



university of
 groningen

Five-year Action Plan Diversity, Equity and Inclusion 2026-2031

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Context for a UG Action Plan 2026-2031.

The current 2021-2025 D&I action plan expires on 1 January 2026. Over the past four years, many activities have been initiated and significant results achieved. At the same time, the scope and importance of D&I have continued to grow, alongside increasing social and geopolitical tensions. Consultations with stakeholders across the UG, including the mid-term review of the D&I programme, show that activities across numerous D&I themes need to be continued or expanded in order to meet D&I goals, goals that are inherently developmental, long-term and systemic. The recommendations of the mid-term evaluation therefore underscore the need for a University-wide, structural, and integrated programme for both the short and longer term (five years and beyond) with clear and consistent elaboration in the new University strategy.

What has been achieved?

In 2020 a working group known as the Starting 12 was formed to lay the foundation for identifying D&I themes that required attention in UG policy. This preliminary phase created the contours of a project approved by the Executive Board and the University Council. In 2021, a second phase followed in which a concrete strategy and action plan for 2021-2025 was formulated and linked to the appointment of a Chief Diversity Officer. In 2022, the establishment of a dedicated D&I office marked a further step in institutionalising this work.

The D&I action plan was built around four central objectives¹:

1. All students and staff have an awareness of the importance, urgency, and added value of diversity and inclusion.
2. All students and staff have the necessary skills and knowledge to create an inclusive environment where all can feel a sense of belonging.
3. All students and staff experience equitable opportunities and treatment.
4. Good D&I practice is integrated throughout the University's ways of working.

The implementation of the D&I Action Plan was led by the Chief Diversity Officer and supported by the D&I programme manager, a communications officer and a student assistant.

A detailed overview of the many projects and activities developed, implemented and supported to advance the university's D&I objectives can be found in the annual reports. Below, we highlight several prominent examples that illustrate the breadth of work undertaken across products, events, diversity-group focus plans, and wider institutional projects.

One significant achievement has been the creation of the *Inclusive Language Style Guide* and its accompanying workshops, which offer staff and students practical tools for communicating in an inclusive and respectful manner. Complementing this, the *Guidelines for Language Use* were developed to function alongside the official *Language Policy*, ensuring that inclusive communication principles are reflected in the university's every-day use of language. The D&I Office has also provided extensive feedback on the forthcoming *HR Inclusive Recruitment Guide* (currently awaiting publication), aimed at strengthening equitable and bias-resistant recruitment and selection processes across all faculties and services. Another notable product is the *Enlight Guide for Inclusive and Accessible Events*, which was later incorporated into the

¹ For more details of these objectives see Appendix XObjectives. For the rationale for revising the four original focus points (2021-2025 Action Plan) see page 5 of the 2024 Action Plan.

Checklist for Sustainable and Inclusive Event Management. Together, these products provide concrete guidance for organising events that are accessible, equitable and aligned with the institution's values.

Beyond these materials, the D&I Office has organized recurring awareness-raising or skill-building events. Each October, Diversity Day or Diversity Week introduces students and staff to workshops on a broad range of inclusion-related topics, while every July, the *Developing across Differences* Summer Schools supports professionals in the development of the skills required to create an inclusive environment. These events play a key role in maintaining visibility for D&I themes visible and fostering a culture of continual learning across the university community.

The office also supports initiatives that directly recognize and strengthen student inclusion. This includes the annual implementation of the ECHO nomination process, which highlights excellent students with a migration background, as well as the allocation of Grass Roots subsidies that stimulate student-led inclusion projects. Furthermore, the D&I Office initiated the *Inclusive Teacher* Comenius project in collaboration with Prof. Jan Riezebos, advancing inclusive education practices at the institutional level.

Attention to specific diversity groups has also taken shape through the implementation of the LGBTQ+ Plan, which outlines tailored measures to improve safety, visibility and belonging of LGBTQ+ members of the community. Likewise, gender-related goals have now been structurally embedded within HR processes, including the implementation of two affirmative action programmes, the RFF and AJC. While progress has been made in these areas, the D&I Office continues to monitor and advocate for cultural change and for ongoing attention to gender balance in the student population.

Taken together, these activities demonstrate a sustained and multifaceted approach to creating a more inclusive academic environment, one that reflects all four objectives of the D&I Action Plan. Awareness has been increased through communication tools, events and guidelines, skills and knowledge have been strengthened through workshops and professional development, equitable opportunities have been supported through inclusive recruitment practices, student-focussed programmes and affirmative action initiatives; and good D&I practice has been increasingly embedded into policies, HR processes and everyday ways of working.

