

Action Plan

Diversity & Inclusion Office

January–December 2023

“Quick Wins”

Version 1.3

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Contact: diversity@rug.nl

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Acronyms

BoU	Board of the University
D&I	Diversity & Inclusion
EAB	External Advisory Board
GEP	Gender Equality Plan
IAB	Internal Advisory Board
IC	Intercultural Competence
IDI	Internationalization, Diversity and Inclusion
LANDO	Landelijk overleg Diversity Officers
SER	Sociaal-Economische Raad
TAG	Teaching Academy Groningen

I. Introduction

Purpose of this Document

This document, **Action Plan Diversity & Inclusion Office, January-December 2023: Quick Wins**, identifies the objectives and intended actions of the D&I Office for January to December 2023. This document follows the 2021 [University Action Plan Diversity and Inclusion. Belonging in the University of Groningen](#). Please refer to that document for the overall mandate for the Diversity and Inclusion Office, its positioning in the university, the goals and activities for the short term (2021-2022) and the longer term objectives (2021-2025). A summary of the D&I Office's work in 2022 can be found in retrospective report for 2022 ("[Setting Up](#)"). **The appendix contains the overview and elaboration of the 2021 Action Plan ('Uitwerking Appendix D&I Action Plan') updated for 2022.**

Definitions

The University of Groningen wants to be a university where staff members and students at the university feel respected and experience a sense of belonging. Everyone, regardless of visible and invisible differences in background, experiences, perspectives, characteristics and identity, deserves equal opportunities. Equal opportunities can only be navigated if our policies and procedures are tailored to different needs of different community members. Differences should be recognized, utilized and properly facilitated in order to help individuals reach full potential, which, in turn, will enable the university to reach its potential.

Diversity is part of the academic community. The D&I Office believes that diversity enriches the academic debate and helps to improve the quality of teaching and research. Diverse perspectives, when managed well and properly facilitated, result in an inclusive environment that contributes to improved quality and sustainability of our education and research. Diversity, inclusion and equity are important core values for the University of Groningen.

The D&I Office recognizes that prejudice, discrimination and racism also occur at the university, and it pursues an active diversity and inclusion policy to help to foster equity for everyone. Awareness, policy and support are therefore needed to achieve the strategic aim that students and staff feel at home and experience a sense of belonging. As a learning organization, we strive to continually improve how we manage this challenging reality.

Our D&I programme and activities are aligned with the actions and advice of the [National Advisory Committee for diverse and inclusive higher education](#). In the references, you will find the documentation used to write this document.

Diversity

Our broad definition of '[diversity](#)' not only covers characteristics that are usually visible (such as skin colour and physical appearance) but also less visible and invisible characteristics (such as

cultural background and nationality, functional diversity and health condition, gender identity, sexual orientation, socioeconomic background, opinions, religious beliefs, neurodiversity, style of working, prior degrees, age and experience, care duties and language). Particular attention is paid to intersectionality, as all these characteristics may be interrelated in complex ways.

Inclusion

We define 'inclusion' as a safe study and work environment in which each staff member or student feels at home and is able to develop thanks to equal treatment, and in which a wide range of perspectives is offered and taken into account.

Document History

The first version of this document was written in December 2022 as a part of the 2023 Action Plan. After internal review and slight revision, in February 2023 it was submitted to the Internal Advisory Board and the Faculty Representatives (the latter only in outline form). The second version of this document (March 2022) incorporated the feedback from the Internal Advisory Board and the Faculty Representatives and was submitted to HR for final review. Finalization of this document prior to submission of the Action Plan to the Board of Directors awaited approval of the HR department. Feedback on the HR related content (October 2023) did not require any further changes to the document. In November 2023, it was decided to separate the retrospective Results Reports from the future oriented Action Plans, as the former do not need HR and Board of Directors approval. Version 3 reflects that separation.

How to Read this Document

The remainder of this document is organized as follows:

- [Context 2023](#) - This section explains the internal and external factors that are expected to affect the D&I Office's plans for 2023.
- [Objectives](#) - This section explains general diversity and inclusion objectives and the specific ones as formulated in the 2021 Action Plan for the 2021-2025 period.
- [Activities](#) - This section describes the activities planned for 2023. It is divided into:
 - Multi-year or annually recurring projects
 - Strategic Priorities
- [Looking to the Future](#) - This section concludes the Action Plan for the upcoming year.
- [References](#) - This section details the references used to create this document.

