



**AURORA**  
**UNIVERSITIES NETWORK**

**Overview of Thematic Activities**

**December 2019**

# Overview of thematic activities - December 2019

## Introduction

The overview of activities is a tool that informs various groups within and outside of Aurora Universities Network on what is happening. It is updated every 6 to 8 weeks. Suggestions for further improvement of this document are welcome.

### **New in this overview**

- Aurora EU Grants officers coordinated [joint declarations](#) with advice on the Horizon Europe Mission #1
- The SDG Analysis: Bibliometrics of Relevance group created 17 separate surveys for each SDG

Aurora has a clear focus:

1. Diversity & Inclusion
2. Societal Impact & Relevance of Research
3. Student Engagement
4. Innovation of Teaching & Learning.

Also, to these four key priority themes, “Sustainability” – or the Sustainable Development Goals – is seen as a unique expression of the core Aurora objective of matching academic excellence with societal relevance and may thus become a crucial part of the overall Aurora narrative. Moreover, “Internationalisation” seems a logical and inevitable theme for an [international](#) network of universities.

Beyond this core, we see meetings in Aurora of groups with a shared interest, meeting to learn from each other and find things to do together that fit their internal strategies. When these are not connected to one of the broader themes covered in this overview, they are styled *birds of a feather group*.

The overview of thematic activities is ordered by both the priority and scope of the activity. A table overview enlists all groups and projects with institutional coordinators as well as the university responsible for communication regarding that group. Project and other groups with little or no activity over the recent months are deleted from the list – but may return when appropriate.

Since September-October 2018, both the Vice-Rectors Research and the Vice-Rectors Education of the Aurora universities regularly meet to monitor Aurora activities related to their perspective and share experiences amongst themselves. A unique paragraph is dedicated to its activities.

## Vice-Rectors

### Education

The Vice-Rectors Education group had a half-day meeting in October, as part of the Amsterdam Aurora Biannual. The main focus was on the developing Aurora Alliance proposal, in which the VR Education group will play a key role in guiding and monitoring the educational innovation plans.

<u>Chair</u>	<u>Institutional Coordinator</u>	<u>Communications Liaison</u>
Neil Ward (UEA)	Richard Harvey	UEA

### Research

The VRR group had a half-day meeting in October, as part of the Amsterdam Aurora Biannual. Although the main focus of the developing Aurora Alliance proposal will be on education, the link between education and research remains essential, and the VR Research group discussed the proposal from that perspective.

The SDG bibliometric tool was also on the agenda – as was the work of the EU grant/info offices group related to the Horizon Europe Programme.

<u>Chair</u>	<u>Institutional Coordinator</u>	<u>Communications Liaison</u>
Jón Atli Benediktsson UI	Háldor Jónsson	UI

## Key priorities

### 1. Diversity & inclusion

The overall purpose of the thematic group on Diversity & Inclusion is to learn from and with each other to reach the highest possible levels of achievement in Diversity & Inclusion at the Aurora member universities; Also, it aims to show Diversity & Inclusion as a distinctive characteristic of the Aurora Network of Universities.

The Aurora workgroup on Diversity and Inclusion aims to:

- Create equal opportunities for our staff and students;
- Create a working and learning environment at our universities in which different perspectives are explicitly valued;
- Capitalise on the ability to generate creativity from different perspectives both in teaching and in education.

#### Specific projects:

<u>Project</u>	<u>Chair</u>	<u>Institutional Coordinator</u>	<u>Communications Liaison</u>
Overall Diversity award	Ruart Ganzevoort	Esmee Paques	VUA
	Neira Becár (VUA)	Esmee Paques	VUA
Aurora Gender Benchmark		Esmee Paques	VUA

#### Update on activities

**Diversity & Equality Award:** This third edition of the Aurora Diversity and Equality Award took place at the Stedelijk Museum. The award has resulted in a total of 12 nominations from the participating partner universities. The jury consisted of 4 members, representing academic staff as well as student representation. They could not vote on the projects that came from their institution. The jury members were:

