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Recipients prof. dr. H.G. van Dissel; mw. W.A. de Munck; prof. dr. P.J. van Baalen,

Advice – Strengthening the BoE

Dear prof. dr. H.G. van Dissel,

Dear mw. W.A. de Munck,

Dear prof. dr. P.J. van Baalen,

The Faculty Student Council (henceforth referred to as “FSR”) at the Faculty of Economics and Business (henceforth referred to as “FEB”) is writing this letter to address point of improvements regarding the functioning of exam quality mechanisms as enforced by the Board of Examiners (BoE). In brief, we posit in this letter to urge the board to take concrete and structural measures in making sure the quality of exams is safeguarded at all times on our FEB.

According to the Nederlands-Vlaamse accreditatieorganisatie (henceforth referred to as “NVAO”) accreditation criteria of faculties and derived “kader toetsbeleid” at the UvA, the FEB has to have an adequate system of examination. More importantly, the NVAO states that the quality of exams need to be ensured and quality policy written actually needs to be enforced.

As it stands, the FSR FEB shares concerns regarding the current functioning of the quality mechanisms for exams as deployed by the BOE. Objectively, we want to strengthen our argument by referring to the Midterm Assessment 2017 of the FEB, stating that the Board of Examiners could do more in executing all their legal duties. The Midterm Assessment 2017 explicitly mentions the checking of “end documents” and exams on a structural basis for quality as one of the major improvement points. Our concern specifically focuses upon the ultimate quality of exams and the underlying procedures/mechanisms in-place to safeguard the quality of exams. Currently, the Board of Examiners checks one block of exams of one programme every three years. We contend that this is not sufficient to safeguard exam quality on a structural basis. Our concern should be seen in the light of the NVAO accreditation criteria of faculties stating the importance of safeguarding the quality of exams on a continuous basis.





Furthermore, the concern of the FSR FEB is underlined by the collected portfolio of exam flaws (attached in email) with a minimum of effort, upon which we found worrying cases with grave exam quality concerns as well as exams whereby at minimum half of all questions originated from previous exams. This, in conjunction with objective findings in the Midterm Assessment of 2017, leads the FSR to conclude that the call to action in safeguarding high quality exams is currently of a not-sufficient standard and thus in need of improvement.

Second of all, we suggest to focus improvements on the structural enforcement of exam quality by the Board of Examiners. As it stands, the exam quality is guaranteed and followed-up by a part-time exam expert, who acts upon signaling lists, complaints or reviews a self-initiated sample. In the vision of the FSR FEB, each exam must be checked for quality prior to the examination date. We believe that ensuring the quality of exams strikes the core of the education to both our students and the faculty and should therefore be at all times safeguarded. The FSR welcomes current initiatives taken to enlarge the Board of Examiners and to write the assessment/invigilator documents. However, we contend that these measures are not enough to structurally enforce the quality of exams. Especially as the Board of Examiners has to deal with more duties and work, the FSR FEB suggests faculty management to dedicate more support resources to ensuring exam quality specifically.

On the basis of the aforementioned points, the FSR FEB suggests to having more full-time quality officers employed at the Board of Examiners, so that they will be able to more proactively ensure the quality of exams on a structural basis. The FSR is very much aware of the fact that dedicating resources to eternal staff for the Board of Examiners will come at the opportunity costs of less funding being available for other highly important matters. But contends that the current negative and big magnitude of exam quality erosion will need a more structural enforcement relative to the current checks and balances for safeguarding exam quality (including those to be implemented regarding the invigilator and assessment policy) in-place. By having extra structural enforcement and improvement follow-up, the FSR believes that the problem can be tackled more fundamentally. Improvement agendas could be set-up, enforcement can be guaranteed, and the magnitude of quality problems can be researched more thoroughly throughout the faculty.

More strongly, the FSR acknowledges the fact that there is no clear cut first-time fix solution to problems relating exam quality (e.g. the re-use of questions issue). Tackling these and other problems relating to exam quality will need an adequate discussion and structural follow-up to evolve and



improve. It is thereby the FSR's believe that the faculty management should dedicate resources to enforce exam quality policy more strongly and to improve more structurally on exam quality.

All in all, the FSR writes this letter to share its concerns regarding the quality of exams at the FEB that potentially affects the credibility of diploma's issued. By gathering evidence like the portfolio of exams flaws, the FEB Midterm Review 2017 and the Kader Toetsbeleid, we posit that problems relating exam quality currently are in need of structural follow-up to enforce exam quality policy more strongly and to improve more structurally on exam quality. As a solution, the FSR suggest the critical development of hiring more external staff (i.e. exam experts) in realizing the high-quality standard of education which the faculty aims to uphold. Nonetheless, this letter is only a suggestion on how to strengthen the BoE functioning. We wish to emphasize that the BoE knows best on how to improve quality of exams further. We thereby look forward to hearing from the BoE as to how they think we should bring the enforcement of exam quality policy and the enhancement of exam quality to the next level at our faculty. Which the FSR believes is a shared interest to us all.

On behalf of the Faculty Student Council,

Jelle Turkenburg

Committee Member, Education & Research

Christof Bischofberger

Chairman, Education & Research

Referred to files:

Kader Toetsbeleid 2012, Universitaire Beleidsnotities

Voortgang Aanbevelingen UA Midterm December 2017