



Minutes of the Overleg Vergadering (2) of the FSR FMG '20- '21
Faculty Student Council of the Faculty of Social and Behavioural sciences

Date: 17th of November 2020

Location: Online via Zoom

Present executive board FMG:	Agneta Fischer, Sterre Minkes.
Present education directors	Andries van der Ark, Erna van Hest.
Present FSR FMG '20-'21:	Emilie van der Heijden, Pablo Mustienes, Robin Hellmich, Kaleem Ullah, Siddharth Jethwani, Pedro Gonzales, Joselyn Arevalo Moran, Johanna Lehr, Viktoriia Akhankova, Alessandro Ractliffe
Absent FSR FMG '20-'21:	Ruben de Groot (from 13:30 onwards), Joshua Meijer
Technical chair:	Alexandra Rosca
Minutes:	Lieve Bastiaan

1. Opening and setting the agenda

Alexandra opens the meeting at 13:02. The agenda is set without changes.

2. Setting the draft minutes of the OV (1) on October 1st

The FSR FMG has accepted all of the dean's changes to the minutes of the first OV of '20 -'21.

3. Announcements

Andries van der Ark and Erna van Hest will join for the first topic of this OV.

Dean

The dean has a request, in the faculty, two different committees are going to discuss different formats of teaching. One is focussed on education after COVID-19, to see what parts of corona education should be kept. The dean would like a council member to be in the committee. The idea is to give advice early next year, so programmes starting in September 2021 can benefit from this advice. It is preferred to have a Dutch-speaking student join, as the committee is currently Dutch speaking.

FSR

The request will be discussed in the Education and Communication (E&C) committee this afternoon; the committee likes the idea.

Joshua Meijer is unable to join the meeting. Kaleem Ullah and Robin need to leave at 14:30. Ruben needs to leave at 13:30.

4. Subject 1: New masters programme proposal

Erna van Hest & Andries van der Ark

The intention is to start a two-year master's programme for primary school education. It is a new programme, nothing in this form exists in the Netherlands. It will be a collaboration between the VU, UvA and Leiden University. The master is for bachelor students who want to obtain a primary school teaching certificate. The aim is to reduce the shortage of teachers, especially in the metropolitan area.

The deans need the council's consent to proceed in setting up the programme.

Currently, the biggest hurdles can be seen as the collaboration between universities and the collaboration with a university of applied sciences to be able to give students the teaching qualifications.

Modules of existing masters will be used, and an online learning platform will be created that will incorporate the lessons learned during the corona crisis. The teaching practice will be done in collaboration with an already existing system.

There are already masters for secondary school education, thus the universities are experienced in teaching a programme that has a practical and theoretical part regarding education.

FSR

The council will provide an advice at a later date. This will also be discussed in the E&C committee. The committee would also like to set up a more in-depth discussion with Erna van Hest and Andries van der Ark.

Dean

The faculty supports the proposal, as does the VU and Leiden University.

Action point:

201117-1: The FSR discusses its reaction to the request for consent UMPO Tuesday, November 17th and makes an appointment with Andries van der Ark and Erna van Hest to discuss their remaining questions and reaction.

Andries van der Ark and Erna van Hest exit the meeting.

5. Subject 2: Faculty strategy plan review

FSR

The council sent their advice on Monday. The council will now illustrate their advice. The council was happy to see the ambitious in the document as well as topics that the council put in their strategy plan as well. Most issues the council had were related to vagueness. The council would like more clarity. Pertaining to the education aspect, the council wants to make sure that there is a plan to streamline the results of the Dutch and international tracks. The council thinks there is a lack of clear definitions and goals towards diversity and inclusivity. The council is missing the diversity of opinions. The FSR would like the faculty to take an example from the Faculty of Economic and Business's website.

Regarding part 3 and 4. The council would like to see a clearer definitions and goals. Firstly, the paragraph on social safety needs to be improved. Secondly, the council has doubts about the monitoring part. The decision-making process on selectivity should be more transparent.

The council thinks part of ambitions is having a more structured plan.

The council thinks the difference between the effects of the programme itself or personal factors is an important point.

The council feels that there is a large difference between points in the programme, some points are elaborated upon and some are not. There should be a clear aim in outlining these points. The council thinks it is positive that even though the comments are not necessarily going to be used now.

The DB will meet to discuss if they will change their advice.

Dean

The dean thinks there is a misunderstanding of the nature of the faculty strategic plan. It is related to the central strategic plan (instellingsplan). The idea here is to describe the ambitions one has for the following years; this also means it is not to operationalize. The dean then understands why the council sees the strategic plan as a bit vague. The dean is happy that the council agrees with all the ambitions. Almost all comments are about the operationalization of those goals. The next step is to make more concrete plans on how the ambitions in the plan will be achieved. The faculty can inform the council of those plans, and we can still have a discussion about it. The council's comments will be kept in mind while creating the operationalizations.

The dean thinks the career platform is a very good idea.

Internationalization is a big topic that relates to many kinds of things, the dean agrees that a more operationalized plan is needed to address internationalization. It is clear to the dean that in some tracks the balance between international and Dutch students is a bit off. While in other programmes there is not yet an English track. About the international classroom, apparently in some programmes there are performance disparities between Dutch and English-speaking tracks within some studies. But it should be acknowledged that there are significant differences between those groups of students. If there are major differences in a programme it should be examined where very large discrepancies come from, the programme itself or personal factors.

The differences in elaboration may stem from the difference in the history of the topics. Social safety, for example, has been worked on a lot in the past year, therefore it is more elaborately presented in the plan.

The dean would like the council to reconsider their negative advice, she believes that the council's advice, in principle is positive, the council agrees with the general idea.

