



Facultaire
Studentenraad

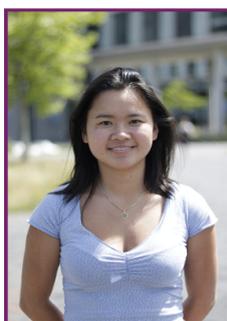
NATUURWETENSCHAPPEN,
WISKUNDE EN INFORMATICA

Beleidsplan 2022-2023





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Voorzitter



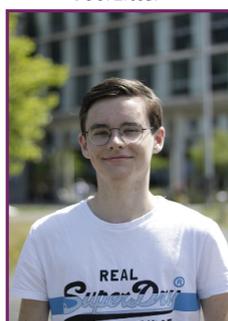
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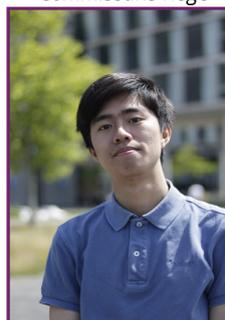
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Preface

Dear Reader,

I welcome you to the policy plan of the Faculty Student Council of the Faculty of Science. The Faculty Student Council (FSR) of the Faculty of Science (FNWI) 2022/2023 (hereafter: the council) is proud to present its policy plan for the academic year. This academic year, the council consists of three committees and several task forces. The Facilities & Public Relations (FPC), Faculty Educational Affairs (FOZ) and Regulations & Programs (RegO). Committees have expressed their goals for a number of files. In addition, the goals of the finance task group are described. The remaining task groups are internally oriented and are therefore not mentioned in the policy plan.

These committees and task groups will work to improve the education and study climate at the faculty and communicate to students as best they can what is happening within the council. This document lists the main topics we want to work on as a council. Each committee and task group has established its own key points. Are you curious which files the committees and task force want to tackle this year? Then be sure to continue reading!

I hope you enjoy reading this policy plan.

If there are any questions, you can always contact the council at fnwi@studentenraad.nl, or stop by at A0.10.

Kind regards,

On behalf of the Faculty Student Council of the Faculty of Science 2022/2023,

Stan Fris
Chair

Committees

Facilities and Public Relations

The Facilities and Public Relations Committee (FPC) is occupied with improving the facilities of Science Park and with the publicity of the council. We accomplish this by actively maintaining our social media, organizing all sorts of events and giving lectures throughout the year. By doing this we hope to inform as many students as possible about what we do and to let them think along with us. In addition we also try to improve the facilities of Science Park. Close contact with students is crucial for knowing what issues are present at our campus. By addressing topics like mental health, accessibility and diversity we want to realize an optimal study environment.

Recruitment

Recruitment for the student council this year is twofold. Council assistants must be found to fill the remaining positions and new council members will have to be recruited by the end of the year. Finding twelve new council members for the next council is the main goal. The physicality of education is critical, as previous councils have experienced that online methods severely complicate student recruitment. This year again the council will organize plenty of events at Science Park to get students excited about the Faculty Student Council.

Mental Health

The FPC committee will continue its commitment to mental health this academic year. Students with mental health issues should be able to get help. The council wants more attention to this issue so that students know where to go for help. There are already a lot of initiatives for this, such as student advisors and student psychologists. The council wants to help students by referring them properly, in case they come to us with problems.

New Year's Survey

The New Year's Survey is an important source of information for the Student Council. The student council depends on students' opinions and ideas. The beginning of the new year after the Christmas break is the time to ask around to students what they want to improve at Science Park. In the past, the New Year survey has proven its value. For example, this survey showed that many students did not know where to go with their complaints and did not feel heard.

This year, FPC plans to launch the New Year's Survey in a great way again. We want to increase the number of responses and so we are going to do this with a big campaign. The more input from students, the more we can do for students.

Complaints

The New Year's survey revealed that many students do not know where to go with their complaint. Just because there is a complaint desk does not mean that it is well utilized and that people feel that they are being helped. Therefore, the council will monitor the complaints procedure. We will engage with the complaints officer and check that it is clear where people should go with complaints.

Information facilities

Information provided by the faculty is not always clear. This year the new student website launched. The student council wants to check this site, but also other information services. We do this by asking for input from students, but also seeing to it ourselves that information is easy to find for all students. We want to maintain good contact with the Communication Office, so that we can actually share student feedback with the UvA.