II. Context 2023

Internal Context

History of the D&I Office and Next Steps

The mandate of the D&I Office was identified and commenced at the end of 2021. In 2022, the D&I Office realized the intended organizational form - establishing not only the core D&I team (Chief D&I Officer, Programme Coordinator, Communications Advisor, and Student Assistant) but also the designated support bodies (including, among others, the Internal and External Advisory Boards and Faculty D&I Representatives). 2022 was the year of "Setting Up." While establishing the office was an important element of the work that year, the office also began implementing activities.

2023 will be the year of "Quick Wins." In order to gain legitimacy and recognition while also enacting organizational change, the D&I Office has identified a number of low-investment activities that can make a large impact towards its goals.

While the D&I Office aims to address all aspects of diversity and inclusion, the office selects 1-2 key domains to focus on each year. In 2022, these were accessibility and cultural diversity, In 2023, the focus domains will be 1) the **LGBTQIA+ community**, 2) **race and discrimination**, and 3) **cultural diversity**. Activities will be organized specifically around these themes.

University Context

D&I policy development is not an isolated domain, but is also part of education and research, Human Resources and international strategy and relations policy, which is developed under the responsibility of their respective directors on the central level. It is the task of the Chief Diversity & Inclusion Officer (as the figurehead and initiator of this theme) to coordinate all initiatives and develop D&I policy in close collaboration with them. The Chief D&I officer will therefore work closely together with other (policy) officers with different, but related, work fields.

As D&I is linked to many themes, the D&I Office collaborates with various internal stakeholders. Two new initiatives are expected to mature in 2023 - Social Safety and Inclusive Education.

Social Safety. In 2022, the Integral Safety project was given its own place within the University Services business operations as a part of the HR and Health Cluster. This brought with it responsibility for the theme of social safety (among others). Prior to 2022, the Board of the University put forward a [Zero-tolerance policy](#), [Complaints procedure](#) and [Code of Conduct](#). Since 2022, a broad range of Active Bystander Training has been set up to promote a culture of speaking up against socially unacceptable behaviour. A Social Safety programme manager will be appointed early in 2023 with the assignment to draw up a 3-year plan. As the fields of Diversity and Inclusion and social safety have significant overlap, social safety being necessary

but not sufficient for inclusion, conceptual clarification of the relationship of the two and collaboration between the two projects will lead to new activities.

Inclusive Education. In 2022, dr. Jan Riezebos, professor in Educational Innovation at the Faculty of Economics and business and Academic Leader of the Teaching Academy Groningen was awarded the national Comenius Leadership Fellowship for a university-wide project on inclusive education. An Educational Development Officer will be appointed early in 2023 with the assignment to develop logistical interventions to support teachers in managing and benefiting from student diversity in the classrooms. Together with the TAG D&I working group, the Comenius Educational Development Officer, the D&I Office will work to ensure that D&I themes are included in the resources available to teachers.

In 2022 the annual **NSE results** indicate that international students scored significantly lower on many of the items in comparison to Dutch students. This is also so on the specific item “I experience equal treatment of students.” That international students scored significantly lower than Dutch students on the item on equal treatment (despite the generally high score) and the general tendency of a significantly lower score by international students concerns the D&I Office. Seen through an intercultural lens, recognizing that there are cultural differences in responding to surveys, this concern is exacerbated. The D&I Office will continue to monitor this result and engage the stakeholders to develop a clearer perspective on why this difference exists.

External Context

In 2022, the cabinet decided on a **gender [quotum](#)** for all semi-public institutions. A quatum of 33% female employees will be required for scale 15 and above, starting in 2024. If this target is not met, sanctions will be imposed. In the upcoming year the D&I Office, together with HR, will need to monitor the developments within the University, and, together with other stakeholders consider additional avenues to realize this.

The OCW Minister’s letter on the **internationalization of higher education** and the proposed law on language and accessibility (*taal en toegankelijkheid*) continues to hold the attention of the D&I Office. Concrete measures are expected to better control and direct the number of international students, and central control of the internationalization of Universities has been proposed. Further, Universities will be expected to preserve and strengthen the Dutch language. What shape these measures will take and how these measures will impact the diversity of our University is of concern to the D&I Office.

