

Overview of thematic activities

May 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

- Announcement of the meeting of Internal Auditors in Antwerp
- Repeat analysis to the Elsevier report at the launch
- Change of place of the Fall 2019 Biannual

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 the priority and scope of the activity. For all groups and projects, the relevant institutional coordinator is indicated in the outline below, as well as the university responsible for communication regarding that group. Project and other groups with little or no activity over the recent months have been 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 have found each other. This followed from the conclusion of the Aurora presidents that Aurora activities need to be more strongly embedded in the educational strategies of their universities. A special paragraph is dedicated to their activities.

At its meeting in Antwerp (November 2018) the General Council of Aurora has underscored that Aurora groups need adequate support of its chair to function correctly. This applies both to the thematic and project groups, and to the various groups that underpin the ongoing work of coordination and communication. Also, it refers to the group of vice-rectors Research and Education. In the coming months, the 18 groups will be identified (two per Aurora member university) for which adequate chair's support will be safeguarded.

Vice-Rectors

Education

The Vice-Rectors Education group had a second – virtual – meeting in March, which was mainly used to prepare for its full-day meeting during the Grenoble Aurora Biannual. The strategy of focusing on shared ambitions as a tool to monitor specific activities taking place – or needed – within the educational domain was reaffirmed and refined. In addition to *) Diversity, *) Future skills, *) Student engagement, *) Technology, and *) Internationalisation, the group may add *) Teaching skills as a shared concern.

At the Grenoble full-day meeting, the group will discuss in-depth two of the specific projects that seem to fit well in the overarching strategy. Also, it will have a thorough discussion on creating synergy with the Aurora students group, based on a presentation by the Aurora student president. A key topic on the Grenoble agenda will be the alignment between the Aurora-flavoured EUN-proposal (for the second Call expected in Fall 2019) and the activities in Aurora.

Research

The VRR group held its second meeting on March 13th which was a virtual meeting chaired from Reykjavik. At the meeting, we had a short update on the developments concerning the EUN proposal and some discussions. The SDG bibliometric tool was on the agenda, with update on the latest developments and a productive debate about (1) the workload on the bibliometricians and participating academics, (2) on the strategical importance of the tool and (3) on some issues and concerns on the intended collaboration with Times Higher Education Rankings and Elsevier. At the meeting, Toby Wikström from UI gave a short but comprehensive presentation on KA2 proposal on cooperation at the PhD level, which is an excellent example of the benefit that Aurora members can have from the network.

All these issues above will be on the table in Grenoble along with an in-depth presentation of new comparative analyses of academic strength of Aurora members performed by the VU bibliometric experts. These new analyses will be compared to similar analyses conducted for Aurora by Elsevier in 2016.

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>
Diversity award	Karen van Oudenhoven (VUA) ¹	Esmee Paques	VUA

¹ Neira Becar (VUA)

<u>Project</u>	<u>Chair</u>	<u>Institutional Coordinator</u>	<u>Communications Liaison</u>
MPQ questionnaire	Karen van Oudenhoven (VUA) ¹	Esmee Paques	VUA
eBook Outreach & Empowerment	Yvonne Thompson	Esmee Paques	VUA
Inclusive Internationalisation	Helena Gillespie (UEA)	Richard Harvey (UEA)	UEA
Gendersense	Arnar Gisláson (UI)	Fridrika Hardardóttir	

Update on activities

Diversity & Equality Award:

On November 31st, 2018, three nominees have presented their projects at the plenary session in Antwerp for the Aurora Diversity and Equality Award 2018. In addition to participation from the partners, students participation was ensured by having students from the University of Antwerp design the trophy, which was handed to the winner. Just like last year, a booklet has been created, highlighting entries from different universities. Representatives of the winning project – Mammaforum, from the University of Gothenburg - will be given the opportunity to travel to another Aurora partner and exchange best practices.

Multicultural Personality Questionnaire: At the Antwerp Aurora Biannual, a training workshop on the Multicultural Personality Questionnaire (MPQ) will be conducted by Jader Franklim Pinto (KIT Intercultural Professionals, part of KIT Royal Tropical Institute).

The workshop will focus on critical questions: What 5 human abilities—measured by the MPQ— influence intercultural cooperation and communication? How to use the MPQ within your institution? Which target groups can it be used for? What is needed before you start using the MPQ? Cases will illustrate it.

