



# AUC 21

Our community's vision for excellence,  
diversity and global citizenship

[www.Auc.nl](http://www.Auc.nl)

AUC 21: Our community's vision for excellence, diversity and global citizenship

**Report Author**

Prof. Dr. Murray Pratt

**Photography**

Bram Belloni

Floris Cobben

Ray Edgar

Maarten van Haaff

Leonard Fäustle

Benjamin Garstka

---

## FOREWORD

It is with great pleasure and pride that I invite you to read and reflect upon this document, describing the next phase for Amsterdam University College in achieving its ambitions as one of Europe's leading Liberal Arts and Sciences honours undergraduate education centres. In keeping with its founding phase since 2008, AUC will continue to place excellence at the heart of its strategy, leveraging on the diversity of its community of students, educators, partners and alumni.

In my mind, as a member of AUC's International Advisory Board, an unequivocal and relentless drive for excellence is an essential pillar to addressing the myriad of challenges we face in today's world. But a goal without a plan is only a dream. AUC 21 sketches the steps we commit to take as a dynamic community to achieve the goal.

*Dr. Marja Zonneville*  
*AUC International Advisory Board Member*

---

## **CONTENTS**

Context	<b>6</b>
Phase 1: 2016	<b>9</b>
Phase 2: 2016–2017	<b>10</b>
A contemporary and relevant LAS curriculum	<b>14</b>
Students at the heart of the learning experience	<b>16</b>
Innovation and discovery in global and city contexts	<b>20</b>
Extending our reach and recognition	<b>23</b>
A sustainable institutional framework	<b>24</b>

# Context



---

## CONTEXT

In April 2016, Amsterdam University College embarked on strategic conversations aimed at bringing together colleagues and students, the college and the universities. In brief, this was a chance to talk about our goals, the contexts in which we operate, the opportunities and challenges we face. We talked about what would we like to do better, what we wanted to do more of, less of, or differently, and how we might build on our foundational period in setting our ambitions for the years to come. The intention was that the discussions would enable AUC to set our strategic priorities for the next five year period (2017–2021), and inform our action planning over the next few years. This intention was further elaborated during team meetings, EMT meetings, consultations and discussions, where the ideas were introduced, debated, refined and gradually took shape.

The aim of the exercise was not a radical rethink of what we do. On the contrary, we started from a position that recognises the very many strengths of AUC, endorsed our focus on delivering high quality honours undergraduate education within a Liberal Arts and Sciences model, acknowledged that those who make up our community (colleagues and students alike) are our most valuable asset; and built on the achievements and pillars (excellence and diversity in a global city) of AUC's founding period, as well as the many motivated discussions already taking place, not least the Voices of AUC franchise.

Instead, the strategic discussion allowed us to begin to channel the enthusiasm of the community in gathering together the many good ideas we all have for improving the curriculum further, developing our reputation, innovating in delivering education, working better together in our unique interdisciplinary environment, making more of our partnerships – be they civic or global, enhancing the student experience, fine-tuning our structures where needed, and achieving even more as we move beyond the college's set up phase towards consolidating and growing our deserved reputation as one of Europe's leading Liberal Arts and Sciences colleges.

# Phase 1: 2016



---

## **PHASE ONE**

The process began with considerable energy. Much was achieved, both formally, through the theme discussion groups which brought together members of the AUC 21 and our partners to focus on key areas for consideration, and, perhaps equally importantly, through the many informal discussions, local decisions taken and the continuing commitment we made to the inclusive, valuing culture that AUC21 embodies.

Many of the ideas and intentions expressed during AUC 21 Phase 1 also informed the interim strategic report to our International Advisory Board in June 2016.

Theme groups shared their main ideas during the Annual Joint Meeting in 2016, and the slides were made available. At the same time, the second Voices of AUC project also took place during phase 1, addressing many similar issues. The slides from the Annual Joint Meeting, and the Voices report were circulated, and led to further discussions in teams and various meetings.



