



UNIVERSITEIT VAN AMSTERDAM

Institute for Interdisciplinary Studies

IIS Result 2020-2021

Dear all,

It has been a bizarre COVID year, in which unprecedented achievements have been made by students, teachers and the whole institute. The unthinkable suddenly became possible: all of our education had to go online and we were introduced to tools which we used to try to optimise remote interactions. But it also became all the more clear that physical encounters in our education and in our work are irreplaceable and invaluable. Now that hybrid education and work are part of the 'new normal', we need to talk about a good balance between online and offline. Not only the intellect, but also what gives us emotional strength and bonding are included in this consideration.

You might expect that in times of crisis, people would have no time or need for (more) educational innovation. The opposite is true, as this overview also shows, since the IIS has not been idle. It sometimes seemed to work as a beacon of light to work on the future together with others. A remarkable number of plans was made and projects started in 2020-2021, with the Strategic Plan as a powerful catalyst. We also continued to inspire and facilitate others in their educational initiatives with our knowledge sharing and guidance. The elective courses once again proved to be a valuable opportunity to respond quickly to current issues in society, resulting in Esther Quaedackers immediately starting the new elective course *Pandemic*, open to all UvA students, in September 2020. A tremendous success! This and more can be found in our overview of 2020-2021.

Lucy Wenting, director of the IIS

Luca Bertolini, scientific director of the IIS



The IIS Strategic Plan 2021-2026:

Turning ideals into reality

In the education of the Institute for Interdisciplinary Studies, we foreground interdisciplinarity and transdisciplinarity. We will now continue to integrate this with the knowledge, skills and attitudes needed to shape societal transitions.

Society is facing urgent and complex challenges, such as the development of sustainable energy supplies, accessible healthcare, a just city and inclusive digitalisation. These types of challenges are firmly embedded in existing societal structures and institutions, and demand radical changes in structural thinking and action. These radical changes, which are not easy to manage, are **societal transitions** and may involve system-wide resistance, inequality and instability.

The IIS is developing education in which students learn to relate to and actively manage such societal transitions, in order to initiate and facilitate change processes.

Our students will soon be taking over the reins from the current generation. Many of these young people want to be leaders of a more just and sustainable world and expect their university to take the lead in this together with them (Inspiring Generations UvA 2021). The IIS will work in co-creation with students, lecturers and social institutions to broaden and deepen knowledge, skills and attitudes on complex societal issues through interdisciplinary and transdisciplinary education. At the IIS, students are given tools to turn their ideals into reality.

Shaping transitions



We have lifted off with four projects:

Honours module open to UvA, VU and AUC students

In 'The Next Great/Small Transformation', students will become critically and constructively familiar with tools to shape transitions. Interdisciplinary student teams will identify a societal transition challenge and develop a strategy to address it. At the same time, the students are encouraged to critically evaluate the tools and suggest improvements.

Learning Trajectory

Dealing with and shaping social transitions requires certain knowledge, skills and attitudes. For example, connecting perspectives and directing change processes. The IIS is developing a learning trajectory 'Shaping Transitions', which consists of several modules, including learning objectives, activities and assessment, that cover the most important aspects of shaping transitions. This learning trajectory can be used in various degree programmes.

Building Bridges for Local-Global Challenges

There are many issues at a global scale that have local implications, and vice versa - for example, overfishing, the spread of infectious diseases and inequality caused by digitalisation. In this IIS elective, students team up with students from European partner universities, to work together both online and offline in international project groups on connecting various perspectives. They address the global issue taking into account both local and international context(s) and inspire each other with various tangible local interventions.

Toolbox

The IIS is working on a dynamic toolbox to support transition-focused education. It is a place to get informed and inspired, to find ready-to-go teaching materials, to learn from and with each other and to find the route to a tailored approach and ask for help with educational development related to shaping transitions. The toolbox is being developed in co-creation with teachers, educational developers, students, external parties and other stakeholders.



"Thanks to the IIS Project-based learning grant, we were able to implement the desired interdisciplinarity within the course 'Big Questions in Time'. How can people with different disciplinary backgrounds work together in the best possible way? Which skills are needed, and how do you divide the tasks amongst one another? We enjoyed fantastic training sessions by the IIS with many practical examples, which served as a great source of inspiration. We have successfully integrated various interdisciplinary work methods."