Based on the presentation, partners have been asked to express their interest in working with the tool. The MPQ has been made available for student free of charge. However, costs for the application of the device for staff would have to discuss with the KIT. Several universities have expressed their interest in working with the tool. Additional information can be made available to those who are interested, followed by train the trainer sessions.

eBook Outreach and Empowerment: At the Duisburg-Essen Aurora Biannual, the initiative was launched to create an e-book on sharing useful concepts of Outreach, and Empowerment Programs aimed to enhance study success and transition to the labour market, for the next Aurora meeting on November 28 and 29, 2018 in Antwerp. The initiative builds on examples at both VUA and UEA of several outreach and empowerment programs giving first-generation students a head start to enhance equal opportunity in comparison with those students who are born into a family that has experienced academic life themselves.

The eBook will have chapters on initiatives for secondary school students, programmes promoting study success, and programmes to enhance the transition to the labour market. Publication the eBook has suffered a delay due to staff changes. It is expected that an overview of projects will be made available in the first half of 2019.

Aurora Inclusive Internationalisation Project: This project is focused on closing the gap in participation in international (mobility) experiences between disadvantaged students and their peers. The project seeks to better understand the reasons behind the differences in the partner universities and take action to close them. The project builds on work elsewhere in the sector, but implementing activities across our network should enable a more inclusive student exchange to be possible for the web. The consortium of UEA, VUA, UGoth, UDE, UAntwerp, UAber, UGA and possibly Iceland with the Aurora office will bid in March 2019 for Erasmus+ funding to support the activity.

Other initiatives within Diversity & Inclusion, not (yet) as a project:

- Gender mainstreaming: Part of the Diversity group meeting in Antwerp will be devoted to discuss the development of benchmarks for specific areas of diversity. By setting robust quality standards, Aurora universities may raise the quality of their policies and practices. Such benchmarking needs to be evidence-based. As most universities have adopted practices promoting the position of female faculty and staff at work, this will be taken as a starting point. There will be benchmarks on the inclusiveness of the work environment as well as on the attractiveness of attractive career perspectives.
- Education for prisoners: Following on a presentation by Mireille Baurens from Grenoble University during the Duisburg-Essen Aurora Biannual, a questionnaire has been circulated. At the Antwerp Biannual, the Diversity group has discussed whether the results of this survey warrant to make education to prisoners a specific action line within the Diversity group. Unfortunately, plenty of partners indicated that the priority of their educational activities lies with students, and there might be legal and administrative hurdles to turn this into a feasible project. A break out session could be organised at the next biannual to explore further ways of cooperating for partners who wish to take part in setting up this project.

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 stays remains a key focus of the Vice Rectors Research group.

Specific projects:

Project	Chair	Instit. Coor	Comms. Liaison
SDG analysis	Maurice Vander Feesten & 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](https://aurora-network.global/project/sdg-analysis-bibliometrics-relevance/): Again at the Antwerp Aurora Biannual, the project was presented - with a particular focus now on the Biosphere related SDGs. The [interactive tool on the Aurora website](https://aurora-network.global/project/sdg-analysis-bibliometrics-relevance/)² now allows graphic data representation on any selection of the nine Aurora universities and the 17 SDGs. The robustness of the methodological set up is now the issue of highest concern – and will not be achieved overnight. The engagement of the vice-rectors research in this effort is crucial.

At the Biannual in Antwerp, the bibliometricians came together and discussed several scenarios for the robustness of the methodological setup. Resulting in a collaborative workflow validating the current methodologies first, discovering its weaknesses, before creating a new classification model. This validation should be finished in February, but we faced organisational and technical difficulties at the start of the workflow chain, were the other dependent activities are delayed for three weeks.

² <https://aurora-network.global/project/sdg-analysis-bibliometrics-relevance/>

Meanwhile, in December, we had a constructive talk with THE and Elsevier-Research Intelligence, to collaborate and create a global standard for SDG-classification in research publications. This collaboration contains that Elsevier is creating the queries, and providing the data for validation. Aurora universities activities will be to contact researchers to validate the delivered data.

Doctoral education: The Vice Rectors Research group has identified a shared aspiration among Aurora universities in the field of working conditions and perspectives for “early career researchers”(PhDs and post-docs). It has asked for a survey of current offerings of services and courses within Aurora universities that may help to provide early career researchers with an outstanding environment and experience; a proposal will be discussed at the February meeting of the group.

