



**Minutes of the Overleg Vergadering (1) of the FSR FMG '20- '21**  
**Faculty Student Council of the Faculty of Social and Behavioural sciences**

Date: 1<sup>st</sup> of October 2020

Location: Online via Zoom

Present executive board FMG: Agneta Fischer, Sterre Minkes.

Present FSR FMG '20-'21: Emilie van der Heijden, Joshua Meijer, Pablo Mustienes, Robin Hellmich, Kaleem Ullah (first hour), Siddharth Jethwani, Pedro Gonzales, Joselyn Arevalo Moran, Johanna Lehr, Viktoriia Akhankova (second hour), Alessandro Ractliffe

Absent FSR FMG '20-'21: Siddharth Jethwani, Ruben de Groot, Viktoriia Akhankova (first hour), Kaleem Ullah (second hour)

Technical chair: Alexandra Rosca

Minutes: Lieve Bastiaan

**1. Opening and setting the agenda**

Alexandra opens the meeting at 10:02. The agenda is set without changes.

**2. Setting the draft minutes of the OV (6) on June 30th**

The FSR FMG has accepted all of the dean's changes to the minutes of the sixth OV of '19 - '20.

**3. Announcements**

FSR

Siddharth Jethwani and Ruben de Groot were unable to join the meeting. Viktoriia Akhankova will be absent during the first hour, Kaleem Ullah will be absent during the second hour.

**4. Subject 1: Diversity**

FSR

In their policy plan, the FSR outlined a few objectives regarding diversity. The FSR picked points from the diversity action plan that are partially the responsibility of the dean.

Firstly, they want to include visibility in local schools in underrepresented areas in Amsterdam.

Secondly, the FSR wants to receive more information on the status quo regarding diversity at the faculty, in order to increase transparency. The FSR wants more frequent analysis of the status of diversity at the faculty. The diversity action plan has some examples of how this could be done. The FSR understands that the diversity action plan is not the dean's plan. The

diversity officer could not give an overview of the points that have been worked on. To accommodate people who do not want to take part in the survey's, there are ways to make people more comfortable. One example is making the survey anonymous.

Thirdly, regarding diversity on the teaching side there are a few point the FSR would like to see the faculty work on; the training of staff, active scouting, and having diverse and trained recruitment panels

Fourthly, the FSR wants more coordination between working councils that have overlapping responsibilities. Regarding the communication between working groups that address diversity. The diversity working group and the sexual harassment working group. Marieke agreed with this. The FSR does think that there are overlapping issues between diversity and social safety.

Lastly, the FSR wants to address decolonization.

### Dean

The dean thinks that it should be kept in mind that the diversity action plan is the plan of the diversity officer who advises the dean. It is not a plan from the dean herself. She agrees with most things in the diversity action plan, this does not mean she copies all things that are in there.

The dean is working on a faculty diversity statement, it was sent to all the chairs and directors of the departments to see if they support it. This will be sent to the FSR when all of these people agree to the statement. The dean thinks it's important that people in a position of power support the statement. In the statement, the dean does not mention decolonialization, as she believes it is a term that has a specific meaning which is not important for all study programmes. What the dean finds important in a study programme is learning about different perspectives from which to see a situation, the ethnicity or social background of people is only one way to create these perspectives. It is not up to the dean to force people to include certain perspectives in their study programmes.

The dean informs the FSR that programs aiming to reach out to underrepresented areas in Amsterdam are already being expanded.

Regarding diversity on the teacher's side, the dean believes that in order to have a decent procedure it's important to train people to hire and select people fairly. This is a skill that can be learned. The dean, of course, does not know for sure if current procedures are unfair, she does not know where it works well and where it does not. The dean intends to, for example, create short film clips to showing best practices for interviewing people. People often fall into the trap of hiring people in who they recognize themselves in, it is important to make people aware of this. Another thing that can be done from the faculty side is the composition of hiring committees. This is done already for full professors, but not for other positions.

