



# Gender Equality Plan

Rotterdam University of Applied Sciences

## Rotterdam University of Applied Sciences Gender Equality Plan

### Introduction

Diversity and inclusion are key issues for Rotterdam University of Applied Sciences. As a higher education community, we represent a smaller version of the world. It is our social duty to lead by example. By taking joint responsibility for an open, inclusive learning and working environment, where talent gets developed and where we help shape socially relevant transitions. In 2022, a Diversity and Inclusion White Paper was published, setting out the current situation, ambitions, and an action plan. Within the wide range of issues related to diversity and inclusion, equality, and more specifically gender equality, is obviously a very important issue. In this Gender Equality Plan we elaborate on the philosophy, regulations, guidelines and ambitions of the Rotterdam University of Applied Sciences with regard to (gender) equality, based on the underlying White Paper and other underlying policy documents. The chapter layout used and the topics covered are based on the Guidelines for an Equality Plan as published by Horizon.

### Gender Equality

By gender equality, we mean the equal treatment of people regardless of gender, gender identity or sexual orientation. We see gender equality as an integrated theme, approaching gender from an intersectional perspective. Intersectionality means that diversity is never just about one aspect of difference (gender, race/ethnicity, etc.). Different forms of inequality reinforce each other and should be seen in relation to each other. For example, experiences of gender are always linked to one's ethnic and sexual background. Different social positions should therefore always be taken into account. We strive for gender equality at all levels of the organisation and want to actively promote gender equality through this plan. In concrete terms, this means that the measures developed and implemented must have the aim of promoting gender equality. We do not see gender as a binary concept. We mean both the distribution of tasks and jobs being 'gender equal', as well as our principle that gender should not play a role in decisions and opportunities for staff and students.

For the time being, the data available in the various chapters are based on differences between men and women, as the current systems are not yet able to provide more comprehensive data.

## **1. Work-life balance and organisational culture**

### **1.1 Work-life balance**

Happiness at work is essential. It contributes to a positive organisational culture (and a positive organisational culture contributes to work happiness), a better work-life balance and enables employees to use their unique talents. By striving for happiness at work, RUAS aims, among other things, to focus attention on connectedness to promote the meaningfulness of work and study, and our employees' personal growth opportunities. Work-life balance refers to the ability of employees to flexibly combine their private and professional lives. The rules are based on general laws and regulations, the collective agreement and specific RUAS rules. Many of these provisions contribute to gender equality by making it possible, for example, to combine caring responsibilities, which are often unequally distributed between the sexes, with work. For example, parental leave is offered not only to mothers but also to fathers.

In addition to general arrangements such as parental leave and long-term employability arising from collective agreements and regulations, RUAS pays particular attention to work pressure through our work pressure policy. Research has shown that combining caring responsibilities with work can lead to higher work pressure. The annual Work Experience Survey (WBO in Dutch) gives us an insight into work pressure as it is perceived and possible differences therein between men and women. Teams then work on this topic themselves and the Executive Board monitors workload for the entire organisation.

### **1.2 Organisational culture**

Organisational culture refers to a set of values and norms: what is important to us and what is our behaviour like? At RUAS, we get information about how employees experience organisational culture through the WBO survey. Based on the WBO, there seems to be no reason to assume that the organisational culture, as it is experienced, has adverse effects on either gender. We do not yet have any research on whether this also applies to those outside the traditional male/female classification.

## **2. Gender equality for leadership and decision-making**

Rotterdam University of Applied Sciences finds gender balance in decision-making very important (equal representation). Forty-two per cent of FTE in job scales 14 to 18 are registered as F (2022). In scale 13 (middle management and senior policy and teaching positions) the figure is 48%. Gender balance in decision-making bodies is taken into account in the selection procedures for management, directors and executive board positions.

To have an inclusive working environment at RUAS, managers are trained in inclusive decision-making and applicants for management and executive board positions are tested for their capacity for inclusive leadership and behaviour (see under 7).

### 3. Gender equality for recruitment and promotion

#### 3.1 Inclusive working environment

Rotterdam University of Applied Sciences aims to create an inclusive working environment where diversity is used as a strength. The aim is for our diverse student body to recognise themselves in our staff, and for lecturers to empathise with the diversity of our students. An inclusive working environment is a prerequisite for providing an inclusive learning environment for our students.

Visible gender diversity creates a more inclusive image of RUAS as an employer, making RUAS more attractive to new employees. It also reduces absenteeism and staff turnover. In addition, visible gender diversity influences the image of RUAS as an educator among (potential) students and parents.

RUAS' recruitment and selection process has been adapted in recent years to make it more objective and inclusive. Job descriptions have been rewritten and assessment procedures have been adapted to ensure that candidates' skills and abilities are always at the centre of the recruitment and selection process.

