



Minutes of the Overleg Vergadering (1) of the FSR FMG '23 - '24
Faculty Student Council of the Faculty of Social and Behavioural sciences

Date: 3rd of October, 2023

Location: On-site

Present executive board FMG:	Agneta Fischer and Sterre Minkes
Present FSR FMG '23-'24:	Rachel Ham, Varvara Gorbunova, Diana Andreea Burduja, Kianush Monschau, Sonia Batreja, Elisa V Neiva, Samarth Kambli, Clara Ricci Curbastro Ruiz de Arcaute, Serena Song, Julie Nesse Barikmo
Absent FSR FMG '23-'24:	Vidhi Khandelwal
Guests	Aybüke Özbakir, Michel Telkamp
Technical chair:	Willem van Riel
Minutes:	Irem Ütkün

1. Opening and setting the agenda

Willem opens the meeting at 13:30, the agenda is set without changes.

2. Setting the draft minutes of the OV (5) of May 9th.

The FSR-FMG has accepted all of the dean's changes to the minutes of the 5th OV of '22 -'23.

3. Announcements

Dean

The dean informs the council of the development of the proposed law by the Ministry of education, culture and science 'internationalisering in balans' which aims to regulate the flow of (incoming) international students in order to reduce the further internationalization of universities. The dean makes it clear that universities are not happy with this, as she believes that internationalization is a good development for both staff and students. A more pragmatic and gradual approach is preferred over the proposed law. Right now, it is not a thought for concern, but the faculty is monitoring this process and will keep the council informed of.

FSR

Kianush will leave the meeting between 14:45 – 15:00.

Serena will leave the meeting around 14:30.

Diana is late.

4. Subject 1: Accommodation for Language Barriers

The FSR-FMG would like to follow-up on previous language accommodation agreements.

FSR

The FSR-FMG shares their experiences with language barriers so far in order to avoid further barriers in the future. Despite the facilities offered by the faculty, such as headphones with automatic translation, it is not enough for the council to properly work on files. So far, the council has already experienced difficulties with the finance files and the finance meetings, which are held in Dutch. It is acknowledged that this issue will reoccur in the future, especially when the OER is addressed. Therefore, the council believes the solution to this problem is appointing English as the official language to be used during the meetings, as well as legally binding English translations of official Dutch documents provided to the council. The most efficient way to make this happen is to allocate an additional budget dedicated to language accessibility. This budget can be used to hire translators who translate during meetings and/or translate official documents. The council adds that this would also relieve work pressure off the faculty.

The council acknowledges that it is a two-sided effort and shows appreciation for the meetings to be held in English. However, election runners are not expected to be fluent in Dutch in order to run for the student council. The council should therefore not be expected to be fluent in Dutch. If knowing Dutch is truly an important skill, it should be made clearer.

The council argues that one does need to be fluent to understand what is being said in financial or regulation documents for instance. Additionally, the offered language courses start in June, meaning there is barely enough time to reach the expected proficiency level. Only Dutch files are legally binding as it is the original draft of the documents. However, it is difficult to give consent and advice when documents are non-officially translated with programmes (such as Google Translate or DeepL). Programmes are not humans: some concepts or context-based meanings are prone to get lost in translations that are done by programmes, rather than an official translator. Right now, the council does not have a single Dutch-speaking student, which makes it difficult for the council to notice these translation errors as well.

The council clarifies that it is not about making the translation more official; it is about the translations that do not make any sense. Some documents are harder to understand using a translating programme, like the Faculty Regulations as well as the faculty budget. These programmes often fail to make sense of policies and regulations. It is an official translator that the council is asking for, and not an official translation or a legally binding translation.

The council confirms the dean's question and adds that particularly relevant to meetings that are held in Dutch, such as the finance meeting.

Furthermore, the council addresses that this process is indeed a two-way thing, however, active participation becomes harder if there is a language barrier in the first place, making it more difficult for the FSR-FMG to fulfil their duties. Having to use multiple translation machines and comparing the answers to see if it is similar takes also time away from actively participating.

Of course, the council can ask the dean questions, but it would be counterproductive if the dean receives a lot of emails as well. If the council does not have a Dutch-speaking member, meetings (other than OV's etc) should be held in English in order for the council to participate.

