



Facultaire
Studentenraad

**NATUURWETENSCHAPPEN,
WISKUNDE EN INFORMATICA**

Policy plan 2021-2022

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Preface

Dear reader,

It is an honour that I am allowed to write this policy plan for the Faculty Student Council of the Faculty of Science 2021/2022 (hereinafter: the Council). The policy plan explains what the various committees and task groups would like to achieve this academic year. This academic year, the Council has three committees: Facilities and Public Relations (FPC), Faculty Education (CFO) and Programme-Specific Education (COO). The only mentioned task group is Finance, as it is the only one that is continuous and externally oriented. Therefore, they are not included in this plan. These committees and this task group will do their utmost best to improve education and the study climate and to communicate as effectively as possible to students what is happening within the participation bodies.

This policy plan contains the most important topics that we would like to commit ourselves to as a Council. Each committee and task group has drawn up its own focus points. Are you curious about which topics the committees and task groups will be working on this academic year? Then read on!

We hope you will enjoy reading this policy plan.

If you have any questions, you can send them to fnwi@studentenraad.nl or drop by our Council room (B0.112).

Yours sincerely,

On behalf of the Faculty Student Council of the Faculty of Science 2021/2022,

Anniek Verstegen

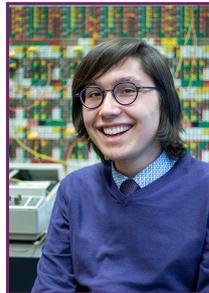
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Committees

Facilities & Public Relations Committee

The Facilities and Public Relations Committee (FPC), is responsible for improving the council's visibility among students. This allows the council to better anticipate current and new issues with the help of input from the faculty's students. In addition, the committee deals with all business that concerns the facilities at the Faculty of Science. This includes issues such as diversity and mental health, but also facilities such as IT. The goal here is to create an optimal climate that supports students in their studies at the Science Park.

Lecture talks

To ensure that knowledge about the existence of the Council, which has taken a hit during the pandemic, is increased, the FPC is once again holding physical lecture talks. In these talks, the most important aspects within and goals of the current Council are explained, to make students aware of what we do as a Council and in which situations they can ask us for support. These lecture talks are also linked to the recruitment process, so that in addition to informing, there is also a promotion-oriented purpose to the talks.

Faculty Introduction

This year's Faculty Introduction (FI) will hopefully be physical again, providing us with ample space for creativity to organise effective and fun activities during this introductory period. Just as with the "Collegepraatjes" we are going to start off strong right away with promoting and recruitment for the Council. Being present at committee fairs of study associations and promoting ourselves at Intreeweek are just a few ways by which we can put ourselves in the spotlight. Organising events such as a get-together, a Talk with the Council event, a workshop on, for example, having a meeting, or getting to know the facilities and functional contacts at the university are just some of the ideas that have been brainstormed with regard to the FI.

Promotion

To keep students informed of the state of affairs at the faculty and in our Council, we use various channels. Instagram and Facebook are used to post messages every week to keep students informed of the Council's activities and any current issues within the faculty. We will mainly use the To Dah Loo to tell about actions that students can actively do to improve the faculty. It is important for the functioning of the council that students can speak with the council members for input and for the continuity of the council. In-person contact can create a much clearer image among students of what the work of a council member actually entails. This is why we will once again organise Speak with the Council events. These events will be used in combination with our New Year's survey to gather input. During the survey, we will ask for input from students on issues we are working on, so we can demonstrate that there is support for our issues within the executive team.

Recruitment

This year's recruitment for the Student Council is twofold as council assistants will first be sought to fill the remaining seats, and new council members will be recruited at the end of the year. In addition to using college talks, efforts will be made to distribute flyers, put up posters, post recruitment-related content on social media, informing about the council in person at Talk to the Council events, and an event for doubters will be organised. Again, becoming physical with campus education is critical, as previous councils have found out that online methods make student recruitment extremely difficult. The problems in recruitment experienced in the previous two years will be raised with the Central Student Council where several suggestions will be made to improve the situation for future years.

Elections

The aim of this year is to achieve a higher turnout of students during the elections. This dossier seems to be set mainly around the event. Nevertheless, this file will be picked up sooner and earlier this year in order to increase the awareness about the elections and a new council by the student population. It is essential that a very large part of our student population will vote in order to have a representative council. This will mainly be done with our communication on both the campus and online.

Diversity

This year, the council plans to address and discuss multiple aspects of diversity. For example, when discussing diversity, we come to the meetings of the sounding board of the UvA and thus get more information from the students about what is going on. After unfortunately not being able to have physical events last year, this year we thought it would be fun to organise our own UvA Science Park pride event with all the student associations. A diversity commitment is also being looked at in which we as a council express how we want to promote and guarantee diversity and inclusivity. This year we also want to focus on the appearance of Science Park in terms of diversity. We want everyone to feel welcome when they visit and we want it to be clear that everyone is allowed to be themselves. Therefore, we are in the process of introducing a rainbow crosswalk.

