

Solid Ground

Strategic Plan Faculty of Archaeology 2026-2028



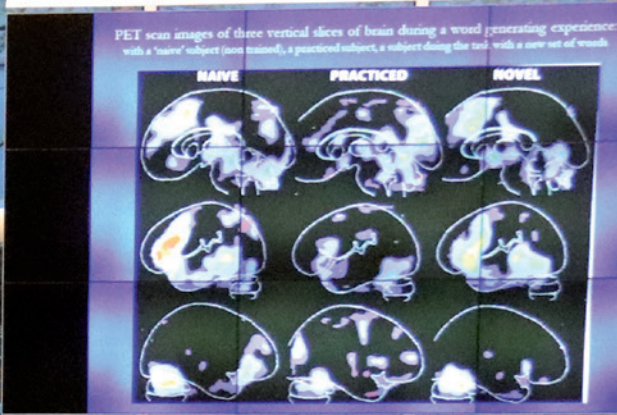
**Universiteit
Leiden**
Archaeology

Solid Ground

Strategic Plan Faculty of Archaeology 2026-2028

Final Draft

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Introduction

The Faculty of Archaeology at Leiden is the leading academic institute for archaeology in the Netherlands, and one of the largest in the world, steadily ranking in the top ten of the QS World University Rankings, for archaeology as a subject. The Faculty has around 100 members of staff and some 450 bachelor's students, alongside 220 master's students. Some 100 PhD candidates and nearly 40 postdoctoral researchers complete our academic community, with members from all over the world. Members of staff are organised across three departments, interlinked through a shared vision, as well as collaborations of individual researchers. These departments: Archaeological Heritage & Society, Archaeological Sciences, and World Archaeology, operate in the Van Steenis building, as part of Leiden University's Bio Science Campus. Here, students and staff benefit from advanced laboratory facilities specialising in a range of fields.

This Strategic Plan outlines the policy priorities for the Faculty of Archaeology from 2026 up to and including 2028. The timespan of this plan is therefore shorter than the more common five-year scope, to align with Leiden University's cycle of strategic plans. Such a term calls for concreteness in the measures for improvement and investments in our future. These policy plans are being proposed at a time when the Faculty is facing the dual challenge of renewal and outreach, while safeguarding its structure. It is an uncertain time for higher education in the Netherlands, and our Faculty is not immune to shifts at the national level. These considerations highlight the need to balance innovation with robust support systems and reasonable workloads.



Renewal implies transition. This also marks the current period, with investments being made in the way we engage with one another at the Faculty. We are aiming for a collegial and safe community, consisting of both support and academic staff, and will facilitate ways to allow colleagues to encounter each other more often in our Van Steenis Building. We recognise that many of us have productive, longstanding collaborative networks and those should be cherished, while also exploring new opportunities such as, for example, co-created research clusters.

Research-led education is one of our core activities and students are our central focus. Student cohorts change in their composition and outlook on archaeology and the world, and we want to recognise this in our course programmes. We wish to further improve what we advertise about our programmes and receive both bachelor's and master's students with dedication and care while offering clear expectations and guidelines during their studies. Innovations in education will continue to receive structural attention, both for the development of teaching skills as well as the opportunities offered by emergent digital tools including but not limited to Generative Artificial Intelligence.

The development of teaching practice is a trajectory that spans an entire academic career, and we will support junior, mid-career, and senior staff to continue to seek out new experiences in teaching and expand their educational skills.

Our research is recognised worldwide and constitutes an essential element in our identity and strategic planning. Our academic staff are successful in developing and funding individual and team-based research lines that, in turn, enrich our courses with current research perspectives. Importantly, our success in acquiring grants allows our Faculty to remain financially viable. Our Research Support Office is central to the efforts of all academic staff to pursue research funding. This work, however, is also facing increasing requirements for the storing of physical and digital collections, data management, Open Science compliance, knowledge security, and ethical assessment, for which provisions are needed.

The ambitions in the field of archaeology can only be accomplished in a healthy Faculty, in terms of both work culture and available resources. In times of shrinking higher education budgets and government measures to limit the number of international students, it will be a challenge to achieve a balanced budget over several years and to maintain financial reserves. Our sound financial health, achieved in recent years, puts us in a strong position to accomplish this. At the same time, we want to continue investing in the development and career prospects of staff and foster a healthy community in which colleagues can do their jobs with satisfaction and in a safe environment, with an acceptable workload. To achieve this, the coming

period calls for clear collective choices, leading to reciprocal standards of accountability for working together.

Based on such a healthy community, we will develop a Faculty research framework that strategically guides us in our hiring plan, in deciding where to invest in research and education. Even though the national political climate is volatile and can rapidly change the conditions we work under, the Faculty is financially stable for the foreseeable future, which means we are not subjected to reorganisation and can maintain our staffing at current levels. The performance of this unique Faculty places us in the worldwide top. Only by strengthening our cooperation will we succeed in continuing our important work.

