

**Consultations on the Collective Labour
Agreement for Dutch Universities (CAO-NU)**

FNV

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Agreement

**Collective Labour Agreement for Dutch
Universities
1 July 2025 to 30 June 2026**

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On 25 June 2025, the Universities of the Netherlands (UNL), acting on behalf of the universities, and the employee organisations FNV, FBZ, CNV and AOb (“the parties”), made the following general agreements on changes to the employment conditions for Dutch Universities.

On 23 July 2025 parties determined that this negotiation result is converted into a final agreement

1. Term and remuneration

Salary and term

The term of the new collective labour agreement is from 1 July 2025 to 30 June 2026. On 1 July 2025, the salaries of university employees who are employed by a Dutch university will receive a general increase of 2.0%. Thereafter, from 1 July 2025, all amounts in the salary table (table 4.1 of Appendix A) will be structurally increased by €100. The pay rise and increase in the salary scale will be paid no later than October 2025. This makes the average structural wage increase in this collective labour agreement 4.2%. In addition, university staff¹ employed by a Dutch university on 1 July 2025 will receive a one-off payment in October 2025. Based on full-time employment, this one-off payment will be €350 gross.

Parties to the collective labour agreement will also establish an Employability Fund with the aim of supporting university employees in their professional development and career mobility in times of political austerity, major legislative changes and related reorganisations. The content and conditions of this Fund are detailed below at section 3.

Equal pay for women and men

For the parties to the collective labour agreement, equal pay between women and men for equal or equivalent work is an important and shared principle. The parties consider it essential that everyone within the university community is fairly rewarded, regardless of gender. In recent years, awareness of this issue has been raised and collective bargaining parties have worked to reduce the gender pay gap.

The parties continue to work together for further improvement. In anticipation of the European Directive on Remuneration Transparency, the parties to the collective labour agreement are actively working to clarify and monitor pay ratios and differences within our institutions. Transparency, awareness and structural improvements are thereby at the heart of our approach. If there are differences, areas for improvement will be addressed at each institution. Progress on this will be discussed in the Trade Union and Employer Consultation (OVW) with the intention of arriving at concrete measures by the end of the 2026 calendar year.

2. General

The university sector is under increasing pressure. Cabinet policies have led to cuts that universities are now faced with. This is leading to reorganisations in several places and is forcing universities to make difficult choices. This has implications for employees. Universities obviously want to remain an attractive employer. At the same time, the parties to the collective labour agreement are committed to financial security for employees. The parties remain jointly committed to important issues such as employee development, social safety and work pressure.

The above text is added to the preamble of this collective labour agreement.

¹ With the exception of claimants, on-call workers, trainees, staff on unpaid leave and staff on the minimum wage or minimum youth wage (including staff with an occupational disability who are employed under the Participation Act). Staff on youth salary scales will receive the one-off payment in proportion to their scale amount. For staff receiving a benefit under the Young Disabled Persons Disability Benefits Act (Wajong), the employer will be able to decide not to make the one-off payment if this is in the best interests of the staff member in question.

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CNV

AOB

FBZ

UNL

3. Sustainable employability and flexibility

Fund for promoting employability university employees

This collective agreement includes agreements on a *Fund for promoting employability of university employees*. Sustainable employability and mobility have long been important topics in the collective agreement. Development also plays a major role in Recognition and Rewards.

To remain part of the labour market for a long time and with high job satisfaction, it is very important that employees continue to have the right knowledge and skills.

Cuts and legislative changes will see jobs change and disappear at universities in the coming years, with it already clear that compulsory redundancies cannot be ruled out. The parties to the collective labour agreement consider it important that employees remain employable, both within their own organisation and outside. Training and development play an important role in workers' employability in the labour market. Therefore, as part of this collective agreement, it is agreed to use a one-off total of €45 million from the available resources to set up a fund for each university.

With the whole sector under pressure, workers will also increasingly have to look to other jobs and sectors. This may involve translating and adapting their knowledge and skills to what is needed in other jobs and sectors, so-called transferable skills. Because the (financial) situation at each university is different, spending this Employability Fund requires customisation and will therefore be left to local consultation (LO).