III. Objectives

Generally, there is a distinction made between diversity and inclusion objectives.

Diversity Objectives

Objectives for diversity customarily address the need to reflect a diverse and inclusive society.

To the extent that this fits in our academic context, the objectives for gender diversity, as articulated in the Gender Equality Plan, are a reflection of diversity objectives: a 33% proportion of female professors by 2025 (currently at 27%), with accountability held via objectives discussed annually between the Board of the University and the faculties.

Elaboration of quantitative diversity objectives can also monitor input, throughput and output (at the interview stage, in career development, and monitoring departure), a leadership quota, and indirect measures such as gender pay equity.

Whereas in the past, the focus of the Chief Diversity Officer was primarily focussed on gender diversity, with the establishment of the D&I Office, other diversity domains fall under its remit. The diversity emergent from internationalization also warrants clarification of diversity objectives.

Diversity objectives for internationalization are more complex. With the intention to develop as an international university and to prepare students for the global job market, internationalization is one of the main focus points on the strategic policy agenda. Internationalization serves to mirror the global community. The university is international in nature (27% students, 40% academic staff). Though no explicit diversity objectives are set for input, diversity objectives for internationalization raise questions about retention and representation in governance structures within the university. Furthermore, though his purposeful choice to be an international university brings with it a richness, it also presents challenges, primarily found in the need to develop a culture of inclusion. More quantitative objectives for inclusion are therefore necessary.

At the same time, this international demographic does not reflect the composition of local demographics either of the Northern Netherlands or of the Netherlands in general. The international interpretation of ethnic background does not address the range of ethnic backgrounds within the Netherlands, nor does it address the lack of an equitable pipeline for those ethnicities into academia. Specific objectives for ethnic minorities in the Netherlands, needed to rectify systemic discrimination they encounter, would need to be set to address this objective, but this is hampered by privacy concerns around collecting this data. This concern is currently being investigated at a national level by LanDO and in an NWO [study](#)¹ piloting quotas based on ethnicity, in which the UMCG is one of the consortium members.

Inclusion Objectives

¹ Quotas for the Inclusion of Racialized Dutch Scholars 2023-2026), research in the Advancing Equity in Academia through Innovation Advancing Equity in Academia through Innovation research programme. Dutch Research council (Nederlandse Organisatie voor Wetenschappelijk Onderzoek, (NWO)

Percentages aren't people, and in the objective to create a more inclusive, equitable organization, it is necessary to move beyond the numbers and set objectives for inclusion. These include advocating for diversity to enrich our academic community, improving awareness of relevant diversity and inclusion issues, and reducing inequality, prejudice, discrimination and racism.

Most of the objectives of the D&I Office for the upcoming period are inclusion objectives, aimed at developing a culture of inclusion.

The objectives for the D&I Office, formulated in the 2021 [University Action Plan Diversity and Inclusion. *Belonging in the University of Groningen*](#), as focus points for 2021-2025 include:

1. We will communicate that the visibility and urgency of the theme of diversity and inclusion is a precondition for academic success and is part of the UG's Strategic Plan.
2. We will raise awareness of the added value of diversity and the existence of privilege and bias to achieve a change in culture towards more inclusion.
3. We will pursue an active diversity and inclusion policy to help create equal opportunities for everyone; we will involve and consult the various stakeholders.
4. We will carry out a baseline measurement and monitor the effectiveness of the D&I policy and actions by introducing a monitoring system or by using an existing one.

The Diversity Office's primary modality is acting as intermediaries in formulating and implementing diversity and inclusion policy, ensuring that this policy is transparent, that various stakeholders can provide critical input and that the approach is as comprehensive as possible. To this end, the activities implemented in the first half of 2022 were focused on continuing to coordinate several existing multi-year or annually recurring projects. In the second half of the year, an initial focus on strategic priorities was defined. Throughout the year, the office was asked to advise, collaborate or advocate on ad hoc activities.

IV. Actions 2023

In 2023, multi-year or annually recurring projects will be continued. Strategic priorities lead to a number of new projects, the 2023 diversity domains, and new initiatives in communication, and with HR.

