Principles and strategic objectives

Operational objectives, planning, instruments and financial support

I. QUALITY ASSURANCE AND EVALUATION OF RESEARCH
II. PRINCIPLES OF GOOD GOVERNANCE IN RESEARCH POLICY
III. INCREASING THE PARTICIPATION OF WOMEN AND ETHNIC MINORITIES IN RESEARCH
IV. RESEARCHER TRAINING AND CAREERS
V. COMMUNICATION ON CURRENT AND COMPLETED RESEARCH

Abbreviations used


ANNEX 4: Explanatory memorandum on the introduction of a new financing model for research: basic financing and programme financing (Governing Council, 24.05.2011).
Principles and strategic objectives

The central principles of the current research policy at the Vrije Universiteit Brussel are as follows:

- **a 'bottom-up' approach**, with research being initiated and financed as much as possible from the research community (following selection based on quality);

- **no a priori division** of resources based on applications, so that the best applications across all areas can be selected in competition (based on quality);

- **open calls** for applications for research financing (where possible, based on the financing channel);

- a healthy balance for internal financing between (I) **general basic financing** that gives all researchers access to research financing, (II) **development opportunities**, and (III) financing based on **level of excellence**;

- the pursuit of a **balanced overall distribution of the sum of all research resources across the three major areas** of 'Social Sciences and Humanities', 'Basic, Natural and Applied Sciences' and 'Biomedical Sciences', this balance being monitored systematically;

- the incorporation of **incentives for the acquisition of external financing, internationalisation, networking and valorisation** (incl. social) into the criteria and conditions for internal finance instruments.

The necessary preparations and deliberations call for major commitment, competence, knowledge of the files and accessibility of all the parties involved (members of advisory bodies, supporting administration), and transparent procedures (calls for proposals, criteria).

The University's research capacity is focused on **three levels of research**, each valuable in itself, ranging from a broad and diverse research base to an internationally recognised priority level (Figure 1). A specific range of finance instruments is associated with each of these three levels (Table 1).

Management of the resources listed in Table 1 is supported by the **Research Administration Department**, consisting of the Research Coordination Unit, the Science Communication Unit, the Central PhD Office and the Data and Policy Unit. This excludes resources of the Industrial Research Fund, management of which is supported by the Technology Transfer Interface.

The subject of this policy plan is **non-targeted research**, notably that financed through the **Special Research Fund**, focusing in particular on the provisions contained in Article 23 of the Special Research Fund decision in this regard.

Research policy at this level is closely linked to the policy applied in relation to **targeted research, valorisation and innovation** (in particular that financed through the Industrial Research Fund and regulated by the relevant decision), which is set out in a separate policy plan on this issue (**ANNEX 1**)
and monitored by the **Technology Transfer Interface**. The interconnection of these issues\(^1\) into a more comprehensive research strategy or career is also visible in various policy instruments, and will also be included in the planned design of multidisciplinary poles of excellence.

The global financing model for research was recently substantially revised (Governing Council, 24.05.2011, **ANNEX 4**). This revision brings with it new possibilities (monitoring) and structures (programme financing). The coming period will be marked by a further follow-up and response to this, in line with two **key objectives for the period 2013-2017** that span all three levels of research:

| A) the design of multidisciplinary poles of excellence, the start point being the spearheads defined and the growth potential; |
| B) the development of a high-quality broad research base through general incentives. |

**A) In the period 2013-2017, multidisciplinary poles of excellence** will be designed, taking as the start point the various excellence-level allocations (the various forms of long-term financing and internally and externally allocated research mandates), and with **internationalisation and networking** as essential elements. This raising of the University's profile in terms of research through internationally recognised core research competences is essential in the current context of increasing globalisation and international competition.

**B) Recently renewed financing and incentives for a high-quality broad research base** ensure basic research financing is generally available in all departments, and that a **local policy is pursued at research level**. In particular, it is planned to evaluate the Basic Financing for departments (after being applied for 5 years) as a new instrument at this level in the course of the period 2013-2017.

