study Advice and Student Counselling Services (e.g. coaching). Our efforts in this regard will begin with a focus group.

4. Educational resources and curriculums

4.1. Bachelor and Master programmes

4.1.1. Curriculums and programmes

Our university presents a fine range of educational resources, with cultivated and balanced programmes. Based on the principle of subsidiarity, the faculties initiate adjustments and curriculum changes, which are also discussed at the higher institutional level with regard to the basic options. It is important to elaborate sustainable, high-quality programmes with a balance between flexibility and clarity, in addition to testing our role within society on a regular basis.

Although new programmes are possible, opportunities for developing them should be considered carefully (see Section 1.1.3). We will screen the portfolio of Master programmes taught within our institution, and we will provide targeted reinforcement to our resources, in consultation with the faculties. Our goal is for Advanced Master programmes to be self-supporting.

4.1.2. Education-research nexus

Academic education obviously implies that our programmes are based on research. From the start of the Bachelor programme, students become familiar with research and research results. In the Master programmes, specialisations and research expertise are strongly fed by the available research expertise. We would like to exploit this situation to an even greater degree. Academic education is also aimed at the gradual development of research competences (both insight and skills) in our students. This will strengthen their position on the labour market. For a number of programmes, we must include both research and design. These two competences are complementary, intertwined and necessary.

4.1.3. Internationalisation

We aim to provide our students with substantial international and intercultural competences, thereby improving their ability to function in a globalising society. This will require continued encouragement and facilitation of mobility, while expanding and reinforcing the range of experiences offered through internationalisation@home. Through the central administrative services, we provide further support to programmes by setting up joint degrees, Erasmus+ programmes, summer schools and strong partnerships.

4.1.4. Entrepreneurship and enterprise

Because of its profile, the University of Antwerp would also like to target companies and entrepreneurs. To this end, it has adopted 'entrepreneurship' as an additional strategic policy theme. Several programmes already contain explicit modules concerning enterprise. In the past year, a special statute was created for student-entrepreneurs, with provisions including an extensive range of coaching services. In collaboration with the Antwerp University Association, a new guidance project for entrepreneurial students was started.

We aim to adopt a broad interpretation of enterprise. Analogous to other strategic policy themes, we will investigate how we can concretise entrepreneurship and the associated characteristics (e.g. creativity and a desire to take initiative) in the core competences of our programmes. We will also provide further facilitation for student internships, taking into account the individual character of the programmes, which will receive further support for their efforts to follow-up on the range and quality of the internships and optimise their evaluation.

4.1.5. Interdisciplinarity, social education and service-learning

In the coming period, collaboration across programmes will be reinforced by a greater appreciation for interdisciplinarity. For example, we aim to achieve the joint development of interdisciplinary programme components and summer schools, in addition to the joint organisation of multidisciplinary programmes.

The reinforcement of collaboration will also entail explicitly making better use of in-house expertise and providing structural encouragement for service-learning.

From the same perspective we will explore how we can best centralise the management of academic language education, for example through the incorporation of Linguapolis in the IPAC language institute, which will mean that our language lecturers are managed by FLW wherever possible.

Taking our profile as a starting point, and in consultation with the Education Board and the Pieter Gillis Centre, we would like to impart to our students more basic competences concerning the contemporary world than is currently the case. There are some types of knowledge, insight and attitudes that every student should acquire, regardless of field of study, in order to achieve a stronger position both professionally and personally. We could create a basket of optional social education courses in the Bachelor programme, from which all students could include one or more programme components. In addition to the existing course in Ideology and Worldviews, this basket could include such courses as 'Sustainability and Economics', 'Sustainability and the Environment', 'The Digital Society' (on the information streams involved in opinion-formation), 'Global Health' and 'Cultural Diversity'. Proceeding from an active, listening pluralism, we could also provide students with more encouragement than is currently the case to supplement programme components with modules in community engagement and civic values (community service learning).

4.2. Lateral entry and lifelong learning

4.2.1. Bridging programmes

We offer bridging programmes for some Bachelor programmes and for a large share of our Master programmes. These programmes will be anchored in the quality assurance system, with more active follow-op on completion rates. The range of programmes offered will be expanded wherever possible and useful. In order to safeguard the individual character of the programmes and improve study progress rates, we are investigating the separate organisation of a limited number of separate programme components for bridging students. We will also consult with the university colleges in the greater region on a regular basis.

4.2.2. Postgraduate programmes

These programmes also call for monitoring and possible adjustment. As is the case with the Advanced Master programmes, we aim for these programmes to be self-supporting.

4.2.3. Vocation-oriented lifelong learning

The faculties and institutes regularly organise in-service training sessions and activities involving continuing education, but the whole of these initiatives is not highly visible. We will explore the possibility of expanding an over-arching portal site, with links to the various initiatives, including the In-service Teacher Training Centre, faculty training sessions, working-student tracks, services offered to alumni and university-wide initiatives (see also Section 5.4.2).

Wherever possible, and in consultation with the working field and our alumni, we will reinforce our range of structural further training.

4.3. New initiatives

We strive to achieve a well-considered expansion of teaching qualification (see Section 1.1.2).

In the coming years, we will also be working to design the new Master programmes in education, which will replace the specific teacher training programmes beginning in 2019. In this regard, we will ensure close collaboration between the Antwerp School of Education (ASoE) and the faculties. Within the framework of the teacher training programmes offered through the ASoE, we will also establish a bridge to the university colleges of the Association, to the secondary education system, to the CVOs in the region and to entities such as the Minority Forum.

SECTION 3 – RESEARCH AT THE UNIVERSITY OF ANTWERP

1. Introduction and positioning

The University of Antwerp has a strong research orientation. It should be a breeding ground for high-quality, innovative research, and it should provide a space within which new ideas, collaborations and synergies can emerge and grow. This will require the necessary funding and infrastructure for a research environment in which full attention is paid to creative processes and in which ideas can be translated into concrete realisations. In addition to the importance of fundamental research, interdisciplinarity and relevance are important points of attention within a broader social context. We will strive to unite scientific depth and social relevance wherever possible.

1.1. Stimulating research policy, optimal organisation

Researchers play a central role within an environment in which attention is focused on the scientific enterprise. In this regard, researchers will be able to count on maximum support in the preparation and realisation of the research initiatives, based on a sound, expanded management structure. The research policy aspires to play a stimulating and mediating role, with attention to a broad palette of research activities and opportunities for dissemination.

This will obviously entail a constant quest for the highest quality, as manifest in various ways, including strong participation in scientific and social debates.

