

2017

2018

FSS – Faculty of Social
Sciences

FSC – Faculty Student
Council

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POLICY PLAN

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1. Preface

The Faculty Student Council (FSC) is the democratically elected participation body for all students of the Faculty of Social Sciences (FSS). We represent the interests of the students by means of consent- and advisory right on the faculty policy. Moreover, we are the linkage between the students and the faculty. Therefore, it is important to maintain contact during the academic year with all the stakeholders, to be able to respond forehanded to possible problems, but also to allow for all kinds of questions, complaints, suggestions and other remarks from students. We are there for the students after all.

Filled with motivation and enthusiasm we start off to improve the quality of the education, increase the communication and visibility of the FSC and advance the professional and social development of students. This policy plan offers a start. If we signal other issues in the meantime, we will surely work on this. For now, we are looking forward to a fruitful council year!

2. Vision

In the policy plan of the FSC FSS 2017-2018 are three central starting points. First, our main task is to represent all students of the faculty and their interests. Communication and visibility are therefore extremely important. Moreover, the guarantee, and where possible the improvement, of the quality of the education is one of the starting points. Finally, we also want to commit ourselves to the professional and social development of students.

The FSC represents the interests of the students of the faculty. Therefore, we must be accessible for students at all times, but we also need sufficient input from students. Our predecessors have already laid an important foundation regarding the communication and visibility of the FSC. We will build on this the coming year. We will mainly focus on the provision of information to student, the maintenance of contact with external parties and the interaction with students and lecturers. Furthermore, we will not have a master student in the council coming year. Therefore, we will pay extra attention to the representation of master students. As first measure we created the function of master coordinator.

We highly value qualitative education. Therefore, we want to have good view on the available course information, the way of examination and the course evaluations. Hereto, we need the Programme Committees (OLC's), because they are for sure the closest to the educational programmes. As of 1 September 2017, the role of the OLC's will change as a result of the new law: *Wet Versterking Bestuurskracht Onderwijsinstellingen*. They will henceforth gain the status of participation body's and gain more voice. Furthermore, we will find ourselves in a transition period coming year, because all bachelor educational programmes of the faculty have been revised. It is important to closely follow this change and keep track of the reactions of students. Also, there will be much attention to the internationalization issue the coming year, such as the introduction of an English language test and the potential offering of the academic core and the bachelor educational programmes in English.

Finally, next to our main tasks, we want to commit ourselves to the professional and social development of students by organizing workshops, student-lecturer activities and by emphasizing the possibilities next to the study. For example, by spreading vacancies from inside and outside the faculty. Think of internships, student-assistantships, but also a variety of committees and participation body's.

3. Faculty Student Council 2017-2018

The FSC FSS 2017-2018 consists of seven councilors with each its own function. The daily board is formed by the president, the vice-president and the secretary-quaestor. An important change compared to previous years is the split up of the function education coordinator into a bachelor- and master coordinator. This aims at a better representation of all student populations at the faculty. Next to function specific tasks, the councilors also work on various portfolios. At headlines 3.2 and 3.3 there is more information available about the councilors, the functions and the portfolios. In order to function properly, the FSC has a number of legally determined rights.

3.1 Rights

Legally, we have seven sorts of rights: consent right, advisory right, initiative right, information right, hear right, education right and protection right. Consent- and advisory right are by far the most important. Below follows an overview.

Right of consent	Right of advisory
- Adoption or amendment of the Faculty Regulations	- Affairs that matter for the functioning of the faculty
- Adoption or amendment of the regulations of the Joint Meeting (GV)	- The faculty policy regarding educational facilities
- Adoption or amendment of (a part of) the Education- and Examination Regulations (OER)	- The faculty policy regarding student facilities - The budget of the faculty (potential annual accounts included)

3.2 Functions

<p><u>President</u> Demi Leakat Third year student Political Science</p>

The president is the first contact point and also ultimately responsible for the functioning of the council. On the one hand, the president provides sufficient help and information to all councilors so that they can perform their tasks well. This is primarily a facilitating role, which

the president in cooperation with the vice-president supervises. On the other hand, the president keeps frequent contact with external parties in order to stay informed about all developments within the faculty and to represent the interest of the student. In addition, the president must be able to keep the overview and act decisive if necessary.