The Strategic HRM policy of Rotterdam University of Applied Sciences includes the ambitions and activities as part of the HRM policy covering 2020–2022. This policy will soon be updated to cover the near future. It describes, among other things, how we are working towards becoming an inclusive and diverse organisation. The Diversity and Inclusion Action Plan 2.0 also sets out our ambitions and planned actions.

#### 3.2 Equal pay

A survey was carried out in 2022 on a possible gender pay gap at Rotterdam University of Applied Sciences. The results of this survey do not warrant any further action. However, we will continue to regularly monitor any pay differences at RUAS. This will be reported in the annual social report.

### 4. Integration of (gender) equality in research and education

Rotterdam University of Applied Sciences positions itself as a socially responsible and inclusive higher education community. The Strategic Agenda (2023 – 2028) explicitly states that we want every student and employee to feel welcome, safe, seen and acknowledged. Information about diversity and inclusion at the Rotterdam University of Applied Sciences is bundled on one webpage.

## 4.1 Education

One of the guiding principles of our teaching is that we take into account the characteristics (background, learning style, age, etc.) of the student. Our education is based on inclusive pedagogy and didactics. Students are actively involved in the education itself and its innovation, implementation and decision-making. In this way we improve the quality of education and increase commitment to the study programme and the organisation as a whole. Rotterdam University of Applied Sciences also offers students the opportunity to develop their talents in a way that suits them best.

The Included community, for and by students, provides space for students' unheard stories. It is the student voice focusing on inclusion, racism and discrimination, and the feeling of belonging at the Rotterdam University of Applied Sciences. The community aims for RUAS to be an organisation where everyone feels welcome and at home, regardless of sexual orientation, gender identity and expression, sexual orientation, disability, appearance, neurodiversity, age, origin or religion, and where acceptance and diversity prevail. We also provide the Student Welfare Team to support students. Student counsellors, student welfare advisors and peer coaches are available to students who may need personal or study-related support.

The Inclusivity Expertise Group aims to strengthen teachers' pedagogical and didactic competences for inclusive education and to increase the coherence between an inclusive learning and working environment. Inclusive education capitalises on the diversity of talents and role models in an inclusive working environment. Conversely, an inclusive working environment is a prerequisite for an inclusive learning environment. The expert group provides tools for dealing with diversity in our work and for organising, developing and implementing education in a way that all students can feel at home and succeed.

Learning and innovation programmes took place until the end of 2023, including the Inclusive Pedagogy & Didactics Working Group, where lecturers have the opportunity to work concretely on making their teaching more inclusive through experimentation. Guidance, space (in terms of time) and a community are provided. The working group offers knowledge exchange and impact research. The starting point is Inclusive Excellence. From 2023, the results of the workshop were shared widely in our organisation, including via this website. Also through the Educational Quality Advisors who advise on inclusive curricula, and through the Diversity and Inclusion Research Group.

## 4.2 Research

Practical research at the Rotterdam University of Applied Sciences focuses on (gender) equality, both in the content of the research and in the organisation of the research. Where applicable, (possible) gender differences are taken into account in the design of the research, such as in healthcare-related and medical research. Such research will also be reviewed by a Medical Research Ethics Committee (METC) in accordance with applicable laws and regulations. For research where this legal obligation does not exist, the Rotterdam University of Applied Sciences has established its own Research Ethics Committee (ECO), to which researchers can turn for advice on ethical, legal and procedural aspects of their research. The position and role of the Ethics Committee are laid down in the Ethics Committee Regulations. This is part of upholding the Netherlands Code of Conduct for Research Integrity (NGWI).

The aim is also to raise awareness of (potential) gender issues in research among professors, lecturer-researchers and other staff involved in research, to achieve a level of awareness in this area that will naturally lead to the inclusion of this issue in new research projects and plans.

## 5. Measures to combat (gender-related) undesirable behaviour

As an institute of higher education, we strive to create a safe learning and working environment based on mutual respect between all students and staff. Unfortunately, undesirable behaviour can occur in any organisation: (sexual) harassment, aggression and violence, bullying and discrimination, both gender-related and in other areas. We work together to create an inclusive environment where students and staff feel safe and act professionally. The key to desirable behaviour is respect, integrity and the courage to give feedback. Undesirable behaviour is unacceptable, both from students and staff. This is set out in the RUAS Policy on Undesirable Behaviour, which includes the position and role of confidential counsellors, the complaints procedure and a wide range of supporting measures. This includes the Undesirable Behaviour Action Protocol, which describes the concrete steps that students and staff should take if they encounter undesirable behaviour in the broadest sense. A structure has been put in place to ensure that reports are handled professionally, in a safe environment, with the possibility of making an official report to an external committee.

