UYA Evaluation Report 2016-2019

An active, independent, and diverse group of young researchers exchanging critical perspectives on:

Academia Society Policy

uu.nl/uya
UYA Evaluation Report 2016-2019

This report provides the self-evaluation for the Utrecht Young Academy (UYA). It is divided into the following parts:

- overview of UYA: aim, history, structure, and projects;
- plans for the coming period;
- a SWOT Analysis for 2016-19; and
- conclusions and recommendations.

Overview of UYA

Aim:

The UYA is an independent collaboration platform that aims to exchange critical perspectives on academia, policy, and society in Utrecht and beyond, and develop interdisciplinary and cutting-edge projects focusing on research, education, policy, and outreach. The UYA identity statement and mission can be found in Appendix A.

History and Structure:

The UYA was founded in November 2016 by three former UU members of De Jonge Akademie (DJA) of the Koninklijke Nederlandse Akademie van Wetenschappen (KNAW) and was officially established on 26 March 2017 at the Dies Natalis of the UU. UYA will eventually consist of 40 excellent young academics who are selected for a period of 5 years. The UYA began with 24 members. Eight new members are selected every year (plus additional ones to fill the spots of those who leave the UYA before their term ends). This means that UYA member numbers will peak at 64, after which the first generation will leave. In 2018, nine new members joined the UYA and in 2019, eleven new members joined. Currently, the UYA has members from all UU faculties: Sciences: 5; Social and Behavioural Sciences: 9; Humanities 9; Medicine: 3; Geosciences: 7; Law, Economics and Governance: 6; and Veterinary Medicine: 1. There are 15 male and 25 female members. There are 10 members in the category cultural diversity. Four (male) members have left the UYA (and UU) because they started jobs at other institutions.

In the first year the members decided on the government structure and formulated the following set of regulations: "Regulations Governing the Utrecht Young Academy", "Standing Rules for the Utrecht Young Academy", and "Regulations Concerning the Selection of New Members of Utrecht Young Academy". To read the regulations please go to our website.

According to these regulations, UYA has the following structure: there are 5 standing committees (Governance, Communication, Finance, Selection, and Social Events). Each of these committees has a representative on the UYA Board. All UYA members elect a chair and vice chair from the Board members. The Board works together with the UYA policy officer to facilitate and coordinate collaboration, and it is the main point of contact for external parties. Besides the Board and the standing committees there is a varying number of (temporary) project groups (see below). UYA also has a student assistant to help with communication and organization.

The Board organizes the following regular activities, facilitating exchange between UYA members, between UYA and other Dutch Young Academies, and between UYA and young scholars at UU:
Ten General Assemblies per year where UYA members come together to exchange ideas, plan projects and activities, and discuss topics such as Open Science, interdisciplinary education, public affairs, and work pressure with invited keynote speakers.

Network National Young Academies: The UYA has been instrumental in setting up a network of all NL Young Academies to foster collaboration and exchange at a national level. The first two meetings were held in October 2018 and May 2019. UYA will host the next meeting in October 2019.

Town Hall Meetings are a way for UYA to meet with and involve other young UU academics, to hear from them about topics of interest and concerns, to exchange ideas on the future of the university, and to recruit potential UYA members.

Current Project Groups:

UYA project groups are organized around UYA’s key themes of interdisciplinary research and education, policy, and outreach. The groups organize events, facilitate and implement collaboration among UYA members and beyond, and organize outreach activities. In this section we highlight selected projects that represent the major UYA successes in 2017 and 2018. For a timeline of past and upcoming projects see Appendix C and for a complete list of projects and UYA collaboration partners please see Appendix D.

Project Group Interdisciplinary Teaching
Promotes and practices interdisciplinary education within UU on several levels by developing interdisciplinary lectures and seminars for students from all UU faculties and by sharing best practices and creating synergies with colleagues UU-wide. This group is organizing workshops and masterclasses, is connected with TAUU and CAT, and is working closely with Descartes College (where UYA member Annemarie Kalis was made programmaleider). In 2018, the group drafted a USO proposal on traveling concepts in interdisciplinary education.