Research of the highest quality demands highly qualified and passionate researchers, as well as structures that make this possible. Contemporary researchers combine many competences and tasks, and this requires an organisation that is complementary and in which individuals can realise their potential as members of a team. This ensures that the whole is more than the sum of its parts. We will therefore strive for the further optimisation of the research organisation within the University of Antwerp. Collaboration, integration and

interdisciplinarity will be further encouraged. To ensure the strength and visibility of the position of our researchers within an international context, it will be important for the University of Antwerp to be a leader in the movement towards 'open science', in which social and scientific impact, academic integrity and the accessibility of publications and research data are of central importance.

1.3. Diversity in research

Research is manifested in many ways across disciplines, and the needs, results and products of these manifestations are not always the same. For example, studies conducted within the fields of art, philosophy, the social sciences and the biomedical sciences follow different paths, and their results are often presented, used and cited in different ways. This can make it difficult to arrive at a clear assessment of research performance. We must therefore have access to the proper instruments for initiating and facilitating research in each domain, in addition to making a proper estimate of the results of this research. An adapted policy will focus on allowing all disciplines to shine and offering prospects to researchers in the various phases of their careers.

1.4. Talent and opportunities for growth

A balanced research policy should also create an environment in which researchers in the development and growth phases, as well as those who have already achieved a high level of distinction receive opportunities to acquire project funding. Although this would seem obvious and logical, it is often not so simple in practice. Competition for funding is harsh, both within and outside the university, and excessive budget restrictions often render the likelihood of success much too small. Achieving success with a project requires a strong position in several areas, and the embedding of researchers within an effective structure plays an important role. A properly expanded framework will be essential in this regard, in order to achieve the required level and to give properly informed consideration to all elements. Within our university, some researchers and teams have outstanding scores in this regard, successfully playing at the highest levels. Because such performance is less obvious for other researchers and groups, we will strive to unlock all available talent to the greatest extent possible.

More generally, another goal will be to assist all researchers in their efforts to develop from good to excellent.

1.5. Valorisation

The university's research policy is largely focused on supporting fundamental scientific research. The most important funding channels in this regard are located within the context 'second-flow' (BOF and FWO) and 'third-flow' (EU and ERC) funding. As a research organisation, however, we must strengthen our efforts in the area of more applied research, encourage innovation and, where possible, develop paths to valorisation. This should reinforce our position within the context of third-flow and fourth-flow funding. We will focus efforts on the further reinforcement of our position within the context of third-flow funding, including the European funding channels. In this regard, we will investigate how we can use our research – and our valorisation policy – to promote the participation of our researchers in European and other networks, and how we can improve on our current ability to link fundamental knowledge to possible applications and paths to valorisation (see below, Section 4).

2. Actors in the research policy

2.1. The Research Board, the Office and the Reading Committees

The Research Board is the Executive Board's central advisory body on policy relating to research and science, including the management of the funds in the University Research Fund (BOF). The Office of the Research Board prepares the meetings of the Research Board. In the assessment of research projects funded through BOF funds, the Board is assisted by the five reading committees. The Board has a balanced composition, with attention to the three major scientific disciplines (Social and Human Sciences; Exact and Applied Sciences; Biomedical Sciences) and the academic profiles of the members. In this regard, members should possess extensive expertise in their own research domains, in addition to be willing to collaborate in university-wide efforts to develop and enhance the efficiency of the research conducted at our

university in terms of both breadth and depth. This requires the members of the Research Board to be capable of adopting an unaffiliated attitude and transcending the boundaries of their own domains. In its operations, the Research Board strives to achieve clear regulations and transparent decision-making.

An important role in this regard is reserved for the reading committees, who evaluate the quality of the submitted proposals, paying sufficient attention to the various disciplines and potential for growth.

2.2. A quantitative and qualitative growth strategy

In the assessment of research, the Research Board also assigns priority to intrinsic quality, taking into account the prospects that the proposed research offers for the further development of the various domains of knowledge. Although these principles have already been adopted, exhaustive analysis of our research portfolio and performance (based on clear benchmarks; see below) can improve our ability to work in an even more focused manner and to make choices that could make a difference. The intention in this regard is to continue developing areas that are already strong, while offering opportunities to initiatives that are still in an earlier phase of development or that could grow with additional impulses. To bring these intentions into practice, we will develop a clear strategy in which we draw upon qualitative and quantitative analyses to provide targeted stimuli to ensure continuity in domains with historically accumulated strengths, while increasing our efforts to create leverage effects for promising new initiatives and domains.

2.3. Streamlined and transparent regulations

Within the university, the Research Board will be engaging in an open dialogue with the faculties, institutes, departments and the actual research groups. Within the Research Board, we will systematically examine the existing calls and regulations, eliminate the barriers that are standing in the way of certain initiatives and launching new or adapted initiatives as needed. At the same time, we will strive to achieve clear regulations focused on smoothness and transparency.

Some provisions within the current regulations are sometimes regarded as limiting and as possibly suppressing the dynamics of the process. Regulations should not stand in the way in areas that allow for constructive collaboration. Career opportunities and valuable new

initiatives should not be blocked. We will strive to optimise regulations in order to encourage participation in research and offer career opportunities in the range of options within the project portfolio, with participation in external programmes forming a part of the whole.

The likelihood of success is an important point in this regard. The likelihood of success should be proportionate to the efforts invested by the researchers. It is therefore important that we clearly delineate the criteria that must be met in order to participate and how they fit within a path of growth, consolidation and excellence.

2.4. Benchmarking and internal screening

A focused, ambitious research policy is impossible without qualitative and quantitative measurements and a means of monitoring research performance. In this regard, we would like to identify a number of domain-specific and discipline-specific benchmarks for assessing our performance within a broader regional and international context. Where are we today, where would we like to go and what is feasible within our realm of possibilities? In this regard, particular attention will be paid to the individual character of specific domains and disciplines. Given that the manner in which research is conducted and presented differs by domain, it cannot be measured in the same way in all cases. At the same time, we strive to achieve the greatest possible qualitative participation on the part of our scholars in the scientific enterprise.

The university conducts a cyclic screening of the research performance of the research groups by faculty or department. This is done by a visitation commission composed of external experts with an international image in the relevant research domain. Although we would like to continue this system, we will investigate the extent to which the current format of questioning and reporting could be simplified even further, without detracting from the objectives. It should be clear to the members of the visitation commissions where we would like to go and within which context we are working and developing. In consultation with the faculties, we will also develop a system of benchmarking for proposing targets and monitoring research performance. The proposed criteria should be realistic, and the benchmarking should take place in a differentiated manner. We would like to use this information to reinforce the justification of the research policy and to take targeted initiatives for developing from good to excellent wherever possible.

