

Anchor person STERKplaats¹ Hogeschool Utrecht

I have been an anchor person at the STERKplaats for three years. I do this for 4 hours a week. My duties within this role are not defined. They have proved to be dependent on various factors in recent years, such as the stage of development of STERKplaats (in the beginning different things were needed than now), the state of affairs within our education system (such as during the various moments of educational innovation) but also social developments and, of course, during the Covid 19 period.

It is good to know that STERK students² are supported by a coach in their daily routine. Funding for the STERK place and the coach is through the LFB³. The Hogeschool Utrecht provides the STERKplaats with a space and facilities such as copy card, coffee card, etc, and gives them space within the educational system. So I have no direct coaching duties in this role. The STERK students and the STERK coach are my colleagues, but the STERK students are therefore not employed by HU (but if you aim for inclusion, you will (I think) have to treat them as full HU employees). There is a grey area here because of this construction.

Very generally, I would divide the tasks into facilitating tasks (passes, e-mail addresses, floor plans), guiding people through the large HU forest (who is who, where should I be, what do we have in house?), liaison tasks (bringing the right people into contact with each other), implementation tasks (ensuring that there is a sustainable anchoring in education and policy within Social Work, within the HU and, if possible, even outside it) and a monitoring/monitoring task of all this.

The general characteristics and tasks of an anchor person could, I think, be described as follows: starting small, putting your feet between doors, daring to be a bit 'cheeky', looking for or making space, throwing up small balls, being close to the fire, being on top of everything, keeping the lines short in all areas, spreading the word, celebrating and sharing milestones achieved, sometimes disobeying and colouring outside the lines. I think it takes a kind of social socialist who already has a lot of contacts in education and practice and has a view of the curriculum.

Starting small, putting feet between doors, finding or making space, throwing up small balls

- Pop-up approach, so using moments that are already there (education development festival, introduction week, joining student associations)
- Hands-on mentality, i.e. not waiting, just doing, taking initiatives and accepting challenges.

Practical examples

- Taking up regulatory affairs towards the HU applying for/renewing service passes
- Arrange HU matters when accepting new STERK students (and while I am typing this, it is also about time they also received a HU Warm Welcome Package).
- Arrange matters in facilities like email addresses, mugs, toilet, books, reserving rooms etc.
- Arrange budget for things that cannot or should not be funded by the STERKplaats
- Direct contact with Management Team, short lines of communication regarding finances, policy, inclusion and other matters

¹ <https://www.hu.nl/samenwerken/praktijkvoorbeelden/studenten-met-een-beperking-ontwikkelen-zich-tot-ervaringsdeskundige>

² students with disabilities developing into experts by experience

³ <https://lfb.nu/wat-is-een-sterkplaats/>

- Discuss / ask silly questions to the HU about organization/policy/progress (why haven't the STERK students been invited to the Christmas drinks party yet? Can the STERK students also become members of your student union? What jobs do you have for the STERK students when they graduate?)
- Throw up lots of balls in the corridors, at the coffee machine, at get-togethers, team outings, etc.
- Facilitating meetings and creating meeting places for STERK students with HU students, lecturers, innovation group, experience experts within HU Social Work, experience experts HU-wide
- Forwarding of links, publications etc. from the STERK place to colleagues for whom it fits in their education.
- When implementing or innovating (new) education, always mention the added value and possible role of experts by experience/ STERKplaats.
- 'Stalking' existing contacts within other courses and colleagues who move to other courses and exploring opportunities for cooperation together. For example, collaborations have been established with Social Legal Services, Nursing, Ecological Pedagogy, Pedagogical Academy Basic Education,
- Participation in meetings, study days on theme and network organizations (with Strong students or alone) such as: innovation group, Consortium Strong in Education, HOED (Hogeschool Overleg Ervaringskennis en -deskundigheid), Dag van de Ervaringsdeskundige Hogeschool Windesheim in Zwolle, 'The experience expert student central' PABO, workshops Movisie, Congress Reinaerde,...
- Contacts with HU Library, HU Lab, so that they know how to find the STERK place in their activities such as Living Library 12 February: [Living Library in HU library - Trajectum](#)

Being close to the fire, being on top of everything, keeping the lines short in all areas, keeping a finger on the pulse

- Circulate a lot/mouth to mouth
- Finding/making/using communication channels
- Networking: find/make/use contacts, presence at events, openings, other occasions
- Listening, enthusing and connecting

Practical examples

- Weekly informal joining of the STERKplaats (over coffee, over lunch) for informal contact and hearing what's going on
- Group app of the STERKplaats, and have one-to-one app contact with STERK students and coach
- Every now and then a piece in the internal 'newsletter' (preferably with pictures of the STERKplaats/students) to make the STERK students visible
- Knowledge clips recorded with STERKstudent, provided a lot of face recognition and name recognition HU-wide
- Linking/organizing experience experts with each other, connecting experience experts with teachers and students
- Organizing participation and focus group moments for experts by experience
- Contact with and impact on the work field: short lines with practical organisations, for example, collaborations have arisen with Reinaerde, LFB, Amerpoort, Special Arts, ASVZ, conference for therapists at Reinaerde
- Contact with and working through foreign allies/partners within Erasmus projects such as Thomas More Geel (BE), UCLL (BE), KdG (BE), Kemi-Tornio University of Applied Sciences (FIN), Open University (UK), Vilnius University (Lit), Lund University (SE) etc.
- Member of the lectorate Participation Care and Support and thus be close to the fire there and always mention the added value and possible role of experts by experience/ STERKplaats e.g. as co-researcher

- Taking a role in educational innovation (via my study Senior Didactic Competence) and implementing experiential knowledge and expertise in education that way
- Liking and reposting a lot on Facebook and Linked as a loyal fan of the STERKplaats
- Writing annual evaluation together with the STERKplaats and inviting the Management Team to discuss this together at the STERKplaats every year
- Occasionally attend classes and lectures of the STERK students. Compliment them and, where necessary, point out gains (such as links to the literature or thinking with them about appropriate practical examples)

Celebrate and dare to share milestones, dare to be a little 'bold', sometimes disobey and colour outside the lines

- Sharing STERKplaats projects through HU channels
- Not everything succeeds through the formal route or takes longer than desired. It then requires creative thinking skills and also the guts to go off the beaten track
- Writing a plan for a minor in experiential expertise, coincidentally finally approved recently!
- Addressing management members about gaps within the organization such as the lack of an inclusive policy and presenting concrete plans for change
- Liaise with HR regarding inclusive policies
- Getting STERK students to participate in their own visual arts classes when an implementation was taking too long
- Be present/play a role at festivities at the STERK location (National Two Days, The Relatives performance, Opening of new program)
- Lobby for the recruitment of experts by experience and then see what is lacking in your organization