



# AMSTERDAM YOUNG ACADEMY

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Evaluation report  
2018-2022

## Amsterdam Young Academy

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# Introduction

With this evaluation, we, the Amsterdam Young Academy (AYA), would like to present what we have achieved over the last four years since our installment on 6 November 2018.

AYA is an independent platform where talented young scientists from different disciplines meet to develop views on science, scientific policy and how to build bridges between science and society in Amsterdam. Amsterdam Young Academy is an initiative of the University of Amsterdam (UvA) and the Vrije Universiteit (VU).

As important, with this evaluation,<sup>1</sup> we would like to share our ambitions in continuing as AYA, focusing on a framework of academic care. In the remainder of this document we discuss how we started in 2018, our accomplishments from 2018 – 2022 and our ambitions for 2023 – 2027.

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<sup>1</sup> This evaluation comprises a general overview of our activities, highlighting several aspects but not everything, of what we did. We supplement the evaluation with a document listing all of our activities per year and providing a financial overview.

## Getting started

The Amsterdam Young Academy (AYA) was launched on 6 November, 2018 at the Artis Library and officially installed by Tacco Dibbits, general director of the Rijksmuseum. 30 new members were welcomed and sent off on an adventure.



Sjoerd Repping, together with co-initiators Kristine Steenbergh, Jeroen de Ridder, Hilde Geurts and Rens Vliegthart, welcomed the new founding members comprising excellent early career scholars from four institutions: ACTA, Amsterdam UMC, UvA and the VU. With 30 members AYA is the largest local young academy in the Netherlands.

The (former) rectores magnifici of the UvA and the VU were present, sharing their inspiring perspectives on and hopes for AYA. Ever since, both Professor Dr. Karen Maex and Professor Dr. Vinod Subramaniam kept a keen eye on our development and they welcomed our input, as well as that we have welcomed theirs.



# Accomplishments

In this section we discuss what we have done in relation to the goals that were set out in the founding documents and the criteria for the evaluation outlined in the letter formally approving AYA (**see letter: SC/rk/2018/0081; 2018cu0065**). Here, an overview of activities undertaken and as requested by letter of approval, focus on (a) the selection procedure, (b) the decision-making process, (c) grants and (d) year activities. After that we discuss the goals of AYA as were laid out by the founders and how we have met these goals.

## APPLICATION PROCESS

The composition of AYA is intended to represent Amsterdam's academic institutions, aiming for balanced representation of gender, nationality (Dutch versus International), discipline, and time after PhD defense. Rules for AYA Membership selection are the following:

- Every year the board of AYA publishes a call for new members. Selection will be held through an open round with the application being limited to the application form and a CV.
- Eligible for AYA membership are employees of Amsterdam's academic institutions who received their PhD within the last 10 years, measured from the date of the call.
- This period may be extended up to a maximum of 2 years in case of:
  - child birth (12 months per child); this applies equally to men and women
  - illness or childcare (formal reduction in working hours);
  - training in a clinical specialism (total aggregated time spent on training).
- Former AYA members are not eligible for a new membership period.
- The AYA Board proposes a new member selection committee to the General Assembly of AYA. The member selection committee will consist of at least one AYA Board member and two further AYA members. In its proposal for a new selection committee, the AYA Board will aim for a balanced representation of genders and disciplines.
- The selection committee invites applicants for an interview based on their CV and motivation.
- After the interview round, prospective candidates will be nominated for AYA membership by the selection committee. The selection committee will aim for a balanced representation of genders, nationalities, and disciplines
- The AYA Board appoints new AYA members nominated by the selection committee.
- AYA Membership lasts 4 years at maximum.

## DECISION MAKING PROCESS

The decision making procedures at AYA are formulated in the Amsterdam Young Academy Rules and Regulations which were approved by the General Assembly March 20, 2019 and placed as a separate appendix to this evaluation document. Here we highlight some of the core aspects of our decision-making process.

