

Faculty Student Council

Faculty of Social and Behavioral Sciences (FMG)

Policy Plan



2019-2020





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Introduction

Dear student, collaborator, director or other person involved with the University of Amsterdam (UvA),

Hereby we present to you the policy plan of the Faculty Student Council of the Faculty of Social and Behavioral Sciences (FSR FMG) of the academic year 2019-2020. The present document states the FSR FMG's vision and main goals for the following year.

We are proud to announce that this year's FSR FMG is the first international student council in the history of our faculty. Created by a group of highly motivated and strong-willed students, this policy plan reflects our aim to serve the interests of students. Our council members are guided by their shared values and strive to have the students' voices heard at all stages of the policymaking process. Throughout this year we will keep the students' interests in mind when working with the faculty's administration office.

This year, the FSR FMG announces its spearheads through five central themes: an accessible faculty, an engaged student body, qualitative education, a sustainable faculty, and a transparent faculty. Our work is meant to contribute towards creating an inclusive faculty, where students are offered equal chances and are encouraged to embrace their identity. We strive to achieve that while also paying attention to the means by which we achieve our goals and carefully assessing and improving our impact on the academic environment.

For us, an accessible faculty offers equal chances to every student regardless of their background, be it political, ethnical, racial, religious, etc. Nonetheless, we applaud the Faculty's open-door policy towards international students, and we want to smoothen this transition as much as possible, by working on issues such as material translations (for both Dutch and English tracks). By promoting engagement across the student body, the FSR FMG emphasizes the importance of collaboration across all levels of the university. Most importantly, this theme highlights the importance of student involvement. Council visibility is of utmost importance and the FSR FMG strives to get in contact with as many students as possible to ensure we properly represent their interests while working on increasing the voting turn-out of student elections. We believe that FMG should not be overly concerned with enforcing uniformity in students' academic journey, but rather should nurture individual development and academic community building as well as engagement internally and externally. The FSR FMG considers it important that the quality of education reflects the needs of society, as well as acknowledges the developments in the UvA's student population. While working towards a sustainable faculty, the FSR FMG

envisioning a faculty that has a strong relationship with the society in which it is situated and takes it as its responsibility to treat environmental issues seriously both in terms of physical materials and academic sustainability. Lastly, the transparent faculty reflects the future of our faculty. Understanding that policy changes are applied across the different domains of the FMG, the council members will monitor these developments and properly inform the student population on these as elected student representatives. Lastly, this theme is strongly focused on the finances and how these are handled, striving for as much transparency as possible (for example in the planning of faculty budget).

Over the past several years there have been changes in policy at the Faculty of Social and Behavioral Sciences that we see as real progress. However, there are still many changes to be made, and we fight to see it happen. Nonetheless, the FSR FMG is always open to hearing your opinions and ideas. During our working process, we follow the structure of the B.O.B Cycle, where every decision is reached after considering 3 stages: informing the members, discussing the topic and making a decision as a council. We strive for transparency; therefore, these steps are explicitly indicated in the meeting agendas, which can be consulted on our website. We believe that the only way to achieve our goals is by closely collaborating with all the different actors of our faculty. Therefore, feel welcome to discuss with us about any issues or suggestions you might have!

Alexandra Cosmina Rosca

FSR FMG Chair 2019-2020

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Facultaire
Studentenraad
MAATSCHAPPIJ- EN
GEDRAGSWETENSCHAPPEN

1. Personalia



Alexandra Rosca

Chair

Files: Culture, Diversity, Education & Examination Regulations (OER), Honors & Talent Program, Masters Selection, Study Advisors, Rules & Regulations



Siddarth Jethwani

Vice-Chair

Files: 8-8-4, Binding Study Advice (BSA), Education & Examination Regulations (OER), Examination Board and Rules & Guidelines, The Pluim, Transition programs (schakelprogrammas)



Ana Mar Kreutzenbeck-Pérez

Committee Chair Finance & Organization, Treasurer

Files: Academic Community, Culture, Diversity, Finances, Social Safety



Tom Flipse

Committee Chair Education & Communication

Files: Binding Study Advice (BSA), Double Bachelor/ Master, Digitalization, Flex Studying, Matching, Numerus Fixus, Transition programs (schakelprogrammas)



Artem Gryshchenko

Delegate to the CSR

Files: Career Orientation, Flexstudying, Honors & Talent Program, UvA-Q



Michael Sivolap

General Council Member

Files: 8-8-4, BoS- and Ombudsstudents, Lecturer of the Year, Mental Health, Study Advisors, Student Assistants, Student Psychologists



