



Dutch Physics

# IMPROVING DIVERSITY AND INCLUSIVENESS

A COLLECTION OF BEST PRACTICES



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# PREFACE

In a rapidly globalised world, the importance of diversity is becoming increasingly recognised across all aspects of life and across all scientific disciplines. Physics is no exception. The value of diversity in enriching human learning and experience is well-known: a diverse environment benefits both personal and organizational development and fosters scientific advancement. In 2019 the Dutch Platform Academic Physics (PAN), in which all eleven physics research departments/institutes at universities and the four physics-based NWO national institutes are represented, launched an inquiry to get an overview of how diverse these institutions are and what practices they have developed to be more welcoming. In the present document we summarise the results of this exercise into a collection of best practices, which can serve as an inspiration and a guideline in the path towards a fully inclusive work environment. Do not hesitate to contact us if you would like to receive more details of the collected background information.

The best practices here summarised focus on increasing the representation of "women in Dutch Physics", improving the "onboarding of internationals", and "retaining international talents". While these are crucial and complex questions, other important questions inherent to the very nature and definition of diversity are necessarily left unexplored.

Diversity refers to differences across our social identities. These include, but are not limited to, race/ethnicity, gender, disability status, nationality, religious affiliation, socioeconomic background, and sexual orientation. An inclusive environment is thought of a space where all these differences are not only welcomed and valued but are supported and celebrated. These identities are intertwined and intersecting and as a collective they pose questions related to equality. Aspects of diversity and inclusiveness are crucially important not only for senior researchers, but for students and junior colleagues as well, for whom we strive to serve as role models. The importance of representation is embedded both with issues of representation (e.g. how does a physicist look like?) but also with issues of diversification of the image of physics (e.g. what careers in physics are all about?). After all, nobody can dream to be what they cannot see and nobody can love what they don't know.

Creating inclusive environments in Dutch Physics involves a profound cultural change that will take years to accomplish. This cultural change does not take place in a vacuum. Instead, it takes place within a sociocultural space made of a series of complex systems, which include researchers, group leaders, colleagues, students, committees, the curriculum of BSc and MSc programmes, and organizational policies. For complex systems to work, however, all components need to interact with each other and work in synergy. What you have in your hands is only a tiny component of this complex system and as such it does not promise to fully address the challenge of creating an inclusive physics culture. We do hope, however, that it will act as an evidence-based starting point and source of inspiration for future diversity and inclusiveness initiatives. Our journey to promote inclusion in physics and valorize all human talents has only just begun.

## **THE PAN TASKFORCE DIVERSITY**

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## KEY TAKEAWAY STATISTICS

### INTERNATIONAL BSc STUDENTS

30% for English taught programmes, ≤ 2% for Dutch taught programmes

### FEMALE 'DUTCH' BSc STUDENTS

VU champion with 39%, majority approaching 20%

### INTERNATIONAL MSc STUDENTS

English taught programmes at all institutions, UU champion with 31%, several around 20% but also below 10%

### **FEMALE 'DUTCH' MSc STUDENTS**

VU & AMOLF champions with 26%,  
many  $\geq 20\%$ , no institution  $<10\%$

### **INTERNATIONAL PhD STUDENTS**

Typically  $\sim 50\text{--}60\%$

### **FEMALE PhD STUDENTS**

More international than Dutch,  
typically  $20\text{--}30\%$

### **INTERNATIONAL POSTDOCS**

Typically  $\sim 75\%$ , Nikhef  $100\%$ !

### **FEMALE POSTDOCS**

Many  $\geq 30\%$  but very few Dutch  
(UT highest with  $11\%$ )

### **INTERNATIONAL STAFF**

Nearly everywhere  $>30\%$  (DIFFER  
 $60\%$ ; LEI, RUG, RU  $50\%$ )

### **FEMALE PROFESSORS / GROUP LEADERS (FROM UD TO HGL1)**

$<20\%$  for 8 of the 14 respondents

### **INTERNATIONAL STAFF IN LEADERSHIP POSITIONS**

Only 5 of the 14 respondents have  
at least one international department  
head/institute's director

### **FEMALE STAFF IN LEADER- SHIP POSITIONS**

Only 5 of the 14 respondents have  
at least one female department  
head/institute's director