Regarding the analysis of diversity, the dean informs the FSR that she sees a dilemma, you want to increase diversity, but people do not always want their different background to be emphasized.

The dean informs the FSR that there is no sexual harassment working group. The faculty is working on social safety issues, they are working on that with the chairs of departments. As this is the responsibility of the department chairs. The dean does not see how this relates to diversity.

The dean will ask Marieke what she meant by there being too little communication between different groups.

## **5. Subject 2: Housing during COVID-19**

### FSR

The FSR has not had a housing meeting yet. It is clear that the problems that were common last year do not apply this year due to Corona.

In their policy plan, the FSR's first objective was to ask for more study spaces, but due to new coronavirus regulations, the FSR has decided to pause this objective.

Secondly, the FSR wants to look into putting in a system online that allows students to see what spaces are available. In order to prevent them from making the commute and being disappointed. The FSR informs the faculty that many students are not aware of the reservation system that is currently in place. The FSR argues that communication towards students about the decisions made regarding study spaces needs to be done clearly and openly. When students do not know why decisions are made, they get angry. This should be avoided

Thirdly the FSR is working on setting up an online library environment where students can study together. Joselyn is working on creating a platform where students can simulate a library environment. This is already being discussed with the CSR.

The fourth objective is related to the situation after the Corona crisis. There is a long-standing issue with the housing of students, most housing is only available for first-year students. The FSR wants to know if building housing in areas other than Amsterdam has been discussed.

### Dean

The dean advises the FSR to discuss the issue of study places with Tom Verhoek. One issue is the number of students that are allowed to be in the buildings (at the same time) due to corona regulations. We need to prioritize the use of available space in the building, this includes offline education and study places.

There is an online system for some of the study spaces already, the issue is that reservations are made but students do not show up. There needs to be a solution for this. The FSR should communicate with Tom Verhoek about this issue.

The dean adds that sometimes the on-campus activities are cancelled, and study spaces are empty without this being known in advance. Another issue is the pressure the physical activities put on public transport. The FSR could explain to the students why there are only a limited number of study places available on the campus.

The dean agrees student housing is always a big issue, this is a university-wide issue (UvA-Housing is an UvA department). The university is aware of this, they are talking about it with the city council. This topic is discussed often.

## **6. Subject 3: Mental health during COVID-19**

### FSR

The FSR believes access to mental health should be an outgoing obligation of the UvA. Students should be aware of mental health services before they need to access them. Increasing

students' awareness of the services will do two things: reduce stress and increase early access to services which can reduce escalation. The FSR believes the university should make that first step to present students with these resources. The FSR wants to smoothen the process of finding resources, there are enough resources, but the focus needs to be on providing information.

Secondly, the FSR believes there should be an online platform available to students during these times of online education.

A possible solution would be to create a section on Canvas that provides the information and is more visible in a central place that students use daily. The FSR will have a meeting with the person responsible for Canvas. They are also going to contact the CSR file holders. It is emphasized that the FSR wants to normalize seeking help and using the services. If it's readily available, the FSR believes it helps normalize the use of mental health services.

### Dean

There is a website with information on mental health resources. The dean believes that the information on mental health is now sufficiently accessible to all students, the website is easily found, and students are informed about its existence through their study programmes and by their advisors.

The dean informs the FSR that a health unit will be created at the REC campus that will be accessible to students and employees. It will also be a visible representation of the services.

The dean does not want Canvas to be saturated with information. There is a university-wide study regarding mental health called UvA-care. The outcome of this study might be useful in answering the questions that the FSR has.

## **7. Subject 4: Digitalization**

### FSR

Firstly, the FSR believes lecture recordings should be made available to all students, due to a number of issues students are experiencing; time zones, Wi-Fi connection, and other obligations caused by corona such as care for family members. The FSR wants to have a faculty-wide policy for accessibility to lectures. At the OWI meeting one member said that "lectures are mandatory as always", the FSR does not agree with this statement. The director of Communication Science proposed to send PowerPoint slides in combination with audio recordings. Regarding privacy laws, this is a strange situation. Some students are asked to use Proctorio for examinations. The FSR wants to know how it is possible to use recordings for exams but not for lectures.

