

Covenant University Council - Executive Board Summer 2024

Principles for the Covenant

The rules governing the administration and management of the UG have been laid down in the law, the Higher Education and Scientific Research Act, the WHW.

The HRA dates back to 1992 and has undergone many changes over the course of more than thirty years. In addition to changes at the educational level, there have also been changes at the level of administration and management, the governance of the university.

In terms of governance, the main body within the university is the Board of the University. The influence of staff and students on policy is represented by the University Council. Thus, the formal positions of the Board and the Council are those of the responsible Executive Board on the one hand, and of the central participation body on the other. The legislature did not choose to designate the University Council as a co-governing body like the city council or provincial councils for instance.

In addition to the formal legal position of Executive Board and University Council, there is a relationship within the UG between the Board and the Council that is not limited to formal positions. For decades there has been a tradition of student and staff involvement in university governance. The so-called Harmony Model is used, which further interprets and elaborates the formal duties and powers regulated by law. Without detracting from and without prejudice to its formal duties and powers, the Executive Board gives the Council the opportunity to exchange views with it on matters over which it has no formal authority. While the formal administrative language of the UG is Dutch, the participation language is rather a multilingual one (Dutch/English).

The previous "codification" of this division of roles dates from 2011. In order to incorporate more recent insights and developments, parts of the model have been modified and redesigned, without prejudice to the formal duties and powers of the respective bodies. As in the past, the Board realizes the importance of decisions that can count on support within the UG. The Council and the Board prefer not to lose themselves in discussions about powers and procedures.

The Board and the Council agree that the foregoing broadly leads to the following elaborations and interpretations of the formal relationships.

Elaboration of outlines

A central pillar in the relationship between the Board and the Council is an optimal exchange of information between the Board and the Council, with the presidium of the Council functioning as the first point of contact, for which the agenda meeting between the Board and the Council was set up. The elaboration of this provision of information in the agenda consultation can be found under I below, where it is also stipulated that current developments can be discussed during the agenda consultation, that involvement of the Council in new large (policy) projects can be explored and the organization of informal sessions between the Board and the Council can be coordinated.

The second point concerns the position of the presidium as the first point of contact in the relationship between Board and Council. This will be considered under point II.

A third pillar is the committee structure and content (III). Council committees are structured in line with the portfolio distribution within the Board: Administration, E&R and Resources. Furthermore, there is room to involve the Council in policy-making at an early stage: strategic policy questions can be the subject of an open exchange of views

between the Board and the Council in committee. The Council is updated and inspired on a (current) thematic policy topic prior to meetings with the Board. Then the organizational side of the meetings (IV) and the handling of documents (V) is discussed. In the event that the Council and the Board do not agree with each other's points of view, an effort is made not to end up in a conflict: in these cases they will enter into consultation with the help of the Glue committee (VI).

These frameworks take shape within the Harmony Model, which remains in full force. This expresses the fact that, without prejudice to their formal duties and powers, the Executive Board and the Council exchange views on matters over which the Council strictly does not have formal powers. This model constructively fosters cooperation between the Executive Board and Council, focused on support. Fruitful cooperation is the starting point. This is in the interest of the University, students and staff.

The Board and Council agree that the foregoing broadly results in the following elaborations and additions to the University Council Regulations.