Birgit Peters

General Council Member

Files: Day of Representatives, Finances, Housing, Student Involvement, Study Associations (FV-FMG), Sustainability



Nadya Manuputty

General Council Member

Files: Digitalization, Internationalization, Numerus Fixus, Matching, Mental Health, Student Psychologists



Robin van den Hoek

Official Secretary (AS)



Marc Janvier-Olsen

Council Assistant

Files: Canvas, Democratization & Decentralization (voting districts), Finances, Sustainability



Minou De Rosa Silvera

Council Assistant

Files: Mental Health, Student Psychologists, Social Safety, Sustainability



Teun Prins

Council Assistant

Files: 8-8-4, Double Bachelor/ Master, Democratization & Decentralization (voting districts), Finances, Housing, Study Associations (FV-FMG)



Viktoriia Akhankova

Council Assistant

Files: Career Orientation, Course Evaluation, Internationalization, Student Information, Student Involvement, UvA-Q

2. Central Themes

2.1 Accessibility

The first core value of the FSR FMG is accessibility. This means that the FSR FMG strives for a faculty where every student is accepted, is provided in their basic needs and is offered the best education possible. The FSR FMG wants to make the faculty a more accessible place for people of different cultures, with learning disabilities, mental health problems and physical disabilities, without endangering the quality of education in any way.

The rejection of a Turkish student for an internship at the UvA mid October 2019, proves that accessibility should be high on the agenda of the FSR FMG. The FSR FMG wants to realize this, for instance, by rooting for sufficient lecture halls, study places and diversity projects such as the 'Let Me Tell You' project. Additionally, in an increasingly international faculty, the FSR FMG strives for adequate translations of study material, both in English and Dutch. The FSR FMG strives for a bilingual policy which the administration needs to increasingly take into account. Furthermore, the FSR FMG wants to encourage the faculty to do research on the effects of web lectures and encourage the faculty to form a policy to increase the consistency of publishing lectures on the internet across studies. By providing web lectures, students with learning disabilities, mental health issues or other external factors can still be provided with the best education possible.

Lastly, the FSR FMG wants to emphasize the latter point concerning mental health. The FSR FMG finds it important to accommodate students in their mental health needs. Next to providing online web lectures, the FSR FMG wants to look into collaboration with mental health projects such as UvACare.

Culture/ Diversity

The FSR FMG acknowledges the diversity of backgrounds across the Faculty and embraces the open door policy of the UvA. As student representatives, we consider it our responsibility to hold our Faculty responsible and ensure that the entire student population feels welcome in this institution regardless of their nationality, political orientation, race, gender, sexual orientation, etc. Among other initiatives, the council believes artistic expression to be an important step in educating individuals about different parts of the world, therefore we are proud to have continued the 'Let Me Tell You Project' for this academic year. To accomplish our goals in terms of Diversity, the FSR FMG is in close collaboration with the Faculty Diversity Officer, Marieke Brand.

Digitalization

In terms of digitalization, the FSR FMG wants to root for online web lectures and digital exams. In an increasingly digital world, we would like the faculty to keep track on this development. The FSR FMG would like to see more research from the faculty about the benefits of web lectures. Furthermore, The FSR FMG would like to propose a more constant policy from the faculty concerning online lectures. The lecturer cannot be forced, but we would like to make lectures available online at least a week before the exam. In terms of digital exams, the FSR FMG wants to make this possible for at least students who follow a double bachelor. These students risk having two exams at the same time. With the option of digital exams, this problem could be solved.

Mental Health/ Student Psychologists

As previously stated, the FSR FMG wants to root for online web lectures. For students with mental health issues this can be very beneficial. For a student who is diagnosed, for instance, with Bipolar Disorder II, it can be very overwhelming and difficult to concentrate during a lecture. By providing online lectures, the student will be provided with the best education possible. Furthermore, the FSR FMG would like to root for more visibility of mental health facilities. This way, students are more informed about the facilities and possibilities to receive the mental help they need. UvA Care has launched a pilot to test the effectiveness of E-Help for instance, and the FSR FMG would like to look into this.

