



DISCUSSION

briefing note

Meeting	University Council
Meeting date	28-09-2017
Subject	6.3 151 Work stress and reduction of work pressure action plan
Corsa number	-
Department	HR
Handling advice	to be discussed
Summary (maximum of 10 lines)	In relation to the CAO agreements concerning work pressure and work stress, please find the action plan (PVA, <i>plan van aanpak</i>) compiled in consultation with the LO below. The PVA describes the process with the suggested base measurement in the staff satisfaction survey (MTO), meetings about the results at departmental level, a toolbox for managers and staff on how to cope with work pressure, and escalation options for the results and possible actions as well as monitoring of the process.
Financial implications	
If yes, coverage:	
ICT implications	
Suggested decision/Advice	The Board of the University approved the suggested approach on 17 July 2017.
Follow up	<input type="checkbox"/> Committee of Deans <input type="checkbox"/> Board of the University <input type="checkbox"/> Management Council <input type="checkbox"/> University Council <input type="checkbox"/> Supervisory Board <input type="checkbox"/> Faculty Boards <input type="checkbox"/> Local Consultative Committee <input type="checkbox"/> other:
Communication	<input type="checkbox"/> internal <input type="checkbox"/> external

Draft action plan

'How to reduce work stress and work pressure at the University of Groningen'

Background

In Art. C11 of the Collective Labour Agreement for Dutch Universities (CAO Nederlandse Universiteiten) it has been agreed that in consultation with the Local Consultative Committee (Lokaal Overleg; LO) universities will present an action plan to reduce excessive work pressure and actively work on the sustainable employability of their staff. Below is a short description of the relevant CAO article, the activities currently deployed within the University of Groningen in this field, and a number of options for a possible approach. This document was discussed with the LO on 5 July 2017 and will also be discussed with representatives of the University Council and the Labour Inspectorate. It will then be submitted and discussed with the various administrative bodies as a joint action plan.

Description and CAO agreement

The CAO partners observe that both academic and support staff at universities enjoy their work and are highly productive. This high degree of productivity, combined with an increase in various new and existing duties and responsibilities lead to some staff members experiencing a high degree of work pressure and increased work stress. A lot is being asked of staff members and the parties find it important that staff members, in view of these changes in what is required of them, are given the opportunity to continue to develop their skills and competences (sustainable employability). As established in Article C.11 of the CAO it is important when implementing interventions focused on work and performance pressure to optimally take into account the relevant local circumstances. This is why parties agree that every university will establish a work plan concerning work pressure and sustainable employability in consultation with the LO and the University Council before the end of 2017, such that faculties and services are specifically involved and issues are addressed at the lowest organizational level possible.

Current activities and approach so far

The University of Groningen aims to present an action plan this autumn which will include current activities and additional activities. Below is a brief overview of a number of current activities and activities that are in the preparatory phase. For example, within the Sustainable Employability Road Map of the Green University and in consultation with HR and AMD, a number of projects have been defined that aim to reduce work pressure and work stress and promote sustainable employability. These include projects in the field of age-sensitive personnel policy (Young UG and 55+), Talent Travel, Balance in your work and the project 'Take control of work pressure'.

The interrelationships of the project plans are currently being worked out in more detail. In addition, the Inspectorate of the Ministry of Social Affairs and Labour is launching a project aimed at controlling psychosocial workload (PSA), of which work pressure forms part. In the context of this project, the Inspectorate will visit the University of Groningen this autumn and a preparatory meeting is planned in July. A number of faculties are working on hiring additional lecturers (using income from the social student loan system). This represents the implementation of the decision of the Board of the University taken on November 2016. Finally, we would like to mention the preparation of the staff satisfaction survey (MTO) that is due to take place this autumn. In addition to questions concerning individual work experience and work-life balance, this survey devotes a lot of attention to questions concerning work pressure and work stress.

Process approach

Once the MTO questions have been defined in meetings held by the units involved (faculties and services), HR/AMD and LO, we can expect reports at team level fairly soon after the survey is released. When announcing the MTO to staff members, we will emphasize the MTO's importance for the follow-on track focussing on controlling and resolving the work pressure issue. It will then be possible to discuss work pressure and implement measures at the lowest possible level (degree programme/section/department). In view of our experience that many work stress-related issues also require a local and individual approach, this seems to be a fruitful direction to

follow. In addition, in preparation for the university department interviews, in the autumn we will also conduct a number of pilot interviews with specific departments. These pilot interviews will serve as input for University of Groningen interviews and will take place at a number of departments. All these interviews will be conducted by facilitators trained for this purpose.

It is likely that not all problems can be resolved at department level and that some issues will require a more generic approach at faculty or service, or even university level, specifically in relation to certain target groups or duties. This ‘escalation process’ falls under the responsibility of the HR department in consultation with managers. In any case, when implementing follow-up plans and actions, the organization as a whole remains responsible for ensuring an adequate balance between individual measures and measures at organization level. In addition, the organization is also responsible for supporting managers and other facilitators in their role in bringing this issue into the open and suggesting possible solutions. This requires room in the action plan for a yet-to-be-developed toolbox for managers and for staff members allowing them to take control of their own work pressure and that of their department. This toolbox is being developed within the ‘Take control of work pressure’ project within the Sustainable Employability Road Map.

To facilitate the implementation and progress of the above, we will hold a technical meeting with the LO and the University Council, who will act as advisors and co-creators in a number of components and phases.

Preliminary time-table:

2017	
June/July/ August	- Preliminary discussions with various bodies (administrative/ LO/UR/HR/AMD)
	- Preliminary talk with the Inspection Service of the Ministry of Social Affairs and Employment concerning PSA (psychosocial workload)
	- Process proposals HR/LO for plan on reducing work pressure; organize technical meeting
	- Liaison with Sustainable Employability Roadmap Project Plan: work pressure
	- Inventorize and establish relevant questions for MTO with representatives of LO/University Council
September	- Prepare MTO
	- Develop Sustainable Employability Project Plan on work pressure: toolbox for stress prevention
	- Interviews Inspectorate with various target groups within the organization
	- Pilot interviews with a few departments/target groups
October	- MTO online; first measurement
	- Inventory of potential generic measures at institutional level
November	- Discuss results of MTO at department level and control escalation to faculty and ultimately UG/Board of the University level
	- Develop sustainable employability toolbox
	- Results from Ministry of Social Affairs and Employment
December	- Final Action Plan
2018	Implement plan and monitor results and actions via Administrative Meetings and the usual consultative meetings
2019	Assess implementation and second MTO meeting