Project Group Interdisciplinary Research
Promotes, facilitates, and conducts research across faculties and disciplines; develops long-lasting or short-term collaborations within UYA and beyond; generates additional funding for UYA projects and UYA spin-off projects; organizes interdisciplinary supervision for graduate students. For a complete list of research collaborations and projects see Appendix D.

UYA Highlight: Project Group Open Science
UYA formed part of the university taskforce open-science and is currently represented by Sanli Faez on the open science platform. In connection with the Open Science workgroup UYA organised a public consultation meeting on 14 december 2017 and has been advocating for open science on internal communication channels.
Podcast series “Road to Open Science”. The main objective of this series is to raise awareness about developments towards Open Science at UU and internationally (the series was released in 6 main episodes and contains 10 full interviews). In collaboration with the University Library the “Road to Open Science” podcast continues in the form of a monthly newschat.
Project Group Diversity
This project group is connected to the UU Diversity Taskforce where it gives advice on UU inclusion policy; it has organized a number of workshops (e.g. on implicit biases for UYA members and for young cardiovascular researchers at the Young@HeartEvent and at Erasmus MC), participated in the organization of the 2019 Onderwijsparade, and is launching the UYA-UGlobe project The Global Challenge of Religious Diversity (see Appendix D).

**UYA Highlight: Film and Research Project: From Parochialism to an Inclusive City**
This is a collaboration of researchers from different faculties and the City of Utrecht. The result was a short film about diversity and social cohesion in the city and an ongoing research project. In a first experiment with around 900 people from Utrecht, the film showed various positive effects. The film received a lot of positive publicity including at RTV Utrecht, at AD, on the UU website and was noted as top project in Utrecht University Highlight. The film will also be discussed with the Executive Board and wethouder Anke Klein in June 2019.

**UYA Highlight: Project Group Outreach “Waar of niet Waar?”**
A project for primary school students in collaboration with the wetenschapsknooppunt. In this project, UYA-members conduct scientific experiments together with primary school children at their schools. The aim is to promote scholarly thinking among young children and let them experience how interesting and fun science can be, as well as to be able to distinguish ‘alternative’ from ‘actual’ facts. The first ‘Waar of niet waar?’ program on ‘Humor’ was brought to 12 primary schools (group 5/6) in the province of Utrecht in November 2018, reaching ~400 children (see news item). For the next two years, the program will be on offer semi annually by the wetenschapsknooppunt, with the aim of annually reaching ~1000 children as many primary schools in Utrecht and the surrounding area. UYA members will add at least one topic to the ‘Waar of niet waar?’ each year and participate in its execution at primary schools.
Policy Work:

- The UYA has issued statements on the procedural changes in the "embedding guarantee" for the "Vernieuwingsimpuls" and "Open Competition" schemes for Social Sciences and Humanities by NWO. This has received considerable media coverage, including in the Volkskrant. To read our statements, please see our website.
- Participating in WOinactie-group: UYA supports the call for action in higher education. We are represented by an UYA member at the meetings of the Utrecht WOinActie group (currently Hieke Huistra attends the meetings, earlier Francien Peterse and Joas Wagemakers assisted WOinActie).
- Open Science: The UYA, through involvement in the task-force Open-Science, has been given a leading role in developing the section of the University strategic plan devoted to Open Science.
- Periodic meetings with the UU Diversity Taskforce to brainstorm and provide feedback on UU diversity and inclusion policy

Plans for the Coming Period (selection)

Outreach:

- UYA Video Logs (vlogs) on the UU YouTube channel (in process): A series of 5-minute vlogs on questions related to the research of UYA members. An inventive way to teach and engage high school students in meaningful discussions. The six vlogs currently being developed deal with the following questions:
  - Helen King, Faculty of Geosciences: How did life start?
  - Angela Sarabdjitsingh, Faculty of Medicine: Are women more stressed than men?
  - Divya Raj, Faculty of Medicine: How does a cell commit suicide?
  - Erik van Sebille, Faculty of Science: Where does our plastic waste end up?
  - Tom Wennekes, Faculty of Science: How do our gut bacterial frenemies keep us healthy or make us sick?
  - Martine Veldhuizen, Faculty of Humanities: Can words hurt?
- Third UYA Generation Project (Autumn 2019): "Repercussions of the Fall of the Berlin Wall from an Interdisciplinary Perspective": a series of four lectures in collaboration with Studium Generale that take the fall of the Berlin Wall as a starting-point for an interdisciplinary perspective on pivotal developments in the three decades since 1989. Perspective range from e.g. city-planning and social psychology to the environment and international history. (In preparation)
- Second UYA Generation Project: Organizing a discussion dinner between UYA members and VMBO High School students and teachers from the province of Utrecht. The aim is to build links, discuss what ‘science’ and ‘scholarship’ are, and to get input for vlogs as a usable teaching tool. (In planning)
- Climate Change Symposium and Climate Change Festival (2019/2020, in planning)

