

NEWSLETTER

UNIVERSITY COUNCIL

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Introduction

The most recent consultative meeting of the University Council and the Executive Board mainly focused on the new plans of the Executive Board regarding the organisation of our educational and research activities. In addition, the enrolment quota for Psychology, the problems surrounding perpetual students and the draft Guideline Education and Examination Regulations were discussed. The Council has taken leave of George Ndungu, who has completed his studies and is to return to Kenya. His seat will be taken by Andrea Lehmkuhler (UREka). The next consultative meeting will take place on Wednesday 6 April 2011 in the Horst, Tower 1300. Council meetings are public meetings; interested parties are invited to attend the meeting. See also our website: www.utwente.nl/uraad.

Draft Education and Examination Regulations

In the past cycle the Draft Guideline for Education and Examination Regulations (OER) was discussed in the University Council. Since the guideline has been issued by the Board, the regulations have caused a great deal of controversy within the participation. The Council shares the view that it is useful to arrive at a joint OER and that students have the same rights and obligations as much as possible. The Council can also understand that the Board issues a guideline to achieve this. But the position that no decentralised participation is possible with respect to this guideline and the fact that the Board refuses to grant the Council this participation still goes against the grain with the Council. This way there is no participation with respect to the guideline. This is a sad state of affairs, all the more so when one considers that we agree in outline.

The University Council

The University Council (URaad) is the central participation body of the UT and holds regular meetings with the Executive Board. The council has 18 members; nine staff members and nine students. The University Council has a say in UT policy at the central level.

Five parties are represented on the council: Campus Coalition and UREka, Pro-UT, Lijst Chairman and PvdUT.

At the moment the members of the University Council are: Frits Lagendijk, Jann van Benthem, Björn Harink, Dick Meijer, Sjeff van der Steen, Frank van den Berg, Jan de Goeijen, Jan Schut, Herbert Wormeester, Eva Kunst, Ellen Langerwerf, Pieter Willems, George Ndungu, Miranda Schraa, Beer Sijpesteijn, Sjoerd van den Bedem, Anne Benneker and David Smits.

For example, the University Council supports the idea of a student plan for students. The Council is also of the opinion that a student plan can help in an (even more) serious approach to the education programme by the student. However, at the moment OSIRIS appears to be insufficiently able to adequately support all the desired functionalities (inviting students for student plan, automatic assessment, etc.) and it is questionable whether this will be the case by September 2011. The University Council has therefore given the Executive Board the unsolicited advice to properly monitor the improvements in OSIRIS and if necessary suspend article 5 (the student plan), whereby all the parties involved are informed. The Executive Board also wished to impose a restriction to the number of resits a student is allowed. The Council shares the underlying idea that students are to decide in a more conscious way about participating in an examination. Limiting the number of resits could contribute to this. Also with respect to this rule there are doubts as to whether OSIRIS can support this. The Council has given the Board the unrequested advice to include a functionality in OSIRIS which automatically informs students when they have failed to pass an examination after two attempts, to monitor whether OSIRIS timely supports the enforcement of this rule and if not, to have the bureau of education administration check the registrations. During the consultative meeting the Rector Magnificus announced that he would adopt our advice about the student plan and the restrictions to the number of resits. In a subsequent meeting he will return to the question whether functionality can be included in OSIRIS which automatically informs students that they have to draw up an (additional) student plan.

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Enrolment quota Psychology

For the second time within the University Council there was discussion about an enrolment quota of 350 for the study programme Psychology. In the previous cycle this had been postponed because the negative advice from the faculty council about the number of the enrolment quota had been received too late to discuss it before the consultative meeting. The negative advice of the faculty council was based on possible problems involved in an intake of 350 students. The faculty council was afraid

that, among other things, the quality of the education activities would suffer if such a major step in student numbers were made (the current intake is 281 students). According to the Council, however, the university is able to cope with large variations in student numbers. Besides, in the next few months there will be sufficient opportunity to make preparations for a possibly higher intake of students for the study programme Psychology. Despite the negative advice of the faculty council, the University Council therefore decided to give a positive advice on the enrolment quota of 350 students for this study programme with the promise from the Executive Board that if problems arise in filling the intake, fitting measures will be taken for the students already enrolled and that, if necessary, the enrolment quota will be adjusted downwards.

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Plan of action perpetual students

The Board has presented a plan to the Council intended to drastically reduce the number of perpetual students at the UT. The Council is positive about the plan to help perpetual students obtain a certificate more rapidly, but has made it clear that all measures are to be discussed with decentralised participation bodies such as faculty councils and the University Curriculum Committees. The content of the approach to perpetual students differs per study programme, and in this context the Council believes that a tailor-made approach per study programme offers the best perspectives. However, such an approach has to take into account the rights and obligations of all students and staff, it would be undesirable for this to result in a distorted relationship between perpetual students and non-perpetual students. The options to reduce the number of perpetual students proposed by the College to the Council can be considered by each separate study programme, after which each study programme can initiate its own tailor-made measures.