- Karen van Oudenhoven-van der Zee (Dean/Professor/Chief Diversity Officer, Vrije Universiteit Amsterdam).
- Sveinn Guðmundsson (University of Iceland)
- Ydwine Zanstra (Amsterdam University College)
- Jake Goddart (now former Aurora student representative, University of East Anglia)

As the award is organized to celebrate all initiatives rather than highlight the winners, we describe all three nominated projects below:

Support for Access to Audio-visual Media (SAAM), University of East Anglia: SAAM is an inclusive and innovative language-learning initiative. They provide practical opportunities for students to use their language(s), whilst engaging with local and global communities. Participation is on a voluntary basis. The key objectives of the project are: fostering creativity in teaching and education and; providing equal access to audio-visual media to a diverse community. The number of volunteers has risen from seven in 2016 to 34 in 2019 as the interest in the project had taken an international dimension, attracting students from the University of Alcalá, Madrid (Spain). Since the inception of the project, SAAM has helped seven organisations on a national and international level by providing translations and subtitles for documents and video clips. These beneficiaries include organisations fighting for the protection of children, marginalized groups, and refugees. The student volunteers benefit greatly from the project. The project helps them develop their communication and translation skills but also makes them aware of diverse communities and how their work provides equal access to audio-visual media. The students are often paired up with other students who speak the required native language, to get the 'tone' of the translation right.

INSERLAB, Rovira i Virgili University: INSERLAB is a transformative program for students with an intellectual disability. The program is coordinated by the Rovira i Virgili University ('URV') Chair for

Social Inclusion and the Social Business Research Lab. Additionally, INSERLAB involves 15 organizations external to the URV, 22 lecturers, and various URV services. It is a one-year course (38 credits) focusing on improving the autonomy and the educational level of the intellectually disabled student. Eventually, the program prepares the student for supported employment. In parallel, INSERLAB provides a mentoring program where the students obtain experience in the university community, as well as comprehensive, personalized education. There are several components to the project, such as practical learning, curricular work experience, and an entrepreneurship course, in which the students develop important competencies such as teamwork and problem-solving. The teaching staff is specially trained to adapt to cognitive diversity and to help the students with their specific needs.

Right2Education, Amsterdam University College: 'Right2Education' ('R2E') is a non-governmental organization that offers free Dutch and English courses for people with a refugee background residing in the Netherlands. The organization was founded in 2015 and is fully student-led. At R2E, education does not only happen in a classroom; the organization and its educational strategies have a strong social aspect to them. As R2E aims to provide tools for people to further their integration, their students are not referred to as refugees, but rather as guest students, as they are guests, studying at the Amsterdam University College ('AUC'). Besides language education through language courses, R2E offers a variety of social activities. Students can become part of the 'Buddy System', where guest students are paired up with local students. These pairs meet up, attend events, and study together. In addition to the Buddy System, R2E also organizes weekly events such as movie nights, museum excursions, and potluck dinners. These social events are integral to the aim of R2E as they provide a place to meet new people, practice language skills, and enable a valuable exchange of knowledge about different cultures, languages, experiences, and values. Students are taught language skills in the classroom that they can apply and practice in real-life situations at events and with their buddy while getting the chance to build new and meaningful relationships and continue higher education in the Netherlands.

Among many inspiring and creative entries, submitted, INSERLAB was chosen because it focuses on the dimension of diversity that is often overlooked. INSERLAB is coordinated by the Rovira I Virgili University ( 'URV' ), 22 lecturers, and various URV services. The course focuses on improving the autonomy and educational level of the intellectually disabled student. Eventually, the programme prepares the student for supported employment. In parallel, INSERLAB provides a mentoring programme where the students obtain experience in the university community, as well as comprehensive, personalized education.

Aurora Gender Benchmark: Based on the Athena Swan Charter, a simplified version of the document has been produced, and submitted to all Aurora partners to fill out. Unfortunately, not all partners have completed the documents, nor were they present at the last biannual in Amsterdam. This made it difficult to see where we stand as a network and to build on the presented content in order to establish a benchmark. A follow-up of the project remains to be discussed, also now that Karen van Oudenhoven-van der Zee is no longer going to be chair of the Diversity group.