# BEST PRACTICES

Increasing diversity is a major strategy focus of universities and research institutes in the Netherlands. This has led to the definition of policies and to the establishment of advisory committees (e.g. the Gender and diversity working group (RU), the Network Female Empowerment Maastricht (UM), the Gender Diversity Policy project group (UU)). Many institutions have established special programmes to increase the number of women in faculty positions, such as the Rosalind Franklin Programme (RUG), the Christine Mohrmann program (RU), the MacGillavry program (UvA), the Westerdijk Fellowships (UU), the Irène Curie Fellowships (TU/e) and the Hypathia chair initiative and the UTWIST program (UT). All NWO institutes participate in the NWO-WISE program. Others have put specific targets for hiring female staff (for ex. TUD aims at filling 35% of the positions by women). TU/e decided to open vacancies for assistant, associate and full professor exclusively for female talent during the first six months of recruitment.

Promoting diversity starts with attracting a diverse pool of candidates for every open position. Special guidelines for recruitment have been implemented to this effect (see for example the recruitment guides of TU/e and RUG or the recruitment script of UM).

Recruitment of diverse staff entails different aspects for which we list a few suggestions, which the PAN Taskforce Diversity found especially inspiring.

# HOW TO ATTRACT DIVERSE CANDIDATES AND WARRANT INCLUSIVENESS IN THE HIRING PROCEDURE

## MAKE SURE THAT THE ADVERTISEMENTS ATTRACT DIVERSE CANDIDATES

This starts with vacancy texts written in a way that potential candidates find attractive. AMOLF, DIFFER and Nikhef use a [web-based resource to check advertisements](#) based on the work of Danielle Gaucher, Justin Friesen, and Aaron C. Kay: Evidence That Gendered Wording in Job Advertisements Exists and Sustains Gender Inequality, Journal of Personality and Social Psychology, 2011, Vol 101(1), p109–28; at UvA all faculty job advertisements are screened by a faculty-wide editorial board that focuses on inclusivity in the broadest sense; at RU the faculty's gender&diversity committee does the screening; TUD involves professional text writers to look at the gender neutral tone.

## MAKE SURE THAT DIVERSE CANDIDATES SEE THE ADVERTISEMENTS

Tips for diffusing advertisements include: using job boards, field specific mailing lists and social media, as well as mailing lists for

female scientists (*European Platform of Women Scientists EPWS*; *the Association for Women in Science U.S.A.*; *AWIS.Association Career Network*; *Physikerinnen in Germany*; *Landelijk Netwerk voor Vrouwelijke Hoogleraren*; etc.); personally contact senior female scientists in the field (find them via [academia-net.org](http://academia-net.org) or by simply searching "Name of the field, she") and ask them to diffuse the advertisement; require members of the search committee to contact at least 10 female scientists/colleagues each with the request for diffusion; require members of the search committee to establish a list of names of female scientists that would be ideal candidates before opening a position; contact head hunters for positions difficult to fill.

## **MAKE SURE THAT SELECTION COMMITTEE HAS AN INCLUSIVE ATTITUDE**

In addition to making sure that the selection committee is diverse in terms of nationality, gender and background, many institutions have developed dedicated courses on gender and diversity such as UT's 'Mindbugs and Gender Bias' and 'Diversity Proof Selection' training. Participation in such courses is mandatory for all selection committee members in some universities/NWO labs, only for the chair, and in others participation is voluntary. Several institutions adopted the recommendation of more than one female committee member issued from Marieke van den Brink's dissertation 'Behind the Scenes of Science. Gender practices in the recruitment and selection of professors in the Netherlands', 2009, RU.

*Note: The PAN Taskforce Diversity recommends that disability is taken better into account, for example by having provisions like a disability accommodation request in the on-line application process (see e.g. [faq.pgwebtools](#)), or by systematically instructing selection committee members on subjects such as interviewing candidates with symptoms in the autistic spectrum (see [the conversation](#)).*

## **WARRANT A DIVERSE SHORTLIST**

At DIFFER three weeks after the opening of a position an assessment is made on the diversity of the applicants. If required, the recruitment channels are broadened. RU has the policy that the





gender ratio of the shortlist should match the ratio of the incoming applications and that the selection committee's final report must include detailed information on diversity of the applicants. At TU/e the shortlist for appointment proposals for professor and associate professor needs to consist of 1/3 women; if not, justification by the departmental board is requested. RUG requires that the list of invited candidates must have at least 40% female candidates and that female candidates are given preference over male candidates with equivalent qualifications.

