



Date: 19 March 2020  
Subject: Alarm Day communication tool kit

Dear reader,

Thank you for indicating that you wish to join the broad coalition that wants to make a statement against the structural underfunding of higher education. This campaign is widely supported and is being coordinated by the Association of Universities in the Netherlands (VSNU) and WO in Actie. This tool kit contains everything you need to contribute to the campaign. This can be done on a large or a small scale. There are several things you can do:

- **Be an activist in The Hague** | On 6 April, you can come to The Hague and protest around the Hofvijver. You can help to convey the statement by wearing a special academic cap and face mask while standing around the Hofvijver, or better yet: you can sit, squat or stand in the Hofvijver proper wearing a special cap to convey the image of barely keeping your head above water and that it is time for a Normal Academic Standard.
- **Be a local activist** | No time to travel to The Hague? Contact the local demonstration leaders and take action in one of the 14 university towns on 6 April. They will provide you with all the materials you need to make it a great success.
- **Be visible online** | Support the campaign online by sharing the resources in this tool kit. Our website will feature the stories of people who are willing to share a testimonial on the importance of high-quality university education and how underfunding has put it under threat. The interview and photography session for this will take no more than 30 minutes. Please share and like all of these stories on social media.
- **Write letters** | In addition, various people have already indicated that they would like to write letters to the national and regional media. We would be delighted if you did! Please use the core message in this tool kit as a starting point. Let us know if you need any more input.

If you have not yet done so, [please sign up right away for one of the roles above using this form](#). If you would like to be interviewed, please also indicate this on the form and we will contact you for an appointment.

This tool kit contains all the materials you will need to take action. If you feel that something is lacking or need something in a specific format, please email us using the details below.

Many thanks and good luck!

Kind regards, on behalf of the VSNU/WO in Actie,

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## Terug naar een normaal academisch peil



[normaalacademischpeil.nl](http://normaalacademischpeil.nl)



### Core message – long

Dutch universities are among the best in the world. This benefits all of society. It ensures that our economy is competitive and innovative. Our universities educate the people we need to meet the challenges of our time, such as the coronavirus pandemic and the climate crisis.

Unfortunately, our universities are struggling due to being structurally underfunded. Although the number of students has been increasing for years, funding per student has dropped. This has left precious little time and financial resources to conduct high-quality research or deliver high-quality teaching, let alone both.

However, these close connections between research and teaching are crucial for the quality of university education. The best way to educate students is have researchers give lectures to them. This way, students can learn first-hand about research methods and recent scientific insights and develop the inquisitive and critical attitude they need, both in the world of academia and beyond.

As a result of underfunding, students no longer receive the education they deserve and our teaching staff and researchers are struggling to cope. It is high time to address this situation and to work towards a Normal Academic Standard to ensure the students of today receive the proper education they need to meet the challenges of tomorrow.

This is why teaching staff, researchers, students, administrators and alumni of all 14 universities will be congregating on Tuesday, 6 April to sound the alarm. They will be calling on the new government to invest 1.1 billion euros on a structural basis. This call for investment is supported by the recently published PwC report commissioned by the Ministry of Education, Culture and Science. These investments are essential to restoring the level of Dutch university education to a Normal Academic Standard.

Visit [www.normaalacademischpeil.nl](http://www.normaalacademischpeil.nl) for more information or to join in.

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## Core message – short

Dutch universities are among the best in the world. This benefits all of society. It ensures that our economy is competitive and innovative. Our universities educate the people we need to meet the challenges of our time.

Unfortunately, our universities are struggling due to being structurally underfunded. Although the number of students has been increasing for years, funding per student has dropped. This has left precious little time and financial resources to conduct high-quality research or deliver high-quality teaching, let alone both.

Students no longer receive the education they deserve and our teaching staff and researchers are struggling to cope. It is high time to address this situation and to work towards a Normal Academic Standard to ensure the students of today receive the proper education they need to meet the challenges of tomorrow.

