2023-2024

LOTS OF FUN

The Central Student Council at the Univeristy of Amsterdam's Year Plan

S×R

Centrale
Studentenraad

TABLE OF CONTENTS

S R Centrale Studentenraad

The Centrale Studentenraad (CSR) is the highest student representative body at the University of Amsterdam. The CSR consists of seven directly elected members, and seven delegates from each of the different faculties, all of whom have 12 member student councils, the faculteit studentenraaden (FSR). The CSR is a legal body whose position in the university is outlined in the Wet op het Hoger Onderwijs en Wetenschappelijk Onderzoek (WHW), or, the Higher Education and Research Act. Our existence as a democratic representative body in the UvA first came out of the 1969 Maagdenhuis Bezetting in which students occupied the university administrative building in order to demand a greater say in how their university was run, marking a turning point in the long trend of Dutch student democracy movements. The Maagdenhuis was later occupied in 1978 (twice), 1980, 1986, 1990, 1993, 1996, 2005, and most recently in 2015, for reasons from a failure to appoint women to professorships, keeping tuition fees lower, decolonising course content, and decentralising decision-making powers.

Now, the UvA CSR acts a form of checks and balances on the unelected powers at UvA, many of whom are appointed in some form by the minister of Onderwijs, Cultuur, and Wetenschappen (OCW), or, Education, Culture, and Science. We have a number of rights including those of advice, consent, and information. This means that we can give out advice on any form of university policies or happenings and the College van Bestuur (CvB), or, the Executive Board, must respond and decide positively or negatively on the advice with a reason why. Should they decide negatively, we have the right to dispute their decision. We are often asked for advice on any forms of fiscal or educational policy the university works on, as well as advising on university culture, the annual budget, new forms of didactics, and whatever else we aim to work on.

However, we do not do all of this work alone. Aside from the 7 FSRs, each study programme has an Opleidingscommissie (OC) or Programme Committee which can focus on the localised issues for specific programmes, and also bring them to the faculty or central level should these issues be more generalisable. There are as well other representative councils, such as the 16 member Centrale Ondernemingsraad (COR), or, the Central Workers Council for academic staff, who also has faculty level ORs, the 15 member Gemeenschappelijke Ondernemingsraad (GOR) or, the Joint Services Enterprise Council of non-academic staff, and finally the 7 member Centrale Promovendiraad, or the Central PhD Council (CPC) for the UvA's PhD candidates. When the CSR can find itself out of its depth in regard to certain issues, we can collaborate with more democratic bodies at the UvA such as these elected ones, as well as the Algemene Studenten Vereniging Amsterdam (ASVA) student union and the Algemene Onderwijsbond (AOb) educational workers union.

In this document you will find the in-depth personal goals of every CSR member in regards to what work they aim to get done this year, and how said goals can be actualised. These goals are categorised into our three committees, Organisatie & Financen (O&F), Outreach & Media (O&M), and Onderwijs & Onderzoek (O&O). We cannot help but look forward to the upcoming year, and all of that we aim to achieve. Although one of our **primary goals for the year is, as advised by Vice Voorzitter of the CvB Jan Lintsen, to have lots of fun.**

Joaquim Becker, FEB Delegate and Treasurer :
Joaquim.Becker@Studentenraad.nl

Noah Benjamins, FGw Delegate and Trust Person :
Noah.Benjamins@Studentenraad.nl

Ruben Brouwer, General Member : Ruben.Brouwer@Studentenraad.nl

Mic Cimmino, O&F Chair : Mic.Cimmino@Studentenraad.nl

Ștefana Feciuc, FdR Delegate : Stefana.Feciuc@Studentenraad.nl

Sofia Frumkina, General Member : Sofia.Frumkina@Studentenraad.nl

Sanaa Kashif, O&M Chair : Sanaa.Kashif@Studentenraad.nl

Ihab Laachir, O&O Chair : Ihab.Laachir@Studentenraad.nl

Elisa Vassimon Neiva, FMG Delegate : Elisa.Neiva@Studentenraad.nl

Jessey van Oostende, FdG Delegate and Trust Person :
Jessey.vanOostende@Studentenraad.nl

Noah Pellikaan, Voorzitter : Noah.Pellikaan@Studentenraad.nl

Saar Schnieders, FNWI Delegate : Saar.Schnieders@Studentenraad.nl

Titus van der Valk, Vice Voorzitter :Titus.vanderValk@Studentenraad.nl

Roza Wagenaer, Trust Person : Roza.Wagenaer@Studentenraad.nl

Committees

Organisation and Finance

Members

Voorzitter : Mic Cimmino- Mic.Cimmino@Studentenraad.nl
Noah Pellikaan – Noah.Pellikaan@Studentenraad.nl
Noah Benjamins – Noah.benjamins@Studentenraad.nl
Joaquim Becker – Joaquim.Becker@studentenraad.nl
Stefana Feciuc– Stefana.Feciuc@Studentenraad.nl
Saar Schnieders -Saar.Scnieders@studentenraad.nl
Sanaa Kashif –   Sanaa.kashif@Studentenraad.nl

Files

Menstrual Equity ; Toilets for everyone ; Mental Health ;
Contemplation room ; Improving Univeristy facilities ; Switching of
UvA's banks ; ; Sustainable and accessible catering ; Research ethics
reform ; Social Safety policies ; Profileringsfond.