Diversity

This year, the council plans to address and discuss several aspects of diversity. First, we plan to maintain good contact with the Faculty Diversity Officer (FDO) to know what is going on and what activities will be organized. Furthermore, the council wants to pay more attention to diversity this year. The council wants to do this by setting up an event during Purple Friday for all students of the Faculty. Besides organizing Purple Friday, the council also wants to work more closely with other diversity bodies. This is important. The council feels this is important because it is a way to exchange ideas and see where the council can provide assistance. As part of these collaborations, meetings of the Diversity Sounding Board (DSB) are attended. This sounding board is a good way to keep up with new ideas regarding diversity at Science Park and help where needed. The Council wants Science Park to have an open and accessible atmosphere for everybody and where there is room for diversity.

Accessibility

Accessibility is a relatively new file within the council. Thus, accessibility for people with physical or mental disabilities is being worked on to improve educational quality for these students. Awareness of the procedures that exist to help people with disabilities is low. Another problem is that faculty members do not always know what they can do to help students with certain disabilities. The council wants to work with the faculty to create guidelines that they can use to know what to do when dealing with students with disabilities. The council wants to accomplish this by working with the Central Student Council to implement this UvA-wide and ensure that these guidelines are useful and clear to all.

Promotion

The promotion of the Student Council is one of the main tasks of the FPC. The reputation of the council and the involvement of students in the faculty are essential for the improvement of the faculty. The student council is there to represent the opinions and interests of students. To achieve this, it is very important for the student council to listen and ask around for students' opinions. Through social media channels, the council can inform students of our actions and events. Organizing a number of physical events contributes to student engagement. The council wants to ensure that there are several opportunities for students to talk to the council at get-togethers.

Social safety

The council believes it is important that Science Park provides a safe environment for all students. To achieve this, we will keep in close contact with the new confidants and do our best to ensure that they are known to all students. Pathways to confidants should also be known to all tutors, mentors and student advisors so that they know where to refer students with problems. Furthermore, the council wants to stay in close contact with the social safety taskforce of the FNWI. This way we can stay informed about what is going on at Science Park which we as the council can help with.

Catering

Students should be able to buy food for a reasonable price at Science Park. Last year a temporary meal deal was realized for this purpose. This year we also want to offer a lunch deal for students. Hereby we are in close contact with the person responsible for catering and we want to make sure that the canteen remains affordable for students.

Summary

In conclusion, the Facilities and Public Relations committee is focused on the PR of the council. We keep social media up to date and organize events that contribute to student bonding and recruiting next year council members. Next to this we also collect feedback from students for example by using our New Year's Survey. The results of this survey provides input for all of our committees and gives us insight in how the facilities can be improved. This year we will be working on the following points regarding the improvement of facilities:

- Monitoring if the information facilities are improved and share feedback from students to the Communication Department;
- Improving the general knowledge of who to go to in case of mental health issues;
- Keeping an eye on the complaints procedure and make sure that it is well known where people can file their complaints;
- Organizing a spirit day event to improve diversity;
- Being in close contact with people with a physical disability to see where accessibility can be improved;

- Increasing the awareness of the confidential advisers, who can help students who encounter unpleasant behavior.

Faculty Educational Affairs

The Committee on Faculty Educational Affairs (FOZ) deals with all kinds of topics within the faculty. Think about the form of education, the quality of education, cooperation with other universities, the form of communication within the faculty, and also the future of the university. The wide range of subjects requires a lot of cooperation between the different layers of the university. This is why it is important for the FOZ, as an initiative committee, to bring together all the different stakeholders and provide solutions to the problems that students face.

Communication

At Science Park, we students sometimes experience problems with communication about education. An example of this is the late announcement of canceled lectures and tutorials. In the past, this has occurred with storm Eunice and a nationwide train strike, among others. Currently, these events are announced via email, a canvas message, the newsletter or on social media, but there is currently no concrete roadmap as to which communication tools are used at what time. Therefore, we believe this process can be more efficient and clear. The council wants to discuss this with the faculty management team and the communication department with the goal of creating clarity in these kinds of situations. Students should be informed earlier and there should be a clear plan of action for similar circumstances.

Schedules

When announcing the tutorial and practicum schedules, it is necessary that they are communicated to students in time for the preparation of a new period. Announcing the final schedule earlier not only ensures that students and TAs (teaching assistants) know on time when they have lectures, but it also helps with scheduling extracurricular activities, sports, and work. The goal is to schedule all study groups and labs at the FNWI in time before the course begins. To achieve this, the FOZ wants to enter into a dialogue with the faculty to reach an agreement on this. Subsequently, the FOZ wants to monitor the implementation of this in future teaching periods.