Secondly, the FSR wants to address that, currently, in the Political Science programme, students are not given the opportunity to get feedback on their exams. The reasons given to the FSR was that teachers are afraid exams will be copied. However, students have the right to inspect their exams, this is included in the OER.

To add the FSR knows online inspections have been taking place before Corona and this went fine. The option of using Proctorio during exam inspection was written off as being too expensive. However, the FSR believes that. The FSR understands the concern that students may cheat or share exams from previous examinations online. However, online inspections have taken place online before Covid-19. Students received the mock scheme of exams and

could see their answers online. The FSR believes people will always find ways to cheat, the policy should favour the students that do not resort to this.

The FSR argues that many exams currently consist of large essay questions, it should thus be possible to create new questions. The FSR thinks a quick fix would be presenting a quick mark scheme on canvas for a limited amount of time. It is paramount that students can argue for their score, especially for students that need to obtain high grades.

*201001-3: Viktoriia investigates whether the inspection of exams not taking place is an issue at more study programmes or courses, or if it's only an issue for a few political science subjects.*

### Dean

The dean thinks the quotes from the OWI meeting that the FSR now mentions are a little bit selective. She believes the OWI directors recognize the problem of the online lectures. The dean mentions that there are some issues with providing the lectures online. One of them being the AVG, as students faces should not be uploaded online without their consent. The question of how long lectures should be available was not discussed at the OWI meeting; the dean believes this should be discussed as well. There are different ways in which teachers do this, with different motivations.

The dean agrees that a solution for online lectures needs to be found. The faculty will come back to this issue. In the next OWI meeting, the OWI directors will be asked what their teachers do in terms of online lectures, and their motives for doing and for not doing so.

The dean agrees the inspection of exams is important. Solutions are being discussed. In the past there has been a lot of cheating, this is a small percentage of students. There are services that sell the exams. This is not good for the reliability of the exams itself. Thus, the dean thinks cheating is a fair motive to not publish exam answers. Some inspections could be done on campus but solutions for online exam inspections need to be found.

The dean agrees that students will always find ways to cheat, so this should be minimized as much as possible. The dean agrees that test-vision could be used for inspection of exams, but not all exams make use of this programme.

The dean informs the council that sometimes exams need to be multiple choice to test different types of knowledge. There are different types of examinations that test different types of knowledge. The dean agrees that for essay-based questions it is important to be able to see a marking scheme and argue for one's answers.

*201001-2: The dean asks the OWI directors what their teachers do in terms of online lectures, and their motives for doing it in that manner.*

### **8. Any other business**

The FSR wants to discuss having council assistants on files, they want council assistants to have integrity in their work. The FSR believes it is fair to have council members involved in files in some way.

The dean informs the council that this is a matter of formality, Sterre knows more about the formalities of council assistants, they can come to her with additional questions.

The dean understands the reason for the protest happening this coming Friday, to ask for more offline education. One of the arguments of the protesters that the dean saw is that there are many other spaces available at other locations that could be used. However, this is expensive and an increase in students will put added pressure on public transport. The dean thinks a big issue is that teachers and or students are often unable to actually come to booked locations due to corona regulations.

The FSR wonders whether some system may be put into place to inform students that space is freed up due to these issues.

The FSR informs the dean that there is a fine line between wanting offline education and respecting the measures that are in place. The FSR thinks it's important for students to express their opinions. However, the FSR does not think this is the time to expand spaces, a plan should be put in place to do so if the spread of the virus lessens.

The dean proposes to discuss the social contacts of students at the OV meetings on a regular basis.

## **9. Questions and closing**

No questions are asked.

Alexandra closes the meeting at 11:42.