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\(^1\) The interconnection of Research Policy and Innovation and Valorization Policy: The implementation of research results in society is an important basic task of the university. The acquisition of external revenue from the valorization of research is therefore one of the main emphases of the General Strategic Plan. This revenue includes, strategic research projects at Flemish (Agency for Innovation by Science and Technology/Strategic Basic Research) and European (EU Framework programmes) levels, and, where appropriate, is included as a parameter in the evaluation of the performances of researchers (Assignment Matrix for senior academic staff), research groups and spearheads. The specific academic administrative bodies for the Innovation and Valorization Policy, supported by the Technology Transfer Interface, have the job of drafting a policy that, among other things, aims to encourage more researchers to develop their own research. The development of a new culture of valorization-based thinking, in consultation with the Deputy Rectors responsible for Research Policy and for the Innovation and Valorization Policy, is therefore crucial for the University. Besides awareness-raising and training at PhD level (domain of the Central PhD Office), the University's senior researchers and research teams should, in the long run, not only bear in mind the need for a well developed research process (Research policy area), but also the need for a file for valorization (to industry and society) that incorporates and exploits every opportunity to obtain external resources in a structured manner (Innovation and Valorization policy area). Valorization-based thinking is, however, a necessity within all areas and forms of research, although it should be viewed within the broad concept of social valorization with the aim of making a social and cultural impact. The development firstly of stimulation mechanisms geared towards this and, secondly, of a monitoring instrument forms part of the broader research area (Research policy area). The Data and Policy Unit, falling within the Research Administration Department, includes these tasks in its mission statement.
Table 1

By research level and sub-level:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Finance instruments with grants being based on the Council’s opinion and closely related financing channels</th>
<th>Internal</th>
<th>External</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>I. Firm base</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>1) Doctoral</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>- Research Foundation Flanders PhD fellowships &amp; Agency for Innovation by Science and Technology Specialisation Postgraduate Grants</td>
<td>Special research fund/Research Council</td>
<td>Research Foundation Flanders/Agency for Innovation by Science and Technology</td>
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<td>- Research Council research fellowships/Predoc</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Planned action:</strong></td>
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<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Expansion of partner universities for international scientific cooperation</td>
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<tr>
<td>2) Postdoctoral (postdoc and starting senior academic staff)</td>
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<tr>
<td>- senior academic staff Start Financing</td>
<td>Special research fund/Research Council</td>
<td>Research Foundation Flanders</td>
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<tr>
<td>- Special research fund Tenure Track fellowships</td>
<td>Special research fund/Research Council</td>
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<tr>
<td>- 10% senior academic staff appointments</td>
<td>Special research fund/Research Council</td>
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<tr>
<td>- Research Foundation Flanders Postdocs first period &amp; Agency for Innovation by Science and Technology Postdoctoral fellowships</td>
<td>Special research fund/Research Council</td>
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<tr>
<td>- Research Council research fellowships/Postdoc</td>
<td>Special research fund/Research Council</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Planned action:</strong></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Generalisation of senior academic staff Start Financing</td>
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<tr>
<td>3) General</td>
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<tr>
<td>- Basic financing for departments</td>
<td>Special research fund/Research Council</td>
<td>Research Council</td>
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<tr>
<td>- Infrastructure</td>
<td>Research Council</td>
<td>Special research fund/Research Council</td>
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<tr>
<td>- Research groups alliance</td>
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<td>Special research fund</td>
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<td>- International scientific cooperation</td>
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<td><strong>Planned action:</strong></td>
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<td>Joint Research Labs</td>
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## II. Growth potential

<table>
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<th>1)</th>
<th>Incubation level (senior academic staff and postdoc)</th>
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<tr>
<td>-</td>
<td>Basic financing for departments</td>
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<td>-</td>
<td>Sabbatical leave</td>
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<td>-</td>
<td>Distinction based on social valorisation</td>
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<tr>
<td>-</td>
<td>Research Foundation Flanders Postdocs second period &amp; Flanders Scientific Research Foundation and Agency for Innovation by Science and Technology: Strategic basic research projects</td>
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</tbody>
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**Planned action:**
Thematic policy-supporting platforms

<table>
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<tr>
<th>2)</th>
<th>Excellence level (Senior academic staff)</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>-</td>
<td>Strategic Research Programme – Growth Financing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-</td>
<td>Senior Research Fellowships (&quot;Special research fund-Senior academic staff&quot; within theme + influx after Odysseus fellowships and after European Research Council (ERC) Starting Grants</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-</td>
<td>EU incentives</td>
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<td>-</td>
<td>ERC Starting Grants</td>
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<td>-</td>
<td>Odysseus fellowships type II</td>
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<td>-</td>
<td>Group of Expertise in Applied Research (GEAR) II</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

**Planned actions:**
Widening of budget for Senior Research Fellowships

## III. Spearheads

<table>
<thead>
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<th>1)</th>
<th>Established Centres of Excellence</th>
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<tr>
<td>-</td>
<td>Strategic Research Programmes</td>
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<td>-</td>
<td>Interdisciplinary Research Programmes</td>
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<tr>
<td>-</td>
<td>Methusalem financing</td>
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<tr>
<td>-</td>
<td>Research Foundation Flanders projects and Agency for Innovation by Science and Technology: Strategic basic research projects</td>
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<tr>
<td>-</td>
<td>ERC Advanced Grants</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-</td>
<td>Odysseus fellowships type I</td>
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<tr>
<td>-</td>
<td>Interuniversity Attraction Poles &amp; EU networks</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-</td>
<td>GEAR I</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Planned action:**
II.2) & III.: Design of multidisciplinary poles of excellence
In addition, the proper functioning of policy instruments is continuously monitored from the policy viewpoint, and attention is focused on how each of the various areas participates in financing channels and on any unexpected gaps that emerge.

