Diversity Policy Plan

2014 - 2017
Dear reader,

In the pages that follow, we are proud to lay out the diversity policy plan of KU Leuven. This plan builds on the enthusiasm and dedication of many staff members and students and highlights the diversity policy of KU Leuven for the 2014-2017 policy period.

This policy plan introduces several carefully formulated priorities. In addition to implementing its Gender Action Plan, KU Leuven is committed to addressing financial and cultural obstacles, revamping the Diversity Incentive Fund, launching and expanding projects aimed at inclusion (with special attention for the principles of Universal Design for Learning), and deploying a proactive approach towards physical and digital accessibility.

As reflected in its educational policy plan, KU Leuven considers diversity to be a central pillar of its university-wide educational policy.

Furthermore, an effort is being made within the newly approved framework for research policy to encourage more research into diversity. We are laying the groundwork for this effort by setting out possible research trajectories and seeking new funding channels.

Lastly, we strive to make the most of the diversity services and expertise that have developed over time at KU Leuven’s various campuses.

In order to solidify the university’s dedication to diversity, it is essential to consolidate the current implementation structure of diversity policy at KU Leuven, particularly the Diversity Council and the Diversity Teams. KU Leuven also aims to boost the university community’s involvement by publishing key figures relating to diversity and by launching a wide range of awareness-raising initiatives. The diversity policy will also be refined with the help of statistics on the diversity characteristics of students and staff.

This diversity policy plan has benefitted from the inspiration, reflection and tireless work of many contributors: the members of the Diversity Council and the Diversity Teams, the faculty deans under the auspices of the Metaforum working group on diversity policy, and the staff of the Diversity Policy Office. We thank all involved for their outstanding cooperation.

Finally, we wish to thank the Board of Governors and the Academic Council for its constructive criticism and for its commitment to supporting diversity policy as a genuine policy priority.

Prof. dr. Katlijn Malfliet
Vicerector Diversiteit
June 2014
Vision

The diversity policy of KU Leuven emerges from a Christian-inspired desire and commitment to approach diversity as an embedded reality in an open and transparent way.

Diversity manifests itself as a wide-ranging spectrum of personal positions, insights, values and world views, both in society and in the university community. These differences stem from the effects and the interplay of numerous factors, including language spoken at home, cultural background, gender, age, religion, geographic area, sexual orientation, disability and socio-economic status. At an increasingly international university such as ours, these differences are often magnified.

As stated in its mission statement, KU Leuven pursues an inclusive policy that bestows equal standing to all people in the university community, regardless of background. Through its diversity policy, the university intends to play an exemplary and inspirational role for society at large.

This assumes both an inspired and deliberate strategy as well as a number of basic tenets. These tenets serve as the cornerstones of the policy.

1 Diversity as an ethical principle

Diversity requires an open, person-centred approach vis-à-vis the entire university community. The decision to opt for such a diversity policy is entirely consistent with what the university itself wishes to be: an institution that, informed by its own distinct view of mankind and the world, seeks to value each and every human being.

Approaching diversity in a responsible way also has its limits. KU Leuven bases its openness to diversity on the values of justice, equal opportunity, respect and dialogue. Taking these values as a starting point, KU Leuven seeks to pursue a sound diversity policy aimed at increasing the democratisation of higher education, providing intercultural encounters and gender diversity in education and research, and implementing an approach towards disability that is enriching for all.

At the same time, KU Leuven fosters an awareness and openness toward diversity among its students and staff. The university strives to participate actively in the social and cultural debate on diversity.
Stimulating and developing every talent

Talent knows no societal boundaries, which is why KU Leuven is undertaking initiatives to create an environment in which all talents can reach their fullest expression, regardless of any potentially inhibiting diversity-related factors. Based in this approach, the diversity policy forms part of the university’s larger quality policy, which strives for democratically-rooted excellence.

