



UNIVERSITY
OF AMSTERDAM



Facultaire
Studentenraad

**NATUURWETENSCHAPPEN,
WISKUNDE EN INFORMATICA**

Beleidsplan

2023-2024

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Voorwoord

Dear reader,

Welcome to the policy plan of the Faculty Student Council of the Faculty of Science (Faculteit der Natuurwetenschappen, Wiskunde en Informatica).

The Faculty Student Council (FSR) of the Faculty of Science (FNWI) 2023/2024 (hereafter: the council) presents with pride its policy plan for the current academic year. The council consists of two committees: the Facilities and Public Relations Committee (FPC) and the Programme and Regulations Committee (ORC). Each committee has its own files, sometimes overlapping with each other, that have passed on by previous councils or are brought up this year.

The council and its committees will work towards maintaining and improving the atmosphere for students of the faculty. This year three themes have been decided upon by the council: Inclusivity, Education, and Democratization & Transparency. These themes have been chosen to narrow down and simultaneously to broaden the direction the council wants to take, as well-being for our students knows many facets. For the council's own future perspective, we will also pay special attention to the quality and strengthening of the medezeggenschap this year.

The policy plan will be divided into the three themes, with each theme mentioning the topics we are going to work on. If you are interested in our plans and passions, please continue reading!

I wish you much joy in reading our policy plan!

If you have any questions you can always send an email fnwi@studentenraad.nl or walk by A0.10.

Kind regards,

On behalf of the Faculty Student Council of the Faculty of Science 2023/2024,

Maas Hermes
Chair



Thema's

Inclusiviteit

De sleutel om elkaar te begrijpen in een veranderende wereld

At the University of Amsterdam many backgrounds, ideas, and goals come together within the framework of science and education. This high variety of people working in one institution comes with its challenges, especially as existing structures may be a remnant of the past. The current system may no longer be suitable for new practices that are developed by the different people that now work within the institution. To transition into an academic society, where the differences of people are taken into account and understanding of one another is improved, inclusivity will be the means to achieve this. This section will go into detail what our plans are to achieve a more diverse and inclusive faculty.

Onderwijs

Intrinsieke motivatie als een drijvende kracht in het behalen van een universitair diploma

The Faculty of Science is home to many disciplines and about 7500 students. Education is not only based on theoretical knowledge, it also includes learning to manage your education, understanding the academic world, and learning to work with people. As everyone learns and works differently, there are a lot of variables that contribute to a good learning environment. Governing this environment includes improving or maintaining the quality of education, while also guarding the rights and obligations of students. This section will discuss our goals in creating a good atmosphere for students to achieve their goals.

A crucial aspect of studying is guidance from teachers. Teaching Assistants (TAs) often provide approachable and personalized help with subjects. However, the quality of this support can vary widely. In some cases, TAs are not adequately trained to assist effectively with certain subjects, and sometimes they are charged with responsibilities that are not within their scope of duties. This lack of uniformity and clarity in TA support is a concern for the council. The council seeks structural improvements in **teacher professionalization**, for example by implementing more extensive training for TAs. The goal is to provide consistent, high-quality support that meets the needs of students.

Ensuring the quality of education starts early on in the programme development, and currently the faculty is in the development phase of three **new study programs**. Two new programs will be introduced in the next academic year. The involvement of the council in this process is significant. The council actively participates in the drafting of new Education and Examination Regulations (OERs). In addition, the council has advisory rights regarding other aspects of the new studies. This involvement ensures that the student voice is heard in the development of new programs, and that the programs are as responsive as possible to the needs of students.

Annually, the council plays a crucial role in evaluating, not only new, but all programs during the **OER process**. This process includes a thorough analysis of students' rights and obligations as set forth in all OERs. Aspects such as examination regulations, attendance requirements and study support are carefully checked. The council not only has the task of monitoring what the faculty includes in these regulations, but also has the right to make

its own suggestions and changes. The council's ultimate goal in this process is to make studying at the faculty as enjoyable, fair and bearable as possible.

A concrete example of the impact of the OER process can be seen with the **language requirements** for Master's programs. Previously, the English language requirements were unclear and chaotic. The council has actively worked with faculty to ensure that these requirements are consistent across all Master's programs and clearly communicated to students choosing a Master's degree. This is a tangible result of the council's efforts to leverage the OER process to improve the quality and transparency of educational offerings.

After implementation of new or clearer regulations it might happen that these rights and obligations are not met. One of the new files this year will focus on the compliance of the university when it comes to **contracts for internships**. Some students indicate that they spend time doing their internships outside of the agreed upon hours. To test this theory the council wants to ask students during the New Years Survey if they have experienced such deviations. If it is more common, the council will decide upon informing the faculty of these practices. The goal of this file will be to improve a healthy work atmosphere for now and future students at the FNWI.

In addition to good time management for students during their internship, special attention can also be paid to the schedule of the academic year. Currently the academic year consists of an **8-8-4 schedule**, two blocks of 8 weeks followed by a project period of 4 weeks. There is critique regarding work pressure on this schedule by students and teachers, but there is no convincing alternative yet. The distribution of educational periods is set until the year 2024-2025. This means that this is a great time to evaluate and revise the current 8-8-4 schedule. This year the council will investigate if there are plans to investigate the current schedule, and if there are none, to convince the faculty board to look into the existing structure, or contact the CSR to exert influence on a central level in the advantage of all students.