Featured Files: Culture/ Diversity, Digitalization, Housing (*see 2.3: Quality of Education*), Mental Health/ Student Psychologists

2.2 Engagement

Student engagement is a complicated concept that has many different interpretations and therefore requires an explanation. When the FSR FMG refers to student engagement they mean the extent to which students feel connected to the faculty and the UvA as a whole and to what extent their actions reflect this. The FSR FMG considers student engagement to be very important. The purpose of the FSR FMG is to protect and serve the interest of the students of the FMG. In order to do so properly, the FSR FMG needs to know what those interests are. Of course, each member has ideas and beliefs about that, but they still need the input of students outside the FSR FMG. This is why it is important that students who are not directly involved in the FSR FMG are still engaging in the political process. Their input is needed to help refine the decisions the FSR FMG makes.

The FSR FMG is of the opinion that student engagement is an area in which a lot of improvement is possible and desirable. Previous councils have made great



strides already by implementing a new election process which has ensured that the council now consists of students from different domains within the faculty. Still there is a lot of progress to be made. For example, the voting turnout for the last election was very low. The FSR FMG plans to change this in several ways.

The first way in which the FSR FMG plans to engage students more is by keeping in contact with the study associations within the FMG. Study associations are in close contact with students. Which gives them a sense of the needs and problems students face. If study associations relay those problems to the FSR FMG then indirectly those students are still engaging. Contact with the study associations can also directly lead to a higher level of student engagement. Study associations might inform their members about the FSR FMG, send people with problems to the FSR FMG or urge them to vote.

In order to ensure that close contact is kept. Members of the FSR FMG will attend the meetings of the fv-FMG (meetings between the chairs of the study associations and the common room). In addition to that we invite the boards of the study associations to the Day of Representatives. The Day of Representatives is an event in which the FSR FMG invites several important stakeholders in the FMG to discuss important matters on which the FSR FMG would like to hear their input.

The second way in which the FSR FMG will seek to increase the level of student engagement is by informing students about UvA/FMG events that might be interesting to FMG students. If people attend FMG events then the FSR FMG hopes that this will increase the extent to which students feel connected to the entire faculty. It is the hope of the FSR FMG that this will in turn lead to a sense of community within the FMG. The FSR FMG will keep up a strong media presence which is partially aimed at informing students about these kinds of events. We will also use the toilet-paper and lift-paper for this purpose.

The third way in which the FSR FMG intends to increase student engagement is by informing students about the policies of the faculty and the opinion of, and resulting action taken by the council. It is the belief of the FSR FMG that if students are more aware of what the FSR FMG does and why. That they will naturally become more engaged as a result. After all, the policies of the FMG (and therefore the FSR FMG) strongly affect their lives. The specific ways in which the FSR FMG intends to inform students will be elaborated in the transparency section of this policy plan. In order to avoid being needlessly repetitive it will not be explained here.

Featured Files: Day of Representatives, PR Taskforce, Student Involvement

2.3 Quality of Education

Equal quality of education for Dutch and international students

The quality of education must be equally high for Dutch and international students. The FSR FMG refers to the fact that texts from quizzes, PowerPoints and even exams are regularly misspelled, in both Dutch and English. It seems that these errors occur when translating from one language to another. This not only looks extremely messy; it also causes uncertainty about the meaning of the words or/and sentences. This is unacceptable, particularly during exams. The FSR FMG demands grammatically correct texts in both the English and Dutch languages.

Teachers

Students at the university are entitled to lectures and working groups given by qualified teachers. The FSR FMG has received messages about a high number of burnouts among teachers. The health problems were mainly caused by excessive workloads. The problems worsened when teachers dropped out. In some situations, this led to an even higher workload on the current staff, which ultimately led to even more dropouts. In other cases, someone without any experience or the right qualifications was put in front of a classroom. The FSR FMG is of the opinion that the current situation leads to a lower quality of education and is therefore unacceptable. The council will use this year to gather information about the issue in order to come up with a concrete plan and/or statement.

Course evaluation and implementation

Evaluating education is crucial for the quality of education at the University of Amsterdam. UvA-Q is currently the most commonly used tool for conducting course evaluations. However, the FSR FMG believes that this online method of evaluation does not tell the complete story. Although the turnout at UvA-Q is not low, a lot of valuable input from students is lost. This is mainly due to the fact that most students only give grades but fail to answer the open questions. In this way it is difficult for teachers to convert positive or negative criticisms into changes. That is why the FSR FMG wants to complement the process of course evaluation with so-called focus groups. These groups are representative for the students within a course and will provide the course and the teacher with substantive feedback. Another important aspect of the focus groups is that students who take part are anonymous. This way the FSR FMG wants to remove a possible barrier preventing students to give their unfiltered opinion.