3. Support in the acquisition of external funds

High-level research requires the necessary financial resources, which are not possible without intensive project acquisition. The available funds are limited at both the national and the international level, and competition is extremely strong. Given the important share of time that our researchers devote to fundraising, it is crucial to maximise the returns on these time investments. We would therefore like to pay particular attention to providing guidance to our researchers in the preparation and submission of project proposals. Where possible and desirable, we will also attempt to align our internal funding channels more closely with the external counterparts.

The Department of Research Affairs and Innovation provides targeted support to researchers with regard to funding orientation, project preparation, submission and follow-up of the evaluation process. The services and processes for fundraising will be developed further, with an eye towards efficiency, customer orientation and quality. At the same time, the central services for the acquisition of external funding and the decentralised services to researchers will be further optimised and coordinated to each other.

We will also reinforce our efforts in the area of information and training. The range of information sessions and workshops for preparing our researchers to submit project proposals will be further streamlined and expanded (e.g. Dive into Projects or DIP). We would like to involve our leading researchers, thus allowing them to benefit from their own knowledge, approach and experiences. In this process, we pay primary attention to the most important external channels (e.g. those of FWO, VLAIO and EU), each of which has its own specific character. We would like to draw more attention to the expertise that we have accumulated in this regard, making it more accessible by organising guidance programmes (e.g. D²IP, Deep Dive into Projects).

In this way, we hope to reinforce the interaction between research management and researchers even further, in addition to communicating funding opportunities more broadly, thereby increasing participation and the likelihood of success.

4. The University Research Fund (BOF) as leverage

4.1. Accessibility of the internal funding channels

The University Research Fund (BOF) entails a number of different funding lines, ranging from minor to major projects. This diversity forms the foundation for a balanced research policy that creates opportunities for new researchers and new research projects, while consolidating the accumulated expertise and quality. We will investigate the extent to which we could strengthen the leverage even further and provide encouragement to solicit external funding.

The smaller projects and doctoral projects are intended primarily to provide basic initial funding to beginning lecturers, in addition to allowing more senior researchers to go into greater depth on specific research topics. The larger projects (e.g. TOP and GOA) are intended to address more complex, broader scientific problems that require more financial resources and, in many cases, an interdisciplinary or multidisciplinary approach. This system works well. It allows differentiated funding for different types of projects. It is nevertheless unclear whether the differentiation between TOP and GOA (based on one or more research groups) is actually the most optimal configuration. In theory, high-level collaboration between research groups can currently occur only through the GOA channel. We might be able to achieve more synergy by open this up to other funding lines (e.g. by no longer restricting TOP to one research group and by reconsidering various forms of funding).

4.2. External funding

Funding for research through the BOF should also act as a stimulus for new initiatives and for fundraising outside the university. We would like to consider concrete ways of applying the BOF even more emphatically as leverage for the acquisition of FWO funds and other resources. We thus expect our researchers to submit proposals to other funding sources – particularly the EU and FWO – in addition to their dossiers with the BOF. Although the central and de-central research managers can offer necessary support in this regard, the initiative should come from the researchers themselves. Coordinating the application rounds and procedures for internal and external funding to each other wherever possible could optimise efforts and the likelihood of success.

The responsibilities of the reading committees are not limited to evaluation and selection. They also play an important advisory role, and they can formulate recommendations based on

their experience. As stated previously, we would like to ensure that the submission procedures and required documents correspond as closely as possible to the most relevant external procedures.

4.3. ZAPBOF framework

The ZAPBOF framework occupies a special position within the ranks of the ZAP. The individual character of the mandate means that this category of researchers can be deployed specifically for providing a special scientific impulse within certain research domains, thereby bringing other researchers along in the process. The goal is to consolidate and reinforce the domains in which our position is strong, while devoting equal attention to realising the transition from excellent to outstanding.

A ZAPBOF mandate usually concerns a 10-year period, followed by the transition to the ZAP framework. This means that researchers in the ZAPBOF framework could eventually be assigned to duties of education and services. It is therefore important to pay attention to these aspects during the recruitment process.

During a tenure-track project, the mandatary must meet a number of criteria that are intended to guarantee high-level scientific quality and effectiveness. Although the generic criteria that are now applied were established with care, they could be difficult to realise within some research domains. For this reason, it will be necessary to investigate whether the objectives should be adapted for some disciplines in which the research portfolio differs from the referential framework that has been adopted. This does not mean that the criteria will be weakened, simply that the benchmarks that are applied will be better adapted to the portfolio of the research domain.

5. Further internationalisation of research

5.1. Support for international project proposals

The fundamental and applied scientific research conducted at the university has a strong international character, and participation in international networks is thus important. The

European Union manages a highly substantial share of the research funding through its framework programmes. Participation in such programmes and networks often provides leverage for more international collaboration and provides access to other international initiatives. It is therefore important to devote even greater efforts to encourage our researchers to participate in these programmes. Proceeding from the research policy, we would like to take initiatives to become even more targeted than we currently are in referring our researchers to the opportunities enclosed in the various international calls, thereby promoting participation in such networks. For example, those taking the initiative to coordinate a network or programme should be able to count on support in both the acquisition and operations of the project, such that it can be realised in the most efficient and successful manner possible.

5.2 Attracting foreign researchers

Another important aspect of internationalisation involves attracting researchers and professors from abroad. We must ensure the wide international distribution of our job vacancies, possibly grouping them more and announcing them in leading international journals and internet forums. This will enhance the international visibility of the university and make us more familiar to the best researchers in search of the next step in their careers. One downside is the limited financial space for offering an attractive starting package. In some cases, however, this can be compensated by attractive embedding. The FWO Odysseus programme and the EU's ERC programme offer such opportunities, and we should therefore be more active in using them.

6. Research directions, frontline areas and consortiums of excellence

6.1. Primary anchors

The university currently has nine frontline areas and three growth poles, distributed across the faculties and research domains. The frontline areas are domains in which we enjoy clear

international recognition and for which we have access to the necessary critical mass relative to our international peers in the relevant disciplines. They are identity-forming signboards that the university should make even more visible to external parties. The frontline policy takes the individual character of disciplines into account, as well as the actual and expected future scientific developments. By definition, the frontline policy is dynamic and thus subject to revision as research within the university develops further and grows in one direction or the other. For their part, the growth poles should be able to grow into frontline areas.

The university has also selected nine consortiums of excellence, with the intention of bringing research groups that are working on related topics closer to each other and encouraging them to work together in the acquisition of more external funding. Recognition as a consortium of excellence is of major symbolic importance. In the near future, we would like to open a debate on the topic of excellence and on the question of how we can further realise excellence and interdisciplinarity within the University of Antwerp.

6.2. In search of new synergies

The Research Board will also strive to test the regulations and funding allocations carefully for the balance between supporting and recognising excellence and encouraging new researchers and research projects.