Interdisciplinary Teaching:

- Developing an interdisciplinary course on Traveling Concepts taught by UYA members from of all UU faculties (at MA/RMA level, in planning, projected for 2020/21). The objective of this course is to stimulate students’ reflection on key concepts in their own discipline, and enable students to trace what happens when such concepts travel throughout different disciplines, thereby enriching or even changing the concepts’ meaning. Connected to this the group will prepare a collection of essays on best practices in interdisciplinary teaching.
Policy Work:

- **Commons for Academics:** A workshop, a podcast and a spin-off pilot project whose main objective is to raise awareness about the notion of the commons and its potential for developing open science both internationally and at UU. These activities will be closely related to the positive role UYA can play in the university administration of progressive policy making (in preparation).

- Creating opportunities for postgraduate and advanced undergraduate students to be involved in UYA as assistants, and would like to develop an interdisciplinary and inter-faculty PhD network, which would increase the impact UYA can have in fostering young researchers (in discussion).

- Individual development program for early career researchers (in planning). Development of a web-based tool that is aimed at better tracking and charting an individual's career. The composition of UYA with varied faculties and early principal investigators is well suited to guide such a task. The tool can be complemented with annual assessment of the candidate and designed to allow both self-evaluation and managerial evaluation to better identify scope for improvement. The idea is to design this program for post-docs first, with the possibility to expand to include PhDs and early PI’s.

- East-West polarization and the role of academia (in planning): This project will consist of various activities with the aim of 1) stimulating the exchange between scholars from Western and Central and Eastern Europe, and 2) fostering the wider debate about the role of universities in an increasingly polarized world. Activities will include a symposium and a Visiting Fellows Programme. This project will start in the second half of 2019.

Finances:

From 2016-2018 UYA had a budget of €100,000 p.a., of which €80,500 was reserved for support staff. Starting out, the support staff comprised a policy officer (0.5 fte) and Iris Koopmans (0.5 fte). Iris was hired for two years because of her experience as support staff of DJA. However, Iris left already in May 2017 to take a job outside UU. Iris was unique in her experience with DJA, and as such difficult if not impossible to replace. Instead of replacing Iris, we found a different and to our mind efficient and sustainable solution: we raised Fati’s appointment to 0.6 fte, hired a student assistant (0.2 fte) to help with communication, and decided to compensate the UYA chair with 0.1 fte. This works well because it allows the chair and policy officer to steer UYA together, without having to also take care of daily communication and website maintenance tasks. It is also a more cost-beneficial solution and results in a total of €65,000 p.a. for UYA support staff.

With an increasing amount needed for logistics (€15,000, more members, more meetings, hence more running costs, i.e. catering at meetings, PR materials, and other incidental expenses) and a budget of €100,000 we are left with €20,000 for projects. In actual fact, in 2018, with 31 members, we spent €25,500 on projects. With increasing member and project numbers we anticipate that a project budget of €50,000 will be needed to sustain this level of activity.

Concretely, this means that UYA would need a budget of **€130,000 p.a.** for administrative support and to fund a growing number of projects, events, and outreach activities. Please see the overview of the budget in the table below and the full budget in Appendix B.
## SWOT Analysis

### Strengths:
The UYA is an interdisciplinary, diverse, and inclusive network of 40 excellent researchers within UU, and it is financially and organizationally independent. This independence is crucial, as it allows us to think and discuss freely, critically, and without restrictions, pressures, or particular deliverables, and as such provides a welcome and much needed space for creativity and exchange. We have set up a well-functioning and solid organizational structure for UYA. We have developed and carried out a number of successful projects with respect to interdisciplinary research, education, and outreach, and we already have policy impact (e.g., NWO inbeddingsgarantie, werkdruk, Open Science). We have good relationships within UU and with the City of Utrecht, and have also been instrumental in networking with other Young Academies and scholars on a national level. We have also had two extremely successful recruitment drives, with an impressive long list of excellent applicants to the UYA.