Through its diversity policy, KU Leuven seeks to stimulate creativity, flexibility and innovation in scientific research, academic education and service to society. Bringing together students and staff members – each with their own individual backgrounds and experiences – ensures a wide range of ideas and outlooks and stimulates critical self-reflection. To be an innovative environment, KU Leuven needs diversely composed teams. A diversity policy aimed at developing talent dovetails seamlessly with the university’s goal to offer a high-quality university education and retain its leading position among Europe’s top research universities.

An inclusive policy combined with a dynamic approach

KU Leuven is a strong proponent of an inclusive policy that contains measures aimed at reaching as wide a public as possible. Through its ‘Design for All’ approach, KU Leuven aims to foster an obstacle-free university experience for all students and staff members. This approach is intended to overcome new and existing forms of stigmatisation. An inclusive policy also assumes a dynamic approach to diversity. It must avoid a ‘one-size-fits-all’ approach: the range of tailored facilities serving individuals or target groups cannot simply be expanded to meet the needs of all students or staff members. For this reason, KU Leuven will continue to pursue an attentive policy vis-à-vis certain target groups.
Diversity Policy Plan

The diversity policy plan presented here builds in large part on to the diversity policy plan approved in 2011, which sets out a course for the university’s diversity policy through 2020. That structure will remain in place and will be consolidated where possible, including in the recently-integrated degree programmes. A new action plan is being drawn up for the 2014-2016 period and will be updated each year. This action plan will bundle all initiatives and will serve as a monitoring tool for the Diversity Policy Office.

KU Leuven has a network of diversity stakeholders embedded in its faculties and central services (diversity teams) responsible for elaborating and implementing diversity policy university-wide. Each faculty and service/office is responsible for ensuring that diversity-related topics are addressed in their respective faculty or service/office. The Diversity Council, which is the internal advisory body on diversity issues, will continue to play a central role in the decision-making process.

Retaining this structure is crucial to ensuring that diversity remains an important policy priority at the university. The lines of communication within this diversity framework will be reinforced by new diversity stakeholders in the Kullocs (KU Leuven’s various campuses outside Leuven).
But bringing about an effective diversity policy will take more than diversity teams and other designated actors – we need the involvement of the entire university community. KU Leuven intends to increase involvement by publishing key figures, and moreover, by undertaking broad awareness-raising initiatives. Bottom-up initiatives will be facilitated as much as possible. The diversity policy is also aimed at providing students and staff with an accessible contact point for diversity-related questions and concerns.

Below is a summary of the policy priorities addressed in the diversity policy as it relates to staff, students, education, research, and service to society.

**1 Policy priorities**

KU Leuven wishes to emphasise ten key points:

- The Diversity Policy Office has in recent years developed a framework and a standard set of services concerning statistical data on student diversity. It is seeking to further optimise this framework. The enrolment and study progress reports currently delivered to the faculty diversity teams each year will be further enhanced via the inclusion of analyses of the mutual interaction between diversity characteristics and the identification of key indicators. These statistics will be distributed widely (while taking the privacy policy and end goal into account) in order to continue awareness efforts. The application completed by each student upon enrolment at any of the institutions of the KU Leuven Association will be further optimised to include required fields on diversity characteristics. Key concerns here include the student’s language background. This data will be cross-checked with similar data available from secondary and primary education. In terms of staff diversity, the Diversity Policy Office is conducting a detailed analysis of M/F ratios and M/F disparities regarding promotions to and among Senior Academic Staff (ZAP), Administrative and Technical Staff (ATP) and Special Academic Staff (BAP). The staff policy also focuses on other diversity characteristics. The university will take a position on the gathering of origin and disability data on staff, with special consideration for staff members’ privacy and the need to collect accurate data to inform policy.

- A concrete gender policy is crucial to an effective diversity policy in the area of HR. Informed by the Gender Action Plan, specific initiatives will be developed and monitored aimed at achieving tangible and measurable results (cf. membership composition of assessment committees, appointment of gender vanguards, 50% women among new ZAP appointees, etc.).

