



Advisory Committee on Third Party Collaborations

P +31 (0)20 525 2666
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Date

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Contact person

Dr. Niek Brunsveld MBA, scientific secretary of the
Advisory Committee on External Collaborations

Email

n.brunsveld@uva.nl

Subject

Draft Assessment guidelines collaboration with external parties

To the Executive Board of the University of Amsterdam,

Dear Board members,

Early September, you requested the Advisory Committee on Third Party Collaborations¹ to draw up a revised Assessment framework for the collaboration with third parties, in light of the recommendations drawn up by the ad hoc working group on external collaborations in July 2024.

You invited several experts in the field of human rights and conflict studies, as well as with expertise in policy making related to research and educational collaborations, to assist the Advisory Committee in the process of drafting a revised framework. Information on the composition of the Committee and the experts can be found [here](#). We took as a basis [the recommendations](#) by the Ad hoc Working Group on External Collaborations, and sought to ensure that these could be implemented in the university's operations. We hereby present the concept Assessment guidelines, which form a first part of the revised framework. These guidelines are to be complemented with a revised Policy framework on external collaborations. The UvA was one of the first Dutch universities to implement a Policy framework on third party collaborations, which will now be updated in light of these proposed new Assessment guidelines and the recommendations of the ad hoc working group.

The Assessment guidelines aim to promote reflection on existing and intended collaborations and increase the vigilance of UvA staff and students regarding the societal impact of their educational, research, valorisation and patient care activities. It describes the collaboration assessment process

¹ In the past, we spoke about third party collaborations, meaning collaborations with non-academic parties, but the committee advises to revise its title to Advisory Committee on External Collaborations (ACEC), because it now includes academic parties too.

and provides tools to assist UvA staff and departments in assessing whether a collaboration with an external partner is controversial, and in reflecting on measures or strategies necessary to prevent or mitigate identified/potential risks. Finally, these guidelines provide guidance in deciding whether the envisaged collaboration should be submitted for review to the Advisory Committee on External Collaborations (ACEC).

With these Assessment guidelines, we believe we cover most of the recommendations by the ad hoc working group on external collaborations. To highlight several important recommendations that were implemented in the current concept:

- The ad hoc working group concluded that there is sufficient support for the notion that academic freedom and academic responsibility go hand in hand. This is reflected in the concept Assessment guidelines. The working group also advised that the current policy should be supplemented with additional assessment criteria for other core tasks of the university alongside research, in particular education, valorisation and patient care. These are now part of the scope of the draft Assessment guidelines.
- The ad hoc working group also advised that there should be a clearer set of indicators to determine if and when the university should start assessing existing collaborations, in particular existing collaborations in exceptional political circumstances, such as ongoing and emerging wars or conflicts involving war crimes or crimes against humanity, or the perpetration of gross and systematic violations of human rights, and that new and existing collaborations should be assessed on the basis of the same standards. This is now a part of the draft Assessment guidelines.
- Additionally, the advice was to include indicators to assess the potential involvement of a partner in gross and systematic human rights violations. The advice was also to assess ongoing collaborations only in the gravest of circumstances, taking into consideration contractual obligations and the impact on the relationships with partners and funding organisations. This has been implemented.
- As advised, the draft Assessment guidelines indicate several sources to rely on for assessments of institutional or project-based international collaborations. Also, as advised, country- and region-specific expertise available within the university itself is to be consulted.
- Also, collaborations with organisations in exceptional political circumstances receive extra scrutiny. A risk assessment framework is developed for these types of “higher risk” collaborations and included in the guidelines, allowing for a nuanced and detailed evaluation of the (envisaged) collaboration and the third party (or parties) involved.
- As advised, there is room for differentiation between different organizational units (e.g. faculties).

In line with the advice of the Board and Deans, the revised Policy framework will include clear process steps for the ACEC to come to its advise, which is not merely a positive or negative advise, but includes more nuanced perspectives for action and possible scenarios as regards the consequences of (temporary) suspensions of collaborations.

In line with the concerns of the Deans, the implementation of the Assessment guidelines and the Policy framework should be feasible, should primarily aim to raise awareness, and should set clearer boundaries about which proposed collaborations should be submitted to the Advisory Committee.

We hereby submit this concept for your consideration, as well as for broader consultations within the UvA.

Kind regards,

Prof. Dr. Aart Nederveen, Chair of the Advisory Committee on Third Party Collaboration
Prof. Dr. Yvonne Donders, additional expert and former Chair of the ad hoc working group