Why is a UG DE&I Action Plan 2026-2031 necessary?

Greater diversity, inclusion and equity contribute not only to a safe and stimulating working and learning environment, but also to better education and research with broader societal impact. Yet, as Mounier Samuel notes, “a diverse organisation is a challenging ambition that requires a long-term perspective and continuous attention.” At the UG, we have only just begun to promote DE&I in a focussed and systematic manner, and much remains to be done to ensure a genuinely diverse, inclusive and equitable environment, one that is crucial to the university’s ongoing success.

The mid-term review of the current D&I programme highlights that while significant progress has been made in recent years, there remain important gaps and challenges. Interviewees pointed to areas requiring further attention, including the deepening of awareness and skills across staff and students, attention to developing DE&I more structurally in university services and clusters rather than only within faculties, and a shift from focus on activities to more systemic interventions. Current initiatives, though valuable, are often fragmented, with limited coordination between units.

The review underscores the need for a university-wide, structural and integrated DE&I programme that operates both in the short and longer term, aligned with the university's overarching strategy. Scattered initiatives require cohesive alignment, with the Chief Diversity Officer (CDO) taking a central coordinating role. This includes allocating responsibilities, monitoring progress, and ensuring that each service and faculty has the resources and guidance needed to implement their projects effectively.

Finally, several important projects initiated in recent years require broader and sustained implementation across the university. These include initiatives to collect baseline diversity data on students and staff, to promote diversity in student intake and selection, and to develop inclusive curricula and learning environments. The use of HR tools to recruit more diverse employees, and to address lack of equity in remuneration must be further encouraged, monitored and evaluated. .

Proposed process of developing the 2026-2031 DE&I Action Plan

Building on the findings and conclusions of the mid-term review, as well as insights from the processes that followed, the D&I Chief Diversity Officer and D&I Programme Manager have taken the initiative to prepare a proposal for a follow-up DE&I Action Plan for 2026-2031². The development of this plan will follow a structured, multi-phase process involving stakeholders with diverse roles and perspectives, ensuring that the resulting action plan is both supported and feasible for implementation across the university.

An initial exploratory phase, currently underway, aims to assess whether there is sufficient support among key university leaders, including the Rector, the Executive Board, the University Council, directors of HR, O&S, R&I, as well as the deans. This assessment is based on a preliminary conceptual outline of the scope of proposed D&I activities (see below). Securing board and explicit endorsement at this stage is essential, as it forms the institutional foundation for the next phases of development.

During the second phase, the preliminary concept will be further refined and developed into a detailed proposal aligned with the contours of the upcoming UG strategy and the priorities of the university stakeholders mentioned above. These stakeholders will be invited to advise on their strategic priorities, co-develop shared action lines to achieve the objectives, and to formulate recommendations for an effective approach. They will also be asked to indicate which structural and organisational preconditions are necessary and available to facilitate successful implementation. This collaborative process is designed to ensure coherence between the DE&I objectives and the broader institutional strategy.

In the third phase, the finalized detailed concept for the 2026-2031 DE&I Action Plan, integrating the outcomes of phase two and under the lead of the new Chief Diversity Officer, will be discussed with a range of key actors in the university community. These include the Rector, service directors, deans and faculty portfolio holders, the members of diversity networks and student and staff representatives. We will also submit the draft action plan to the wider university community. The draft plan will also be shared with the wider university community through an online consultation. Feedback from staff and students will be incorporated into the final proposal, which will then be submitted for formal decision-making.

² "Due to the growing attention to power relations and forms of exclusion that perpetuate inequality, more and more Dutch organizations—including higher education institutions—are changing the label 'diversity and inclusion' to 'diversity, equity, and inclusion' (DGI)." 2023 Mid-term review p15.

"The Executive Board adds equity as a relevant dimension to the D&I theme..." In response to the points of attention raised by the University Council ([27 February 2025](#)).

If approved, implementation of the 2026-2031 DE&I Action Plan can begin in the autumn of 2026. Throughout this process, the primary role of the DE&I Office is to coordinate, advise and stimulate institutional change - not to implement it independently. The Office initiates and supports developments, provides expertise, and monitors progress, while the structural embedding and execution of many of the new DE&I measures takes place within the responsible services and faculties. This ensures that DE&I becomes part of the university's regular operations rather than an isolated set of activities.