This active vigilance from the policy viewpoint is supplemented by an open attitude towards the research base, so that any shortcomings that are experienced can always be flagged up with the policy. To this end, explicit possibilities are also created in the dialogue that is planned with the departments on the basis of their 'Strategic Policy Statements on Research'.

Both key objectives are in line with the general recommendations to Flemish universities from the most recent evaluation of research management. A number of underlying considerations play a role in supporting both key objectives and in the policy instruments employed to that end:

- Efficient scale, high-quality research output, efficient guidance of PhD students, academic integrity, internationalisation, networking, social valorisation and gender balance.

These considerations have been integrated into criteria and conditions for the policy instruments that are explained in greater detail in the following chapters, including but not limited to:

- **Efficient scale**: Programme financing; basic financing for departments.
- **High-quality research output**: Basic financing for departments; Assignment Matrix for Senior Academic Staff.
- **Efficient guidance for PhD students**: Doctoral Schools & Doctoral Training Programme; Basic financing for departments.
- **Academic integrity**: Committee for Academic Integrity.
- **Internationalisation and networking**: Personal grants aimed at European research financing; International scientific cooperation.
- **Social valorisation**: Personal grants aimed at social valorisation; Planned action: Thematic policy-supporting platforms.
- **Gender balance**: Gender Action Plan Steering Committee; Composition of the Plenary Research Council and advisory bodies; Adapted deadlines.

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2 'Beoordeling van de kwaliteit van het onderzoeksmanagement van de Vlaamse universiteiten' [Assessment of the quality of the research management of the Flemish universities], Flemish Interuniversity Council, Brussels, 2010 (http://www.vlir.be/content1.aspx?url=evaluatie-onderzoeksmanagement)
Together with the aforementioned central principles of the current research policy, the underlying considerations form and support the core focuses of the VUB’s Research Policy:

- balanced distribution of research resources;
- no steering of research as regards content;
- interdisciplinary cooperation;
- healthy research culture;
- excellence policy
- re-sourcing opportunities;
- attention to ties with service agreements and valorisation;
- communication relating to research performances;
- monitoring of research performances;
- strategic interactions in the context of alliances, the university association, the University Medical Centre.

The starting points for research policy are to be found in a broader internal and external policy context:

1) the policy pursued by other internal policy levels within the university, described in the General Strategic Plan ³; the allocation model relating to operating resources; policy plans in terms of valorisation (Annex 1), science communication (Annex 2) and Doctoral Schools (Annex 3); the strategic agreements and collaborations (association partner EhB, UZBrussel/UMC, ULB, alliance partner UGent, UAB-Kunsten);

2) the external position of the university in relation to research in an international, Flemish and Brussels context, as evidenced by evaluations, analyses, monitoring and benchmarking, including the periodic external evaluation of research management ⁴, internal analyses and monitoring of parameters relating to research performance in the context of internal ⁵ and external ⁶ financing models, ad hoc externally outsourced studies.

³ The strategic top priorities being "Working on a sustainable and healthy financial management", "Improving study returns", "Investing in recruitment and marketing" and as other strategic priorities "The development of a strong student policy", "The development of a strong alumni policy", "Offering inspirational, high-quality and 'tailored' education", "Stimulating excellent research in collaboration with external parties and renewed attention to valorisation", "Strengthening the position as an international university", "Attracting, developing and empowering talent", "Optimising cooperation with strategic partners", "Investing in a green campus as a motor for growth of the university", "The further development of a self-sufficient UMC", "Strengthening efficiency, strength and good governance".

⁴ Second external assessment of the quality of research management of the Flemish universities (2010).

⁵ Annex 4.

⁶ In particular the Special Research Fund (Special Research Fund decision, Flemish Government 21.12.2012).
Operational objectives, planning, instruments and financial support

Instruments to support the key objectives

Of the diverse portfolio of instruments at the Research Council’s disposal, those that support the key objectives for the period 2013-2017 in particular are discussed below. A more exhaustive review of the Research Council policy instruments (structures and financing channels) can be found in the Research Council Regulations7.