The group on Doctoral education has submitted a strategic partnership proposal under KA2 of the Erasmus+ programme in April 2019 (UI is the lead coordinator, VUA is the project manager). UI and VUA have met in Amsterdam in April 2019 to finalise writing the Erasmus + proposal. (with considerable help from others, and especially UEA in the final stages). All project partners who are Aurora members have also duly provided with signed participation statements.

The Aurora Future Influencers Mobility Programme aims to allow doctoral students from Aurora Universities to circulate throughout the network and work in interdisciplinary settings with academic and industry actors, regardless of financial limitations and domestic responsibilities. This triple mobility will empower a new generation of socially responsible research leaders/influencers who can communicate, innovate and exert influence across national, social and disciplinary boundaries and contribute to the realisation of the Europe 2020 objective of smart, sustainable, inclusive growth. The project is based on creating mobility packages and stimulating the mobility of 200+ PhD candidates within a period of 3 years.

Some members of the Doctoral group have met in Amsterdam during the workshop of the EUA Council on Doctoral Education 17-18 January 2019 at VU Amsterdam to work on the Erasmus+ proposal.

A follow-up meeting is planned during the EUA Council for Doctoral Education Conference 2019 in Italy, Brescia June 12-14. The group will also Skype at the end of June to catch up on recent developments in doctoral education stemming from their participation in various workshops and conferences meanwhile, as well as discuss the steps forward in case the Erasmus grant is awarded, and when it is not the case.

EU Research Funding & Information:

The EU Research Funding & Information Managers group has started to provide structural support to Aurora’s advocacy and visibility activities in Brussels. In this, it works closely together with the Aurora office on the one hand and the Vice Rectors Research group on the other.

3. Students’ engagement

The Aurora Universities Network attaches great 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 staff 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	Fridrika Hardardóttir	U Iceland
Joint Sports Event	Nils Van de Velden	Elise Bauwens (UAntwerp)	
Aurora Mental Health Strategy	Elísabet Brynjarsdóttir	Fridrika Hardardóttir	U Iceland
Aurora Student Newsletter	Wouter Verheij	Esmee Paques	VU Amsterdam

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.

Joint Sports event

In the context of the Aurora Sports Days (Wednesday, April 24th, Antwerp), a workshop “AURORA collaboration in the domain of Sport” was held with professionals from the sports offices of AURORA member universities on the same day. Heralding the start of the AURORA Sport Days programme as part of the PCU Games 2019.

Representatives from the *Vrije Universiteit* Amsterdam, the University of Duisburg-Essen and the University of East Anglia presented their institutions' sports offices policies and activities. The hosting University of Antwerp presented the Project “STICK” (Sport and Academic Talent Integration Through Exchange Programmes in Hockey), supported by the EU through the Erasmus+ programme.

The presentations and discussions were seen as useful forms of exchanging information and experiences.

Participants:

- Jürgen Schmagold from the University of Duisburg-Essen
- Adam Garford from the University of East-Anglia
- Jan Snellen, Mariëlle Spekrijse and Jolanda Seijger from the Vrije Universiteit Amsterdam
- Peter Verboven from the University of Antwerp

Aurora mental health strategy: The Aurora Student Council has taken the initiative to host a workshop on mental health during the biannual in November. The workshop will aim to create a mental health strategy. Students will come together and share the best practices in student support, what their universities are doing, and what should be done.

Aurora Students mental health video: The Aurora Student Council has produced a video on mental health for students. The video will feature a message from students within Aurora regarding mental health, and the object is to raise awareness on the matter.

Aurora Student Newsletter, The Aurora Student Council, is working on a newsletter which the students would publish. Wouter Verheij is currently the students' editor. The purpose is to bring attention to the work the students are doing, what the network is doing and try to reach and raise awareness about the network amongst other students at our universities.

Shared aspiration and strategy for next years: The Aurora Student Council will meet at the next biannual to discuss, and form, shared students' expectations and form a plan for student involvement for the next two years. This will also include how the students work within the network and what their priorities are for the next two years, and how they align with the work being done within the network.

