

Plenary Meeting - University Council
Erasmus University
February 2nd, 2021

Present in the Meeting: Ana Uribe Sandoval, Ben Bode, Ferry Blom, John Piarelal, John van Wel, Natascha Kraal, Sebastiaan Kamp, Albert Wagelmans, Yogi Hendlin, Afrodita Dobрева, Armand Gozé, Bram Heesen, Jasper Klasen, Joep Schoenmakers, Luca Kriese, Philip van Moll, Wouter van Dam, Younes Assou, Hans van den Berg, Helen Gubby, Dian van Toor, Bianca Jadoenath, Marjan Gorgievski.

Absent in the Meeting: Olaf Hornes, Diederik Mosch.

Teams Meeting: 14:00

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01 Opening

01.01 Setting of the agenda

Two points were added to Any Other Business. These points are: the reservation time for the EUR library, and the sustainability awards.

01.02 Setting of the minutes of the previous meeting

No further remarks were made to the minutes.

01.03 Announcements

Chair announcements:

- *Appointment New Rector Magnificus*

Two members of the Confidentiality Committee have been put forward to be in the selection committee for the Rector Magnificus. The decision who is going to take up the seats was made within the Confidentiality Committee. At this point the profile is being discussed with the Confidentiality Committee. Further updates on the process will follow through the Chair.

- *Invitation UC Agenda*

Members are encouraged to invite the UC agenda/mail address to their meetings so the secretariat has an overview of open timeslots to plan meetings.

- *Behind the Scenes of the Secretariat*

A more in-depth explanation of the “behind the scenes” of the secretariat will be given on the 16th of February.

- *AOB vs. Agenda items*

Sometimes certain topics come during the cycle. The Secretariat is trying to make the difference between Any Other Business (AOB) and regular agenda items clearer. AOB is a question directed to the Chair of the UC or to the EB. However, if a member would like the point to be discussed with the UC, it could be brought up as an agenda point. If it is very urgent, it could be included in the agenda in the middle of a cycle, such as the second camera in proctored exams. Furthermore, the Secretariat is working on making rules clearer, and producing a document for it. The Secretariat will also be reviewing with the UC the rules and regulations of the UC.

Action Points: the Secretariat will work in making a short overview on the rules related to the current working procedure of the UC.

Presidium Announcements

- *Evaluation Meeting UC*

On the 16th of February a follow-up meeting is planned on how to implement the suggested changes to the work method and to discuss how to move forward with these changes.

- *Presidium Minutes*

Minutes of the presidium meeting will be published in a folder on the general Teams environment for members to access it.

- *Poll on Presidium - EB meetings*

A poll will be held about the way in which meetings take place between the EB and the UC regarding COVID-19 topics. There are two options: (i) Presidium and EB meetings take place according to the rules and regulations of the UC, meaning the Presidium is the discussion partner of the EB. This also applies to dissemination of information, discussions, and decision making (if this cannot be done via the regular procedure of the UC) in relation to COVID-19 topics. (ii) In the particular case of COVID-19 the Presidium and EB will not meet according to the rules and regulations of the UC. Any dissemination of information, discussions, and decision making (if this cannot be done via the regular procedure of the UC) in relation to COVID-19 topics meetings will be planned with the whole UC.

The voting took place, and 15 members voted in favour of option (i) whilst 6 members voted in favour of option (ii). Hence, the Presidium will continue as the discussion partner of the EB, even for COVID-19 related topics. However, the Chair of the UC will ask the Chair of the EB if it is possible to have visitors in these meetings.

Action Point: the Chair of the UC will ask the Chair of the EB if it is possible to have visitors in these meetings.

02 Agenda items plenary meeting UC

02.01 ICT rules and regulations

The taskforce working on this point has a letter prepared for the possible consent of the Rules and Regulations. Nevertheless, EUROPA is still in conversations with the policy makers in charge of the document. Therefore, the taskforce is waiting to see if any substantial developments come from the input of EUROPA in the document to advise for consent. Generally, the taskforce explains that they are favourable in consenting the document.

