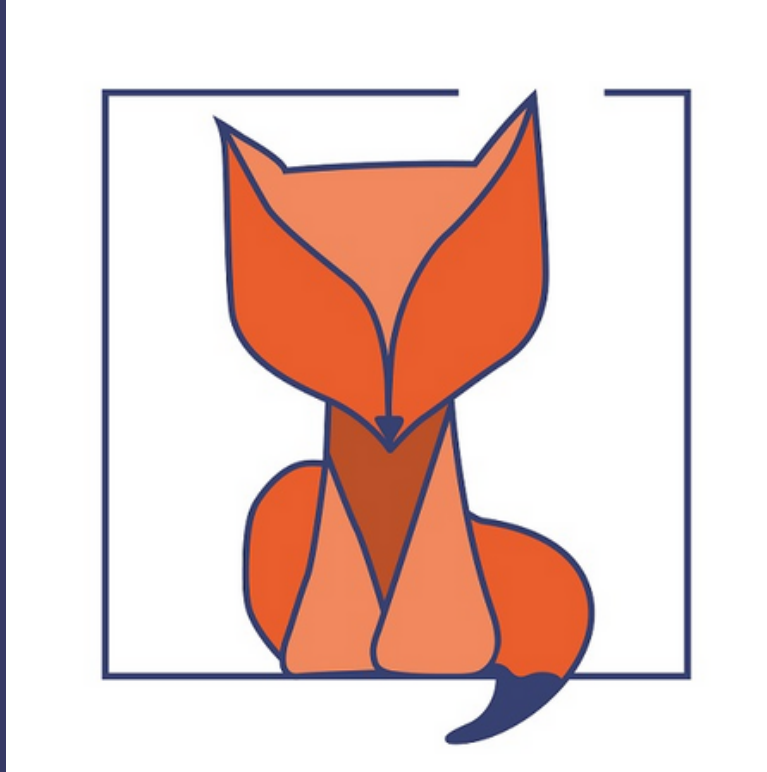


2023-2024

POLICY PLAN



PREPARED BY

STUDENT COUNCIL

VUB

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INTRO

As members of the Student Council, representatives of VUB's diverse and engaged student community, we endeavour to develop a plan that seeks to defend the interests of all students. It is with this goal in mind that our policy plan for the 2023-2024 academic year came into being. We divide our vision in committees for innovation, education, student facilities and internationalisation. However, this does not mean that we are not working on this as a team, quite the contrary!

In the following pages, we will set specific goals we will work on this year, but this policy plan is only a static representation of reality. In fact, our work is not limited to the walls of meeting rooms. It is complemented by your involvement and participation. We invite you all to participate in conversations, to share your perspectives and be critical, including for us. Both internal partners such as the various departments and students, but also external partners such as the VVS and UAB therefore play an important role in this.



Our commitment goes beyond the academic curriculum; we want to create an environment where every student feels supported and heard. We therefore wish to engage in various initiatives that promote well-being but also improve the overall student experience.

Central to this is cultivating the bond between VUB departments and students as well as between students themselves. We want to work towards clearer communication from and to the university ranks, clear student representation with respect for everyone's background and developing a true community. A community in which not only academic growth is promoted, but each person is also given space to develop.

As a student council we can only bring about real changes and shape the future by working together with all of you. So that each and every student and our VUB itself can flourish.

Diewert Seynaeve and Mariem Negrouz
Resp. Chairman and Vice-Chairman
Student Council VUB 2023 - 2024

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STUDENT FACILITIES

The student population at the Vrije Universiteit Brussel (VUB) is growing rapidly, which brings several challenges, including in terms of student facilities. Our priority is the well-being of students and creating an inclusive campus where everyone feels at home.

Rest and Prayer Rooms

The VUB has a huge diversity of students from different backgrounds and religions. Crucial to an inclusive campus is that these students are also part of the VUB community. In this, therefore, there is an urgent need from the students for a prayer room. Many students do not find a suitable place to pray. As student council, we therefore want to support the students. To this end, we are looking at what options we have to provide these students, regardless of religion, with a place where they can experience this.

Besides a prayer room, a rest room is also essential on campus. Many students experience overstimulation and need a place other than the library or restaurant to unwind. A space without excessive noise or crowds, but with a cosy atmosphere, equipped with soft poufs and self-help books. Creating such an atmosphere gives students an opportunity to relax for a while and promote their mental well-being.

Study Spaces

The library on the Etterbeek campus is often overcrowded, both in the morning from 9 am and in the evening at 7 pm. In addition, some students find it very difficult to study at home or in digs. As the Council therefore want to see which locations we can use throughout the academic year as extra study places. This way, students can work optimally on their studies.

Alternatives Evening Resto

The reopening of the evening restaurant at the VUB seemed a logical step, given the need from a wide audience, as observed by the student council. However, after the corona period, this did not seem financially feasible. However, the need from dorm and evening students, with classes taking place after 5pm/18pm, remains.

As the Student Council, we are looking at alternatives to compensate for this lack. For example, we are looking into whether the cafeteria can stay open longer or the sandwich bar can be accessible for longer for students who want something quick to eat. However, the most important thing remains that these options are also affordable.

Lockers

With the growing number of students and the sought-after expansion of study spaces, new lockers are being considered on our campus. Lockers currently exist for periods of 8 hours, but we are exploring options for offering lockers for periods of a semester and/or academic year. Providing lockers for safe storage of study materials can be an attractive solution for students and to provide opportunities for the students who do not necessarily have the best study environment at home.

INNOVATION

The Innovation Committee's projects this year will focus on starting important works that will have a long-term impact on how VUB students will remember their time at the VUB. We will also take a critical look at our own operations and communication to students in the spirit of Free Research.

