



*Centrale*  
**Studentenraad**

**College van Bestuur**  
**Postbus 19268**  
**1000 GG Amsterdam**

Nieuwe Achtergracht 170  
1018 WV Amsterdam  
(020) 525 3726  
csr@studentenraad.nl  
studentenraad.nl/csr

Datum	24-04-2020	Ons kenmerk	1920-6
Contactpersoon	Pjotr van der Jagt	E-mail	csr@uva.nl
Bijlage(n)	-		
Betreft	<b>Unsolicited advice Corona</b>		

Dear Geert, Karen and Jan,

The Central Student Council (*hierna*: CSR) is glad to see you all still healthy in these turbulent times. Over the past weeks, we've had the privilege to witness from behind the scenes how the UvA handled herself in the time of a global pandemic. Despite the enormous challenges that the current situation has put our university through, it has mostly shown how resilient, innovative and flexible our university is. This holds true for both staff as well as students. In this unasked advice we would therefore first like to communicate our gratitude and respect to how the situation is being handled, as well as to the enormous amount of work that everyone has put in to ensure that education can continue online. We nevertheless feel the duty to point out a few matters that have raised our concern. These issues are outlined below in different sections.

### **Medezeggenschap**

As the first phase of the pandemic is over and short term crisis decisions make place for long term planning it is crucial that medezeggenschap is participating in the decision making regarding upcoming policy choices at the UvA. The CSR therefore advises that discussion with the medezeggenschap, on central level as well as faculty level, will take place prior to the decision making. This includes consulting the FSRs, ORs and program committees. Besides, we ask that the concerned medezeggenschap is asked for advice. Especially now that the decisions made will heavily influence multiple generations of students, participation of students in this decision making is crucial.

### **Information**

For the past few weeks the UvA provided (more than) weekly updates through the Corona site. By now, there are more than 15 tabs with separate information. Therefore, the CSR advises to make a separate overview page with all of the measures taken clearly stated on one page with intuitive titles, such as 'Travel advice International students', 'BSA', 'Harde knip' etc.

Besides, the CSR would like to draw attention to the accuracy of the information on the corona information page. We noticed (and understand) that information sometimes changes and gets corrected. Taking the travel advice for International students as an example, the advice as stated on the website changed significantly over time. The CSR understands the changing environment in which we are now, but when an advice on the website is changed we believe that this should be clearly stated on the website.

### **Final year students**

#### *Students who expect to be finished with studying this year*

For a group of students the academic year of 2019-2020 was supposed to be their final year of studying. However, due to the Corona crisis some were not able to finish and are only missing courses from blocks 4, 5 or 6. These students will have to register again next academic year (2020-2021) in order to finish these missing courses. The CSR believes that students should not have to pay an additional year of tuition for education they could not follow due to circumstances out of their power. The CSR advises that all students who meet this requirement should be compensated to lower their financial burden. A refund of the tuition fee of 2020-2021 seems the most fair option. However, we understand that this measure might put too much pressure on the finances of the UvA. In that case *flexstuden* seems a good middle ground. Nevertheless, this is not applicable for non-EER students. The university of Delft might have found a feasible solution for this problem, which might be applicable at the UvA as well. Apart from providing compensation the CSR also urges the CvB to take this discussion to a national level, since national policy might be a more fitting solution and could lead to proper compensation for not only the UvA students, but all students.

#### *Students who want to enrol in a masters next year (harde knip)*

Since the final decision has already been made the CSR would like to express its contentment with the outcome. An important note we would still like to make is that there should be clear communication towards students currently writing a thesis worth more than 15 ECTS and whether these students fall under the exemption as mentioned on the website.

Moreover, the CSR wants to stress that not only sickness should be considered as a reason for not finishing a course. We advise you that all Corona related issues, including stress and other forms of mental health are valid reasons to be considered for the *zachte knip* regulation.

#### *Cum laude and honours*

We are happy to see that leniencies regarding cum laude and honours are considered within the university. Still, the CSR would like to see that the regulations, possible deviations and leniencies regarding cum laude and honours should be communicated clearly towards all the students.

