

Response to concerns proposal “Saving costs on tutorial education”

Programme management, 24 June 2025

The programme committees Economics & Business Economics and Econometrics & Operations Research has voiced several concerns regarding the proposal “Saving costs on tutorial education”. Below we would like to provide our response to these concerns.

Targeted cost reduction and trade-off between benefits and costs

The PC’s commented that it is not clear how much needs to be saved. We have added this in the proposal. The management team has set the goal of saving 500K on our tutorial education. Half of this cost reduction can be achieved by using HOKA (BAO) funds for our tutorial education instead of regular first money stream funds. As also explained by our dean in the information session on 17 June, the cost reduction on tutorial education is part of a package of various planned cost reductions, which, among others, include no more automatic extensions of PhD-contracts and a reduction in material costs (catering, events, gifts, etc.).

We would like to stress that our goal is to realize these cost savings while limiting the negative effects on the quality of our education. Tutorials are currently an obligatory element in Bachelor-1 and -2 courses. From a didactic point of view, they are not necessarily the most optimal form of education in all these courses. With the current technological developments and opportunities to learn, practice and cooperate online, taking a critical look at our tutorial education cannot be solely regarded as a bad thing.

We will do our very best to only reduce the number of tutorials in courses that are open to this and for which it can be regarded as beneficial. Only if we cannot reach the targeted cost savings with these courses and the other discussed measures, such as cutting back on one-group contracts for TA’s, might we be forced to take measures in other courses as well. We hope to prevent this and would like to ask the help of the Programme Committees and School Council to ask lecturers to keep an open mind and be open to discussing possibilities.

Last, we understand that there might be concerns that lecturers are asked to make changes now and then again with the bachelor curriculum re-design. We endeavor to prevent this as much as possible. We are already in the process of making changes to courses, namely for the International Classroom project, and also these changes will be kept as much as possible in the new curriculum design. Designing a new curriculum is not

something we do overnight. In our view, we have already started the process unofficially, and will further build on changes already made when the project formally kicks off again.

Measures 1 and 2: Decrease number of tutorials and investigate alternatives for tutorials in courses in which they are not evaluated positively

Both the PC E&BE and Ectrics expressed concerns that reducing the number of tutorials will reduce the quality of student learning, decrease opportunities for bonding, and increase workload for lecturers.

We understand the concern that having fewer tutorials will negatively impact student learning and bonding. Our goal is to focus interventions in the tutorials on courses where tutorials are not well attended and/or not impactful.

For Econometrics we had already assumed that there would be less room to reduce the number of tutorial hours (see page 6 of the proposal, text directly under the table). Their suggestion that “we look at other programmes to reduce tutorials hours” therefore feels unnecessary, as this is what we are, to a large extent, already doing. Still, as for E&BE, we believe that for a subset of courses, the “one size fits all” tutorial approach might not be best. We therefore expect Econometrics to also be cooperative in investigating whether for some of their courses no or less tutorials are possible.

Measure 3: Integration Academic Skills

We agree with the PC E&BE that this change preferably is part of the curriculum re-design. We have also indicated this in the proposal.

The PC E&BE comments that students are more positive about Academic Skills than Career Skills. The course evaluations, however, show a different picture when it comes to the appreciation students have for these courses. In academic year 2023-2024 the average grade given to the Career Skills courses was a 7.2. The average grade given to Academic Skills for IBEB and E&BE was a 5.6. We would also like to stress that Career Skills is fully funded from the BOA (HOKA) funds and thus does not eat away at any of the regular education funds for “core academic learning”.

Measure 5: Tutorials as a PhD Duty

Both the PC E&BE and Ectrics have their doubts about PhD-candidates teaching more in Bachelor-1 and -2 tutorial education. If PhD-candidates teach tutorials they can do less teaching in other types of education, which can potentially increase work pressure on academic staff. We understand this concern and are currently discussing this further with the vice dean of research, the director of doctoral education, and the department directors. We hope to find a workable solution that fits all.

To our knowledge, there are currently considerable differences in teaching tasks between PhD-candidates. For internal ESE PhD-candidates we feel it would be beneficial to standardize this more, giving all PhD-candidates a solid foundation in teaching. Such a foundation should also include teaching Bachelor-1 and -2 students, which tends to be quite different from interacting with students in seminars or in thesis supervision.