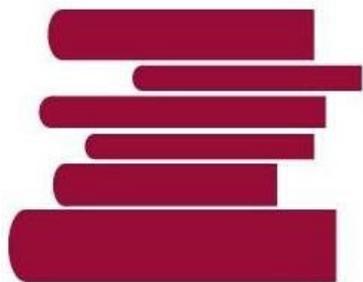


FEBRUARY 2020

**2019/20
MIDTERM
REVIEW**



STUDENT
REPRESENTATIVES
FACULTY OF ARTS AND SOCIAL SCIENCES

Report by:
Student Representatives '19/20

STUDENT REPRESENTATIVES: STRUCTURAL OVERVIEW

Education:

Focused on the evaluation and improvement of the quality of education for the Bachelor Programs within the Faculty of Arts and Social Sciences.

Diversity, Integration, Accessibility, Sustainability (DIAS):

Tackling a wide range of matters in the faculty oriented around increasing the capability of the faculty.

Marketing & Communications:

Responsible for the accessibility and communication of the Student Representatives, as well as planning social events.

Career Day:

Responsible for organizing a day providing information about career perspectives of students and alumni.

BRIEF HISTORY OF Student Representatives FASoS

The Student Representatives are the FASoS internal student participation and representation body, and therefore takes a central role in the organization of FASoS. It consists of 29 elected and appointed students of the Bachelor and Master programs who are representing their fellow students in various faculty bodies and in all levels of the faculty. Among others, students are represented in the faculty board, faculty council and the program committees. The FASoS Student Representatives connect the different student members, create collaboration between them and function as a decision-making body. It allows students to receive assistance and staff members to receive broad student input.



Previously established goals:

- Digitalization policy, including lecture recordings
- Reducing exam stress through exam week restructuring
- Simplifying course registration
- Tutor quality assurance
- Accessibility of internships
- IWIO form for thesis period

1) Implementing an IWIO feedback form for the thesis period

At the beginning of this academic year members of ES Programme Committee noticed that there was no IWIO evaluation form for the BA thesis period available. The IWIO evaluations are of great importance for all the programs at FASoS. Through the revision by the Programme Committees, the evaluations determine what aspects of courses need to be improved. They ensure that the student voices are heard and reviewed and thus contribute to a great amount to the progression of the programs. In December 2019 the Programme Committee members of BA Arts and Culture reported that an IWIO feedback form for the BA thesis period will be made available.

2) Educational Digitalization and Lecture Recording Policy/Lecture Recordings

In an age of digitalization and transforming learning and teaching methods, e-learning creates possibilities to strengthen the education at FASoS. Even though

IMPROVING ACADEMICS: EDUCATION UPDATE

conversations with different staff members last year led to an examination of the possibility of web-based learning at FASoS instead of a focus solely on lecture recordings the demand for the latter has not subsided. In a changing study environment, students from all FASoS programs emphasized that the ability to re-listen/re-watch a lecture could aid them greatly in preparation for a course as well as studying in general.

Progress:

In October 2019 the Student Representatives presented multiple arguments in favor of the implementation of lecture recordings at FASoS (see Appendix I) to the Faculty Council. Counter arguments/responses mainly regarded possible negative effects on study behavior (e.g lack of attendance) or privacy violations.

Proposal:

During the meeting a proposal for a (voluntary) pilot project was made. It suggested small-scale video or audio recordings within one course per program to gather reliable data regarding perception, additional costs, attendance etc. Such a pilot project would not only help to become familiar with the technology that is needed but it would also contribute to

manage and minimize risks and make adjustments to prevent and implementation from failure. Even though an implementation of lecture recordings has been rejected for this year, the proposal for a pilot project was received positively by the Faculty Council members and manage and minimize risks and make adjustments to prevent and implementation from failure. Even though an implementation of lecture recordings has been rejected for this year, the proposal for a pilot project was received positively by the Faculty Council members and promised to be taken into consideration with a note towards the planned implementation of a comprehensive digitalization policy. The aim is to maintain a continuous communication between Student Representatives and Faculty Council regarding the comprehensive digitalization policy as it maintains broad consequences for other issues that are included in this evaluation as well.