#### **Learning outcomes**

The CSR shares the concern of the CvB regarding study delay and is pleased to see that preventing this is one of the top priorities of the CvB. However, the CSR does see a possible threat in this priority. Study progress is important, but it may never bypass the quality of education or the credibility of a program. Considering the exceptional circumstances under which programs are currently being taught the CSR is amazed by the amount of inventiveness of the teachers in finding ways to still teach. Though, to make sure the students graduating or studying during this academic year (2019-2020) do not have a lesser reputation later in their career, the CSR advises that all the learning outcomes of programs stay completely intact and that Program Committees are being actively involved in the discussion with the program director on which end terms may be threatened due to changes made in the curriculum.

#### **Proctoring**

Proctoring has frequently featured in the news, both positively and negatively. On the one hand it seems to solve a lot of issues regarding exams, on the other hand questions on privacy and safe space of students have arisen. Can we, and do we want to, ask from students to trade a bit of privacy and safe space for the opportunity to take an exam?

Since an extensive research is done on proctoring the CSR will go more into detail on the subject of proctoring in a separate letter that will be sent to the CvB in the coming week(s). For now the CSR wants to address that they are



concerned with the topic when hearing the reservations of multiple students and considering the speed at which decisions are being taken.

### **Mental health**

Sitting at home all day; no clear future perspective; fear for the health of family and friends being at risk; financial uncertainty, those are only a few examples of things on students', and many people's, minds due to the pandemic. The CSR expects that this situation will take an extra toll on students' mental health. Also, the CSR would like to lay an extra emphasis on the change in workload for students. Some students are overloaded with a huge increase in assignments and deadlines. The constant pressure of these deadlines puts them in an even more stressful situation. The CSR is aware of the fact that the CvB is already busy taking up mental health problems on a long(er) term via UvA Care. Despite this, the CSR advises the CvB to also increase the short term solutions for the students who find themselves in a difficult situation right now. It is expected that a new group of students might be looking for help who were previously not in the need of mental health care. Therefore we suggest that extra promotion is made for the different types of assistance the UvA offers. For instance, a dedicated Canvas page with this information can be made accessible for all students.

Also, with the expected rise of mental health problems, the admission and waiting time of the UvA psychologists might increase. Perhaps there are even students still on the waiting list from before the lockdown. This risk group finds themselves in a very difficult and dangerous place. The CSR wants to urge that an assessment is made of the waiting lists of the psychologists and an extra effort is made to contact all of these students and assign them with appointments.

Apart for assisting students the council also wants to tackle one of the roots of the problem, namely the workload of students. As is already mentioned, especially the increase in all sorts of assignments with deadlines puts a lot of pressure on students. This is specifically the case at the faculty of Humanities (FGw), where the students are overloaded with reading and writing. The CSR therefore asks all the teachers to start an open conversation with their students on how they are handling their workload and how much would be feasible for the students to do.

### **Accessibility of the digital services**

During this crisis one piece of equipment is crucial for students to continue their studies, namely a computer. And not just a computer, but one with the sufficient hardware (and software) to meet the requirements for all new online work forms, meetings, exams and assignments.

The purchase or upgrade of a computer is very costly, this combined with the fact that the source of income for students mostly depends on jobs which are now unavailable (e.g. horeca), and that students would need to go outside and bring their devices away to get them upgraded, could result in an increased number of students who are struggling with the accessibility of the digital services offered by the UvA.

The CSR advises that the UvA makes sure to have sufficient computers (laptops) to provide for students who find themselves in a difficult financial situation.

### **Block 6**

We are now in block 5 and block 6 is around the corner. The CSR understands that universities are waiting for decisions from higher up (government, VSNU etc.) to set new guidelines for this period. Nevertheless, this waiting game is difficult for everyone at the UvA. Now more than ever students need some certainty in what will happen. Some programs even already took a lead in announcing in what form they will provide education in block 6, resulting in confusion for students of programs where such announcements regarding block 6 have not yet been made. The CSR urges the CvB to take the 15th of May as a deadline for a decision on the guidelines of education in block 6, and communicate this deadline to the students, taking into account that some students might have to travel back to the Netherlands. Understandably, this deadline can be very difficult for practical education, where

block 6 is not online or offline, but rather go or no go. In that case at least for all other education a clear decision should already be taken.

We look forward to your reply.

Bedankt en sterkte in deze tijd namens de gehele Centrale Studentenraad,

Met vriendelijke groet,

Pjotr van der Jagt  
Voorzitter CSR 19|20