Interrelationship of policy measures and instruments

The operational objectives and supporting policy instruments were divided into five chapters in accordance with the provisions of Article 23 of the Special Research Funds decision. However, these policy areas are intrinsically strongly interrelated, and the effect of many of the policy instruments in question is broader than the policy area in which they are primarily listed below. This strong interrelationship of measures and instruments within research policy was recently explained in greater detail to the research community on the occasion of the introduction of a new financing model for research8. All policy instruments together form a coherent and interrelated whole, aimed at continuous improvement. The new policy instruments are systematically evaluated in a way adapted to the instrument concerned after a minimum application period.

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7 Research Council Regulations, last amended by the Governing Council on 19.03.2013.
8 ANNEX 4.
I. QUALITY ASSURANCE AND EVALUATION OF RESEARCH

The research policy of the Vrije Universiteit Brussel is traditionally strongly focused on quality control and quality support, not by thematically steering research, but by promoting the quality of its researchers and research teams through various policy instruments. In addition, when making selections for research financing based on applications, the scientific quality of the proposed research, which is in principle determined through screening by external experts, is always central.

Quality incentives are interwoven into the criteria and conditions for all policy instruments, such as those introduced with the new financial model for research (programme financing, basic financing for departments, personal grants, Research Council research fellowships). In addition, placing this new financing model within the overall policy framework, focusing on a healthy local research policy and a good research culture, is also expected to have a positive effect.

Programme financing

- **Instrument and objective:** in 2011, a switch was made from extensive project financing with a limited term to programme financing based on the excellence level for group leaders whose international excellence has been demonstrated. Two types of programme ("Strategic Research Programmes", with the emphasis on academic excellence, and "Interdisciplinary Research Programmes", with the emphasis on social challenges and comprehensive thematic expertise) are designed to help ensure that the university can create a clearer profile for itself around a series of poles of research excellence, created and fed from a diverse and continuously renewing research base.

- **Planned action:** with regard to the key objective of designing Multidisciplinary Poles of Excellence, programme financing will form a key element alongside the spearheads set and the growth potential, and will also be an important touchstone for any unexpected gaps in the participation of the various domains.

- **Indication of the current financial support:** Strategic Research Programmes, incl. growth financing: EUR 6,085,000 per annum; Interdisciplinary Research Programmes: EUR 640,000 per annum

Basic financing for departments

- **Instrument and objective:** since 2012, "Basic Financing for Departments" has been the new instrument for a balanced distribution of research resources among departments, and thus for retaining a wide range of research topics as a broad research base for innovative ideas. The formula for distributing resources combines a degree of simplicity with sufficient nuancing. The parameters remain limited to a set of representative and strategic criteria, which take account of differences depending on the disciplines. While certain forms of high-quality research output are explicitly stimulated and monitored using the criteria, the model involves a much wider incentive as regards the research policy of the departments. High 'scores' in the selected parameters should not be an objective in themselves, but are the result of a healthy local research policy and a good research culture. The departments are expected to make optimum use of the 'lump sum' allocated to them, on the basis of a strategy that is in line with the needs of the domain concerned. The department reports on this annually to the Research Council in its "Strategic Policy Statement on Research" (see Chapter II. PRINCIPLES OF GOOD GOVERNANCE IN RESEARCH POLICY").

- **Planned action:** in the period 2013-2017, after being applied for 5 years, the first interim five-year evaluation of the model will take place.
- **Indication of the current financial support:** EUR 2.600.000 per annum

**Personal grants focused on profiling at European level and in society**

- **Instruments and objective:** since 2011, personal grants have been assigned with a focus on **European research financing** and **social valorisation.** The incentives for preparing and obtaining leading European research financing foster the optimal use of the growing European set of instruments and budget for research financing. The grant for social valorisation focuses the attention of researchers on social valorisation, and is also in line with the increasing attention being paid to this aspect in general.

- **Planned actions:** given the complexity of the European financing channels for research, ever-increasing support is desirable. The research administration will therefore be more proactive in supporting project applications. This might involve both maximum support for the individual application and the drafting of a strategy in the future. This strategy should be seen in the context of the research process developed and the valorisation file (for industry and society) of the research group’s findings as set out in the policy plan. The intention is also to optimise the relationship between the other elements of the strategic policy plan for research and the strategy for attracting EU funds. Besides general information sessions, the Research Administration Department will undertake to approach the research groups proactively to discuss this strategy with them and at the same time explain the support available in greater detail. The purpose of this support is to increase the external financing attracted and to build up the necessary know-how to continue to achieve success at a European level.

- **Indication of the current financial support:** grant for social valorisation: EUR 150,000 per annum; incentives for European research financing: EUR 400,000 per annum.