## 2. Societal impact and relevance of research (SIRR)

The overall purpose of focus on Societal Impact & Relevance of Research is to learn from and with each other to reach the highest possible levels of achievement in Societal Impact & Relevance at the Aurora member universities and to show Societal Impact & Relevance of Research as a distinctive characteristic of the Aurora Network of Universities.

The theme of impact and relevance of research is a crucial focus of the Vice Rectors Research group with as chair Jón Atli Benediktsson and secretary and contact person is Háldor Jónsson.

## Specific projects:

Project	Chair	Instit. Coor	Comms. Liaison
SDG analysis	Maurice Vanderfeesten & René Otten	Esmee Paques	VUA
Doctoral Education	Nick Watmough (UEA)/ Sandra Hasanefendic (VUA)	Richard Harvey Esmee Paques	UEA VUA
EU Research Funding & Innovation Managers	Andreas Hoene	Petra Günther	UDE

### Update on activities

[SDG analysis: bibliometrics of relevance](#): Update after Aurora Amsterdam Biannual | Oct 2019 – Dec 2019

As the response to the [survey](#) among academics is still below requirements to avoid a skewed balance, the Vice Rectors Research have been asked for support in soliciting more responses from academics. The responses from Universitat Rovira I Virgili stood out positively.

The interface for the SDG data collector has improved. It is now possible to create and execute query-parts alongside the societal sub-topic that requires a specific detailed search.

Machine learning with the SDGs now almost have an 80% accuracy with standard/old ML algorithms. The University of Duisburg Essen has designed an SDG badge that links an SDG to its content. These badges may be used next to each publication in a repository, next to a research project- or master course description. We are working on a new dashboard by adding new Aurora members but still based on old SDG classification version 3.

Elsevier launched their SDG queries, implemented it in Scival, and has indicated it is interesting to join forces with our Aurora efforts. Contacts also continue with Times Higher Education with its Sustainable Impact ranking – we need to strike a balance between the pros and cons of close cooperation.

Doctoral Education: the plans to improve doctoral education and more generally the situation for early career researchers in Aurora have been pending since the KA2 proposal and will be integrated with significant parts into the Aurora Alliance proposal in response to the 2<sup>nd</sup> Call in the Erasmus+ programme

EU Research Funding & Information: The EU Research Funding & Information Managers was formed to strengthen the collaboration of the Grant Offices within AURORA. The main goal is to compare current practice and share knowledge/expertise in supporting applicants, strategies and networks for EU applications.

Apart from exchanging know-how and best practices in EU research support, the EU Research Funding & Information Managers group intensified activities to synchronise and harmonise actions regarding the next European programs for research and innovation funding, Horizon Europe and its related programmes. In 2019 a multitude of events have taken place:

The AURORA EU-Grant Offices have been coordinating joint declarations with advice on the Horizon Europe Mission #1 (Adaptation to Climate Change including Social Transformation) and most recently also on Mission #2 (Cancer).

The position paper with statements on the future mission area “Adaptation to Climate Change, including Societal Transformation” can be found [here](#).

Furthermore, represented by Pim de Boer, Senior Strategic Policy Advisor EU at Vrije Universiteit/Amsterdam UMC, AURORA communicated with 13 other networks of universities in Europe to produce a joint statement on the proposal for Horizon Europe, intended to stimulate and

facilitate the timely approval of the best possible new programme for research and innovation in Europe. The joint statement can be found [here](#).

AURORA also has supported the [Joint Declaration for EU Horizon Europe budget](#) from 15 European umbrella organisations (including AURORA) regarding the European campaign on increasing the Horizon Europe budget to €120 billion instead of the currently proposed €94 billion.

The AURORA EU Grant Offices group represented the AURORA network on 24-26 September 2019 at the EC "Research & Innovation Days" in Brussels. This event is an annual policy event of the European Commission which brings together all types of stakeholders to debate and shape the future research and innovation landscape and mid-long term impact of the programme. In the run-up to the conference, AURORA submitted a joint response coordinated by Pim de Boer (VUA) in the first Horizon Europe public web consultation for the strategic planning.