# Phase 2: 2016-2017



---

## PHASE TWO

An update on the first phase of AUC 21 was presented at the 2016–2017 Start the Year Meeting in August 2016, including a statement on our horizon (how AUC will be positioned and perceived in 2021), and group work activities took place, anticipating the year in ways which reflected many of the emerging ideas from AUC 21 phase 1. Additionally, discussions continued within the teams and EMT, supplemented by a further valuable round of the Voices of AUC project in April 2017.

Many of the good ideas generated in the first phase are already finding their way into implementation, and the task of bringing together a strategic vision that reflected these was undertaken, with EMT colleagues working in pairs summarising the discussions so far, establishing feasibility and harmonising the ideas within a logical structure.

Our strategy therefore evolves around five themes which, together, are designed to capture our ambitions to build on the founding period of AUC and harness our potential to become a leading University College, delivering a world class programme in the Liberal Arts and Sciences. It is underpinned by commitments to the actions we will take jointly with colleagues, students and partners to achieve this ambition.

A living  
document,  
working  
together on  
actions as  
our strategic  
vision  
evolves

---

## A LIVING DOCUMENT

The current document therefore reflects over a year's work by the entire AUC community, thinking together about how best to prioritise our ambitions and aims for the five-year period 2017–2021. Yet our strategic conversation will continue. While the result of the first two phases successfully summarises much of the dialogue, it's equally to our credit that there are other ideas, spin-offs and initiatives out there in the ether, either happening or still forming as the grains of ideas to come. These should be encouraged, and the development and articulation our strategy should be embraced as an ongoing work of progress and further debate. On the other hand, it is helpful to establish an action map, as a reference point in time, that we can agree as one snapshot indicating how we can move forward, and it is in this spirit that "AUC 21: Our community's vision for excellence, diversity and global citizenship" is launched.

Some actions are already in implementation, others being modified through further discussion and research, still others are earmarked for an introduction later in the cycle. Hereafter, our conversations will indeed continue. At the same time, it is hoped that the current document can translate into a third and final implementation phase, steered over the five-year period by five action groups (one per theme) consisting of colleagues, students and external partners who can help us ensure that we stay on course in reaching our ambitions for AUC and our students, past, current and future. It is these communities of practice then, that in the implementation and

overview, and over the period in question, that will bring the vision to life, through design and dialogue, carefully formulating the actions that reflect the vision, and in the college's best practice of working together with respect and dedication. More broadly, the aim is to build on our traditions of collegiality, co-ownership not only of the decisions we make but also of the challenges we encounter, and a can-do attitude that tackles these challenges within a mutually supportive, well-functioning and respectful community.

We now invite the endorsement of students, colleagues, our governance and advisory bodies, our partners and friends, in bringing their enthusiasm to the implementation of AUC 21, and do so in the spirit not of an additional set of restrictions or shackles, but rather, in the spirit of our on-going collective conversation, as a shared aspiration for what we aim to be, and what steps we can take on the journey to get there.

# A contemporary and relevant LAS curriculum

**1. We will review and refresh our curriculum as we approach our 10th anniversary, so that we continue to provide an appropriate and challenging Liberal Arts and Sciences honours education that prepares graduates well for further study, research or careers.**

The curriculum will engage our students in complex questions, state of the art analytical and scientific methods and multi-/interdisciplinary learning. We will retain our distinctive approach that combines core learning in the LAS with opportunities to develop full competence in major disciplines, and build further on the opportunities offered to students, including internationalisation, community projects and internships. The refreshed curriculum will begin to be launched from 2018–2019, with detailed work first taking place in earnest during the course of 2017–2018, and through further collaborative dialogue with colleagues, students and partners. 'Curriculum 21' will be fully established with regular meetings and a consultation schedule enabling revisions to be adopted for the following year. Opportunities for development include:



- 
- Affirming our commitment to a curriculum built round the research cycle and the key learning objectives of LAS, such as systematic literature review, formulating coherent research questions and writing, experimentation, critical analysis, data processing and interpretation, interdisciplinary integration, self-reflection and critical analysis, and dissemination for a wider audience;
  - Ensuring that pathway development remains rigorous, core skills thoroughly embedded, and that curriculum coverage of big complex questions and thematic issues remains appropriate, challenging and contemporary;
  - Introducing and redesigning innovative core classes that aim to train students in state of the art methodologies and epistemologies not only relevant to their specialisation but also aiming at a broad view on the foundation of each of the disciplines;
  - Promoting students' ownership of their learning objectives and practice;
  - Attending further to the digital and data revolutions by appropriate introductions to the key C21 competencies required by the graduates of tomorrow;
  - Promoting social responsibility, civic awareness and global citizenship through learning that is anchored in real world contexts;
  - Ensuring that all students have equally comprehensive learning standards and degree requirements;
  - Strengthening and interrogating interdisciplinary approaches through innovative teaching methodologies;
  - Renewing the concept of master classes in areas where students can engage with expertise or are seeking specialist knowledge or skills, and where relevant, delivered in partnership, such as entrepreneurship;
  - Seeking opportunities to establish additional attractive minors with our partner universities in and across disciplines that complement our curriculum
  - Designing our approach to languages in the curriculum such that all students can logically complete a minimum of two units of language (sequential or complementary) from an attractive selection of world and European languages;

# Students at the heart of the learning experience

## **2. We will ensure that AUC remains an attractive undergraduate destination for talented and diverse applicants by:**

- Ensuring that our admissions criteria are appropriate, to help us identify and accept students well prepared for academic success at AUC;
- Leading the way in ensuring our admissions processes and practices consider the whole person, and that marketing messages are inclusive and fair for all applicants;
- Establishing and communicating clearer guidelines and processes for candidates who have not yet met the entry conditions and effective processes that show how they can meet these and enable us to assess their progress in a timely way;
- Evaluating and relaunching our outreach programmes with a range of key partner schools in the Netherlands, including schools in the communities with which we engage, and international schools, through the activities of AUC, as well as the wider the UC network, such that we are known for our commitment to building equal opportunities and learning chances;
- Building meaningful international partnerships with schools and other partners, that help build awareness about our degree to international applicants and support them in the process;
- Engaging with Amsterdam's diverse communities to continue building trust and confidence in applicants from diverse backgrounds.

---

**3. We will review the structure of our academic programme to make sure it is appropriately designed to challenge every student to make academic progress and grow as an academic citizen, while supporting their learning and well-being by:**

- Considering our attendance policy to ensure it is meeting its aims and represents a fair contract for learners;
- Providing a sensible but challenging learning and assessment calendar, in the first instance by standardising a class-free week in the 16-week period of both semesters and considering how we might gain more value from the 4-week periods;
- Ensuring that our approaches to assessment enhance the value of learning, provide a well spread out diet of tasks over the semester, and both provide meaningful feedback and evaluate student learning outcomes appropriately;
- Continuing to evolve as a learning organisation, particularly with regard to developing leading pedagogical practice and innovation in areas that enhance student learning, such as problem-based approaches;
- Develop and implement more innovative and flexible learning strategies, mixing traditional classroom activities with other approaches, including blended or flipped learning where appropriate
- Ensuring that students' intellectual curiosity is supported through academic mentoring, and that there are achievable opportunities to make progress;
- Attending to how we can better integrate first year students within the AUC academic culture and community.





---

**4. We will support students in preparing for and making choices about their future studies, research and careers by:**

- Redesigning and strengthening the support we provide students in choosing Masters options;
- Considering how to enhance the support for careers available for students (including working with the universities, providing training opportunities, maximising the value from Community Projects and Internships and other approaches);
- Strengthening the support and academic mentorship our tutors provide to students, including hardwiring future planning from the first meeting onwards, supporting portfolio development, positioning references better and other approaches.