- The Diversity Incentive Fund will be redesigned in 2014 based on the new management agreement with the Flemish Government. This redesign will include the use of results indicators and baseline measurements, which, in addition to qualitative assessments, provide a useful means to measure diversity policy progress. Assuming adequate funding, standard
initiatives will be incorporated into existing services and faculties in order to make room for additional innovative projects and initiatives. Initiatives will be undertaken to provide additional funding for innovative diversity policy initiatives through fund-raising efforts via the Leuven University Fund as well as other funding channels.

- KU Leuven intends to put inclusion into practice. To this end it will take part in the activities of the Support Centre for Inclusive Higher Education (SIHO). In close collaboration with the faculties and the offices of Student Affairs and Educational Policy, the university will also work to implement the principles of Universal Design for Learning (UDL). By collaborating with the SIHO, encouraging research into the effects of inclusion and applying the UDL principles, KU Leuven intends to develop initiatives that benefit the entire university community and discourage the stigmatisation of students with a disability.

- The diversity policy seeks to take a proactive approach towards accessibility. The activities of the working groups on digital and physical accessibility are being pursued based on their own action plans. The Digital Accessibility Working Group maintains a mainly operational role regarding the accessibility of the digital learning environment and information processing at KU Leuven as well as the utilisation of ICT as a way to facilitate the teaching and learning processes of students with a disability. In past years, the working group has done a great deal of work in the area of text-to-speech software, digital course materials, accessible websites, accessible documents and online lectures. The working group monitors technological developments in these areas and responds to new needs and trends (e.g. its study into the use of Windows 8 To Go drives). KU Leuven intends to pursue an effective accessibility policy by minimising disability-related barriers and by streamlining the Q&A process. In cooperation with the Physical Accessibility Working Group, KU Leuven will assess the physical accessibility of all of its buildings. This information will be made available in the form of an electronic map along with information on the history of these buildings.

- In the wake of the second wave of the democratisation of higher education in the 1980s, democratisation promotion has been placed on the policy backburner. The university is dedicated to guarding against becoming an institution where privileged students from high-performing educational environments are the norm. Each year, 30-32% of ‘generation students’ (students enrolling for the first time in the first year of higher education at an institution within the Flemish Community) apply for a need-based scholarship. In the period between the 2005-2006 and 2010-2011 academic years, roughly 17% actually received one. This figure was slightly lower in 2011-2012 and 2012-2013, at 15%. The university intends to place a renewed emphasis on addressing financial, cultural and social obstacles and wants to challenge the status quo pertaining to less privileged students and students who are the first in their family to go to college. To do this, the university will draw up a needs analysis and undertake targeted measures in conjunction with Student Services.
• **Hospitality is also one of the university’s core values.** Numbering just under 8,000 for the 2014-2015 academic year, there are once again a large number of international students enrolled at KU Leuven. Almost half of these are enrolled in a bachelor’s, master’s, advanced master’s, transitional or preparatory programme. The presence of international students and researchers is a major asset to a proactive diversity policy that encourages students and staff to enter into a dialogue with one another and approach diversity in an open way.

• In cooperation with the Vice Rector for Educational Policy, KU Leuven intends to make **diversity a central pillar of its educational vision.** To this end, there is much value in an educational policy that reserves a key role for the learning community. By shifting the emphasis from the individual to the learning community, concrete initiatives – such as making a diversity internship a compulsory course unit in teacher training, the Studium Generale, teaching methods for working with heterogeneous groups and the Universal Design of Learning – can assume a central place in university’s educational policy.

• As a basis for a sound diversity policy, both policy-oriented as well as fundamental research on diversity must be encouraged at our university. In this context, **measures and funding channels to encourage research on diversity** will be sought in cooperation with the Vice Rector for Research Policy.

• Finally, the fact that KU Leuven’s academic degree programmes are dispersed across a network of different campuses has important implications for its diversity policy. This fundamentally alters the concrete reality of the university’s diversity policy. Some campuses, including those in Antwerp and Brussels, are located in places where ethnic and cultural minorities make up a majority or near-majority of the local population. The policy on integration is based on the principles set forth in the Association Memorandum entitled “Diversity Policy after Integration: Advisory Memorandum for the Association Working Group on Diversity Policy”. The campuses will be involved in the process of designing the policy framework as soon as a collaborative framework has been established to include the central policy, the faculties and the campuses. Adequate consideration will be given to aligning the framework and the action plans with the diversity services at the various KU Leuven campuses that have been built up over time.