The FSR FMG believes it is important that the results of the course evaluation are also available to students. In an ideal situation, the results and adjustments within the course will be discussed in the module's manual. This way, aspects that have been assessed as negative by students can be tackled. This is already happening with a number of courses, but the FSR FMG is keen to see this happen on a larger scale, because we expect that it'll have a positive outcome on the development of the courses.

Housing

All students enrolled in a course are entitled to a seat during a lecture or seminar. Too often it occurs that a room or lecture hall is reserved based on an estimate of the turnout. For example, in the Research Methods course within the Political Science bachelor, a room was booked which only seated half of the registered students. As a result, many of them were forced to follow the lecture while standing on the stairs. Needless to say, events such as these lead to a lower turnout and are therefore a self-fulfilling prophecy. The FSR FMG therefore wants to work on measures that prohibit reserving spaces that offer fewer places than the number of students enrolled in the course.

Featured Files: Course Evaluation and Implementation, Housing, Teachers

2.4 Sustainability

The FSR FMG views sustainability as an integral part of its core values. Therefore, the council seeks to further integrate sustainability within academic and facility domains at the faculty. Progress has been made over the years as the last two Student councils respectively aimed at introducing a sustainability minor to the faculty and enforcing a UvA-wide travel policy. Although budget cuts hindered the creation of a sustainability minor, study programs within the faculty are increasingly inclusive of sustainability - with most of them having a dedicated course to it. The stance of the student council is to continue this dynamic, however only if adding this course is not detrimental to the overall quality of the program. Additionally, we have a keen interest towards sustainable materials within the faculty. This is the case because we have the intention to prepare a set of criteria/conditions that would work as deciding factors concerning the new contracts that will be given in 1-2 years. Nevertheless, sustainability does not only concern environmental issues, in our opinion it also covers finances. The Student council wants to aim for a sustainable financial status for the faculty alongside financial policies that guarantee its well-being. Lastly, we intend to conduct research on sustainable learning environments and to implement our findings within our faculty as there are, for example, growing numbers of complaints relating to the lack of natural light in learning spaces.

Featured Files: Academic Sustainability, Material Sustainability

2.5 Transparency

The FSR FMG considers transparency to be of great importance. For this reason, this will be one of the main themes we will be focusing on in the upcoming year. We have identified several aspects of transparency which will be explained in the following segment of the policy plan.

The first aspect of transparency is social safety. Universities often have problems with sexual harassment and bullying. The UvA is no exception to this. The FSR FMG considers transparency an important part of discouraging inappropriate behaviour. If abusers know that others are aware of their behaviour, then they will be less likely to misbehave and if they do misbehave it is easier to act against that. Because of this, the FSR FMG has two main things that we wish to achieve. The first of these two is that there somewhere where (potential) victims or witnesses can anonymously inform the university about inappropriate behaviour and that everyone knows where they can do so. The second thing the FSR FMG strives toward is a culture in which it is possible to openly discuss matters surrounding social safety and any threats to it. Both of these things require the development of a policy and clear communication of said policy from the university. The FSR FMG intends to cooperate with the organisation Our Bodies Our Voices in our attempts to make progress on this matter.

The FSR FMG applauds UvA's initiative in terms of paying closer attention to social safety. In the previous year, the council closely looked into the status of sexual harassment awareness. Nonetheless, while following on the work of our predecessors, this year's council decided to create a new file entirely dedicated to social safety. For us, social safety comprises an array of topics: sexual harassment awareness, student inclusion and personal guidance, among others. Over the following year, we plan to look into these topics and ensure our faculty has an open and welcome environment for everyone.

The second aspect of transparency is transparency in the budget of the FMG. In the last couple of years, the FMG has endured several budget cuts. Most of these budget cuts, while painful, were necessary and not done without reason. Most students however do not know these reasons. It is difficult for students to inform themselves about the financial decisions of the faculty because vital documents are not available to them. The framework letter (the document on which the budget is based) is an example of such a vital document. The FSR FMG aims to have all documents as important as that published online both in Dutch and in English. The FSR FMG believes that access to these documents are necessary for students to make an informed vote during the elections or to give us feedback during the year.

Access to these documents is however not always enough. Students also need to be able to understand them. This often requires detailed knowledge of the faculty and the university as well as a background in economic terminology. In order to ensure that this does not hinder students who wish to understand the FMG finances, a list of important terminology is to be added. In addition to this we would like key parts of financial documents to be explained in written statements.

