



**van hall
larenstein**
university of applied sciences

gender equality plan

VAN HALL LARENSTEIN UNIVERSITY OF APPLIED SCIENCES
HR DEPARTMENT

Drs. J. van Iersel
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1. Introduction

Inclusion at VHL

The Van Hall Larenstein University of Applied Sciences (VHL) is an inclusive university of applied sciences.¹

We aim for excellence and we want to work together to create a stimulating study and work environment based on respect for diversity in the broadest sense of the word. We understand inclusion to mean that everyone feels valued and free to be themselves in their work environment. That we are all free to say what we want to say, obviously with respect for the other. That there is room for dissenting opinions, and equal opportunities for all. We believe that diversity among our students and staff improves the quality of our teaching and research.

Equality at VHL is about gender, sexual orientation, and more diversity among our staff in terms of cultural background, age, full-timers and part-timers, as well as a occupational limitations. It is precisely this diversity and the deployment of everyone's unique qualities that allows our university to develop more creative solutions, ideas, and insights.

All of this once again emphasises how aware we are at VHL of the benefit and necessity of a plan for promoting diversity and inclusion within our walls. This is how we can contribute to a better world for future generations.

Grant from the Horizon Europe programme

In this document, referred to as the Gender Equality Plan, we have translated this ambition, in line with the guidelines of the European Commission, into a sub-plan that would allow us to qualify for a grant from the Horizon Europe programme for research and innovation. The Van Hall Larenstein University of Applied Sciences frequently applies for EU grants.

The themes of the Gender Equality Plan are inspired by five of the lines put forward by the European Commission²:

1. Work-life balance and organisational culture
2. Gender equality in leadership and decision-making
3. Gender equality in recruitment and career development
4. Integrating the gender dimension into the content of research and teaching
5. Measures against gender-related violence, including sexual intimidation

Whereas diversity is primarily concerned with differences between people, inclusion is about the capacity to create a context in which everyone feels at home and valued, and is able to contribute to a common culture.³

In this document we explain how things stand at present as far as inclusion and diversity at VHL are concerned. We also present an action plan for how we plan to shape the building blocks for an inclusive university of applied sciences.

¹ 2022-2025 VHL Institutional Plan 'Growing as experts in transition'

² [Gender equality strategy | European Commission \(europa.eu\)](#)

³ Riordan, C. M. (2014) Diversity is useless without inclusion. Harvard Business Review

2. What is the Van Hall Larenstein University of Applied Sciences?

Mission

As a university of applied sciences, Van Hall Larenstein University of Applied Sciences (VHL) brings together people who want to work together for a better world. With our teaching and research, we train people to become ambitious professionals who can make a difference in the most important societal issues worldwide. Professionals who know how to translate their ideals into innovations, policy, revenue models, and impact. Our practice-oriented research makes us a reliable partner within our networks, where we apply our knowledge and work with others to discover how we can best contribute to the world of tomorrow.

VHL is emphatically choosing to prioritise the transition. Our domain is 'the Earth'. We train experts in transition and we work together to promote this transition. Our passion for the Earth forms our character as an institution. This character can be summarised in the following elements that we - and our partners - most value in our attitude and behaviour:

- *We are committed to the transition*
We determine the value of what we do by looking at the difference we make in practice. You can count on our experts to make choices that lead to real improvements. We dare to make choices, to use our knowledge, and to act in concert. We use the experience we gain in practice in our teaching and research.
- *We are pioneers*
We are proactive in our fields of expertise. You can always count on us to be fully aware of the latest developments and to push back our boundaries by continuously looking for ways to do better. We are curious, entrepreneurial, and focused.
- *We strive for excellence*
We train motivated professionals by being highly professional ourselves. You can count on us to provide the highest quality in everything we do. We are responsible, knowledgeable, and reliable.
- *We are in it together*
We are a personal university of applied sciences with short communication lines. We cherish our relationship with our students, colleagues, and partners. You can count on us to make everyone feel personally heard and seen. We engage in dialogue, provide customised service where needed, dare to show ourselves, and see diversity as a strength.

Our 2022-2025 Institutional Plan⁴ further elaborates on our strategic agenda, including action points. Our next step is implementing this renewed strategy.