On behalf of the Faculty Board,

Prof. dr. Alex Geurds
Dean

1 Mission and vision

Mission

Archaeology studies the human past through a focus on the interaction of humans with their surrounding physical worlds and with each other, from the earliest traces of our species to the advent of modernity and globalisation. At the Faculty of Archaeology, we advance and co-create knowledge on this long-term human past through innovative teaching and advanced research, by means of an internationally unique combination of empirically rigorous methodologies and critically informed perspectives, and through working with academic, professional, and public stakeholders across the Netherlands and abroad. We contribute to understanding global patterns of societal change by studying shifts in human practice at the local level. As such, we see archaeology as the study of human diversity in the past, by generating insights via fieldwork, laboratory-based studies, and societal engagement.

Vision

We commit to remaining a leading centre of archaeological education and scholarship, bringing together international cohorts of students, and excellent academic & support staff, and working with partner institutions in the Netherlands and abroad, to study and understand global and local long-term trajectories of the human past and its relevance to the present and future. Our work is rooted in thorough methods and techniques, critical reflection, and forging ties with contemporary society. Our curricula are the outcome of the collective innovations of our academic staff and are marked by a diversity in teaching methods while safeguarding a prominent role for ongoing Faculty research. We train students in our 'global classrooms' through an exceptional mix of laboratory-based engagement with materials, forging critical academic and decision-making skills, and having students learn the practice of data collecting at field sites, in laboratory settings, or in museum environments around the world.

We conduct teaching and research that address locally and globally relevant questions through interdisciplinary collaboration, innovative approaches, and cultural sensitivity. We do this in a contemporary world where the long-term human past is increasingly seen as part of societal challenges like global climate change and discussions on identity and cultural diversity. For this, we build on the long legacy of archaeology as a field of study at Leiden University, uniquely marked by a broad spectrum of expertise in conducting archaeology across different world areas through long-standing fieldwork projects, in combination with different science-based and heritage approaches. This triad of area-based, heritage-focused, and science-driven research forms the backbone of the Faculty's interdisciplinary strength. Our unique position as a standalone Faculty within Leiden University enables us to foster this distinctive integration of social sciences, natural sciences, and the humanities.

We see networks of cooperation as central to our work. We engage with the challenge of balancing our presence across continents whilst also preserving our key role in the institutional environment of archaeology in the Netherlands and our position within Leiden University as a whole and the Bio Science Campus specifically.

We work towards an inclusive, safe, diverse, and supportive Faculty community where every member—student and employee—is heard and can thrive academically and professionally. We recognise the significance of teamwork, outreach, innovation in teaching, and clearly structured roles in the Faculty organisation. We value diversity in perspectives as being enriching to both research and learning. We embrace Leiden University’s core values of freedom and pluriformity, which for us among others means that our Faculty staff have significant opportunities to organise the content of their research and education as they see fit. Such opportunities are an important driver for innovation and job satisfaction. At the same time, we align with academic developments towards team science and Leiden’s schemes of recognition and rewards.

The Faculty of Archaeology operates on shared values that guide collaboration, decision-making, and academic practice. We foster curiosity, connection, teamwork, and accountability to strengthen our community and enhance the quality of teaching, research, and support. Our work is scientifically grounded, interdisciplinary, and internationally relevant, while remaining embedded in regional and societal contexts. Through co-creation and dialogue with colleagues, students, and external partners, we pursue collective goals and shared responsibility. We embrace diversity as a source of strength and strive for sustainability. Together, we aim to deliver state-of-the-art research and education with lasting global and local impact.

2 Actions in relation to LEI strategic ambitions

i. Space for innovation

We are committed to remaining a world-leading centre for archaeological higher education and research, uniting international students and staff with partner institutions to explore the human past and its relevance for today and the future. As a Faculty, we realize this ambition based on a transparent and fair distribution of teaching, research, and administrative tasks, with outcomes visible to the entire staff. Our collective staff collaborate fairly in this distribution, regardless of seniority or position. We are therefore committed to further developing our Parameter model, which better recognises the diversity of tasks in teaching, research, administration and committee work. We are setting up a committee to advise on the development of the parameter model with members from across the Faculty to have broad staff representation and bring proposals to the Faculty Board. The model indicates what is expected of employees and protects those same employees from unacceptable workloads by setting maximum limits on tasks. A new model should explicitly allocate time for professional and organisational development for all permanent academic staff. This time can be used for personal training and courses such as, for example, Dutch language acquisition or obtaining a Senior Teaching Qualification ('SKO'). It also includes attending Faculty meetings such as department meetings, research and education meetings, student recruitment activities and culture change meetings.

Another important change will be that newly recruited lecturers will be given adequate time to develop and implement their teaching. This should result in a workable teaching load for new colleagues.

Education

After careful market research and a survey among various cohorts of our students, the bachelor's specialisations have been discontinued. The reasons for this decision are the high level of teaching pressure and the widely supported desire among students to follow a uniform and broad educational programme. This means that a new bachelor's curriculum will be formulated, incorporating elements of both specialisations. In addition, the second intake for the master's programme in Archaeology has also been discontinued. This latter decision will be reviewed and granted annually. This will reduce the educational pressure, because it decreases the number of courses to teach, while leading to more coherent and more study-friendly programmes.