I: Agenda meetings

1. Agenda meeting: members of the Council presidium meet structurally with the Executive Board in the Agenda meeting.
2. A first agenda meeting takes place well in advance of the Council and Board consultation meeting, the second meeting no later than 2 weeks before the consultation meeting.
3. During the first meeting, draft versions of committee and Council meeting agendas will be discussed. During the second meeting, committee agendas and Council agendas will be finalized.
4. During the deliberations, the presidium can request further information about the various documents on the agenda of the committees or the Council. The presidium can also inquire about files that -for the time being- are outside the scope the Council meeting. The Board provides the necessary information, thus manifesting constructive cooperation.
5. In turn, the presidium informs the Board on matters in the Central Participation Council that concern the administration of the University.
6. Meetings are attended by a Board member, the general director of University Services, or their deputy, and by the secretary of the Board, so they can relay what is discussed to the various parts of University Services and/or other parts of the UG. This way, proper preparation of meetings is ensured, in collaboration with the Registrar of the Council.
7. If desired, the Board will be given the opportunity to get acquainted prior to the (re)election of a presidium member. Should the Board be of the opinion that there are factors that hinder constructive cooperation, it shall make this known to the Council meeting. Council members may take this into consideration in the (re)election of presidium members.

II. Written information presidium

1. The basic principle is that the Board provides the Council presidium with insight into the documents handled at Board meetings as much as this is possible as well as justified. This benefits administrative transparency and engagement.
2. All non-confidential documents before a Board meeting shall become available to the presidium. Confidential documents include those documents that represent an internal business interest to such a degree that distribution is not possible. Documents that have substantially changed in content and meaning during the Executive Board meeting will become available in modified form.
3. If, in the opinion of the Board, it is beneficial to the cooperation, the Board may also grant the presidium access to documents from other UG bodies, with the exception of confidential documents.

III. Committees

1. The Board has three standing committees of assistance, with names and portfolios created in line with the portfolios of the members of the Executive Board.
2. The committees prepare for the Council meeting in their assigned specific policy area, follow developments therein and discuss them in order to contribute to the policy development of the UG and to arrive at decisions that can count on sufficient support.
3. Committees are involved in policies under development and those already at the stage of intended decision-making by the Board.
4. The relevant portfolio holder of the Executive Board attends committee meetings.
5. In accordance with the provisions of the Council's Rules of Procedure, the committee meeting can be held behind closed doors in specific cases.
6. Committee meetings, or parts thereof, intended to prepare for Council decision-making shall be held in public, unless agenda items are designated confidential or part of the meeting requests closure of the doors in accordance with the Rules of Procedure.
7. Committee meetings have a technical explanation section. The Executive Board may arrange for answers in these parts of the meetings to be provided by officials knowledgeable in the field. The technical explanation of agenda items and notes in the committees ensures smooth handling in the Board meeting itself.
8. Committees may report to the Council.
9. The general manager of University Services shall provide official support to the committee.

IV The organization of Council meetings

1. The Council meets periodically during the academic year. Meetings are held according to the Council's Rules of Order.
2. The agenda is mutually agreed upon by the presidium of the Council and the Board during their regular agenda meetings. The presidium and the Board can put items on the agenda.
3. The basis for the agenda is the administrative calendar. This calendar is discussed between the Board and the Council at the beginning of the meeting year and, if necessary, adjusted during the meeting year. The agenda allows for the submission of notes in any case, given the Council's right of initiative. On the administrative agenda and on various council meeting agendas, the status of each item on the agenda (right of consent, right of advice or for information) is indicated.

4. As the Council's interlocutor, the entire Executive Board attends the Council meeting. The General Manager of University Services, or their replacement, attends the University Council meeting q.q.
5. Minutes containing a decision list shall be kept of each Council meeting and submitted to the Council and the Board for approval. The consent decisions of the Council and the opinions or proposals issued by the Council are added to this document.
6. Agendas, meeting documents and decision lists of the Council, insofar as they do not relate to a closed meeting, are brought to the attention of faculty boards and councils, heads of departments and department councils, the Local Consultative Committee (Lokaal Overleg) and the University newspaper (Ukrant). Agendas and decision lists of committees and the Council are also posted on the website: www.rug.nl/uraad.