Students and staff in figures 2021

VHL is home to 4787 students from 63 nationalities, divided over the Leeuwarden and Velp locations.

⁴ 2022-2025 VHL Institutional Plan 'Growing as experts in transition'

We employ just over 670 staff members from 17 different nationalities. We do not have any figures on our staff's sexual orientation or their cultural, ethnic, or religious background. Of our total staff, 65% are involved in teaching.

3. Our vision for Diversity & Inclusion

Our institution's success depends entirely on the quality and the diversity of our people. Surprising insights and innovative solutions arise from an interplay of perspectives, cultures, knowledge, and experiences.

We aim for excellence and we want to work together to create a stimulating study and work environment based on respect for diversity in the broadest sense of the word. Diversity, inclusion, and fairness are important key values at our university. We understand inclusion to mean that everyone feels valued and free to be themselves in their work environment. That people feel free to say what they want to say, always with respect for the other person, with room for divergent opinions, and equal opportunities for all.

We believe that diversity among our students and staff improves the quality of our teaching and research. Diversity is characterised by differences in gender, age, sexual orientation, cultural and religious background, and potential occupational disabilities. We value these differences and put them to optimal use so that everyone's contribution to VHL is of great value.

Points of attention

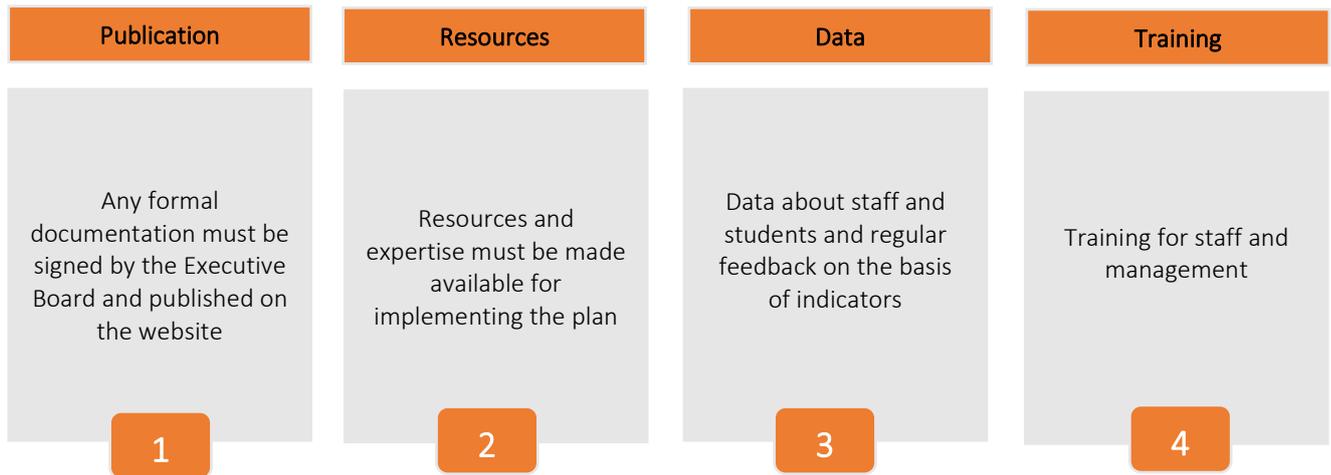
To help us achieve the above, we have defined the following points of attention for 2022-2025:

1. Diversity & inclusion are strategically integrated at all organisational levels at VHL. This is a precondition for the quality and success of our university of applied sciences. Diversity and inclusion are integrated into VHL's institutional plan and our strategic HRM plan.
2. VHL aims to create an inclusive culture. A culture in which all professionals are involved and feel involved by being invited to optimally deploy and develop a wide range of qualities in a safe environment.
3. VHL strives for an active diversity and inclusion policy, with equal opportunities.
4. VHL monitors and safeguards the effectiveness of any actions taken to improve diversity and inclusion. We provide our management and administration with structural reports on progress and results. This is done via the P&C cycle.