3) Course Registration Process

The course registration process has caused several problems for many students over the past years. The issue is twofold. First, the approachability of the course registration process: Even though there were taken several steps to allow a general guidance (e.g. instructions, information of registration deadlines via e-mail), the process, especially for first year students still caused insecurity (e.g. people register but are somehow not on the course list) mostly because of its guise. Thus, requests for an improvement of the processes approachability and accessibility were raised. However, secondly, a much deeper problem are the

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consequences that result out of this confusing process. For example, recently students find out that they are not registered for a course at the publication date of the timetable – to register for a course then is impossible. In many cases this often results in a study delay.

Progress:

The issue was raised during an OMT meeting within a wider discussion regarding the digitalization policy. As there is going to be a transition from ELEUM to CANVAS the Student Representatives stressed the importance of a simplification and moderation of the process and its consequences.

Proposal:

Multiple suggestions have already been made regarding possible simplifications of the course registration procedure design. (e.g. within the possibilities of a University/Faculty App). However, the often disproportionate consequences that result out of a still require adjustment. Issue like that should be considered in the creation of a digitalization policy. The MarCom-team has been of great help in rising awareness of deadlines regarding registration and should remain to do so.

4) Quality of PBL Tutors

Within the last year the education working group has set itself the task, to make

sure that the quality of PBL tutors in the areas of discussion facilitation, feedback criteria, and course specific knowledge maintains but also increases. Process I: Recently a proposal was brought to an OMT meeting to make pre-designed feedback forms a requirement for the grading of, for example, an assignment or exam similar to the feedback forms of the European Studies BA Thesis (Appendix II). The idea was that the forms would include the exam/assignment expectations that tutors would use to guide the way they grade students' work. This would achieve clarity and transparency and would explain the requirements to achieve a passing grade. While the proposal was overall received positively by the members a universal feedback form is not feasible as each course is unique.

Proposal I: The decision was made to establish a working group consistent of program directors as well as the members of the program committee to brainstorm about possible solutions regarding more coherent feedback.

Process II: Recently the PBL- tutor trainings were revised.

Proposal II: Currently the members of the Education working group and the members of this revision process are working on a proposal regarding possible improvements in the fields of structure, organization and content.

5) Bachelor Thesis Allocation Procedure

Currently, the allocation for the Bachelor thesis works on a 'first come, first served' basis. The student body has criticized this system as it creates unnecessary

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competition among the students. Furthermore, crashes and/or failures exposed systems to lead to unnecessary and disproportionate work and stress for staff members (e.g Qualtrics).

Progress:

We have communicated the issue to other Student Representatives and discussed it within the Education Working-Group. A working group consisting of people who went to the thesis allocation procedure was established.

Proposal:

The suggestion was made to look into the prospect of utilizing the system used in the Erasmus/Exchange allocation procedure (without GPA being a decisive criterium) in which students are asked to input four choices of topics. In addition, it was proposed to give students time over the summer to come up with a thesis proposal and adjust that proposal towards the recommendations of the faculty. It was also suggested to look at other Universities and faculties to get a perspective on their bachelor thesis allocation procedure. Currently together with MarCom we are working on a survey regarding staff and students thoughts on the specific problems with the current system.

6) Lecture Attendance Evaluation

The Faculty bodies have communicated to the Student Representatives a drop in the number of students that attend lectures.

Progress:

With an invitation from the BA Programme Directors of ES/AC/DS, we are planning to discuss this issue in depth and identify several factors that may result in the dropping attendance. Factors that could influence the lecture attendance might be: The overall PBL experience, the perceived relevance of a course, the overall workload of the students, the design of a course and the self-responsibility of students.

Proposal:

Currently we are working on creating a working group that together with the Program Directors will aim to work on the re-conceptualization of current lecture structures

7) Cum Laude

The programme directors proposed a change in the cum laude regulations, as specified in the Rules & Regulations for all BA programmes. Currently, the regulations stipulate that a student graduates cum laude if:

- All exams are passed without any resit, and
- The unrounded and weighted average mark achieved is eight or higher, in addition to which no mark is lower than six, and
- The bachelor or master thesis is graded with eight or higher.

