

Human-centred and future-forward

BUas 2026-2029 Strategic Direction



CREATING MEANINGFUL EXPERIENCES

Human-centred and future-forward

Breda University of Applied Sciences is a leading European university of applied sciences with a strong international outlook. We are sharpening our profile as a human-centred institution that integrates advanced technology across all domains. As a top-level university, we are intensifying our focus on research and development, as well as European collaboration. We are committed to helping every student discover their potential, develop their talents, and make a meaningful impact in their field of work.

We educate talented, globally minded professionals and generate applied knowledge that contributes to solving real-world challenges. Our programmes respond to the changing needs of students, industry, and society, across disciplines and borders. With 30% of our students and staff coming from outside the Netherlands, and research firmly rooted in international collaboration, BUas is deeply embedded in the European knowledge ecosystem.

We offer our diverse students a strong community in which to prepare for their professional careers. We maintain high expectations of our students while providing support when needed, all within a vibrant and green campus with ample opportunities to connect with peers from all educational programmes.

Our evolving identity

In an era of radical change, higher education institutions must swiftly adapt to maintain public trust in science, equip their students with the knowledge and skills that will serve them throughout their careers, and remain relevant to society and industry. These transitions, accelerated by rapid technological developments, will always be pursued at BUas with careful attention to our students, staff, and how together they can form a close-knit and safe community. Hence our title: 'Human-centred and future-forward.'

Our identity has changed dramatically over the years. We have evolved from a knowledge institute primarily focused on Tourism and Transport to a dynamic university of applied sciences with strong connections to booming sectors such as Hospitality, Leisure, Tourism, and Creative Business, and new high-tech creative studies such as Gaming. We maintain a strong focus on placemaking and data flows in Logistics, Facility, Built Environment, and AI and Advanced Data Sciences. 'Creating meaningful experiences' not only embodies our core values but also captures the unifying themes that connect our academies.

Looking to the near future, however, we need to transform the way we prepare our students for a life full of personal and professional development in a constantly changing world where professionals are constantly being challenged to enhance their knowledge and skills. In our domains, industries need highly adaptive and skilled professionals who can drive innovation through an agile and sustainable learning attitude. With a full understanding that artificial intelligence (AI) – which will become even more advanced in just a few years - will expand human capabilities. It will change the way students learn, industries work, and humans live their lives.

Europe has recently developed a better and deeper understanding of the urgent need for sound European strategies, policies and institutions. The European Union requires strategic autonomy, a highly competitive economy and a more innovative culture. The need for a highly skilled workforce and for applied science-based innovation is growing rapidly. As a European university with a global outlook in highly international domains, BUas must align itself with the EU innovation agenda, developing education and R&D programmes within its portfolio. As a specialist applied science university, BUas will further grow in quality and impact, strengthening its foundation of Data Science and AI as a basis for applied integration into the other domains.

We will enhance our quality and impact with a human-centred approach to AI integration, with solid R&D, creativity and a strong community. We will increase our relevance to society and the industries we work with. Collaboration with (international) knowledge partners will be even more important. That is why we have joined KreativEU, a European university alliance. Moreover, we intend to expand our partnerships in order to further strengthen our unique position across all our domains.

We value our community's current scale: small enough to be a staunch and well-connected community, yet large enough to excel in both education and R&D while engaging in meaningful cooperation with other universities. We therefore prioritise quality over quantity in our growth strategy.

Mission and vision

For the past few years, BUas' mission has been *empowering young professionals on their journey to shape a better world*. If anything, this mission has become even more relevant today. It keeps inspiring us and it will guide our choices in this updated strategy.

Our new R&D vision shows that, if we are to have an impact in Europe, we need to intensify our R&D efforts. The interaction between education, R&D and society, as well as our connected industries, will improve the quality of our programmes and ensure that our graduates are prepared for the future. That is why we have enhanced our strategic vision: *educating and innovating for well-preparedness in a fast-changing world*.

Students at the heart of our strategy

At BUas, students are at the heart of everything we do. We see their learning as a process shaped in interactions with lecturers, researchers, industry experts and peers, driven by personal ambitions and choices and supported by the BUas community. Their learning is focused on future relevance. We encourage our students to search for meaning in their professional directions and personal lives. That is why, from day one, our students are part of a close-knit, international learning environment that offers more than just academic growth. It is a community that sets them on a course to create meaningful experiences.