Agreement

1. Objective:

The Employability Fund aims to support university employees in their professional development and career mobility in times of budget cuts and reorganisation. The fund will temporarily provide additional financial resources to universities to help and guide employees to develop sustainably and take advantage of new opportunities within or outside academia, following article 9.14. The goals are:

- Development: employees can continue to develop and (re)train, making them better prepared for changes in academia and more flexible in the labour market. And with the specific aim of promoting employability where it may be under pressure;
- Career mobility: employees can receive support/career guidance to find new opportunities and job-to-job counselling within or outside the academic sector, especially for those where job survival is under pressure. With a specific focus on support for transition to other sectors or positions within or outside academia (including orientation and transferable skills).

2. Funding

Universities will receive guidance from the parties to the collective labour agreement on how to determine the amount for their institution.

3. Implementation and management

- a. This fund is managed at university level, under the direction of the management team of HR;
- b. Resources from this fund will be deployed in the years 2025 to 2028;
- c. The universities (HR), in consultation with the unions in the local consultative bodies, will make a multi-year spending plan appropriate to the objectives of the fund. This plan can be updated annually, in view of possible subsequent reorganisations. The initial plan will be agreed in the local consultative bodies before the end of the collective labour agreement's term and then any annual adjustments will also be agreed in the local consultative bodies;
- d. The spending plan will include how spending choices are arrived at and evaluated;
- e. A guide for developing these spending plans is being created to support universities. It will be discussed in the Trade Union and Employer Consultation;
- f. Should the funds not be spent by the end of 2028, a plan will be submitted in the local consultative bodies to spend the remaining portion. This should be aligned with the rationale and objectives of the fund.

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4. Monitoring and reporting

- a. An annual report will be prepared at each university on the use and, where possible, the results of the fund. This report will be discussed in the local consultative bodies to gain insight into its effectiveness and to be able to make suggestions for improvement;
- b. Successes and good practices are shared with all universities to strengthen academic career development.

Furthermore, in the context of improving sustainable employability and flexibility, the parties agree the following:

- a. The text of Article 9.10(3) is amended to read: The period of three months mentioned in the first section commences on the first day of the month following the month in which the employee is informed of their potential dismissal in writing. This notification is not sent until the Reorganisation Plan has been decided on;
In special circumstances and if financial resources are available, the dismissal protection period for specific target groups may be delayed by up to two months, for example in those cases where the residence permit expires on dismissal. The provision on internal vacancy filling from Article 9.13 shall apply."
- b. A new provision to Article 2.3: "When a proposed reorganisation has been notified in the local consultation in accordance with Article 9.2, it may be agreed in the local consultation that an employee within the scope of the reorganisation may be employed for a maximum of two years, or an expiring fixed-term employment contract may be extended a maximum of twice for a year (in deviation from the other paragraphs of Article 2.3). This provision is valid until 30 June 2028. The parties have until 30 June 2028 to extend the agreement."
- c. The agreement in article 6.12a of the collective labour agreement on Customised long-term employability agreements in the context of the RVU is extended for a period of 3 years until 31 December 2028. At present, there is insufficient clarity on the conditions under which this scheme will be extended nationwide. Once this clarity is in place, the parties will discuss whether the current provision should be adjusted to these national conditions in the interim.

4. Social safety and workloads

The parties to the collective agreement want to take further steps to improve social safety and workloads, because university staff should be able to work in safe and healthy conditions. In the previous collective labour agreement, the parties agreed on several measures that deal with the complaint and reporting structure. In this collective labour agreement, collective bargaining parties want to take the next step and therefore agree the following:

a. Enhancing social safety

In previous collective agreements, the parties have mainly focused on developing and organising a good complaint and reporting structure at universities. In this collective labour agreement, the parties want to zoom in more on the content and causes of the issues. Hierarchy in the organisation, dependency relationships and the role and qualities of managers play an important role in creating a socially safe environment.

The parties therefore agree to conduct a joint analysis of these concerns, with the KNAW report by Prof. N. Ellemers: *Social safety in Dutch science (from paper to practice)* and follow-up studies as a basis.

In this analysis, we look at universities along the lines of the Ellemers report (structure, culture, system). What fuels social insecurity? What does this mean for the people functioning within it and what adjustments can be made to this?