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 in each of 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	Milou de Smet (UAntwerp)	Elise Bauwens	U Antwerp
Open Educational Resources	Anke Petschenka	Petra Günther	U Duisburg Essen
Positive teaching culture & teaching quality standard	Silvester Draaijer (VUA)	Esmee Paques	VUA
Aurora Sustainability Lectures series	David Lusseau (UAb)	Margaret Ross	
Aurora Collaborative Online International Learning module	Sabine Sainte-Rose (UGA) / Silvester Draaijer (VUA)	Sabine Sainte-Rose / Esmee Paques	
Learner analytics	VUA/UGA		
'Learning incomes'	Aurora office		
Connecting Research in HE pedagogy	UEA		

Update on activities

e-Assessment: After successful submissions and presentations at the Technology Enhanced Assessment Conference (TEA2018, 10-11 December 2018 in Amsterdam), this group keeps on working together. Further collaboration is expected on innovative support of students' writing processes, using text analysis tools developed at the University of Antwerp (Inputlog). UAntwerp is in the lead. Within the new VU Network for Teaching & Learning, a further start-up by setting up experiments is expected.

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

The group met at the Essen and Antwerp Biannual and will meet again at the Grenoble Biannual. The project group conducted a series of webinars "Open educational resources as an enabler for building an inclusive university community". The first two webinars on "National and international initiatives concerning OER" and "Supporting structures and teaching scenarios for Open Educational Resources at the University Duisburg-Essen (UDE)" already took place in February and April 2019. Next webinars will be planned in Grenoble. UDE is in the lead. Event-Webpage: <https://aurora-network.global/event/aurora-webinar-series-open-educational-resources-as-enabler-for-building-an-inclusive-university-community/>, project webpage: <https://aurora-network.global/project/open-educational-resources-web-series/>.

Positive Teaching & Learning Culture (PTLC): PTLC met in Antwerp during the Biannual to discuss further planning of activities. They worked on a position paper which they now carry on doing in a collaborative online manner. VUA (Gerhard van de Bunt and Silvester Draaijer) participated in a European University Association thematic Peer group on in the area of Continuous Development of Teaching Competencies. PTLC developed a paper that is disseminated throughout the European Universities Network. The group was forwarded the new call for participating in thematic peer groups for 2019. VUA is in the lead. The group will not meet in Grenoble but expects to resume after the summer break of 2019.

Aurora Sustainability Lectures: This Sustainability series will showcase to the broader University community the expertise available around sustainability challenges that affect all of us, framed using the UN SDGs. We want to invite all students and staff, both academic and non-academic, and the public to join the conversation during 18 events hosted in nine European countries. We will hold 18 events around the nine institutions over the next 18 months. Each institution will host two events over three periods (May-June 2019 - phase I; Nov-Dec 2019 - phase II; Feb-Mar 2020 - phase III) never hosting more than one in each period. The host institution will be at liberty to choose the format of the event (talk, panel, debate, etcetera.). Four events are planned to take place before Summer 2019.

Aurora Collaborative Online International Learning:

This project is taking new steps. On 13 December, support staff and teachers from the University of Grenoble and the VU have met to discuss one or two specific possible virtual exchanges. This still needs fleshing out. The project members will collaborate with International Offices to also include virtual mobility into the structured mobility initiatives. A more significant impact is expected within the Aurora-flavoured proposal for a European Universities Network focussing on Social Entrepreneurship & Innovation. This proposal, virtual/online learning and collaboration, is expected to be an essential part design and delivery. UGA has announced that it will assume leadership for this project.

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. UVA and UGA are in the lead.

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. Aurora and Aberdeen are in the lead.

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.

NB in all probability, two of the last three initiatives will be discussed in-depth in the full-day meeting of the Vice Rectors Education in Grenoble (May 27th).

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 indeed 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.

As a strategy, it aims to promote good practice, stimulate joint activities, and develop benchmarks to monitor progress at individual institutions and collectively as Aurora.

The Sustainable Development Goals have gained significantly in prominence in Aurora. The network may want to a) transform the “Sustainability” theme into a broad “SDG” theme and b) upgrade this from one of the “other priorities” to an overarching framework for Aurora as a whole

Professor David Lusseau (UAb) resigned the Chair of the Sustainability Group in early Spring 2019 due to workload pressure. We thank him for his contribution to the group during his time as chair. On an interim basis, having first consulted with the Aurora Central Office and then with Andre Niemann (UDE) and Pieter Van Beukering (VU), Ivar Maas (VU) and Ilka Roose (UDE) are coordinating the Group’s preparations for the Biannual meeting in Grenoble. Their efforts in so doing are very much appreciated, particularly by Aberdeen while it searches for a substantive Chair. At the time of writing, Aberdeen has identified a new person to lead the group forward and hopes that they will be able to take over the chair from June subject to discussion meantime about the allocation of responsibilities.