**International scientific cooperation**

- **Instrument and objective:** international scientific cooperation is supported by financing of and for young researchers, with a specific part dedicated to development cooperation as a traditional focus of the university (in research and education). The sub-programmes involve (1.1.) PhD scholarships in the context of development cooperation, (1.2.) PhD projects in cooperation with privileged partner institutions, and (2.) bench fees for the VUB PhD students under bilateral cooperation agreements for joint PhD projects.

- **Planned actions:** in the period 2013-2017, the actual cooperative ventures will begin with the additional privileged partner universities selected alongside the first partner (University of Ljubljana) (1.2.), namely the University of Groningen (2012) and the University of Warwick (2013), and it will be examined how international scientific cooperation can be developed further. The introduction of the new ‘Joint Research Centres’ policy instrument will also be discussed.

- **Indication of the current financial support:** international cooperation agreements: EUR 200,000 per annum (University of Ljubljana, University of Groningen), extended by EUR 100,000 per annum (University of Warwick); PhD scholarships in the context of development cooperation: EUR 230,000 per annum; Joint PhDs and Alliance Research Groups: EUR 100,000 per annum; establishment of ‘Joint Research Centres’: EUR 100,000 per annum.
Quality control

A quality research policy requires the necessary instruments for monitoring and evaluation. Within the research department, the evaluation of, on the one hand, research applications and, on the other, the further development of the set of instruments, is based on internationally recognised criteria, parameters and models. The research department is also developing its own expertise in this regard, both within the context of interuniversity cooperation with the Centre of Expertise for Research and Development Monitoring and autonomously. Where the first is concerned, attention is focused on developing indicators, measuring instruments and evaluation models that relate to the individual excellence of researchers and on evaluating the quality and impact of artistic research. In addition, in the policy period 2013-2017 efforts will be made to design indicators (within a broader evaluation model) that gauge the social and cultural impact of research, from a perspective that within the various disciplines, research can support multiple valorisation processes and as such can lead to different forms of impact. The development of expertise in this area falls within the ambit of the Data and Policy Unit, which was established within the Research Department in 2013.
II. PRINCIPLES OF GOOD GOVERNANCE IN RESEARCH POLICY

Attention to good governance was recently boosted by a series of new measures and instruments\(^9\) that are explained below. This includes several of the underlying aspects and principles relating to governance, management and control of the subject matter, organisation and implementation, empowerment and accountability, monitoring and control, transparency, efficiency and effectiveness, integrity and ethics. A number of these aspects are also addressed through quality assurance in research (evaluation of policy instruments, monitoring of research performances), through researcher training (academic integrity), and by monitoring the university's General Strategic Plan (see the relevant chapters: I. QUALITY ASSURANCE AND EVALUATION OF RESEARCH, and IV. RESEARCHER TRAINING AND CAREERS).

**Good Governance Charter**

- **Instrument and objective:** the revised Special research funds decision (VR 21.12.2012) stipulates that the rules for the internal allocation of the global resources of the Special Research Fund are embedded in the university's **Good Governance Charter**. In 2013, several specific provisions were approved concerning responsibilities of (actual and alternate) members of the Research Council vis-à-vis the university community, among other things through interaction with and a good flow of information to the faculties.

- **Planned action:** as soon as the VUB Good Governance Charter has been approved, the Research Council Regulations will be embedded in it.

**Composition of the Board of the Research Council**

- **Instruments and objective:** in 2013, **alternates** and a maximum term of office were introduced for members of the Board of the Research Council. The introduction of alternates is in line with the concern for continuity, by appointing former or possibly future Research Council Board members as alternates. The alternates also sit in the absence of the current members.

- **Planned action:** the relevant provisions will be applied for the first time in the 2013/2014 academic year.

**Committee for Academic Integrity**

- **Instrument and objective:** in 2013, a **Committee for Academic Integrity** (CWI) was added as a new Research Council advisory body, which, in accordance with the new Senior Academic Staff Regulations (Governing Council, 03.07.2012), is responsible, on an ad hoc basis, for files relating to this matter (replacing the procedure established in the 2002 Academic Staff Regulations for handling suspected cases of academic misconduct). This new structure is also in line with the increased attention being given to this matter (prevention and education) at Flemish level, and consultation on the creation of a relevant Flemish body (FWO/BU/13/57).

- **Planned action:** in the period 2013-2017, the relevant provisions will be adapted or refined where necessary.