The research policy is aimed at bringing various forms of expertise even closer together in a structural and functional manner. Building a well-chosen interdisciplinary framework could also contribute to refining the university's profile (e.g. with regard to metropolitanism; see Section 1.1.2).

Barriers between faculties that stand in the way of joint research are in no way desirable. Their elimination could allow synergies to emerge that could further develop the interdisciplinary character of the research, thus further enhancing the use of the available competences. Looking to the future, this could result in the redefinition of excellence, always in the spirit of construction and consolidation. Here, too, wherever possible and relevant, we will seek good coordination and interaction between initiatives that are part of the valorisation policy and initiatives related to communicating our research excellence to the outside world.

The university-wide excellence policy does not absolve the faculties, institutes, departments and research groups of the duty to develop their own research vision, in which all types of research, researchers and research groups can occupy a place and for which the allocation of scarce resources is carefully weighed to the benefit of opportunities for pioneering research.

7. A framework for young researchers

In the past decade, the number of doctoral degrees conferred in Flanders increased by more than 70%. The doctorate is undergoing a transition throughout the world. Whereas the doctorate was seen as the first step in a permanent academic career until several decades ago, the majority of people with doctorates now go on to develop careers outside the academic world. An important shift has occurred in recent years, with the doctorate increasingly being regarded as a combination of research and education, with the goal of applying the accumulated knowledge and skills within the knowledge society. Proceeding from the revised meaning of the doctorate, we will commit to efforts for the further career pathways of our PhD students. In this regard, the doctoral programme is a key instrument for building a successful career and the valorisation of the doctoral track.

The doctoral programme is firmly anchored within the doctoral track as a compulsory training programme. In light of the rapidly changing academic landscape and the importance of people with doctoral degrees to our knowledge society, constant critical reflection on the doctoral programme is needed. One of the most important questions that we should ask in this regard is whether the doctoral programme in its current form provides a sufficient response to the needs and expectations of the non-academic labour market. Although employers are increasingly regarding the doctorate as beneficial, a mismatch continues to exist between the competences of people with doctoral degrees and the expectations of employers. People with doctoral degrees are amongst society's most highly educated individuals. In the perception of employers, however, they sometimes lack specific skills that are demanded on the labour market. Bridging this gap will require an interpretation of the doctoral programme in which attention is more structurally devoted to these skills, as well as to career development. In this regard, we should also reflect on the coaching role of the supervisor in awareness-raising and the development of skills other than those that are exclusively related to research. Briefly stated, in order to ensure that our PhD students have a smooth transition to the labour market, it is important to monitor the efficiency of the doctorate. In addition, the supply of young post-doctoral researchers should be expanded further. This will allow the knowledge and competences of our doctoral graduates to be valorised to the fullest extent possible.

In this regard, the Antwerp Doctoral School serves as a platform for bundling the expertise from the departments of Education, Research Affairs & Innovation, and Human Resources.

SECTION 4 – VALORISATION AND DEVELOPMENT AT THE UNIVERSITY OF ANTWERP

1. Positioning

The innovation policy at our university translates to fundamental research, as well as to basic and applied research aimed at economic and social valorisation. The University of Antwerp would like to increase its focus on valorisation and the development associated with it.

We understand valorisation as referring to the conversion of knowledge that has been accumulated through innovative research and that is useful to the economy and society into a product, artefact or process, or into an organisational or business model. It is thus a process of creation from knowledge, through knowledge that is suitable and/or that can be made accessible for economic and social use, or that is also suitable for translation to competitive products, services and new activities.

In collaboration with all partners in the Antwerp University Association, the university aims to create a pool of valorisable knowledge, with an eye towards innovation and development, all in collaboration with the government, civil society and the commercial sector.

The Industrial Research Fund, which is under the supervision of the Antwerp University Association, provides leverage for valorisation and an instrument for involving faculties and Association partners. With regard to valorisation and development, the University of Antwerp is the driving force of the Association, offering support throughout the entire valorisation track in order to create a win-win relationship for the parties involved in each track. This can be accomplished by involving all partners within the Association (including the Antwerp Maritime Academy), the Antwerp Management School, UZA and the Institute of Tropical Medicine, as well as the commercial sector, the City of Antwerp and other institutional and societal actors in the various steps of the valorisation process.

We strive to maintain a targeted focus on strong disciplines and new domains that have demonstrable potential, with which the university would like to profile itself in order to build bridges to companies and other partners in the community that stand to benefit from knowledge transfer. In addition, the process should ideally involve multidisciplinary projects that could have a strong multiplier effect, given improved support in the form of people and funding.

In Flanders, funding opportunities for research-and-valorisation projects are increasing more strongly than is the basic funding for universities. The social and economic impact of the University of Antwerp can be increased substantially by reinforcing the university's presence in third-flow and fourth-flow funding. To make this possible, we will be focusing additional efforts on the acquisition of funding, in addition to providing instruments that can help to follow consistent market logic in the preparation of projects with economic actors. In this way, we will be able to enhance the economic and social relevance and the impact of the research conducted at the University of Antwerp.

To realise this ambition, the University of Antwerp, as an entrepreneurial university, will devote efforts aimed at:
  - Integration into multidisciplinary domains of valorisation
  - Collaboration with the government and commercial sectors
  - Stronger support and encouragement for valorisation

2. Integration into multidisciplinary domains of valorisation

2.1. Targeted focus

We are committed to the multidisciplinary reinforcement of the existing frontline areas and consortiums of excellence in order to allow new opportunities and new initiatives to grow towards the level of excellence. We also aim to focus on a limited number of additional multidisciplinary priority areas with high potential for valorisation: topics relating to

metropolitanism, including smart cities, sustainable chemistry and logistics (see also Section 1.1.2).

By integrating various disciplines around a specific focus, we will strive to enhance relevance and strengthen the valorisation of our research. To this end, we will proceed from the demand side outside the university (e.g. roadmaps and long-term plans of companies, sector federations, civil society and government bodies), as well as from our strong research groups. Where possible, we will also seek collaboration with the broad palette of actors within certain research processes, in line with contemporary initiatives of scientific and technological assessment, as well as Responsible Research and Innovation. In this regard, we will assign priority to efforts in domains for which funding is possible, with regard to metropolitan needs with in the harbour city, as well as within the European context. These external opportunities will be translated to internal competences that will be reinforced and supported in a targeted manner.

