

University Council
Second Plenary Meeting
Erasmus University Rotterdam

Date and Time: 21/05/2024, 14:00 – 17:00

Location: Polak 2-22

Present in the Meeting: Ivonne Cune-Noten (chair), Ernst Hulst, Sebastiaan Kamp, Pedro van Gessel, Joseph Ayinla, Albert Wagelmans, Cagla Altin, Nawin Ramcharan, Linqundo van der Klooster, Linda Dekker, Emese von Bone, Aleid Fokkema, Tom van Dijken, Achraf Taouil, Anthony van der Linden, Wesley Hennep, Katarzyna Lasak, Rosita Boedhai-Jansen, Max Wagenaar, Roxanne Austin (Clerk), Ellie Cercel (Minutes).

Absent: Natascha Kraal, Timo Zandvliet, Emre Ulusoy, Yasin Demir, Aki Negate.

01 Opening

01.01 Setting of the agenda

The UC decided through a majority vote to keep the agenda item ‘Zorgen omtrent aankomend campusprotest’ on the agenda. With this decision, the agenda was set.

01.02 Minutes first plenary meeting

The minutes of the first plenary meeting were set without any remarks. The action point regarding UNL was brought up, with the request of receiving the update in time before the consultation meeting, so that the UC has time to prepare.

1.03 Announcements

- Integral safety

Several comments were made about feelings of unsafety. The UC was asked to keep in mind that Integral Safety can be contacted in these situations.

- Update Good Conversation

Due to time considerations, the update was tabled for the 3rd Plenary meeting.

- TF participation

Due to safety concerns, a councillor decided to withdraw their participation from the UC task forces in which another councillor is active. The Chair was asked to confirm whether the safety concerns were indeed based on a threatening situation. The Chair will get back to this point at a later moment.

Action point: the UC Clerk will remove the councillor from the necessary taskforces.

02 Agenda items plenary meeting UC

02.01 Student Charter 2024-2025

The policy maker Rianne Nieuwdorp was invited to the Plenary meeting to address UC’s questions regarding the document *Student Charter 2024-2025*. Specifically, the UC members remarked that the use of the pronoun “they” in some sentences led to grammatical errors due to subject-v;erb disagreement. The policymaker stated that the issue has been rectified by retaining the pronoun “they” while changing the verbs to the plural form. Furthermore, the UC members inquired why the choice for the “they” pronoun was made. According to the policymaker, the previous Student

Charter document made use of the pronoun “he” throughout the entire text, which they deemed outdated, and by changing the pronouns to “they”, a more neutral formulation could be ensured.

The updated policy document was shared with the UC Clerk and will be available shortly.

Action point: the UC Clerk will table the topic *Student Charter* at the third plenary meeting.

02.02 Programme Plan for Strengthening EUR Educational Quality Assurance 2024-2027: ‘Quality dialogues: Connecting and Improving’

Due to technical issues, the task force did not convene for a meeting before the second Plenary meeting. Instead, a meeting will be scheduled in the upcoming week. Thus, the topic will not be tabled at the Consultation Meeting, instead a concept consent letter will be tabled at the third Plenary meeting.

Action point: the taskforce Strengthening Educational Quality will upload the concept consent letter before Friday 31st May. The UC Clerk will table the topic *Strengthening Educational Quality* at the third Plenary meeting.

02.03 Institutional tuition fees policy 2025-2026

The task force shared with the UC the policymakers' clarifications to their questions. The answers were sufficient and have been shared in Teams. The decision to increase the institutional tuition fees was in line with the inflation rates, while still ensuring that EUR occupies a mid-market position in comparison to other universities.

Interestingly, the figures for ISS were missing from the policy document, which upon further inquiry was due to the funding for ISS being non-governmental in origin (i.e., the Orange Funds), thus falling outside the scope of the current policy and instead, it will be discussed next cycle, within the scope of Erasmus Perspective. However, because of the imminent termination of the Orange Funds, the task force strongly advised the UC to look further into this specific matter, and, consequently, the UC agreed to table this topic at the next Consultation Meeting as *Any other business*.

