

(**Translation: Inzet vakbonden voor de CAO NU 2022.** This English translation is provided by AOB as a service to our members. However, this translation is not made by a native speaker. In case of an incorrect translation of the Dutch text or differences in interpretation, the Dutch text shall be binding.)

Trade unions' commitment to the Collective Labour Agreement NU 2022

On 31 March this year, the term of the current CLA expires. The underlying agreement was aimed at providing an answer to the ever-increasing workload and the experienced deterioration in the work-life balance. In this context, the aim was to remove uncertainties and the pressure experienced by the workforce by structurally investing in permanent jobs and converting existing temporary contracts into permanent jobs. As of 1 January 2022, the basic principle is that support staff, university lecturers and professors will be given a permanent contract of employment after 12 months if they prove suitable and continue in the same position.

In the commitment to the new CAO, trade unions are building on these agreements for employees in the primary process of education and research. We also build on the earlier agreements to reduce work pressure.

Commitment to (entering into) employment contracts in accordance with the CAO-NU:

Trade unions will primarily focus on the introduction of a three-column system for academic positions:

Column 1: the teacher column 4-1: main task (80%) education (development); secondary task 20% education-related research and development time (obtaining BKO and SKO obligatory).

Column 2: the U(H)D/ HGL column: main tasks teaching and research (30-70 or 40-60% v.v.): BKO and PhD (resp. senior qualification research: skoz) compulsory.

Column 3: post-doc/(senior) researcher column: main task (80% research, incl. valorisation); secondary task 20% research-related teaching time. Promotion, skoz and bko mandatory.

NB: for a number of WP posts and levels, activities for management, administration and participation in working groups are also assigned, fall under the concept and classification criterion of organisation; percentages must then be temporarily adjusted so as not to increase the pressure of work.

With this column system, trade unions also aim to offer teachers and researchers permanent jobs and the prospect of an academic career. Progression to column 1: i.e. talented graduates with teaching ambitions; progression to columns 2 and 3: i.e. junior lecturers/researchers and PhD candidates.

Within this system, the career track can also be used to design a variation on the tenure track, while abandoning the idea of up or out which, in our opinion, does not fit in with the Dutch academic labour market. It is also possible to design a tenure track for the teacher and researcher column, which would then offer access to the UD column.

Columns 1 and 2 are mainly financed from adequate funds for education and research (first-stream funding); column 3 mainly via funds from the universities' own risk-bearing position, (partly) financed back from external funding/valorisation.

In the transition to this system, the following measures/agreements are in any case necessary:

- Teachers are given full-time employment contracts: the average size of 0.6 to 0.7 employment contracts, which in practice is too small to fulfil the teaching duties alone, is abandoned. Within these employment contracts, BKO and education-related research time can be more easily and more effectively realised. Temporary contracts based on the chain provision will be handled with restraint, in favour of the possibility of agreeing on contracts for the duration of 4 to 6 years.
- For researchers/postdocs, the permanent employment contract will become standard practice; with regard to this group and PhD candidates, the 'may' provision in Article 2.5 Extension of employment due to employee's circumstances will be converted into a 'must' provision. Birth leave is added to the circumstances. This form of leave also applies to the employment of PhD students.
- PhD students perform scientific work within their employment. They are confronted with a form of unfair competition on the university labour market through the fellowship system. In this system, grant holders perform academic work just as well, but they are significantly cheaper for universities. At the same time, fellowship holders often find themselves in precarious situations, as was also demonstrated during the pandemic since March 2020. In anticipation of the final evaluation of the ministerial experiment, we agree not to use this system any more and to convert scholarships that are still running into an employment contract.
- The system of horizontal tenure track (from UD2 to UD1) that is partly applied within universities is contrary to the intention of the current Article 6.6. of the CAO and contradicts the agreement made that UDs in principle become permanent employees after one year if they are found to be suitable. These T.T. contracts will be converted to permanent contracts with effect from the new CAO.
- Academic staff who receive an ERC grant will be subject to a collective agreement similar to that for VIDI funding (article 2.7 lid 5).
- The internal priority policy will be further tightened in the case of vacancies.
- In order to make the transition to faster permanent employment also visible in the CAO, the temporary employment contract with the prospect of permanent employment is again included.
- In this context, Article 2.2, paragraph 5, also to prevent revolving door constructions, will be deleted from the CAO.
- The agreements on limiting flexible arrangements (E.15) will be made visible in chapter 2 Entering employment.

Long-term employability:

During the term of the current CAO, SoFoKleS carried out a sector analysis for WO at the request of the CAO parties. Based on the results, the social partners would discuss whether additional agreements should be made with regard to the vitality pact and a possible temporary early retirement scheme. Based on the pension agreement, such a scheme is still possible until 2025.