Vice-president

Julia van den Heuvel

Third year student Public Administration and Organization

The vice-president is responsible for the internal functioning of the council. To realize this, the vice-president, together with the president, must be aware of all developments of the individual councilors. When the president is absent, the vice-president takes over the daily tasks of the president. In addition to keeping this internal overview, it is important that the vice-president also keeps a close eye on personal matters of the councilors.

Secretary-quaestor

Kata Rakić

Second year student Public Administration and Organization

This year we combined the functions of secretary and quaestor as one. The secretary is responsible for the control of the reports of proceedings, retouching the internal calendar, replying to incoming emails and archiving all documents in our google-drive. The quaestor is responsible for the finances. An important aspect of that is the forming of and the accountability over the FSC budget.

Bachelor coordinator (including minor)

Ihsane Akka

Second year student Public Administration and Organization

Master coordinator (including premaster)

Levent Soysal

Third year student Public Administration and Organization

The education coordinators are responsible for the maintenance of contact with the OLC's. The OLC's are closer to the educational programmes and therefore have better understanding of educational programme specific affairs. The education coordinators will organize a number of FSC-OLC meetings to exchange crucial information. Furthermore, the education coordinators are responsible for the OER's and keep track of all educational related developments.

Research- and internationalization coordinator

Sozjaar Sirini

Second year student Public Administration and Organization

The research coordinator is responsible for setting out surveys among students and analyzing the results. The FSC uses these results to gain better understanding of the opinions of the students. The analysis is in the interest of the students and can be communicated to the Faculty Board (FB). Also, this year we made room for a new function: an internationalization coordinator. The reason for this is to strengthen this development within the faculty. The internationalization coordinator deals together with the Internationalization Committee with the development of an international character of the faculty.

Project coordinator

Puck Boer

Second year student Sociology

The project coordinator will, next to the regular tasks of every councilor, mainly focus on organizing a number of yearly projects. These projects are: the recruitment and selection of new councilors, the transmission and the education prize award ceremony. Next to these regular projects, the project coordinator is always free to start new projects. It is important to oversee what students want, then the project coordinator will organize the activity.

3.3 Portfolio distribution

Portfolios are comparable to specific policy areas that require extra attention. Coming year, we will work on seven portfolios. Each portfolio has a coordinator (ultimately responsible councilor) and supporting councilors. See the table below for an overview of the portfolios and corresponding councilors.

Portfolios	Coordinator(s)	Supported by
FSS-budget	Kata Rakić	Demi Leakat Sozjaar Sirini Puck Boer
Programme Committees (OLC's)	Ihsane Akka Levent Soysal	
Examination	Demi Leakat	Ihsane Akka Levent Soysal
Internationalization	Sozjaar Sirini	Julia van den Heuvel Puck Boer
Communication and visibility	Julia van den Heuvel	Kata Rakić
FSS-timelines	Ihsane Akka	Demi Leakat
Activities	Puck Boer	Levent Soysal Sozjaar Sirini

4. Objectives

4.1 Quality of education

4.1.1 Course information

To realize qualitative education it is important that correct and relevant course information can be found on Canvas. It is desirable that this information is available before the course starts. This way, students can prepare themselves well and purchase the literature.

Unfortunately, not all study guides are up-to-date and this is unfavorable for the students. We will emphasize the importance of course information and study guides and ensure that lecturers take care of this.