Sustainability

Sustainability is a very broad topic, which has already been and will continue to be the focus of a great deal of attention on campus. Therefore, this file will mainly consist of brainstorming ideas that can further emphasise sustainability and will make the campus even more sustainable. As a basis for these brainstorming sessions, the "Green Commitment" will be able to make an impact on the Council's vision with regard to sustainability, and the noncommittal goals outlined herein will manifest themselves concretely through approaches taken by the file holder.

Complaints FNWI

It is important that students know where to go with their complaints during their academic career. The aim of this year is to guarantee a streamlined process for students with complaints towards the university. Two central questions are: how do we make the university approachable and how do we ensure that students end up in the right place with their complaints? These are two issues that the Council will be working on. This encompasses both the promotion of important documents and generating more visibility for the university entities relevant for complaints.

Mental health

After last year, it has become even more apparent that many students suffer from mental health problems.¹ Recent research showed that this affected more than half of the students.¹ It is important that options are offered for these students to learn how to deal with these problems. All freshmen have a long-term course taught by

¹<https://www.rivm.nl/nieuws/zorgen-mentale-gezondheid-middelengebruik-studenten>

a mentor or tutor. It is intended that these mentors and tutors have at least 1 one-on-one conversation with the student about possible concerns and problems. Also, the student advisers are there to discuss concerns about the study due to personal problems. Not all students are informed about these possibilities and that is something that needs more attention. Earlier a request had been sent to the CSR before to place a psychologist at science park. This year the council will try to effectuate this request. Other options like establishing support groups will also be looked at.

Social safety

Science Park should be a safe place. But if an incident does happen, Science Park should also be the place where someone can tell their story and where the incident is dealt with. That is why there is a confidential advisor at the science park. However, we have noticed that not many students are aware of the existence of the confidential advisor. It's important that more attention is paid to the existence of the confidential advisor, for example by putting up posters. It is also important that all tutors, mentors and student advisers know who the confidential advisor is and refer people to the advisor, if necessary.

Physical accessibility

In order to improve the physical accessibility at the Science Park we will start a dialogue with students who are affected by the current situation. Next to this we will also work to broaden the communication with agencies like the newly founded Disability Work Group (DWG) and the Student Disability Platform (SDP). Together with these bodies, the initiatives that come from the Council and students with physical and/or mental disabilities will be given a broader base to pass them on to the management team of the faculty. In addition to improving communication with these agencies and working together for initiatives, we as a Council would also like the DWG to become a point of contact for issues related to accessibility. In this way we do not want to reduce the role of the Council in this file, but by taking on the initiative together we want to lower the threshold for raising problems, and offer everyone a platform that is as accessible as possible to undertake these problem raising activities.

Mental accessibility

At Science Park there are many people walking around with learning or mental disabilities. The goal is to resolve problems that people experience while studying. One major problem is concentration. At the UvA, it is not mandatory to record lectures. However, we notice that there is a great need for mandatory recording of lectures,

because people are not always able to focus for longer periods of time or cannot attend lectures due to illness. We are therefore in contact with the Student disability platform and the disability work group, who also would like to resolve similar problems.

Summary

The FPC will make an effort to strengthen the contact with students and the council after the pandemic. This will be done by means of lectures, activities and other (digital) promotion channels. The FPC will also work on concrete goals for dossiers such as diversity, where we would like to realise a pride event. We will work on creating a complaints desk and improving the accessibility of the faculty. Finally, we will also try to increase the social safety and mental health of the faculty by raising awareness of these issues and by providing the faculty with more or expanded functions to support these processes.

- The faculty introduction for the next academic year will be published by the Council from day 1.
- During the recruitment process and the elections, physical activities will be used.
- We are working to set up a complaints desk.
- We will work to realise a Faculty of Science pride.
- The awareness and scope of social safety and mental health projects will be increased.
- The FPC will talk with the faculty to increase physical and mental accessibility.

Faculty Education Committee

The Faculty Education Committee (CFO) deals with topics that relate to education at the faculty, which are not related to specific study programmes. This includes topics such as the publication of timetables and teacher professionalisation. We also gain knowledge of faculty-wide regulations and try to share this knowledge with students efficiently.

Binding Study Advice

In the past few years, our Council has explored in what way the Binding Study Advice (BSA) could be set up in a better way. Although we don't have any concrete plans for the coming year, we've been asked by the Central Student Council to join a university-wide working group on the subject. The Central Student Council wants to examine whether the BSA could be reformed into a non-binding advice. This process is still in the early stages, but we will follow their efforts closely and give input from our faculty's perspective where appropriate.