### Weaknesses:
The UYA is not (yet) as visible within UU and outside UU as we would like it to be. On the one hand this is because we have been focusing on content rather than communication. On the other hand, it is due to the fact that we work on a consensus basis and have a flat organizational structure. This is a key difference to similar organizations, such as DJA, for example, where a statement supported by a number of members is being communicated as issued in the name of DJA as a whole, while we are hesitant about such a procedure. This means that we are not as quick and efficient as we would like to be with reacting to current affairs and debates. Furthermore, as of yet, not all UU faculties and departments are equally represented within UYA.

As mentioned in the Finances section, Iris Koopmans left in the first year to take a job outside UU. This was a blow for UYA, as it meant losing valuable DJA-expertise and it resulted in significantly more and uncompensated work for our one remaining administrator and the UYA board, which was not sustainable in the long run. We are now working with a student assistant who takes care of communication tasks and are compensating the chairperson with 0.1 fte to help steer UYA. This has improved the situation, but has not completely alleviated the problems associated with the loss of the experience of the second administrator, which, ultimately is irreplaceable.
A further weakness is the delay in delivering on project ideas and the fact that commitment to UYA is threatened by work pressure and lack of funding (see also under Threats).

As of now, our budget is connected formally to the current UYA chairperson’s faculty. Since our chairperson switches every two years, this would mean that the budget moves faculties every two years. As we have seen in the switch from Geosciences to Humanities, this is not a productive way of handling the budget, as it takes considerable time and resources.

**Opportunities:**
A major opportunity is the fact that non-academic as well as academic partners are very eager to work with the UYA, including Utrecht municipality, Waag, Studium Generale, high schools and TivoliVredenburg (for a full list of UYA partners, see Appendix D). This will only increase with growing visibility. Since there is a general trend in Utrecht, the Netherlands and beyond, towards interdisciplinary research and teaching, the UYA is perfectly placed to apply for research grants and funding for teaching initiatives, and to generate high-profile and cutting-edge projects. The same goes for the emphasis on internationalization, diversity, and inclusivity. The UYA is a model example of how these trends can be put into practice and can serve as an advisory organ on these and other, related issues.

**Threats:**
There are two major threats to the UYA:

Work pressure: the heavy workload of especially young academics is a major problem that limits the development time for UYA projects as well as the ability of UYA members to deliver on their ideas. It is therefore vital for the functioning of UYA to have substantial and effective administrative support.

Insufficient UYA budget: As our overview shows, a budget of €70,000 p.a. would effectively mean the end of UYA, as it would either leave basically no project money or force us to reduce administrative support. With a budget of €100,000 p.a. and with growing member numbers (and thus more projects) UYA would also be facing serious limitations. Having too little UYA funding for projects is problematic since it is crucial for getting smaller projects and events off the ground quickly and smoothly, as well as for setting up and guaranteeing longer-term and larger-scale projects and collaborations. UYA funding allows for out-of-the-box projects and events which would most likely not receive funding otherwise but are extremely valuable to the university community and society.

**Conclusions:**
As the previous pages show, and as the enthusiastic responses we regularly receive from inside and outside UU confirm, the UYA is a great success. We bring together young talented researchers from all faculties, foster open and interdisciplinary science and scholarship, help make the university more diverse, build bridges between academia and society, and contribute to sensible science policy.