The starting point for the mentioned revision of the bachelor's curriculum is our desire to strike a better balance between the small scale of our education, with the opportunity to practise skills intensively in small groups, and the ongoing concerns of staff about high workload. We are investigating whether

we can operate the bachelor's programme with fewer course options without losing its uniqueness, and reform the master's programme to provide more specialised learning opportunities while also making the teaching load manageable. This starts with defining what we want to offer in terms of small-scale education. We are setting a minimum number of students for a course to take place. These revisions should reduce staff workload, in turn allowing the created space to be used for investing in education. In concrete terms, this will allow us to free up budget and capacity to offer the BA2 Internship and BA3 Internship courses internally. To this effect, we recognise, budget for, and staff Field Schools, alongside laboratory and museum internships, and we increase the time allocated for managing tasks of the Field Research and Education Centre (FREC).

Research

How research time is spent is the individual choice of academic staff, and support must be available to anyone who wishes to apply for research funding. At the same time, external funding is important for the Faculty budget, as is targeted investment in promising proposals. We seek to strike a balance between self-determination and strategic action in this regard.



Within Leiden University, the Faculty of Archaeology is very successful in terms of the relative number of successful ERC and NWO grant applications. This represents a significant opportunity, provided there is an infrastructure in place in which all potentially innovative research plans receive sufficient support. In recent years, we have improved the research support line, including the Graduate School (for PhD candidates), the Research Support Office and the Vice–Dean for Research. Applicants can receive support from the Research Support Office in the process of writing, budgeting and presenting applications, as well as through peer review and training. In coming years, we will further invest in training, guiding, and supporting staff in their research ambitions. One example of this is our encouragement to focus on team science. As in previous years, we are making budget available, where possible, to stimulate collaborative research initiatives.

Actions

- Develop a time allocation model along the lines of the stated strategic priorities and monitor this model for effectiveness between 2026 and 2028.
- Develop measures to enable workload reduction, thereby enabling curriculum innovations, related to the bachelor’s curriculum, to be implemented for the 2026–2027 academic year.
- Develop measures to enable workload reduction, thereby enabling curriculum innovations, related to the master’s curriculum, to be implemented for the 2027–2028 academic year.
- Identify a set of priorities for further investing in research support, and create budget to stimulate collaborative research initiatives, both to take place in 2027.

ii. Pioneering interdisciplinary education and research

Education

Our teaching programmes still harbour learning outcomes that were defined when student cohort numbers were much lower. Combined with this, the abolition of the bachelor’s specialisations requires a reconsideration of the bachelor’s programme to achieve a comprehensive and integrated curriculum that offers students a well–rounded training in science–based methods, area–based or comparative archaeological knowledge, and heritage dynamics. This curriculum also needs to provide for rigorous training in the basic skills of academic research to a level that goes beyond the current state, to also allow for an optimal connection between the bachelor’s and master’s programmes.

We will restructure our teaching programmes along three definitions:

- The bachelor's in Archaeology is a broad introduction to the theories, methods & techniques of archaeology in the contemporary world.
- The master's in Archaeology is an advanced one-year programme during which students choose an approach to a heritage-related, regional or science-based problem, resulting in a final product demonstrating student independence, rigour, and creativity.
- The research master's in Archaeology is a competitive two-year preparation for students to engage with ongoing Faculty research – final products can be self-designed new insights or contributions to ongoing research projects and show evidence of specialisation within the discipline.

This restructuring was initiated for the bachelor's and master's programmes in 2024 and 2025 and will be continued into 2026 and 2027, also following up on the recommendation of an NVAO assessment panel review during late 2025. This will result in thoroughly renewed bachelor's and master's programmes that can take effect for the 2027–2028 academic year. The new programmes will offer clarity on what students can expect and should improve student progression and development. The changes should also allow staff to combine their current research more closely with teaching. We will structurally invest in the practical courses of the bachelor's programme to enable Faculty staff to sustainably organise opportunities for practical experience across the full breadth of Faculty data collecting, including site-based fieldwork, laboratory-based working with materials, and heritage and museum-based methodologies.



Our master's programme will be restructured to offer students an optimised set of combinations consisting of rigorous science-based methodologies, and in-depth regional archaeological datasets, together with a selection of archaeological and heritage approaches. The scheduling will be adjusted to create a more concentrated block of time to conduct thesis research.

A current challenge is how to incentivise and support teaching staff towards further professional development of teaching methods and how to suitably distribute this across junior, mid-career, and senior staff. We regard innovation in teaching as something to be recognised and stimulated and will therefore develop and implement a Faculty Academia-in-Motion matrix to promote and recognise teaching innovation across all postholders, from assistant to full professors. Members of staff who actively invest in teaching innovation should be recognised for this in their career development. Current Faculty success in the Leiden Teacher's Academy is notable, and this in-house expertise will be involved more closely in stimulating innovations with members of staff.