2.2. Additional support for domains of valorisation

The mandate holders in the consortiums of the Industrial Research Fund and the valorisation managers at Department of Research Affairs and Innovation will be selectively engaged in order to identify opportunities for valorisation and to support additional funding possibilities. In the final phase of major projects, the valorisation managers will engage in targeted scouting for economic and social challenges, working pro-actively with the researchers to search for further funding possibilities with industrial and/or community partners. Efforts will also be directed towards the further enhancement of the external visibility and valorisation of our research infrastructure and facilities, including through the online provision of more information and the organisation of thematic and demand-driven events like those within the framework of Antwerp Smart Region Link.

In light of the movement towards open science, the use of Electronic Lab Notebooks will be encouraged. Research output will be disseminated both broadly and in a targeted manner, and it will be used to create additional value.

2.3. Integration and reinforcement of multidisciplinary scientific domains

We are committed to the bottom-up integration of research groups, thus allowing them to form strong research platforms. These platforms can then serve as proper forums for the possible valorisation of research results. The existing consortiums of the Industrial Research Fund clearly demonstrate how integration and collaboration can lead to scientific excellence and increased economic and social impact. The following are a few concrete examples of future opportunities:

- We will integrate and reinforce engineering-focused and related programmes within the university and the Antwerp University Association in order to enhance the ability to take advantage of knowledge development, thereby creating a biotope for innovation and valorisation. A multidisciplinary cluster of engineers could offer a broad, sustainability-based engineering programme that adopts a multidisciplinary approach in order to offer solutions to specifically metropolitan problems.

- We will assess university institutes (e.g. the Institute of Environment & Sustainable Development, the Urban Studies Institute and the Centre for Migration and Intercultural Studies) as models and platforms for multidisciplinary collaboration and attempt to describe best practices (see Section 1.1.2).

- We will further elaborate the potential of living labs, testing grounds or demonstration platforms with a multidisciplinary approach in such domains as innovative care, intelligent logistics (including urban logistics), the Internet of Things and metropolitanism.

3. Collaboration with the government and commercial sectors

3.1. Building bridges to partners

We are committed to providing a service point for companies, thus making the University of Antwerp more accessible to them. The Valorisation Office will take the lead in this regard, identifying the owners of dossiers and channelling requests for information, networking and collaboration. From the consultation platforms, we will encourage the sharing of best practices amongst research groups, as well as with external partners.

We are committed to intense collaboration with the Flemish strategic research centres, as well as those within the framework of the Flemish frontline clusters and innovative corporate networks.

We will reinforce our collaboration with the City of Antwerp, the Province of Antwerp, the Port of Antwerp and various organisations (e.g. VOKA and Alfaport) through such efforts as mobilising researchers for and supporting them in initiatives relating to the Internet of Things. For example, the collaboration with the City will be reinforced by valorisation projects relating to sustainable chemistry (e.g. Blue Chem and Blue Gate), as well as by supporting Smart City projects through the Industrial Research Fund and with other funding.

The collaboration with the Province will be reinforced through actions including an active search for partners in inter-regional and European Regional Development Fund projects and the provision of guidance to spin-offs that can be housed at the Science Park University of Antwerp in Niel.

In our search for corporate partners for projects based on our research topics, we will seek advice from VOKA and consult with them about valorisation tracks. We will try to involve more researchers in their Routeplan 2020, with priority domains including logistics, NxtPort and Smart City.

3.2. Partnerships

Public-private collaborations and chairs will be established in specific niches in which the university excels, in order to acquire additional financial resources in the Antwerp metropolitan region. These chairs should preferably be research-driven and offer space for valorisation and network activities. Collaboration agreements can also allow funding for equipment. The Institute of Tropical Medicine, UZA, the Antwerp Management School and the Antwerp Maritime Academy will also be involved, where relevant.

Further efforts will be made to exploit involvement and participation in incubators, as well as innovation actors. Collaboration with private incubators will provide leverage in concrete valorisation dossiers.

4. Reinforcement and support

4.1. Recognising valorisation initiatives

We aim to improve our current internal recognition of the valorisation efforts of researchers. The evaluation and assessment criteria concerning valorisation will be expanded, and they will gradually gain additional importance.

4.2. A stronger, pro-active Valorisation Office

We will reinforce the Valorisation Office by recruiting permanent and temporary staff to perform pro-active business development and support research groups in this process. This support will also be established earlier in the valorisation process, taking a customised approach and jointly searching for the best track for each project.

We will work through the mandate holders of the Industrial Research Fund and valorisation managers to encourage interdisciplinary and multidisciplinary working within our own institution. We will also improve the familiarity and usability of centralised knowledge concerning market information, financial information, project management and research dissemination. The Industrial Research Fund and valorisation managers will also devote targeted efforts to intensifying contractual collaboration with the commercial sector and working proactively to identify opportunities for valorisation. In this context, we will also strive for the optimal involvement of emeritus staff members and alumni in concrete dossiers. We will also call upon external expertise, where relevant. Information from market analyses will be offered in collaboration with the Antwerp Management School, VOKA, Start-it KBC, the innovation centre and other market-oriented actors. For this external professional guidance in the elaboration of a valorisation strategy, we will also provide financial support from Industrial Research Fund-Proof of Concept projects.

4.3. Increasing income flows

We will develop a more effective university policy in the area of price-setting within the context of fourth-flow funding. We will focus efforts on trying to adjust the low price culture

and the reluctance to charge more market-based rates by involving valorisation managers in the negotiation process and by providing more information with regard to the full cost of activities. In addition, the valorisation fund will be supplemented by the successful valorisation of licence agreements and participations, thereby generating additional resources that will allow the provision of greater support for valorisation in strategic domains.

4.4. Expansion of a higher-quality international private law portfolio

We will adopt an active and professional international private law policy in order to expand the portfolio of valorisable knowledge and to operate a diversified licensing policy, based on increased involvement of Industrial Research Fund and valorisation managers and experts. We will increase the direction and involvement of Industrial Research Fund managers in the process leading to patents, licensing agreements and spin-offs. For each IP dossier, an active valorisation track will be elaborated by an ad-hoc valorisation team consisting of the researchers, a mandate holder from the Industrial Research Fund and the IP officer. This valorisation track will be monitored, after which decisions will be taken on the continuation of the dossiers, based on GO/NO-GO criteria.

4.5. Programmes in enterprise

We are committed to strong efforts to stimulate enterprise, in collaboration with partners including VOKA, the City, the Province, the Antwerp University Association and the Antwerp Management School (see also Section 2.4.1.3).
Teamwork is always an important aspect in any successful valorisation track. We will provide programmes in enterprise for both students and researchers. For example, this could be accomplished by integrating elements of enterprise into existing programme components more strongly than is currently the case. The programmes 'Dive into Business' and 'Deep Dive into Business' (in collaboration met the Antwerp Doctoral School) will be further reinforced and promoted in less obvious programmes. The board of the Industrial Research Fund will also establish a prize for a successful valorisation project that has had a major impact.