Transgender Policy

Inclusiveness in all its facets is important to the student council. For this reason, we want to work towards a transgender policy for the VUB. This policy will aim to proactively remove barriers and discrimination against students who do not identify as heterosexual or cisgender.

A preliminary policy study was conducted in 2021-2022. The main recommendation was that there is a need for a cocreative framework for gender and identity affairs. The student council therefore wants to work on this framework together with interested students, the VUB and various actors. In this way, we work towards a VUB where every student, regardless of their identity, feels at home and welcome. *actoren werken aan dit kader. Zo werken we aan een VUB waar elke student ongeacht zijn identiteit, zich thuis en welkom voelt.*

Re-evaluation of subsidies for student life

It is important for us to question and evaluate current policies sufficiently. In light of a tight budgetary context both for the student facilities budget and for most student associations, it is important for the Student Council to look at the subsidies the council gives to student associations. We wish to support student associations and thus keep student life strong. Here, we will have to weigh the needs of the association, the services they provide to the student community and its justifiability to the student. In this way, we optimise student life and help them achieve their ambitions.

Communication Student Council

As a Student Council, we need to take a critical look at ourselves and our own functioning. We are aware that our functioning and our decisions are not known to the student community as we would like them to be. In the coming year, we will work on initiatives around the visibility of the Council and our decisions. In this way, we want to work on connecting with students and student associations. Here, it is important for us to identify the ways in which we can best reach students. In this way, we can develop and implement a supported policy.

We also wish to review the communication to the various student representatives in all kinds of councils and committees. A student representatives network that better identifies but also supports these representatives is essential to strengthen these indispensable students.

Sense of security in student life

Feeling safe on campus and by extension in student life is an important theme for the student council. There are already many initiatives around this theme in which the student council participates. For example, Facility Services organises a "Day of Feeling of Safety" every semester where they engage in dialogue with representatives from the entire VUB Community. The student council supports these kinds of initiatives and actions that strengthen safety and the feeling of safety. Recently, we also worked out an alcohol and drug policy and a baptism framework. We continue to monitor this closely but also remain committed to new initiatives such as alarm posts, among others.

EDUCATION

The aim of this policy plan is to provide a structured framework for all actors with whom we work. Within the theme of education, this year we mainly wish to work on study path guidance and reflex measures, the development of personal class schedules and earlier exam schedules. We also aim to provide a healthy framework for the use of AI tools by students and teachers.

Collaboration with student support staff as well as lecturers, assistants, students and other ranks remains essential within our policy. By working closely together and regularly including different perspectives, we strive for an inclusive and supported policy.

Earlier Exam Timetables

Currently, exam timetables are released 4 weeks in advance. Before the pandemic, however, this was a considerably earlier. We therefore wish to make the necessary efforts to make the exam schedules available earlier. Moreover, being able to plan the block and study period early also has a stress-reducing effect. This can only benefit our students' study efficiency and academic success. Moreover, this reduction in stress is also good for the mental well-being of our fellow students.

AI Tools

Many students and teachers use AI tools for various tasks and other education-related matters. Therefore, we are currently involved in various working groups to develop a specific policy framework regarding the use of AI tools. Indeed, these tools know invaluable value, but their use is not always thoroughly thought out. It is therefore important that we integrate these tools into our education, learn to use them properly without compromising on developing the necessary skills in the process.

Personalised Timetables

The recent change to the class timetable app brought a number of changes. Many students have yet to get to grips with these, but the main feedback is the need for a personalised timetable. Individual students do not always follow the model track or deviate from it to a greater or lesser extent. It is therefore all the more important for them to have a good overview of their timetable.

INTERNATIONALISATION

The VUB is a university with a hugely diverse population. However, we often forget that the students who are here are not just Belgian students. International students come from far and wide to study at our university. By not always involving them properly, we therefore fail to turn them not into passers-by but VUB'ers. We wish to fully respond to their needs to make their experience unforgettable as well. To this end, we will also work closely with ISP. They are an indispensable partner in every project we wish to develop.

Dorm Policy

Een belangrijke problematiek voor internationale studenten is het kotenbeleid. Vanuit het buitenland een kot regelen komt met enorm veel moeilijkheden en uitdagingen. Op de VUB maar in heel Brussel is het lastig om een kot te vinden. Op de privémarkt zoeken komt dan ook met de nodige problemen. Internationale studenten zijn hierin echter nog extra kwetsbaar, o.a. voor oplichters. Het is dan ook belangrijk om met de verschillende partners en instellingen alsook de overheden te bekijken hoe we deze studenten het beste kunnen ondersteunen.

Representation of International Students

As a council, we should represent all students. However, we note that we do not always manage to have the necessary international voices in the meeting rooms. This year, therefore, we will commit and work out how to better involve this growing student population in student representation. Motivating them to participate in the various councils and bodies ensures that they are an integral part of the VUB, but also gives them a greater voice.

Communication to International Students

It is imperative that communication about what we do as a council also reaches the international student community. The inadequate transfer of information between the various student representatives is part of a broader issue, but affects these students doubly. We therefore remain committed to clear and transparent communication that is also spread in English. This way, we involve all students in our operations.

OUR TEAM



OUR

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DIEWERT SEYNAEVE

VICE-PRESIDENT

MARIEM NEGROUZ

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KHADIJA TAHIR

COMMITTEE FOR STUDENT FACILITIES

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More information is always available on our website
student.vub.be/studentcouncil



Emails can be sent to studentenraad@vub.be.



You can always follow the latest developments on our facebook page
'Student Council VUB'.



You can find pictures of our activities on the instagram page:
[instagram.com/studentenraadvub](https://www.instagram.com/studentenraadvub).