### **GUARANTEE THAT CANDIDATES ARE FAMILIAR WITH THE DUTCH NEGOTIATION SYSTEM**

Since recruitment procedures outside the Netherlands often do not foresee negotiations, the PAN taskforce diversity also asked whether Dutch institutions prepare the candidates for this part of the hiring process. At UU all candidates are informed by the HR advisor about the Dutch negotiation system; at RU the selection committee chair is tasked with explaining to the candidate how the Dutch negotiation system works; at UM the Network Female Empowerment Maastricht organized a negotiation skills course; RUG refers female candidates to the LNVH.

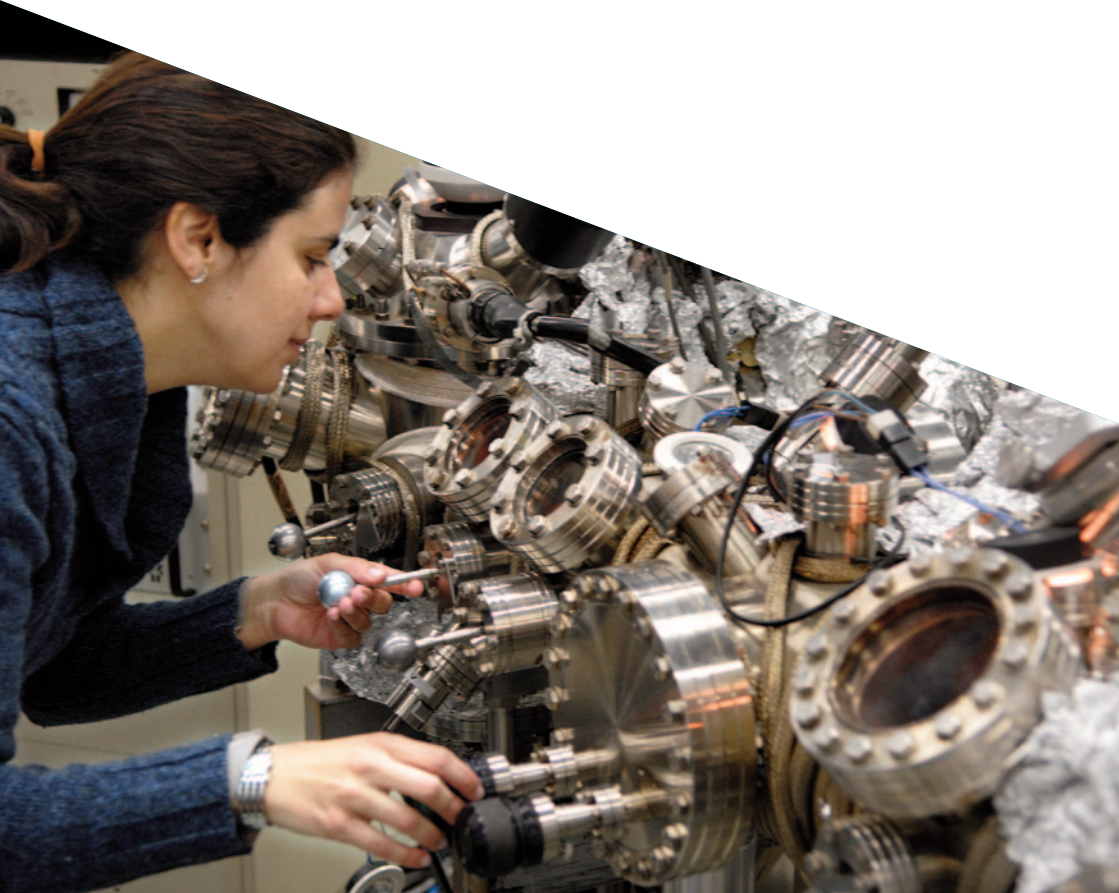
### **ASSIST THE CANDIDATE'S PARTNER IN FINDING A JOB AT THE SAME INSTITUTION**

Accommodating Dual career couples is seen as an important issue by all institutions. RUG has a partner programme to actively assist partners of new staff members: partners of RUG employees are considered internal candidates for RUG positions and in case the partner in question is an academic, a new position may be created with financial support from the Board of the University and agreements between faculties; at UM employees' partners qualify as internal applicants for UM positions; at some other institutions solutions are tailor made, and have in the past years ranged from providing and funding external career guidance, activating the proper network to launch a partner at (another) academic institution, through providing a 1-year postdoc position to be used anywhere in NL (UvA), to hiring a partner within the same institution in exceptional cases.

## ASSIST CANDIDATE'S PARTNER IN FINDING A JOB OUTSIDE THE INSTITUTION

All the universities have special HR officers/services that address the needs of newly appointed international employees and their accompanying partners/families (see below) – often they also offer help in advancing partners' careers. Special actions that were mentioned are involving alumni in helping partners to find jobs outside academia (RUG) or VU's career workshop for partners of international staff offered three times a year.

*Note: The Diversity enquiry highlighted that, contrary to what happened when AMOLF, ARCNL, DIFFER and Nikhef were managed by FOM, there is no longer any organized help to assist candidates' partners in finding a job. The PAN Taskforce Diversity recommends follow-up on AMOLF's suggestion to join efforts from NWO-I, possibly together with the KNAW and the Dutch universities.*



# WELCOMING AND ONBOARDING

## (PARTICULARLY FOR INTERNATIONAL NEW STAFF)

Moving to a new country is difficult at any career stage because it implies mastering many challenges in the private and professional life. If such a move is combined with starting a tenure track position, the demand on the new staff member is even higher because s/he also has to devote considerable efforts to fulfilling the promotion criteria.