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RoUte 14+

The Board, with the approval of the UMT, has launched far-reaching plans for an overhaul of the educational and research activities at the UT. Below, we summarise the plans, and *in italics* we note our initial observations and questions. The coming weeks we will further discuss this subject with the Board.

Cause: as a first point of the Board current government requires universities to have a much more outspoken and distinctive profile. This requires making choices, both in educational and research activities.

The Council is of the opinion that the plans currently presented by the Board do not show a well motivated and distinctive profile. The present definition "High Tech Human Touch" is insufficiently defined and stating a number of themes fails to adequately meet this definition. All this whereas a clear definition of our distinctive nature within the university community in the Netherlands is required.

In addition, the Board expects that the UT will be confronted with a substantial reduction of government funds in the coming years: generic curtailments of the basic funding and reduced funding for innovation and research.

For these reasons the Board wishes to curb expenditure to an amount of 15 million euros from 2012, with the intention to reinvest as much as possible of this in innovation of our educational activities and our leading research.

The Board does not make clear the distinction cutbacks/retrenchment and the total amount of 15 million is insufficiently supported at the moment. The Board is therefore urgently advised to carefully re-examine the expenditure cuts and the way and pace in which these are to be carried out.

Educational activities: according to the Board the UT offers a broad range of high-quality, but compared with the relative size of the UT, too large a number of study programmes. Moreover, the educational activities are characterised by a high percentage of dropouts and a slow study rate. A different structuring of the study programmes, according to the Board, could drastically increase the appeal, the quality and pass rate of study programmes.

More specifically the Board proposes to renew the range of programmes in the **bachelor phase** with 9 new programmes in main domains, within which the student can choose his or her specialisation in a later stage. These specialisations are given shape in the form of a major. Many of the current bachelor's programmes are recognisable in the majors. This gives students more options for a graduate profile. The emphasis will be more on learning academic skills and working in projects.

The concept for the bachelor's programmes is insufficiently worked out and published as yet. For the Council too much is still unclear about the advantages and disadvantages and on how the problem of the study pace is to be solved. As far as this is concerned the Education Day on 8 April will have to provide more clarity. For example, the appeal for prospective students has not been demonstrated and it is doubted whether this form of education is what the new student is indeed looking for. The Council is concerned in this context about the final level in the new set-up of the bachelor's programmes. At this stage it has not been demonstrated that the costs if the investments necessary for the plans and the strain on the training staff weighs up against the

expected benefits. Some questions are also raised regarding the plans for modular bachelor's programmes in relation to the desired profile (Campus university, small-scale).

In addition, the Board wishes to set up a **University College**, aimed at a broad form of engineering. This involves a broad-based and highly intensive bachelor's programme for highly motivated and talented students. The intention is to open the University College in September 2012.

At this moment the Council has insufficient information on the intended elaboration of the plans to express its initial views in this context.

Research activities: For the research activities the Board distinguishes three categories with the aim of goal-oriented research of excellent quality and visibility, the optimal deployment of the means available and a strong tie with our direct surroundings. *Fundamental research:* long-term research in which context our spearheads are: nano, biomedical, ICT, governance, green energy/processes and of course their social relevance. This research is accommodated in institutes. *Research focused on commercial knowledge transfer:* this research to which a basic funding is allocated, has a shorter duration, and is largely self-sufficient. *Training-related research:* this research is indispensable for training at an academic level and for this reason is accommodated with the faculties.

For this moment a large-scale reorganisation of the chairs in the view of the Council has been insufficiently motivated and the financial safeguards need to be better demonstrated. Moreover, the cry of distress now given with respect to part of the research is in sharp contrast with the original position in RoUte '14 that the research activities "were very well on course". Criteria for abolishing chairs are now too strongly based on beneficial budgetary effects for research activities and too little on scientific quality and relevance to training aspects. Because the criteria are unclear, this gives rise to much unrest within the organisation and the social relations are put on edge already in this stage. Due to the intention to abolish 2 of the 6 institutes (IMPACT and IBR) the deans will again become responsible for part of the research landscape. The implications of this have not been outlined so far.

Continuation and role of participation in the next few months (planning Executive Board):

1. In the next few weeks the Board will be working on the memorandum 'tightening of strategy', which will be discussed as part of the initial portfolio in the May meeting with the Council for advice. (Approval in June). This means that the memorandum will be published on Monday 11 April. Part of the memorandum is a description of the considerations and criteria used in making decisions on the research landscape.
2. Parallel to drawing up this memorandum the preliminary views that have reached the UMT and the Board with respect to the research landscape will be further worked out by the Board.
3. In early April the considerations/criteria will be published by the Board as part of the memorandum referred to under point 1.
4. In June the tightening of the strategy memorandum will be presented to the Council for approval.
5. Also in June, partly on the basis of a series of informal discussions, assessment and feedback,

a formal reorganisation plan will be discussed for advice to be presented to the Council before or on 16 May in which the considerations have been translated into intentions in a way which is subject to assessment.

6. In September this reorganisation plan will be submitted to the OPUT for advice.
7. In October the reorganisation plan will be submitted to the Council for advice.

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