Anco Lankreijer, Lecturer and Tutor, Amsterdam University College

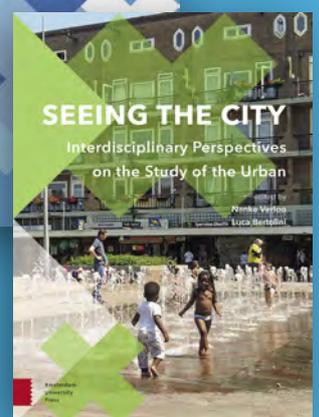
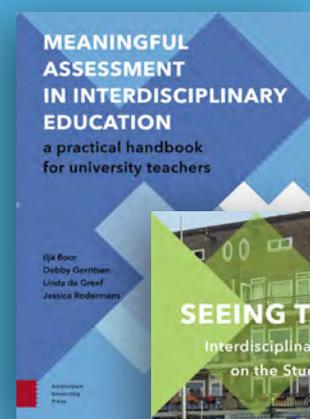
Grant for innovation

With the IIS Project-based learning grant, from 2018 up to and including 2021, several UvA lecturers were given the opportunity to experiment and elaborate on ideas to innovate their education, by developing skills in innovative project-based teaching and learning. On our website, descriptions and results of these projects are shared as inspiration for educators.

Student impact

Together with the Teaching & Learning Centre of the UvA, a Special Interest Learning Group was created to focus on Impact Learning, for the development of education in which students can make a tangible impact on society. Chaired by Katusha Sol, the group is working on sharing knowledge and influencing policy, with the aim of making this type of education more common practice at the UvA.

Publications



Highlights

Dynamic Cookers

In addition to the traditional Pressure Cooker, in which students work on a real-life challenge using the Design Thinking method, an online and a hybrid version were developed. In the first semester of 2020, six degree programmes across several UvA faculties implemented the Pressure Cooker in their education to over 300 students.

Elective course open to the UvA community

With the 'second COVID wave' approaching, the IIS elective *Pandemic* was launched in September 2020. An interdisciplinary course by definition, as insights from various disciplines, both current and historical, are necessary to interpret virus outbreaks and put them into perspective. For 14 weeks, pandemics were studied on scales ranging from the cellular to the global. Experts and scientists from the UvA and beyond contributed, including virologist Marion Koopmans.

Degree programmes in the making

The IIS is involved in the development of various new interdisciplinary degree programmes in an advisory, executive and/or facilitating role.

Bachelor's programmes:

- **Humanities in Context (Faculty of Humanities)** - with a focus on societal changes and challenges, in which the humanities play a crucial role. Intended start: 2022.
- **Computational Social Science (Faculty of Social and Behavioural Sciences)** - a degree programme on the social, political, cultural and technological dimensions of digital transformations. Intended start: 2022.
- **Science & Design (Faculty of Science)** - with knowledge from the natural sciences and research and skills in modelling, design and experimentation, in the context of societal transitions at its core. Intended start: 2023.

Master's programmes:

- **Decision Making** - an interdisciplinary programme about making decisions on complex problems, on the basis of data.
- The IIS is facilitating two exploratory studies into the need for and possibilities of a Master's programme on **sustainability**.

News from our degree programmes

Future Planet Studies

FPS alumni Daan Disco and Jesse Schoenmakers have made several podcast episodes to inspire new and current students. They explore the concept of sustainability, talk to alumni about their career choice and explore the possibilities of elective credits within the programme. In the autumn of 2021, they shoot an alumni video.

Bèta-gamma

Following the UvA Research Priority Area Human(e) AI, Bèta-Gamma has included the interdisciplinary course *Human(e) AI* for the first time in its 2020-2021 programme. Students learn about developments in artificial intelligence and work together in groups on a case study of their choosing, in which the social impact of these developments and the disciplines involved become clear.

Forensic Science

Together with the Co van Ledden Hulsebosch Centre, Forensic Science initiated a successful international lecture series in 2021: *Crossing Forensic Borders*. Several academic forensic institutes presented their research and educational programmes. Besides gaining knowledge, students were also able to build their professional network.

Brain and Cognitive Sciences

Once again, the Brain and Cognitive Sciences programme was able to organise a successful ABC Summer School. This edition was led by Henkjan Honing, Professor in Music Cognition. No fewer than 74 participants from 15 different countries studied the theme of 2021: *Musicality!*

"In addition to opportunities, digitalisation also confronts us with new challenges. In the new interfaculty Bachelor's programme Computational Social Science, students are trained to develop sustainable digital interventions themselves. Thanks to the knowledge and experience of the IIS, we have developed a very daring and didactically innovative programme. The panel of assessors was charmed by 'the transdisciplinary nature of the programme, its focus on research methods and techniques and its ambition to address and solve real-world problems'. This could not have been achieved without the IIS."