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## Images, photos and logos

You can download various materials using this link: <https://we.tl/t-7wTHEp9L5W>

- The logo
- Images for social media (Instagram, Facebook, Twitter)
- Background for online meetings

## Online

If you wish to show online support for the campaign, always use at least **#NAP** or **#NormaalAcademischPeil**. If you have any space left, you can also use **#wateraandelippen**. We would prefer you not to use **#wateraandelippen** on its own. Always use 'Normal Academic Standard' in combination with other terms. You can share stories easily using the social media buttons on the website [www.normaalacademischpeil.nl](http://www.normaalacademischpeil.nl). If you want to post something online yourself, always use the core message as a basis. We will help get you started with the following standard posts:

## Sample copy

### Facebook

Dutch universities are among the best in the world. This benefits all of society. Unfortunately, our universities are struggling due to being structurally underfunded. Although the number of students has been increasing for years, funding per student has dropped. Our lecturers and professors are struggling to cope. It is high time to work towards a Normal Academic Standard to ensure the students of today receive the education they need to meet the challenges of tomorrow.

This is why students, administrators and staff of all 14 universities will be congregating on Tuesday, 6 April to sound the alarm! We will be calling on the new government to invest 1.1 billion



euros on a structural basis. These investments are essential to restoring the level of Dutch university education to a Normal Academic Standard.

➔ Visit [www.normaalacademischpeil.nl](http://www.normaalacademischpeil.nl) for more information or to join in.

#normaalacademischpeil #NAP #wateraandelippen

### Instagram

Dutch universities are among the best in the world. This benefits all of society. Unfortunately, our universities are struggling due to being structurally underfunded. Although the number of students has been increasing for years, funding per student has dropped. Our lecturers and professors are struggling to cope. It is high time to work towards a Normal Academic Standard to ensure the students of today receive the education they need to meet the challenges of tomorrow.

This is why students, administrators and staff of all 14 universities will be congregating on Tuesday, 6 April to sound the alarm! We will be calling on the new government to invest 1.1 billion euros on a structural basis. These investments are essential to restoring the level of Dutch university education to a Normal Academic Standard.

➔ Visit [normaalacademischpeil.nl](http://normaalacademischpeil.nl) for more information or to join in.

#normaalacademischpeil #NAP #wateraandelippen

### LinkedIn

Dutch universities are among the best in the world. This benefits all of society. Unfortunately, our universities are struggling due to being structurally underfunded. Although the number of students has been increasing for years, funding per student has dropped. Our lecturers and professors are struggling to cope. It is high time to work towards a Normal Academic Standard to ensure the students of today receive the education they need to meet the challenges of tomorrow.

This is why students, administrators and staff of all 14 universities will be congregating on Tuesday, 6 April to sound the alarm! We will be calling on the new government to invest 1.1 billion euros on a structural basis. These investments are essential to restoring the level of Dutch university education to a Normal Academic Standard.

➔ Visit [www.normaalacademischpeil.nl](http://www.normaalacademischpeil.nl) for more information or to join in.

### Twitter

On 6 April, students, administrators and staff of all 14 Dutch universities will be congregating to sound the alarm! We are barely keeping our heads above water. An additional 1.1 billion euros are needed to restore higher education to a Normal Academic Standard. ➔ Join us at [www.normaalacademischpeil.nl](http://www.normaalacademischpeil.nl)

### Share your own story

Would you like to share your own story about why you are striving to achieve a Normal Academic Standard? Please do! Professors, lecturers and administrators should consider the following questions:

- What do you love about your profession?



- How can you see structural underfunding reflected at your university?
- Has the coronavirus crisis made this worse?
- How have things changed in recent years?
- What will it take to turn the tide?
- Why is it important to address the structural underfunding?
- What is the added value of university education?
- Can you illustrate this with examples from your own work or Dutch examples from your field?

Students should consider the following questions:

- Why did you choose the degree programme that you did? Do you like it?
- How have you experienced the past year?
- What do you think of university education's cry for help?
- As a student, have you noticed structural underfunding at your university?
- How has it manifested itself?
- Why is it important to address the structural underfunding?
- What do you hope will change for students?
- What is the added value of university education?