We foster personal learning pathways that reflect individual talents, motivations and career goals. Our educational model combines flexibility, coaching, reflection, real-world relevance and the integration of AI and emerging technologies. The BUas campus offers a small-scale, inclusive, safe and dynamic community where students are known, supported, and seen. Our lecturers are teachers, researchers, and inspirational coaches. Our learning communities, supported by the Community for Teaching and Learning (CTL), connect students with researchers, alumni, and industry partners to solve real-life challenges. Intercultural awareness, creativity and human skills are embedded throughout the curriculum.

We encourage and support our students to develop beyond knowledge and skills. We aim to build confidence, resilience, and a reflective mindset that embraces innovation, responsibility and leadership. At BUas, students grow into professionals who are ready to shape a better world, with impact and purpose.

A strong educational portfolio that elevates every student

We will continuously strengthen our programmes by anticipating future student and industry needs. That is why we are integrating AI fluency and sustainability into all our programmes. We will continue to create more opportunities for students to design their own learning paths. We will also strengthen the focus on intercultural awareness and inclusive classrooms, alongside the typical BUas skills such as reasoning, analysis, critical thinking and ethics.

Looking ahead:

- We will create more real-life and transdisciplinary education projects to prepare students for their professional futures.
- We will explore the possibilities of creating new programmes in AI-related themes such as robotics and human-tech together with regional and international partners, including other universities and organisations such as Breda Robotics.

- We will explore the development of honours programmes that challenge talented students, in line with our positioning as an applied R&D university and our ambition to foster academic depth and excellence. Moreover, such honours programmes will serve as an exciting pathway towards master's programmes, at BUas or elsewhere.
We will develop these in cooperation with our industry board partners.
- We will strengthen our master's portfolio to enhance its relevance to industry and to be more attractive to international students. Furthermore, we will ensure better alignment with our R&D themes.
- In line with the European Union of Skills, we will develop business-to-business programmes in selective areas such as AI, Hospitality and Gaming for the purpose of upskilling employees.
- BUas will strengthen its relationship with alumni by offering opportunities to upgrade and upskill their knowledge and competencies in the years immediately following graduation. Through tailored short courses, online modules or participation in business-to-business programmes, we aim to support alumni in staying connected, future-ready and professionally agile.

In all areas, our portfolio should not only meet future industry demands but also resonate with what today's students value most: relevance, flexibility, an international atmosphere, and inclusiveness. Our aim is to provide high-quality learning experiences that foster a reflective mindset in both students and lecturers.

Sustainable AI as a strategic driver

Artificial intelligence is one of the defining forces of our time: shaping how we live, learn, and work. At BUas, we embrace AI as a key strategic driver for innovation in education, research and development/design (R&D), and professional practice. In just a few years, AI will have transformed the way human beings work in virtually every industry. That is why we think it is of utmost importance to help students prepare for a near future that is radically different from today's world.

Rather than viewing AI as a separate domain, we integrate it throughout our entire organisation. In all knowledge domains, we integrate AI into our study programmes, research projects and operational processes. Our goal is to equip all students — regardless of their study programme — with a thorough comprehension of AI and its implications for their field. This is not just about technical skills. Rather, we need our students to develop, in essence, deeply human skills, such as reasoning, analysis, writing, empathy, critical thinking, and ethical awareness. These qualities are required to use AI tools as a form of co-intelligence, expanding their own qualities, possibilities and effectiveness.

Our commitment to developing AI-ready professionals is visible in multiple ways:

- A deep integration of human-centred AI in every domain we teach and research.

- Dedicated bachelor's and master's programmes in AI and Data Science that provide BUAs with a deeply rooted technical knowledge base.
- A BUAs-wide R&D programme that connects technical and human-centred AI approaches.
- Helping companies and their employees by offering tailor-made upskilling programmes in AI.
- Providing students with safe, helpful and state-of-the-art AI tooling.
- Making targeted investments in infrastructure, tools, and - predominantly - staff development. We will ensure all staff have a thorough understanding of AI.

We are well aware that AI comes with a significant impact on energy usage. Led by our transversal professors, we take responsibility for teaching our students and staff how to use AI deliberately and effectively. Moreover, this commitment extends to our ongoing investment in sustainability. We are doing so by further integrating climate education into all our bachelor's programmes, as well as by fostering our BUAs-wide R&D programme on sustainable transitions. Although AI will increase our energy usage, we remain committed to becoming a climate-positive organisation.