2 Diversity: focus on staff

KU Leuven is committed to making gender equality part of its organisational culture. To do this, measures are needed which foster working conditions and a workplace culture in which both female and male employees feel welcome, enjoy their work and see the university as a fair and equitable employer.
The underrepresentation of women in academic and (senior) administrative policy positions at KU Leuven cannot be denied. The higher up the hierarchical ladder, the lower women’s participation rate.

KU Leuven intends to improve its gender policy and make this policy domain a priority. At the request of Minister Ingrid Lieten, a Flemish Interuniversity Council Gender Action Plan has been drawn up. This plan is specifically aimed at encouraging the recruitment and promotion of women to Senior Academic Staff (ZAP) positions as well as at improving the degree of gender equality within the university’s advisory and governing bodies. Each institution represented in the Flemish Interuniversity Council was then assigned the task of formulating their own Gender Action Plan (GAP) to address these two priorities.

As a policy framework, the GAP of KU Leuven constitutes an important set of guidelines for further decision-making and implementation. The GAP for academic staff will be supplemented with a plan for administrative and technical staff and for students. KU Leuven intends to submit tangible results by 2016 in the form of a gender report.

The GAP will be systematically implemented during the current policy period. In addition to influencing its organisational culture, KU Leuven also intends to work with clearly-defined targets. No more than two-thirds of those making up advisory and governing bodies should be of the same gender. KU Leuven’s goal is for 50% of all new ZAP recruits to be women. As previously noted, however, this assumes a change in the university’s organisational culture: a quantitative target is meaningless unless it is accompanied by a corresponding change in mentality.

Because KU Leuven wants to attract talent from all of society, it strives to reach out to under-represented groups in a proactive and responsible way. KU Leuven has a long tradition in this area and this informs our special awareness of the obstacles experienced by staff and potential measures to address them. This particularly policy area needs to be expanded to address other diversity issues such as disabilities and interculturality. The newly-formed Staff Diversity Working Group will draw up advice and formulate recommendations for arriving at a diversity-sensitive HR policy. This policy is largely defined by the objective that the participation of these groups must be commensurate with the degree to which they are represented in society. This assumes a delineation of these groups based on objective characteristics, the efficient gathering of data on staff recruitment, promotion and departures, an analysis of the existing obstacles and a clearly defined action plan that contains realistic targets. Based on these obstacles and the degree to which these groups are represented in society as a point of comparison, targeted measures can be taken while also taking into account the unique characteristics of the academic staff and administrative and technical staff. As with gender policy, it is crucial to address the organisational culture at the same time.
KU Leuven wants to instil an awareness of diversity in all its members when dealing with students and staff. One important way to do this is by adopting the standpoint that all staff categories receive equal treatment. The first step is to make people aware of the implicit biases with which we perceive, evaluate and associate with people from certain groups. KU Leuven provides training to strengthen the diversity competences of its staff and to make them aware of implicit biases.

A diverse workforce is another means to attract and encourage minority students to progress towards both academic as well as administrative and technical positions. Role models can be very inspiring in this context. The diversity policy will enhance and expand the impact of role models by increasing their visibility and by promoting networks.

Diversity: focus on students

The policy on student diversity needs to be further refined. The diversity policy will examine which initiatives have the greatest impact at the student-support and faculty levels and will explore options for improving expertise-sharing at all levels. Initiatives that demand constant attention and which form the basis of the diversity policy as it relates to students are a priority and must be given a permanent place within the policy.