Research

Faculty research is marked by a broad spread of specialisations along a triad of the humanities, and natural and social sciences. In the past, various definitions were put forward of what defines archaeology at Leiden, also in comparison to institutes elsewhere. This resulted in only partial success, marked by overly abstract key concepts to harness our diversity in research, complicating discussions on how and where to strategically reinforce research strengths. In 2024, the external assessment panel on research suggested improving our research profile, by making strategic choices on internal and external collaborations that lead to interdisciplinary research and developing further guidelines for future hiring. This challenge needs a new approach, preferably one that is co-created with the entire academic staff and departing from the view of three interlinked foci: in depth-area approaches in a global context, rigorous scientific methodologies, and innovative heritage-based approaches.

How we carry out our research is also facing change, requiring more attention to be paid to knowledge utilisation, impact and various forms of compliance. While some academic staff members are already engaging with these topics, they still need to be better embedded within our daily practice. The research topics that our staff explore are diverse, yet they all have potential for impact and value both for science and society. Through training and policy, we aim to stimulate our staff to expressly consider knowledge utilisation and develop processes to monitor and measure the impact of our work. Through regular 'Research Days' we plan to better prepare our staff to engage with Open Science, data management, knowledge security and other changes to the research landscape.

The Faculty has significant physical collections and digital datasets, requiring assessment, long-term curation and, possibly also, a deselection policy. The challenge is how to increase staff engagement with these new requirements, and to optimise the handling of these collections to boost research output. The Faculty's data management policy, and the upcoming collections management policy are prepared in collaboration with various stakeholders in the Faculty and in the research management line (e.g., Data Management Officer, Privacy Officer, Legal Affairs). Both policies outline how, and why, research data and materials should be inventoried, stored, and eventually made available to others, following legal frameworks and FAIR and CARE policies. Once finalised, both policies will be brought to life through information sessions and individualised coaching, while compliance will be assessed during yearly GROW meetings.

Interdisciplinary efforts in education and research are also central to the University's contributions to society as shown, for example, through the core domain of Humans in the World. We will further strengthen our interdisciplinary positioning by organising a round table to identify opportunities within the Bio Science Campus.

Actions

- Develop a comprehensive bachelor's programme redesign, to be implemented for the 2027-2028 academic year.
- Develop a comprehensive master's programme redesign, to be implemented for the 2027-2028 academic year.
- Develop a targeted research master's programme redesign, to be implemented for the 2027-2028 academic year.
- Develop and implement a FAiM teaching framework, to take effect in 2027.
- Design a roadmap to a co-created Faculty research identity, identifying current strengths and weaknesses and future opportunities, resulting in a consensus document in the second half of 2027.
- Re-design Faculty Research Days, targeting more interactive formats to discuss current staff research and to emphasise research best practices, to result in annual cycles of meetings by the 2026-2027 academic year.
- Optimize management and access to physical collections and digital datasets
- Explore possibilities to increase interfaculty collaborations in education and research and, specifically, organise a Bio Science Campus round table, featuring interested academic and commercial partners, to take place in the 2027-2028 academic year.

iii. Future-proof student development

Research emphasis in archaeology is shaped by changes in society. The challenge is to make this clear through our teaching. This runs from participatory archaeology in communities in the Netherlands and abroad, to thinking about societal inequality, human-environmental relations, and

improving fundamental understandings of what it means to be human. At the level of the English-taught master's programme, this should allow for some teaching to be done in Dutch, in light of student preparation for professional employment in the Netherlands, such as, for example, on the subjects of Bronze and Iron Age in the Netherlands.

Our bachelor's and master's programmes offer a wide range of learning opportunities to acquire knowledge on materials and methods, and develop critical skills on matters such as legislation, identity and ethics. All this should benefit students in their preparation for the next steps after graduating but the challenge is how to translate the importance of having such knowledge and critical skills into their future societal roles as citizens. This requires more structured integration of the University's academic skills and making the role of archaeology and heritage in society more explicit. Alongside this, our research master's programme prepares students for an academic research trajectory. Academic skills will be integrated in a balanced way across the individual courses of the programme, using the Skill'ed platform that was awarded Leiden-Grassfields funding in December 2025. Skill'ed will support students and offer a toolkit for teaching staff, as well as training courses and workshops for the effective implementation of skills in individual courses.

Our classroom is a global classroom, and, despite the current national challenges, we see this as a continuing key aspect of our Faculty's teaching. Our scope for teaching on human diversity in the past is local in focus and global in ambition, as delivered by our highly international staff, and this is further strengthened by comparably diverse student cohorts. The challenges this creates necessitate a teaching staff that is both equipped to address these with an ample teaching toolkit and interested in improving teaching skills. This global focus also means that we motivate our students to undertake challenging archaeological and heritage-based internships at a range of locations around the globe.

We will develop sets of teaching best practices, initially pooled from the staff and possibly complemented with expertise from the wider University. Investing in the further development of an inclusive teaching portfolio will be part of the GROW cycle. Beyond their Basic Teaching Qualification (BKO), staff members will also be encouraged to consider Senior Teaching Qualification (SKO) certificates. Some of the regular Education Days will be a platform for discussions on teaching innovations, for example, led by Faculty members of the Leiden Teaching Academy.