All institutions have relocation services that help with finding housing, child care, schools for children, health insurance etc., often in collaboration with local services (think of the Holland Expat Center in Eindhoven and similar); for tax advice most institutions refer to the tax office but for example Nikhef refers to trusted advisors and partially reimburses the costs. Several institutions have dedicated websites (see i.e. [staff Universiteit Leiden](#) or the [NWO-I website](#); another recommended source is [factcards](#). To get an impression of the kind of leisure activities typical for the Netherlands, DIFFER recommends the link: [Academic transfer](#).

Below we list selected inspiring suggestions on how to accelerate the new employee's integration into the professional environment.

### **GUARANTEE THAT NEW STAFF LEARNS HOW TEACHING IS ORGANIZED WITHIN THE INSTITUTION**

At RUG every new staff member receives the "Education Primer" which explains how teaching is organized, who is responsible for what, and when things have to be done. UvA's Educational Service Center compiled a web portal with background information for new teachers. At UU the information includes on how teaching is organized in special courses for new scientific staff, which also introduce them to how research (and research support) is organized, how the governance and the financial system works, how careers can develop, etc.

In addition to the BKO ('Basiskwalificatie Onderwijs') programme mandatory at all universities, VU couples the new staff member to a staff member experienced in teaching. UvA sees room for a dedicated, practical training for new staff right before they start teaching, similar to what they do for TA's and PhD students before they start their teaching involvement. Furthermore, Tenure track staff members are assigned an academic mentor as well as a coach (typically the institute manager).

### **GUARANTEE THAT NEW STAFF LEARNS HOW RESEARCH & PhD TRAINING IS ORGANIZED WITHIN THE INSTITUTION**

AMOLF and DIFFER distribute KNAW DJA booklet "A beginner's guide to Dutch academia". RU provides an information brochure and organizes welcome lunches to provide the relevant explanations. At RUG new senior staff is assigned a "guardian angel" = a staff member who makes the newcomer knowledgeable, while tenure track staff is offered a mentor as also at UT, LEI, UvA and VU. Courses on PhD training and supervision are offered by several institutions, but VU makes them mandatory for tenure trackers and associate professors seeking *ius promovendi*.