In discussion with the Faculty of Applied Sciences, we will strive to achieve synergy between the various enterprise programmes within and outside the University of Antwerp (e.g. with Start-it KBC, Bryo, SO-kwadraat, UBIS).

We would also like to provide our doctoral students and interested post-doctoral researchers with insight into the mechanisms underlying successful enterprise: creativity, initiative-taking and the recognition of opportunities. We will do this by bringing them into contact with inspiring examples and enthusiastic alumni entrepreneurs.

4.6. Engaging in strong interaction with investors

We will build and maintain positive and frequent contacts with private capital providers, as well as with seed funds and risk-capital funds (e.g. QBIC II, Capricorn, Capital-E, PMV, LRM, V-BIO, GIMV, BAM). In each case, we will introduce them to our funding opportunities in an early phase, in addition to searching for additional pre-seed and seed capital.

SECTION 5 – SERVICES AT THE UNIVERSITY OF ANTWERP

Our university assigns high priority to services. It is the only Flemish university to have a decretal Board of Services to the University and the Community, which provides academic directs to the University of Antwerp in its organisation and operations. This direction is translated through consultancy, stimulation and coordination, based on scientific expertise and analysis, provided by the Board, if needed. Colleagues engaged in the provision of individual and/or collective services know that they are supported and valued, as the statute for ZAP and the associated position profile recognises services as a third component in any academic assignment, including in evaluation and promotion dossiers.

1. Services as an organisation

The Board of Services to the University and the Community is an academic core-task board that is authorised to provide academic direction to and assess the internal and external service policies. To this end, several policy domains have been clustered: (1) University & Community, (2) Communications, (3) Social, Cultural & Student Services and (4) Library.

The policy domains are highly diverse. The decision-making in the Board of Services to the University and the Community is therefore organised according to a graduated system centring on several steering groups. These steering groups sketch the basic outlines and test them with the various stakeholders, including the Education Department, the Department of Research Affairs and Innovation or the Antwerp University Association.

The operation and interest of the steering groups is a dynamic fact that will be evaluated regularly, in discussion with the chairs of the steering groups. The composition of the steering groups will be redesigned such that all staff members will be equivalent members. The collaboration between the various departments belonging to the cluster services and other central services (e.g. the Education Department, the Department of Research Affairs and Innovation, the Finance Department) will be subject to further exploration, thus allowing synergies to function to their maximum potential.

2. The University of Antwerp on the map

2.1. 'Rethink tomorrow'

The University of Antwerp aims to devote major attention to its social role and responsibility as a centre of knowledge and education in the greater Antwerp region, in order to position itself in national and international contexts (see Section 1.1.2).

The theme 'Rethink tomorrow' will play a central role in this regard. The university's excellent research, inspiring education and service to society offer a young, dynamic context in which individuals can rethink tomorrow in their own way. The university explicitly includes this theme in its efforts to recruit students and staff members.

From now on, the Communications Department will develop all student-recruitment campaigns, in close consultation with the academic community. The steering group for communication serves as an important sounding board for and by academics.

2.2. Internal and external communication

For its own assignment, the Communications Department works in close consultation with the other administrative departments and faculties, striving to optimise its own organisation. To this end, synergies with other departments will be sought, particularly with the departments of University & Community and ICT. We will contract out concrete tasks whenever possible and desirable.

In recent years, the university has been strongly committed to developing proper communication channels, with the goal of putting the University of Antwerp on the map. These efforts will be continued and reinforced by paying increased attention to networking and building relationships with anyone who feels connected to the university. The further development of Customer Relation Management (the CRM system) will play an important role in this regard. The attention paid to online channels should be at least equal to the attention paid to offline media.

Internal communication is a key instrument for translating policy to all staff members at various levels. In addition to reinforcing and optimising mutual collaboration, good internal communications provide these staff members a sense of solidarity with and pride in organisation. In this way, 'Rethink tomorrow' will become a connecting and inspiring factor. We will therefore continue our efforts to expand Pintra as an instrument of collaboration and for thematic newsletters for bringing information to the internal target groups. To this end, additional efforts will be made to meet the needs of English-speaking staff members and newcomers to our university (e.g. through an adapted website and other forms of targeted communication).

We would also like to strengthen our external communications. We aim to be clearly visible in the cityscape, using targeted campaigns in the media and in secondary schools to increase our name recognition and attract students. Attention in the press and new media is an important policy priority for communicating our university project. We will reinforce our press work by opening up our expert databank to the media in a highly visible and unambiguous manner. Staff members can take media training, and we support them through written, oral and visual communication.

2.3. Secondary education

Good relations with the secondary education system are of the greatest importance to the quality of our intake of students. We will strive to optimise the coordination between central and decentralised initiatives from our university, and we will invest targeted efforts in information sessions in the schools of the greater region, year after year. Structural contacts with the schools will be made, followed by information sessions that include a general presentation of our university, as well as an overview of all of our facilities and study opportunities.

2.4. Alumni

Our university has an extensive alumni network with great potential, upon which we can draw and which can be reached to an even greater extent than is currently the case. We should activate and maintain this network. A recent study charted the needs of our alumni. The hearts of our alumni remain close to their programmes and faculties, which are the motor of all

efforts of the Alumni Office. The central Alumni Office also offers expertise, logistics and financial support. The operations of this body and its collaboration with the faculties should be evaluated. We will also be examining best practices from other universities.

2.5. Student communications

Student communications proceed in a wide variety of ways, including between students, between lecturers and students, and between students and the Student Administration Office. The various channels of communication will be re-examined with an eye towards efficiency, clarity and transparency in student communications. We have opted to construct an over-arching student portal that will group and present the various information streams to students in a personalised manner.

2.6. The University Fund

The University Fund has attained a solid position within our university. The coordination of various donations, gifts and bequests, along with the associated administrative follow-up, have doubled financial income from sponsorship funding. The current economic climate is favourable for *inter vivos* gifts and dual bequests. Failure to invest major efforts in this regard would result in missed opportunities.

Further expansion is urgently needed in order to explore additional and alternative funding channels. Taking advantage of major donations through networking and actively approaching companies with concrete projects will be essential. One instrument is the fundraising board that will be established, consisting of individuals with diverse backgrounds, knowledge and skills. The board will not be restricted to university staff, but will also include stakeholders, emeritus staff and alumni.