We offer our students an inclusive learning experience. Therefore, where possible, we offer help to students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities. The relative high number of such students and the range of these difficulties and disabilities is a challenge to staff members who aim to provide an optimal learning experience. At the same time, expanding the support

structures for both students and staff is, at present, equally difficult. In this regard, clear communication on our minimal standard of support that we can offer will be developed during the period of this Strategic Plan. As part of this Strategic Plan, the Board will conduct a scoping study of what sustainable support for such students can and must look like now and in the future. This will at least entail more training and support for teachers to include these matters in the classroom and on fieldwork. We will establish a framework on what equitable accessibility opportunities are available to prospective students at our Faculty. Such a framework will offer a realistic reflection of later professional trajectories. In line with this, we will improve staff awareness of, and ability to work effectively with, all students.

Actions

- Emphasize social relevance and transferable skills of the bachelor's and master's programmes, to be implemented for the 2027–2028 academic year (as part of the bachelor's and master's programme redesign, set up consultations with societal partners to optimise labour market preparation).
- Promote the global classroom by, among other things, reformatting the Education Days so that they consist of a series of smaller-scale single-topic lunch meetings, to enable intervision and pool teaching best practices (to be set up for 2027).
- Review existing policy on helping students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities, to be implemented for the 2027–2028 academic year.



iv. A healthy, engaged, and learning community

The Faculty will continue the path it has chosen to further improve its organisational culture. Considerable efforts have already been made to improve well-being and further raise the professional standards of our community, particularly regarding workload, accountability, and expectations regarding leadership. We have developed a Faculty Code of Conduct for fieldwork and implemented mandatory pre-departure meetings. We have also established an external Career Committee, along with a Faculty professional development policy. Other building blocks, such as creating a sabbatical policy, updating our Parameter Model and investing in the leadership development of staff members with management responsibilities, offer further future guidance. For appointments to administrative roles in the Faculty Board or as department head, and for appointments to full professor, we are implementing a mandatory anonymised 360-degree feedback tool that will allow community members to reflect on the qualities of the internal candidate. When senior administrators or Full Professors are recruited from outside the Faculty, an assessment is part of the recruitment process. Such an assessment will be focused on all requirements outlined in the job description, going beyond academic qualifications, to also include expectations regarding professional conduct, leadership, and accountability in a professional organization.

A healthy work environment is essential for enjoyable work in education, research, organisation, and management. We strive to ensure sufficient leave is taken annually to properly recover. HR makes concrete agreements with employees and their managers if this proves to be insufficient and a backlog of leave accumulates. Furthermore, we have developed new guidelines for GROW meetings, focusing on performance, well-being, and professional development needs and to continue discussing these topics throughout the year. Managers and employees work together to achieve these ambitions, supported by HR.

We have launched a professionally guided culture change process aimed at helping us process past negative experiences and jointly determine the culture we want to create. Crucially, this culture must be supported by the entire community, and staff members must be able to confidently address each other, come to agreements, and speak up when necessary. These are the goals of the process, and success will be measured accordingly. This process will continue until 2026. We will incorporate the outcomes of the process into our daily work.

The Faculty Board fully endorses the option of working from home, when and where this is possible given the employee's tasks and responsibilities. However, a shared culture also involves a shared presence in the office, as

occasional conversations within informal settings significantly shape the formal organisational culture.

Facilitating suitable office spaces, laboratories, meeting rooms, studying spaces and working facilities remains key. We are eager to engage with the community to explore what is needed to achieve this and will also enlist the assistance of the Real Estate department. Sharing office space for employees will remain the norm in the coming years. To reinforce our ambition, we are developing a Faculty Common Room during this planning period. Other options include exploring ways to facilitate greater intermingling between employees from different departments, creating more open spaces, and increasing the focus on and attendance at joint activities. Given shrinking university housing budgets and changing housing standards, increased attendance also helps our Faculty maintain the rich infrastructure of laboratories, material working rooms, offices, and lecture halls necessary for an efficient and pleasant teaching and research environment.

Good communication is crucial for our community. We will explore ways to meet more frequently, increase awareness of policy and decision-making, and better incorporate community input, in addition to our usual face-to-face communication and the use of diverse communication tools. For example, we will explore a broader range of social events, with the aim of appealing to and inviting different segments of the Faculty community. We will set up a yearly community events calendar and explore ways to create a central teaching portal. In our diverse community we are committed to an inclusive language policy for everyone, including using listening language (a form of multilingualism), the translation of Faculty (policy) documents and the allocation of budget for English and Dutch language courses. In this way, we are giving concrete expression to Leiden's language policy at the Faculty level.

In recent years, we have achieved positive financial results and, as a result, for the first time established a financial reserve of over 5%. The Faculty is therefore financially sound, and it is crucial that we maintain this result, given the above-mentioned increased risks of substantial shifts in University budgeting. Government contributions have not kept pace with the sizeable growth in student numbers over many years now. One consequence of this is increasing workload for staff. If further budgetary cuts are made to higher education, it will be a challenge to remain financially healthy, while at the same time reducing workload. Involving teaching staff in less time-consuming teaching programmes, combined with a more realistic Parameter Model, will help the Faculty to further control personnel costs and establish a transparent and manageable workload.