The council understands that the case is different with PCs. It is mentioned that it is harder and less efficient to work on files if there is trouble with translation. On top of this, if the council e-mails the dean with questions, the council will be depending on the dean's response time.

The council clarifies to the student assessor that they have been using DeepL, however, some points in documents are not translated.

The council believes an additional specific budget is needed in order to hire someone.

It is argued that asking the student assessor for help with translations makes it harder if the student-assessor works one day a week. It would also create more work for the secretary. Additionally, the council believes that they can reach out to the dean for more useful questions, such as content-related questions rather than translation-related questions. However, the council is willing to give this approach a shot. If the deadline the dean gave does not work, the council would have to resort to other resources.

There is one minor problem though: the agenda meetings are very close to the OV meetings, so this leaves little time for the council to work on files.

The OER is a big document to go through, and there are some worries that the council might have to ask for the whole document to be translated, which can be a lot of work. This is why the allocation of extra budget is stressed.

The council will find out how much a translator would cost and get back to the dean within 2-3 weeks.

Finally, the council asks Michel if it would be possible to have the finance meetings in English.

Dean

The dean wonders if the FSR-FMG has looked at the language policy from 2021. This policy was developed to solve some of the problems that were experienced by the FSR-FMG. The dean says this policy still applies. However, this policy works both ways to improve the communication between the faculty and FSR-FMG. Firstly, the faculty ensures that all meetings with the dean and the FSR are in English. Secondly, since Dutch is the administrative language of the university, documents and proposals are drawn up in Dutch. The dean thinks it is a waste of time and resources to have documents, besides translating them for the FSR via DeepL, translated by an official translator. Whether the official Dutch document is translated by a machine or a person, it does not make much of a difference. A translation by a person does not make it more official or guarantee that concepts will be translated properly either. If concepts get lost or if there is anything unclear, the FSR can ask questions to her or Sterre or the student-assessor. The faculty then expects the council to put in the other half of the effort, which is taking Dutch classes before starting the FSR-FMG term. The dean clarifies that learning Dutch is merely to understand what is being said and not to learn how to speak in Dutch too.

The dean agrees with the statement, provided the council has a participating function in the meeting. With Programme Committee meetings (which are held in Dutch) for instance, this is not the case as the council is only a listener in those meetings. It therefore makes more sense to ask for a report, which can be translated. Alternatively, the council can also talk to student representatives in the PCs.

The Faculty Regulations may be more difficult to understand as it is written in a more 'legal' language, meaning it is even difficult to understand in Dutch.

There is about 8000 Euro per year reserved to the FSR, for the activities of the FSR. The FSR can use this for language accessibility. The council can spend the overall budget as it wishes. The council should see first how much they need by finalizing the budget, instead of already asking for additional budget

The dean suggests that the council poses all translation related questions during the agenda meeting or e-mail Sterre instead to see how this approach works in the upcoming months. If this does not work, extra resources or an additional budget can be talked about in a later meeting. Sterre will aim to answer questions within five working days.

The dean offers to reschedule the agenda meetings, so it gives the council more space to work on files.

It is wondered how much the council thinks they might need.

Student assessor

The student assessor clarifies that she works one day a week, so she cannot always respond 'quickly' to emails..

It is wondered if the council has thought of using software like DeepL.

Michel Telkamp

Michel says this is not a problem to have the finance meetings in English.

5. Subject 2: 2024 FMG Budget

The FSR-FMG shares their input on the FMG budget.

FSR

The council would like to ask some things for clarification regarding the budget. First, they would like to know when the exact date of consent is.

The budget is less detailed than last year's. Is this because it is the draft version?

The council wonders if there is a specific budget for sustainability reserved within the faculty budget.

The current efforts that are being made are great, but there are also some measures that can be taken within the FMG faculty.

The council argues that small measures can be taken as well, such as initiatives for Sustainability Day and recycling paper etc. Would this also need budget from the central budget?

The council wonders if the Green Office is also funded by the faculty.

The council wonders if the renovation of contemplation rooms is included in the housing budget.

The council asks if the budget for the general area (which includes the contemplation room) is flexible.

It is not clear what the exact regulations are of the funding with regards to renovations.