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\(^9\) *Indication of the current financial support does not apply here (no financing channels).*
Strategic Policy Statement on Research

- **Instrument and objective:** since 2002, under the "Basic financing for departments" scheme (see Chapter I. QUALITY ASSURANCE AND EVALUATION OF RESEARCH), the departments were given an explicit responsibility for research policy, and also the resources to develop and support their local research strategies. The financing model was framed within a broad policy vision that offers a broad incentive for the departments’ policies (incl. scaling, internationalisation, networking, research output, external funding, supervision of PhD students). Each year, the departments report their research policy to the Research Council in the form of a **Strategic Policy Statement on Research**. All policy statements can be consulted by the VUB research community, and constitute a starting point for dialogue between research policy and department, initiated by Research Council members.

- **Planned action:** from 2013, a paragraph is expected to be included in the "Strategic Policy Statement on Research" relating to the **publication policy** pursued by the department (Research Council Board, 22.05.2013), which will promote the possibilities for review and discussion of this area. These discussions will also focus in particular on the allocation of resources to **young researchers**.
III. INCREASING THE PARTICIPATION OF WOMEN AND ETHNIC MINORITIES IN RESEARCH

Gender Action Plan Steering Committee
- **Instrument and objective:** the Research Administration Department is a member of the Gender Action Plan Steering Committee (inaugural meeting, 08.07.2013) and is responsible for monitoring the recommendations made that form part of research policy.
- **Planned actions:** actions to be planned within a research context will take further shape following the inaugural meeting.
- **Indication of the current financial support:** not applicable (no financing channel)

Composition of the Plenary Research Council and the advisory bodies
- **Instrument and objective:** since 2008, an explicit review based on the quality requirements and **gender balance** has been included as part of the annual composition of the Research Council (Governing Council 12.02.2008).
- **Planned action:** from 2013, the provisions on gender balance are more binding and extend to the advisory bodies involved in the allocation of resources.
- **Indication of the current financial support:** not applicable (no financing channel)

Adapted deadlines
- **Instrument and objective:** continuous attention is paid to possible actual changes in regulations that promote equal opportunities, in particular regarding the participation of women in research (e.g. with the seniority condition adapted in 2013 in the context of Methusalem financing for leading researchers).
- **Planned actions:** continuous monitoring.
- **Indication of the current financial support:** not applicable (no financing channel)

Activities in the context of Doctoral Schools & Doctoral Training Programme
- **Instrument and objective:** the Central PhD Office and the Doctoral Schools pay continuous attention to gender balance in the degree programmes they organise. Thus, on 8 March 2013, the Central PhD Office supported the CampusTalks session as part of International Women's Day, at which only female researchers spoke on the subject of 'Gender Bias in Science'. On 29 and 30 November 2012, the coordinator of the Central PhD Office attended the European Gender Summit in the European Parliament, on the topic of 'Quality Research and Innovation through Equality'.
- **Planned actions:** on 13 September 2013, the 'Family in Science' symposium will be held in Brussels, organised in interuniversity collaboration and with topics including 'Dual Career' and 'Work-life Balance'.
- **Indication of the current financial support:** the operation of the Central PhD Office and the Doctoral Schools is partly determined by the conditions of the subsidy from the Flemish Government for the support of young researchers (EUR 487,721 in 2012 budget year), including attention to gender balance and interuniversity cooperation with at least two other Flemish universities.
Activities in relation to Science Communication

- Instrument and objective: the Science Communication expertise unit organises regular initiatives that focus on the specific disadvantaged groups 'women' and 'ethnic minorities', in conjunction with external partners. These include 'RoboCup Junior', an initiative aimed at raising awareness among young people of science, technology and more specifically robotics, with 'girls' and 'ethnic minorities' as specific target groups. To reinvigorate young people's interest in Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics (STEM), the Flemish Government launched the 2012-2020 STEM action plan, including policy themes designed to encourage more girls to look at STEM professions. The 'Technogrieten' and 'FabLab Junior' projects will focus on girls, and more specifically on girls from socially vulnerable groups (newcomers, ethnic minorities).

- Planned actions: in 2013, cooperation with one of the partners will begin on the 'RoboCup Junior' project, focusing on 10-12 year-old girls, is being submitted to the Impulse Fund (Federal migration policy) and on a Bridge Project through Enterprise Flanders.

- Indication of the current financial support: the functioning of RoboCup is currently being financed by a contribution from all the associations involved, and is supported by UAB staff (0.5 FTE financed under the financing covenant for science communication concluded with the Flemish Government).
IV. RESEARCHER TRAINING AND CAREERS

The career of researchers will remain a key focus in the coming policy period. In this regard, the VUB will make its contribution through international initiatives, such as the HR Strategy Group, and the EU pilot project EURAXESS Rights (institutional pilot group on the "human resources strategy for researchers incorporating the charter and the code", Human Resources Strategy for Researchers), and will aim to implement the ‘European Charter for Researchers and the code of conduct for the recruitment of researchers’ as far as possible.