**5. We will remain a welcoming home for our alumni, boosting and broadening our relations with them and involving them more in the life of AUC by:**

- Working with the AUC Alumni Association to explore how we can better identify the needs and build our support for the alumni community and help AUCAA meet its objectives in community-building and fund-raising;
- Developing systems for bringing alumni back to AUC, as part of our Masters Fair, within classes, and as academic role models and future career exemplars, who can coach, mentor and inspire current students;
- Building a global network of alumni ambassadors who will promote AUC, engage with schools, host academic and social events, and advise current students and other alumni on their city, university, research or profession.



# Innovation and discovery in global and city contexts

## **6. We will continue to develop and expand outstanding opportunities for global learning by:**

- Continuing to seek best value in the provision of study abroad places with trusted partner universities, in combination with UvA and the VU and through our own network;
- Piloting international classroom link-ups across our curriculum to offer opportunities for our students to work together with learners from other cultures;
- Providing at least one international field trip option in each of the three Majors, so that students can gain experience in applying their learning in international contexts;
- Harnessing the global experience and knowledge of our incoming exchange students in ways that enhance our international community and providing a welcoming and academically worthwhile experience for them;
- Facilitating students' access to international learning and extra-curricular activities;
- Exploring in-country study opportunities with partner universities.

---

## 7. We will increase and enhance learning opportunities in and with the city through:

- Further embedding a range of learning opportunities, internships and communities with partners in and around the Science Park;
- Finding ways to involve city cultural institutes, museums and venues in our curriculum and its extensions, and supporting AUCSA to make more of these opportunities beyond the curriculum;
- Creating innovative experiential learning activities in the city by aligning city events with 'open course formats' related to AUC curriculum priorities;
- Scoping appropriate degree combinations with the universities and other prestigious education providers in Amsterdam, including combinations with creative degrees.



## 8. We will continue to promote equal learning opportunities for all and engage with fostering and celebrating diversity by:

- Building further on our co-work with AUCSA in diversity outreach, mentoring and coaching activities such as Jeugdlab and our work with Zeeburgia, and nurturing our role in supporting the refugee in the community;
- Taking the next steps in building an inclusive and supportive community, and growing our collective awareness of diversity through workshops and other actions;
- Forging strong and durable relations with community partners and working with them to raise awareness of AUC and create the pathways that support diversity-related recruitment;
- Working with ASF to ensure scholarship opportunities that support diversity in all its forms.

---

**9. We will continue to pioneer learning opportunities for students that take their learning into real world contexts such as:**

- Community Projects and Internships;
- Classes that include a focus on ethical, participatory leadership and entrepreneurship, and design thinking skills for the C21st workplace;
- Bringing key Amsterdam cultural, social and scientific events into the classroom and vice versa.
- Integrating learning opportunities within our classes that provide students opportunities to bring problem-based approaches to live questions and issues;
- Activities that extend the classroom beyond our academic building



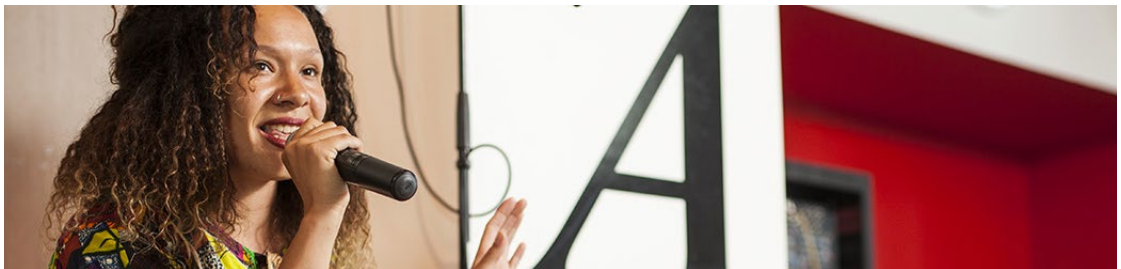
# Extending our reach and recognition

**10. We will grow our presence and profile through our educational offers and partnerships so that our reputation for excellence in the Liberal Arts and Sciences is internationally recognised through:**