Throughout this preparatory trajectory, the D&I Office, consisting of the programme manager, the communications officer and a student assistant, will coordinate and carry out the development process while continuing to deliver its ongoing annual objectives and support existing D&I activities. This ensures continuity of institutional efforts as the new plan takes shape. Once the new Chief Diversity Officer is appointed, and the programmes for Social Safety, Accessibility, Wellbeing and the *Afspraakbanen* are brought under their responsibility, new operating procedures and collaborative structures will be developed.

Preliminary Concept:

Objectives and priorities of the DE&I Action Plan 2026-2031

Whereas diversity is the presence of a wide range of human qualities and attributes, both visible and invisible, within a group, university or society, and asks: *Who has a seat at the table?*, inclusion is the creation of an environment where people have both the feeling and the reality of belonging and are able to achieve their full potential. Inclusion asks: *who has a voice at the table?* Diversity refers to representation across various backgrounds, identities and experiences. Inclusion is about creating an environment where every individual's voice is not only present but also heard and valued.

Equity* is a condition of fair, inclusive and respectful treatment that recognizes and acknowledges differing needs and expectations. Equity acknowledges the fact that equal treatment doesn't always yield equal results. Equity asks: *Whose ideas are taken seriously? Whose are not because they are in the minority? What conditions maintain certain groups as the majority?* Equity means providing fair access to opportunities and resources, and removing barriers that disproportionately affect certain groups.

Equity was a part of the 2022-2025 action plan as formulated in objective 3: All students and staff experience equitable opportunities and treatment. It is more explicitly addressed in the changing title - Diversity, Equity and Inclusion, as decided during the Feb 2025 Council meeting.

Finally, there is Belonging, the arena where Diversity, Equity and Inclusion meets Social Safety. Belonging is feeling recognized, respected, connected to the community, with the safety to be your full self. Belonging asks: *"Do you feel heard and valued?"* Belonging goes beyond inclusion to create a sense of deep connection and psychological safety.

These objectives are translated into the following key priority arenas.

Key priorities:

1. Ensure equitable access, belonging and success for all **students**.
2. Embed inclusive and anti-bias pedagogy in **education**.
3. Foster equitable career development and representation for **staff** at all levels.
4. Advance an inclusive **research** culture and equitable knowledge production

5. Create an inclusive **campus** environment

Priority 1: Ensure equitable access, belonging and success for all students

Goal: Reduce disparities in participation, retention and graduation rates among underrepresented and marginalized student groups.

Focus: Strengthen outreach, admission, mentoring and support systems to close participation and attainment gaps for underrepresented and first-generation students.

Actions:

1. Equal opportunities in selection procedures (*Bestuursakkoord 2022*)
2. Advance gender equity in STEM, in line with the EC2025 goals.
3. Combat internship discrimination in collaboration with national partners (OCW project & NAP2.0).
4. Promote inclusive mobility to ensure equitable participation in international exchange and study abroad programmes (Erasmus+ project).
5. Support first generation students through tailored mentoring, academic support and community building.
6. Strengthen inclusion and success of students with a migrant background through targeted outreach and institutional support mechanisms.
7. Address selection bias in admission and progression processes (UMCG project).
8. Monitor student progress - inflow, progression, outflow.

Priority 2: Embed inclusive and anti-bias pedagogy in education.

Goal: Ensure that all students experience curricula and teaching practices that reflect multiple perspectives and foster critical awareness of diversity and equality.

Focus: Equip educators to design and deliver learning that reflects diverse perspectives, decolonized content and inclusive assessment practices.

Actions:

1. Enhance representation in the curriculum (student ambassadors project)
2. Encourage diversity in composition of teaching teams
3. Support the dissemination and use of the Inclusive Teacher online module
4. Collaborate in the Teaching Academy Groningen Diversity & Inclusion Community of Practice
5. Invest in effective alignment between secondary vocational education, higher professional education, and university education for marginalised groups (OCW, NAP2.0)
6. Diversity, equity and inclusion in accreditation (LanDO project)

Priority 3: Foster equitable career development and representation for staff at all levels.

Goal: Achieve greater diversity and equity in recruitment, retention, promotion, and leadership positions across academic and professional staff.

Focus: Identify and remove structural barriers that limit career development, progression and leadership access for staff from underrepresented or marginalized groups, and embed equitable practices in HR and management processes.