All active AYA members form the General Assembly. The General Assembly meets four times per year. Each active AYA member carries one vote. Voting by proxy is not allowed. Majority vote wins. The collective voice of the General Assembly carries the highest authority within AYA. Members of the General Assembly are expected to join one or more of the three thematic working groups (see below). One member of each working group will act as chair for the working group. The working group chair is an AYA Board member. The chair of the working group is the driving force for the working group and leading its organization.

The AYA Board consists of a chair, three members who each chair and represent a working group, and a member who maintains contacts with the National Young Academy and the other local Young Academies. The board is responsible for:

- preparation of the General Assembly;
- implementing the decisions made by the General Assembly; representing AYA;
- informing AYA members about issues presented to the Board from external sources;
- presenting overviews of finances, yearly reports, proposing a working program;
- interacting with the Deans, presidents, and other administrative bodies within Amsterdam's academic institutions;
- any other task laid down in regulations agreed upon by the General Assembly.

The chair of the board:

- acts as an official spokesperson for AYA;
- sets the agenda for Board meetings;
- chairs the meetings of the Board;
- chairs the meetings of the General Assembly;
- is responsible for any other task laid down in regulations agreed upon by the General Assembly.

If there is a tie in any voting procedures amongst the Board members, the chair's vote will count as double. Any opinion voiced by members of the Board as representative of AYA should reflect the opinion of the General Assembly.

## THEMATIC WORKING GROUPS

Together with Barbara Coolen of Spui25, AYA has worked together to create a community, facilitating its members and their ambitions. In the end, AYA is based on the work and achievements of **50 members** cooperating in thematic working groups:

### a. Interdisciplinarity:

- (i). stimulates dialogue and collaboration between disciplines.
- (ii). celebrates the diversity of disciplines at Amsterdam's academic institutions. AYA organizes events where experts from different fields are brought together to reflect on academic, scientific or societal themes that benefit from a multidisciplinary approach. These events use both formal and informal settings.

### b. Science Policy

- (i). develops a vision on (academic) policy (e.g. allocation of university funds, staff performance evaluation criteria, NWA - National Science Agenda, UG themes) and speaks out on this in the form of meetings, writing position papers, involvement in debates and discussions, etc.;
- (ii). brings together the community of early-career researchers in Amsterdam, by organizing workshops/meetings on (academic) policy issues;
- (iii). communicates with other the National Young Academy and other local Young Academies in the Netherlands to exchange ideas on policy related matters.

### c. Science and Society

- (i). develops a vision on AYA's specific opportunities for outreach, complementing existing activities at Amsterdam's academic institutions;
- (ii). initiates outreach activities and explores opportunities for interactive rather than unidirectional communication.

Every member is active in at least one group. Each group is chaired by a board member. AYA also installed practical working groups that focus on internal and external communication, recruitment of new members, and the AYA Grants Program that brings together the wide range of different scientific disciplines AYA accommodates.

## GRANTS PROGRAM

Our grants program facilitates AYA members in their projects and activities. Groups of members (typically 2-5) may apply for grants with a size of max. €2.500 per person. Student-assistants or other expenses can be reimbursed. Projects cover interdisciplinary themes to establish stronger connection between AYA members, between faculties and between the two universities. Usually, grants support projects embedded in the three

thematic working groups. To be granted, proposals must be submitted that are based on cooperation between different members; low time investment; and high success rate.

## YEAR ACTIVITIES

Every group of first year AYA members organizes a year activity. Here we briefly describe one of them: the **2019 Science Tour**.

For the year project of 2019, AYA members have been working on a Science Tour through the city of Amsterdam as a means to “build bridges between science and society”. The AYA Science Tour consists of an audio tour and podcast, and aims to guide listeners (students, tourists, citizens of Amsterdam and the general public) through the often overlooked scholarly relevance of ten locations in Amsterdam. At each location, two AYA members provide insights from their specific discipline on the connection between science and social issues related to that particular location – both in English and in Dutch. The audiotour and podcasts are meant to (1) present AYA to citizens and visitors of Amsterdam, (2) show society that science is everywhere, and (3) introduce listeners to the role of science in their everyday life. The audiotour and podcasts have been published on [Soundcloud](#), iTunes, [Spotify](#) and via the platform [iziTRAVEL](#). On October 13, 2020 the AYA Science Tour was launched. The AYA Science Tour was developed as part of the 2018 first year project, in collaboration with OORKRAMERS and Science on Air. The aim of the tour was to present AYA to the citizens of Amsterdam and to build bridges between science and society. The tour takes listeners (students, tourists, citizens of Amsterdam and the general public) to eight locations in Amsterdam. For each location, an audio tour and podcast is available in which AYA members provide insights on the connection between science and social issues (related to that particular location) based on their own research. Radio 1 aired an interview with the chair of AYA on the Science Tour and Het Parool recommended the tour in its column ‘Weekend Tips’.

