LEADERSHIP AND CHANGE MANAGEMENT
A compass for change adventurers

Programme pitch
Organizational transformations are adventures where leadership, rather than plans and standard operating procedures, is key to success. We teach the latest scientific knowledge on change management as well as the skills that you will ‘need on the ground’ as a frontrunner (‘leader’) of change, namely intervention/project management, rhetorical, and political skills. This programme’s unique focus on leadership of change will help you discover your compass and social responsibility to navigate yourself and others through change.

The programme is about

Area of interest
The Leadership & Change Management programme is a traveler’s guide for frontrunners (change agents and change crew) in organizations.

In this programme, you will acquire evidence-based knowledge about the complexities of (planned) strategic interventions from multiple perspectives and in various settings including private companies, public organizations, and large-scale institutions. All of the courses offered in the Leadership Change Management programme are taught with both macro (e.g., organizational/institutional) and micro (e.g., individual, behavioral) perspectives on the subject matter. At the same time you will learn about the complexities of implementing change on the ground, where plans and standard operating procedures usually provide little help and where leaders rise must to the occasion. By learning project management, rhetorical, and political skills, and—last but not least—by becoming comfortable with your personal story, growth and vision (as ‘reflective practitioners’), you might learn to become that frontrunner (and thus, ‘leader’) of change.

You are in the right programme if you are interested in questions such as: How can I make organizations more healthy and successful based on evidence-based practices? What is the best intervention in a given context? How do I manage stakeholders with conflicting interests? How should a leader best ‘pitch’ planned change to gain buy-in from others? How should a leader of change deal with resistance? Is there a way for a leader to improve and learn from a change experience and still ‘lead’? Is there a way to connect my own story of learning and personal growth with organizational learning and visionary leadership?

Core methodology
We believe that the complexities of leadership in changing environments can only be grasped by openness and reflectivity about multiple research philosophies. Therefore, our programme has a multidisciplinary focus, which implies the use of both quantitative and qualitative methodologies. In this way, we can examine and understand the multiplicity of challenges leaders and managers face in today’s changing workplaces. You will therefore learn that using both quantitative and qualitative methods is necessary to understand how leadership and organizational change work in practice. Importantly, you will learn to analyze particular organizational transformation cases and to design change interventions, together with understanding the key issues in the organizational transformation cases. Although it is our aim to instill an all-round and multidisciplinary focus, in their own master’s theses students are allowed to develop specialties in either qualitative or quantitative methodologies.

Target group
Students of the Leadership & Change Management programme are original and multidisciplinary thinkers and come from a very diverse range of backgrounds that are not necessarily restricted to business studies and economics. As we aim to instill an interdisciplinary mindset in strong professional development, students from bachelor programmes in Psychology, Sociology, and the Humanities will find it very useful to deepen their knowledge about our subject matter, given their ability and willingness to get acquainted with sufficient foundational knowledge about macro-organizational (e.g., institutional) and micro-behavioral (organizational behavior) theories.

Challenge to distinguish
The Leadership and Change Management program offers multiple possibilities for excellent and ambitious students to distinguish themselves by taking additional courses and participating in tailored activities. We offer the renowned VU Honours Programme that includes advanced courses in a small-class environment, and provide special opportunities to meet with businesses throughout the programme.

Master’s relevance

Aspirational job (far future)
Depending on how you will choose to craft your own career, this Master’s programme can ultimately place you as the Chief Officer of Learning, Restructuring, Human Resources, or in mid- or late career staged as the CEO.

Actual placement (near future)
The Master’s programme will be the kick-off to your career as specialist of both leadership and organizational change that, up to 10 years after graduation, may open doors for you as a project manager, a consultant, or a specialist in organizational transformation or change management, or general management in private, public or large-scale institutions.

Community

The Leadership and Change Management programme features many social and professional activities that you can be part of. We aim to form a strong community that will help you both during your studies and afterwards. In terms of professional activities, we start each academic year with a three-week long project management bootcamp. This bootcamp will serve as a platform to get to know your fellow students and are required to the faculty members that you will work with during the program. In addition, we organize an alumni event at the start of the year (except for this year, since it our first year), during which 'frontrunner' alumni will connect with you to discuss their experiences during their studies and in finding their first jobs. Throughout the year, we will organize similar meetings, for example in cooperation with Career Services (e.g., CV training, company visits). Our goal is to support you as much as possible for your transition to the labour market. The programme includes other activities as part of our community as well, such as a LinkedIn group that features alumni and current students, our student organization Aurora that organizes several interesting meetings, and a graduation ceremony at the end of year during which we celebrate your successes.

Learning goals and how the programme is designed

Learning goals
1. Have the advanced and original academic and research skills to contribute to the body of knowledge
2. Have thorough knowledge of relevant theory and methods
3. Have an academic approach to solving complex (business/economics) problems
4. Have the professional social skills to interact with other professionals
5. Have an horizon beyond the professional area
6. Are self-reflexive professionals

How the programme is designed
- Throughout the programme students learn to review and analyze critically the current academic debate about leadership and organizational change from various perspectives. Together with research methodology courses (focusing on both quantitative and qualitative approaches) students will be well equipped to make their own original contribution and create knowledge in their master thesis that is not only rigorously conducted but also original, interesting and important.
- After two stage-setting core courses on "Perspectives on Organizational Change" and "Intervention and project management" students can opt for two topical modules that each goes deeper into exploring a specific aspect of leading organizational change. To develop and apply their knowledge, students can additionally choose from several electives that each are strongly based on fostering student’s ability to act in response to strategic and organizational challenges. To broaden your horizon beyond the core of strategy and organization, you can also choose electives from other Business Administration programmes. Several interdisciplinary electives offer an additional opportunity to deepen your knowledge of a topical issue in business and management beyond the boundaries of the Leadership and Change Management programme.
- The courses in the Leadership and Change Management program will consistently search for links between science and practice through on-site visits, guest lectures, and assignments. For instance, we will focus on theoretical and systematic analyses of cases as the foundation for solving practical issues. Finally, to build practical knowledge and skills, it is also possible to do an internship, thereby learning valuable skills.
- Our courses have a strong focus on fostering your communicative (e.g., persuasive skills), your ability to speak up and defend your arguments and position in front of stakeholders with diverging interests (political skills). We especially focus on social skills (e.g., sensing a context, responsibility to followers, needs), rhetorical skills (e.g., effective framing) and political skills (e.g., stakeholder management), and project management skills (e.g., lining up an organization or team to achieve goals). This will be practiced in class, and in simulations (e.g., a serious game).
- We put strong emphasis on your ability to think and act critically and be reflective. This means to not take things for granted as they are, but be able to challenge them, in particular the increasingly contested impact of business on stakeholders as well as social and environmental conditions. In your thesis, you are encouraged to select topics that deal with the interaction between business and society.
- Together with FEWEB Career Services, the Leadership and Change Management programme offers tailor made workshops to provide you the best possible preparation for your entry to the job market. You are from the first semester on involved in planning and what you want to achieve (a personal vision on society and business). We encourage you to interact with fellow students and are introduced to the faculty members that you will work with during the program. This will be tested in a vision portfolio that students can work on during their entire master year. Part of this vision portfolio is a two-minute personal video pitch (a required component of your master thesis), that can also be used to communicate a personal work identity to future employers.