The results of this analysis will be discussed at institution level in the local consultations with the aim of improving the working environment. A particular focus here is on selection procedures and executive training. In addition, the outcomes will feed into the formulation of institutions' social safety policies.

Consultations on the Collective Labour Agreement for Dutch Universities (CAO-NU)

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CNV

AOB

FBZ

UNL

In doing so, the parties are exploring the possibility of jointly submitting a grant application, during the term of the collective labour agreement, under "The Social Safety in Higher Education and Science Programme (<https://programmasocialeveiligheid.nl/over-het-programma/>)". The parties are thinking of developing materials and training, for example a uniform e-learning course that includes basic social safety skills for all employers and employees in the sector. Of note here is that leadership training, and other social safety programmes that are already underway or in development, can tie in with this."

b. **Work pressure:**

Work pressure is one of the priorities of the parties to the collective labour agreement. However, it is also a stubborn issue that has long persisted within the sector and lacks a straightforward solution. Commitment, attention and persistence are therefore required to achieve improvements on this issue. The parties therefore agree the following in the context of preventing and controlling work pressure: one of the challenges for the sector but certainly also an opportunity is the use of AI in work processes at universities. The parties therefore want to explore in a study how employees can be properly equipped to work with AI so that all employees have the opportunity to make use of new techniques and develop these skills;

c. In appendix C.10:

- to the bullet 'policy aimed at controlling work pressure', the following phrase has been added to 'aimed at tackling work pressure': 'such as drawing up, implementing and periodically evaluating a concrete action plan aimed at identifying, preventing and reducing work pressure. Plans will be based on analysis of local data on workload;
- will be added as subject 'the individual choices model of employment conditions';
- the bullet 'promote women in senior positions' is replaced by 'Concrete measures to enhance diversity and inclusion, with specific attention given to the progression towards senior positions';

d. The parties agree that the joint working group to the collective labour agreement study the 'Improvement of use of holiday entitlements and management of leave accumulation' (Annex E.5) will examine whether it is possible to incorporate a textual adjustment to Article 4.7 of the agreement in the drafting committee;

e. To section E, study and policy agreements, will be added: To properly determine the real task load, the sector would benefit from good conversations about the hours standardisation for teaching duties. These talks are held at faculty level. The parties emphasise that agreements on hours standardisation are agreed in the decentralised co-determination. This makes them public for unions, among others. If necessary, in the absence of transparency, this can be escalated to university governance;

f. Added to Article 6.9, paragraph 3 as sub d: "an agreement on the PhD student's educational commitment that does not exceed 20% of employment on average over 4 years."

This does not apply to the combined position of lecturer and PhD student (Article 6.12 paragraph 2 CAO-NU).

5. Other agreements

The parties to the collective labour agreement also made the following agreements:

- a. A reference to the Central Government page with the amounts of statutory minimum wage for an student in the day-time training route is included in appendix A of this collective agreement;
- b. Conduct an inventory study on the application of internship fees at institutions with the intention not to lag behind other relevant sectors;
- c. Article 1.1(d) has been replaced by the following: "Employees' organisations: the employee organisations that are a party to this collective labour agreement (cao). Employee organisation/union also includes FBZ and its affiliated associations."
- d. To appendix D.4, add: 'Parties have established a procedure for this award, which can be found on unl.nl.'
- e. To give substance to the Healthcare Quality, Complaints and Disputes Act (Wkkgz), agreements are made at institution/organisation level where relevant;
- f. In the case of transition leave, the passage 'but no later than 1 January 2026' in the third paragraph of Article 4.26 of the collective agreement has been deleted. This means that the provision will be

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extended until the date when transition leave is statutory. The parties will then enter into consultations to see if further agreements are needed;

- g. The parties agree on a solidarity contribution of €2 per employee for education unions in countries where union work is not taken for granted. This contribution will be remitted by universities to the unions once in 2025, based on a proposal by the unions agreed in the Trade Union and Employer Consultation.
- h. In establishing the amended text of the Collective Labour Agreement for Dutch Universities, the collective labour agreement drafting committee will implement a number of non-substantive editorial/technical changes.

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Agreed on 23 July 2025,

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S. Verduijn

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**N.S.M. Heuwer, also on behalf of
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