4.1.2 Examination and trial exams

An exam must be a good bellwether of what a student has learned during a specific course. Likewise, students must be able to prepare themselves well for an exam. The number of multiple choice exams at the faculty is at the moment relatively high, especially in courses with a high number of students. This is understandable, because revising open questions is time-consuming. However, this is not always desirable. It is also important to formulate good arguments yourself and this can be stimulated by asking more open questions. However, we must bear in mind that multiple choice questions sometimes are a good indicator of the learning objectives of a course. We will therefore deal with the so-called exam plans: do the learning objectives match the way of examination? We will commit ourselves to a good balance between open- and closed questions. Furthermore, we believe that the lecturer of a course must at least make one complete and representative trial exam available, so that students can prepare themselves optimally.

4.1.3 Course evaluations

At the end of each course a digital evaluation form is made available, the so-called course evaluations. Students get the opportunity to give their opinion about the course: about the content, the organization, the lecturer(s) and the exam. The course evaluations are an important source of feedback and input from students. This way, lecturers can improve the quality of the education in the future. It is an important instrument, but unfortunately it does not always function well. The response to the course evaluations is in fact structurally low. Perhaps many students do not understand the importance of the course evaluations. The FSC will therefore actively promote this, by placing regular reminders on our channels. In

addition, it is important that the lecturers give feedback on the results to the students, we will also monitor this.

4.1.4 Programme Committees

The OLC's keep themselves busy with the evaluation and improvement of all educational affairs within their own educational programme and give solicited and unsolicited advice. Important tasks that belong to that are checking the course evaluations, annually evaluate the OER and respond to input from students. For more information about the role of the OLC's, see headline 4.2.2. Furthermore, this year the rights of the OLC's are significantly expanded, especially in the area of their consent rights. The OLC's and the FSC are both committed to the quality of education and the representation of the interests of the students, therefore we will cooperate a lot. Moreover, the educational coordinators of the FSC are involved in the recruitment and selection of new OLC-members.

4.1.5 Bachelor revision

From this academic year all bachelor educational programmes are revised to on the one hand pay more attention to interdisciplinarity and on the other hand improve the quality of education. Some courses do not exist anymore and are merged with other courses. See VU.net for a complete overview. For students that still need to make a resit exam for courses that will disappear or change this year, 'bezemtoetsen' are made available from 18 September to and including 6 October 2017. This is the last opportunity to pass a course in its old form! With regard to the bachelor revision, the FSC primarily has a controlling task: it is important to keep track of how students experience the revision and if there are possible problems.

4.1.6 Internationalization

The aim of the VU is to make our university a *truly international university*, where students and employees are stimulated to look beyond borders. The FSC has appointed an internationalization coordinator this year who will be engaged in the development of this international character of the VU. The use of the English language increases both inside and outside the lecture halls. Moreover, the focus on interculturality within the VU increases. We therefore believe that the English language should be central within the several educational programmes. Within this framework, we will present all our policies in both Dutch and English.

4.2 Communication and visibility

4.2.1 Information resources

We find it important that the students that we represent are well informed about all developments and opportunities within the faculty. However, we noticed that students are not always informed about important information, therefore we want to support the students in this. We will have an informative role and regularly share information via our channels. In addition, we launched a new platform this year: the FSS-timelines (vutijdlijn.nl). Here, you can find all information about dates, deadlines and practical matters. Think of questions like: when will the exam weeks take place? How can I connect the Wi-Fi? How do I register for courses? What is the BSA? Where to go with personal circumstances?

4.2.2 Contact with external parties

The FSC cooperates with different VU-bodies, also called external parties. On the one hand to follow all developments within the faculty and to stay well informed and on the other hand to represent the interest of the student. For the quality of the education a positive cooperation climate is crucial. We strive for an open way of cooperation. Below follows an overview of our most important cooperation partners:

- Faculty Board (FB): the FB leads the faculty and is responsible for the organization and coordination of the education and the science practice. The FSC is entitled to give asked and unasked advice, here the FB is mandatory to give a written response. Every six weeks a Joint Meeting (GV) takes place.
- Personnel Committee (ODC): the ODC is the representation of the personnel of the faculty. The ODC is just as the FSC an elected body. The FB, the FSC and the ODC gather together during the GV about current affairs.
- Programme Committees (OLC's): the OLC's consist of students and lecturers and take care of the evaluation and improvement of the own educational programme. This concerns all educational matters. The OLC's are the closest to the individual educational programmes and therefore hold crucial information for the FSC. The bachelor- and master coordinators will organize a number of FSC-OLC meetings coming year in order to exchange information.
- Education Office: the education office supports the FSS-education, from policy preparation to education execution. Moreover, the education office takes care of the

education quality care, an important starting point for the FSC. Every six weeks a meeting takes place between a few FSC-members and the education office.

