

Executive Board (College van Bestuur)

Casual Academy

0.7

Dear members of the Executive Board (CvB), Prof. dr. Ten Dam, Prof. dr. ir. Maex, and Drs. Lintsen,

We hope this email finds you and yours well and in good health.

Throughout this academic year a number of temporary and early career academics have come together to campaign for improved working conditions at several universities. This group has come together as 0.7 (zeropointseven) and CasualAcademy[1] to highlight the precarious nature of our professional life in these institutions. We are joined in our efforts by WOinActie. Following CasualLeiden's incendiary letter directed to the university board of Leiden university, we present to you the following call for change, a call that we pose to all universities this fall.[2]

Since the creation of our campaign, we have held public meetings, participated in demonstrations, and have created a network of employees in precarious positions. We have been overwhelmed by responses of like-minded colleagues - both temporary and permanent - as well as by students. It is clear that there is considerable frustration and disquiet in the university regarding issues of structural temporary contracts, systemic overwork, and precarious working conditions[3], the University of Amsterdam being a primary example of these conditions [4][5].

To be sure, these issues are not new and have been addressed to the leadership of the university for many years. They are also made apparent by many reports.[6][7][8][9] In addition, in the latest advisory report for the new government the Social and Economic Council (SER) stated that the use of flexible contracts should be restricted and not be applied for structural work. [10] The latest CAO, however, did not offer anything for those in the most precarious positions, except a promise from the universities to address these problems in the local negotiation committees. However, we have seen the effects of the delay in solving these problems up close. Many of our colleagues struggle to materially sustain their lives, experience high levels of stress regarding their legal status (visa), get burnt-out, feel forced to "choose" to end their careers as academics because - in practice - nothing has been done to address the problems they experience due to their precarious positions. These pressing problems affect a large and growing section of our academic community, including the student population as the current working conditions of temporary staff directly affect the quality of education. As such, they need to be urgently resolved.

It appears that laws made to protect temporary workers are instead systematically misused by the institutes and departments to increase their insecurity. Colleagues are dismissed while their jobs are put out to a new hiring process. Others are asked to leave on unpaid breaks, before returning to the

same jobs in order to circumvent existing labour laws. There are virtually no avenues for career advancement or professional growth.

On top of this, a number of worrying reports about social security and misconduct at the university have come out.[11][12][13][14] Recent cases of misconduct at Radboud University have shown that there is a lack of clear procedures for reporting misconduct as well as for the universities replying to misconduct. We welcome the recent developments taken by the University of Amsterdam to tackle social safety within its perimeters (ombudsperson). However, this initiative lacks the depth and acumen that is needed to attend to the structural issues of insecurity that temporary staff are subjected to on a regular basis.

We present you with a series of urgent demands that are a first step towards the improvement of the working conditions of temporary staff at the University of Amsterdam.

We demand that the CvB:

- End casualization by making the appointments of all staff performing structural work permanent.
- Create progressive career paths, and invest time and resources for tailor-made professional growth, for all staff.
- Provide full transparency about workload calculations and take concrete steps against structural overwork.
- Address underfunding of academia, so structural issues no longer trickle down/create exploitative working conditions to temporary contracted staff.
- Ensure a safe working environment by adequate procedures for reporting misconduct and an ombudsperson or other independent organ with a mandate to investigate and give advice.
- Create structural, paid representation of temporary staff within all governmental bodies within the University of Amsterdam.

In short, we demand dignity, respect and decent payments for all.

We demand that the CvB write a proposal to address these issues, with clear and specific targets, proposals and deadlines. If the CvB fails to devise a plan of action before the national countdown clock expires (Countdown (zeropointseven.nl)) on the 20th of December, we will enter a trajectory of escalation. This time our actions will not be ludic but serious, they will not be constructive but disruptive. There are many possibilities for collective action that would add pressure to our demands, but we hope this letter will be received by the CvB as a genuine attempt to avoid such a development in the calendar year ahead. It is clear to us that these issues need to be resolved urgently --in the name of the present well-being and professional future of academia.

Given the scale of this problem and its long-standing nature, we expect to receive a response from the CvB in the shortest delay. We sincerely hope that the CvB will do everything in its power to start

a direct communication and negotiation with Casual Academy and 0.7, and address these issues by the start of the next academic term. In the interest of transparency towards the academic community, we also make this letter public and encourage colleagues across the institution to endorse our demands.

We look forward to hearing from you.

Sincerely,

0.7 & Casual UvA

Sources

- [1] <https://www.zeropointseven.nl>; <https://sites.google.com/view/casualleiden/home?authuser=0>
- [2] <https://www.zeropointseven.nl/Countdown/>
- [3] https://fd.nl/politiek/1416727/wetenschappers-in-opstand-tegen-de-uitgedijde-flexschil-van-universiteiten?utm_medium=social&utm_source=twitter&utm_campaign=earned&utm_content=20211022
- [4] [Tijdelijke contracten bij universiteiten in perspectief | Rathenau Instituut](#)
- [5] <https://www.folia.nl/actueel/117166/de-situatie-van-schoonmakers-aan-de-uva-is-echt-schrijnend>
- [6] Koens, L., A. Vennekens, R. Hofman, N. van den Broek-Honingh en J. de Jonge (2018). Balans van de wetenschap 2018. Den Haag: Rathenau Instituut.
- [7] Jerak-Zuiderent, S., Brenninkmeijer, J., M'charek, A., Pols, J., Goede wetenschap: Een visie van binnenuit , 6 september 2021.
- [8] [Amsterdam UMC, Locatie VUmc - Goede wetenschap. Een cross-disciplinaire studie.](#)
- [9] ['Stel onderzoek in naar structureel overwerk op universiteiten' | De Algemene Onderwijsbond \(aob.nl\)](#)
- [10] https://www.ser.nl/-/media/ser/downloads/engels/2021/abstract-socio-economic-policy_2021-2025.pdf
- [11] [#Metoo op de universiteit | Erasmus Magazine](#)
- [12] <https://www.parool.nl/columns-opinie/ingezonden-brief-maak-de-uva-dit-jaar-vrij-van-metoo~b7a3e04b/>
- [13] [Actiegroep Wangedrag poogt zwijgcultuur UU te doorbreken | ScienceGuide](#)
- [14] [Meer meldingen van seksuele intimidatie op universiteiten | NOS](#)