

Action Plan Racism

Executive Board – Rotterdam University of Applied Sciences

Introduction

Addressing racism requires urgency, shared responsibility, and a targeted approach. At the same time, it is a complex and sensitive issue, which is apparent from the variety of advice given by the Dialogue on Racism working group. In order to apply some focus, the recommendations of the working group have been translated into different action themes. Each theme is linked to a member of the Executive Board and a Director or Dean, who jointly take responsibility for the approach to the issue, and the implementation of the associated actions.

This action plan describes which actions will take place per theme, what the intended time frame is, and which internal or external persons are involved. Every two to three weeks, the progress of the project is discussed by the Executive Board, Jeroen Chabot and Heleen Elferink (supervisors on behalf of the directors), Mark Glimmerveen (Director Concern Staff), Carmen Mo-Ajok (communications advisor) and Wietske Rowaan (project support). The action plan is dynamic, and the corresponding document will be continuously updated on the basis of the discussions.

Continue to actively involve staff and students

Central to the approach is the formation of a joint coalition against racism; we can only overcome racism if all those involved work together: students, staff, lecturers, managers, professors, directors and board members. We want to continue to use the discussion table format to engage in dialogue on the theme of racism and will organise regular meetings to gain knowledge and input, but also to discuss issues and progress on the various themes. We have also noted that more and more people are coming forward because they want to act against discrimination and racism. We find this very valuable and are happy to support good initiatives that relate to one of the themes below. At the end of the Action Plan, you can read how you can contribute.

The themes:

An open, but not noncommittal dialogue about racism

Responsible: Heleen Elferink, Zakia Guernina

The priority for this theme is to create and increase awareness about racism and discrimination, especially among staff and students who do not automatically recognise racism and discrimination or bring it up. The design principle for the activities around this theme is a bottom-up approach: we make as much use as possible of the knowledge, experiences and information of staff and students and use this to inspire and motivate others to tackle racism as well. This is in line with a need that was expressed by staff members during the discussion table on 11 May 2021. The theme 'representativeness' is an integral part of our approach.

Concrete acties

1. Online platform

We will set up an accessible and inspiring platform to share information and knowledge on racism and discrimination, to offer students and staff a place where they can share (inspiring) experiences and to organise events focused on awareness and inclusion. This platform will have a multi-channel strategy and will provide a continuous flow of content in various forms: a website, linked to social media, with text, images, podcasts et cetera. An important part of the platform is an activity calendar, which shows what activities are being organised within RUAS in the field of diversity/racism, such as dialogues, training sessions, and debates. The calendar invites students and staff to join in, but also to organise activities themselves. The platform should be distinctive and appealing so that both students and staff members want to join our grassroots movement. Sami Martins Ribeiro (Communication student at School of Communication, Media, and Information Technology) is helping us as part of her graduation research. For the design and implementation of the platform, a small working group has already started involving students and staff from all corners of the school. They will also be looking at an editorial board for the platform, in which students and staff can take part.

Planning: a first test version will be ready before the summer. The platform will go online in the autumn of 2021.

2. Community and database

To ensure a continuous flow of professional content on the platform, a community will be created with both internal and external experts. An overview will be made of staff and students who are working on the themes of racism, diversity, or inclusion and of external experts we can use.

Planning: the overview has been created and is continuously updated.

3. Event organisation

We will organise physical events with appealing themes and names, in addition to the activities organised by the institutes/service departments/teams themselves. One possibility is to do this in the form of a debate platform (like Pakhuis de Zwijger), which would also make us visible in the city. As soon as the platform is up and running and the community has taken shape, this next step will be taken.

Planning: second half of 2021

4. Collaboration with existing platforms

The working group Inclusive Pedagogy and Didactics (IPD) already has a platform where a lot of knowledge is available in that field. These two platforms can complement and reinforce each other well. Where this platform specifically focuses on knowledge, experiences, and awareness in the field of racism and discrimination, the HUB focuses on pedagogy. We will cross paths where we enter into dialogue about racism and discrimination in the classroom.

Diversity is part of the strategic personnel policies

Responsible: Wijnand van den Brink, Jeroen Chabot in consultation with Ostara de Jager

Based on five core points we will work on diversity as part of our personnel policies:

1. Increasing diversity in all sections of our organisation

Rotterdam University of Applied Sciences has been working actively on this issue for some time now: a specialised agency has been involved in making language use and reference frameworks inclusive in all labour market communication, and RUAS is affiliated with 010 Inclusive and the Diversity in Business Foundation. Despite this, it is often difficult to find the right people. That is why we are investing in a traineeship: talented students and recent graduates are being recruited to fill positions in both education and support.

Planning: a recruitment and support plan will be drawn up in the autumn of 2021.

2. Increasing diversity of the confidential counsellor.

Please refer to the theme 'confidential counsellors and following up on signs/reports/complaints' below.

3. Extra focus for HR Academy courses

In the context of the professionalisation of lecturers and other staff members, the attention spent on racism and bias in training and courses provided by the HR Academy will be increased and, where necessary, intensified. The basic training of lecturers will pay explicit attention to this subject.

Planning: second half of 2021

4. Awareness in on-boarding activities

Awareness training will be part of all 'on-boarding' activities of this institution. A pilot is being prepared as part of the management development process.

Planning: second half of 2021

5. Leadership

a. Personal leadership of employees. We will discuss how to make the policy on undesirable behaviour, including racism, part of the employee interview cycle and include it in the training for managers.

Planning: second half of 2021

b. A tender has just been issued for the new leadership programme to be developed for all RUAS managers. Included in this leadership programme will be the theme of undesirable behaviour (including racism), as well as awareness training for awareness of one's own bias.

Planning: the design of the programme will be realised in the second half of 2021; implementation of the programme is planned for the spring of 2022.