Given the uncertain context of higher education, we will aim to establish a stable intake of 120 students in the bachelor's programme and a combined 120 students in the master's and research master's programmes. This

number is based on the required financial income in general and the number of specialisations in the master's programme in particular. Our recruitment efforts will also be adjusted accordingly, if necessary, although it must also be recognised that we only have limited control over student cohort size. We are further improving educational efficiency, partly by streamlining thesis procedures and expanding internship opportunities.

Success in research grant applications is also crucial to healthy finances. The annual Faculty target of two to three large grants (measured over several years) remains in place. The expected implementation will be coordinated with the Faculty Research Support Office and the Department Chairs. At the same time, we are seeing shrinking NWO budgets, combined with shifts in funding for research excellence in Horizon 2028-2034 in which the chances of successful grant applications are steadily declining. To remain a research-intensive Faculty, attracting externally funded research projects will be a high priority in the coming years, and budget will be made available for this purpose.

The average time to complete a PhD degree is more than the standard of four years, which weighs heavy on PhD students and is a liability to the Faculty financial situation. The Graduate School is focusing on supervisor training and more regular check-ins with PhD to improve timely submission of PhD theses.

Actions

- Further improve the organisational culture of the Faculty and continue the plan of action to create a healthy working environment (2026-2028).
- Further implement the culture change trajectory, to conclude at the start of the 2026-2027 academic year and identify follow-up opportunities.
- Create a flexible working culture that combines working from home with a strong on-campus presence, strengthening collaboration, informal interaction, and effective use of our shared facilities (2026-2028).
- Foster an engaged and inclusive Faculty community through clear communication, connection, and accessible information about policy and decision-making in 2026-2027 (such as creating a common room that should be operational in 2027).
- Aim to establish a stable intake of 120 students in the bachelor's and a combined 120 students in the master's and research master's programmes (2026-2028).
- Further improve educational efficiency in 2026.
- Focus on continuing to be a research-intensive Faculty by securing externally funded projects and achieving two to three major grants annually between 2026-2028, while supporting timely PhD graduations.

v. *More value through strategic collaboration*

We want to promote collaboration with other academic disciplines and organisational units within Leiden University. This can be achieved in many ways, for example by providing teaching in each other's educational programmes, by developing joint research initiatives, or by combining administrative processes across Faculties.

Due to the interdisciplinary nature of archaeology, we can serve as a bridge across Faculty boundaries. By defining our profile and increasing our interdependencies within and beyond Leiden, we become more resilient, less vulnerable, and less dependent on success in just one scientific field. During the period of this Strategic Plan, we will investigate and explore the form and feasibility of such interdisciplinary collaborations and initiate conversations on this topic at an administrative level.

We have a wide and varied network of collaborations in the Netherlands and abroad, yet many of these connections are tied to individual members of staff. The challenge is that such collaborations, while in place and productive, tend to lack Faculty oversight. This creates a risk of underutilisation or gaps in opportunities of staff to work together across boundaries and for students to gain study and research experience beyond the confines of the Faculty. Professors by Special Appointment at our Faculty already have ties to the Cultural Heritage Agency (RCE) and the National Museum of Antiquities (RMO). In addition, we will seek new opportunities to build bridges with other stakeholders through similar special appointments. We will seek closer ties to Campus The Hague, principally through the design of a minor (work begun in 2025) that is aimed at public engagement with archaeological heritage questions in The Hague in particular and in the Netherlands more broadly. Our role in the Leiden-Delft-Erasmus Programme on Cultural Heritage will be tied into this connection to Campus The Hague.

A central avenue for strategic collaboration is formed by our alumni network. Archaeology alumni are spread across the globe and form a strong backbone to the governmental heritage and the commercial archaeology fields in the Netherlands. The Faculty needs to safeguard its role in the professional and academic Dutch fields of archaeology, currently challenged by shifts in archaeology programmes across the Netherlands and the threat of lacking expertise in key research topics. To make effective use of the expertise of our alumni, we will reposition the Alumni Society (ALFA) and the Faculty's Advisory Board to allow for a more central advisory role towards the Faculty on matters of strategic collaboration within the Netherlands. In concrete terms, this will include extending invitations to alumni and setting up an annual Faculty event for ALFA.

Beyond the Netherlands, European contexts should be connected more directly to Leiden by, for example, linking more actively into the European alliance networks such as the Cultural Heritage Focus Area of UNA-Europa, and drawing international audiences to Leiden for large conferences. To this end, we will bring around 4,000 professional archaeologists and heritage specialists from Europe and beyond to Leiden for the 2027 Annual Meeting of the European Archaeology Association – the University’s largest conference in its history.

Based on the community-defined research themes, an international collaboration policy will be developed to direct and streamline formal institutional agreements. This should function alongside and be complementary to all international collaborations that individual members of staff maintain. Such a policy could, for example, link preferred institutional partners to possibilities for student exchange or be centred around locations where students can participate in internships abroad.