AURORA has also been involved in discussions with high-level officers in DG R&I on societal engagement in the development and executive phases of Horizon Europe. As the R&I programme is organised and developed in an interdepartmental way, the EC established a matrix team across all DGs to deal with societal/citizen engagement, and proposed to have regular meetings with organisations that supported the citizen involvement in EU research statement (see: <https://aurora-network.global/aurora-supports-citizen-involvement-in-eu-research/>). It is planned to involve all relevant research groups in AURORA in this process.

All group members have now explained their way of working on research and explicitly grant support locally. The next step is to develop a vision, strategy and plan to enhance the local procedures for EU grant support, sharing best and worst practices, and stimulate collaboration across all partners in applying for and improving the lifecycle of grants. A first concept will be initiated in January 2020 and further amended and discussed by the group during the 2020 AURORA meeting in Reykjavik.

### 3. Students' engagement

The Aurora Universities Network attaches excellent weight to student involvement, both within universities and as a network. That is why the 'students engagement' is one of the four key priority themes of Aurora. 'Student engagement' is a broad concept, which may cover i.a:

- Ideas initiated by the student representatives in Aurora for joint Aurora activities
- Views of student representatives on the overall vision & mission, strategy, and operations of Aurora
- Active participation in the various thematic and project groups by students with a particular engagement with that topic
- Activities to strengthen the profile and practice of Aurora universities as institutions that offer their students an engaging education with a lasting impact on their personal development.

Students are excited to be an integral part of the network and aim to be a driving force in shaping and achieving its ambitions. Aurora Student Council consists of two elected student representatives from each university, who collectively decide on student priorities for their own Aurora activities and student priorities for the network. They are actively involved in the network's activities and ensure Aurora's continued student focus.

The elected chair of the Aurora student group participates as an observer in the General Council and Board meetings.

Students' current top priorities for the network are:

- Collaborative Learning – Aurora universities should make their digital learning resources accessible for all Aurora students and staff (see the [Open Educational Resources Portal](#) here). The team of different Aurora universities should collaborate in creating education; both for lectures and entire courses;

- Summer school – Use our diverse cultures, perspectives, and educational specialities for a remarkable and inclusive summer programme, including great courses and topical debates on societal issues.

Some member universities can offer structured support of a Student Ambassador.

### Specific projects:

Project	Chair	Instit. Coor	Comms. Liaison
Aurora Open Educational Resources Portal	Anke Petschenka (UDE)	Petra Günther	U Duisberg-Essen
Aurora Student Handbook	Elísabet Brynjarsdóttir	Friðrika Harðardóttir	U Iceland
Aurora Mental Health Strategy	Elísabet Brynjarsdóttir	Friðrika Harðardóttir	U Iceland
Aurora Student Newsletter	Elísabet Brynjarsdóttir	Friðrika Harðardóttir	U Iceland
Aurora Student mission and values	Elísabet Brynjarsdóttir and Callum Perry	Friðrika Harðardóttir	U Iceland and UEA
Aurora student projects	Elísabet Brynjarsdóttir and Callum Perry	Friðrika Harðardóttir	U Iceland and UEA

### Update on activities

Open Educational Resources: See under “Innovation of Teaching & Learning”.

Aurora Student Handbook: The new student president Elísabet Brynjarsdóttir has taken the initiative for an Aurora Student Representative Handbook as a tool to help incoming new student representatives to get their bearings in Aurora quickly and efficiently. The Handbook offers information on Aurora's fundamental character, history, governing structure, working groups as well as the student involvement. The handbook is updated at least once a year and was last updated on July 2019.

Aurora Mental Health: The Aurora Student Council hosted a student workshop on mental health in 2018. The students found it of the utmost importance for the network to emphasize mental health, share best practices in student support and eventually form a mental health strategy. The Aurora Student Council produced a video on mental health for students, published in 2019. The video featured a message from students within Aurora regarding mental health, and the object was to raise awareness on the matter. The students strongly support that students mental health will be part of the network’s proposal for EUN.

Aurora Student Council Mission and Values: The students of Aurora gathered in October and discussed what our shared student mission and values should be. Work is now in progress to form these values, and they will be published once the students vote on the final results.