Students with disabilities
KU Leuven has long pioneered a prudent policy for students with disabilities. It is determined to continue to do so. In conjunction with the Diversity Policy Office, the Service for Students with Disabilities will address practical and organisational obstacles related to accommodating students with disabilities. Where appropriate, the Service will also provide clear guidelines regarding additional clarifications for these arrangements.
As more students call on these services, the need increases for a prudent policy that, wherever possible, adapts the teaching and exam process to meet the special needs of these students. Despite the fact that a policy on inclusiveness must always be paired with a policy that is attentive to certain target groups (this is an “and/and” situation), KU Leuven will continue to explore the boundaries between inclusiveness and target group policy. Together with a number of faculties, the university will gradually devise inclusive measures and integrate them into its testing policy and other areas. KU Leuven will encourage research related to 1) the effects of diagnostics and assessment on the potential stigmatisation of students with a disability, and 2) the effects of reasonable accommodations and inclusive measures on the learning opportunities of students.

The chart on page 10 shows the changes in the absolute numbers of students with a disability (by disability type) who have registered with the Service for Students with Disabilities during the period covering the 2005-2006 academic year up to and including the 2012-2013 academic year. These figures are for KU Leuven, campus Leuven students. A total of 1,253 students were acknowledged to have a disability during the 2012-2013 academic year. This represents a 14% increase compared to the previous academic year.

KU Leuven is committed to the goals of the Support Centre for Inclusive Higher Education (SIHO). One of the SIHO’s core tasks is to guide and support the implementation of the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities of 13 December 2006 within higher education in Flanders. The university will participate in the SIHO as a network organisation that advances the expertise of all those persons who offer practical support or guidance to students with a disability or who develop and structure the policy that governs this support and guidance within higher education institutions or associations.

**Interculturality**

The number of students at KU Leuven with an immigration background has risen sharply over the past ten years. Depending on the extent to which this origin characteristic is applied (i.e. whether or not students descending from other Western European countries are included), the percentage of students with an immigration background among the population of first-time students increased from 3.3% in the 2003-2004 academic year to 5.8% in the 2013-2014 academic year; or alternatively, from 5.9% to 8.7% during that same period. The graph below shows these changes.

The debate concerning the designation of and approach to students with an immigration background within the university community needs to be (re-)waged, in part due to the altered situation after integration.

By establishing a fund for students with an immigration background, KU Leuven seeks to provide targeted support for these students by offering individualised guidance from tutors and coaching. Associations that support integration will be supported in their role as intermediary in helping students feel at home at the university and encouraging mutual contacts among students.
For the current coaching process for first-stage bachelor’s students, Student Services will evaluate whether it will be possible to transfer coaching services to the faculties within the existing budgetary limits without sacrificing project quality.

Another priority objective of KU Leuven is to ensure the smooth transition of graduates to the labour market. Partnerships are being established with businesses and organisations seeking talented students to fill internship positions. By focusing on jobs with a high degree of visibility, such as those in journalism, KU Leuven is seeking to encourage role models. Initiatives related to interculturality are being prepared by the Working Group on Interculturality. The Immigrant Students’ Office and the recruitment counsellor for immigrant students are part of the university’s regular staff makeup.

Gender
An M/F disparity exists in half of the university’s bachelor-level study programmes, and this in turn leads to M/F disparities among working professionals. In recent years, gender disparities across the study programmes have been growing more than they have been shrinking.

The graphs on page 13 are taken from the memorandum on gender and students that was approved by the Academic Council in June 2013. The first graph shows the proportional change in the number of study programmes with and without an M/F disparity. Gender disparity has increased since the 1992-1993 academic year. The second graph shows the average proportion of male and female generation students per study programme. Fifteen study programmes have a structural M/F disparity.
This table was created subsequent to the reform of the bachelor’s/master’s system. Data for students enrolled prior to this reform have been allocated to the corresponding bachelor-level study programmes to the extent possible. Data for the study programmes that were integrated in 2013-2014 are included.