Multi-year or annually recurring projects

Collaboration

Regular collaboration will continue or will be initiated with the following stakeholders

- Confidential advisors
- Ombudsperson

- Integral security
- Programme Leader Integrity
- TAG D&I community of practice
- Accessibility project
- Social Safety programme manager
- Comenius Educational Development Officer,

Infrastructure

The following infrastructural collaborations be continued.

- Seeking advice and guidance from the Internal Advisory Board (three meetings per year) and the External Advisory Board (meetings two times per year).
- Coordinating and collaborating on D&I actions at Faculty and D&I Office level in the meetings with the Faculty representatives (monthly).
- Organizing the six-weekly meetings of the Internationalisation, Diversity and Inclusion (IDI) policy officers.
- Representation of the University and alignment of strategy at various national and international bodies, specifically, such as the Guild's D&I Working Group, The Coimbra Groups' Equality and Diversity Working Group, and the National Network of Diversity Officers.

Echo Award

The D&I Office will once again coordinate the identification, selection and submission of nominees for the Echo award, for students with a non-Western background.

For the following actions, changes in approach are expected in the upcoming year:

Diversity Week 2023

The week from 2-6 October 2023 will be dedicated to diversity and inclusion. In contrast to previous years, the D&I Office will coordinate the actions organized by various Faculties throughout the University, in addition to the activities organised by the D&I Office itself, to scale up Diversity Week 2023. This serves to both to increase awareness and to offer opportunities for the development of skills and knowledge.

Gender Equality Plan (GEP)

As opposed to previous years when the Gender Equality Plan was monitored, in 2023, the Gender Equality Plan will also be reviewed and updated, incorporating the European Commission's call for Inclusive GEPs and gender-based violence and attending to the negative effects of positive discrimination.

The RFF community will continue to receive support while encouraging a more of a self-organizing structure of its community. After discussion with the Committee of Deans and pending positive decision by the Board of the University, a new round of Aletta Jacobs chairs might be prepared, in cooperation with HR.

In addition, the UMCG is doing research into pay equity. The D&I Office will closely attend to their process and findings. Also, various faculties are attending to the question of possible salary gaps. HR and the D&I office are involved in this discussion.

(Semi-) Annual Faculty Boards Meetings

The meetings of the Chief Diversity Officer with all Faculty Boards in the spring of 2022 resulted in a number of specific KPIs/targets. For 2023, there are targets that will need continued monitoring, and one target that is planned for the year. For the following KPIs established in 2022, deadlines will need to be extended or will come due. They are the following:

Objective	Action 2023
By the end of 2022 each faculty has its own D&I officer, representative, or working group ² .	Follow up
By the end of 2023 each faculty has its own (updated) D&I plan.	With faculty D&I representatives
Each faculty will, in principle, recruit for functions and 'roles' in an open and transparent procedure. This will be monitored by HR and the D&I Office.	Monitor
In all selection committees (as well as for admission, educational and exam committees) there is sufficient diversity (broader than min. 2 women), dependent on the situational context. This will be monitored by HR and the D&I Office.	Monitor
Per faculty, a target for number of female professors is formulated (per year) and discussed with the board of the university.	Monitor
The overall aim is to have a diverse staff population so that each student is able to find a role model within the staff.	Overarching goal
In the first months of 2023 D&I office will publish guidelines inclusive language ('handreiking').	Plan

Meetings will be held with Deans and/or Faculty Boards new to their position - Dean of FSE, Philosophy, UMCG. Follow-up meetings with the Faculty Boards will be available on request.

Organize and Host the Developing across Differences Summer Schools

Due to the decision of the Language Centre to focus solely on language training, what started as a collaboration between the Language Centre and the D&I Office, will gradually be fully transitioned to the D&I Office. For the 2023 delivery of the Summer Schools, the strategic responsibility shifts to the D&I Office, while the administrative and financial responsibility remains with the Language Centre. After the 2023 delivery, depending on the status of the Language Centre, new arrangements will need to be made for its administrative support.

² End 2022 the following faculties have a diversity officer / representative or chair of D&I group/ committee: FEB, GMW, UCF, UCG, FRG, FRW, FSE, FMW. The following faculties are still considering how to implement this: Arts, Philosophy, Theology. An overview (up-to-date) is available [here](#).