Aurora Student Projects: In October, the students of Aurora agreed that they would all work on a specific project within their own university to raise awareness of Aurora for students. Each student representative from each university has a unique project and will work on it independently within their university. The results from the projects will be introduced during the next Aurora summit in Reykjavík, 2020.

## 4. Innovation of teaching and learning (ITL)

The aim of the focus in Aurora on Innovation of Teaching and Learning is twofold. Primarily, to exchange innovations in pedagogy and tools amongst the partners and to implement promising ones our programs. Secondly, ITL aims to develop shared resources and joint educational modules on key themes of the Aurora Universities Network such as Sustainability, Health and Life Sciences etcetera.

Since the UGA chair of the group has retired and the Vice Rectors Education have formed their own Aurora platform, it is now considered that the vice-rectors will assume responsibility for the ITL theme as well. The Vice Rectors Education has asked for new activities connected to the shared aspiration which they identified.

### Specific projects:

Project	Chair	Instit. Coor	Comms. Liaison
e-Assessment tools & practices	Michael Goedicke	Petra Günther	U Duisburg Essen
Open Educational Resources	Anke Petschenka	Petra Günther	U Duisburg Essen
Aurora Sustainability Lectures series	Tavis Potts (UAb)	Stephen Hill	UAb
Aurora Collaborative Online International Learning module	Sabine Sainte-Rose (UGA) / Silvester Draaijer (VUA)	Sabine Sainte-Rose / Esmee Paques	UGA/VUA
Learner analytics	VUA/UGA		
'Learning incomes'	Aurora office		
Connecting Research in HE pedagogy	UEA		

### Update on activities

e-Assessment: As UAntwerpen left Aurora, a gap in collaboration surfaced. Still, some members met in Amsterdam in October 2019 to take stock of the current situation and decide on a possible new start. The group of UDE, VU, UGA and UEA decided to set-up two online follow-up meetings to discuss important matters further.

Open Educational Resources (OER): Since November 2017, the Aurora website has a dedicated [Aurora open educational resources portal](#).

The group met at the Biannuals in Essen, Antwerp, and Grenoble and have met again at the Amsterdam Biannual at the end of 2019. The project group conducted a series of webinars "Open educational resources as an enabler for building an inclusive university community". The following three webinars have already been offered: 1) National and international initiatives concerning OER", 2) Supporting structures and teaching scenarios for Open Educational Resources at the University Duisburg-Essen (UDE) and 3) The creation of Open Interactive Textbooks and added value for education (VUA). These webinars have been recorded and are provided on our webpage. New activities will follow soon. The next online meeting will be on 17<sup>th</sup> December 2019 at 2 pm. If you want to join, please contact [Anke Petschenka](#). The [event webpage](#) and [project webpage](#).

Aurora Sustainability Lectures: See Sustainability

Aurora Collaborative Online International Learning: Two language classes from the University of Aberdeen and UGA set up a COIL collaboration, with students working together on practical uses of English and [French in context](#). The project was successful in creating a motivating learning environment and meaningful interactions between students around subjects such as international relations and tourism. Previous staff mobility enabled the professors to meet and create a synergy that benefits both groups. Indeed, the collaboration is to be renewed this year.

To push progress, the topic of COIL was one of the working group meetings at the bi-annual in Amsterdam in October. The discussion focused on the broader theme of virtual exchange in light of the Macron proposal and various forms of successful virtual exchange (see example above). The group emphasized that support from the top management for virtual exchange is needed and that a start could be made by setting out a Call for Collaboration on the development of virtual exchanges. For example, by focussing on education revolving around the SDGs. Further, collaborating institutions should explicitly take up as learning outcomes in their curricula and at least one course, the development of international/intercultural competencies. Without such a statement of learning outcomes, there will be no need for faculty or program leaders to start virtual exchanges. Based on these insights, this initiative will play an important role in the EUN proposal that is under development.

