

## FACULTY COUNCIL - FACULTY ITC

FROM  
Faculty Council

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15/2/2019

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YOUR REF.

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FC140219-001

### SUBJECT

Response to URaad on the intended decision of the CvB regarding the Housing Scenario choice for the Faculty ITC

Dear members of the University Council,

In the light of the intended decision by the University Board (CvB) regarding the choice of a housing scenario for the faculty ITC, the Faculty Council of ITC would like to inform you of its considerations in this matter and present you with several requests. We trust that you will include these matters in your evaluation of, and final decision towards the presented housing scenario.

The FC daily board was presented (on 31 January) with basically the same presentation as the one given to ITC working group for Faculty Housing and the CvB. The FC appreciated this openness from the LTSH project team. The FC does regret that it was only informed verbally of the scenario advice and that none of the underlying considerations were shared as documentation. This does not allow us to provide a fully informed opinion, even though we are given the impression to be seen as one of the most important stakeholders in the process. We feel the process lacks in transparency and inclusiveness and we do not accept the 'sensitivity' of some of the information involved as a valid argument for this.

The presentation contained further elaborations of the three already known alternatives ((A) renovation of the Langezijds building, (B) New building on De Es, (C) renovation of the ITC building). What is clear from the scenario's is that each has been assessed against the same criteria as set out in the original plan of requirements for a newly constructed building for the ITC Faculty. This provides a quasi-objective comparison in terms of how well the scenarios meet the criteria in the plan of requirements, and how this would be reflected in the cost.

The plan of requirements was however never designed to be used for a scenario for renovating an older building, but simply for the construction of a new one. If the ITC working group would have been asked in 2017 to deliver a plan of requirements for a renovation scenario, the existing conditions of the to be renovated building would have been taken into account, which would have affected the boundary conditions for the criteria to be set. Although presented as "comparing apples with apples" and perhaps a common way for comparing building projects, it more in line with comparing "harvested apples with the ones that still are growing on a tree". In particular, the cost of the renovation scenario of the current ITC building seems to be artificially inflated due to the extremely high demands placed on achieving the same quality as would count for a newly constructed building.

The Faculty Council of the ITC, therefore, has strong doubts concerning the accuracy of the Scenario C cost estimation. It seems to be put there as a token gesture only, but one that serves a specific purpose, namely to clearly indicate its inconvenience, in an attempt to disqualify it. In the light of the available budget, Scenario C nevertheless appears the only one guaranteed to remain within the budget. The project team is adamant about the quality of their new cost estimation, even in the light of the debacle of last October (when the proposed new building was found to be way over the available budget). When asked about the chances of overspending with the current estimate for Scenario A, we were given the answer that the new calculations were made so more accurately than before, and therefore they would stay within limits.

Knowing that building cost are always higher than expected, the FC is not convinced by the assurances given. Given that the process to plan and cost the initial design of the new ITC building took nearly 9 years, and eventually proved to be woefully inadequate, we have little confidence that the new process, that has taken a mere few months, will be any more accurate.

We expect that ITC will not bear the overspending that will inevitably occur, as this can be agreed upon in advance, but the extra cost will have to be borne by the UT as a whole.

To be clear: the FC does not want to plead for a choice of Scenario C. We merely wish to highlight that we perceive the scenario choice to have been biased from the start, perhaps to serve other agenda's more than the ITC plan of requirements. There are additional benefits for the University to keep the existing ITC building in use, particularly in the light of current space shortages on campus, which have not been taken in consideration with either scenario. Similarly, there are undoubtedly additional benefits, or vested interests, for the University to invest in Gallery II. These however are also not in the plan of requirements, but do appear to play a significant role in the scenario selection.

During the meeting of 31<sup>st</sup> January, a number of sub-scenarios for option A were presented, and the concept of the involvement of the BLOC consortium was, in general terms mentioned. However, whilst the announcement is made that Scenario A is the preferred choice, clearly it has not yet been announced which of the sub-scenarios that were presented to us might be selected. For this reason, the FC wishes to reiterate that, according to the plan of requirements, ITC still requires an 'autonomous' building for it to function as one entity and to provide the learning environment we require for our international student population. The plan of requirements does not include sharing floor space with other tenants, particularly third parties. This is unacceptable.

The issue of the external BLOC involvement is therefore worrying. To the FC it is at the moment it is not at all clear to what extent BLOC has vested interests in Gallery I & II and how this affects the scenario assessment and choices. If BLOC becomes a leading feature of the UT choice for the ITC housing, then any "A" scenario could be wholly unacceptable for the FC. This would in particular be the case when an external partner has an ongoing role in the management of the building or supplying its infrastructure. This type of arrangement would appear to present a purely profit making arrangement for BLOC at the cost of ITC.

In the event of any significant BLOC involvement in the finally chosen scenario, the issue of the rental rates and arrangements needs to be clarified. The FC fears that the faculty could fall victim to commercial rental agreements, by which a disproportionate amount of (our development intended) budget gets 'stolen' just so that we can occupy the building. The FC is therefore strongly opposed to any sub-scenario choice under "A" that involves a physical sharing of space with BLOC (horizontally or vertically) or involves financial interests of BLOC, or any third party, in the exploitation of ITC building space on Campus.

In the light of the uncertainties involved with the exploitation of the buildings under Scenario A, we therefore expect that the University Council protects the academic sovereignty of the Faculties of the University by excluding unsolicited ties to private parties, such as BLOC, from their operational responsibilities.

When the CvB had to resubmit its LTSH budget to the University Council and the UT Board of Governors (RvT) in 2017 to get approval for the budget increase, the FC also made it clear to the University Council, that from a societal and good governance point of view, we cannot accept endless budget increases that will eventually become a burden on our Faculty budget, which for the largest part has been awarded by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs for capacity building in developing countries.



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Finally, whilst until now there appears to have been a desire on the part of the University Board to separate the matter of student living accommodation from that of the 'working' building, we believe that these two matters are inextricably linked. Therefore, we believe that these two issues need to be addressed together, or at least discussed together. Currently, ITC students are conveniently accommodated in the ITC International Hotel, close to the existing ITC building. However, there appears to be no clarity at all on what will happen if ITC moves to the campus. Certain features of the current arrangements for on-campus student accommodation (availability, cost, and admission practices), appear to be unacceptable for ITC students. A clear strategy on housing ITC students after any move to the campus must, therefore, be presented together with the scenario choice of the CvB.

In conclusion, it is our request that the University Council will be critical towards the cost of any chosen building scenario, and put clear limits and consequences on overspending, both from a responsible governance perspective and with respect to the ultimately resulting square meter price, that will become a significant additional burden on the ITC faculty budget for international capacity development.

Throughout this long and protracted process of housing planning, the FC has been most concerned that the voice of two major stakeholders in the whole process, namely the ITC Faculty Board and the ITC Faculty Council, appear to have only been given a very minor voice in the (participatory) decision making process. Whereas the Faculty has made continuous significant efforts to become integrated in the University, there has been given very little acknowledgement to these efforts. Most efforts have received either mild or negative responses, giving the impression that the Faculty ITC must always give while the University only takes. We find this quite absurd and feel that it has not fostered a feeling of transparency and inclusiveness, not reflecting the outspoken warm welcome of the CvB when ITC became a Faculty of the University in 2010.

We would kindly request that the University Council updates the ITC Faculty Council on its discussions on the above matters with the University Board. Of course we are ready and willing to provide any further input on the above matter as and when required.

Yours sincerely,

Faculty Council ITC

John A. Horn, Chairperson

Jeroen Verplanke, Vice-chair

Arsha Amiranti, Chair of the student section