## **GUARANTEE THAT NEW STAFF LEARNS HOW RESEARCH FUNDING IS ORGANIZED**

AMOLF and DIFFER refer again to the dedicated chapter in the KNAW DJA booklet "A beginner's guide to Dutch academia". DIFFER also recommends downloading the Welcome2NLRe-search app to get a good start ([App Store](#) | [Google Play](#)).

In addition to information provided by grant officers operating at the institute or faculty level, some institutions organize special information/training events such as RUG's 'Grant week' every October for all academic staff. Advice and assistance with the preparation of proposals is often provided by centralized services (think of the TU/e's Research Support Office and similar) and special training sessions/courses for tenure trackers are organized (e.g. by the Young Academy of UT).

## **GUARANTEE THAT NEW STAFF FINDS HIS/HER PLACE IN THE DUTCH RESEARCH LANDSCAPE**

The "[\*Dutch Polder Model in science and research\*](#)" essay by José van Dijck and Wim van Saarloos (KNAW) is considered very useful as an introduction. At RUG not only the new staff member's department head (as common elsewhere) but also the 'Guardian angel' advocate the newcomer's invitation to other NL institutions, nat.l conferences and workshops. AMOLF and RU ask senior staff to help new staff to find their way and offer individual coaching by fellow members of the institute.

## **GUARANTEE THAT NEW INTERNATIONAL STAFF LEARNS DUTCH AND BECOMES FAMILIAR WITH DUTCH CULTURE/DUTCH VALUES**

Most institutions offer an introduction course to such as the NWO-I's Dutch Welcome course to introduce newcomers to Dutch culture/Dutch values; VU has also a Global (meeting) room for international staff where the staff can meet with each other and locals. All institutions offer Dutch courses to new staff but RUG also offers 'Business Dutch' conversation, which deals with Dutch business culture (polder-policy, meetings, how to give negative feedback, etc.). Reading Jacob Vossestein's book "Dealing with the Dutch" is also recommended.

# CONTINUED SUPPORT FOR DIVERSE STAFF

## MAKE SURE THAT LANGUAGE IS NO BARRIER

In the enquiry 8 of the 14 respondents indicated that in their institution all relevant communication is in Dutch and English, 4 said that English is the main language and 2 gave no explicit information. Several mention to offer English courses for support staff.

## SUPPORT WITH MENTORING – SPECIAL EFFORTS FOR INTERNATIONAL/FEMALE STAFF

At every institution mentoring programmes are offered, often they do not discriminate between national and international or male and female staff; at RUG female staff is made aware of LNVH and its mentoring/advisory actions and intervention is encouraged especially among tenure track assistant professors. UM has a buddy system for new staff, Nikhef couples new and experienced PhD students.

## SUPPORT WITH CHILDCARE

RU, UT and TU/e offer childcare on campus; TUD set up a multifunctional International Children's Centre which through 'True Colors Delft' offers daycare for children up to the age of four and childcare before and after school to children up to





the age of 12, while education to children aged between four and 12 is provided by the International School Delft at the International Children's Centre. UvA and DIFFER cover incidental expenses for childcare incurred in connection with a business trip; TU/e's WISE-network offers a childcare grant to assist female conference attendees with small children; RUG offers childcare at all conferences/workshops and covers childcare expenses of visiting staff.

### **MEASURES TO ENSURE THAT HAVING A BABY DOES NOT HAMPER CAREER OF ACADEMIC STAFF, POSTDOCS AND PhD STUDENTS**

Several institutions explicitly mention a longer tenure track in case of life events and maternity leave is one of the criteria to extend a PhD or postdoc contract. RU and UM offer financial support after pregnancy leave for researchers to hire extra personnel, extra childcare, etc. UU offers female researchers four months of full-time assistance in getting their academic career back 'on the rails' when they return from maternity leave. The researcher can choose which area she wishes to focus on full-time during this four-month period, which can be scheduled at any time during the year after she returns from maternity leave. Her research group also receives financial compensation to appoint a replacement to take over part of the researcher's duties.

### **SPECIAL SUPPORT FOR FEMALE PhD STUDENTS AND POSTDOCS**

RU has a special mentoring program for female academics, which lasts 1 year and includes workshops, peer learning groups and the support of a mentor from a different faculty; all female post-docs are encouraged to attend this program. RUG senior female staff convene lunch meetings for female PhD students and postdocs and special activities are organized by the Graduate School, the PhD and Postdoc councils and the Young Academy (for example a special workshop "Working in a men's world – experiences by female physicists inside & outside academia"); at UM the Network Female Empowerment Maastricht organizes various activities for these groups.