These data were prepared subsequent to the reform of the bachelor’s/master’s system. Data for students enrolled prior to this reform have been allocated to the corresponding bachelor's study-programmes to the extent possible. Due to a lack of data prior to the 2013-2014 academic year, the study programmes that were integrated have not been included in this table.
The university administration has opted to explicitly address this disparity without actively influencing students in their choice of study programme. KU Leuven is committed to implementing the policy recommendations during the current policy period, such as conducting a thorough analysis, placing an increased focus on cooperation partnerships, communicating in a more targeted way and devoting explicit attention to the training of its teachers and instructors.

**Working students**

Working students are in need of facilities that help them combine work and study. KU Leuven has been developing initiatives for working students for quite some time, usually on the initiative of the faculties. In addition to structural work trajectories, more individualised facilities (e.g. exam deferral, individualised study routes, etc.) are also available to working students. Despite these initiatives, the policy concerning working students at KU Leuven is not fully optimised. For this reason, the Educational Policy Office has formulated a policy vision with respect to working students along with a number of practical tools for educators. In order to avoid overlap with continuing education and with the study programmes offered through the Association, KU Leuven is focusing on courses in transitional, preparatory and master's study programmes. KU Leuven is working on communication in conjunction with the Student Counselling Service. It has supported faculty contact points and has created a working student status. Moreover, faculties are being encouraged to make organisational and methodological changes to their curricula in order to make study programmes more accessible to working students. This assumes that these changes must be commensurate with the ability of faculties to incorporate them into their activities.

**Religious and philosophical diversity**

Diversity of thought regarding religion and the philosophy of life is a fact of life at KU Leuven, and an openness to this is one of the university’s core values. This openness, grounded in the university’s very identity, implies that KU Leuven devotes special attention to the personal dignity of human beings, to justice and to human and religious development. In concrete terms, this means seeking practical solutions through dialogue for issues related to religious and philosophical diversity. Inter-religious and inter-philosophical dialogue emphasises mutual respect for and openness to different identities. True dialogue is maintained through a sincere interest in one another. The guiding principle of this dialogue encompasses both the fundamental right to maintain one's own identity and a recognition and appreciation others’ inalienable and non-diminishable identity. Dialogue does not mean avoiding the conversation or skirting confrontation; it seeks unity in diversity to the extent that this is possible.

The current policy concerning religious and philosophical diversity at KU Leuven continues to be implemented and is being expanded to include the other campuses. The individual personality of each campus is taken into consideration during this process. This includes arrangements for special meals in student dining halls, tranquil spaces on each campus and the request to treat students who wear religious symbols with respect during their internships.
Affordable study
Child poverty is on the rise in Flanders, and KU Leuven intends to respond proactively to this problem through its ongoing efforts at democratisation. Democratisation involves more than just providing need-based financial aid to students. The university will draw up a needs analysis and undertake targeted measures in conjunction with Student Services.

First-in-family students
Students who are the first in their family to pursue university-level studies constitute a target group that is explicitly defined at the international level. But very little research and policy has addressed this group in Flanders. Based on international experience and the university’s own figures, students in this group are more likely to drop out of school than their peers. Each year, roughly 16-17% of generation students at KU Leuven come from households in which neither parent has a university-level degree. 27.9% of these students conclude their studies without graduating after two academic years, compared to 17.6% of their peers who have at least one parent with a university-level degree.

In some cases, academically promising students drop out of university due to social isolation – a feeling of not belonging. KU Leuven, campus Leuven will offer a modified version of the Summer Course that is offered at the VU Amsterdam. Where possible, faculties will offer this course in conjunction with the Student Advice Service. The course takes an inclusive approach towards all beginning students, with an emphasis on ensuring that the social/transitional needs of the target group are being met in non-stigmatic way. The university will seek to coordinate this project with existing student orientation initiatives and summer courses. The Educational Policy Office will also incorporate this inclusive approach into the curriculum.

Engagement and participation
Students play a crucial role in the diversity policy of KU Leuven. By raising awareness and engaging with one another, students build their own social network. This increases students’ sense of belonging and community and enables students’ to devote to devote themselves to learning. To achieve this objective, the Diversity Policy Office is collaborating with STURA and LOKO, the two overarching student organisations.