Teaching assistants

At our faculty teaching assistants are essential for the educational process. Currently, the support for these university employees is lacking however. They receive a short training before they start their work as assistant, but don't receive any further training afterwards to develop their teaching skills. Additionally, they frequently have to work more hours than agreed upon in their contracts, while not always being compensated for this overtime. Teaching assistants also have access to fewer facilities when compared to other employees. For parts of their work that have to be treated with confidentiality, like for example grading assignments or exams, they have no set place to work.

Student bible

For most students it is not clear what their rights and obligations are. The important rules and guidelines that apply to these students are spread over numerous large documents. This makes it complicated for students to find the most important information. The idea was born to create a "student bible" where all the important rules and guidelines that apply to students are summarised. With the "student bible" it is easier to search for rules on specific subjects such as resits, honours and cum laude graduation.

Schedules

Each year work on the timetables for the upcoming academic year starts in January, and in June, the timetables for the upcoming academic year are published. From experience within the council and contact with fellow students, the publication of these schedules is often later than desired, in extreme cases only several days before the start of a course. This is because workgroups are scheduled too late. This year the Council will try to realise a fixed publication date of the tutorial groups.

Teacher professionalisation

A few years ago, the Teaching & Learning Centre (TLC) was established with the aim of supporting UvA lecturers in the field of educational innovation, teaching staff development and knowledge distribution within the University of Amsterdam. The Council enters into discussions with the TLC about, among other things, the progress of teacher professionalisation, and examines the influence of the TLC and in which areas the TLC can still improve. For example, facilitate follow-up training sessions for teaching assistants.

Exams and Corona

We believe that students who have been infected with Corona and are therefore in quarantine or are still ill, should be given an extra retake option. Undesirable situations may arise in which students who are (potentially) infected must choose between attending an exam or risking failing a course, with unpleasant and undesirable consequences in both cases.

Internationalisation and the English language

The Council would like to do more research on the role of the English language within study programs. The Council thinks, in accordance with the law, that this should only be applied when it actually adds value to the education. By making these arrangements more transparent, the Council hopes to safeguard the Dutch language at the faculty. Moreover, the influx of international students has increased significantly over the past few years, as recently mentioned by the UvA in a media article. This should, however, not be at the expense of the quality of education due to overcapacity. Moreover, care should be taken that international students are not attracted as long as no housing is available for them.

Flex-studying

Flex-studying, the possibility to pay per credit instead of having to pay for an entire academic year, can offer a solution for many students who undertake extracurricular activities alongside their studies. Examples are board memberships, setting up or running a business, top-level sports, volunteer care, etc. Currently, flex-studying is only possible for certain programmes. We want to make sure that flex-studying becomes possible throughout the entire faculty for students who would feel the need to flex-study.

Hybrid education

Due to the current pandemic, hybrid education is being used more frequently and, besides disadvantages it may bring along, many benefits of hybrid education arise as well. We would therefore like to continue our efforts to ensure that all lectures can be viewed online so that students who would benefit from being able to watch recorded lectures due to extracurricular activities, subjects in other studies, illness, concentration problems or other reasons, have this possibility.

Summary

The CFO will make every effort to guarantee and improve the quality of education throughout the faculty. In doing so, we look at the options for flex-studying, improving lecturer professionalisation, and the policy on the use of English and internationalisation at the faculty. There will also be contact with the CSR about the retake policy and the BSA. Things we are working on next year are:

- Summarise the most important information that all students should know in one document.
- Implementing a deadline for organising the tutorial groups, so that the schedules are known earlier.
- Extra retake options for students in quarantine.
- Making the recording of lectures standard procedure.
- Maintaining and improving the quality of education, despite the limitations imposed by COVID-19 on education.

Program Specific Education Committee

The Program Specific Education Committee (COO) focuses on all study-related topics, like the Teaching and Examination Regulations (TER) part B, contact with the Programme Committees and the (re-)appointment of programme directors and College/Graduate School directors. In addition, we are concerned with course enrolments at the VU, the creation of new programs and minors and all other program-specific subjects.

Teaching and Examination Regulations part B

The committee will review all TER part B thoroughly and critically. We will start this process early this year, in order to give our comments to the programme directors as soon as possible, who will include our comments when writing the new TER part B. On all parts of these new versions, we either have the right of approval, or the right to be consulted. These rights are complementary to the rights of the Programme Committees (PCs). Therefore, we will consult the PCs to approve or not approve the new TER part B.

UvA-Q: course evaluations and feedback

This academic year, we would like to ensure that course evaluations are published in the study guide in order to make this information accessible to all students. We believe this will help students choosing an elective course and provide transparency about the progress of a course compared to previous years. Furthermore, we would like to evaluate the UvA-Q system as a whole and consider ways to increase the response rate. We would also like to hold discussions with those involved, such as programme directors, and brainstorm together.