**Always end the post with a call to action. Don't forget to tag and add hashtags!**

### **Photos with a post**

A photo with a post always goes down well. Include a photo or selfie of you wearing the special special cap (black cap topped by a red square), with the red square clearly visible, or use one of the photos provided in this tool kit. You can request a special academic cap from BKB via Linh Vu using the email address [linhvu@bkb.nl](mailto:linhvu@bkb.nl).

### **Email signature in the run-up to 6 April**

I am taking action to improve university education and research. Due to underfunding, our teaching staff/students/education professionals are barely keeping their heads above water. It is high time to restore university education to a Normal Academic Standard. Visit [www.normaalacademischpeil.nl](http://www.normaalacademischpeil.nl) and join us!

### **Email signature on 6 April**

I am out of the office today, campaigning to improve university education and research. Due to underfunding, our teaching staff/students/education professionals are barely keeping their heads above water. It is high time to restore university education to a Normal Academic Standard. Support our campaign and visit [www.normaalacademischpeil.nl](http://www.normaalacademischpeil.nl)

### **Background for online meetings**

Would you like to use a digital background for an online meeting in Zoom or Teams? You can! You can find the right material for this here. You can find brief instructions for installing the background below:

Zoom:

1. Open Zoom and click on 'Settings'.
2. Select 'Virtual background' in the left-hand tab.
3. You will then see a selection of pre-selected background images.
4. To add your own photo, click on 'Add photo' and select your favourite image.



#### Microsoft Teams:

1. Go to the meeting controls and select More actions, then More options > Apply background effects.
2. Select Blur if you want to blur the background or choose one of the available images to replace it. To upload your own image, select Add new and choose a .JPG, .PNG, or .BMP file from your computer.
  1. To turn off background effects, select the Turn off background effects option.
3. Select Preview to see what the chosen background will look like before you apply it, then select Apply.

## FAQs

The FAQs for the campaign are shown below. If you are asked any questions by the media, this list will help you to be well prepared. If there are any questions that you cannot answer, please contact us (BKB) or Femke van Zijst (VSNU).

### What is Alarm Day?

On 6 April 2021, lecturers and professors, together with students, representatives of trade unions, works councils, researchers and many other organisations active in academic education, will be sounding the alarm for the higher education sector. On that day, people will be protesting in The Hague and other university towns to raise awareness of the underfunding of the academic education sector. We will present outgoing Minister for Education Van Engelshoven and the new MPs elected to Parliament with a manifesto. In that manifesto, we call for a permanent annual capital injection of 1.1 billion euros.

### Who organised Alarm Day?

Alarm Day was initiated by WOinActie, which, in association with the VSNU umbrella organisation, has entered into a broad coalition comprising: WOinActie, the 14 Dutch universities, the LSVb and ISO student unions, the LKVV (the umbrella organisation of student societies), the AOb's Higher Education and Research department, FNV's Teaching and Research department, CNV's Teaching and Research department, the NFU, AC/FBZ for healthcare professionals, and the association of university representative advisory councils, LOVUM. It has been endorsed by PNN, the association of PhD students, and Postdoc.nl. The coalition is growing. Every day, more people declare their solidarity with the protesters, including student representatives on university councils and students, alumni and people from the business community.

### Why is the academic education sector sounding the alarm at this time?

Due to chronic underfunding, our universities are struggling. Although the number of students has been rising for years, the amount of funding allocated to universities for each individual student has decreased. As a result, academic staff do not have enough time or money to either conduct high-quality research or deliver high-quality teaching, let alone both. Due to this underfunding, our students no longer receive the education they deserve, and our lecturers and professors are struggling to cope. It is high time that this situation was addressed. Now is the time we must convince the newly elected members of parliament that they must urge the parties that will form the new cabinet to make a €1.1 billion capital injection, allowing lecturers and professors to resume their duties to a normal academic standard.