Eelke Heemskerk, Associate Professor in Political Science, University of Amsterdam



Sustainability

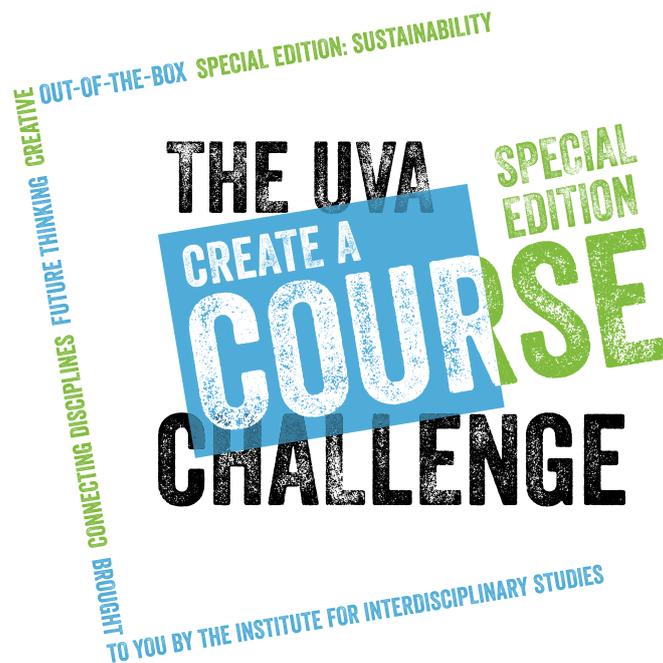
More than ever, the impact of human interventions on our planet is exposed. That is why the UvA considers it important to invest in education in the field of green sustainability, combined with related social sustainability aspects. The IIS translates this ambition in various, concrete ways:

Sustainability grant

Together with the Teaching & Learning Centre, the IIS has awarded a number of grants to lecturers who would like to work on sustainability in their education and provide students with more knowledge and skills in this field. Next to additional assigned hours, lecturers also received guidance from the IIS. The scholarship immediately attracted national attention and ended up in 3rd place in the SustainaBul 2021: an annual ranking for sustainable development in higher education.

Minor programmes

At the request of the Executive Board, the IIS is developing a UvA minor focusing on sustainability with perspectives from all faculties. Intended start: 2022. In September 2021, the pilot courses *Rethinking Sustainable Societies: New Perspectives* and *Rethinking Sustainable Societies: Urban Lab*, in partnership with the Municipality of Amsterdam, will kick-off. With new insights and a hands-on approach we want to give students the right tools to work towards a more sustainable world.



Create a Course Challenge Special Edition

In the spring of 2021, the IIS challenged all UvA students to think about how sustainability education can be fun, challenging and meaningful. Media and Culture student Caatje Kluskens won the challenge with her course idea *Food, Animals and the Environment*. "A course that will be of real value to UvA students, because of its comprehensive approach", according to jury member Professor Rick van der Ploeg.



"As a client, I have now taken part in the Placemaking course a number of times. Design Thinking is an important method to inspire the students to get to work on the challenge at hand. This results in very creative and innovative solutions. In my work, I notice that challenges are becoming more and more complex, and this does not only apply to real estate. Design Thinking and interdisciplinary work do not only increase the creative capacity, but also create a certain energy in the group that motivates both the students and myself."

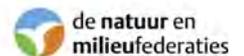
Femke Kamp, Policy officer Real Estate, University of Amsterdam

About the IIS

The IIS has over 20 years of experience in developing interdisciplinary education. In addition to its role as an expertise centre and education implementer, the institute is a testing ground where experiments, publications, workshops and training sessions, manuals and teaching methods for interdisciplinary education are shared and tested. Clients both from within or beyond the university can come to us with questions, which can be both operational and strategic in nature.

The interaction between our various core tasks of giving guidance and developing and implementing education is important for the IIS in order to remain a learning organisation. The institute therefore aims to develop high-quality education with an open and reflective attitude, which meets the current needs of the educational institution, student, discipline or society.

Partners



Contact us

Are you looking for curriculum innovation or do you have a vision for the development of an entirely new degree programme? Do you have a need for teacher professionalisation or an interesting theme for a new lecture series? Then please don't hesitate to contact the IIS.

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