Learner Analytics: At the vice-rectors meeting of 30-31 October 2018, it was agreed to start collaboration on the theme of Learner Analytics. Both Student Analytics and Learning Analytics. An insightful presentation of Theo Bakker of the VUA showed possibilities for a systematic approach of and developing relevant research/policy questions and data collection methods (with privacy in mind), analysis and presentation possibilities. VUA and UGA are in the lead. No progress has been reported yet in view of the heavy workload on both sides – but Learning Analytics will also be part of the EUN proposal.

Promulgation of 'Learning Incomes': At the vice-rectors meeting of 30-31 October 2018, it was agreed to start collaboration on the theme of better conceptual understanding of innovative ways for admission of (international) students to bachelor and master programmes. Underlying to this approach are the concepts and procedures developed within the E+ project Mastermind Europe. This initiative has not been actively pursued in recent months due to the focus on the Aurora-led proposal for a European University Alliance. This initiative will play a major role in the EUN proposal that is still under development.

Connecting Research in HE pedagogy: At the vice-rectors meeting of 30-31 October 2018, the vice-rectors voiced the idea that the educational research units of the Aurora Universities should be connected, knowledge exchanged and collaborative projects possibly started and also trying to tap into EU grants. Iceland and UEA agreed to take the lead.

## Other activities with active broad steering groups

The Aurora universities want to focus the leadership attention on a few key strategic priorities. These four priorities are listed above.

This focus does not preclude or hamper further activities in other fields where participants see a benefit in working together, sharing visions & strategies, compare practices, and develop projects for reciprocal and mutual learning. Indeed, in various other horizontal themes and broad global challenges areas, experts from Aurora universities have found each other and are working together.

### 1. Sustainability

The Sustainability group aims for Aurora universities to:

- Operate and build sustainable universities that balance the four pillars of sustainability which are governance, environmental management, learning; research and social policy
- Create a working and learning environment at our universities in which sustainability is valued and measured.
- Capitalise on the ability to generate creativity and solutions from different perspectives both in our practices and education.

In considering these aims, the Group hopes to promote good practice, stimulate joint activity, and develop benchmarks to monitor progress at individual institutions and collectively across Aurora. As a galvanising theme, the United Nations' Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) remain at the heart of Aurora's discussion of sustainability. They feature heavily in the work of the Sustainability Group and are at the heart of the transformative vision evident in the emerging European Universities Network (EUN) proposal.

Following a period with interim leadership in early 2019, Dr Tavis Potts from Aberdeen took over the chair of the Sustainability Group in June 2019 and had, alongside his Aberdeen colleague Fraser Lovie, helped to reinvigorate the Group's discussions.

A series of clear and detailed recommendations emerged from a productive Grenoble biannual meeting (well-coordinated by the interim leadership of VU and UDE), and these included a proposal to encourage Aurora to sign the SDG Accord. The Accord is a global initiative to aggregate the impact of further and higher education institutions in tackling the SDGs and would establish a shared, network-wide baseline commitment to doing so.

The groundwork from Grenoble has been built on at a subsequent Skype session and the well-attended Amsterdam biannual. At those meetings, the Sustainability Group has coalesced its activity around five thematic discussions 'clusters' with colleagues from across Aurora allocated to each. Those clusters are:

- Cluster 1     SDG Lecture Series (including research showcasing and public engagement)
- Cluster 2     Business travel (including institutional and collective off-setting)
- Cluster 3     Benchmarking (including the SDG Accord and reporting)
- Cluster 4     Sustainable events management
- Cluster 5     Leadership for sustainability (including the Executive Voice)

The Group intends to lead by example in meeting virtually for the next biannual (Reykjavik). It will, in due course, make other recommendations and suggested guidelines around off-setting, business travel, benchmarking, SDG reporting and a meat-free approach to future catering for Aurora events. Among the other issues discussed in Amsterdam was the need for the work of the Sustainability Group to continue in parallel with the development of the EUN initiative and to ensure coordination of these parallel endeavours.