Progress:

The programme directors suggested dropping the first of these criteria (requirement to pass all exams without any resits), as it places unreasonably hard consequences on a student missing out on a single exam chance early on in their studies, without any possibility of

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compensation, regardless of how excellently a student is performing throughout their studies. Without this clause, the criteria for gaining a 'cum laude' would still be high, especially compared to many international universities, but the designation might be attainable to more of our graduates, which would potentially improve their academic and professional chances.

Proposal:

Even though the proposal of the program directors will be examined by the Faculty Board members of the education working group were recently working on a follow-up proposal that suggests not only a change in criteria but also in process. While we highly agree with the programme directors to change to the current model of zero resits we suggest furthermore that an alternative model of Cum Laude should be considered. At the next OMT meeting we want to present a proposal that suggests a model of two forms of Cum Laude, Magnum and Summa. This would be a new addition to the faculty. It would be for students who fail courses multiple times but still achieve a GPA of 8 or higher. This way students who still achieve an 8 or higher but have more resits than allowed are still rewarded. Thus, making their C.V. more attractive to future employers or master's Programme's. This dual system of Cum Laude is evidently not a new one but

one that could make FASoS students who have demonstrated academic excellence more employable in the future, which would benefit both the students and the faculty.

8) Resit Procedure

The current resit procedure (that coincides with regular exam weeks) a great point of dissatisfaction within the student population. Currently the resits are taken at the same time with regular exams, a fact which not only increases the pressure for students but also creates more work for tutors having to correct more exams.

Progress:

The initial idea was to reduce the stress of exam time, through the implementation of two separate resit weeks per year outside of established exam periods. For example, in mid-February, after period three and June after period five. Unfortunately, after a discussion within an OMT meeting, it was concluded that such a plan is not feasible.

Proposal:

There are two main ideas regarding the approach of this issue. Firstly, a possible solution could be the implementation of anticipation weeks. The current aim is to come up with a suitable proposal. Secondly, we are planning on looking into the possibility of an implementation of a "reflection week" in all study programs.

Improving accessibility and quality of internship opportunities

Progress:

It was brought to our attention that the internship opportunities that the faculty provides are not only hardly accessible but also lacking a certain quality. Until now

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there are not many Internship opportunities and most importantly, the ones that are present in the "FASoS Intranet", are out of date. In order to find them, students might struggle. Moreover, the University staff does not provide enough information on the topic. Resolution/Proposal: We are planning to present the issue to Resi Schenk. Currently we are designing a survey to get advise and ideas from previous years' students to propose and to ultimately update the internship database. To rise awareness about recent internship opportunities and their accessibility on ELEUM we are considering consulting MarCom. An initial idea was also to work together with the career event team.

TOWARDS AN INCLUSIVE FASoS: DIAS UPDATE

I) Enhancing and implementation of sanitary products

After successfully having installed boxes of sanitary products in the bathrooms we are continuing and enhancing this implementation of accessible menstrual products in bathrooms for men and women. We have an ongoing process of the 'Take one, Leave one' policy where we are encouraging students to replace the sanitary products that they use, hence creating the idea of helping a community and working together to achieve it. However, there seem to be issues of those boxes being stolen as well as getting wet and moldy. Additionally, we also seem to be facing the problem of lack of replacements by students, possibly due to forgetfulness or the boxes not being as easily accessible, as the students would have to go out of the way to remember the bathroom where they used the sanitary product and then have to replace it.

Proposals:

We have proposed the idea to put up semi-permanent holders with boxes onto the bathroom walls to prevent issues (such as moldy boxes) from occurring in the future. This can either be through the method of using screws to attach the boxes to the walls, or by using suction cups to secure them to the wall. Additionally, command strips could be a cheap and simple option for this solution. To deal with the issue of replenishing the sanitary products, we thought of placing a few boxes into frequently visited hallways.

Previously established goals:

- Access to menstrual products
- Tutorial room beautification
- Enhancing physical accessibility
- Study spaces

This way, students can conveniently replace products if they have used them, and the Student Representatives can then distribute these resources to the bathrooms as necessary. We propose to do this on 4-5 pinboards, located in Banditos, GG 80-82 (both in the bike shed and upstairs), GG 76, and the Ster College common room. The bike shed and GG76 locations are backups in case we feel the necessity to have more locations. We will put up posters above the boxes so that it is clear to students that it is part of the "Take one, leave one" initiation.