Committees

Education and Research

<div style="background:red">

Members

Voorzitter : Ihab Laachir - Ihab.Laarchir@Studentenraad.nl
Noah Pellikaan - Noah.Pellikaan@Studentenraad.nl
Sanaa Kashif - Sanaa.kashif@Studentenraad.nl
Elisa Neiva - Elisa.Neiva@Studentenraad.nl
Sofia Frumkina - Sofia.Frumkina@Studentenraad.nl
Roza Wagenaer - Roza.Wagenaer@Studentenraad.nl
Jessey van Oostende - Jessey.vanOostende@Studentenraad.nl
Titus van der Vall   - Titus.vanderValk@Studentenraad.nl

</div>

Files

Casualisation of Academic Labour ; Universiteitsforum ; Internationalisation ; Student Housing ; Campus Development ; The use of AI in the university ; Verschooling ; Increasing the diversity of the UvA workforce; Establishing Diversity in Learning - Decolonising the Curriculum ; Religion at the university ; Accessibility policies .

Committees

Outreach and Media

Members

Voorzitter : Sanaa Kashif - Sanaa.Kashif@Studentenraad.nl
Noah Pellikaan – Noah.Pellikaan@Studentenraad.nl
Ruben Brouwer –   Ruben.Brouwer@Studentenraad.nl
Jessey van Oostende – JJessey.vanOostende@Studentenraad.nl

Files

Accessibility of Information about the CSR ; Election turnout ; student Outreach ; Newsletter ; COBO

Democratisation

The university must be **a space for the free and fair pursuit of knowledge**. A space which represents the ideals of student democracy, student autonomy, and non-hierarchical knowledge structures. Part of curating an equitable academic environment is ensuring the safety of all students, our confidence in having a real say in how the university operates, and exercising our fundamental right to protest.

Democracy to us is **the process of collective deliberation** through which we come to the best solution for all. It is important that students have a real say in the content, context and process of their education, for else they will be doomed to live for the goals of others, reinforcing patterns of inequality and injustice.

Instead of top-down academic hierarchy, where capital and government decide what our education looks like, we need to stand for and fight for our **academic independence.** Deliberative democracy **requires students, staff, and executives to have an equal seat at the table.** As long as democratically representative medezeggenschap councils are dependent on goodwill, as long as they can only achieve policy change when the executives agree with them, the game is rigged against the interests of students and staff.

To translate this vision into reality, we advocate for a substantive overhaul of the university's **internal dynamics,** which entails a transition from the current paradigm of medezeggenschap (co-determination) towards the more empowering **zeggenschap (determination) framework.** In this reimagined governance structure, the university council becomes the locus of collective decision-making, wherein students, alongside non-academic and academic staff, as well as PhD candidates, collectively steer the university's trajectory and determine its leadership. The administration's role, in this context, is one of implementation.

With this paradigm shift we have to take into **account transparency, accessibility, bottom-up accountability and decentralisation.** Transparency of information and procedure is essential to hold institutional powers accountable, to have well informed discussions, to foster trust between decision makers and community and as a part of the system of checks and balances to prevent abuse of power. An accessible democratic playing field, every student being able to be part of the conversation about policy relevant to them, is necessary for inclusivity and representation so that all perspectives have a place in the debate, to foster engagement, for sustainable innovation and progress, and for long term stability. For autonomy and independence we need a democratic structure built on bottom up accountability. Not the government, through the top executives, but the community should primarily decide how we design our education and research. A decentralised university democracy means that when possible we need to allow decisions to be made at a program level, through a fair distribution of power between students and teachers.

Furthermore, we firmly assert that in moments of protest or occupation, it is imperative that we **refrain from invoking the presence of law enforcement, specifically the mobiele eenheid** (riot police), to quell the very students who the university exists to serve. In the past we have witnessed instances of explicit violence inflicted upon non-violent student demonstrators, as exemplified in January 2023 when a student sustained a leg injury, and another's hand was broken. It is worth noting that these acts of civil resistance and occupation created the Dutch student councils and unions, and deploying force against proponents of democratic expression invariably harms a trusting relationship with university administration. Actions to take on this topic include a thorough review and rewrite of the whitepaper on occupations/evictions with consenting rights from the joint assembly, and transparency regarding communications within UvA, and between the university and its administrators with law enforcement as well as the Gemeente.