Confidential counsellors and following up on signs/reports/complaints

Responsible: Wijnand van den Brink, Jeroen Chabot in consultation with Ostara de Jager and Menno Siljee

The working system of confidential counsellors is being reviewed in order to ensure that students and staff can easily report any form of racism or discrimination they experience in education or at work in complete confidentiality. There appears to be a great need for officials with the responsibilities and authority of confidential counsellors in whom students from non-represented groups can recognise themselves. To this end, the team of confidential counsellors will be reinforced by representatives from these specific groups. They will be available for the whole organisation.

Planning: realisation in the second half of 2021.

The visibility of diversity among the current counsellors and student welfare advisors will also be increased, so that students from different groups will be able to find them better.

Planning: a communication plan will be drawn up in the autumn of 2021.

Urgency, steering and visibility

Responsible: Jeroen Chabot, Heleen Elferink, Mark Glimmerveen

Concrete action

1. Rotating supervising role directors

The theme is assigned to the directors on a rotating basis (owner/supervision role).

Jeroen Chabot and Heleen Elferink jointly act as first diversity supervisors.

2. Appointment Official

An official (or several officials) will be appointed to support the director(s) and serve as a source of knowledge for the organisation. Talks have been held about the desired profile and the position in the organisation where this official will be appointed.

Planning: the profile will be ready before the summer. In the autumn of 2021, the official will start work.

3. Development diversity policy

The diversity policy will be further developed in conjunction with the Strategic Plan. This will elaborate on what the various concepts (diversity, inclusion, racism) mean to the Rotterdam University of Applied Sciences, what the objectives are and what concrete measures and actions are needed to achieve the objectives.

Planning: a detailed diversity policy will be in place by the end of 2021.

Representativeness

Responsible: Jeroen Chabot and Heleen Elferink

The Dialogue on Racism working group indicated that the perceived representativeness is too low. This was also mentioned in the follow-up interview with staff and students. It was recommended that students and staff members with a multicultural background be visibly involved in (policy) development with regard to diversity and in follow-up activities. This is an ongoing point of attention

and is embedded in the implementation of the other themes. For example, a balanced composition of the community involved in the platform, a balanced composition of the confidential counsellor team and a balanced composition of the advisory committee curricula, as well as welcoming all RUAS staff and students to the discussion tables.

Curricula

Responsible: Ron Bormans, Jeroen Chabot, Mark Glimmerveen

A critical review of the curricula requires a careful process that does justice to the professional discourse in the various fields and to the various roles and responsibilities of those involved both internally and externally. The Executive Board seeks advice on the best approach and will appoint an advisory committee for this purpose.

Concrete actions

On 21 and 27 May 2021, a discussion took place exchanging initial ideas about:

- The assignment for the committee

The committee will be asked to help lecturers reflect on inclusion/bias in their own educational programme, curriculum and pedagogy/didactics, and to offer perspectives for conduct of lecturers embedded in normativity: how can lecturers/lecturer teams deal with racism/bias in a well-founded and balanced way when (re)designing curricula, lessons and teaching materials in a sustainable way, and how does this affect the pedagogical and didactical knowledge and tools they need to do this?

- The desired profile/the desired composition

The committee as a whole has knowledge of racism and/or diversity issues, can translate this into the context of higher education and has a respectful attitude towards racism and diversity issues. We are looking for a committee that is balanced in different ways: male/female, ethnic background, full professors/professors/educators. The committee consists of people who have authority in their field. The committee is supplemented by a RUAS lecturer and student, who will be invited in consultation with the Central Representative Board.

- The intended output of the committee

(1) A framework or guide for teams and individual lecturers to achieve a broader/inclusive perspective in their programme, curriculum, and pedagogy/didactics in a balanced and sustainable way.

(2) advice on whether/how to set up a committee within RUAS (analogous to an ethics committee) that can be consulted by lecturers and teams to guide their actions within this framework.

Planning:

On 12 June 2021 an interview took place with the intended chairman of the committee. After this, the composition of the committee and the assignment to the committee will be further elaborated.

Before the summer, the terms of reference for the Committee will be drafted and the Committee will be appointed. The Committee will present its advice by the end of 2021. In the autumn of 2021, we will develop an internal communication flow (from January 2022). It is also important to make connections with other themes from the project plan and with other bodies (such as the Expert College).

Using insights from applied research on the subject of racism & knowledge sharing

Responsible: Zakia Guernina, in consultation with Ron Bormans

The working group has recommended that research centres should conduct research within their field into this theme and implement the results in education. This topic will be addressed as part of/as a follow-up to the critical review of the curricula.

Intended planning: spring 2022.

Avoiding bias in communication

Responsible: Ron Bormans and Mark Glimmerveen

The working group has advised to investigate the extent to which unintentional framing occurs in the communication tools and messages of Rotterdam University of Applied Sciences, causing students to insufficiently recognise themselves in the communication.

Concrete actions

Frequently used internal and external means of communication and messages will be examined for unintentional framing. This research will be carried out externally. The municipal authority of Rotterdam has already given a presentation to the Communications Team, in which they shared experiences about their approach to the screening of municipal communication. As a follow-up, an exploratory meeting was held on 10 June with the research bureau that they had worked with in order to come to a concrete approach and offer.

Do you also want to contribute to the Action Plan?

If, after reading the action plan, you are interested in thinking about or contributing to our approach to racism and promoting greater awareness and inclusion, then please join the new series of discussion tables we will be organising in the coming academic year. We will organise discussion table sessions for all the themes, each time focusing on a different goal or question. We will keep you informed about the dates and topics of the discussion tables and how to register via Hint, other internal channels and social media. Through your active participation, we hope to build a coalition against racism and discrimination and for inclusion, together with our students and staff.