Specific projects:

Project	Chair	Instit. Coor	Comms. Liaison
SDG analysis	Maurice Vanderfeesten (VUA)	Esmee Paques	VUA

Aurora Sustainability Lectures series	David Lusseau (UAb)	Margaret Ross	
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[Update on activities](#)

SDG analysis: See above (SIRR)

Aurora Sustainability Lectures: See above (ITL)

2. Internationalisation

In an international network of universities, it makes sense also to explore the 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
Inclusive Internationalisation Structured mobility	Helena Gillespie	Richard Harvey	UEA
	Frans Snijders (VUA); Alex Cole (UEA)	Esmee Paques	VUA
Improved student exchange agreements MPQ questionnaire	Frans Snijders (VUA); Alex Cole (UEA)	Esmee Paques	
	Karen van Oudenhoven (VUA)	Esmee Paques	VUA

[Update on activities](#)

Internationalisation

The internationalisation activity consists of several subsidiary activities including work on international mobility, inclusive internationalisation (covered elsewhere) and a select group on Africa, (which has not met recently). 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.

International mobility presents an exciting challenge in that, in principle, it is widely supported, but in practice, the successes are negligible. We have completed an audit of mobility between the partners, and we have now signed agreements for mobility between partners, even when an Erasmus+ agreement does not exist. It is quite possible that either a no deal Brexit or the Macron proposal may precipitate improved mobility, but I am confident that, given time, mobility with Aurora will help. It is worth noting that it can take a staggeringly long time to for information about Aurora to propagate into a university - I met a Professor recently, at an institution who shall remain nameless, who claimed to not know Aurora at all - despite being an expert on European policy. In that regard, the Aurora Brief Reviews is very helpful as it is attractive to Academics who are one of the hard-to-reach groups. We will reconvene in Grenoble to assess progress but the co-scheduling with NAFSA, the world’s biggest mobility conference, is not ideal in that regard.

Aurora Inclusive Internationalisation Project: See under Diversity

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.

Other activities

In many fields and subjects, members of the academic communities of two or more Aurora members have identified a shared interest and a collective desire to see if they can work together. Where these are not sufficiently broad enough to be a full steering group and not sufficiently specific enough to become a project group, we will use the term "*Special Interest Group*".

1. Birds of feather meetings

Internal audit – Autumn 2019 – University of Antwerp

5 Aurora universities confirmed their participation: UAntwerpen, University of Duisburg-Essen, University of Iceland, VU Amsterdam and Université Grenoble-Alpes. These five universities will be represented by their internal auditor (or another relevant person). A doodle will be sent to schedule a meeting in Antwerp in the autumn of 2019.

The University of Aberdeen will be attending the meeting virtually. The University of East Anglia will probably not be participating since an external accounting firm conducts its internal audit

The session will focus on the following items:

- How is the 'internal audit'-function organised in the different Aurora universities? What is the legal framework? What is the exact position and responsibility in the institution? What are the underlying protocols and methodologies used? What works well, what are obstacles encountered?
- What are the possibilities for cooperation? Exchange of ideas, data, etc.? Potential role of Aurora member internal auditors in activities in other member universities? Are they helping each other to find experts on specific topics?

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.

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 8th. 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 broad 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.

Key contact persons per group:

Key priority steering groups	Lead contact
Diversity & Inclusion	Karen van Oudenhoven (VUA) k.i.van.oudenhoven-vander.zee@vu.nl Neira Bećar (VUA) n.becar@vu.nl
Societal impact and relevance of research	Sigridur Beck (Ugo) sigridur.beck@hum.gu.se
Students' engagement	Elísabeth Brynjarsdottir (UI) elisabetbrynjarsdottir@gmail.com
Innovation of teaching and learning	Pierre Gillois (UGA) pierre.gillois@univ-grenoble-alpes.fr

Other broad steering groups	Lead contact
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