Among the other key activities of the Sustainability Group is the SDG Lecture Series. VU launched this in June 2019 ([SDG 17](#)), before a flurry of activity in October saw three lectures in Grenoble

([SDGs 1, 8, 10, 12, 13 & 16](#)) from October 14<sup>th</sup> till the 16<sup>th</sup>; and one in Aberdeen ([SDGs 1, 2 & 13](#)) on October 16<sup>th</sup>. The Amsterdam- and Grenoble Biannual have sought to establish a more pragmatic methodology, encouraging participation by building on pre-existing public engagement activity where possible, while still showcasing SDG related research. Further contributions for 2020 have been sought and will be finalised in the coming months.

### Specific projects:

Project	Chair	Instit. Coor	Comms. Liaison
Overall chair SDG analysis		Stephen Hill	UAb
	Maurice Vanderfeesten (VUA)	Esmee Paques	VUA
Aurora Sustainability Lectures series	Tavis Potts (UAb)	Stephen Hill	UEA

### Update on activities

SDG analysis: See above (SIRR)

Aurora Sustainability Lectures: See above (Sustainability)

## 2. Internationalisation

In an international network of universities, it makes sense to explore opportunities to learn from and with each other in the field of internationalisation. This may also offer opportunities to involve academics in Aurora activities.

After a few brainstorming sessions, it has become clear that the main focus needs to be on concrete projects run by separate project groups, with the thematic ‘internationalisation group’ as a strategic liaison between the projects and the Aurora leadership.

### Specific projects:

Project	Chair	Instit. Coor	Comms. Liaison
Overall chair	Richard Harvey & Frans Snijders	Richard Harvey & Esmee Paques	UEA & VUA
Inclusive Internationalisation	Helena Gillespie	Richard Harvey	UEA
Structured mobility	Frans Snijders (VUA);	Esmee Paques	VUA
Improved student exchange agreements	Frans Snijders (VUA); Alex Cole (UEA)	Esmee Paques	VUA & UEA

### Update on activities

Internationalisation: The internationalisation activity consists of several subsidiary activities including work on international mobility, inclusive internationalisation and a select group on Africa.

Improved student exchange agreements: Four mobility reports have been produced to capture mobility between the Aurora partners, ahead of both Biannuals in 2017 and 2018, during which time we eventually achieved signed agreements between the original nine institutions. Mobility data reports have not been produced during 2019, but new Aurora membership offers opportunities for additional exchange agreements before of the spring 2020 Biannual.

Local discussions have been taking place, in particular between Amsterdam and UEA with regards to the UK leaving the EU and strategies being considered to mitigate against the impact upon mobility across Europe. Suggestions have been made to the relevant ICs to find ways in which we can utilize the Network partnerships to maintain exchange opportunities. With the guidance of Universities UK

International, UEA, amongst many other UK universities, has sought all Erasmus partners to sign a new UUKi partnership agreement, outside the Erasmus Charter, pertaining to the same protocol and to ensure that, should there be a hard exit, currently mobile students are still in-situ as part of an existing agreement.

Aurora Inclusive Internationalisation Project:

The internationalisation activity consists of several subsidiary activities including work on international mobility, inclusive internationalisation (covered elsewhere) and a select group on Africa. As Aurora itself is an extensive and wide-ranging internationalisation project, most participants within the Internationalisation group, who is also the Institutional Co-ordinators, are reasonably busy.

## Institutional coordinators

The Institutional coordinators play a key role in ensuring alignment between the various activities in the network:

- They have a joint responsibility to advise the Board, the General Council and their president on the overall strategy and policy of Aurora.
- For groups chaired by a member of their university, they have a specific responsibility to liaise with that chair and with their Communication Officer on the work of that group.
- Also, they liaise with their Communication Officer on the overall Communication policy: to enhance the visibility of Aurora within their university and to disseminate relevant information on their university through Aurora.

**Chair**

**Sabine Sainte-Rose UGA**

## Communications

The position and role of the group of Communications Officers are distinct from the thematic steering groups – within and outside the key priority areas. The Comms group serves the network as a whole and simultaneously has a responsibility to those steering groups and projects that have been given priority by the leadership of Aurora. In its network function, the Comms group works intensively with the central Aurora office.