The sector analysis once again makes it clear that many academic and other employees experience the pressure of work as high to very high. Among academic staff, this leads to a lot of overtime in the evenings and weekends. The sector analysis also shows that absenteeism, including WIA, is increasing. On the basis of the key figures presented, it is plausible to assume that the pressure of work will not automatically decrease if the policy remains unchanged. Certainly not now that experiences with hybrid working show that the line between work and private life is becoming increasingly blurred.

That is why trade unions want to make further agreements that promote or increase long term employability and reduce work pressure:

- Further improvement of the vitality pact by adjusting the percentages of continued payment to, respectively, 80% for the 0.4 variant and 90% for the 0.2 variant.]
- Reintroduction of ½ hour shorter working day for employees 60 years and older
- Introduction of D.I. (long-term employability) hours for all employees of at least 40 hours on an annual basis, including development days, to be used for training¹, development and recuperation.
- Improvement of the multi-year savings model for younger employees to adapt their own working week.
- An Accelerated Retirement Arrangement for heavy occupations (such as in the continuous service in the plants and in animal care). In addition, RVU must be possible as a customised measure.
- Making real job agreements as an obligatory part of the annual interviews: right for the employee.
- Adjustment of the expiry period of the statutory holiday days that are carried over to the next holiday year.
- Right to be unreachable by email and telephone after working hours, at weekends and in holiday periods (except, of course, for jobs with periods/schedule for on-call and standby shifts).
- Abolition of the function contract and abolition of the scale limit for overtime.
- Introduction of partially paid long-term carer's leave of six times the weekly working hours (building on the UvA pilot).
- Good agreements on (partially paid) bereavement leave: The collective agreement (CAO) for Dutch Universities does not include any agreements on bereavement leave. Article 4.25 refers to special leave in the event of special circumstances. We want to make better arrangements about bereavement leave: The employee receives paid leave from the day of death up to and including the funeral. For the period thereafter, we want the employee to make agreements with his/her supervisor about:
 - Temporary adjusted working hours;
 - Temporary no or less demanding work
 - A flexible arrangement for paid bereavement leave. This might include a leave budget that can be taken in days, parts of the day or hours.

The agreements are flexible when it comes to applying for this leave in the interest of providing good care for the grieving employee with the aim of a safe and healthy return to work.

- Improving the financial consequences of taking partially paid leave: full accrual of leave; scrapping the obligation to repay if there is a possibility of a change in position or improvement.

¹ With regard to training, it must be emphasised that job-related training is at the expense of the employer and is work time; see Transparency and Predictable Employment Terms Act; see also Art. 6.10

Diversity/ inclusiveness:

Trade unions note that additional agreements can be made in the collective agreement that promote a diverse and inclusive workforce. In that context, we propose the following points:

- The introduction of multi-year (partially paid) transgender leave: leave to visit a doctor or psychologist related to diagnostics, medical transition and/or hormone therapy during the transition period (derived from Unilever gender policy)
- Menopause/ transition leave for women in service.
- Less one-sided orientation towards Christian holidays in the collective agreement. This must in any case offer employees who follow a different religion the opportunity to enjoy paid leave on public holidays that are important to them.
- Improvement of the partially paid parental leave scheme due to new legislation as of 1 August 2022.

Wages and term:

Trade unions start with the observation that, unfortunately, the wage agreements in the current CBA have not (just) succeeded in preserving purchasing power. We also note that surveys and collection sessions show that wages are regularly not the top priority of employees. Maintaining purchasing power is often considered sufficient, but essential. Especially now, however, increasing attention is being paid to the effects of high inflation in the Netherlands and the resulting increased cost of living.

In this context, we propose a two-step approach: a wage increase now that guarantees purchasing power maintenance for the duration of the new collective agreement, and a separate agreement on the structural introduction of automatic price compensation. This will in any case guarantee that university employees retain their purchasing power in future collective bargaining rounds. In the system, we propose an annual cycle from April 2022 to April 2023, and so on. In this way, we more or less link up with the announcement of the reference room and the spring budget. This also means that we assume a duration of at least one year (12 months). A longer term may be negotiable

In the current collective agreement, we have raised the minimum wage to €14. For employees at the bottom of the pay scale, that meant an additional salary increase. However, the effect of the collective agreement was that in the lower scales various steps have the same salary outcome. In our opinion, it is now necessary to redesign the scales up to and including 6 in order to create new perspectives and challenges for employees in the positions within those scales. Furthermore, we want to extend the minimum wage agreement at least to the pay scales for employees with a labour disability and the TOIOs.

Finally:

As usual, trade unions reserve the right to amend, supplement or withdraw proposals and to make new proposals.