## GOALS

The founders of AYA formulated four goals, here we will discuss how we have met these four goals.

- 1. AYA is an energetic, active group where young scientists from different disciplines of both universities freely interact with each other about topics that cover the complete spectrum of contemporary academia*

Have we met this goal? We think yes! AYA consists of a group of young scientists from the VU and UvA (see members) and AYA that cover all faculties. We regularly meet in formal and informal sessions throughout the year (see also discussion regarding points 3 and 4).

Aside from the substance that we discuss in these meetings, AYA offers more: it is platform for people to share experiences, insights and ideas. And AYA has offered more, as it has assisted its members in growing as an academic professional, like **Sanne Kruikemeier (cohort 2018)**...



*Being a member of AYA has meant a lot to me. It has given me direct access to more knowledge and collaboration in the field of science policy. Moreover, it is very inspiring to hear what other talented and young scientists are doing. My network has become so much bigger and broader! It has also stimulated me to do more regarding communication with society, like writing columns and I learned how I can encourage others to collaborate more.*

**Dr. Sanne Kruikemeier, Amsterdam School of Communication Research, UvA**

...and former AYA chair (2019) **Linda Douw (cohort 2018)**

*What a great opportunity to work together with other Amsterdam academics within AYA for 4 years. On the one hand, it became clear to me which difficulties in academia really require resolving. AYA is a great venue to actually prioritize those difficulties. On the other hand, the many interdisciplinary interactions gave me an even clearer picture of my own research field: where else would I be inspired by research ideas from historians and linguists or economists and sociologists? In short, being a (board) member of AYA has truly advanced my research and leadership skills!*

**Dr. Linda Douw, Anatomy & Neurosciences, VU**



2. *AYA is an independent from the UvA and VU. As such, AYA independently organizes activities and formulates ideas and opinions that are shared widely. AYA frequently organizes activities where members share knowledge and discuss things like interdisciplinarity, the role of science in society and other (pressing) issues. Aside from these informal meetings, AYA organizes at least four official activities per year. In these activities the free and intellectual debate play a central role.*

Have we met this goal? Yes. AYA has developed a rich set of possibilities and activities where AYA members can discuss issues such as the role of science in society, interdisciplinarity, sustainability, recognition and rewards and other pressing issues. This has resulted in various products:

- We have made several audio(visual) applications available, including [the AYA Science <+> Society Tour](#) on Spotify, and the [Pandemic nursing: Audio Recordings as a Window into Nursing during COVID-19](#). We also have delivered several in- and external workshops and training sessions, for example on delivering a TEDtalk, scientific storytelling, and on how to take Diversity & Inclusion seriously.
- Academics are human beings, as we emphasize with, for example, the Academic Hikes, where AYA members hike at different routes throughout the Netherlands, by AYA member Pieter Coppens.

Aside AYA members contributing to debates within and outside the university, we do more:

- In valorizing our work, AYA works together with the Amsterdam newspaper Het Parool where several of our members have had their opinion article published, like [Katinka van der Kooij](#), [Umberto Olcese](#), [Jos Akkermans et al.](#), [Hanneke Stuit](#), [Silke Muylaert](#), [Eddie Brummelman](#) and [Yarin Eski](#).
- On top of that, we have created our own AYA-zine with its first edition focusing on [Recognition and Rewards in Academia: Young academics offer a new perspective which was widely distributed at the UvA and VU](#). This new perspective has concretized itself in an event where we have presented our future ambitions for [a framework of academic care at the UvA Library](#) and at [Spui25](#).

