

Consultation Meeting
Executive Board and University Council
Erasmus University
November, 3rd 2020

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 Hessen, Diederik Mosch, Jasper Klasen, Joep Schoenmakers, Luca Kriese, Philip van Moll, Wouter van Dam, Younes Assou, Hans van den Berg, Anne Zijleman, Helen Gubby, Dian van Toor, Bianca Jadoenath, Machteld Harmsen, Ed Brinksma, Rutger Engels, Ann O'Brien, Lobke van Steenberg.

Absent in the Meeting: Olaf Hornes, Marjan Gorgievski.

Guests: Elmer Smaling

Teams Meeting

Time: 16:30

	Page
1 Opening of the Meeting	1
1.1 Establishment of the Agenda	1
1.2 Acceptance of the Minutes	1
2 Announcements	1
2.1 Announcements EB	1
2.2 Announcements UC	1
3 Topic List	1
3.1 Administration and Management regulations	1
3.2 Appointment Deans Procedure	1
3.3 Blended Working	1
3.4 Ombudsperson's Report	2
3.5 HoKa Progress Report	3
3.6 HoKa - Action Plan for the Implementation of Student Wellbeing	3
3.7 Electoral System	3
4 Other Business	4
4.1 RSM HoKa Committee Request	4
4.2 Personalization of the Minutes	4
4.3 Student Wellbeing Week	4
4.4 Extra Physical Facilities from the Municipality of Rotterdam	4
4.5 Tuition Fees	5
4.6 Facilities for physical education	5
4.7 Covid-19 correspondence	5
4.4 Statement on Academic Freedom	5

1 Opening of the Meeting

1.1 Establishment of the Agenda

The agenda was established

1.2 Acceptance of the Minutes

No changes were made to the minutes of the last consultation meeting.

2 Announcements

2.1 Announcements EB

No announcements were made

2.2 Announcements UC

Bram is replacing Olaf in the presidium. Hans will inform the EB about this point.

3 Topic List

3.1 Administration and Management regulations

At this point, the council is unable to make a decision on the Administration and Management Regulations. Some questions about this point haven't been fully responded by the policy makers. The UC has stressed the importance for these questions to be responded to as soon as possible. There are concerns about the processing of personalized data in these regulations, as well as the procedures for the immediate dismissal of employees and contract termination.

The EB expressed that some answers were already provided to the UC on the 30th of October. However, UC members explain that the answers are lacking critical points.

Action Point: Joep and Sebastiaan will include Anne Zijleman, Machteld Harmsen, and Lobke van Steenbergen in their correspondence with the policy makers so that they help in receiving a focused answer on the matter.

3.2 Appointment Deans Procedure

A letter with advice is being drafted soon about the procedure. There will be a discussion at the UC next Tuesday about it, and afterwards, it will be sent to the EB. This letter will contain remarks and alternatives for improving the document. At this point, the council believes that there are substantive gaps in the document which need to be resolved.

The input given by the UC consists of a collection of feedback from FCs and Deans of different faculties. Some of the critical points include the definition of a "faculty community", the inclusion of lower level academics and students in the appointment process, and the role of the FCs in re-appointing deans.

The EB explained that this new procedure is already a big improvement from the older version. They expressed that the procedure needs some degree of flexibility so that its implementation is feasible. Nevertheless, the UC considers it to be too flexible at the moment, and some points that are important for the faculties need to be included.

The EB will communicate with the policy maker and their support staff to move forward with the topic. They value the input from the participatory bodies on this procedure, and are looking forward to agreeing on a final version.

3.3 Blended Working

The UC process of co-creation with the policy makers on this point was very positive. The documents were received, questions were asked, and a lot of the suggestions were implemented in the new policy.

The council is very grateful for the dynamics of the communication with the policy makers, and are looking to advice positively on the new document. They want to recognize the great work of the people involved. There are still some very minor points to be resolved, which are mainly related to phrasing issues.

3.4 Ombudsperson's Report

Questions and Answers to the EB

- The ombudsperson explained that students are contacting her effectively, while the employees contact her regarding cases that are outside of her scope. Redirecting these later cases requires time and effort. Thus, would extra support staff be helpful to redirect people that approach the ombudsperson with the wrong complaints, or to improve the information on the website to direct people to her?

This is something that the ombudsperson herself can reply to. However, she is mainly dealing with heavy cases that do require her attention. If she needs further support, this would be communicated to the EB.

- The hours budgeted for the ombudsperson are limited. Can they be increased?

The hours for the ombudsperson have been already upgraded and she got a secretary for support. As she has mentioned before, her role in the university has been dynamic and they are trying to accomodate on a rolling basis.

- In your opinion, does the ombudsperson have enough resources to conduct her investigations? There is no standard on how to conduct this type of investigation. There is no way of answering this properly. If there's an urgency to change the status-quo, the EB will take a closer look at it.

