

A photograph of a diverse group of five young adults standing in a line, looking towards the right. From left to right: a woman with dark curly hair wearing a patterned top, a man with a beard wearing a light blue button-down shirt, a woman with curly hair wearing a dark top, a woman with dark hair wearing a grey sweater with her arms crossed, and a man with dark hair wearing a dark t-shirt. The background is a bright, modern interior with large windows and geometric patterns.

# Gender Equality Plan



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Saxion Diversity Office  
Dienst Onderwijs  
Postbus 70.000  
7500 KB Enschede

[diversityoffice@saxion.nl](mailto:diversityoffice@saxion.nl)  
[www.saxion.nl/over-saxion/visie/diversiteit](http://www.saxion.nl/over-saxion/visie/diversiteit)

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Auteurs:  
William Sanchez  
Domenique Scheuten

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# Introduction

As a knowledge institution, Saxion is at the centre of a society that is more than ever characterised by a growing diversity in its population and at the same time gives much importance to inclusion and equal opportunities. Saxion University of Applied Sciences is keen to establish an environment that is sensitive to gender and diversity. Any kind of discrimination is strongly condemned.

Saxion and its Executive Board supports gender mainstreaming as part of their commitment towards gender equality within our academic community and in the region where its campuses are situated. We see a clear link between gender equality and the creation of knowledge as well as the value of diversity to the global education community.

The responsibility for developing and maintaining a Gender Equality Plan is a welcome opportunity to showcase the different actions and opportunities possible at Saxion. Gender equality starts with commitment at the highest level at Saxion. The Executive Board is conscious of our position as role models. At operational level, we work with a multi-dimensional approach to ensure continuous improvement in achieving gender equality goals and measures. The Diversity Office works closely with the Human Resources Management Department, the Green Office and the Saxion Research and Graduate School for the strategic development of gender equality and diversity policies in research and education.

Gender equality and equal opportunities is a key priority for Saxion as an institution focused on delivering societal impact (Get ready for a Smart World!). In this Gender Equality Plan, we present the current and future development of structures and targeted measures that will enhance gender equality and social equity. These measures include promoting gender equality through training opportunities, raising awareness and policy measures to ensure inclusive recruitment and career progression.

**“Gender equality and equal opportunities is a key priority for Saxion as an institution focused on delivering societal impact”**

Gender equality needs conscious and constant attention. Together with our dedicated teachers, researchers, staff and students, we are confident that Saxion will be able to adapt and succeed in promoting gender equality in new contexts and circumstances.



A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Anka Mulder', written over a white background.

Anka Mulder  
President of the Executive Board

# 1. Commitment to Gender Equality

The Saxion Mission, Goals and Strategic Plan (2020-2024) shows that Saxion is committed to being an organisation in which everyone counts, in which everyone feels appreciated, one where they can be themselves and feel at home. This applies to students, staff and also our associates.

Saxion is striving to diversify its workforce and is adjusting its policy accordingly to achieve this. At Saxion, everyone can be themselves, regardless of cultural or racial background, religious beliefs, gender or sexual orientation. It is precisely being part of such an inclusive organisation that enables us to shape diversity together in terms of creativity, ideas and solutions.

Through the publication of the Gender Equality Plan (GEP) the Executive Board expresses its continuous commitment and support with regards to fostering gender equality and diversity at Saxion.



## 2. Dedicated Resources

There is a commitment of human resources and gender expertise within Saxion Schools and Student Support Services to implement the Saxion Strategic Plan and Gender Equality Plan in the course of 2020-2024.

The Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and Diversity, Inclusive Culture and Equity (DICE) are themes which have gained weight and importance within Saxion. The Executive Board of Saxion believes it has a duty to put sustainability and inclusion on the agenda and to promote the required academic and social support.

Saxion has a designated Diversity Office, and provides structural and financial support to promote the policy of Diversity, Inclusive Culture and Equity (DICE) at Saxion. The policy tackles issues through an intersectional approach and directly involves the Saxion community at all levels. Saxion makes use of the concept of intersectionality, which allows us to better understand the dimensions of gender inequality and its complexity.

The Saxion Green Office was established in 2020. A year later the Diversity Office was established. These offices have staff who are dedicated and entrusted to take the lead in making meaningful changes at Saxion.