In conjunction with Research School ARCHON, Faculty Advisory Council (*‘Raad van Advies’*) and ALFA, professional and governmental partners and the academic field, including Saxion University of Applied Sciences, the University of Amsterdam, the Vrije Universiteit Amsterdam and the University of Groningen, will be invited to participate in annual round tables on topics of shared concern such as, for example, assessing possible expertise or skill gaps among archaeology graduates; the inventorying of student internship possibilities, or a charting of strategic needs and desires for the combined whole of archaeology programmes in the Netherlands.

Actions

- Explore further ways of expanding interfaculty collaborations based on key research themes, to result in a set of concrete possibilities by 2028.
- To expand and institutionalise our collaborative network in the Netherlands, during the second half of 2027.
- Reposition the Faculty more closely to the ALFA Alumni Association and consider ways of increasing their visibility and input in strategic collaboration, to be completed for the start of the 2026–2027 academic year.
- Position Leiden as a leading European hub for archaeology and cultural heritage by strengthening international networks and hosting a major international conference in 2027.
- Develop guidelines and priorities for the Faculty’s international institutional collaborations, to connect with the Faculty research identity, during the second half of 2027.
- Increase collaboration with professional and governmental partners, to be initiated during the Annual Meeting of the EAA in 2027.

vi. Ample scope for talent and development

The Faculty embraces the new approach to Recognition and Rewards. We have taken initial steps in this direction in our Faculty professional development policy. In the coming years, we will be working on Faculty-specific adjustments to UFO profiles. The aim here is to assess academic staff on broader criteria than research alone. Performance in the areas of teaching, team science, leadership and social impact will also be considered. Although meeting research requirements remains the basis for our academic staff, exceeding the set requirements in research alone is no longer the basis for career development and promotion. We are looking for various combinations of good performance in the areas mentioned that make promotion possible. We will formulate how to implement this in a measurable and transparent way in the coming academic year.

A crucial element is to develop incentives to achieve collective responsibility of our teaching programmes, across junior, mid-career, and senior members of staff, within frameworks set by the Education Director and the Vice-Dean of Education. This will also allow for concrete pathways to career development, where possible, and following Faculty Academia-in-Motion guidelines.



PhD candidates with an appointment, scholarship PhD candidates and postdoctoral researchers are given the opportunity to develop their teaching skills, for example by acquiring the full BKO, provided that the conditions of their research project or scholarship allow this. Under the supervision of a recognised examiner, their teaching is jointly prepared, attended, and evaluated. Offering this teaching experience increases the career opportunities following the end of their fixed-term appointment. We will work more closely with ALFA and the broader Dutch archaeological community to further enrich our labour market orientation for young scholars, including both academic and non-academic career paths.

Where there is room for career development, promotion and career opportunities within the Faculty of Archaeology are determined by our strategic personnel planning, which is based on the principle of staffing levels. How we implement this is determined in consultation with department chairs in our annual personnel scans, based on the Faculty's career policy. When department chairs propose promotions to Associate Professor or the Dean proposes a promotion to Full Professor by means of an abbreviated procedure, the Faculty's external Career Committee is always consulted for advice. The external Career Committee assesses candidates based on our career policy, in which the Faculty's approach to recognition and rewards will be given greater weight.

Administrative and support staff within FdA are a valued and integral part of the successes we achieve. The support they provide is of a high standard. To enable them to continue doing so, we will continue to allocate budget for their training and development. We want to focus more attention on the development of career paths, both within the Faculty, across the University, and beyond. Together with the Faculty Board, they will be given the opportunity to prioritise the range of university-wide policy initiatives and make clear choices that we will follow up on and implement at Faculty level.

Actions

- Further develop and implement a Professional Development policy ('Recognition and Rewards'), to be adopted in 2026.
- Develop and implement measurable and transparent promotion criteria that enable career progression based on diverse combinations of strong performance, rather than excellence in research alone.
- Increase teaching opportunities for PhD candidates and postdoctoral researchers and develop guidelines on how to ensure adequate balance with their primary task of research. To be adopted in 2027 or 2028.
- Further develop and implement our strategic personnel planning in 2026-2028.
- Increase the attention paid to career development for support staff, to be explored in 2026 and 2027.

3 Actions related to ongoing LEI development themes

i. Digitalisation

We recognise that education and research are digital practices and that digital skillsets are increasingly impactful in society and therefore also for our students' preparation for the labour market. The fast-growing impact of Generative Artificial Intelligence (GAI) is necessitating rapid adjustments in our ways of teaching and research. Students now regularly employ tools such as ChatGPT, yet uptake among staff is still sporadic, leaving the technological opportunities insufficiently addressed in courses.

Initial University policy on the use of GAI was established in 2025, and we will follow such guidance, adjusting it to the Faculty's needs where suitable. We will explore the opportunities offered by GAI in education and research and the need to train staff members in its productive use. At the same time, we are mindful of the substantial challenges and risks that GAI presents, such



as concerns about academic integrity, data privacy as well as its significant environmental footprint. We must increase student and teaching staff awareness of the opportunities and risks of GAI is needed to responsibly adopt these digital innovations in our education.

Active learning is an important component of our education, both in the practical modules of the bachelor's programme and in master's seminars. It is supported by digital teaching tools, but further efforts are needed to raise awareness among teaching staff.