To ensure a functional academic and educational democracy we need not only improve the conditions in which our elected representatives operate. For a just, transparent, accessible, decentral, bottom-up university we have to fundamentally change the democratic framework of our organisation. This year we will collaborate with parties within and outside of our university in order to tackle the issues surrounding our (lack of) academic democracy.

Democratisation

Universiteitsforum

The University Forum (UF), which was instilled as a democracy measure following the Maagdenhuisbezetting of 2015, has had issues regarding visibility and participation since its inception.

Further, since none of the discussions which took place in the UF formally led to a policy from the CvB which was sent to medezeggenschap, there became a sense of lack of impact or urgency which followed this democratic process. In response, administration has decided to lessen the amount of forums held in academic year 2023-24 to only 2, which will cost roughly eur20.000 each. These will be held in person instead of online, and become prestigious events with external speakers, planned with the UvA events office, and catering.

While in theory these changes will lead to greater participation, they are instead turning an important democratic process into a high class, illustrious event, which caters to a very specific sect of UvA community. This will become a more exclusive event which upper class staff and students may feel very comfortable in, but which is entirely decoupled from the average student. The board wishes to implement these changes for the next 3 academic years, and has done so without consultation or consent from Medezeggenschap bodies. In short, the unelected board has changed democratic processes, and gone over the heads of the democratically elected representatives to do so.

In order to make the university forum an event which is accessible and welcoming to the average student, it must be held at a minimum 6 times yearly, with at least some of the forums held in person. These in person events should be visible on an UvA campus where students and staff who were previously unaware of the process are able to join, as opposed to a currently undisclosed external location. This must be a forum for everyone to speak freely and openly about their thoughts on the UvA, with basic inclusive catering provided. This must not be an event to wear a suit to, to watch what you say, and to see a who's who of UvA administration without any tutorial teachers nor facilities workers present.

Democratisation

Casualisation of Academic Labour

Staff and students united will never be divided. To cope with the growing number of students at UvA, more tutorial teachers and junior lecturers need to be hired.

With the expanding student body, more junior lecturers and educators must be hired to ensure quality education. Quality education can only be achieved if the educators have fair and legal contracts that allow them to maintain a healthy work-life balance. Crowding tutorials with dozens upon dozens of students does not give educators a welcoming nor stable working environment. In tandem, we consistently see these same teachers unable to keep up with grading deadlines due to the influx of work, as well as working unpaid overtime and lacking the proper training for their role.

It is in the interest of the UvA that our educators are compensated well for the labor and given the potential for upward mobility in academia, meaning permanent contracts for those in D4 positions. The CSR has official stances in support of CasualUvA as well as their past grading strikes, and will continue this support wherever needed in the coming academic year.

Further, much more emphasis must be placed on the Gemeenschappelijke Ondernemingsraad (GOR)-- the non-academic staff representative council as well as the Centrale Promovendiraad-- the Central PhD Council (CPC), rather than the status quo of the institutional representative voice significantly in just the central student (CSR) and central works councils (COR). Students and staff united means all students, and all staff.

Growth of the UvA

Student housing

Navigating student life in Amsterdam has become increasingly challenging in recent years. Escalating housing costs, landlord exploitation, and a particularly pressing issue, the homelessness of international students, have compounded the difficulties. The rapid influx of international students has created immense pressure on the student housing market, leaving little to no housing options available. This situation underscores the critical need for both long-term structural solutions and immediate emergency measures, which we intend to address in this initiative. Our first objective is to establish **greater transparency** for incoming international students concerning the housing crisis and related issues such as rental scams and landlord exploitation. By doing so, we aim to empower these students with essential information, enabling them to make **informed choices** in a challenging housing market. Additionally, we are actively collaborating with other bodies within the university to implement emergency solutions for students facing homelessness. It is imperative that we ensure a safety net for those who find themselves without shelter due to the housing crisis. This collaborative effort with the UvA will provide a vital lifeline for students in need. In these trying times, we are committed to making the student experience in Amsterdam more manageable and equitable.By pursuing these measures, we aim to alleviate some of the burdens associated with housing challenges and create a more inclusive and supportive environment for all students.