When these offices were established, there were many issues found in the general measures that Saxion did or did not have in place. The main and most important objective was to advise policies that can be implemented and to support multiple initiatives using a bottom-up approach.

The Green Office and the Diversity Office are fully staffed units with each office comprising a head officer, a communications advisor and student assistants. They have a structural budget at their disposal to develop relevant training and activities. These activities are organised to raise awareness and share knowledge and to create networks and communities.

Furthermore, Saxion has a central Education and Student Support (ESS) unit and specialised officers (aandachtsfunctionarissen) who focus on promoting targeted measures such equal access and a safe and healthy work environment. This includes the subject of social safety and addressing sexual harassment.

The Diversity Office and the Human Resources Department (HRM) collaborate in giving solicited and unsolicited expert advice on organisational development with regard to gender equality and diversity issues.

### Sustainable Development Goals

In 2018 by signing the UN Sustainable Development Goals Charter, Saxion stated its commitment to contributing in a positive way to the ecological, economic and social issues of our time.

Saxion is working on all 17 goals listed, in our teaching and our research, both locally and in other parts of the world. Emphasis has also been given to SDG 5, Gender Equality. Gender equality, as defined under the SDGs, is a principle that states that all men and women need to be treated equally and have the same rights despite their biological differences. These should not prevent them from having the same opportunities to succeed in school and in life.

### 3. Data collection and monitoring

Saxion collects data and monitors sex/ gender disaggregated data on personnel and students through annual reporting based on indicators in the Annual Report. This data feeds into reporting through benchmarks such as the Diversity in the Workplace Benchmark (Diversiteit in Bedrijf – SER). The Education and Student Support (OSS) unit and the HRM Department are responsible for gathering information on certain performance indicators.

In the Saxion Strategic Plan 2020-2024 the following performance indicators have been defined in regard to Staff and Organisation:

- Employee satisfaction
- Effective personnel policy
- Good employment practices and development as an inclusive organisation
- Sustainable organisation

These performance indicators are reported and published in the Saxion Annual Report. You can see in the Annual Report that gender diversity and ensuring equal representation of women in the workplace has been given a high priority. Equal representation has positive effects all across our entire organisation. These positive effects include:

- A wider talent pool
- Different perspectives
- Enhanced collaboration
- Improved staff retention
- A better reflection of our student population and the region we work in
- Improved recruitment and reputation



## 4. Training and capacity building

Effective gender training and capacity building is part of a broader strategy to reinforce institutional capacities and leadership capabilities, so that what is learned in training courses can be practically applied in everyday working practice. Training is being continually developed and regularly evaluated to ensure that actions are relevant to both the institutional needs and the individual professional contexts of participants.

Training programmes are offered through our training and development platform Saxion Academy (<https://saxionacademy.saxion.nl>). To supplement the existing training on offer, the Diversity Office will initiate in 2022 a number of dedicated training courses to support change at three levels:

- Injustice and gender inequality awareness and the need to be committed to changing the situation;
- Knowledge of the relevant international, national and institutional policies and toolboxes that form the basis for maintaining gender equality;
- Skills in the practical use of the technical tools and guidelines that can be used at different levels within the Saxion organisation and within educational programmes.

Alongside training courses, resources are being developed to guide recruitment officers and selection committees in inclusive practices which will accompany efforts to ensure inclusivity and gender equality as consideration throughout the recruitment process.



# 5. Work-life balance and organisational culture

Saxion is aware that organisational culture and work-life balance are key components for establishing an environment where both men and women can thrive and have equal opportunities in building a fulfilling career.

Organisational culture and work-life balance is a broad thematic area that covers issues such as:

- Gender-sensitive communication;
- Childcare provisions;
- Maternity/paternity/parental leave provisions

Saxion has provisions and a collection of services ranging from life-balance coaches, specific measures for starting a family, courses on stress management, mindfulness, time management, in order to support a healthy lifestyle, together with other measures that contribute to being a family friendly employer. This support is provided and regulated by the collective employment agreements (Cao HBO)<sup>1</sup>.