Actions:

1. Strengthen data-informed decision making through the Diversity Atlas pilot and extend its use across the university population to enable longitudinal monitoring of representation and inclusion.
2. Develop a university-wide departure monitoring system to analyse reasons for staff exit and identify structural barriers to retention (NIM requirement, SER project).
3. Address inequitable task allocation, by creating a monitoring system that identifies patterns of overload, invisible labour and bias in distribution of teaching, research and service tasks (request ombudsperson).
4. Advance gender equity by continuing to monitor gender representation in academic professions and expanding analysis to include academic management positions (LNVH project)
5. Monitor and address gender pay equity across faculties and staff categories (HR project)
6. Improve visibility and support for women of colour in academia.
7. Strengthen inclusive recruitment and career progression by supporting ongoing HR initiatives.
8. Promote diversity-sensitive approaches to Rewards and Recognition.
9. Collaborate with confidential advisors to identify systemic patterns of discrimination and feed these insights into structural interventions.

Priority 4: Advance an inclusive **research culture and equitable knowledge production.**

Goal: Increase the visibility, recognition and impact of diverse researchers, perspectives and methodologies within the university's research portfolio, and develop a coherent DE&I research agenda that strengthens inclusive knowledge production.

Focus: Promote diversity in research teams, topics and methodologies; embed the gender and diversity dimension in research content; recognize a broad range of knowledge traditions, including community-engaged, practice-based and non-Western forms of knowledge.

Actions:

1. Integrate gender equality in research and innovation by addressing gaps identified in *She Figures* metrics, including underrepresentation in research participation, leadership and career progression.
2. Increase participation of underrepresented groups in research careers.
3. Develop a coherent DE&I research agenda that articulates priority themes and provides guidance for faculties, research institutes and grants support units.

Priority 5: Create a safe, accessible and inclusive **campus environment**

Goal: Ensure that all members of the university community can participate fully in campus life free from discrimination, exclusion and barriers to access. While substantial progress has been made for students in the Student Accessibility project, this priority focuses on areas where support is still limited or unevenly implemented.

Focus: Ensure physical, digital and social spaces are designed for accessibility, respect and psychological safety for everyone. This includes attention to the needs of staff with disability, neurodivergent, LGBTQIA community members, first generation students, international students, religious minorities and others who may experience structural barriers.

Actions:

1. Integrate diversity perspectives into social safety initiatives, ensuring that preventive measures reflect the different risks and vulnerability experienced by minoritized groups.
2. Guarantee at least one all-gender toilet in every university building, and map these facilities clearly online and on-site
3. Ensure inclusive design in renovation and new-building plans, including attention to the need for low-sensory and quiet spaces.

Other: Actions that address multiple priority domains (objective)

Many of the following actions are activities that have been conducted regularly or annually in the previous 5 year period.

Actions:

1. Diversity Week, Inclusive Language Style Guide Workshops, Developing Across Differences Summer Schools. These address objectives levels 1&2: awareness, knowledge & skills objectives.
2. Grassroots Inclusion subsidy, ECHO, online discrimination (KIS project), domestic diversity, NCRD action plan. These address objective level 3: equitable opportunities.
3. GDEIB, Diversity Atlas, CSRD (EU directive), confidential advisors alignment. These address the objective level 4: Integration.

Appendix X Objectives

Awareness:

All students and staff have an awareness of the importance, urgency, and added value of diversity and inclusion.

Diversity and inclusion is understood as vital for ensuring the success of students, staff, and the University as a whole.

Skills and Knowledge:

All students and staff have the necessary skills and knowledge to create an inclusive environment where all can feel a sense of belonging.

This includes an understanding of, and skills related to, privilege and bias. Other relevant skills and knowledge include (among others): inclusive language use, managing power dynamics, addressing the systemic nature of discrimination within institutional systems, intercultural communication, and active listening / empathy. By increasing knowledge and skills, students and staff will be equipped to behave in ways that foster inclusion.

Equitable Opportunities and Treatment:

All (prospective, current, and former) students and staff experience equitable opportunities and treatment.

This includes ensuring (prospective) staff and students are not unfairly discriminated against based on any visible and invisible differences in background, experiences, perspectives, characteristics and identity. It also includes

identifying and addressing systemic barriers that negatively impact marginalized groups. These barriers include institutionalized racism, sexism, ableism, etc.

Integration:

Good D&I practice is integrated throughout the University's ways of working.

This includes ensuring good D&I practice is utilized in all Faculties and departments. It also includes ensuring structural mechanisms are in place for receiving feedback from students and staff, and especially marginalized communities, and making improvements related to D&I topics.