Collaboration UvA and VU

The UvA and the VU work together on a regular basis. For example, there are now seven joint degree programs and six cooperative programs. As a result, certain topics can cause confusion for students, such as the different exam regulations or timetables. Also, UvA students may enroll in subsidiary courses at the VU, which often involve the same problems. To address these problems, we would like to enter into dialogues with the FSR Beta of the VU to come up with appropriate solutions and develop improved cooperation.

UvA-Q

Evaluating courses is a careful process done by the program committees. The purpose of course evaluations is to improve and protect educational quality. Students and faculty work together in writing suggestions and initiatives that can contribute to this. The goal of the council is to improve the tool currently used to evaluate courses, which is UvA-Q. UvA-Q is a course evaluation that is distributed to students by email, at exams or during lectures at the conclusion of a course. The questionnaire consists of a number of standard questions about the course and the method of teaching. UvA-Q could be improved by making the questionnaire more specific to the course in question. When evaluating courses, other means could also be used such as panel discussions, in which students are given more time to express their opinions and can engage in a conversation with the program committee. When assessing the evaluation process, it is especially important to also ask the program committees what they think leads to an improvement of course evaluations. To this end, the council would like to establish a stronger connection with the program committees to further improve education.

Feedback Course Evaluations

The faculty student council has been fighting for feedback on the course evaluations since 2018. Recently, a number of programmes have incorporated this form of feedback into their TER-B. However, this is not the case for every programme. Additionally, it is relevant for the education at the faculty that both the teacher and the students are aware of the strengths and weaknesses of their courses. Furthermore, it is important for students to receive this type of feedback so as to inform them of what happens with their evaluations. This also motivates them to continue filling in their course evaluations. Consequently, we want to include the feedback on course evaluations in the TER-A. To this end, an advice will be written to the direction of the faculty with the cooperation of the programme committees.

Lecture Recordings

The council has been trying for several years to make the recording of lectures mandatory. This year, we want to step up our efforts to have lectures recorded and published in as many courses as possible. All students, but specifically students with disabilities, could benefit from this. When lectures are recorded, you can watch them again if you experience concentration problems, were ill during the live lecture or have overlapping lectures. We want to work with the Science Park board to find the best ways to make this possible for both students and teachers.

English Language & Internationalization

In recent years the influx of internationals has increased greatly at the UvA. Our main goal is to prevent the decline of education at the faculty due to overcapacity. Currently all master programmes at the faculty are offered solely in English. Therefore we will research whether

the master programmes at FNWI experience any issues with regards to internationalization as well as whether any measurements are in place to maintain the quality of education despite the increase in student numbers.

Summary

The Faculty Educational Affairs (FOZ) committee is the council's initiative committee. We deal with all kinds of overarching themes at the faculty. Hereby we solve problems that students encounter and improve education, we communicate with all kinds of parties and keep an eye on the future vision of the FNWI. Next year we will work on the following activities:

- Improving communication from the faculty to students, for example with corona measures or storm notifications.
- To make it easier to combine education with other activities, the FOZ wants the working group schedules to be known to students on time.
- For students studying at UvA and VU, it is important that they have the same guidelines to avoid confusion and overlap.
- UvA-Q is an evaluation tool that can be improved by more cooperation between the council and the program committees.
- The feedback of course evaluations is still not done enough; the council wants to make the feedback of subject evaluations mandatory in the OER-A.
- The council wants to ensure that the recording of lectures is mandatory so that every student can optimize their study endeavors.

Regulations and Programmes

The Regulations and Programmes Committee (RegO) deals with the ins and outs of the programmes at the Faculty of Science. Furthermore, all regulations of relevance at the faculty and the university are the expertise of the members of this committee.

Regulations

For many students, the large number of complicated and long-winded regulations is overwhelming. Thus, these documents are often not read, which can put students at a disadvantage if, for example, they are entitled to something but do not receive it. The committee wants to promote the topics in these documents that are important to students so that students are more aware of their rights and obligations. This has been done in recent years through 'The Ten Commandments (for the exam week)', which the committee wants to update. This year, we also want to create a general student handbook, a 'survival guide', which will summarize documents that are important to students. In this way, students can quickly and easily look up what they can and cannot do, and where to go with certain problems.

TERs

One of the important documents the committee reads is the Teaching and Examination Regulations (TER). The council has the right of consent on this document, which means that no adjustments can be made without the council's consent. The TER consists of two parts, the TER-A which is faculty-wide and the TER-B which differs per programme. The committee reads all 28 TERs thoroughly, makes proposals for adjustments and checks whether the council agrees with the proposals of others.