Action points: the UC Clerk will table the question “*How does the EB envision the funding for ISS in the future?*” as any other business at the Consultation Meeting. The task force *institutional tuition fees* will draft an advice letter in preparation for the third plenary meeting.

02.04 Proposal to Develop EUR Guidelines

The task force is still working on the topic; it will be tabled at the third plenary meeting.

Action point: the Clerk will table the topic *EUR Guidelines* at the third Plenary meeting. The task force EUR Guidelines will draft an advice letter in preparation for the third Plenary meeting.

02.05 Increase parking fees EUR

It was clarified that the raising of the parking fees is not for employees, which had already been raised in the past, but for all other users. However, the task force is still awaiting answers to their technical questions. In addition, the task force would like to ask the Executive Board about the decision to tax their current employees for using the parking facilities; the UC would like to ensure the question is asked in an informative manner and will not signal the stance of the UC on the matter.

Action point: the UC Clerk will table the question “*How does the Executive Board reflect on their decisions to tax their current employees for using the parking facilities on campus?*” at the CM.

02.06 Highlight report December 2023

The UC was sufficiently informed, and the topic will not be discussed further.

02.07 Strengthening academic freedom and freedom of expression

The task force prepared several questions on the topic which were shared with the UC in Teams; these were however not sent to the policymaker and were instead discussed during the meeting, with the intention to decide how to proceed.

Several UC members noted that questions 3 and 5 are not neutral enough because they imply there is a declining trend in academic freedom, which has yet to be ascertained. Instead, it was proposed to rephrase the questions more neutrally. Specifically, the UC would like to ask the EB about the specific challenges and barriers they see in promoting and protecting academic freedom and freedom of expression at our university, and how that relates to the trend that is reported in part of the documentation for the agenda point, such as the Educational Inspectorate 2023 and the report of the European Union. In addition, questions 1 and 2 (see below) will be addressed to the policymakers as they inquire about technical matters. Finally, the title of the agenda point will be changed to *Protecting and Promoting Academic Freedom and Expression*.

Question 1. In earlier interactions with policymakers from the Meerjarenplan, responsible for the long-term plan of Erasmus University Rotterdam, the need for a stronger focus on academic freedom was recognized. The policymakers indicated that the topic had received insufficient attention in both the long-term plan and the overall strategy of EUR. They promised improvements, including exploring how the university can more effectively support and defend academic freedom. We would like to receive an update on the progress of these initiatives and how they have been incorporated into policy.

Question 2. On November 15, a meeting was held where the deans of our university came together to discuss academic freedom. During this meeting, discussions were held about concrete measures that could be developed and are expected to be implemented at the beginning of 2024. We, as the university council, kindly request an update on the progress of these measures.

Action points: the UC Clerk will ask the policymaker questions 1 and 2 for the topic *Protecting and Promoting Academic Freedom and Expression*. The UC Clerk will table the topic *Protecting and Promoting Academic Freedom and Expression* at the Consultation Meeting.

02.08 Strengthening diversity and inclusivity in our food strategy

The task force proposed tabling the proposal at the Consultation Meeting, to receive the opinion of the Executive Board as well as ask which catering agents on campus will be subjected to the vegan policy.

A discussion continued in the UC as several members were not convinced that the proposal comes at a premature time, considering that the EB has yet to decide on the matter. To that, the task force argued that the proposal would be helpful to the EB during this figuring-out process, and the additional questions would be helpful to them when writing a constructive letter of advice. As a result, the UC agreed to ask the EB the following questions:

- *How does the Executive Board look at our proposal, especially with the proposed ratio of vegan- non-vegan food options?*
- *To which food catering agents does the vegan food policy apply on campus, e.g., Pavilion, Spar, Sport building?*
- *How does the EB look at the concerns that multiple shopkeepers at the food plaza have about the plans for the vegan campus?*

Action point: the UC Clerk will table the topic of *Strengthening diversity and inclusivity in our food strategy* at the CM.