The council wonders if there is any room in the budget to provide these accommodations?

Moving on, the council wonders if the provision of menstrual products is funded by the faculty budget or another budget?

Finally, the council would like to know if accessibility investments go through the faculty budget or the central budget.

Michel Telkamp

Michel estimates the deadline should be around the 27th of October.

Michel confirms this and says this is indeed due to the draft version. A lot of the information is not fixed at this stage as the faculty is waiting for the final numbers. The council will be able to follow the changes that were made in the budget.

There is no budget reserved for sustainability in the faculty budget, however, investments for sustainability come from the Central Services part of the overall UvA budget. For instance, Facility Services is in charge of investing in new installations, such as solar panels. Furthermore, the housing budget is also used for renovations. Right now, the P-building is being renovated: old materials are re-used; energy will be connected to the central supplies. Additionally, the university stores heat in the ground on REC which can be used during winter. Therefore, a lot of investments in sustainability are already being made, but these are often not visible.

The problem that comes with this is that the faculty does not own the buildings nor installations; it is being rented. This makes faculty-wide investments more difficult.

These small measures would indeed have to use the Central Services budget. Michel explains that the faculty is the consumer and the central department is the supplier. When the faculty makes requests, they're usually already part of the central process. For instance, the replacement time of computers is extended (they are replaced every 5 years instead of 4), the same applies for furniture.

The Green Office is financed by a central programme. The faculty has three main costs: staff, materials and contribution that is paid to Central Services.

There is a separate renovation budget reserved for renovations. This budget is split up into two types: a light and large renovation.

The budget is always up to discussion, as the faculty interacts closely with the suppliers. However, there are some rules that the faculty needs to adhere to.

It is about the use of the room, meaning each room has to have a similar level of design (i.e. same painting, same flooring). Adjustments, such as an extra screen, need to be requested.

In order to get these accommodations, a request needs to be made to start the process. This request needs to be approved by other departments.

Menstrual products are part of the Facility Services. The faculty budget will show that the faculty is paying a fee to Facility Services as part of the agreement.

Michel clarifies that it is both. Physical adjustments go through the central budget. For instance, UvA Facilities is making efforts to improve accessibility. Right now, they are in talks with the municipality about a corridor from the metro station to REC campus. However, educational facilities that students need are part of the education budget that programmes have, after it has been approved by the student counsellor.

Dean

One of the issues that was discussed in the previous FSR, is that if a room functions as a common space, it is not allowed to leave (personal) things there. The question then was whether people had to carry their belongings with them all the time. One of the possibilities to counter this problem is to have lockers available in the room. We cannot change the rules for the use of this room, but we can think of things to accommodate this.

6. Subject 3: Faculty Regulations

The FSR-FMG would like to advise on the new Faculty Regulations.

FSR

The council has reviewed the changes that were mentioned in the 2019/2020 Faculty Regulations but was left with some questions as the translating the document did not provide much clarity. First, the Faculty Regulations state that student members of Programme Committees are appointed for a maximum of one year. Later, it is stated that there is a possibility for extension.

The council asks why there is a limit on the amount of applications.

Many Programme Committees are having trouble finding student members. Students are not well-informed about the Programme Committees and many often do not know about these committees and the possibility of joining them.

The council clarifies that students should not be in the Programme Committee for a long period of time.

How does the faculty know that students do not want to re-apply?

Students do not know about Programme Committees in the first place, or that they can re-apply for it. Overall, it is a communication issue between the faculty, FSR, Programme Committees and students. A term that is longer than one year could help establish institutional memory that can carry and deliver knowledge to future Programme Committee members.

The council does not have contact with students, as they have a hard time communicating with students as the council.

It is clarified that the council is not asking for a longer term. The council suggested a longer term due to the benefits it brings. Furthermore, it is stressed that there is a lack of communication between the Programme Committees and students.

The council has been trying to reach out to Programme Committees, however, some of them have not formed yet as they have issues finding student representatives.

Moreover, the council would like to talk about Article 46, which states the Right of Consent. They request the dean for more clarification on the changes.

Finally, the council would like to clarify whether it is the CSR that grants the FSR-FMG the Right of Consent.