4. Mandatory process requirements

In order for a gender equality plan to qualify for EU funding, it must meet a set of four process requirements⁵ established by the European Commission. In order to qualify for a Horizon Europe grant, an institutional plan must include the following building blocks:

⁵ Horizon Europe, gender equality. Directorate-General for Research and Innovation (European Commission), 10 June 2021



1 Publication

This document was adopted by the Executive Board on 8 February 2022.

The Gender Equality Plan was published on our external website www.vhluas.com and can be found on the intranet for staff members.

2 Resources

- Our goal is to develop a common policy and co-ordinate our activities. To this end, in 2022, we created a Diversity and Inclusion task force, jointly represented by the teaching team and departments.
- At central level, we are reserving expertise for developing policy. To this end, we have freed capacity in the following support departments: HRM, Facilities & Support, M&C, Teaching & Research, and International Affairs. We have made central funds available for developing and implementing policy.
- Our study programmes and departments are further elaborating gender equality in their own strategic personnel and other plans.

3 Data

- At VHL, we use a personnel information system to record the following information about our staff: sex (male/female), job title, salary scale, age, scope of the appointment, and highest completed level of education (for teaching staff). Monitoring takes place within the HRM department and progress data with respect to gender equality, for example in executive positions, is publicly available in VHL's annual report.
- In the management meetings embedded in the P&C cycle, we focus on key figures. In formulating our plans around inclusion, we determine which key figures are leading in realising our ambition.
- Twice a year, we conduct a staff satisfaction survey (MTO). The degree of inclusion (social safety, freedom to be oneself, equal opportunities) is integrated into this survey. We use the

survey results to take action both at central level and at the level of individual study programmes/departments.

4 Training

- We see it as our staff's task to embody what it means to be a transition expert, while our task as an institution is to facilitate transitions within study programmes and departments.
- 'Helping people to blossom' in a 'sustainable environment' are action points within VHL. This also includes professionalising our staff. Staff members are allocated professionalisation hours (minimum 40 hour per year, in line with the Collective Agreement for Universities of Applied Sciences), and study programmes and departments are assigned professionalisation budgets (3% of the total payroll).
- Professionalisation activities are organised by the VHL Academy.
- In addition to professionalisation topics at study programme/department and individual level, we also consider strategic professionalisation at institutional level. Diversity and inclusion issues are translated by the VHL Academy into concrete development solutions.

5. Thematic interpretation of the process requirements

The European Commission recommends shaping gender equality policy around the following themes, and using concrete actions and goals in the process. Below we describe how we engage with these themes at VHL. Further elaboration and concrete details can be found in the ensuing policy.

Work-life balance and organisational culture

At VHL, we implement the agreements established in the Collective Agreement for Universities of Applied Sciences, and we attach great value to a good work-life balance. A good work-life balance is an ongoing and important theme. In past years, we have devoted a lot of attention to preventing and reducing absenteeism, and reducing unhealthy work pressure. This has involved communicating about this theme, as well as offering coaching and training programmes, facilities and financial allowances for creating a home office, and sports subscriptions. In addition, each location organises extra activities of its own. Our locations also provide a silent area, a place expressly intended to be used by people of all backgrounds, whether religious or not.

Our 2021 staff satisfaction survey (MTO) revealed that work pressure is a recurring theme. We are taking additional action to address it. For example, we have developed a work pressure policy, which is included in our strategic HRM plan, and consists of proposals for reducing and preventing unhealthy work pressure. What we mean by this is that we want to deploy our existing instruments in a more systematic and consistent manner, allowing us to combat work pressure in a way that is closely aligned with recent developments and our existing policy.

Gender equality in leadership and decision-making

The most important diversity-related objective in our strategic personnel plan is our intention to promote a more diverse staff composition. The table below illustrates the gender ratio in the most important job groups at VHL.

(Reference date: 1 December 2021)	Female	Male
VHL (670 staff members)	55%	45%
Management (Executive Board and location managers)	55%	45%
Supervisors (including management)	40%	60%
Education and Research		
Teaching staff and lecturing researchers	50%	50%
Lectors	42%	58%

Gender equality in recruitment and career development

When it comes to gender equality in recruitment and career development, we have set the following objectives for 2022-2025:

- More lecturers with a non-Western cultural background
- A more balanced distribution of part-time and full-time staff in terms of gender ratio
- A more balanced distribution across generations
- Enough international experience among teaching staff and lecturing researchers
- Filling 20 participation jobs by 2023

These objectives are further elaborated by the Diversity and Inclusion task force.