Democratisering & Transparantie

Een open geest wordt gestimuleerd door duidelijke communicatie en feedback

Open communication and feedback are essential for a positive university atmosphere. They foster transparency, trust, and collaboration among students, faculty, and staff. Transparent communication ensures that diverse voices are heard, reducing misunderstandings and building a sense of unity. Constructive feedback is crucial for academic growth and personal growth, eventually benefiting students now and in their future careers. This dynamic, where there is open communication that is received and acted upon by listeners, creates an environment that values continuous improvement and adapts to the evolving needs of the university community. We dedicate this section explaining what we will do this year to make things more transparent, regarding the faculty as a whole, and the council itself.

Our efforts regarding increasing the **council's transparency** are evident in our annual introductions each September on the website, in newsletters, and on Instagram. These introductions provide valuable insights into the council members, shedding light on their roles and academic interests. Simultaneously, our social media presence, especially on Instagram, is a vital tool for disseminating information about the faculty's current status. Managed by the Facilities and Public Relations Committee (FPC), our platforms feature posts, stories, and monthly columns in the To Dah Loo, aiming to keep students well-informed and emphasize the importance of transparency.

Visibility is a long time established issue for Student councils at all faculties. For students to effectively address issues surrounding their studies, they need to know who to communicate these to. In our pursuit of visibility, we organize various events throughout the year, including game nights, drinks, and distributing handouts. These initiatives are designed to not only raise awareness about the FSR, but also to encourage more students to actively participate in the vibrant Science Park community. It is important that the FSR does not only perform tasks behind the scenes, but is also clearly visible in the foreground. Alongside these activities, our annual survey comprehensively gauges student needs, covering aspects such as awareness of rights, harassment reporting, lecture accessibility, and the overall learning environment. This feedback serves as a crucial guide, enabling us to address specific concerns and implement improvements tailored to the students' preferences.



Students at the UvA have a lot of rights most students are unaware of. These rights are often hidden in lengthy and hard to read documents. A noteworthy initiative this year is our commitment to creating an accessible document summarizing the most useful **student rights**. This document aims to empower students by providing clear information about their entitlements, fostering better understanding among students and teachers alike.

Supporting Programme Committees (OCs) is another cornerstone of our efforts. With 27 programs at FNWI, the FSR places great importance on aiding student members within these committees. The Fora Programme Committees (FOCs) play a pivotal role in facilitating communication between OCs. After all, they fulfill the co-determination task at the program level and are thereby a part of faculty democracy. These FOCs are four meetings organized by the FSR to which all Program Committees of the FNWI are invited. Both the FSR and the OCs can submit agenda items, and afterwards we have an informal pizza dinner. In this way we keep the lines of communication short and promote cooperation.

Encouraging feedback on courses is integral to improving the quality of courses here at Science park. Good feedback allows programs to keep developing and build upon its shortcomings. We actively advocate for clearer communication regarding how teachers address feedback and propose the incorporation of a pre-course report outlining improvements based on past feedback. Additionally, the FSR is actively involved in the development of a new system to replace UvA-q. This system will give teachers and students the necessary tools to receive and give useful feedback, respectively.

Lastly, one of our current goals is to improve **communication from the faculty** during exceptional circumstances. This includes clarifying regulations around bad weather and lectures, as well as exploring the possibility of sending push messages in case of Code Orange situations. This initiative underscores our commitment to ensuring that students are well-informed and can navigate their academic journey smoothly, even in unforeseen circumstances.

Samenvattingen

Inclusiviteit

Onderwijs

- Concerns about support for Teaching Assistants (TAs) prompt the council to advocate for improved teacher training, ensuring consistent, high-quality assistance.
- Active involvement of the council in developing three new study programs, including contributing to Education and Examination Regulations (OERs), ensures student input and responsiveness to their needs.
- The council's crucial role in evaluating programs during the OER process focuses on enhancing the enjoyability, fairness, and manageability of studying at the faculty.
- Success in the OER process is exemplified in the council's work with the faculty to clarify and standardize English language requirements for Master's programs.
- New focus on internship contracts involves a survey to address deviations from agreed-upon hours, aiming to improve a healthy work atmosphere for students.
- Examination of the current 8-8-4 academic year schedule is aimed at addressing the work pressure under students, and to look for potential other schedules that are an improvement compared to the current structure.

Democratisering & Transparantie

- Annual introductions on websites, newsletters, and Instagram showcase council transparency, offering insights into members and their roles, managed by FPC.
- Visibility initiatives address established issues, organizing events, and an annual survey to raise awareness about the FSR, encouraging student participation and addressing concerns.
- Initiative to create an accessible document summarizing student rights aims to empower students with clear information about their entitlements.
- Support for Programme Committees (OCs) is a cornerstone, with a focus on aiding student members, facilitating communication between OCs, and fostering cooperation through FOCs.

- Advocacy for feedback on courses includes efforts to improve the quality of courses through clearer communication and the development of a new feedback system.
- Improve communication during exceptional circumstances, clarifying regulations, and exploring push messages in Code Orange situations, ensures students can navigate academic journeys smoothly.

Nawoord

We hopen dat de doelen van de Facultaire Studentenraad FNWI 23/24 duidelijk zijn. We streven ernaar om zo veel mogelijk doelen te bereiken. Als je suggesties, tips of opmerkingen hebt, laat het ons dan weten! Je kunt altijd contact met ons opnemen via e-mail (fnwi@studentenraad.nl) of kom langs in onze raadskamer (A0.10).

De raad wil je bedanken voor het lezen van het beleidsplan en wenst je veel succes en plezier dit academisch jaar!

Veel liefs,

FSR FNWI 23/24