KU Leuven will develop a policy vision on engagement and volunteer work. The key questions here are: What does KU Leuven expect of its students in terms of engagement? How can KU Leuven encourage students to be more engaged in the university community?

Students will provide the inspiration for this. By structurally incorporating students into diversity teams, the Diversity Council and working groups, KU Leuven seeks to encourage the participation of students in the policy process.
Education on diversity - diversity in education

In past years, KU Leuven has invested heavily in student diversity and, more recently, in staff diversity. During the 2014-2016 period, the university also intends to devote more energy to diversity in its core tasks of education and research.

Students must be capable of taking a nuanced approach to the increasing levels of diversity in society, which is why they are encouraged to have as much contact as possible with social diversity while at university. As a result, KU Leuven intends to provide students with a diversity experience as part of their education and wants them to be capable of assuming responsibility for their role in society upon graduating.

The diversity that exists among the student population is a means by which to promote intercultural learning. With the teacher training module ‘Dealing with Heterogeneous Groups’, KU Leuven is developing the diversity competences of Flanders’ future teachers. It will also offer teachers and researchers a training course on understanding implicit biases. This course is designed to make them aware of the mechanisms behind the implicit biases that we employ, consciously or unconsciously, when categorising other people. In order to achieve high-quality education and research, it is critical to maintain an awareness of these mechanisms.

KU Leuven wants each of its academic study programmes to include a critical reflection on the human and world views among their course units and encourage students to develop research skills that take diversity into account.

It is essential to provide effective support to study programmes in their efforts to incorporate diversity without increasing lecturers’ planning load. The expenditure of education funding (the O-funds for the faculties) provides the opportunity to encourage faculty diversity staff and study itinerary guides to work with diversity in an inclusive way. In doing this, KU Leuven would first like to draw inspiration from a number of positive real-world examples. The Studium Generale, which incorporates diversity as one facet of a broad-based ethical, cultural and social education, is an excellent example of this. KU Leuven will additionally encourage international cooperation via institutions such as the Higher Education Academy, which, in cooperation with British universities, has drawn up an inventory of practical examples and resources.¹

KU Leuven is also trying to encourage specific study programmes to focus on diversity and to assign them a more prominent place. One good example of this is the attention given to diversity in the university’s teacher training programme.

¹ The Higher Education Academy is an independent organisation that supports higher education institutions in Britain in their efforts to promote quality education. It does this by recognising and appreciating excellent education, exchanging good practices and influencing policy. See also www.heacademy.ac.uk
The vision statement of the university’s teacher training programme underscores how important it is for teachers to be able to adequately address diversity. The goal of the teacher training programme is to produce teachers who are considerate and skilled in building relationships and who “focus on the personal and educational needs of all their students, in particular the most vulnerable among them. They pay attention to various forms of diversity and know how to make constructive and creative use of the differences among students in their teaching practice.” (Specific Teacher Training Programme Vision Statement, January 2013). The vision statement makes it clear that a focus on diversity goes hand in hand with a focus on identity. The practical component of teacher training at KU Leuven includes an elective of four study credits. Students can choose from a range of practice-oriented or internship activities focused on diversity. Every specific teacher training itinerary must provide the university-wide range of tutoring internships (Buddy Project, ASSistent Project, Second Chance Learning, etc.).

Implementation of the compulsory tutoring internship into the teacher training study programmes of all KU Leuven faculties is scheduled to begin with the 2014-2015 academic year.

5 Research on diversity - diversity in research

KU Leuven believes it is important to incorporate diversity into research and to ground its diversity policy in research-based expertise that includes a clear-cut analysis and interpretation of data and that is designed to produce accurate information.

KU Leuven intends to further develop its vision on diversity and research by:

- **Incorporating diversity into research:**
  Ways in which aspects of diversity can be incorporated into scientific research will be explored. How can the risks posed by implicit biases be consciously addressed within the context of research projects? When formulating research questions, it is important to pay heed to the significant differences that may exist between diverse groups. Moreover, it is important that researchers exercise caution when interpreting their results in cases where different populations are being studied.