One example is the selection of a master's degree. Here, admittance is now based on application date because they apply a 'first come, first served' principle after a strict pre-selection. The committee will discuss this with the programme director and others in charge of selection.

Rounding partial grades

Last year, the proposal to renew the regulation around rounding partial grades in the TER-A came up. The council did not agree with this proposal, but the council is open to renewing the article. The council would like to see that it is clearer to students which rounded partial grades are used to calculate the final grade and that lecturers are given more freedom in rounding these grades. The council will enter into discussions with the faculty on how to improve this regulation.

Third year requirements

Programmes within the FNWI sometimes have requirements to start the third year. For instance, several TERs-B state that if a student has yet to pass first-year subjects after two

years of studying, that student may not take second- and third-year subjects. This rule can lead to a lot of study delay, which is why almost every student also gets exemption on this rule. Since almost all applications for exemption on this rule are approved, it is strange that this rule still exists. The council will debate on how we could remove or rephrase this rule.

Forum for Programme Committees

All topics about TERs concern not only the student council, but also the programme committees (OCs) of relevant programmes. Therefore, the council regularly enters into discussions with OCs. This can be done by organizing the Forum for Programme Committees (FOC). Every year, the council aims to facilitate the FOC three times. In addition to discussing the TER, the study programme committees can also exchange problems and ideas that may arise at faculty level. Transcending programme issues can then be dealt with at faculty level.

Course catalogue & course manual

Before the start of each academic year, the course catalogue is published with information for each course, including the form of examination and necessary literature. Just before the start of a course, the course manual is also shared with more information, including an overview of the material. It sometimes happens that the information in the course catalogue does not match the information in the course manual, even though it should. For students who only read one of both documents, this can have unforeseen consequences if the teacher decides to keep to the other document. Students should not be disadvantaged by this inconsistency. We therefore want to work to ensure that this inconsistency no longer occurs. In addition, we will try to add a rule that in cases where the course catalogue and course manual contradict each other, the most favorable case for the student will prevail.

New programmes

The faculty is constantly innovating, including in the field of education. This means that new programmes are regularly developed. We remain closely involved in the development of the curriculum for a new interdisciplinary bachelor's degree that is about to start, by regularly meeting with a member of the curriculum committee. In addition, the council receives monthly updates from the dean on developments in education.

Growth policy

The faculty has had several occasions in recent years where a programme grew rapidly. Currently, there is no plan of action within the faculty to accommodate programmes that grow suddenly or steadily. This means that when a new programme grows rapidly, the programme director has to figure out what to do, which has implications for teaching, such as increased workload among professors. Problems can also arise for practical matters, such as the lack of enough classrooms and teaching assistants, as these are overlooked when a programme grows. Similarly, the workload of student advisers increases.

Summary

The Regulations and Programs Committee will focus primarily on reading the regulations of the faculty, such as all teaching and examination regulations and the student statute. We will promote the contents of these documents by for example by composing a list with ten points you should know for an exam and by making a booklet with a summary of what is in the regulations. Furthermore, we will look critically at points we want to adjust in the documents. Topics from the documents we will be discussing the coming year are:

- formulating a clear wording for how partial grades should be rounded;
- discussing and potentially adjusting the requirements for starting the third year of study;
- looking at selection procedures of programs and thinking about how this could be improved;
- the problem of how the course catalogue and course manual can still contain contradictory information and that there is currently no regulation about that.

Besides regulations, we deal with other topics. For example, we monitor the development of new programs and give advice on the appointment of new education- and program directors. In addition, we look at the policy regarding the growth of programs. Lastly, we organize the Forum for program committees (FOC), where we let PCs talk to each other, but also ask for their input on, among other things, the above topics.

Task group

Finance

The task group Finance deals with the finances of the faculty. This means that we give advice on the framework memorandum and the faculty's annual budget. The framework memorandum describes the financial plans the faculty has for the next financial year and the annual budget describes the development of these plans which includes the financial state of the institutes. We have noticed an increase of money towards research and education with respect to last year and thus we are mostly in favor of these plans.

Final remarks

We hope that the goals of the Faculty Student Council Faculty of Science 22/23 have been outlined clearly. We will work to achieve the goals described in this policy plan. If you have any suggestions, tips and/or comments, please feel free to contact us via email (fnwi@studentenraad.nl), or stop by our council room (A0.10). The council would like to thank you for reading our policy plan and wishes you good luck and a great academic year!