Forum for Programme Committees

As usual, each year we facilitate the Forum for Programme Committees (FOC). This meeting encourages PCs to share knowledge and discuss potential problems that occur in multiple programmes. This way, the PCs of the different programs are able to help each other to find a solution. The Programme committees appreciate these meetings, resulting in 20-30 attendees. We, therefore, decide to organise three FOCs this academic year.

The course evaluations have been subject to many discussions. The PCs are continuously working on ways to increase the response rate, improve the feedback and optimise the way of evaluating. The different Programme Committees can help and

inspire one another at this point. We as a council also work on this, as mentioned above. Another topic that is repeatedly discussed is the TERs, which are reviewed yearly by the PCs and the council. By being in contact with each other and consulting on the documents where the PCs have the right of consent and the council advisory right and vice versa, we can jointly issue recommendations and represent the students with a stronger voice.

Secondary subjects VU

The UvA and VU regularly collaborate. Currently, there are seven joint-degree (JD) programmes and six cooperative programmes in which students are enrolled as a secondary course subject student at the VU. In the cooperative bachelor's degree mathematics, for example, this concerns almost all students.

Last year, the Council looked into the option of an automatic registration for every FNWI student at the VU. We contacted the Faculty Student Council Bèta of the VU (FSR Bèta) and they are willing to help us. However, they asked for a more concrete blueprint. This academic year, we would like to maintain this contact with the FSR Bèta and offer them a concrete plan whereby as many FNWI students as possible can register as secondary course subject students at the VU.

VU exam policy

Despite the fact that the UvA and the VU have seven JD programmes, they have a different policy regarding rules in exam rooms and during exams. This academic year, we therefore would like to proceed the discussions with the FSR Bèta about straightening the exam policy for JD programmes and together come up with a suitable solution for this problem. We would like to get in touch better with the VU central council (the VU USR) via the FSR Bèta, since much more is arranged at the central level. This way, we would like to ensure that FNWI students of JD programmes have the same rights during exams at the VU locations as at UvA locations.

Additional qualitative admission requirement

The additional qualitative admission requirement (AQAR) was implemented after the removal of guaranteed master programs after following a bachelor. These AQAR's were supposed to be both qualitative and quantitative. However, over the years there was a perceptible change in the amount of qualitative and quantitative requirements for the master programs. This has resulted in some master programs only using quantitative admission requirements, such as grades or study duration, to select their students.

These AQAR's are implemented primarily to reject students who might need more time finishing their education or drop out and, in that way, negatively affect the statistics of the program. The council is against the current selection methods wherein many qualities of students are ignored and is aiming for a master selection where a substantial part is based on personal and qualitative aspects.

Qualitative selection stimulates students to put in effort before joining the master program and are in this way able to show their motivation. Motivation letters, references, assignments, or intakes could be methods in which students are able to show that they are suitable for the master program of their choice. The student council would prefer that nominal study duration + 1 year and grades will no longer be used as AQAR. Especially in the case of bachelors earned at the same university for which the diploma should show sufficient proficiency for a master regardless of their GPA. Also these AQAR's make extracurricular activities less attractive for students while those activities are very important for the personal development of students and their skills.

Course catalogue

Both the course catalogue and the course manual are important sources of information about courses. The big difference between the two is that the course catalogue is published before students enroll for courses, and the course manual in advance of the start of the course. The aim of the council is to have more information available in the course catalogue and to make this the primary source for course information. One of the most important aspects of this was the inclusion of possible compulsory attendance for a course in its course catalogue description, in order to make it available to students. The council did not succeed in having this implemented last year, so this is something we will continue working on this year.

Summary

The COO will work to ensure and improve the quality of education at programme level. Our attention is focused on the secondary course registration and the examination policy of the VU, UvA-Q and the inclusion of important information in the course catalogue. Matters that this committee will mainly deal with in the coming year are:

- Work with the Programme Committees to protect the rights of the students in the TERs B;
- Work with the VU to facilitate taking courses there;
- Monitor the AQAR's and make them as fair as possible.

Task group

Finance

Just like last year, the council has a task group finance that deals with faculty finances. This includes the framework memorandum and the budget of the faculty. The framework memorandum describes the faculty's financial plans for the next budget year. The budget contains the financial details of these plans and shows the financial situation of the institutes. The council notices that certain research and education institutes do not have balanced budgets. Despite the fact that the council is positive about the budget, we have called on the dean to work with the institutes towards a balanced budget in a way that does not harm the quality of the education.

Final Remarks

We hope that the plans of the faculty student council FNWI 21/22 have been clearly expressed. We will do everything we can to achieve the goals described in this policy plan. If you have any suggestions, questions, tips and/or comments, you can always send us an email (fnwi@studentenraad.nl) or drop by our Council room (B0.112). The council thanks you for reading our policy plan and wishes you lots of success and fun this academic year!

