



minutes

Meeting Faculty Council (FC)

Date and time

12 December 2023, 13:30-15:00

Reference

final

Eliza van der Ploeg-Bout

T +31 (0)50 36 33898

e.s.van.der.ploeg-bout@rug.nl

Present

FC: Dimitris Ballas (chair), Annet Kempenaar, Zeqiang Pan, Diana Velea, Timothy Laukens, Jovan van den Berk, Paulo Cigarro

FB: Nienke Bastiaans, Arjan van den Assem, Julia van Wijk

Others: Ibn Battuta, Gert Weitkamp, Alessandro Fois, Maaïke Buser

Landleven 1

9747 AD Groningen

The Netherlands

Absent with notice

Gwenda van der Vaart, Saskia Enuma, Johan Woltjer, Gunnar Mallon

Minutes taken by

Eliza van der Ploeg

Last minutes (31 October 2023) approved

Yes, with changes

1. Actions

Number	Who?	What?	Dead-line?	See point
20231031-3	Pro Geo	Make a proposal/memo about improving digital skills (so students have the required level for a course) for the FC so a better discussion and brainstorm is possible.		
20231031-4	Ballas	Reaction from HR about employee satisfaction survey?		2
20231212-1	Bastiaans	Check whether reassurance message has been sent/posted on Brightspace for students.		3b
20231212-2	Bastiaans/Van der Ploeg	Check reimbursement for PC members has increased from €37,- to €39,- per meeting?		5

2. Finished actions:

20231031-1: Bastiaans has notified the department Health, Safety & Sustainability (AMD) that social safety should be taken up in the progress report Health Safety & Sustainability.

20230919-2: Van der Ploeg has invited the new GS director and the PhD Council to brainstorm about: 1) the increase of teaching workload of the PhD employees in relation to the aim to reduce the PhD completion time and 2) the policy about extension due to personal circumstances. On the agenda.

20231031-2: Bastiaans has emailed a more precise figure for the impact of lower travel costs.

20231031-4: Van der Vaart has emailed HR (Henriette van Ingen) about the next edition of the employee satisfaction survey, to not only conduct the analysis at the level of the basic units, but also to see whether there are interesting patterns, taking into account for example, position, age, gender. Ongoing. [12-12: Ballas takes over the follow-up – action]

3. For information/received documents

a. Update PC's:

Pro Geo notifies the FC and FB that the course evaluation form has been changed without consent from the Programme Committees. Although the PC's have been informed and agree with the change, it was implemented before they could meet and give consent. This is not the right procedure. Furthermore, it has been noticed that the online evaluations response rate is very low.

b. Update Faculty Board

- After the elections the FB had an open-door meeting, which some staff joined. The main concerns are: what will it mean for the programmes and for the careers. Also, at university level much discussion is going on. The Faculty aims to defend that we have

minutes

international programmes. Pro Geo notes that it would be nice if the board could communicate to students a general message of reassurance and the stand of the faculty. According to Bastiaans a message has already been sent [action Bastiaans to check].

- Bastiaans comments that no general information session(s) about the financial situation has(/have) been held, but she has joined staff meetings per department and support staff. Financially there will be no negative influence on promotion perspectives. However, faculties have become more careful in expenses.
- Honours College: there have been discussions about the continuation of the programme, mainly due to the financial situation. In consultation with Executive Board the faculty is not suspending enrollment this year. However, it will probably be happening in the future. More likely than not after the next cohort the programme will stop (with the last cohort still finishing = 3 years).

The FC is positive about what the faculty is doing/communicating, as reassurance(s) to staff and students is very important.

- c. FSS Work plan Privacy & security 2023-2024:** Kempenaar has two points of concern (for list of risks) to add: 1) what to do with colleagues working on a private laptop? 2) the new admission system for foreign students, which includes a check by the coordinator is not working.

Concerning the first point, Bastiaans has talked with different people about it. The demand manager and IT Services gave different advice and have different opinions. Ideally, Bastiaans would like to have employees be save online without thinking. Working on their own laptop, which automatically synchronizes and provide protection. Bastiaans is working on it, although sadly, it is still a long way to go.

Second point: Kempenaar would like the FB to know that the new system is much worse than the old system. Also, there are problems from a privacy point of view. This point is something to discuss at university level.

- d. Green Office report** about UG flight travel 2016-2022: the faculty staff is traveling a lot, although it is already less than previous years. Finding the right balance is necessary. The FC would like to know:

- 1) Are student field trips included? Not known, probably yes.
- 2) How does the board perceive the survey? Are there consequences?

Bastiaans notes that together with the department chairs guiding principles have been developed. If one travels, go green. PhDs have their own budget.

- e. Concept minutes 31 October 2023:**

Textual:

Point 6: change 'HGP' into 'SPD'.

With this change the minutes are approved of.

Following the minutes:

Page 4, first bullet point: Bastiaans and HR have looked into the situation at FSS. Also, Van der Vaart has been invited to look at it. However, no pattern has emerged that there is a rising page gap between men and women at FSS.

Page 4, point 8: Bastiaans (together with FEB) has raised the closing of the Equator with the caterer (too often and without notification). The caterer pledged improvement.

4. Brainstorm Workload PhDs

The new director GS (Gert Weitkamp) and Alessandro Fois and Maaike Buser of the PhD Council join the meeting.