The Undesirable Behaviour Policy focuses on preventing and, if necessary, intervening in undesirable behaviour. Information about the policy is published on our intranet and we work to ensure that everyone acts accordingly. The key principle is professional and desirable behaviour and broad ownership throughout the organisation. Reporting alone

does not resolve undesirable behaviour; prevention and, where necessary, intervention are essential.

## **6. Monitoring, evaluation and resources**

As part of the implementation of laws and regulations, the Rotterdam University of Applied Sciences produces extensive annual reports. This includes the annual social report, which includes annual figures on the distribution of men/women in different job families and comparisons with previous years. Our reporting will be further developed as a result of this plan. Monitoring is therefore also part of the regular reporting cycle of the Rotterdam University of Applied Sciences. We note that this is a binary vision; attention should be given to finding a more modern formulation, in line with the vision on diversity and inclusion, that does justice to the full gender spectrum and also provides the information needed to further promote equality.

In recent years, significant additional funding has been made available for the implementation of the Diversity and Inclusion Action Plan. This once again underlines the value and urgency that the Rotterdam University of Applied Sciences attaches to this issue. In the coming years, the focus will be on translating what has been learnt into the existing organisation and making conscious choices in this regard. The Rotterdam University of Applied Sciences is focusing on five core themes: inclusive leadership, inclusive learning environment, inclusive working environment, inclusive communication and inclusive recruitment & selection.

The 2021 Annual Report included, for the first time, a comparison with 2020 in terms of the registration of reports from student welfare, confidential counsellors, the safety and security team and the complaints and disputes office. Compared to the national figures for unwanted behaviour, the numbers at Rotterdam University of Applied Sciences are low. We strive to create a low threshold for reporting unwanted behaviour so that incidents are actually reported. For example, through our confidential counsellors.

It is the ambition of Rotterdam University of Applied Sciences to continue and perpetuate the course set with regard to diversity and inclusion, including the full spectrum of gender aspects and related issues. It goes without saying that it is necessary to continue to support the existing initiatives, working groups and other bodies within our organisation, and externally, to achieve the goals set and to further develop our organisation as a safe learning and working environment where everyone can be themselves, can participate and is valued.

## 7. Training

Professionalisation is offered by our own HR Academy. Training courses on inclusive education have long addressed inclusion in the broadest sense of the word. For a number of years now, professionalisation for an inclusive working environment has also been offered. Components of this are:

- Inclusion workshops as part of the induction of new employees.
- The course Inclusive Communication for non-teaching staff.
- Extra attention for diversity and inclusion in the management development programmes of new managers.
- A course Inclusive Leadership has been developed and is being offered to management.

Gender equality is part of the various training sessions, including case studies. New developments are highlighted in the Inclusion newsletter, which all employees can subscribe to. The various training courses are evidence-based and are continually updated to reflect the latest findings.

## 8. What will we be working on in the near future?

Particularly in the area of inclusion and gender equality, we have already undertaken many activities and developed policies. However, we remain ambitious to do more and achieve more. The following points are planned for the coming years:

1. Recently, RUAS has introduced the option to register as non-binary or gender diverse in its human resources information system. However, employees have not been actively encouraged to register as such. We are investigating whether this is desirable. We are also exploring these options for student registration.
2. To further support our commitment to gender equality, we want to start making the best use of gender-neutral language in our communications. Inclusive writing means that texts are written in such a way that any reader can relate to them. Gender-neutral language can help break down stereotypical male or female roles. Research company Verwey Jonker Institute conducted a study on the state of inclusive communication at the Rotterdam University of Applied Sciences in 2022. We explored what this means in terms of communication with students, in our environment and with employees. The recommendations are being implemented and have been translated into a style guide for inclusive communication. Our aim is to continue to use and develop inclusive communication in all areas where possible. For example, communication in recruitment and selection, staff training and professionalisation, and in the various teaching and research materials.



3. In 2023, a large proportion of management attended professionalisation courses focusing on diversity and inclusion. This training will be extended to all RUAS employees.
4. Until now, our policies have assumed that gender is a binary concept. We want to take a broader view of gender. In the future, we also want to understand the perceived organisational culture for employees with non-binary identities.
5. Rotterdam University of Applied Sciences has the ambition to support gender diverse and transgender people, especially in their transition period. This applies to employees, students and third parties who have any kind of relationship with our organisation.
6. Our research centre Urban Talent researches inclusion as a theme. Knowledge gets developed that will help professionals make society more inclusive, so that every person and his, her or their talents can and may participate in society. This research contributes to strengthening the competences of (future) professionals. The aim is to apply the knowledge and experience gained from this research to our other research projects, teaching and organisational culture. As of April 2023, the research centre has a professor who will conduct research focused on this topic.

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