Progress:

The proposals after having been sent to the facilities manager have been read and approved, hence we shall soon be receiving our budget money to carry out these tasks.

DIVERSITY, INTEGRATION, ACCESSIBILITY, AND SUSTAINABILITY

2) Study Spaces

There is a high demand for an increase in the number of study spaces or common rooms for students to mingle and study, similar to Banditos, which continuously reaches its full capacity or the common room in 76 which is shared along with SBE students. However, we have experienced problems in finding a free room with enough space which is easily accessible.

Proposals:

Our initial proposal was the attic in GG80-86, yet we were informed of the limited capacity that only a maximum of 50 people are allowed in there at any time.

Our preferred option would be GG76 0.16. However, we were informed that this room has been under high demand for large size tutorials and small lectures. Although, we were informed that this was going to be replaced by windowless rooms in GG80-82, but that has not been done yet.

The basement previously occupied by Books4Life has been opposed by the Student Representatives due to its limited capacities, difficult accessibility, dark isolated environment, inexistent internet connection and claustrophobic atmosphere. Furthermore, two study associations are interested in using this space. Finally, the general atmosphere (no windows, basement) and accessibility weakens this option.

We have been persistent on acquiring the SterCollege and have brought up this idea with the faculty board.

Progress:

We have achieved minimal progress and also come across multiple hurdles in this ongoing process. We know now that the common room belongs solely to the FASoS students. We also know that our current diversity Manager is in the process of creating a new policy for the entire faculty included and new an improved version of the accessibility aspect which will be presented to us on the 19th of February FDIAS meeting. We believe this situation to be an issue of high importance and hope for further progress towards finding a viable solution in the nearest future.

3) Accessibility of the Turnzaal

It has come to our attention that there are dissatisfactions amongst students regarding the ease and comfort of being able to attend lectures at the Turnzaal. Students found the combination of the attached chair and table rather restrictive in terms of space and a huge struggle for left-handed people as well as people on wheelchairs. The combination of the attached table and chair was a sudden change in the faculty without any consultation of the student representatives. Soon we experienced a dislike by the students for the new furniture and went on to brainstorming

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and creating a list of what people find inconvenient and took account of all their complaints.

Proposal:

We decided to create a survey asking students their views and opinions on the current situation of the Turnzaal furniture to receive a well-rounded idea and understand what the students want, since they are the end users of the Turnzaal. We brought this issue up with the facilities manager as well as the faculty board.

Progress:

We have succeeded in bringing back to the Turnzaal a couple of units of the old furniture but have not changed all of it completely. We are still working towards any other developments that we can make to improve the situation further.

4) Accessibility to the faculty for people with disabilities

All the buildings at FASoS are quite difficult to access for people with physical disabilities. However, due to the historic protection of the buildings, the legal procedures and the costs to be endured, it has become clear that such measures would be too complicated to endure only as a preventative measure. In order to change this, there needs to be a concrete case of a student whose enrolment would be obstructed by the accessibility to the buildings. The Student Representatives are regarding this issue as highly significant to

improve the faculty learning environment by making it accessible to everyone.

5) Decoration of tutorial rooms

We have proposed the beautification of tutorial rooms through the curation of artwork to make it more interesting and inviting for students to come and study. Particularly, the idea is to make sure that any kind of art work including but not limited to excerpts, quotes, pictures, maps, paintings that goes up on to the tutorial room walls has some sort of relation to what is studied at FASoS.

Proposals:

A photowalk: An event that will be organized in the form of a "photography walking tour", namely a guided tour in and around the city centre of Maastricht, aimed at taking multiple photos that portray the historic architecture, character, landmarks and landscapes of the city we inhabit. Furthermore, we aim to photograph the FASoS buildings and its social focal points. This will result in great engagement and interactions amongst students hence intersecting with the diversity strand as well. We proposed the idea of engaging with art schools to work on a collaboration and obtain a vast variety of artworks from them.

Progress:

A proposal has been created regarding

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the photowalk and it has been sent out to the facilities manager and we shall be receiving a response very soon. If it is approved, we will collect all the resources that will be needed to begin work on this project, as soon as possible. Along with this, we are currently in ongoing meetings with art schools in Maastricht working out the details in order to obtain these art works.