Growth of the UvA

Internationalisation

The CSR will closely monitor the topic of internalisation in the upcoming year, especially due to the potential changes in general law regarding higher education. The Dutch government is planning to transform our educational system to Dutch by default by imposing a cap on international students, introducing mandatory Dutch courses, and conducting most of the educational practices in Dutch (Boztas, 2023). These potential measures will be imposed in response to the consistent growth in the number of international students, the lack of housing and study spaces as well as the lack to university's well-being facilities. Ergo, the CSR will be **closely overseeing the potential changes** in higher education law, and making sure that the growth of UvA is sustainable and that the perspectives of both International and Dutch students are **accommodated and valued.**

Growth of the UvA

Campus Development

Recognizing that the medezeggenschap currently has **limited** influence in REC development, we are committed to taking steps to rectify this situation. We will persist in our efforts to become actively engaged in a development group within the REC, mirroring the successful model in place for the **University Quarter.** This involvement will provide us with a platform to contribute to the planning and decision-making processes related to REC development. Additionally, we will offer our support to the Faculty Student Councils (FSRs) to encourage their participation in these projects, since the student perspective should be leading in policy surrounding campus development. Where necessary, we will directly engage with these projects ourselves to ensure that the medezeggenschap's perspective is **duly considered in the campus development initiatives**. Our aim is to strengthen the role of medezeggenschap in Campus Development, fostering a collaborative environment that aligns the development of our campuses with the needs and preferences of the university community. Very important is also the creation of more study places so every student has the opportunity to study efficiently.

Student Wellbeing

Toilets for everyone

Gender-neutral toilets create a safe and welcoming space for individuals of all gender identities and expressions. Not only do they make all students feel welcome at our university, they also send a powerful message that we **respect and value the diversity** within our community, acknowledging that gender is not binary. Gender-neutral toilets accommodate everyone, and ensure that no one feels excluded or uncomfortable while using campus facilities.

Although the Diversity Document states that "one new measure is the establishment of gender-neutral toilets in every building" (UvA: 29) is one that has been implemented, the number of gender-neutral restrooms on campus is still insufficient. They need to be more readily and orderly available, in every building. Therefore, a thorough **assessment of campus facilities** to determine the most suitable locations for gender-neutral toilets will be conducted and implemented.

Student Wellbeing

Menstrual equity

Ensuring free access to menstrual products not only promotes inclusivity but also directly **impacts the health and well-being** of our community members. Menstrual hygiene is essential, and by offering free products, we help promote the overall well-being of individuals.

Lack of access to menstrual products can hinder an individual's participation in education, work, and social activities. Providing free menstrual products ensures that everyone can fully engage in their academic and personal pursuits, levelling the playing field and fostering **equity**.

Equal and comprehensive access to menstrual hygiene products, and to the right to education about reproductive health removes barriers to care and reduces stigma surrounding it. Although the UvA has taken measures to make menstrual products available on campus for a price, we **strive to make them available for free in every lavatory.** As a result, cooperating with facility services to manage the costs of this project and identify strategic locations for the placement of free menstrual product dispensers, easy access for all will be ensured.

Student Wellbeing

Mental Health

In the upcoming year, our Student Council is committed to **ameliorating both the supply side:** university facilities, and staff training, **and the demand side**: de-stigmatizing students' attitudes towards mental health support. We strongly believe in the creation of a **central mental health policy,** which is essential for ensuring the prioritization of student well-being at our university. Students face unique pressures and demands, therefore our institution must provide a comprehensive framework to address all of the important issues. Creating a centralized policy will not only ensure consistent access to support services but also **foster a culture of understanding, empathy, and stigma reductio**n. Our commitment to advocating for a centralized mental health policy reflects our dedication to the holistic well-being of our student body and emphasizes the cruciality of mental health.

Furthermore, the CSR will continue working with the student well-being and communication team, to further strengthen mental health promotion, as it is crucial to constantly maintain and improve the awareness of this integral part of our overall health (Jané-Llopis, Barry, Hosman, & Patel, 2005).

Student Wellbeing

Contemplation room

 The contemplation room is a place where students can go to meditate, pray or take a personal moment. It is intended to be used as a quiet space that students can retreat to and use for **personal and reflective purposes.** Every campus at the university should have one such accessible room. However, not all rooms across the university are of an equal standard. This has been a longstanding issue that the **CSR commits itself to resolving this year.**

It was observed during the recent elections that a considerable number of students expressed their interest in having a secure and suitable space to pray, mediate or take a moment. Other universities, like Twente, have already provided a large range of such rooms for their students. This has resulted in an increased appreciation of university resources among students. Therefore, it's imperative to make suitable rooms available at the university for students who wish to use them.

There has been several overarching issues with the rooms namely the size of the room, location of the room and the house rules. On several campuses, **the issue arrises** that the size of a contemplation room is inadequate for the number of students that wish to use it. This can lead to long wait times and students being late for class. furthermore, the constant crowds within the room and the lines outside of it can disturb the intended atmosphere of the room.