Commitment:

The dean and the DB meet to discuss the strategic plan before OV3.

Action point:

201117-2: The FSR's DB discusses if the advice regarding the faculty strategic plan will be altered and if necessary, makes an appointment with the dean for further discussion.

6. Subject 3: Blind grading

FSR

The FSR's aim is to make grading fairer. They see blind grading as the grading of assignments, papers, and exams in a more anonymous way. There are two issues: the lack of grading scheme, and progressive bias. Thirdly,

This issue has been derived from the political science programme.

The council is aware that there are limitations to blind grading, therefore they will focus on exam is their further writing on this topic.

By aiming at tutorial grades the FSR wants there to be a grading scheme and to be open to students about how they are graded.

Dean

The dean thinks there are different things at stake here that are confused. The dean does not recognize this pattern in the entire faculty.

Blind grading is a tool that is provided to encourage anonymity and prevent bias. In most of the teaching programmes, this is already done. The dean does not think this is a general problem, all teaching directors are aware of the issues with grading. Blind grading cannot always be applied.

To add, teachers may differ in ways that they assess students' work, in all teaching institutes there is a lot of deliberation among teachers to make their grading as equal and fair as possible. Regarding theses, there are two teachers who grade the thesis. Within programmes teachers often assess each other's assessments.

The dean advises the political science council members to take their complaints to the political science Examinations Board.

No one would recommend curving tutorial grades.

The dean agrees that blind grading is important to prevent bias among some persons. If it is true that there are big differences among teachers the Examinations Board should be informed about that, it is important to address this.

All teaching directors are aware of the grading tool in Canvas and advice that their programmes use it.

The dean has looked into this issue and it is not prevalent in other parts of the faculty.

7. Subject 4: Mentor meetings and mental health

FSR

The council's view on mental health is that the UvA has an outgoing responsibility towards mental health.

Previously, mentors were just there for academic life, the FSR wants mentors to be able to identify struggles and provide their students with the right information. The council believes mentors are a good way to guide people towards the services, this humanizes the process. One issue is that not all courses have mentors. The council does not necessarily see this as an issue this mental health access is an addition to the existing mentors. This could also set a precedent when programmes start implementing mentors. The council will interview a person who was a mentor, an alumnus of the faculty who is now a mental health activist.

The council views mentors as tutorial teachers who have bi-annual meetings with students who ask questions about academia. These people are always employees. The council does not want to dive too deep into what a mentor is.

The council agrees that mental health care is not the responsibility of mentors, however, it is important that mentors have the information on UvA resources so they can aid students in finding help. The council wants to underline that the first step in finding help, in their view, is easier if it is humanized.

The FSR agrees anonymity is important. Since the mentor is often the tutor the council believes that there is more of a relationship.

The use of mentors is different in different programmes. Some courses have a lot of support, such as the psychology programme where students are messaged if tutorial teachers observe behaviour that is out of the ordinary.

Dean

The dean agrees that the mental health of students is very important. The dean wants to know how the council defines mentors. The dean thought mentors were the teachers who taught the tutorials in the first year. The dean disagrees that it is the role of a mentor to be the student's mental health guide. There are big differences in the presentation of mental health issues, and the dean's main concern is that the mentors are not trained in identifying those presentations. To add it is tricky to make people feel responsible for things they are not responsible for, or trained to identify. The dean agrees that health information should be readily available to people. She thinks the student advisors should play the bridging role between students and mental health services. Teachers and mentors could then warn the study advisors if they observe a student having issues. This would take the responsibility away from the mentors.

The dean disagrees with the dehumanization argument, it is easier to send an email to someone. To add, as students only see their mentors twice a year, they are not likely that they will open up to them about their inner turmoil. The dean argues it might be better to have upper year students be the ones that students contact regarding such issues. As the barrier to seek help may be lower.

8. Subject 5: Quality of education in relation to housing

FSR

To keep the quality of education high the FSR believes having smaller classes is a must. The OR and the council recommend a maximum of 20 students. This group size issue is more related to the covid situation, as it would allow for more on campus teaching and larger class sizes make online teaching harder. The council believes that this is more important than focussing only or predominantly on the quality of online education. Regarding housing the council wants the focus to be on online lectures and offline tutorials.

The budget response that mostly the covid funds are invested in the quality of online education, the council believes if this was invested into teaching. The quality funds are being invested in the teaching and the tutorials. The covid funds are mostly being invested in online education, she council wants to know if it is possible to allocate more funds towards small groups instead of online education.

Students feel the quality of tutorials has decreased due to the use of breakout rooms and discussion of work done before the tutorial. The consensus is having lectures online is seen as fine while tutorials could benefit from being in person.

Dean

Most courses already have a maximum number of students that is 20 or below that, the only deviation is political science. Thus, this is a social sciences policy issue. The dean advises to discuss this with the programme committees of social sciences. The dean agrees that having groups of 40 people online does not work well. Smaller groups would increase the costs of education.

The dean believes the quality budget and covid funds are being confused. The big issue with on-campus teaching is the need to keep within the 1.5m regulations. The dean is doing as much as she can to have as much on-campus education as possible.

The teaching directors decide how the covid funds are allocated. The size of the tutorials is determined by the teaching directors.

The dean understands teaching through breakout rooms is not satisfying, students should voice their dissatisfaction towards their teachers. The faculty wants to accomplish that all students who want offline teaching to have the ability to do so. The issue with this is that some students do not show up or teachers are unable to join and thus classes are moved online again.

If the council hears about good formats for online teaching the dean would like to be informed.

9. Any other business

No other business.

10. Questions and closing

No questions are asked.

Alexandra closes the meeting at 14:47.