02.09 Preparation Consultation Meeting

Main agenda items:

- **Recent Campus Demonstration.** The UC would like to reflect with the EB on the process and decisions of the demonstration last Thursday. The UC would also like to ask the EB how they reflect on their change of direction regarding the Israel-Palestine conflict, between our previous proposal and their recent announcement. The discussion will be open, and there are multiple viewpoints on this matter in the UC, thus the UC Chair was asked to introduce the topic with the disclaimer that multiple viewpoints may be shared.

Action point: the UC Clerk will table the topic *Recent Campus Demonstration* as an agenda item at the Consultation Meeting.

Any other business items:

- **Taskforce Recorded Lectures.** Following a meeting with the policymakers, the task force learned that students with functional impairments are sometimes experiencing study disadvantages because not all faculties agree on providing recorded lectures, due to a lack of a targeted and uniform policy. Thus, the task force would like to ask the EB if they could consider a uniform policy for all faculties to provide more help for students with functional impairments.
- **Closing times G Building.** The G building is closed after 7 pm on weekdays and on the weekends, which means the prayer room located in the building is not accessible at those times. The UC would like to ask the EB to reflect on this situation and whether they can consider any solutions, such as increasing the opening hours.
- **Exams on Religious Holidays.** The UC would like to discuss with the EB if there are options for a more inclusive exam scheduling that would account for other religious holidays besides the Christian ones, also in the context of the Smarter Academic Year.
- **Promotions for Wellbeing.** The Student Wellbeing team informed a HeQa TF member that they are unable to promote the Living Room through banners and other physical promotional material, however, these materials are already in use for the anti-smoking campaign. The UC would like to discuss options with the EB.
- **New State of Education and National Agreement in National Politics.** The UC would like to ask the EB how they reflect on the developments in national politics and the consequences for higher education and our university.

Action points: the UC Clerk will table the above-mentioned agenda items under any other business at the consultation meeting.

03 Incoming documents

03.01 Response to 38710 Redistribution of all-gender toilets

The EB responded to the UC's proposal to redistribute the all-gender toilets. A discussion ensued, as some council members were positive about the response, while others requested some aspects to be clarified in a discussion. Specifically, some UC members believe the response to show a positive trend, because it invites the UC to partake in discussions with several stakeholders, as well as describing the intention to rethink some issues highlighted by the letter, such as the distribution on the 3rd floor of Mandeville. On the other hand, some UC members considered the response disappointing, because it did not seem to acknowledge the issue the proposal brought across and it seems unsure what the follow-up process would look like. As a result, the argument was made to ask the EB a few questions in the consultation meeting:

- Does the EB acknowledge there is a large group that does not want to use the gender-free toilets and can we ensure they are taken into account in the process?
- How will the evaluation process look like and who are the contributors?
- Who are the other stakeholders that are mentioned in the letter?

While some UC members were against tabling a discussion on this topic at the CM, a disagreement ensued, and the discussion did not conclude with an agreement between the different viewpoints. As a result, a voting procedure took place. In the end, 9 votes were cast in favor of tabling the topic at the CM, 5 votes were against it, and 2 abstained. Thus, the topic will be tabled at the CM.

Action point: the UC Clerk will table the topic *Response to 38710 Redistribution of all-gender toilets* at the CM.

03.02 Letter University Council Utrecht: Brief 'Antwoord banden UU met fossiele industrie'

The UC made no remarks on the letter.

03.03 Brief 'Zorgen omtrent aankomend campusprotest'

A letter addressing the EB was signed by some council members with their professional titles attached. This development led to a discussion within the council, as most of the UC members were not involved in the process of this letter, due to time constraints. There were concerns regarding not following the protocol of sending letters, as well as disruptions in the way of working together as a council. As the discussion escalated, it was decided that both topics would be tabled separately at the third plenary meeting.

In addition, a *Motion of distrust* was shared by one council member and signed by 3 more council members. During the meeting, 2 more members seconded the motion. As a result, the UC cast a vote on whether to engage with the motion. 6 councilors voted in favor of the motion, 7 voted against it, and 1 abstained. As a result, the motion was dismissed.

Action point: the UC Clerk will table two discussions on the topics of *Letter protocol* and *Way of working* at the third plenary meeting.