Secondly, the location of the room within a campus can pose an issue. If the room is not centrally located on a campus (as is sometimes the case) , then students are required to walk longer distances to use it. This disincentivizes students from using the room and thus negates its purpose. **Lastly**, there is the issue of the UvA house rules. These are a university wide set of rules that dictate the behaviour within UvA buildings. Certain rules make the use of the contemplation room difficult for students as it places undue burden upon them.

The CSR believes the room should be an **open neutral and accessible space for all.** Therefore, we will work on securing larger rooms in central locations across the university . Additionally, we hope to modify the house rules to take into account the practicalities of those who use the room. Lastly, we want to ensure that any such rooms are truly accessible for all students regardless of any dissability they may have.

It is imperative that students feel welcome on all campuses throughout the University. The CSR wishes to stress that both the personal and religious usage of the rooms are of equal importance and are vital to the wellbeing of the student body. Therefore, the CSR will work to ensure that students are able to access adequate rooms across the university that can be used effectively and efficiently.

Student Wellbeing

Improving University Facilities

One of the prominent issues discussed during the elections revolved around t**he insufficiency of student amenities,** particularly during peak hours of the day. Students have expressed their desire for an expanded range of facilities, both for relaxation and academic work. Additionally, there is a pressing need for increased **storage space** where students can safely keep their belongings throughout the day.

A considerable portion of our student body faces the challenge of commuting long distances, necessitating early wake-up times and prolonged stays on campus between classes. Some students also have commitments in the evenings or at night, which can hinder their ability to get adequate rest. Furthermore, students have highlighted th**e significance of having designated quiet spaces on campus for relaxation.** Extensive scientific research has unequivocally established that brief power naps, as short as 15 minutes, can notably enhance one's cognitive performance. Consequently, the **CSR is advocating for the acquisition of sleeping pods t**o be made available at the Roeterseiland campus.

In addition, students frequently encounter the issue of insufficient secure storage options for their personal items. This predicament forces students to carry extra baggage into classrooms, which can be disruptive during seminars. In response to this concern, students have voiced their support for the introduction of **more lockers to address these challenges effectively**. Therefore, the CSR is formally requesting the procurement and installation of additional lockers on campus.

Digitalization & AI

The use of AI in the University

 In recent years there has been a growing interest and need to investigate and understand the role and power of Artificial Intelligence in higher education contexts. The CSR is highly interested in investigating AI trends and actively seeking opportunities to incorporate AI in our education environment. The UvA should take advantage and closely monitor the possibilities of **adaptation of AI in our learning processes,** aiding in creating a **personalized approach** for both **students and teachers**. We think that it is essential that students are closely consulted on this integration process, as it provides a **user-centric perspective**. The CSR is also dedicated to consulting all the faculties and their FSRs regarding the decision-making process of the utilization of AI, as we understand the specific needs and concerns of different disciplinary areas.

Verschoolsing

Mandatory attendance, lack of lecture recordings, inaccessible bureaucracy, zero space for exceptions, high stakes mini-deadlines, rat-race exceptionalism, lack of vacations, binding study advice and same-year interim result validity periods among many others together make up a system of **target-efficiency and protocol above quality and motivation**. Efficiency and protocol can be important and useful, but they should never be subservient to quality and motivation.

The **'verschoolsing'**: the bureaucratic pedagogy of new public management, a process through which university education becomes more and more like a school, or what some would describe as a diploma factory.

Because students need structure to be more efficiently guided towards obtaining a degree, we take students by the hand, but with an iron grip. This lack of autonomy does not allow enough **space for reflection, personal direction, motivation, failure and experimentation**. This is both a source of stress and a threat to wellbeing as a threat to the development of **critical thinking, creativity, initiative and emancipation**. We are hitting the target but missing the point.

With an educational system focused on upkeeping protocols for efficiency's sake, many students fall between shore and ship (Dutch Idiom), when the designed system might (kind of) work for most, but not for them. Problems stack up and the safety net is slow, often dysfunctional, and bureaucratic. Instead of one-size-fits-all and offering bandaids to those who can not keep up, we need to **facilitate education that works for everyone**. We do this through **flexibility, trust, space to fail and encouraging a culture of exceptions**.

Learning, understanding, growing and most of all critical thinking and creativity requires intrinsic motivation and therefore autonomy. Instead of making the rules more strict, and sanctioning students who fail, we need to develop a system of stimulating intrinsic motivation. This is possible, but it requires a paradigm shift in our pedagogic approach.

Factors that improve intrinsic motivation strengthen each other. Extrinsically motivating factors negatively affect overall motivation and wellbeing. Through stronger support facilities, time for reflection, community building, lenience, trust, affordability, a culture of equality, mutual understanding, accessibility, inclusivity, sensitivity, social safety, reducing workload, less bureaucracy, more flexibility, social encouragement, space to fail, inspiration,

guidance and education that meets the needs and matches the interests of students, among many others, we can build a community, a culture and a space for free, happy, productive, engaged and intrinsically motivated students and staff.