Saxion is developing extra dedicated training opportunities to raise awareness on gender equality and provide training in unconscious biases for staff and decision makers. In the coming years, management of faculties and support services will have the opportunity to follow courses on implicit bias training. These courses provide tools and skills on how to avoid/diminish the biases in regular work processes (such as inclusive recruitment and selection, inclusive communication, and a training to become a active bystander).

<sup>1</sup> <https://www.vereniginghogescholen.nl/kennisbank/cao-s-hbo-nederlandstalig/artikelen/cao-s-hbo-nederlands-en-engelstalig-vanaf-2010>

## Employment conditions in the CAO HBO: Maternity and Paternal Leave

In accordance with the collective employment agreements (Chapter J-10, CAO-HBO) a female employee is entitled to pregnancy and maternity leave in connection with the birth of her child without loss of income. The provisions of the Work and Care Act (Wet Arbeid en Zorg (WAZO) apply. Entitlement to pregnancy leave commences 6 weeks before the day after the due date, as indicated in a written statement by a doctor or midwife which is to be submitted to the employer. The pregnancy leave will start at the latest 4 weeks prior to the day after the due date.

In accordance with the collective employment agreements (Chapter J-10, CAO-HBO) birth leave or emergency leave and other short-term leave of absence is also available to partners. Birth leave is sometimes also referred to as paternity leave or partner leave.

Following the birth of a child, the partner is entitled to paid leave for the duration of one working week or the number of hours of one working week spread over a period of 4 weeks beginning on the day when the child actually resides at the same address. These days do not have to be taken consecutively. As from 1 July 2020 the employee is entitled to additional birth leave as referred to in article 4:2a Work and Care Act (Wet Arbeid en Zorg (WAZO).

## Employment conditions in the CAO HBO: Care Leave (Mantelzorg)

In accordance with the collective employment agreements (Chapter J-11, CAO-HBO) a female employee is eligible for care leave without loss of income in the event that the partner, a parent or a child, including the employee's or the employee's partner's parents-in-law, stepparents or stepchildren or foster children, fall ill and require care, to a maximum of two weeks' working hours per year. If a medical certificate, to be submitted to the employer, should indicate that the continued presence of the employee with the person who has fallen ill is required for a longer period of time, this period may be extended.



## 6. Gender balance in leadership and decision-making

Saxion strives to be a gender-balanced institution, where its members have equal access to and a balanced participation in leadership and other decision-making roles. Currently, the Saxion Executive Board is comprised of two female members and one male member.

Saxion is proud of its reputation as an employer of choice. At the highest level, the Executive board is comprised of two females and one male. The gender balance is positive with 57% female staff. In 2020 we had 1137 male staff members (1052 FTE) and 1784 female staff members (1230 FTE).



## 7. Gender equality in recruitment and career progression

Saxion has a social responsibility to ensure an educational environment that is free of gender bias. In order to reduce bias in our research and educational content, it is vital to take into consideration the equality dimension of gender, from biological traits to social features of both men and women.

Consequently, Saxion has taken several measures to ensure gender equality in recruitment and career progression. We are re-enforcing measures to ensure inclusive recruitment and selection, and are actively promoting staff to follow specific courses such as Leadership Training for Women (Leiderschap voor vrouwen).

## 8. Integration of the gender dimension into research and teaching content

Saxion strives to be a socially responsible institution that successfully integrates and proliferates gender conscious research and education. This aspect of the Gender Equality Plan will be further developed in the coming years.



## 9. Gender-based violence including sexual harassment

At Saxion we strive to cultivate a community that fundamentally operates on the grounds of mutual respect between all its members. Consequently, gender-based violence is not tolerated within our institution.

Saxion has several measures in place to eliminate gender-based violence such as sexual harassment within our community. We have a network of confidential counsellors and an ombudsperson who is there for student and staff members. In addition, Saxion has developed guidelines such as the Student Charter which is accessible on our intranet. Students and staff are given extra lines of support through cooperation with the Dutch Health Organisation (GGD) and the Sexual Assault Centre(CSG).

Saxion actively takes part in the Orange the World campaign aimed at eliminating violence against women. From 25 November (International Day for the Elimination of Violence against Women) to 10 December a number of activities are organised to raise awareness and increase the capacity of women and men to stand up against gender violence and support human rights worldwide.