Dean

The term is one year, however, the student member can be re-elected twice. This means that there is a maximum of three years in total. This term is established to give other students a chance to join the Programme Committee as well. If students want to stay, they are expected to re-apply and be re-elected. A maximum of three years is quite reasonable.

Students often do not want to be on the committees for longer than a year and this is a separate problem. Students need to be informed better so they know about the possibility of joining a Programme Committee, rather than having a few students on the long-term.

The faculty is not informed that there are problems with this.

Students are already able to re-apply. Has the council been informed by students having problems with the re-application process that prevents them from staying longer?

How does the council know that this is a problem?

The dean says this is something that the council can bring up when the teaching directors are participating in the meeting. She believes it is a good and fair point as it concerns the representation of students in the Programme Committees. The council can ask the teaching directors if there is a problem with representation; if the communication with students is sufficient; and if there are things that can be done to improve this.

The teaching directors can use the council's input on how to improve greater awareness about Programme Committees.

It has been deleted as it was a right of the CSR. There has never been a student statute on a faculty level, this was wrongly stated in the Faculty Regulations and needs to be corrected. There is only a student charter ~~student statute~~ on a university level. The Executive Board has the right to determine the Student Charter, and therefore the CSR has participation rights.. The Complaints Regulation is on the university level. The faculty assumed that the information in the Faculty Regulations was correct, however, they were told by Legal Affairs that there were some mistakes in the Faculty Regulations that needed to be corrected.

Subject 4: Proposed Appointment of Graduate School Director of Social Sciences

The FSR-FMG would like to share their response on the proposed appointment.

FSR

The council took their time to 'investigate' the new Graduate School Director of Social Sciences. It was however a difficult process to reach out to students as there is not a single Anthropology student in the council.

The council clarifies that nothing was mentioned about the position, therefore no confidential information was leaked. The aim was to gather more insight on the person. Based on credentials and personal qualities, is this person suitable for the position?

The council wonders if students can give feedback on the Graduate School Director.

The council wonders if it is possible for the council too be more involved in the process in the future. The FSR-FMG has the Right to Advice, however, the way the process has progressed makes this right rather superfluous. The council is presented with one potential candidate, which leaves little to no space to give proper advice.

If the council needs to consent to something, there should be other options that the council can compare with.

Considering the meeting with diversity committees, the council wonders if diversity has been taken into consideration in the selection process.

Anthropology is rather diverse in terms of gender. Were the diversity commitments taken into consideration?

The council asks one more time if the FSR-FMG as well as the Works Council are not involved in the selection process.

Finally, the council points out that meeting the person first will allow the FSR-FMG to give the faculty proper advice. This meeting can be a coffee or lunch.

Dean

The proposed appointment is confidential, the council should not have been asking around about this application.

The Graduate School Director would have to have experience with a similar type of function. It is important that this person has leadership qualities, which can be demonstrated through courses amongst other things. Additionally, good teaching qualities; enthusiasm; knowledgeable of innovating teaching programmes; creating an inspiring environment for staff are important qualities. The candidate meets these qualities. After one or two years, an evaluation is made of the person based on feedback.

The FSR-FMG will not be asked for feedback. Rather, people that have worked with the Graduate School Director of Social Sciences directly will be asked for feedback. The director will supervise programme directors and teachers. If there are students that have worked directly with this person, they will be asked for feedback as well.

This issue has more to do with the selection procedure. It is difficult to involve the FSR-FMG in the 'earlier stages' of selection, as there is no earlier stage – except for the selection committee.

The faculty never gives the FSR or the Works Council more than one option. The selection procedure is to point out the best candidate, therefore the FSR-FMG and Works Council are expected to trust the selection committee to deliver good work.

This position is not for new people, and it has to be someone that is already in that domain. This limits the choice, as well as the options regarding diversity.

The diversity commitments were considered. There are four College Directors and four Graduate School Directors, of which three are men and five are women. The dean acknowledges it lacks diversity in other ways, but in terms of gender it is even.

The dean will take this idea into consideration. She will have to talk to a couple of individuals about this first.

7. Any other business

Dean

Agenda meetings will be rescheduled.

FSR

The FSR-FMG will provide the faculty a formal statement of consent for the Faculty Regulations.

8. Questions and closing

Willem closes the meeting at 15:00.