Doctoral Schools & Doctoral Training Programme

- **Instrument and objective:** as part of the Doctoral Training Programme, among other things, the Central PhD Office and Doctoral Schools organise recurring activities that instil a positive publication culture in PhD students, and show them the importance of academic integrity. Other integrity and performance-related policy instruments in the area covered by the PhD Office are the Ombudsman/woman for PhD students and the profile of the good supervisor (whose operation and adequacy are continually monitored and adjusted where necessary), and the PhD portfolio (an online documentation system that allows PhD students to retain a clear overview of their achievements, in terms of both research and training).

- **Planned actions:** various actions are scheduled over the next year: (1) In 2013, a new monitoring instrument is being set up relating to the length of time spent preparing for a PhD; (2) The launch is planned for the beginning of the 2013/2014 academic year of the new PhD portfolio, linked to Campus Lifecycle and to the new research database (PURE); (3) The development of the complete offer of the Doctoral Training Programme will in the 2013/2014 academic year take place for the first time with the target group being made explicit according to which stage the research is at (starter, junior, advanced, senior, postdoc), for more efficient training.

- **Indication of the current financial support:** For the Doctoral Training Programme: EUR 30,000 per annum per Doctoral School + EUR 50,000 per annum for the Central PhD Office + Subsidy for the Support of Young Researchers (EUR 487,721 in 2012 budget year). For the development of the PhD portfolio: EUR 120,000 in 2013 (from the Funding for the Support of Young Researchers).

**ANNEX 3:** 2013-2017 Policy Plan for the Central PhD Office

Career Centre

- **Instrument and objective:** in cooperation with the Central PhD Office, the VUB Career Centre is now expanding its range of services for PhD students. PhD students and alumni can go to the Career Centre for individual careers advice and, from the 2013/2014 academic year, for training as well. The service provided is being actively promoted, including at relevant events. The Career Centre is permanently concerned for the employability of doctors on the labour market and takes steps to involve the target group more in job fairs that are traditionally only aimed at 2nd cycle students.

- **Planned actions:** in the coming policy period, work will be carried out to develop and offer “in-house” careers coaching and training for PhD students. In 2013, a stand has been booked at the PhD Job Fair (15.10.2013, Louvain).

- **Indication of the current financial support:** some of the actions are supported on an ad hoc basis through the Funding for the Support of Young Researchers.
Assignment Matrix for Senior Academic Staff

- **Instrument and objective:** the Assignment Matrix for Senior Academic Staff was introduced (RvB, 01.07.2008) to offer uniform criteria and guidelines for the evaluation of the academic dossiers of individual researchers at various levels (faculties, research council, etc.), differentiated by level and discipline. Among other things, the instrument is systematically applied in the statutory 5-yearly evaluation of a senior academic staff member, from 2009 accompanied by a quantitative overview of performance indicators at research level. These indicators either concern research performances in categories that are correlated with scientific quality, or research performances that can be considered in relation to reference values. Various ad hoc updates and additions have been made since the instrument was introduced.

- **Planned action:** in 2013, the intention is explicitly to supplement the quantitative overview at research level with a number of valorisation-oriented performance levels.

- **Indication of the current financial scope:** not applicable (no financing channel)

Senior Research fellowships (Special research fund – Senior academic staff)

- **Instrument and objective:** Senior Research Fellowships (Special research fund – Senior academic staff) enable excellent researchers to devote almost all their time to research, and space is provided to offer holders of externally granted research fellowships (ERC Starting Grants, Odysseus fellowships) a full-time research career at the university for an extended period of time.

- **Planned action:** from 2013, the budget for these fellowships is being increased, which will again create scope for Senior Research Fellowships within selected subject areas.

- **Indication of the current financial support:** EUR 2,240,000 per annum, expected to grow to EUR 3,000,000 per annum (30 FTE) in the period 2013-2017.

Sabbatical Leave

- **Instrument and objective:** since the 2001/2002 academic year, a few sabbatical leaves have been made available each year as exemption and re-sourcing opportunities for senior academic staff members depending on the budgetary possibilities.

- **Planned action:** from the 2013/2014 academic year, additional sabbatical leaves will be available based on the Basic financing for departments calculations, which are for a specific domain (Social Sciences and Humanities) and for which particular attention will be paid during the selection procedure to education load and membership of policy and advisory bodies, and to gender-related arguments.