- Scoping distinctive summer school offers, where there are achievable and relevant reasons to do so, and, where appropriate, in partnership with the universities;
- Scoping a possible mini-MOOC that would enhance our online provision in ways that engage applicants during the period they are considering coming to AUC;
- Consolidating a network of key international partner universities, colleges or programmes that complement and enhance our mission, to co-create collaborative provision going beyond study abroad (such as staff exchange, international classroom link-ups, student project collaborations, joint funding applications etc.)

**11. We will build on our marketing and admissions strategies by:**

- Developing and delivering an annual marketing and admissions plan;
- Ensuring our AUC Ambassador scheme is functioning well and that ambassadors are better trained to deliver our messages at schools, open days and tours;



# A sustainable institutional framework

**12. We will set a clearly articulated vision and mission for the next five year period of AUC's development and establish action groups to oversee the implementation of our commitments and their adoption into relevant documents and communications through**

- The launch and implementation of AUC21; international] such that AUC remains well informed of new developments in higher education.
- Continued monitoring of the external landscape [Dutch, European and

**13. We will continue to foster strong relations with our parent universities and their component parts such that we identify and enhance:**

- Opportunities for new educational innovation;
- Best practice sharing;
- Smooth transitions to Masters;
- An understanding and appreciation of AUC and its ambitions, including being on the radar for new developments and pilots;
- Continued first rate academic and administrative arrangements that enable our students to access research-informed teaching, appropriate facilities, library services and other university level provision as required.

---

**14. We will seek ways to work with colleagues to build a supportive, well-functioning and respectful workplace by:**

- Enhance the AUC experience of each colleague through adopting participatory leadership approaches and promoting a collaborative, supportive atmosphere ;
- Ensuring that our planning infrastructure for the allocation of work time and tasks is appropriate, balanced, and supports career development;
- Continuing to work together to resolve issues of work pressure;
- Making better use of annual reviewing mechanisms as well as regular discussions with supervisors
- Revitalising/Making better use of regular constructive discussions within the teams, via the governance bodies, and as a community;
- The further provision of appropriate opportunities for developing competencies, skills and experience for academic and support staff;
- Maintaining our commitment to enshrining and defending all colleagues' right to work in an environment where they can feel supported and respected

**15. We will continue to engage in institutional learning with a focus on best practice in Liberal Arts and Sciences education and the promotion of student ownership of their learning through:**

- Reaffirming our support and facilitation of participation in relevant workshops for students and staff
- Hosting and co-hosting workshops and other training events that develop teaching practice for colleagues
- Continuing to develop our forward-thinking professional development programme
- Integrating partner faculty from the universities well in our community and supporting their delivery of teaching and assessment;
- Refreshing our approach to peer review in ways that make the experience meaningful and sustainable for all involved





**16. We will build a culture that disseminates and celebrates the successes of our communities and individuals through:**

- Report back opportunities for students and colleagues who have been funded for various activities, including displays, blogs, shout-outs and other events;
- Enhancing our media outreach to place our success stories in ways that build awareness;
- Refreshing our successful Who's in Town series through structuring and promoting the event more professionally such as to further maximise attendance and our reputation as the home of informed academic conversation.

**17. We will ensure that our programme is supported by well-balanced policies, efficient procedures and an effective infrastructure, by continuing to prioritise:**

- Regular evaluations, interactions, communications and feedback and structures that promote constructive critical review
- Robust and timely quality assurance cycles;
- Optimising the workflow around our support services through regular review
- of mission critical procedures such as mid-term evaluation, course enrolment, room reservation, information systems
- Improving communication to students, staff and stakeholders on the outcomes and actions resulting from reviews, evaluations and quality assurance cycles

We invite the  
endorsement  
of students,  
colleagues and  
stakeholders  
in the  
implementation  
of AUC21