**So how will this Alarm Day differ from the incendiary letter WOinActie presented to the Ministry of Education, Culture and Science in February?** WOinActie has been raising awareness of the chronic underfunding of the higher education sector for some time now, in various ways. The coronavirus crisis showed up the problem even more clearly and caused an even heavier workload for academic staff. In association with trade unions, university councils,



works councils and student councils, WOinActie therefore sent an incendiary letter to the Ministry of Education, Culture and Science in February.

**The Ministry has already committed to injecting an additional €8.5 billion to the education sector. Don't you think that might be enough?**

These funds are not meant to solve the chronic underfunding problem. Rather they are compensation for the impact of the coronavirus pandemic. Of the €8.5 billion pledged to compensate for the impact of the coronavirus pandemic, €5.8 billion will go to primary and secondary schools, while €2.7 billion will be divided between VET colleges, universities and universities of applied sciences. Ultimately, this boils down to a one-off amount of €0.4 billion for academic degree programmes and research. These funds are meant to be used to offset the backlogs caused by the pandemic. In addition, the sector will receive another €350 million to compensate for the halving of students' tuition fees, to prevent universities from having to pay these fees out of their own pockets. These funds will not go any way towards resolving the underfunding we have seen in recent years due to the fact that research funding did not increase in line with rising student numbers, and due to the multiple hats employees are wearing.

We are pleased that financial support is now being provided to properly support staff and students during these difficult times. The coronavirus pandemic has had a huge impact on academic degree programmes and research projects, just like it has had a huge impact across society. The stimulus package is a comprehensive package that focuses on student well-being and students' progress towards their degrees. It will also go a long way to compensating for the fact that researchers have fallen behind in their research projects. In other good news, universities will receive additional permanent funding to cover the recent growth in student enrolment numbers – rather sooner than expected. The additional lecturers, student counsellors and teaching support staff this funding will allow us to appoint should help us prevent the current heavy workloads from getting any heavier.

But however ambitious and welcome this package may be, it will not solve the problem of the tertiary education and research sector being chronically underfunded. The new government will have its work cut out for it, trying to resolve that challenge.

**Recently, a study on the funding of the higher education sector conducted by PWC at the behest of the Ministry of Education, Culture and Science confirmed that the sector needs more funding. So why are we organising this day?**

We are pleased that the [report](#) entitled *Toereikendheid, doelmatigheid en kostentoerekening in het mbo, hbo en wo&o* (Adequacy, effectiveness and cost allocation at VET colleges, universities of applied sciences and universities and research) concluded that the higher education sector will need considerably more funding to 'realise its ambitions with regard to high-quality degree programmes and easy access to said degree programmes'. Now we must convince the newly elected members of parliament and the incoming cabinet that it is time the education and research sector were given a capital injection, so as to ensure that we can return to normal academic standards. Due to chronic underfunding, our lecturers and researchers are exhausted. Chronic deficits have affected all degree programmes (the popular ones as well as the less popular ones), as well as all members of staff and all students.

**How did the report arrive at the request for €1.1 billion in annual funding?**

Academics have unacceptably heavy workloads. Since the number of students has risen, lecturers need more and more time to teach courses. As a result, they often end up carrying out their research in evenings and on weekends. This situation is untenable.





After completing a study commissioned by the Dutch House of Representatives, [the PwC research agency found](#) in 2021 that universities are not receiving enough funding; a €1.1 billion capital injection is needed. If we do not get this capital injection, scientists will no longer be able to provide our country with the innovative solutions we so desperately need, even though the Dutch economy and society rely on the knowledge generated at universities.

### **What will €1.1 billion for the academic education sector help us achieve?**

A reduction of lecturers' and professors' workloads, an end to frequent overtime and a return to proper academic standards. Students will be taught by researchers, and academics will be able to continue providing our society with the innovative solutions it needs.

### **Why don't universities just pay their lecturers better wages and hire more people?**

#### **Universities have a lot of money, don't they?**

A recent [report by the Education Inspectorate](#) shows that universities do not have excessive reserves. In other words, the reserves that universities currently have are necessary for the pursuit of responsible (financial) policies, and must not be used to take unacceptable risks.