De verschoolsing is a subject affecting a multitude of education related files and topics.

1) Flexstudying

Education of the future suits the needs of all students. The CSR is therefore strongly in support of flexstudying. In 2017, an experiment was launched regarding flexstudying. The idea is that students only pay tuition fees for the subjects followed. By making students pay only for the courses they intend to take, students have more freedom of choice and more space for self-development. Students are given the opportunity to shape their studying in a way that suits their personal circumstances. The target groups that participated in the flexstudying pilot include chronically ill students, informal caretakers, top athletes and students who combine learning and working for a better connection to the labour market.

It follows from the pilot that, besides financial benefits, flexstudying also brings social benefits. ([1] Eindevaluatie experiment flexstuderen - onderzoeksrapport Door Ockham IPS, SEOR, en ECBO). **Students should have more control over their own study pace.** The student decides how many credits he or she wants to earn and sets their own targets. Once that is achieved, the student thus studies on his or her own schedule, instead of being "study delayed". These social benefits of flex-studying contribute to student welfare and weigh at least as heavily as the financial benefits flex-studying brings. Flex-study also seems to reduce drop-out rates and improve study results [1] Eindevaluatie experiment flexstuderen - onderzoeksrapport Door Ockham IPS, SEOR, en ECBO .

Thanks to the pilot, a lot of experience has been gained at various educational institutions and support has been broadened. The minister aims to enable flexstudying for all educational institutions from the academic year of 2025/2026. We are awaiting the results of the foresight study and the embedding of flexstudying in law. This year, the CSR will keep a close eye on all developments regarding flexstudying. We want to contribute in any way possible to enable flexstudying.

2) Online lectures

The CSR greatly values student-autonomy. The education of the future has to fit the needs of our diverse population of students. That's why we want to look for alternatives that can increase flexibility. One of the alternatives the CSR proposes is providing lectures online. Students should be given the opportunity to shape their study program in a way that suits their personal circumstances. It also creates space for students to gain practical experience next to the theoretically focused study programs, which will help students in the transition from university to the job market.

3) Mandattory attendance

Mandatory attendance is an obstacle to among others student-autonomy and accessibility. At the moment students can get suspended from a course if they miss a tutorial too many. Instead of supporting these students to go to classes it's made impossible for them to attend the other classes which will eventually make it even harder to pass. We push students into a negative spiral, impossible to escape. Abolishing mandatory attendance can again, also create more space for students who want or have to combine internships and work with studying.

This year we hope to create more flexibility by bringing alternative options to the table.

4) Examination committees

As a hallmark of bureaucratic pedagogy, we need to revisit the role that we have ascribed to examination committees. Oftentimes when students require an exception, they have to go through a long, impersonal, untransparent and bureaucratic process. We could allow teachers and students more autonomy in fitting to student needs, and only involve external parties in case of disagreement or if necessary by law to ensure the quality of education. Therefore we will push for a re-evaluation of the functioning and the tasks of the examination committees, to increase both the quality, the efficiency and the accessibility of our education.

5) BSA

The CSR is critical towards the BSA. The BSA is a major cause of pressure and stress for students. The pressure of having to pass the BSA so early in the year with the risk of being kicked out at the same time as getting used to student life puts a lot of pressure on students to perform[1].

Although the BSA was meant to guide students and help them choosing the right program, a large part of higher education institutions are using the binding nature of the study advice with the aim of increasing profitability of education[2]. Experts indicate that there should be less emphasis on nominal graduation. Weighty selection moments such as BSA create a lot of pressure and stress for students, while the focus should be on personal development, which may take longer or shorter depending on all kinds of personal circumstances.[3] The BSA can also have negative impact on the performance of students. A high BSA can cause examination anxiety[4]. Our main goal is to reduce stress and pressure among students. Highly pressuring achievement-based education can have bad effects on students autonomy, mental well-being and the process of learning. We want more guidance and attention for first year students instead of pressuring them by means of a BSA. **Our university should be a safe and stimulating learning environment.**

Sustainability

Switching of the UvA's Bank

The facts are loud and clear — fossil fuel is suffocating our planet. Fossil fuels are the greatest contributors to global climate change, making up over 75% of all global greenhouse gas emissions and approximately 90% of the global carbon dioxide emissions. Fossil fuel results in a blanket of greenhouse gas emissions that dramatically increase global warming. This year — 2023 — is the third warmest year to date at 0.43°C above the recent average, with the average global temperature in July at 1.5°C above preindustrial levels. We need immediate actions to mitigate the worst impacts of climate change — and the very origin of the problem cannot simultaneously serve as its resolution. UvA needs to do away with fossil fuel.