- **Encouraging research on diversity:**
  Regard for aspects of diversity is not only essential within scientific research projects; specific research into diversity must be encouraged at our university in order to serve as the basis of a sound diversity policy. Within this context, the establishment of a working group under the auspices of Metaforum is being considered. An interdisciplinary network of diversity researchers could help support the development of diversity research. Options are also being studied for building this type of network and getting researchers from KU Leuven involved in diversity policy. Funding for this will be sought with the support of the Research Coordination Office.

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2 See [www.kuleuven.be/slo/stage/diversiteitsstage.html](http://www.kuleuven.be/slo/stage/diversiteitsstage.html)
• Research and policy:
  KU Leuven intends to formulate a clear vision on the link between diversity research and
  diversity policy. Within the Diversity Policy Office, a policy information assistant has been
  appointed to conduct preparatory and supporting analyses related to policy. A clear vision
  will be developed on the provision of (university-wide and specific) data both inside and
  outside the university, taking privacy protection into account.

This research-based vision on (diversity) policy is also reflected in the participation of the
KU Leuven’s diversity staff in international research and policy networks. Within the League
of European Research Universities (LERU) Working Group on Gender, global data on
gender is gathered and compared, which makes benchmarking possible. This working
group has also written a research-based policy paper on gender policy at the different
LERU universities. Strong contacts are also in place with the VU Amsterdam, with which
an expertise exchange has taken place on a number of occasions. KU Leuven intends to
continue its participation in these exchanges. In addition, UCLA continues to be a source
of inspiration for the ongoing development of diversity policy at KU Leuven.

KU Leuven plans to publish a gender report in 2016 that will contain an update on progress
made on the proportional representation of men to women in the various university
departments. The feasibility of other publications is being studied in relation to both the
priorities in the current policy period as the results of the current analyses.

6 Diversity policy for the benefit of society

Service to society is one of the university’s three core tasks, alongside research and education.
As a diversity-sensitive organisation, KU Leuven serves the very society of which it is part.
KU Leuven believes it is important for its students and employees to possess the competences
needed to function in an increasingly diverse society. For this reason, the university wants
all of its students and employees to have the chance to acquire these competences and
to experience the enrichment of diversity during their time at KU Leuven.

To this end, KU Leuven also intends to incorporate existing extra-curricular diversity
activities into its study programmes where possible. One example of this is the Buddy
Project (administered in cooperation with the city of Leuven): student volunteers offer
guidance to underperforming secondary school students, and they come into contact with
students from highly varied backgrounds. The Buddy Project is also included among the
internships that are available (within the curriculum) for the teacher training study
programmes (see above). Participation in the Patronage Programme and in the Assisted
Living Project also gives students the opportunity to experience diversity in-depth.
As noted earlier, diversity is a fact of life in today’s society, and we are seeing an increasingly diverse population of students and staff at KU Leuven. Because KU Leuven wants to foster the development of all potential talent, students and staff must feel at home here regardless of their background. People capable of serving as role models for different groups within the university community are an excellent means of addressing this. Having a diverse range of visible role models enables a wide group of people to identify with studying and working at KU Leuven. The expansion of mentoring services to staff can also contribute to this effort.

In its diversity policy, KU Leuven is looking beyond its own borders and believes it is important to play its role in a broader educational sphere. This is why it organises a number of initiatives for primary and secondary school-aged audiences geared towards choice of study and student mobility. Examples include the Kids’ University, Science Week, the Buddy Project, the World at Your Feet project, etc. KU Leuven makes an effort to maintain regard for diversity aspects in these initiatives and encourages underprivileged groups to participate.

Direct contacts with external stakeholders provide a basis and support for the university’s policy-making decisions. These formal and informal contacts contribute to the ongoing accumulation of expertise and to the development of a network.

Finally, KU Leuven is seeking to stimulate the intellectual debate on diversity topics by developing a partnership with Metaforum, sharing expertise via the Leuven Diversity Forum and organising discussions and readings.