

To the University Council
From the Faculty Council EEMCS
Cc Faculty Board of EEMCS

Concerning: the proposed shift of the Spring holiday week to the start of the 2nd semester for the benefit of the introduction of new inflow of master and exchange students

Dear UC-members,

First of all, thank you for consulting us in this matter, since usually we only have to deal with the consequences of similar decision making at the central level.

The vast majority of the faculty council opposes the decision for various reasons, but the expected increase of work pressure for both students and teaching staff is the most important.

In our opinion the University Board does not have its priorities right when weighing the con`s and pro`s of the 2 options. Choosing for an education-free week between semesters, only 4 weeks after the Christmas-break, makes the distribution of free weeks even more unbalanced than it already is. In their argumentation the board seems to downplay the effect of moving the spring holiday week to the start of the second semester on the work pressure of teaching staff. Pointing out that some employees already suffer from the impossibility to use the spring holiday since their children go to school in another region, is another way of stating: "There are already people dealing with this problem, so let us create the problem for a larger group". When this "voorgenomen besluit" is adopted, it means that many employees cannot take holiday breaks outside the summer and Christmas breaks at all. Cancelling this (last) possibility to have a holiday break with the family does have a negative effect on the experienced work pressure.

Another important aspect is the work pressure for students. It is a well-known phenomenon that students get more tired or even exhausted at the end of an academic year, which causes a drop in academic achievements and grades, especially in the last quartile. The effect of cancellation of the Spring holiday will be that the second semester will be a 21 weeks long educational period, with only some national holidays. One can expect a negative effect on work pressure for students as a consequence of the proposed measure.

Of course, we value a proper introduction of new students at the start of the second semester, but one should take into account that such an introduction is important for only a relatively small group of students (last year less than 200 students participated). Moreover, a survey showed that the students were satisfied with the current programme of the "Winter kick-in". Creating some space of a few days in the first week of the semester should be sufficient to create an even more satisfactory introduction programme, without disturbing the educational activities in quartile 3 too much. Another disadvantage of a full week`s introduction could be that students only show up after this period, which is also an increasing trend during the August introduction period.

We want to point out that only internationalization officers, programme managers and service departments were consulted before the decision was formulated, not the representatives of students and employees. In our opinion, the vast majority of students and staff of our faculty, represented by the Faculty Council members, are in favour of the alternative option of a few days introduction at the start of the second semester. Hence we call upon the University Council to do everything within his power to voice this opinion and make the board choose for the alternative option.

Regards,

On behalf of the Faculty Council EEMCS,

Maarten Bonnema

Chair

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'MJB', is written over the printed name 'Maarten Bonnema'.