

# Report dialogue session ethical action framework

## Department

Office of the Board

## Date

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On Tuesday 9 July, students, teachers, staff and board members of The Hague University of Applied Sciences (THUAS), led by discussion leader Andrew Makkinga, discussed THUAS' [ethical framework](#) for collaborations with external parties. The aim was to explore what is needed to determine when collaborations are fair and desirable or not. The dialogue session was a substantive and practical exploration, with the intention to have more frequent conversations in the future about ethical considerations when assessing external collaborations.

Elisabeth Minnemann, president of the Executive Board, touched on the importance of the dialogue session: 'The ethical framework presented by The Hague University of Applied Sciences earlier this year shows our considerations when entering into collaborations. An important next step is how we then apply and explain those considerations. That step is sorely needed, especially as the world around us is constantly evolving and new and complex issues arise as a result. For instance, due to technological advances, wars, or climate change.'

Minnemann argues that The Hague University of Applied Sciences has a responsibility to relate to the world in which it operates. That includes a responsibility to provide clarity and direction. "If we enter into a collaboration with an external party, as a student or employee you must be able to count on the fact that this cooperation is okay. A clearly formulated framework for action helps make those (ethical) considerations transparent. Having a broad dialogue, with different voices, perspectives and interests within the University of Applied Sciences about what the building blocks of such a framework should be, is important as far as we are concerned."

Students, faculty, staff and board members present agreed that concrete tools to assess and justify collaborations, both future and current (international), are highly desirable. The dialogue therefore focused on the question of what a more concrete future framework for action should look like: what should it be able to do, what should it comply with, and who should have a say in defining it?

## 1. What should an action framework be able to do?

The existing ethical framework was positively assessed overall. The considerations it contains when engaging in external cooperation are seen as the right ones and worthy of pursuit. However, there was a widely felt need to clarify a number of issues in this framework. After all, how do you weigh the various considerations if there is no single answer? If collaborations, for whatever reasons, 'are in a grey area'?

For example, the ethical framework states that judgements are made based on the content of the collaboration and, in addition, on the profile of the party being collaborated with. Participants remarked that these two criteria cannot be seen and judged separately. It is the total context you have to judge. Criteria such as the intensity, duration and size of collaborations are also considered important when assessing a collaboration. Therefore, it is important to put all the different considerations on a scale and let them weigh in.

Making the choices more explainable and more transparent was suggested as important for a good action framework. Both for collaborations that are not entered into and for collaborations that THUAS does enter into. In the longer term, this transparency will reduce the current grey area regarding collaborations and give students and staff a starting point for making their own individual choices. In the long run, it also helps to create a standard

## **2. What does an action framework have to comply with?**

Several attendees emphasised that an action framework should not only be useful when starting a collaboration or partnership, but should also suffice as a tool for monitoring and evaluating existing collaborations. The world is constantly changing, so the context in which a cooperation is entered into can also change. In addition, the population of The Hague University of Applied Sciences also changes, which may make new values important. According to some attendees, this means that you have to keep monitoring whether

However, it was noted that continuously monitoring all collaborations is difficult to implement in practice. Spot checks, external events and signals from the student or staff community can nevertheless be reasons to conduct additional research.

A key question raised was who has ownership for review and monitoring. Who or what do you turn to in order to gain insight into this, is it an internal body or an independent actor? There was a broad need here to be able to make clear at what level and on what grounds these choices are made and what considerations are leading in this.

## **3. Who should have a say in defining an action framework?**

Having a conversation about making concrete the current ethical principles was greatly appreciated by all attendees. Facilitating a dialogue about collaborations was named by one attendee as even more important than the final outcome of such a conversation. By talking to each other more often, you get a better grip on the most important common values of The Hague University of Applied Sciences community. By continuing the dialogue, you can also strengthen your values and identify possible changes.

Some attendees felt that an inclusive and learning University means organising a bottom-up dialogue that gives students and staff a place in it as well. It is a fundamental conversation that must be able to be had at times within all layers of THUAS. You need to know where to go if you have questions, doubts or uncertainties. In a general sense, it was felt that this space is currently available within The Hague University of Applied Sciences, although perhaps more people need to know that they can make use of the possibilities.

### **Closing the dialogue session**

Elisabeth Minnemann closed the session by thanking all those present for their time and input. According to her, the dialogue offered many starting points for the future: 'I am happy that our current ethical framework provides a good basis, but I conclude from this dialogue that there is still a need for more guidance and clarity about the framework. As to how we are to provide that clarity, I am happy to talk further after the summer. Because if today has made anything clear, it's how nice and important conversations like this are.'