2023 Strategic Priorities

Alongside the continuation projects, the D&I Office will initiate a number of new projects: measurement of D&I, annual focus on diversity domains, communications, and work with HR.

New Projects

Measurement

Measuring diversity and inclusion of staff and students is a critical part of diversity policy. This enables us to set a baseline, to be able to benchmark, and to determine effectiveness. Yet, this is a complex undertaking - privacy considerations limit the amount of personal data that can be collected, without which it is difficult to collect diversity data; and, how do you effectively measure the perception of inclusion? The D&I Office, together with the Faculty D&I representatives, will look into various instruments of measuring inclusion (e.g. the Dutch Inclusion Monitor, the Cultural Barometer, the SER Monitor on the Diversity Charter and others), including the data already collected via existing instruments (e.g. the Staff Satisfaction Survey, the National Student Enquete, and others) with the intention of either implementing a base-line measurement in the Fall of 2023 or to make use of the existing data. Alongside this more quantitative data, it remains important to highlight qualitative stories.

Grass Roots Initiatives

In the fall of 2023, the D&I Office wants to pilot a call for Grass Roots D&I initiatives amongst students. This call would challenge students to propose an innovative activity to promote a culture of inclusion within the university, and the D&I office would provide seed money to realize the activity.

Diversity Domains

Annually, activities will be developed for a number of diversity domains that are particularly pertinent that year. For 2023, they will be activities around LGBTQ+, Race & Discrimination and Cultural Diversity. New domains will be chosen for 2024.

LGBTQ+ (with special attention to T)

LGBTQ+ inclusion means making sure that staff and students of all sexualities and gender expressions feel safe, can be themselves, and are valued in the workplace. Despite significant progress in recent years, they still face rejection, discrimination or even harassment in the workplace. Particularly, transgender members of the community are often disproportionately faced with bullying or harassment.

The following projects will be pursued in 2023:

- Use of pronouns - awareness raising via the Inclusive Language Style Guide, inclusive language workshops and via social media.

- Names & gender designation in forms and software systems for both students and staff (e.g. mepa/progress/brightspace/recruitment) - in collaboration with CIT and HR the online systems for name and gender registration will be reviewed for inclusion. (See also With HR > Gender Registration, below.)

Further D&I programming for the LGBTQ+ community will be developed in [collaboration](#) with the relevant employee/student networks.

Race and Discrimination

1 July 2023, it will be 150 years slavery was formally abolished (in the western colonies of) the kingdom of the Netherlands. Ketikoti is the day this freedom from slavery is celebrated. In the week after Ketikoti, the D&I Office will organize a (number of) Memory Walks. Together with the UG historian researching the relationship of the municipality to the Dutch slave trade, a walking tour will be held along the places that are relevant to the city's and/or the university's role in the Dutch slave trade. Other moments for the same might be during Diversity Week. In addition, BLOG (Black Ladies of Groningen) will be organizing one specifically aimed at students.

Slavery, though a historical fact, has its modern day ramifications in discrimination and racism. To continue to raise the awareness to the persistence of racism and discrimination, the D&I Office is exploring the implementation of the following campaign:

- A Sessions of Significance (betekenissessies) campaign, to engage in dialogue around the question 'do you experience discrimination at the University?'

Further D&I programming to address race and discrimination will be developed in collaboration with the relevant employee/student networks.

Cultural Diversity

Internationalization, though doubt is cast upon its worth by the letter of the Minister and the proposed law, is an irreversible process that is now embedded itself in the identity of the University of Groningen. As with other domains, diversity does not automatically result in inclusion.

Throughout the University, many are doing the work of developing the intercultural competence (IC) of staff and students. More than 75 have gone through the Winter School and are aligned in perspective on what intercultural competence is and how to develop it. In 2023-2024, the Diversity Office wants to deepen the collaboration amongst those working in this domain by encouraging the establishment of an IC network with the purpose of sharing insights, methods and best practices, addressing questions and continued professionalization and strategic alignment of those involved in this pursuit.

In addition, the D&I office will pursue the following activities: pursue effective and efficient approaches to onboarding international students, interpret and follow up on the discrepancy between Dutch and International students emergent from the NSE results, continue to advocate for intercultural competence training throughout the University, remain involved in the working

group updating the Language (without Culture) Policy, and write up a white paper on strategic approaches to culture policy for the University.