- **Indication of the current financial support:** EUR 375,000 per annum (5 FTE, of which 2 FTE through the Basic financing for departments budget)
Personal grants (senior level)
- **Instrument and objective:** since 2011, starting senior academic staff members who meet the conditions set have been granted senior academic staff **start financing** equating to around one year’s predoc support. The current grant conditions serves as an incentive and trump card for attracting researchers internationally and for a better gender balance.

- **Planned action:** at the beginning of the period 2013-2017, priority will be given to examining how the current criteria for senior academic staff start financing can be extended to more general financing for starting senior academic staff members, given the high demand for this from the research community.

- **Indication of the current financial support:** EUR 400,000 per annum, expected to grow to EUR 600,000 per annum from October 2013.

Research Council research fellowships for PhD students and postdocs
- **Instrument and objective:** since 2012, Research Council research fellowships for PhD students and postdocs have been managed centrally without area allocation. The best candidates are selected across all disciplines.

- **Indication of the current financial support:** EUR 400,000 per annum for support of 5 Research Foundation Flanders Postdoc applications; annual support of ≥ 14 Research Foundation Flanders PhD fellowship applications and ≥ 8 Agency for Innovation by Science and Technology Postgraduate Grants.
V. COMMUNICATION ON CURRENT AND COMPLETED RESEARCH

- **Instrument and objective:** a new objective has been included in the new financing agreement for science communication (2013-2017): the creation of a culture of science communication among researchers. The aim is to inspire and support researchers to communicate themselves about their research or about science in general to a broad public. Given that science communication is embedded in the research administration (in contrast to most other universities, where this service is part of the communication departments), a partnership with the VUB's Marketing and Communication and Events department has been set up to be able to make use of existing expertise within this department. In this way, the existing highly developed communication channels of this department can also be used to disseminate information. In 2012, this partnership was significantly expanded. In 2013, words are being converted into deeds through an official partnership involving relations with schools, the media, as well as representation on the editorial board of the ‘Akademos’.

Since 2013, the Science Communication Unit has focused on this new objective, but in an initial phase carried out a needs assessment among researchers to be better able to tailor support in communications about science to the precise needs. A first step was taken in 2013. To prepare researchers for the task of communication about science, a ‘Summer School’ in Science Communication will be organised each year in the first week of July in conjunction with the Doctoral Schools and all other associations.

- **Planned actions:** the results of the aforementioned survey will be analysed with the relevant departments with the aim of ensuring effective service provision, through the Marketing and Communication or the Research Administration Departments, depending on the precise demands of the researchers. One action already in place is the annual Science Communication Summer School, for which a date in 2014 has already been fixed. This raises the question of whether the ability to communicate effectively about one’s own research should not be taught alongside research skills, notably in the master’s years.

Because the importance of social media in communications about research cannot be underestimated, a social media expert will be trained up within the Science Communication Unit. Through workshops or personal advice, researchers will be assisted in communicating about their research.

The Science Communication Unit will also communicate spearheads in VUB research, which will be accessible through ‘research statements’ on the website and possibly in a brochure. We eventually want to have a number of thematic statements that explain in an accessible and attractive way what research is being carried out at the VUB on specific subjects.

- **Indication of the current financial support:** to support this, a time allocation of 0.3 FTE is currently provided for under the science communication financing allocated by the Flemish Government from the 2013/2014 academic year. As this is under development, the staff allocation is estimated at 0.75 FTE. The provisional contribution from the science communication budget to the Summer School is estimated at EUR 1,000 per edition. (The larger part is borne by the Central PhD Office, the contribution being divided among the associations based on the number of participants per association).

**ANNEX 2:** 2013-2017 Policy Plan for Science Communication.
## Abbreviations used

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Abbreviation</th>
<th>Full Form</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>CWI</td>
<td>Committee for Academic Integrity</td>
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<tr>
<td>EhB</td>
<td>Erasmushogeschool Brussels</td>
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<tr>
<td>ERC</td>
<td>European Research Council</td>
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<td>FWO</td>
<td>Research Foundation Flanders</td>
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<tr>
<td>GEAR</td>
<td>Group of Expertise in Applied Research</td>
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<tr>
<td>RvB</td>
<td>Governing Council</td>
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<td>STEM</td>
<td>Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics</td>
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<td>UAB</td>
<td>Brussels University Association</td>
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<tr>
<td>UGent</td>
<td>Ghent University (<em>Universiteit Gent</em>)</td>
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<tr>
<td>ULB</td>
<td>Université Libre de Bruxelles</td>
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<tr>
<td>UMC</td>
<td>University Medical Centre</td>
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<tr>
<td>UZBrussel</td>
<td>University Hospital Brussels (<em>Universitair Ziekenhuis Brussel</em>)</td>
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<tr>
<td>FTE</td>
<td>Full-Time Equivalent</td>
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