Our main aim is to be an independent platform and infrastructure for innovative and interdisciplinary research and education projects and outreach activities, and we are well on the way to becoming just that. In order to fulfill this role also in the future, it is important that the UYA maintain its autonomy within the university structure, and also continue to receive the financial and administrative support it needs in order to function. Our first two years were dedicated to laying the foundations for the UYA as an organization and to setting up organizational and project committees, as well as initiating a number of highly successful projects. During this time we also had to deal with a setback when our DJA-experienced second administrator left. We have found a workable and efficient way of compensating for this loss, and we are currently working on remedying other weaknesses such as efficiency in policy and other work (e.g. by creating subgroups) and the unequal representation of UU faculties in UYA (e.g. by organizing Town Hall meetings and visiting underrepresented faculties and departments). If the UYA budget could be kept in one place we could avoid the time-and-resources-consuming budget moves every two years.

Now that the preliminary work has been carried out, we can focus fully on organizing projects and further developing our interdisciplinary collaborations, as well as becoming even more vocal and active
on policy matters and current affairs. The opportunities for UYA are manifold, with a fast-growing list of internal and external partners eager to work with us, and in the context of an ever-increasing demand for truly interdisciplinary research and teaching to address the urgent issues of academia and society today, and we are excited to jump at these opportunities, as our plans for the coming period and Appendix D show.

In this, work pressure and potential budget cuts remain a serious threat to UYA. Concretely, this means that UYA needs a budget of €130,000 p.a. to finance not only the administrative and support staff but also to continue with its current ambition level and fund a growing number of projects and events, as well as outreach activities. A budget below €130,000 p.a. would mean adjusting our ambition level in order to avoid work pressure threats.

**Appendices:**

A. UYA Mission Statement  
B. Financial report 2017-2018 and budget plan 2019 onward  
C. Timeline of projects and activities  
D. UYA Research Collaborations and Projects; List of UYA partners
Appendix A: Mission Statement

Utrecht Young Academy and Academia

- the UYA is a collaboration platform and network for the exchange and generation of ideas among young academics in Utrecht, the Netherlands, and the world;
- the UYA is committed to multidisciplinarity and inclusivity in research and education;
- the UYA promotes open science within academia.

Utrecht Young Academy and Policy

- the UYA actively contributes to evidence-based policy on all levels of government both in and outside the university;
- the UYA gives a voice to young academics by reaching out to policy makers in order to influence science and education policy in and outside Utrecht.

Utrecht Young Academy and Society

- the UYA makes science and scholarship accessible and promotes open science in society;
- the UYA promotes scholarly thinking in society;
- the UYA stimulates an open discussion about the role of university in society.
Appendix B:

Financial report 2017-18 and budget plan 2019 onward

Not included in online version.
# Timeline of projects and activities

This table shows past and future projects and activities of UYA, coloured by type of activity. Page numbers refer to where the projects are described in the main document.

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Appendix D:

UYA Research Collaborations and Projects; UYA Partners

- UYA organized a network evening at the Research Funding Days where young academics (every UYA member brought one non-UYA invitee) came together to make university-wide connections. At this event, UYA members Martine Veldhuizen (Humanities) and Joanneke van der Toorn (Social Sciences) connected with invitees Stefan Kulk (Law) and Florien Cramwinckel (Social Sciences) and are now developing a research consortium and writing an NWA proposal together. The proposed project concerns the tension between privacy and transparency that organizations may experience when collecting sensitive employee data. To aid in the proposal preparation, they have already secured a €25,000 seed-money grant from UU allowing the buyout of teaching time for two of the researchers. They have connected with the Workplace Pride Foundation, an international platform for LGBTI workplace inclusion, and are organizing a focus group and Connecting Members event on May 27th with interested stakeholders to get valuable input and to secure co-financing of the proposal.

- Collaboration between Brianne McGonigle-Leyh (Law) and Tessa Diphoorn (Social Sciences) on Police Reform, which has generated a workshop “Guarantees of Non-Recurrence: Transformative Police Reform” in November 2018, and a special journal issue to be submitted to Policing in May 2019. The project has also generated additional external funding: Seed Money, ‘Cultures, Citizenship, and Human Rights’ (€7,000); Seed Money, UGlobe (€5,000), Utrecht Centre for Global Governance. With Dr. Luuk Slooter; and €25,000 Utrecht Centre for Global Governance, setting up of interfaculty consortium on ‘Contesting Governance’, with 10 other scholars across three faculties.