The discussion is about 1) the increase of teaching workload of the PhD employees in relation to the aim to reduce the PhD completion time. Weitkamp comments that from the

invitation, it looked like the FC perceived a change in policy. However, there has been no change in policy. Before Covid, teaching by PhDs was common. Trough Covid it changed and then there was also a change in PhD Scholarships.

Teaching is positive for your CV and, according to Fois, in general PhDs have a positive opinion towards teaching.

There are different groups of PhDs with different obligations:

Bursary PhD students have no teaching obligation; it is only voluntary.

Contract PhDs have a 15 % teaching obligation, which is mentioned in their contract and in the vacancy text.

For EU/NWO/grants PhDs teaching depends on the contract. Mostly they have a 100% research obligation. Kempenaar and Van den Assem discuss a construction of 80% funding research and then 20% funded by Faculty to include teaching. This suggestion will be worked out further.

Secondly, the FC discusses the policy about extension due to personal circumstances.

There will be no more extension rounds due to Covid. However, personal circumstances are discussed case by case. Sometimes the advice of HR, or other experts will be asked. Then a tailor-made proposal follows. The standard procedure is to file a request with clear reason, explanation.

One positive note: there is no change in policy because of the financial limitations.

Other note: The supervisor is responsible for what tasks are delegated to PhD students. These should be in balance.

A photo of the whiteboard will be uploaded on Google Drive in the FC folder.

5. Input from Pro Geo & Bursary PhD

Pro Geo:

- advises the FB to reassure students about the WIIB on Brightspace. According to the FB a message has already been published. Bastiaans checks whether it was posted [action].
- Pan notes that there is no university guideline about AI; how to use it and how to avoid privacy issues. Mallon is in the committee developing a university policy. Van den Assem points out that 1) the concept university policy will be on the agenda this week. Still, it is a brief policy. The FB is looking into what does it mean for the faculty. 2) have to develop something that works, which means probably training for trainers, staff and PhDs. For staff: EQIP sessions will be organized.
- Pro Geo has updated their policy plan and it is published on their website.
- Pro Geo: one member is part of a student IT panel which is developing an e-learning module for PC-members.
- Pro Geo is glad the Honours College programme will be continued for now. See point 3.b. above. Students would like to inform the board of their negative opinion of quitting the HC.
- Pro Geo is still keeping note of/collecting new data about late grading.
- Pro Geo has learned via the Council's meeting that the reimbursement for PC members has increased from €37,- to €39,- per meeting. Bastiaans/Van der Ploeg will check with Finances [action].

6. Input from staff

- PhD's mention the lack of available office desk space. Especially in Planning there is almost no more place available. Therefore, flex desks have been made and staff offices have an availability indicator.

minutes

- Licensing: Atlas.ai has not enough licenses. Only 200 per campus. Which caused huge problems during the exams. Already, Meijles has been notified and it should be solved by now. Furthermore, it has been mentioned at university level that the number of users should be increased.
- How to communicate sensitive subjects? Personal/social safety issues can be communicated to Karin Weel (informal contact person for social safety). Students can go to student advisors. PhDs can go to a contact person for social safety of other faculties. More general sensitive subjects can be discussed in private/informal with one of the board members.
- The FC advises against installing new computers in the GIS room by the Geodienst. Fewer, but good computers and more space for laptops is probably smarter spending. However, Bastiaans explains that for certain programmes the faculty needs to provide enough good computers. This has also been discussed in the economizing committee. The faculty is now looking at installing work stations for students and together with the demand manager looking into what is needed per room.
- Risk of theft at Mercator was raised by a staff member following an article in the U-Krant about theft at Nijenborgh 4. The FB comments that the general policy at Mercator is to close the office door when leaving and not leave any valuables. So far, this has been sufficient.

7. Any other subject

- Ballas pointed out that the Faculty is ideally suited to contribute further to academic and public debates regarding the impact of internationalization. In particular, he suggested that a potential project could explore the social, economic, demographic and cultural impact of the development of 'student villages' in different areas in the Groningen region. The proposed analysis for such a project would include, from an economic geography perspective, the consideration of local multiplier effects of the University as a result of new investment in building (e.g. jobs in relation to construction) as well as local multiplier effects resulting from additional consumption spending of both the workers employed as a result of the investment as well as the students. In addition, the impact on housing prices and availability of housing could be explored and modelled. From a Transport Geography perspective, new routes and more frequent bus services could be evaluated. There can also be mini projects on local demand for retail outlets. From a Planning perspective, the project could involve Public Consultation methods and Public Participation (also involving Public Participation GIS) to monitor and consider the opinions of local population. From a Cultural Geography perspective, the project could consider the sense of place and identity (and related issues and concepts linked to internationalization). Ballas argued that the Faculty is ideally placed to undertake work for such a project and he proposed that possible funding opportunities could be explored to that end. He also pointed out that even without funding, it is possible to make a start via supervised student projects such as Bachelor and Master theses as well as Research Master projects (in courses such as Individual Research Training and the Research Internship). To be continued.
- Kempenaar would like to add the proposal for a new design track on the agenda next meeting.

8. Closure and date next meeting

The next meeting is 23 January 2023.

The chair closes the meeting.