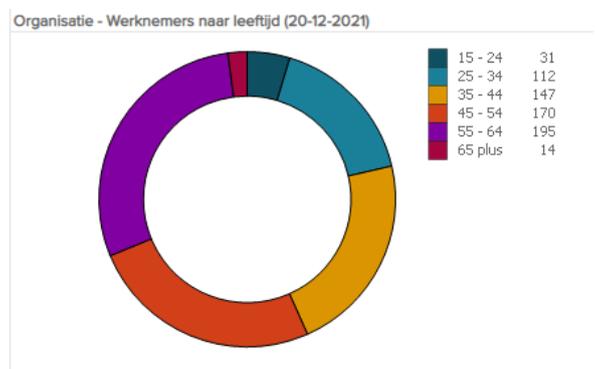
Gender ratio in relation to part-time/full-time employment

Despite the fact that our gender ratio is overall quite balanced, we do see an unbalance in the gender ratio when it comes to part-time/full-time employment. 21% of our male staff work part-time, compared to 79% of our female staff.⁶ This has to do with the gender ratio in executive positions. For executive positions, VHL demands a minimum contract of 0.8 FTE.

Generations

VHL believes in a good balance between younger and older staff members, to stimulate collaboration and knowledge sharing between generations.

The current age distribution at VHL is balanced. In our strategic plan, we devote attention to also creating this balance at study programme and department level.



Participation

jobs

VHL wants to create added value for society. A work environment in which all staff members feel involved and respected, irrespective of circumstances. Our ambition, as agreed within Universities of Applied Sciences Netherlands (UASNL), is to fill approximately 20 participation jobs by 1-1-2023 (1 participation job = 25.5 hrs). To make this possible, we plan to further strengthen our policy. In addition, our annual framework letters now include resources that can be partly earmarked for expenses related to participation jobs.

⁶ This percentage is higher than the Dutch average: Nearly 60% of working women in the Netherlands work part-time, versus less than 20% of men.

Recruiting personnel with a non-Western cultural background

In the spring of 2022, VHL took part in a focus group, organised by the job market and training fund for universities of applied sciences, that focuses on the university's employer brand. There we learned that to hire more people with a non-Western background at universities of applied sciences, VHL needs to establish a more attractive reputation as an employer for this target group. We have integrated the recommendations of the focus group in how we formulate our job market communications. We view this survey as a baseline measurement.

In selecting candidates, we currently aim for the best match, without prioritising candidates with a non-Western migration background.

Integrating the gender dimension in the content of research and teaching

Diversity & inclusion are strategically integrated at all organisational levels at VHL. This is a precondition for our quality and success as a university of applied sciences. For example, it is crucial to integrate the gender dimension in research and teaching because this gives us an additional perspective on teaching, research, and organisational challenges. It is also relevant to acquire insights into the degree to which teaching and research are approached from a 'male or female' perspective, and what the consequences are. This aspect is safeguarded in our strategic personnel plan.

Measures against gender-based violence, including sexual intimidation

VHL has anchored a number of measures in its standard rules and guidelines.

We use a code of conduct that establishes the principles of desired behaviour at VHL. This code describes how our staff members are expected to interact with colleagues and students, and to whom they can turn in case of undesirable behaviour. The code of conduct also devotes attention to the importance of respecting each other's ethnic or national origins, religious beliefs, gender, sexual orientation, and physical and mental abilities. The code applies to all VHL staff and to anyone working in and around the VHL buildings, for example in catering, cleaning, or maintenance. The rules of conduct that apply to students are described separately in the Student Charter.

If staff members are the victim of undesirable behaviour, bullying, discrimination, or sexual intimidation or violence, they can seek help from the confidential advisors or the ombudsman. In addition, VHL also has a complaints regulation regarding undesirable behaviour and an ombudsman regulation. Managers also play a crucial role in signalling undesirable behaviour and opening any complaints about this kind of behaviour to discussion.

We evaluate our policy regarding undesirable behaviour on a yearly basis.