- Is the ombudsperson still a pilot? Furthermore, is it required by law to have an ombudsperson at the university?

The ombudsperson is still a pilot. The EB is not sure if it is required by Dutch law to have an ombudsperson at the university, but it is at least highly encouraged.

- How do you view your own position regarding social safety in the report? What can you do to improve social safety at the university?

The ombuds report is an instrument to improve social safety at the university. However, there are other instruments. The EB is aware that social safety is an essential point for the wellbeing of the university, and that there is room for improvement. The EB can help on de-stigmatizing the taboos on social safety, and can use the ombuds report to find more efficient tools on how to improve social safety at EUR. They are in constant communication with the ombudsperson for this and other points.

- In the report, it says that there are heavy cases in the ESL and RSM faculties. Are you concerned about this? Are you waiting for further details?

These statistics have been noticed. It makes sense that these faculties are flagged as they are amongst the largest faculties in the university. These cases need untangling, and the EB will be following-up to see how they can help on this matter. However, some of these points are confidential.

- The report explains that there will be a final evaluation in the last quarter of 2020. Will this evaluation be shared with the UC?

It may be optimistic to believe that the evaluation will be ready by the end of 2020. However, it will be shared with the UC as soon as it has been completed.

- The ombudsperson may need extra facilities. If a decision is made on extending these facilities, could the UC be notified?

This is personnel information, which is confidential. Extra facilities could be granted, but the specifics cannot be shared with the UC. The UC can directly follow-up with the ombudsperson to inquire about it.

- How does the EB see their working relationship with the ombudsperson?

The ombudsperson needs complete independence in her work. The EB is the guarantor of that. She needs to refer to the EB for any major issues, and the EB needs to make sure that the ombudsperson has what she needs. Her input is very valuable for the board, and can be seen as an instrument to deal with complicated issues at the university.

- Sometimes, it was hard for the ombudsperson to request documentation from lower bureaucratic levels. How has this changed?

As the university system gets more used to the presence of the ombudsperson, this process becomes easier. Therefore, the EB expects that with time, there's more openness on this point.

Final Remarks

The UC deeply appreciated the incorporation of an ombudsperson to the university. This was an initiative from the UC years ago, and UC is grateful to the EB for it. At the moment, the UC is planning an extra meeting with the ombudsperson to get a deeper insight on some questions.

3.5 HoKa Progress Report

One question was asked during the UC plenary meeting about the report. This was answered, and the report is therefore clear.

3.6 HoKa - Action Plan for the Implementation of Student Wellbeing

There are some questions from the HoKa workgroup about the procedures that took place to create this plan, and the content of it. For this reason, the Rector will have a separate meeting with two members of the HoKa workgroup, the Chair of the UC, the HoKa coordinator, and the Legal Department to resolve these concerns. Content-related discussions will also take place at this meeting.

3.7 Electoral System

Currently, the legal department is drafting a proposal for a feasible electoral system. The proposal would be ready by the end of this week. The UC will review this proposal next week, and have a vote on it as soon as possible. If the proposal is accepted, then the statutes for it will be drafted.

4 Other Business.

4.1 RSM HoKa Committee Request

The Faculty Council of RSM approached a UC member with an urgent request from the HoKa Committee. The budget for 2021 needs a top-up due to the increase of students. However, there have been some issues in the timing and transparency of the reply from Corporate Planning. The RSM committee needs a response as soon as possible.

Action Point: The EB will dive into it immediately to see what can be done about this point.

4.2 Personalization of the Minutes

During the plenary discussion of the UC, there was a discussion and subsequent voting on a proposal to personalize the minutes. The proposal included an opt-out system for the anonymization of the minutes. A member asked if the EB has experience with personalized minutes, and if they were positive experiences. The EB explained that it is more a matter of the quality of the minute-taker, instead of the personalization of the minutes per se. However, the EB expressed that they respect any decision that the UC took regarding this proposal, and that they would not like to steer this conversation to any direction.

As a response, a member read the following quote from the minutes of the UC from October 20th: *“Some other members fear that the openness of the discussion could be hampered for members due to the incorporation of their names to the ideas they bring to the table. It was mentioned that this should not be a problem, as the law states that no backfiring could arise as a result of opinions in the UC. However, a member mentioned that it may be naive to believe that there is no backfire from comments and input when the minutes are personalized.”* This member emphasized that they are worried about the fears that their fellow members could have a possible backlash due to the opinions they share in council meetings.

The EB explained that they did not understand the framing of this discussion, as the council had taken a vote on it already. Furthermore, they express that discussions should not be politicized, and that they should be respectful. Lastly, another UC member expressed that the intentions of what they said in previous meetings was different from the framing that their fellow member was giving in this discussion; in summary, they are not scared from backlash due to personalized minutes. They voted against the proposal for other reasons.