Communications

Inclusive Language Style Guide

The Inclusive Language Style Guide is a resource intended for all users at the UG to refer to in the attempt to improve the inclusiveness of their communications. It will cover topics such as identity-based language. In addition, it will cover a number of issues that arise when working in a bi-lingual environment.

Photo Voice Exhibition

Alongside the quantitative measures of Diversity and Inclusion addressed above, it is useful to engage in a more creative, qualitative, dialogue as well. Photovoice is a methodology used in community-based research that allows staff and students to submit photos that illustrate their experiences. It is most commonly used to investigate change in empowerment in vulnerable communities. In doing so, it aims to foster social change. The photos submitted will be exhibited at a number of opportunities within the University.

Website and Social Media

As the awareness raising mandate of the D&I Office is complex, multifaceted and enduring, and the modalities through which to do awareness raising work are restricted by limited staffing, the intention is to further develop the [website](#) of the Diversity Office as an informative awareness raising platform. A similar purpose using a more active social media presence as a learning medium is desirable and possibilities to pursue this will be further explored.

With HR

In collaboration many D&I initiatives become embedded in HR processes (e.g. the recruitment and selection process, parental leave etc) for without this structural embedding these initiatives are just a form of tokenism. HR has a crucial role in realizing D&I policy. Prior to 2023, a representative of the HR bureau was a part of the D&I team. It would be desirable to re-establish this connection. For 2023-2024, the D&I Office would like to initiate a project to develop an HR strategy for employees choosing to exit the university, and will address gender registration for HR processes.

Exit Strategy

Though recruiting and hiring for the inflow of a diverse workforce, and attention is required for through-flow (e.g. in career opportunities and organizational culture) to maintain a diverse workforce, understanding outflow gives us an opportunity to examine retention from a different perspective important to diversity, equity and inclusion.

Current university employees are asked about their experience with D&I in various fora. Yet they are the people who have chosen to remain probably have managed to make it work for them, or, of more concern, are those who might not be brave enough to tell exactly how things are.

Those who have chosen to leave the university can be an important source of information on why this environment may not be working for a diverse workforce. If an organization is finding they are not as successful at retention of their diverse workforce as they would like to be, an exit campaign - asking the leavers about their experiences of equality and inclusion in the workplace - can provide more insight into the reasons they feel they cannot belong.

Working together with HR professionals, the Diversity Office want to explore the possibilities to structurally embed an exit strategy into the standard HR processes. Building on the initial pilot of the D&I work group at FEB, the Diversity Office would like to begin the exploration with HR Advisors of other faculties and engage with HR at University Services to see whether it is feasible to implement an exit campaign throughout the University.

Gender registration

Gender registration within the University is currently limited to the more traditional binary genders - male or female. In collaboration with both HR and CIT the online systems for name and gender registration (e.g. selection, personnel) will be reviewed for inclusion - this includes reviewing to remove unnecessary gender registration and when necessary including non-binary options.

Onboarding

Onboarding of new staff members is an ongoing HR initiative. The Diversity Office would like to ensure that the considerations emerging from our diversity are included in the onboarding programming that is being developed.

Diversity in Career Paths

The Recognition and Rewards Working Group is developing new approaches to career development within an academic environment. The Diversity Office would like to ensure that considerations emerging from our diversity are included in the developments.

Ad Hoc Activities

Alongside the larger, planned activities, the Diversity Office expects to be asked to participate in various ad hoc activities, as was the case in 2022. .

V. Looking to the Future

The full installation of the Office of Diversity by the Fall of 2022 enabled it to address both operational and more tactical level programming, culminating in this more detailed strategic

action plan for the upcoming period. The plans for 2023, articulated in this document, aimed at quick wins, have been discussed with the faculty D&I officers and the internal advisory board and will serve both as the basis for further discussion as well as guide the implementation of programming.

VI. References

The following references were consulted to develop this Action Plan:

- [University of Groningen Strategic Plan 2021-2026](#)
- [University Action Plan Diversity and Inclusion. *Belonging in the University of Groningen*](#)
- [Nationaal actieplan voor meer diversiteit en inclusie in het hoger onderwijs en onderzoek](#)