



KCL-LSE-LSHTM International Education Leadership Programme 2025/26: Study Visit to Amsterdam

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The IELP

The International Education Leadership Programme (IELP) is an annual initiative designed to strengthen education leadership and build networks across London and international institutions. A collaboration between the London School of Economics and Political Science (LSE), King's College London (KCL) and the London School of Hygiene and Tropical Medicine (LSHTM), it supports the professional development of current and emerging education leaders, equipping them with the skills to navigate rapid change in higher education and enable institutional transformation.

One of the distinctive features of the programme is in its facilitation of inter-institutional cooperation at both a regional and an international level to generate networking and collaboration opportunities, and to enable sharing of effective practice. Every year the cohort undertakes a Study Visit, and in 2025/26 this was to Amsterdam in April 2026 where colleagues were hosted by three institutions.

Overview

The visits to the University of Amsterdam (UvA), Vrije Universiteit Amsterdam (VU), and Amsterdam University College (AuC) provided a valuable opportunity for cross-institutional dialogue and reflection on the evolving purpose of higher education. Across all institutions, there was a shared commitment to innovation in teaching, strong investment in staff development, and an emphasis on human-centred education in response to contemporary challenges such as AI and changing student needs.



UvA

The day at UvA's Roeterseiland campus showcased creative responses to common sector challenges. Their Central Teaching and Learning Centre supports innovation through initiatives such as educational research fellowships, communities of practice around assessment, and a locally controlled AI tool.

Workshops highlighted the relationship between pedagogy and space, with practical strategies for large-cohort teaching, and explored the evolving professional identity of academics. Discussion of tensions experienced by novice teachers, arising from institutional and broader pressures, prompted reflection on collaboration, managing workload, and the importance of "disagreeing well."

Scholarship of Teaching and Learning (SoTL) was positioned as a key driver of pedagogic improvement, with a clear framework for developing research questions. The day also included candid discussion of institutional challenges, including funding pressures and political constraints on internationalisation.

A particularly impactful session on Academic Citizenship emphasised the importance of values, reflection, and preparing students for uncertain futures. Using the STEEP framework, participants considered the skills and attributes graduates need, highlighting the role of educators in modelling these values.

VU

VU demonstrated a highly coherent and strategic approach to teaching and learning, underpinned by inclusivity, compassion, and a deep understanding of diverse student identities. Their academic development pathway is notably robust, including an education-focused route to professorship involving institutionally significant projects with strong senior sponsorship.

A reflective activity on identity illustrated the value of creating "safe and brave" spaces for staff, fostering openness, collaboration, and collegiality. Learning environments reinforced this culture, visibly celebrating teaching practice and supported by advanced educational technologies.

Overall, VU stood out for its sustained and strategic investment in education, where teaching excellence is clearly central to academic career progression.

AuC

At AuC, discussions focused on the importance of affective learning in an AI-driven context. Emphasis shifted from problem-solving to broader questions of how individuals live and engage ethically with technology. Drawing on the Inner Development Goals framework, attention was given to competencies such as resilience, integrity, and co-creation.

The introduction of key AI competencies (description, delegation, discernment, diligence) highlighted the need for responsible engagement with technology. The session reinforced the importance of human skills and values, raising important considerations for curriculum and assessment design.



Reflections

The visit was intellectually energising, offering new perspectives on shared challenges and reinforcing the value of cross-institutional collaboration. Time for reflection on personal and professional identity emerged as particularly meaningful, alongside a renewed commitment to role-modelling values and supporting pedagogic scholarship.

Importantly, the visit fostered connections across institutions, already leading to collaborative discussions, particularly around AI in education.

In a follow-up survey, colleagues provided anonymous feedback on the trip:

'This was a fantastic opportunity to deepen the relationships I've already started to build with colleagues both from other institutions and my own. The programming was fantastic, I learned a ton -- and it was the perfect balance between meetings and free time. I never felt exhausted or overwhelmed. Bravo!'

'The discussions with UvA were really helpful. It helped me get an understanding of the kinds of struggles/issues other institutions had. It also helped me understand how things worked at another institution and some different ways of thinking.'