6) Enhancing diversity

We have also thought of enhancing and showcasing the numerous cultures present in the faculty and Maastricht as a whole. We are working on creating a survey for the students to provide us with some feedback and any inputs on what they would like to see more in the university. We have been in contact with multiple groups around Maastricht such as the LGBTQ community, the African community and more for the possibility of an event at a later stage.



Previously established goals:

- **Sustainable marketing channels**
- **Increased visibility**
- **Increased accessibility**
- **Social events**
- **Promoting FASoS infrastructure and staff**

Marketing & Communications has made considerable progress towards achieving the original goals established in the year plan. Notably,

- The organization of faculty drinks in cooperation with So FASoS
- The creation of eco-friendly business cards as a sustainable marketing channel
- Two awareness campaigns: (1) Education IWIO Awareness campaign, (2) January Student Budget campaign
- Frequent social media updates about Student Representative meetings

Developments have also been made outside of the goals identified at the beginning of the year. The Marketing and Communications working group has also increased communication with

THE LOW DOWN: MAR COM STATUS UPDATE

the faculty marketing team, and as such has increased the ability to reach students. Moreover, this working group has answered student questions on either Facebook or Instagram regarding courses or other issues pertaining to the faculty. Input from students was also collected, for example about the desired career paths present at the Career Event. MarCom has also successfully published the Year Plan and (if you're reading this) the Midterm Report.

MarCom has laid the groundwork to continue reaching the Year Plan goals - in the form of planned campaigns and events. This groundwork, in line with the increased sustainability of this working group, can be seen by the drafting of guidelines and compiling of information has been started for the future members. Lastly, the co-organization of events with So FASoS has been planned and some amazing events will be announced in due time.

Student Representatives FASoS

Since 2017, our Student Representatives FASoS team organises the FASoS Career Day every spring. This year's edition will take place on April 18 at our beautiful faculty.

During the day, FASoS alumni will come back and tell us all about their journey from their FASoS degree to their current job. You will have the chance to participate in a workshop given by alumni from the following sectors:

- Journalism
- EU & Politics
- Public Affairs
- NGOs
- Diversity & Inclusivity
- Education & Research
- the Arts.

More information will be posted closer to the event! Stay tuned for more!

Registration for the workshops will open in mid March.

**PREPARING
FOR OUR
FUTURE:
CAREER DAY
UPDATE**

**Previously
established goals:**

- **Quality of
panel
discussion**
- **Expanding to
include
internship
information**


**C A R E E R
O R I E N T A T I O N
D A Y**
18 APR 2020

GENERAL GOALS

- Highlighting the rights of students
- Representation for BSc Global Studies
- Sufficient office space for Student Representatives



1) Highlighting Students' Rights:

As you might have seen on our social media pages and on FASoS Weekly, our team has been working hard to bring important information to the eyes of the students of FASoS. Our Marketing & Communications team has created several campaigns on Facebook and Instagram to draw attention to the opportunities that exist for students in Maastricht, how the IWIO evaluations work, or how to travel around the Netherlands on a budget.

Together with the Management of the Faculty, we have also created new ways to communicate course registration deadlines – for instance by posting the deadlines on the FASoS screens and printing small signs for the tutorial rooms.

We have also been in contact with many of you, the FASoS students, to provide advice and inform you of the formal and informal ways of dealing with all issues that come your way!

What's to come? Watch out for the campaign on why and how you can file a complaint, objection, or appeal at FASoS.

2) Representation BSc Global Studies:

Did you hear of the new Bachelor coming at FASoS? BSc Global Studies will have its first cohort this September. Our team wants to make sure that the first students of Global Studies (and all to come) will be adequately represented in all Faculty bodies.

Throughout this semester, our Board/President/Team, has been in contact with the management of the Global Studies programme to ensure that students know their rights and their voices are heard!

3) SR Office Space:

Did you know that the Student Representatives team has 19 members at the BA level? As you can imagine, our meetings are quite crowded! As our team becomes bigger, there seems to be a need for a new office space. However, space at FASoS is limited for all – students and staff – so we're still working on this!