Research & Development/Design

R&D is an integral part of BUAs' identity. We will connect education and R&D in meaningful ways, enabling students and staff to co-create knowledge with industry and societal partners. Through learning communities, they work together on authentic, experience-based assignments that challenge, inspire and prepare them for future professional impact.

Our R&D agendas will be more closely aligned with European policy priorities and societal transitions, such as digitalisation, sustainability, and human-centred innovation. This alignment will strengthen our relevance, increase our access to funding, and enhance our visibility and contribution at the European level.

Europe needs more young professionals who aim for master's degrees in an applied science context. Therefore, BUAs will align its master's portfolio with its R&D ambitions. Our master's programmes should not only reflect our areas of expertise but also serve as important platforms for R&D and professional engagement. This will make them even more appealing to both industries and future professionals.

BUAs also will expand its R&D activities to increase our impact on innovation and competitiveness. To enable this growth, we have recently revised our R&D vision and governance model:

- We established a clear strategic framework for R&D.
- Leadership roles and responsibilities are now clearly defined.
- Research quality and alignment with educational programmes are better safeguarded.
- BUAs-wide R&D themes and professorships are strategically coordinated.

In light of the financial situation we are facing in the coming years, BUas will increase its primary sources of research funding. This will create a solid basis for interaction between education and research, and enable us to perform even better in the areas of secondary and tertiary sources of funding. In doing so, and in line with our European approach, we need to strengthen our long-term partnerships and alliances with European, national and regional governments, partner universities, and other partners who will become increasingly important within the European agenda, such as defence organisations and science partners with a more technical focus on AI and Robotics. We will continue to invest in sustainability by fostering our BUas-wide R&D programme on sustainable transitions.

Joint education and research initiatives, such as the combined education and research inspiration days, demonstrate the integration we are striving for, where knowledge is not only transmitted, but also created, shared, and applied in context.

Organising for resilience and change

To realise our strategic ambitions, BUas must evolve into a focused and future-ready organisation. This requires clarity in how we allocate resources, consistency in how we operate, and a commitment across all levels to deliver on our promises. Strategic choices only have real value if we are able and willing to execute them.

This strategy will be underpinned by a revised budget allocation model. It will direct resources toward quality, relevance, and long-term sustainability. Rather than distributing budgets by default, they will be allocated based on ambition, performance, and alignment with BUas' strategic direction.

Our support services will become more standardised, hybrid and efficient. This not only improves service quality and consistency across the institute but also frees up capacity for our academic core: education, R&D and innovation. In order to lead and sustain change, we will invest in the development of leadership and organisational capabilities. We will support managers and teams to act with clarity, ownership and a shared purpose, enabling BUas to respond more quickly and effectively to internal and external developments.

We will continue to build on the principles of our community organisation, which are rooted in professional autonomy, team-based working, and shared responsibility. The joint community values that we have embraced form the foundation of how we work and grow together as a caring community, and guide our actions.

Transforming gradually to a residential urban campus will be an important priority in the coming years. Our campus is more than a physical location. It is the foundation of our caring community and a key enabler of student well-being, connection and identity. Our campus is also the perfect breeding ground

for innovation and the creation of added value. A place where crossovers between disciplines and domains thrive, and where education, research, and professional practice come together to create meaningful impact. By the end of 2028, we plan to achieve two major milestones: the opening of new on-campus student housing and the launch of the BUas Game & Tech Centre.

Achieving our ambitions also means recognising our limits. We cannot do everything alone. In order to strengthen our position as a European R&D university, we will actively seek strategic partnerships with select universities and institutions across Europe. These partnerships, including the current ones, will be critically assessed and will focus on education, R&D and innovation. They will be chosen based on shared values, complementary strengths, and long-term potential for mutual impact.

From Ambition to Impact

This strategic direction provides clear direction and strong ambitions for BUas. The next step is to execute our plans with focus and decisiveness. In order to bring our choices to life, we must act with discipline, coherence and determination. This involves careful planning, prioritising what matters most, monitoring progress, and staying on course, even when challenges arise.

Now that strategic decisions have been made, our focus shifts to implementation. These choices represent a clear direction. Their true value lies in how we bring them to life. By following through with commitment and delivering visible results, we will give meaning and momentum to our collective ambition.

To guide this process across the institute, we will launch a BUas-wide implementation agenda titled **'From Ambition to Impact'**. This agenda will bring together our key priorities, timelines, deliverables, and governance arrangements. It will help us translate our strategy into consistent, purposeful, everyday action, enabling us to become human-centred and future-forward.