02.02 Recruitment and selection toolkit

The taskforce is satisfied with the information provided. No further discussion will arise from this point.

02.03 Opening Academic Years 2021-2022 up and including 2031-2032

For tackling this point, a draft letter has been created. The taskforce has spoken to the policy maker in charge about it. The letter mainly suggests a reinstallation of the “White Week” of the university in five years. Most of the UC members see a lot of potential in the re-establishment of the White Week. Student organizations, student associations, and other organizations such as the Wellbeing Team could arrange events for all students during this week. However, members acknowledge the difficulties in this task as the schedules of all schools differ and would make it almost impossible to create a White Week that fits all. It was pointed out that if the university is unable to provide a week free of exams and mandatory education for all schools, there may be an issue as the wellbeing of students should be a priority.

The request for a White Week touches upon a bigger issue: the lack of harmonization in the schedules of all schools at EUR. There are several benefits for harmonizing all schedules, namely the potential for more interdisciplinary education and the easier arrangement of minors.

Considering the input of all members and the theme of harmonization in the university, Wouter will change the letter of initiative. The UC will ask for a white week where no exams take place in the university. Additionally, the letter will encourage faculties to have their own white week where their student associations make events for their students. This point will also be touched upon in next week’s plenary. The point of harmonization will be also discussed in the future.

Action Point: Wouter will re-draft the letter regarding the Opening of the Academic Years and the White Week at EUR.

02.04 Proposal Community for Learning and Innovation

Questions about the budget were sent to CLI. There have been no answers as of now. Luca will share the answers as soon as they are available with the rest of the Council. A question about the consent of the UC in regard to the Study Advance Funds will be asked to the EB during the consultation meeting. Mainly, the UC wants to know if they have consent on the Study Advance Funds’ use from CLI, and if so, if they have to give this consent retrospectively for its use on proctored exams.

02.05 Decision on BSA by EB

There is a Draft Letter on Teams requesting further information on several aspects of the EUR BSA policy for the long term (excluding the COVID-19 situation). The UC would like to receive reports on several aspects of our BSA policy.

Action Points: Jasper will finalize this letter and finalize it send it to the Chair and the Clerk.

02.06 Student Associations’ Allocation Model and Person of Contact

The taskforce would like to request the availability of a person of contact for student organizations. The person of contact would work for 0.5 FTEs to support student organizations and have better coordination of the flow of information. At the moment, three staff members

from E&S are in contact with study organizations. However, the current system is fragmented for the organizations and difficult to handle for the employees of E&S. Some students are even contacting the Diversity and Inclusion office to inquire regarding student associations.

The taskforce will therefore ask the EB if it is possible to create this position for a person of contact. If they agree, they will inquire about a possible timeframe for it. Wouter will finalize the letter with any necessary adjustments coming from the EB's input on the matter.

Action Point: Wouter will finalize the letter with any necessary adjustments coming from the EB's input on the matter.

02.07 HoKa Student Wellbeing

The final letter for not giving consent to the HoKa Action Plan of Student Wellbeing has been shared with all members of the council. Some small editions have been taken into account for the final letter.

There was a discussion on the sharing of information in regard to online polls. The HoKa Wellbeing letter contains input from an anonymized poll made online where all members responded. After asking all members if they would be comfortable with sharing this poll's answers internally in the UC, the poll will be shared. From now on, polls will be internally shared as long as they do not contain sensitive information. The idea behind this initiative is to be more aware of the opinions of fellow council members on different topics.

02.08 Corona / COVID-19 affairs

Introduction of a Second Camera in Proctored Exams

Students have been working very hard to represent the voices of the community in times of COVID-19. This has been particularly visible with the EB's decision to implement a second camera during proctored exams for all EUR students. The students from the UC have worked on a letter to request the EB to reconsider their decision. The letter has been signed by members of the FCs of different schools at EUR. There is only one change that will be made to the letter, regarding EUR being the only university in the Netherlands using a second camera in proctored exams (as it is not the only one). However, the letter will not go through any substantive changes as it already has support from FC members and will be sent on behalf of the student members of the UC, irrespective of whether the UC as a whole supports the letter, to the EB.