Due to the strong growth in student numbers over the years, for which universities were granted additional funding for teaching, but not for research, it has become increasingly difficult for lecturers to conduct research on top of their teaching duties, even though this is essential for high-quality degree programmes. Furthermore, classes are getting increasingly large, and lecturers have very heavy workloads. The study recently completed by PwC confirmed this picture.

### **What are you hoping to achieve?**

We hope that this day of protests, which is supported by many organisations active in the higher education sector, will convince the government that the shortages experienced by the academic education sector are urgent and that an additional €1.1 billion must be allocated annually to the higher education sector. This will allow us to guarantee high-quality academic research and degree programmes.

**Primary and secondary schools are also facing deficits and shortages. So why should we allocate more funding to the academic education sector at this time?** Of course, shortages have been occurring in many places – not just in the higher education sector. But this involves a chronic deficit that has been growing for years. We are now seeing the enormous impact this is having on the lecturers and professors involved. The only thing lecturers get round to during the day is teaching. So they conduct their research in the evenings and spend their weekends drawing up grant applications for future research projects. Lecturers and professors are exhausted. In addition, the chronic underfunding will also have a huge impact on the quality of the degree programmes we will teach in the future. This is not something we can allow to happen. Things cannot go on this way. It is time we received a capital injection, so that we can return to normal academic standards.

### **Do you, in your capacity as the coalition for a Normal Academic Standard, advocate the abolition of student loans?**

As a broad coalition, we are calling for an annual €1.1 billion capital injection for the education and research sector because universities are struggling and the people who work there are exhausted. Workloads have become increasingly heavy in recent years. Students, too, have noticed that their lecturers and professors are carrying an overly heavy burden and have found that the quality of their degree programmes is suffering. At the same time, students themselves have also indicated that they have felt under a great deal of pressure in recent years. Since the introduction of student loans, more students have felt financially insecure, students have worked



more hours on top of their degree programmes, and some students have experienced greater anxiety. The coronavirus pandemic has only exacerbated those feelings. Students without worries are more effective students – that much is clear. If the abolition of student loans and a reintroduction of a student grant of sorts can help alleviate some of their worries, we should consider it. Of course, the funding of student grants should not reduce the education budget. It is up to the politicians to make the decisions in this matter.

**The higher education sector has been campaigning for several years. Have previous protests not been effective?**

Due to WoinActie and trade unions' frequent protests organised to raise awareness of the issues faced by the tertiary education sector, politicians have paid more attention to this subject in recent years. This eventually resulted in MPs raising questions in parliament and asking the Minister for Education to have an independent investigation into the funding of higher education carried out. This resulted in the PWC report that has recently been released.

**Has the coronavirus pandemic exacerbated universities' situation, in financial terms and in other respects?**

The coronavirus pandemic has resulted in workloads getting even heavier, additional venues being leased and investments being made in things such as online teaching. The costs associated with the above are partly covered by the amount the cabinet has recently committed to allocate to the sector for the next 2½ years. Of the €8.5 billion to be allocated to all Dutch education sectors, €2.5 billion should be distributed among VET colleges, universities and universities of applied sciences.

**How is the Netherlands doing, compared to other countries?**

Dutch universities are among the best in the world. **The Netherlands is one of few countries in the world whose universities are nearly all included in [international rankings](#).** We very frequently publish the results of groundbreaking research projects. Unfortunately, we are now expected to keep performing like this even though our funding has decreased considerably.

**What is the difference between research universities and universities of applied sciences?**

Research universities and universities of applied sciences are equal but different. Whereas universities of applied sciences prepare young people for professional practice, university students receive academic training, which focuses on theoretical knowledge and research.

**What added value is created by lecturers who are also researchers?**

Since lecturers are also expected to conduct research, they are able to discuss the latest trends in the field and how to conduct research. In actual practice, due to the funding allocation methods used and the sharp increase in the number of students, universities are forced to employ a relatively large number of lecturers who teach courses but do not have any time to conduct research. As a result, the quality of degree programmes is deteriorating. Therefore, research funding must reflect the increase in the number of students, which will allow us to return to normal academic standards.