- Collaboration between Fenella Fleischmann (Social Sciences), Brianne McGonigle-Leyh (Law) and Joas Wagemakers (Humanities) on an UYA-UGlobe project The Global Challenge of Religious Diversity, which has received €20,000 additional funding. Besides publications and conference organization, the project is also planning a collaboration with the Democracy and Human Rights Education in Europe Network (DARE).

- “The Fall of the Berlin Wall: Thirty Years After” UYA member Laurien Crump is organizing a symposium on The Fall of the Berlin Wall and its ramifications for the present from a political and historical perspective. The symposium will take place in the Academy Building on Saturday 9 November 2019 – exactly thirty years after the fall of the Berlin Wall – and will host a wide audience consisting of inter alia secondary school teachers, students and the general public. Speakers will consist of diplomats, journalists as well as historians, to ensure both a hands-on link to current affairs as well as a thorough historical context. Partners: Vereniging Geschiedenisleraren Nederland (VGN), the Utrechteste Historische Studentenkring (UHSKU), Studium Generale, The Cold War Research Network and the Netherlands Atlantic Association, Werkgroep Historie en Internationale Politiek.

- Tom Wennekes (Science) and Linda van Laake (Medicine), together with Ilja Voets (TUE), are collaborating on an interdisciplinary project “Freezing Hearts: Bio-inspired Cryoprotectants to Buy Time for Transplants”, for which they have submitted a grant application to the UU/UMCU/TUE alliance fund.

- Linda van Laake (Medicine) and Daniel Oberski (Social Sciences) are collaborating on an interdisciplinary project “LVAD-LVAD: Left Ventricular Assist Devices provide Loads of Valuable Additional Data”, for which they submitted a grant application to Health Holland (Top Sector Life Sciences & Health).
Various ongoing interdisciplinary supervision projects, e.g. Wim Otte (Medicine, member 2017-2018) is helping Rianka Rijnhout’s PhD student (Law) with setting up her methodological framework; Amir Raoof and Sanli Faez co-supervise students.

Rianka Rijnhout (Law) has initiated a seed money proposal after discussing with fellow UYA Members from Geosciences on the compensation of damage caused by land movement. She is now setting up the Utrecht Expert Group on Dealing with Anthropogenic Land Movement.

**Other UYA Projects and Collaborations:**

**UYA and Centre for Science Communication and Culture**

- [Movies & Science Series](#), collaboration with Studium Generale. The first series, “Benefit of the Doubt,” took place in 2017 in the Utrecht movie theatre ‘t Hooft. UYA and Studium Generale have decided to make this a recurring event.


- Participating at “Betweter Festival”: Each year, UYA members contribute to the program by giving short lectures for a broad audience.

- “Feiten en Fabels”: "Weekend van de Wetenschap", in which several UYA-members participated. In this project, children (8-12 years) learned about facts and fiction (October 2018).

**Other collaborations:**

- Pump Your Career event organized by NWO in December 2018 with a panel for members of the Young Academies of the Netherlands, including several UYA members.

- Environmental History Symposium organised by the UYA and Utrechtse Historische Studentenkring (study association of history students) on 6 September 2018. Sixty people attended, keynote speaker was Diederik Samsom, with contributions by UYA members Liesbeth van de Grift and Joao Trabuco.

- Podcast series [The Voice of UYA]: a series of interviews with UYA members, conducted by Sanli Faez, and published in the form of podcasts. In this series, the UYA members present themselves, their research, and personal viewpoints.

**List of UYA Partners:**

- Center for Science Communication and Culture (Studium Generale, Wetenschapsknooppunt & Universiteitsmuseum)
- TAOU
- CAT
- UU Diversity Taskforce
- UU Open Science Platform
- Descartes College
- Center for the Humanities
- UGlobe
- Utrechtse Historische Studentenkring (UHSK)
- De Jonge Academie and Network Dutch Young Academies
- NWO
- Waag
- TivoliVredenburg
- Utrecht Municipality
- Workplace Pride Foundation
- Democracy and Human Rights Education in Europe Network (DARE)
- WOInActie
- Vereniging Geschiedenisleraren Nederland (VGN)
- The Cold War Research Network
- Netherlands Atlantic Association
- Werkgroep Historie en Internationale Politiek.