*Note: at the time of conceiving the enquiry, the PAN Taskforce Diversity was not aware that many international young scientists drop out of the academic career and do not continue in industrial research either. They have not been stimulated/guided to think about their future career choice and build up the related skills as PhD students educated in the NL do. PhD students in the NL are often instructed with respect to this topic by their Graduate Schools. The PAN Taskforce Diversity therefore recommends that institutions setup a PostDoc Council (similar to PhD Councils and already present at various institutions, for ex. UvA and RUG), which organizes thematic events related to "Life after the postdoc", creates networking opportunities, shares relevant news/information, but also collects information on issues that postdocs might encounter and addresses them to policy makers at the Faculty/ University Board. Such a PostDoc Council could also help to counteract social isolation and stress related problems.*

## **MEASURES TO PREVENT/TACKLE SEXUAL HARASSMENT**

In addition to publicizing the existence of the confidential advisor and complaint procedures, as all respondents do, some institutions have defined a code of conduct such as the one for psychosocial workload (including sexual harassment) of TU/e, which also outlines a complaints procedure, or established documents and defined procedures for every aspect of integrity and for helping people who are victims of breaches in behaviour, which go against the integrity principles, see for [rug.nl/integrity](http://rug.nl/integrity).

## **MEASURES TO FOSTER AND INCREASE THE VISIBILITY OF FEMALE ROLE MODELS WITHIN THE INST./DEPT.**

VU has a hall of fame of female scientists; UM highlights female professors on UMWiki; LEI organizes a Physics Ladies Day for prospective students; LEI and RUG celebrate the International Day for Girls and Women in Science; AMOLF is a champion for what concerns speakers invited for the guest colloquium (weekly): Approximately 50% of them are female; at RUG own new staff is given visibility by inviting them to give a Colloquium typically within the first 6 months from arrival. UvA and VU have a joint program to attract international visitors

to Amsterdam for an extended visit/sabbatical. RU only provides sponsoring for events when the organizing committee, as well as those involved in the event, has a diverse profile. At LEI and RUG there are women network lunches, and several institutions have a university-wide network of female scientists (think of RISE, DEWIS, WISE, Hawkes network...).

## **OFFERING COURSES/EVENTS TO ENHANCE CULTURAL AWARENESS IN THE COMMUNITY**

At AMOLF an annual international lunch and a monthly "Language café" where employees can learn/practice languages other than English, organized and led by foreign employees. UM organizes a yearly Diversity Day for staff and students and provides D&I Grants (yearly budget to invest in bottom-up ideas from UM Community to increase inclusion).

## **INITIATIVES TO CREATE AN INCLUSIVE WORK ENVIRONMENT (E.G. SYMPOSIA ON DIVERSITY AND DEDICATED TRAININGS FOR STAFF)**

At various institutions staff members in leadership positions are expected to follow a more extensive diversity and inclusion training; at TU/e workshops on cultural awareness are offered to all, starting from PhD students. Events like: "Connect with my Culture festival" are organized. UvA has a Diversity Sounding Board in addition to the Diversity Officer (common at various institutions). RUG has diversity and inclusion trainers whose task is to improve the intercultural competences of staff and students in various ways, such as activities in the context of introductory events for international and Dutch students, workshops for technical and support staff and dedicated trainings for students who act as mentor or teaching assistants. For example, a workshop on 'Selecting and Supervising Chinese PhD students' and a course "Communicating with students with symptoms in the autistic spectrum" are offered regularly. At VU an active group of young PhD students and postdocs organize VU-wide symposia targeted toward PhDs and Postdocs, which amongst the topics cover diversity and intercultural aspects.







## COLOFON

**PAN Taskforce Diversity**  
**(continued by Dutch Physics Council)**  
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Pag. 2-3: **UvA (Wilbert van Woensel)**  
Pag. 6: **AMOLF (Rogier Chang)**  
Pag. 10: **Nikhef (Mats van Soolingen)**  
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