Specifically identified tasks and targets:

- Each university will submit a minimum of three high-quality pieces of content a year to the Aurora secretariat for onward transmission.
- Each university will submit a minimum of 15 high-res images representing their core activities related to the values of Aurora to the Aurora secretariat for onward transmission.
- Conveners of each priority steering group and project group to work closely with communications officer from the host university chairing the group.
- Content checklist and templates for all universities to ensure content submissions align with Aurora themes and values.
- Develop a succinct “boilerplate” that all Aurora members can use to encapsulate Aurora’s mission and values.
- Clarify and create consensus on Aurora branding and endorsement within the member universities.

<b>Chair</b>	<b>Institutional Coordinator</b>	<b>Communications Liaison</b>
<b>Jon Örn Gudbjartsson UI</b>	<b>Friðrika Harðardóttir</b>	<b>UI</b>

## Aurora Brief Reviews

After some delay due to both HR and technical challenges, the first issue of the “Aurora Brief Reviews” (ABR) was distributed on January 8<sup>th</sup>. Meanwhile, eight editions have been published. Work on the online accessibility of the archive of the ABR and its predecessor VU IN&R is ongoing. The ABR biweekly identifies relevant data-driven reports and studies on a wide variety of aspects of higher education and research.

The intention is to have a second content editor next to Kees Kouwenaar; technical editing has been taken up by the central office communication officer, Anna Klas.

In view of the preparation of the EUN proposal, work on the ABR has been given lower priority, leading to the only intermittent publication of the ABR issues.

## Key contact persons per group

Key priority steering groups	Lead contact
Diversity & Inclusion	Ruart Ganzevoort Neira Bećar (VUA) <a href="mailto:n.becar@vu.nl">n.becar@vu.nl</a>
Societal impact and relevance of research	Jón Atli Benediktsson (UI) <a href="mailto:benedikt@hi.is">benedikt@hi.is</a> Háldor Jónsson (UI) <a href="mailto:dorij@hi.is">dorij@hi.is</a>
Students' engagement	Elísabeth Brynjarsdottir (UI) <a href="mailto:elisabetbrynjarsdottir@gmail.com">elisabetbrynjarsdottir@gmail.com</a>
Innovation of teaching and learning	Neil Ward (UAb) <a href="mailto:neil.ward@uea.ac.uk">neil.ward@uea.ac.uk</a>

Other broad steering groups	Lead contact
Internationalisation	Richard Harvey (UEA) <a href="mailto:R.W.Harvey@uea.ac.uk">R.W.Harvey@uea.ac.uk</a> Frans Snijders (VUA) <a href="mailto:f.a.m.snijders@vu.nl">f.a.m.snijders@vu.nl</a>
Sustainability	Tavis Potts <a href="mailto:tavis.potts@abdn.ac.uk">tavis.potts@abdn.ac.uk</a>
Vice Rectors Education	Neil Ward (UAb) <a href="mailto:neil.ward@uea.ac.uk">neil.ward@uea.ac.uk</a>
Vice Rectors Research	Jón Atli Benediktsson (UI) <a href="mailto:benedikt@hi.is">benedikt@hi.is</a> Háldor Jónsson (UI) <a href="mailto:dorij@hi.is">dorij@hi.is</a>
Institutional Coordinators	Sabine Sainte-Rose (UGA) <a href="mailto:sainters@univ-grenoble-alpes.fr">sainters@univ-grenoble-alpes.fr</a>
Communications Group	Jón Örn Gudbjartsson (UI) <a href="mailto:jonorn@hi.is">jonorn@hi.is</a>

Birds of a feather groups	Lead contact
HRM Networks	Renée-Andrée Koornstra (VUA) <a href="mailto:r.a.koornstra@vu.nl">r.a.koornstra@vu.nl</a>



Copyright © 2019 Aurora Universities Network, all rights reserved

The "Overview of Thematic Activities" of Aurora is regularly updated by the Aurora central office, on the basis of information provided by the various groups.

The most recent version is available on the website:

[aurora-network.global/project/overview-of-all-aurora-thematic-activities/](https://aurora-network.global/project/overview-of-all-aurora-thematic-activities/)

For further information, contact [info@aurora-network.global](mailto:info@aurora-network.global)