3. Our students

3.1. Diversity and individual character

The University of Antwerp is a young, dynamic and future-oriented university. Drawing on its geographical location, it is committed to building a democratic society by contributing to contemporary interpretations of liberty, equality and solidarity. In language and in thought, we refer today to a pluralistic, open society, multicultural and even super-diverse, founded on human rights. This is the framework within which, by continuously striving for quality, we want to give form to our distinctiveness: a cosmopolitan, pluralistic university, in which *all* students and staff can feel at home. In this, the university wants to emphasise the benefits of diversity as a source of creativity and enrichment through variety in insight and vision.

The University of Antwerp faces many challenges, due to its metropolitan context. In the next decade, Antwerp will develop into a 'majority-minority city', in which the majority of residents will consist of a variety of minorities.

Because of its mission as a socially engaged university, the University of Antwerp has always been committed to promoting the intake, study progress and successful graduation of students from disadvantaged groups. Our university should nevertheless strengthen its position even further in this regard, both internally and externally. There is a discrepancy between the potential intake of high-quality students from disadvantaged groups in the secondary education system and their presence at the University of Antwerp. Moreover, according to a recent study, the academic success rates of these students are significantly lower than those of non-disadvantaged groups. In order to make progress in this regard, we will be joining forces and optimising the available internal expertise (e.g. the Centre for Migration and Intercultural Studies, the University and Community Department, the Department of Social, Cultural and Student Services, student associations). We should also urge the government to provide additional funding for the specific educational challenges facing Antwerp.

We will also be working to raise awareness amongst our students with regard to this issue. These efforts will be supported by the creation of a structural dialogue. Additional efforts for such projects as Tutoraat, Klimop, Monitoraat op Maat and Mentoraat Plus will remain a priority.

The translation of these projects to the work place will also require additional efforts. Training is needed for all staff members with regard to diversity in all possible forms, with particular attention to interculturality. The influence of individual frames of reference on personal action should not be underestimated. Working in a multicultural context requires additional intercultural competences.

In addition, we will develop new measures (e.g. diversity coordinators) and support initiatives in faculties and programmes. The preparation of faculty policy plans and the designation of a diversity team can ensure a broad-based diversity policy within the faculties, support from the central level. We will also make a special effort to address the specific issue of student-refugees.

In all of these efforts, we will call upon external expertise (e.g. from the Netherlands), whenever possible and useful. We are also committed to collaborating with the university colleges for the purpose of implementing good practices.

3.2. Services to students

The flexibilisation of higher education, the increasing number of students and the diversity of intake call for increasing professional supervision within the central administrative departments as well as within the faculties. For both current and future students, our university offers workshops, individual guidance and training. The Department of Social, Cultural and Student Services provides information and support to students throughout their study careers. The support consists of three components: guidance throughout the study career (e.g. with regard to study choice, reorientation, study skills), requests for special facilities and psychological support.

Given their smaller networks, which are likely to contain fewer role models, incoming students from disadvantaged groups deserve special attention. The teaching of good study methods can help prevent students from dropping out. Although the current range of services is large enough, they do not always reach the right students.

One important challenge in this regard involves organising the guidance services in cooperation with students, whenever possible. One way to do this would be to involve students actively in publicising the services offered. The expansion of the Student Information Point (STIP) at Campus Drie Eiken is a priority, given the increasing number of students.

Within the University of Antwerp, the Study Advice and Student Counselling Services is the first point of contact for students with disabilities who need special facilities. The number of requests has increased enormously. The complexity of the cases, the revised legislation and administrative follow-up call for major efforts from all actors involved.

Our students have a right to a pleasant campus life. It is the university's responsibility to implement the accompanying measures (e.g. catering, housing, classrooms for student activities) as efficiently as possible.

All students can contact the Social Service for housing and assistance in funding their studies. The number of requests for individual financial support, however, is increasing exponentially. The University of Antwerp will act upon this challenge.

Although the university does not consider its duties to include the actual exploitation of student housing, it is prepared to ensure a sufficient supply of decent and affordable housing. Many activities are being developed with an academic character and community ties within the region. The current range of sports options and cultural services offers an array of possibilities. Where possible, we will engage in even more collaboration with the Antwerp University Association and Gate15 in order to increase strength within Antwerp. The collaboration within the Antwerp Research Institute of the Arts (ARIA) clearly offers a large number of opportunities relating to the arts and culture.

4. The community role of our university

4.1. Services and community debate

The university aims to be present in the community debate and to encourage anyone who could play a constructive role in this regard to do so. The critical interdisciplinary debate and the gathering and exchange of knowledge, along with the expertise present in the many research groups at the University of Antwerp offer a wide range of possibilities. The vision platform is an initial step in this regard, but we would like to provide even more encouragement for our academic corps to participate in the public debate. The goal is not merely to increase the visibility of these parties, but primarily to accept civic responsibility based on their academic expertise.

We would also like to encourage the student community in this regard. The student associations are obviously a point of contact in this regard. Other possibilities in this context could include integrating the operations of the pastoral service '*Zomaar een dak*' ('Just a

Roof') and the secular services under a common roof. One result would be the availability of youth services focusing on reception and encounters. Another would be the systematic organisation of debates and lectures for students and staff members concerning important social topics within a pluralistic framework.

The services will be encouraged especially by the creation of service projects, analogous to the education projects of the University of Antwerp Fund for Educational Development and the research projects of the University Research Fund. To this end, we will make financial resources available to colleagues for projects that fit into the framework of the University of Antwerp's service to society.

4.2. Lifelong learning and scientific communication

Through the Lifelong Learning Team, continuing efforts will be made to engage in dialogue and provide information based on scientific knowledge, with the goal of generating interest and increasing knowledge. Participation in various lecture series, science cafés, Science Day and similar event will help to publicise the academic expertise of our University of Antwerp. We will continue to stimulate and encourage every form of scientific communication. Career stimulation (as described in the STEM action plan) will be a policy priority. In close consultation with the Antwerp University Association, we will investigate the possibility of further expanding the STEM Learning Network in Antwerp. We would also like to involve other scientific domains (e.g. linguistics and literature) in the STEM action plan. The acronym could thus be expanded to STEAM: science, technology, engineering, arts and mathematics.

4.3. Development cooperation

Our university considers its duties to include encouraging students and staff members to be active in university development cooperation, based on the over-arching themes of well-being, justice and sustainable development, and paying particular attention to the least privileged. It provides active support to staff members in their activities in order to clarify the implications of our way of life and work in the global North for countries in the global South, as well as in their efforts to expand academic internationalisation in countries in the global South, partly from a Southern perspective. All of these efforts are being made in collaboration

with the entities that are active in development cooperation in some way throughout the university.

The University of Antwerp would therefore like to reinforce its long-term partnerships around and with institutions in the global South. The development themes are in line with the general theme of 'capacity building' in university development cooperation.