4.3 Student Wellbeing Week

A UC student member explained that the Student Wellbeing is a great initiative. However, only very few students are attending. They expressed that this is concerning, and that there may be some issues in quality or communication. Therefore just some students are attending. Additionally, this member expressed that they would like to attend these events, but that their study load is so high that this has become impossible. Hence, it would be ideal to make the schedules of students free for the moment in which these initiatives are taking place.

The EB explained that the lack of attendance is not an issue of quality. Instead, they took some decisions on the communication of the events so that only students could access. They will look if in the future they can communicate with them differently. However, they feel very positive about the Student Wellbeing Week. The lectures were recorded, and students can get later access to them.

An interesting idea would be to postpone deadlines so that students can participate. Luca will provide some input on the organization of the Student Wellbeing week to the team in charge, and cc the Rector with this input.

Lastly, the UC could use its buddy-system to try to harmonize the academic calendar within faculties for this and other types of projects. This has been a challenge for the university for years. The harmonization of calendars would facilitate the scheduling of these initiatives for the availability of students.

As an extra point, staff members of the UC would also like to explore the possibilities for a “employee wellbeing week”.

Action Point: Luca will provide some input on the organization of the Student Wellbeing week to the team in charge, and cc the Rector with this input.

4.5 Extra Physical Facilities from the Municipality of Rotterdam

A UC member inquired about the status of the alliances with the Municipality of Rotterdam to provide extra study spaces for exams and other activities to students. Although there are some possibilities for these facilities to serve the university, they are still in discussions with the Municipality about it. The EB expressed that in the next couple of weeks, they will have some news to see if extra facilities will be available during the second semester of 2020-2021.

The same UC member asked if the UC could be more updated on this matter, as it is very important for students. The EB expressed that they will do their best in updating them. However, it is important to notice that discussing with the Municipality involves several hierarchical levels. Hence, it is difficult to get a unified stream of communication from their side in some instances. For this reason, information could have some delays.

Action Point: The EB will update the UC on the extra physical facilities whenever they have clear information on it.

4.6 Tuition Fees

Two students from the UC conducted a survey among RSM students for understanding how they feel towards Covid-19 and the university. The results of this survey are available, but a report is being drafted for it. Younes will send the report to the EB within two weeks.

In relation to this survey, a student member wanted to know how the EB sees the tuition fees of University during Covid-19. The EB explained that they understand that online education is different from physical education. However, the costs for the university have gone up since the Covid-19 pandemic stroke. Additionally, tuition fees for European students are defined by the Ministry of Education. Therefore, although the fees and the situation may be confronting, this is a discussion that needs to be addressed with the Ministry. The long-term effects of the crisis need to be addressed in order to make any changes, and this is something that the Ministry can do.

Action point: Younes will send the report from UC members to the EB within two weeks.

4.7 Facilities for physical education

As explained by the university, the priority for physical education on campus applies to 1st-year Master students. A UC member that falls within this category explained that in their case, professors are abandoning or ignoring blended teaching due to practical and technical issues. For instance, there is very poor quality of sound in the teaching rooms of Mandeville, and the sound is delayed. The EB was not aware of this. Therefore, Joep will send an email with more details about this issue to the EB, with the UC Presidium in the *cc*.

Action point: Joep will send an email with more details about this issue to the EB, with the UC Presidium in the *cc*.

4.8 Covid-19 Correspondence

The UC members working on Covid-19 sent a draft letter to the EB with proposal-topics on the management of Covid-19. The letter included four main points: a reduction of the BSA to 45 credits for all students during Covid-19 times, an extra round of resits in the summer, a discussion on study and exam spots, and the use of proctoring exams as a last resource tool for examinations.

The EB explained that they had the chance to read upon the letter, but that the topics are not very simple to discuss. A lot of time is needed to debate on the BSA topic, which is already being introduced in the Dutch Parliament. Any decision taken by the university in this, or other topics, needs to have data to back it up. On the topic of study spaces, the EB will share the memo on the priority of the target population of physical education for students, which may answer a lot of the questions that

are asked in the letter. The EB understands the difficulties that students are having under Covid-19, but they are also working on it.

To finalize this exchange, it was decided that the UC will send an updated letter next week, and that this letter will serve as a foundation for future discussions on the matter of Covid-19.

Action Points: the EB will share the memo on the priority of the target population of physical education for students. Additionally, the UC will send an updated letter in two weeks to the EB on Covid-19 related points.

4.9 Statement on Academic Freedom

A UC member asked the EB if they had considered making a statement on academic freedom, considering the recent attacks in France. The EB explained that they had experience with this type of statements in the past, and they were somewhat problematic. The EB stands with academic freedom, but does not have any plans of making such a statement at the moment. It was agreed that if the EB wants to make a statement, they can ask for input from the UC. Otherwise, the UC will work on this statement internally.