In this light, the developments of **transferring away from the Deutsche Bank** (known for its investments in fossil fuel) are very much encouraged by the CSR. DWS, a subsidiary of Deutsche Bank, has been revealed in 2022 to conduct corporate greenwashing by investing 850 million dollars (approximately 782 million euros) from its "green" funds into fossil fuel companies. These massive investments were accompanied by advertising positing them as working towards environmental protection. In the context of the current climate emergency, allowing for greenwashing legitimizes the very thing scientists warn against. There needs to be a drastic re-thinking of the current energy systems and that it is needed now. In the upcoming year, the **CSR will be working on finalizing the switch to a more sustainable banking service provider.** It is of upmost importance that the matter will be dealt with as swiftly and adequately as possible.

https://www.un.org/en/climatechange/science/causes-effects-climate-change

https://www.cleanenergywire.org/news/deutsche-bank-unit-dws-faces-new-greenwashing-accusations-over-fossil-fuel-investments

Sustainability

Sustainable and Accessible Catering

We recognize the pivotal role that food plays in the lives of our students and their overall well-being. We understand that affordable and nutritious sustenance is not just a necessity but a cornerstone of a successful academic journey. Building on the commendable efforts of our previous CSR, we are proud to continue their work.

One notable achievement has been the introduction of an affordable vegan food pilot program available after 5pm. We are committed to building upon this success and making the food offerings in our campus canteen **even more cost-effective**. Equally important is our commitment to environmental sustainability. We are dedicated to r**educing the carbon footprint of our catering services a**nd having a plant based meal as a default. This includes exploring options for locally sourced ingredients, energy-efficient kitchen practices, and waste reduction initiatives. Moreover, we are passionate about democratizing food choices for our students. We believe in empowering our student community and ensuring their voices are heard.

Our ultimate goal is to work towards the **deprivatization of our food services** and establish a public catering system that enables affordable and warm meals for everyone. Therefore, in the immediate term, the CSR will focus on the proper implementation of the single-use directive to reduce unnecessary waste. We are also committed to creating affordable food options that cater to the diverse needs of all students. We believe that fostering a supportive and sustainable food ecosystem is not just a goal; it's our responsibility. Together, we can create a healthier, more affordable, and environmentally friendly food environment that enhances the student experience.

Sustainability

Research Ethics reform

The way in which unsustainability is sewn into the UvA fabric also affects research, not only **financial services.** As expressed directly by the CSR, and in the January and May 2023 occupations, students demanded cutting ties with the fossil fuel industry, with a focus on Shell. The company has proven to be an unethical and an unreliable (research) partner in the transition towards green energy.

Firstly, the core business model of fossil fuel companies like Shell, although include investments in green energy, still remains, after all, dirty energy. Considering that any production from new oil and gas fields, beyond those already in production or development, is irreconcilable with limiting warming to 1.5°C (in line with the Paris Agreement), and that the fossil fuel companies are predicted to spend $4.9 trillion in capital expenditures on new oil and gas projects over the next decade, it is not hard to see how their core business contributes to destroying the planet. These companies are in effect spending to lock-in climate pollution, with Shell being the second highest spender in terms of forecast capital expenditure in new fields ($149 billion for oil and gas), just after ExxonMobil and surprassing Gazprom.

It may still be argued that, despite the figure of 90% investments going in fossil fuels, working with Shell is still needed in transitioning to a greener society. This assumption is far from the reality of needing to rapidly and completely phase out all fossil fuel production - as of January 2022, for a 50% chance of limiting global warming to 1.5°C, the carbon budgets allows for only 10 years of current emissions. More grim, for an increased chance of 67%, this drops to only 7 years. Shell's economic performance (high profits in oil and gas) comes at the expense of the necessity of fossil fuel phaseout. Because of its poor profits from renewables, Shell will keep oil output steady or slightly higher into 2030. To assume that the company can still play a role in the green transition without a fundamental rethinking of its capital distribution is greenwashing.

Greenwashing also manifests in Shell's ommission to publish the exact figures of genuine renewable energy investments - while its 2021 annual report states that 12% of its total capital expenditure went to its 'Renewables and Energy Solutions' division, the exact figure on genuine renewables (wind and solar) may be as little as 1.5%, with the rest going to gas, which is a fossil fuel. Shell cannot claim they are in transition and doing otherwise would be greenwashing. Even when taking Shell's reports at face value, the claim of spending 17,2% of its total cash capital expenditure ($4.3 billion out of $25 billion in 2022) fades when confronted with the fact that they simultaneously decided to increase their investments in oil production and oil products by 30% to $12.5 billion. As mentioned previously, any increase does not commit to the 1.5°C warming limit.