We continue to support forms of blended learning in our bachelor's and master's programmes and will train the teaching staff in adopting uniform ways of using the University's LMS (Brightspace) as well as providing encouragement to explore forms of combining online and in-person knowledge transfer to students, for example, by showcasing peer-to-peer best practices at the Faculty and by consulting with LLInC and the Leiden Teacher's Academy.

There is a University-wide transition underway to change the process of exams from a range of methods to only taking place online via ANS, apart from exams for a specific number of practicals. Our Faculty spearheaded this transition in 2020. Hardly any exams are currently still paper-based. We will support staff in making the transition to designing, marking, evaluating and generating feedback on exams through ANS with the assistance of the Teacher Support Desk.

Actions

- Set up a GAI task force, to work with LLInC, the Education Committee, and the Board of Examiners, as well as student representatives, to carry out a SWOT analysis and consider ways of increasing awareness and uptake among teaching staff. To be concluded by the end of 2026.
- Promote active learning in education using digital tools in 2027-2028.
- Continue support forms of blended learning in our bachelor's and master's programmes in 2027-2028.
- Further develop teacher support for the innovative use of ANS, to result in a series of webinars in 2027.

ii. Sustainability

The Faculty emphasises the importance of making progress in the field of sustainability, with a focus on both national and European policy frameworks, such as the EU Climate Agreement and Dutch climate policy. Although steps have already been taken, such as efforts in sustainable energy use (lowering the heating, renovating the roof, replacing cooling equipment, etc.), improvements in catering (more and better vegetarian/vegan options,

including at the End of Year Event, and a comprehensive allergen menu) and waste separation, there is still room for growth.

For new initiatives, we want to work more closely with the Faculty Green Team and help increase their visibility, so that staff and students have a place to discuss topics related to sustainability. In the coming years, we will focus on more circular ICT and sustainable travel within research and education, in line with the University's framework. We will also look at how conference participation and associated travel behaviour can be brought more into line with the ambitions of the Leiden University Green Office. We will discuss with the teaching staff how sustainability themes and archaeology can be further integrated into existing courses and projects. The proposal is to expand the Green Team's budget and encourage more bottom-up initiatives from the community, so that sustainability plays a more prominent role in the further development of the Faculty.

In the coming years, we will further discuss integrating the LEAF programme (Laboratory Efficiency Assessment Framework) into the laboratories. LEAF aims to make laboratories more sustainable in a phased, measurable and structural manner and to promote a culture of sustainable practice. We are working towards international accreditation (bronze, silver, gold) based on concrete, achievable sustainability measures. The ambition is to obtain the bronze certificate and to further roll out best practices within the Faculty. LEAF will also collaborate with other faculties to share knowledge and work together to become more sustainable.



Actions

- Increase staff and student awareness surrounding Leiden University's ambitions on sustainability, by means of bottom-up initiatives, to be developed between 2026 and 2028.
- Aim to achieve bronze status in relation to LEAF accreditation in the coming years.

iii. Diversity and inclusion

The Faculty Diversity Committee has developed a comprehensive 2026–2028 Workplan to promote Diversity, Equity, Accessibility, and Inclusion across our community, which has been adopted by the Faculty Board. The workplan contains five main objectives and a detailed action plan for the 2026–2028 period. These are included in the implementation plan accompanying the Faculty Strategic Plan.

We continue to foster an environment where all students and staff are supported in developing their talents. Key objectives include enhancing mentorship, promoting diverse recruitment (amongst others by making the Implicit Bias Training mandatory for more members on a selection committee and potentially for the entire staff), promoting a diverse opinion climate and strengthen our onboarding processes to discuss what social safety means, what we do to increase it and to foster belonging.

We aim to develop inclusive curricula that support students with disabilities and students from all backgrounds and gender orientations. We aim to translate this inclusivity also beyond the curricula into the common spaces and norms of the student community, through continued focus on wellbeing and social safety. Furthermore, the Faculty emphasises cultivating a safe working environment through transparent hiring and promotion practices. We will maintain a strong focus on gender equality in the composition of the academic staff, with particular attention to increasing the number of women in senior academic and high-level administrative and governance positions, including both regular and endowed professorships. We will also continue the obligatory social safety training, and predeparture meetings where we discuss issues including the updated Code of Conduct for fieldwork. Our plan also prioritises inclusive research, encouraging diverse grant applicants.

We will organise regular meetings between the Faculty Diversity Committee and the Faculty Board. We support the committee by appointing an HR staff member with a designated task as Diversity Coordinator. Budget allocations support these initiatives, including funding for a lecture series, continuing facility updates where and when needed and inclusive events. Overall, the workplan lays out strategic steps to further embed DEAI principles into the Faculty's culture in the long term.

Actions

- Implement the actions included in the Diversity Committee Workplan 2026–2028 with five main objectives: 1. Enhance mentorship, inclusivity, and safety, 2. Inclusive education and representation, 3. Safe working environment, 4. Ethical and inclusive research, and 5. An accessible and inclusive learning and working environment.