- Student Councils: each faculty has a FSC, but there also is an overall student council for all students of the VU, the University Student Council (USC). Although the FSC mainly deals with faculty affairs, sometimes VU-broad affairs occur. In that case, cooperation with other student councils can be very useful and inspiring.
- Faculty Association EOS: EOS is the official association of the faculty and organizes various activities for students. This benefits the binding between the students and the faculty. Moreover, the career- and study related activities help students to get more out of their student time, activities that we wholeheartedly want to promote and support.

4.2.3 Interaction with students and lecturers

The FSC is involved with students and lecturers in many ways. Next to our informative role (see headline 4.2.1), we also find it important to interact with the students and lecturers of the faculty. In order to function properly, we need input from these two important parties. We will organize at least one student-lecturer activity this year, to improve the contact between these two parties. Moreover, we as council will be present as much as possible at activities and informal meetings within the faculty, so that students are able to contact us in an approachable way.

4.2.4 Representation of (pre)master students

The FSC represents all students of the faculty: bachelor, minor, premaster and master students. Unfortunately, not all student populations are represented in the council, we have no (pre)master student in the council this year. For this reason, we created a new function this year: the master coordinator. We find it important that all students of the faculty feel represented. Over the last years, the master students have been little involved with the FSC. Probably because they are not often physically present at the VU and they often only study here for one or two years. Therefore, we will pay extra attention to the recruitment of (pre)master students for the FSC FSS 2018-2019.

4.3 Professional and social development

4.3.1 Workshops

Many students do not have a clear perspective on the future yet and do not know where they want to work after graduating. We want to support students in this. Therefore, we will offer a number of workshops during the academic year that are focused on the professional development of students. An important aim is to provide students with a better future perspective and gain professional skills. We expect that students will benefit from this during their future career.

4.3.2 Student-lecturer activities

In order to improve the interaction with students and lecturers (see headline 4.2.3), but also the interaction between these two parties, we find it important to organize at least one student-lecturer activity this year. It will improve the ambiance, but also the quality of the education, when this relationship is strengthened so that both parties are approachable in an informal way and can provide each other with input.

4.3.3 Looking further than studying

Next to studying the VU and FSS offer more possibilities regarding the professional and social development of students. As a student it becomes increasingly important to look further than just studying and to build a nice cv. Therefore, the FSC will promote extra activities for students. Within the own educational programme it is possible to become a student-mentor, student-informer, student-member of the OLC and student-assistant. At the faculty or VU-broad level it is possible to become councilor in student councils (FSC and USC). Moreover, motivated students can participate in the Honours Programme of the VU, UvA and AUC. Lastly, there are various possibilities for minors, internships and studying abroad. Thus, enough options inside and outside the faculty. Moreover, the above mentioned functions contribute to the quality of the education, are instructive and you will receive a nice compensation. We will regularly share vacancies and application deadlines with students via our channels. For this, also take a look at the FSS-timelines (vutijdljn.nl).

5. Afterword

Filled with motivation and enthusiasm we will start off to realize our policy points and to closely follow some changes and developments within the faculty. We are always open to questions and other input. Therefore, do not hesitate to contact us via one of the channels below or drop by the FSC-room (HG-1A62). Finally, we want to thank the FSC FSS 2016-2017 for the well-organized transfer period, partly because of that we had enough help and information to get started as soon as possible.

We are looking forward to the academic year 2017-2018!

On behalf of the FSC FSS 2017-2018,

Demi Leakat

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