

NEWSLETTER

UNIVERSITY COUNCIL

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A large audience was present at the discussion meeting between the Executive Board and the University Council on March 25th. The topics that were covered this meeting included the Internationalization Vision, Binding Study Advise, and the concept plan "Studying with a disability". On top of that, the Council issued several unsolicited advices on the Experiment with PhD students, activism on the UT, and the role of participation bodies regarding the Education and Examination Regulations (Dutch: OER). Finally, the Council expressed dissatisfaction with the fact that information about the minor programs was still insufficient, although the board had promised that a matrix with information would be online within two days.

A couple of items will be reported on in this Newsletter.

Binding Study Advise (the BSA)

Several parties of the University Council have received signals indicating that the current BSA leads to much concern and uncertainty among students. Some programs have already responded by lowering the requirements for a positive advise and defining their own rules. The Council supports a BSA of 45 EC, translated into 75% of the study load of the 1st year. This can be regarded as the boundary for a positive BSA. In the opinion of the Council, programs should define themselves how students should meet this 75%. Which knowledge and skills are essential, is best judged on a local level. Indeed, the BSA is intended to assess if someone is suitable for the program, not to make them pass as quickly as possible. The board stressed that the current Education and Examination Regulations give room to organize additional resit opportunities or regulations, because it states that not passing 3 modules *can* lead to a negative BSA. After a tough debate with the Board and a letter from the Program Directors (and also, of one of them, an oral contribution to the discussion) a compromise was found at the discussion meeting. The Board has promised that programs are allowed to widen the conditions for a positive advise if they wish to. This elaboration of the BSA has to be

included in the program-specific annex of the Education and Examination Regulations.



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Internationalization vision

In this document one can read how the UT wants to achieve her ambitious objectives in 2020 regarding the delivery of internationally oriented academics (Global Citizens) and attracting students from abroad, especially as master and PhD. Discussing the topic of internationalization is complicated because one can not exactly define what an internationally educated student should eventually know and be capable of. What are the final attainment levels and how to design your education in order to achieve them? It has already become clear that there might be substantial differences depending on the type of program. Eventually the question how to implement internationalization within a program can only be answered by the program itself. After reading an earlier draft of the Internationalization Vision, the Council concluded that this document prescribed that all programs at the UT, both masters and bachelors, should be taught in English in 2020 at the latest. After revision of the document text and commitments of the Executive Board during the discussion meeting, now it is confirmed that the primacy to determine the language of education belongs to the programs themselves. The Dean will organize this within his Faculty in consultation with the Program Directors and Program Councils. Decisions will be made according to the procedure that applies to the code of conduct for working languages, and they will be recorded in the Education and Examination Regulations. The Faculty Councils will have the right to advice on this topic. The Board also promised to draw attention to safeguarding the quality of English spoken by teachers and students within the programmes when they call for implementation plans of the programs.

However, courses in English will not be included in the curriculum. The program will also decide at what moment the switch to English will take place.

Besides, the program is required to ensure that students who started a Dutch bachelor program will not be affected by this transition for their regular study length, and future students should be informed about the transition to English as official language timely. It was agreed that the transition can only take place after it has been clearly announced on two previous open days of the UT.

The Council had wished that per Faculty an overall implementation plan would be established, in which the Faculty indicates how she acts on the Internationalization Vision and, with that, what she contributes to the objectives of the UT. According to the Council, these plans should be submitted to the Faculty Council for consent, because they concern a major change of policy. The Executive board did not want to go that far. Because of this last item we did not vote at the discussion meeting, because student party UReka asked for a reflection period. The Council has to announce its position within 30 days and therefore this will happen in our internal meeting on Wednesday 22 April.



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Advice directive central OER

According to the law, the Dean establishes the Education and Exam Regulations (Dutch: OER) for each program in the Faculty. But first the consent of the Faculty Council is required. For a number of years, the Board has made use of its right to issue directives “to promote organization and coordination”, to establish a “Central OER” that is imposed on the programs. Within the faculty then it is only possible to add some program-specific rules. From the outset, the Council said that the current detailed directive “Central OER” is undermining the right of consent of the participation bodies. As a lot is going on regarding BSA and OER, the Council already has advised multiple times to provide more space for the programs, and at other universities the Central OER is submitted to the central participation for consent, the University Council asks the board at least to grant full participation on the OER again. Then programs would have more possibilities to solve problems surrounding the module-education in an appropriate way. At the meeting the Board said they first want to obtain information from fellow universities and then will respond to the advice.



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Advice regarding national Experiment PhD students

A bill regarding the “Experiment PhD students” is to be adopted by the Dutch government. In anticipation, the UT and a limited number of other universities have expressed the wish to join the experiment, even though they will probably have to ask the central participation for consent in due course. Following these developments, various trade unions and the national doctoral candidate organization PNN have called on participation councils to express their opinion on this subject.

The Council shares the opinion that (very) different legal positions –employee versus scholarship holder- are undesirable when both persons do the same work: the savings (more than €100,000.- per doctorate) come at the cost of the doctoral candidate and possibly the acclaimed quality and attractiveness of Dutch doctorates. The Board states that it mainly wants to legalize the PhD candidates from abroad who bring a grant for their doctoral studies, a group that already exists for a long time (like at the ITC).

The Council advises to refrain from the experiment in advance and, from a different perspective, to consider whether the scholarship doctorate studies at the ITC (also with respect to final attainment levels) have a different nature, or to investigate whether an equal treatment (as “normal” PhD’s paid from the 1st, 2nd and 3rd flow of funds) is possible.

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About the University Council

The University Council is the central participation body of the UT and regularly talks with the Executive Board. The University Council consists of 18 members: nine employee representatives and nine student representatives.

The University Council exerts influence on the policy of the UT on a central level. Within the council three parties are present: Campus Coalitie, UReka and PvdUT.

Currently the council has the following members:
Herbert Wormeester (chair), Frank van den Berg,
Jan de Goeijen, Jörgen Svensson, Herman Poorthuis,
Anton Stoorvogel, Barend Köbben, Gert Brinkman,
Dick Meijer, Luuk Geurts, Tim Schuitema, Derko Budding,
Peter Mpuan, Thomas van Tilburg, Nik Huisintveld,
Stijn van Winsen, Cathérine de Bruine and Dimah Babugu.

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