There was an ample debate about the introduction of the second camera at EUR during the plenary meeting. This is a summary of the observations and arguments given during the meeting about this decision:

Unclarity about the decision

The UC understands the need for legitimate examinations and the prevention of fraud. However, it is unclear why there is a binary perspective on fraud. It seems that either there is a second camera and exams are legitimate, or there is only one camera and that means fraud. Furthermore, it is not clear whether this decision is proportional. For instance, it is unknown whether feasible alternatives for examination were available and not taken into consideration.

From a practical perspective, it is not clear to some members how the EB will ensure the application of this decision to all students. For instance, one member explained that they do not have a smartphone nor a second camera available.

Ethical & Privacy Considerations

It is clear that students are very stressed about this decision. It is imperative for the university to take a closer look at the wellbeing of students. One member of the council explained that in two years' time, when the pandemic is over, the community will look back at this decision and regret it. It does not have a good impact on the wellbeing of students. The second camera seems a dystopian solution to the problem.

Some members explained that there are also privacy considerations. They explained that with the second camera, you need to show your room which is personal space. However, another member explained that even with one camera, the room needs to be shown. Furthermore, the camera should clearly point to the computer screen. Nevertheless, it was acknowledged that the second camera does invade the personal space of the examinee.

Lastly, it seems that EUR is one of the very few universities applying the second camera in proctored exams. There are some questions on whether this decision was nudged by the software company providing the proctored exam. Other universities, namely Leiden University, opted out of this software because of the second-camera implementation.

Utilitarian considerations

Proctoring is a very expensive system. A member of the council explained that it would make sense to use the large sums of money allocated for proctoring exams to compensate the staff for work pressure. Furthermore, it is not clear what the cost-benefit assessment is that the EB made to take this decision.

The Future of Education at Erasmus University

The decision to implement a second camera in proctored exams opens an even broader discussion in the EUR community. *What is the direction that the university is following? What does it mean to be an Erasmian?* Besides standing against the second-camera measure, some members of the council want to see the university treating its students in an honourable way. Empirical evidence shows that a retribution of this behaviour is possible. Furthermore, proctored exams, and more specifically multiple-choice examinations, seem to be an assessment method from the industrial age. The UC believes that some of these exams test memorization, which could be easily resolved by Google. The university needs to transcend to a more progressive form of examination and behaviour for its students. This is not a change that happens overnight, but the UC needs to work to see this change in the future.

Possible requests to the EB

Multiple members of the council explained that proctored exams, with or without a second camera, should be used as a last resource for assessments in the university. Some members observed that in some faculties, most exams are proctored, although there are assignments

to also assess other components of a course. Many staff members agree that proctored examinations are not a good method for assessing course materials.

Besides asking for proctored exams to be a last resort, some students would like to request postponing this decision, as it is so controversial within the student community. Furthermore, council members would like to ask how the EB will ensure that all students can be examined, as there are major practical issues with the application of a second camera in the proctored exam. Additionally, the UC would like to ask the EB if they would be prepared to re-evaluate and re-consider this decision. Lastly, the UC would like to ask for a follow-up meeting with the EB within the next 10 days to discuss this decision.

03 Any other business

03.01 Tuition fees internationals

There is a direct question to the EB: *Can EUR refund students outside of the EEA for their tuition fees this academic year so that they pay the same as EEA students?*

03.02 Travel Expenses 2019 Executive Board

There is a proposal letter on this point to be sent by Ana.

03.03 Reservation Time for Library Spots

Multiple times, the students have requested to change the timing for reserving spots at the Library. The UC would like to know when they can expect this change.

03.04 Sustainability Awards

The Sustainability Taskforce wants to introduce Sustainability Awards at EUR. They want to present this to the EB to see if it is possible to coordinate such awards.

3.05 Soft Cut Bachelor and Masters

Jasper is drafting a letter inquiring about the possible soft-cuts between Bachelor's and Masters' degrees in this academic year. This topic will be further discussed during the next cycle.

04 Closing