It is important to note that while the budget is an important example of complicated policy needing to be more openly explained. It is not the only subject that requires more transparency. This is merely an example of our views on all policy which strongly impacts the students of this faculty.

The third aspect of transparency is transparency with regards to the actions of the council itself. The FSR FMG seeks to inform the students of the FMG about the actions of the council. This pertains to both the positions the council holds on specific issues, and the inner workings of the council. In order to achieve this, the minutes of the meetings with the dean (also known as OV) as well as the weekly meetings of the FSR FMG itself (also known as PV) will be published on the FSR FMG website. Students are also welcomed to sit in on the weekly FSR FMG meeting. In addition to that, the FSR FMG will maintain a strong media presence which is partially aimed at informing students about our most important decisions. We will also use the toilet-paper for this purpose. Last but not least, the members of this council are willing to answer any questions any FMG student has regarding the FMG or if they do not know the answer, they will refer students to a council member who does.

The FSR FMG will also communicate more directly with various stakeholders and experts when it comes to specific subjects. This type of communication will be much more detail oriented than the general communications. It will often have the purpose of informing the FSR FMG as much as it has the purpose of informing Stakeholders. Because of this, these communications take a different form (such as face-to-face meetings or direct emails) than general communications. One important way in which we communicate with various stakeholders within the faculty is the Day of Representatives. The day of representatives is an event in which the FSR FMG invites Study associations, programme committees, ombuds students and BoS students to discuss important matters on which the FSR FMG would like to hear their input. Undoubtedly, the FSR FMG also tries to stay in regular contact with these people outside of the Day of Representatives.

Featured Files: Day of Representatives, Finances, PR taskforce, Social Safety

3. Abbreviations

A

AS	Official Secretary
ASVA	General Student Associations Amsterdam
ASW	Bachelor of Interdisciplinary Social Sciences
AV	Audio Visual Services
AVO	Departmental Director Meeting
AZ	Academic Affairs (department at UvA)

B

BKO	Basic Qualification Education
BOB-cyclus	Image-forming, Judgement-forming, Decision-making
BoS	Board of Studies (meeting on domainlevel)
BSA	Binding Study Advice
BSW	Board Social Sciences

C

CA	Bachelor of Cultural Anthropology
COBEX	Board of Appeal for Examinations
CSR	Central Student Council
CSW	College Social Sciences
CV	Committee Meeting
CvB	Executive Board (from the entire UvA)

CW Bachelor of Communication Science

D

DB Daily Board

DoR Day of Representatives (Meeting with OC's, BoS-students and FSR)

E

E-Help E-Help is an easy way to start online training, testing and therapy at a time that suits the person in need of mental health.

F

FdR Faculty of Law

FGw Faculty of Humanities

FMG Faculty of Social Sciences and Behavioral Sciences

FNWI Faculty of Science

FSR Faculty Student Council

FS Facility Services (in charge of the buildings etc of the UvA)

FV-FMG Faculty Association of the FMG (meeting with all the Student Associations)

G

GPIO Bachelor of Geography, Urban Planning and International Development Studies

GSSS Graduate School of Social Sciences

I

ICTS ICT Support

IDS International Development Studies (Department)

ILO Interfaculty Teacher Training

L

LSVB	National Student Union
LOF	National Consultation Fractions
M	
M-OER	Model Teaching and Examination Regulation
N	
NSE	National Student Survey
O	
OBP	Supporting Management Staff
OC	Education Committee
ODO	Education Directors Meeting
OER	Teaching and Examination Regulation
OR	Joint consultative committee
OV	Overleg Vergadering, Discussion Meeting
OWI	Education Director
OZI	Research Institute
P	
PDCA-cycle	Plan, Do, Check, Act-cycle
PR	Public Relations
PNID	Staff not Employed
POL	Bachelor of Political Science
POWL	Department of Pedagogy, Educational Sciences And Teacher Training
PSY	Department of Psychology

PV	Plenaire Vergadering, Plenary Meeting
R	
REC	Roeterseilandcomplex
S	
SGPL	Bachelor of Human Geography and Urban Planning
SOC	Bachelor Sociology
SR	Student Council
SV	Study Association
U	
UPvA	University Pabo of Amsterdam
UvA-data	Data system in which all data is stored
UvA-Q	Digital evaluation system for courses
W	
WHW	Law regarding the Higher Education and Scientific Education
WKV	Law regarding the Quality in Diversity
WP	Scientific Personnel
WVB	Law regarding the Strengthening of Administrative Power
V	
VZO	Chairman's meeting

Colofon

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