3. *AYA is a stepping-stone for young researchers to join the Jonge Academie of the KNAW.*

Have we met this goal? Yes, but it requires attention. In 2021, Eddie Brummelman joined the Jonge Academie. As Eddie Brummelman explains, AYA was very important for his development: “As a member of AYA and in my period as board member and vice-chair of AYA I have learned how valuable it is to bring together young researchers from different disciplines. Together they can change the academic world and society at large. Young researchers are in a unique position: they experience the pressure to start their academic career but they also have the ambition and drive to change the world. AYA taught me to bring together young researchers, bundle their unique strengths and, together arrive at new and unexpected ideas”

In the section on our future ambitions, we discuss how we can get more AYA members to join the Jonge Academie. On the one hand, one member that made it to the Jonge Academie is not a lot. On the other hand, we have to acknowledge that entering the Jonge Academie is not easy: the Jonge Academie only admits 10 new members each year. So it is highly selective. We think we can be proud of the fact that in the past 4 years 1 of the 40 members of the Jonge Academie came out of AYA. In our future ambitions we outline how we hope to consolidate, and perhaps increase, the number of AYA members that get elected by the Jonge Academie.

4. *AYA is independent from both universities and will give independent advice to the VU and UvA about all aspects of modern-day academia.*

We have also established significant awareness of our presence within the universities: from being representative for early career scholars to sustainability. We are being noticed! Specifically:

- We advised the boards of both universities on issues facing young academics in our yearly meetings with the rectores, including workload and pressures. Moreover, AYA members affiliated with the VU were invited to write a report on the future of the VU post-pandemic. This resulted in a report titled *The Future VU Amsterdam* (by Elsje van Bergen, Linda Douw & Younes Saramifar), that was discussed at the Board of the VU.
- There is the [AYA Guide for Sustainable Meetings](#) project that focused on developing a manual to help organize sustainable, low-impact meetings. The project group

focused in particular on food and drinks, which are an important component of workshops and meetings in general. We also have designed sustainable hoodies to wear and to sport sustainability visibly.

## Future ambition: taking academic care seriously

In the previous sections we, briefly, discussed our start and our accomplishments in the past years. In the next section we want to talk about our ambitions for the coming four years. We are very motivated to move AYA in the next phase of its existence by deepening and broadening AYA. In particular, we started the d implementing the Recognition & Rewarding debate into [a framework of academic care by taking it seriously](#).

- **First of all**, we want to continue taking care of ourselves as a group, by strengthening our network, our activities and our impact, as we already did, but this time striving toward *academic care*.
- **Second**, we will advance our impact within academia as the wider community in which we operate by being involved in concretizing the Recognition & Rewarding debate into academic care as due diligent university governance. There current initiatives to work toward an AYA Recognition and Rewarding price. Part of this as well is giving biannual (unsolicited but) necessary “eigenwijs” advise to the executive board of both universities, grounded in a mixed-methodological inquiry that monitors Amsterdam’s young academics experiences, both quantitatively through a survey amongst early career scholars, and qualitatively through focus groups. Plans for a pilot of the Monitor of Amsterdam’s Young Academics, or MAYA, are currently being drawn up.
- **Thirdly**, and in having grown as very new young academy, we want to become an adult, by solidifying our connections with other local young academies, expand our societal impact through initiatives, actions and deliverables. We are already part of [Open Research Amsterdam](#) through which we want to engage more. Also, we want to become a more robust stepping stone for our members to the Jonge Akademie, as has happened with [Eddie Brummelman](#), for example.
- **Fourth**, and last, being visible is part of making an impact with academic care, inside but also outside the academic community of Amsterdam. Therefore, we have started revamping our current website, as well as having created a new house style and better communication strategies.

To be able to fulfil our ambitions, we want and need to continue. Therefore, we ask you for another four-year mandate for AYA with the same budget (**see attachments**). We are convinced that AYA’s voice will only become more visible and important in both universities in the future.