The forthcoming reforms in the development cooperation sector (2016, Minister De Croo) and the Global Minds dossier (Flemish Interuniversity Council-University Foundation for Development Cooperation) will have a direct impact on the internal activity of the University of Antwerp with regard to development cooperation. A Working Group for Development Cooperation will be established, consisting of representatives of three scientific disciplines (Human, Applied & Life Sciences) and entities active in the area of development cooperation. This Working Group will be charged with providing direction to the institution-wide policy (education, research, general awareness-raising) of the University of Antwerp in the area of academic development cooperation, as well as with reflecting on effectiveness and efficiency and promoting interdisciplinary and interfaculty initiatives in this regard.

5. The university library

5.1. Financial constraints

The university library is responsible for digital and analogue collections, which are increasingly becoming extensions of each other. Collection-building and its funding remain a point of considerable concern, in consultation with the faculties. The funding of scientific information is a major problem throughout the world. Publishers occupy a monopoly position, maintaining a stranglehold on libraries through continuous price increases. Amongst other actions, the library will ascertain what it can do with regard to managing the many thousands of subscriptions.

5.2. Maintenance and management of collections

We would like to remain alert to all new developments. Libraries, archives and museums operate within a strongly changing environment. The management of these organisations should provide direction to these changes. The library strives to achieve a sustainable personnel policy and encourage lifelong learning. Various committees provide advice on its operations. We would like to evaluate and intensify this collaboration.

The maintenance and management of collections requires ongoing care and follow-up. The collection-building system will be reconsidered. One gap in the collections consists of new textbooks, in both analogue and digital form.

We would like to retain the Quality Label that we earned from the Flemish government under the newly announced Cultural Heritage Decree. In 2013, the Library Board and the Board of Services to the University and the Community approved the policy memorandum entitled *Het Geheugen van de Universiteit Antwerpen* (The Memory of the University of Antwerp). This memorandum contained descriptions of pilot projects aimed at the professional registration and availability of academic heritage, the sustainable registration and digital presentation of artistic patrimony, and the establishment of a university archive. The Special Collections department manages the Print Room and the core collection of old prints, and it will be responsible for our artistic patrimony and academic heritage. A professional university archive will be established as a department within the library. The university has assigned priority to the selection and storage of administrative archives. Digital information is at least as vulnerable as documents printed on paper. In time, the historical archives will inventoried, opened and made accessible.

5.3. Digital collections

Digital collections and the associated services constitute a frontline area in the library policy. This is made possible in part by the library's automation department, Anet. The Brocade software is being continuously developed for opening access to the collections of libraries, archives and museums. Anet and Brocade play a central role in the network of more than 20 academic libraries and archives. Anet works intensively in the area of knowledge transfer, innovation and the sustainability of the basic infrastructure, with modern documentation of the complete source code. In 2013, the library established the spin-off Ciblis, which incorporates the automation of public libraries in Flanders, Belgium and other countries. As a shareholder, the University of Antwerp is contributing to the further expansion of Ciblis.

The core tasks of libraries include the acquisition and management of metadata. We will be exploring ways of improving integrated searching within our own collections.

5.4. Education and research

The university library contributes to education by providing study facilities (e.g. study rooms in libraries, learning centres and maker spaces). Generous opening hours and good facilities (e.g. special computers, classrooms for group work and fast Wi-Fi) are a part of this contribution. We will be evaluating the demand for longer opening times during cramming and examination periods.

The library supports education at the University of Antwerp in a variety of ways. The libraries of Campus Groenenborger and Campus Drie Eiken are being converted into library learning centres, and a maker space and new warehouse are being constructed at Campus Groenenborger. The influence of Google and social media has led to drastic changes in expectations. We would like to contribute to training users so that they will actually be able to locate high-quality information and assess the quality of information that is available.

The library supports research primarily based on its own specific expertise. For example, the academic bibliography and the digital repository are being developed further, in consultation with the Research Board. Together with the Department of Research Affairs and Innovation, we are following developments concerning open access. ORCID is a highly promising technology for the unique identification of authors, and it is thus important to the e-curriculum as well. Anet and the ICT department are jointly developing the integration of ORCID within the relevant systems. The library will continue the high-quality digitisation of its own collections to the benefit of research and education. We are investigating the best options for storing research data in the long-term while ensuring that they remain accessible.

6. Internationalisation

As one of the core tasks of the University of Antwerp, internationalisation is high up on the policy agenda. For the university, internationalisation is not an end in itself, but a prerequisite for guaranteeing high-quality and relevant work within education, research and services.

6.1. Intake and stay in Antwerp

The increasing numbers of international students and staff members coming to Antwerp means that services in all structures and segments of the University of Antwerp will need to be adapted, allowing the university to develop further into a truly international campus. Interaction and collaboration between central and faculty services is essential in this regard. We aim to streamline the administrative services available to international staff members and students. The organisational logistics at work in our university may not be clear to people from other countries, as they are not familiar with our internal structures. The processing time for administrative obligations and the practical preparations necessary for arranging a stay at the University of Antwerp should be reduced wherever possible. Possible measures in this regard include an updated website with a 'service point' function and central focus, though obviously with close links to the faculties.

For international students, we are elaborating a new project – MONDO – in order to create a 'community' in which joint activities are organised for and by international students, researchers and their families.

6.2. Exit

Our university sees the further reinforcement of the international dimension within education as an important challenge. We aim to provide our students with substantial international and intercultural competences, thereby improving their ability to function in a globalising society. It is important to continue our active efforts to provide a broad range of options for international mobility, proper preparation for students, extensive scholarship opportunities and 'internationalisation@home'. This will allow more students – and more diverse groups of students – to experience high-quality international experiences, whether at home or abroad.

We will improve and further develop services for incoming international students and departing domestic students, based on self-evaluation and surveys. Through the central administrative services, we will provide further support to programmes in their efforts to establish joint degrees, Erasmus+ programmes, summer schools and strong partnerships.

6.3. University networks

Our university strives to achieve stronger international collaboration. It will continue to identify innovative trends and, where relevant, to initiate and facilitate their application within the institution.

The University of Antwerp will also continue its structural collaboration with preferred partners in Africa, Asia and Latin America, including through development cooperation. It will invest in the existing university networks (the Utrecht Network, AURORA, YERUN, the Columbus Association and EUPRIO). It will also continue its efforts in the area of international educational programmes that promote project-based collaboration with partners in Europe and beyond. Through its successful Antwerp Summer University, the University of Antwerp is also forging ties with regional and international partners.

The university's structural international collaborations on education, research and services will be framed within a policy of targeted internationalisation and prioritisation: which regions and which topics? In this, we see an important role for the International Relations Office, in close collaboration with other central services, the faculties and the institutes.

Antwerp, 12 April 2017

Herman Van Goethem

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