V Consideration of Council documents

1. The UG Strategic Plan (formally the Institutional Plan, Art. 9.33 WHW) is submitted to the Council for approval. Every year, the Council is presented with an interim report on the implementation of the Plan.
2. Intentions to enter into strategic cooperation agreements with third parties or to establish organizations affiliated with the UG are discussed with the Council by the Executive Board.
3. In the case of strategic agreements with third parties (such as MOCW) that affect the profile of the University, plans for these agreements are submitted to the Council.
4. Decisions by the Executive Board to conduct or order an external study or to obtain external advice on the (re)organization of the RUG's administrative organization are reported to the Council by the Executive Board.
5. The Council's statutory right to advise on or consent to the UG budget (Article 9.33 / 9.33a WHW) also extends to all interim budget amendments. The Council has access to the written feelings of the faculty councils and service councils regarding the budget sub-plans of the administrative units.
6. In any case, the Board discusses with the Council the UG Annual Report, the Annual Social Report, the Report of the Confidential Advisor, the Financial Report (the annual accounts including appendices), reports on institutional accreditation and the agendas of the meetings of the UNL General Board.
7. The decisions to establish (advisory) committees of the Executive Board and the composition of these committees, including the University Committee on Education (UCO) and the University Committee on the Practice of Science (UCW), are notified to the Council. The Council is given the opportunity to nominate an audience member for the UCO and UCW.
8. The division of powers in respect of decisions proposed by the Executive Board relating to matters of general importance to the special legal status of staff and in respect of reorganizations (laid down in the UG Reorganization Code) are governed by a covenant between the Council, the Local Consultative Body and the Executive Board.

VI. The Glue Committee

If the Council withholds its assent to a proposed decision of the Board for which the Council has the right of assent, or if the Board does not wish to adopt all or part of a recommendation of the Council while the Council has a statutory right of assent, the Council and the Board enter into consultation. These consultations are conducted by the so-called Glue Committee, consisting of the chairpersons of the Council groups and (a delegation of) the Executive Board. The Chairman of the Council is assigned chairmanship of the Glue Committee. The committee's task is to develop such proposals that a legal dispute over the matter in question is not triggered.

University Council committee structure: designation, distribution of portfolios

Resources Committee:

Finance	Valorization
Real Estate	Information Technology
Facilities	

R&D Committee:

Education	Research
Student Affairs	Internationalization

Governance Committee:

Administrative Affairs	Human Resources
Health and safety	Communication
Fundraising	Appointments
Annual reports	Meeting circuits (UNL, Committee of Deans, etc).

Character of committee meetings:

1 Strategic policy preparation

After consultation between the Board and the presidium in the agenda meeting, it is determined which topics lend themselves to a process in which the Council is involved in policy development and formation at an early stage. This can be done through special meetings or treatment of a topical theme prior to a regular meeting. These are topics that concern the institutional policy of the UG and its financial implications, or topics in the field of current student or personnel policy.

The Council presidium, assisted by University Services if necessary, prepares a discussion memo to initiate a free exchange of views. Both the Board and the Council members then freely discuss possible policy directions. The purpose of the discussion is to explore the issue and to conceptualize possible policy directions, without taking any positions at this stage.

2 Preparation for decision-making

After consultation to this end between the Board and Council presidium, files that are at the stage of intended decision-making are sent to the Council with a request for discussion, advice or consent.

Presentation of related meeting documents is done in such a way that the position of the Board is known, including the underlying considerations. The Council groups can form their opinions on this basis and make them known at the committee meeting.

The committee meeting has a technical part, in which a technical explanation can be given by experts on the subject at hand. If desired, the groups can request either changes or commitments regarding proposed policy.

Reports will reflect the views of the Council groups as well as the Board, and any commitments made. This will then be the starting point for discussion in the Council meeting. The purpose of the committee discussion is therefore to establish a position and prepare decisions in the form of conclusions on the discussion, either advice or consent of the Council, so that no time is lost in the Council meeting with discussions that have already been held in the committees and adequately dealt with there, ergo: without prejudice to the rights accruing to members of the Council, after an adequate discussion in the committees, the Council no longer dwells extensively on the content of agenda items.