Considering Shell's obvious financial interest in keeping up with burning fossil fuel, as well as its open secret greenwashing, how would the UvA ensure that research projects are not greenwashed themselves? How can bias towards fossil fuel be eliminated from academia? How can the students' curriculum be protected from the power of fossil fuel companies? In 2017, it was revealed that Shell was able to exert influence over education in terms of research, career opportunities, curriculum and admissions at the Erasmus University in Rotterdam. Since then, the contentious contract was terminated, but this raises more and more questions over collaborations between Dutch universities and controversial third parties. Reflecting on the past year, it has become evident that the UvA must take **proactive steps** to reevaluate the terms and conditions that govern third party collaborations.

The overarching aim of the CSR is to **help in the establishment of a well-defined framework that articulates ethical boundaries for research endeavors**. This framework's primary purpose is twofold: **firstly,** to safeguard against any inadvertent collaborations with third parties harboring unethical intentions, and secondly, to enhance transparency within the research process. We firmly believe that by clarifying what constitutes ethically sound research, we can empower students to better comprehend the scope of research activities at the university. This newfound transparency will provide students with the means to voice concerns when necessary. **Moreover,** transparency is important to monitoring and safeguarding the integrity of the university's research projects. Being transparent would also entail setting up clear criteria for obtaining access to documents and centralizing information on funding.

In essence, our objective is to foster an environment where the **ethical compass of research at the UvA is unequivocal**. Through collaboration and clear guidelines, we aim to uphold the values of integrity, transparency, and responsible research, ensuring that the university remains a beacon of ethical scholarship and innovation. For this reason, the CSR will fight for endowing the advisory committee with the necessary resources to conduct proper assessments of prospective collaborations. To corroborate on the transparency point, the outcome of these investigations should also be as much as possible made public.

https://www.erasmusmagazine.nl/en/2019/02/27/rsm-ends-controversial-contract-with-shell/

https://www.reuters.com/business/energy/shell-pivots-back-oil-win-over-investors-sources-2023-06-09/

https://www.globalwitness.org/en/campaigns/oil-gas-and-mining/overexposed/

PV 221019, prior treated in 220928.

Social Safety

Social safety policies

It is important for us to ensure the effective implementation of the social safety measures and actions that are already in place. This includes **reviewing and evaluating** the current policies and initiatives related to social safety. We aim to make sure that the measures in place are not only comprehensive but also **actively functioning** to create a safe and inclusive environment for all members of the university community. It is also important to establish a clear and accessible s**tructure for social safety** within the university. It is important to recognize that socially unsafe behaviour also affects the people around the person directly experiencing it. Therefore, the CSR recognizes the importance of raising awareness among all members of the university community about the available social safety facilities and resources.

Awareness for the Medezeggenschap

Election Turnout

The turnout for medezeggenschap (student participation) elections has decreased significantly in the past ten years. As these elections are supposed to represent the choice of all students at the UvA, this turnout must be increased. From conversation it seems that many times, students do not even know they can vote in the first place and what they can vote for. Other students do not see a sense in voting, as they believe the medezeggenschap to not be important enough. The CSR will examine various ways in which to attract students to the council and inform them of the work that we do. Additionally, we will use forms of media and create projects to reach a larger percentage of the student body.

Awareness for the Medezeggenschap

Accessibility of Information about the CSR

It is important to be visible on social media platforms and on campus to let students know what the CSR is and what is does. We are currently working on improving the website. this will help the CSR to increase transparency by posting meeting agendas and minutes every week. . Additionally , we will work on increasing our social media presence and reaching more of the student body.

Diversity

Increasing diversity of the UvA academic workforce

In accordance to UvA's intention to i**ncrease diversity in academic staff** the CSR has committed itself to aid the university with this endeavour. The need to increase diversity in staff has been first made public and explicit in the 2016 report by Wekker et al., called "Let's do Diversity", where it is recommended that the university:
'Establish a **Diversity Unit** as a linchpin responsible for coordination of diversity policies and the implementation and monitoring of the action plan. The Unit should monitor progress toward an inclusive University in numerical terms and research the desirability and implementation of quota with respect to gender and race/ethnicity if those goals are not met within the period set.' (https://hdl.handle.net/11245/1.546181 , p. 4)

However, a couple of years later the university published a shorter diversity report in which valuable information, such as how the number of non-Western and non-white staff has changed since the previous report, was not accounted for. Furthermore, in this new document the valuable expert recommendations were dismissed, and the commission stated that "how exactly this objective [increasing diversity of the workforce] is achieved depends, and calls for different approaches within the Strategic Personnel Plans (SPPs), as the level of diversity among existing staff members and the level among new candidates varies according to field and profession" (https://www.uva.nl/binaries/content/assets/uva/en/about-the-uva/uva-profile/diversity/uva-diversity-document-020919.pdf , p. 22). This new approach undermines the necessity of engaging on a binding commitment, of rigorously monitoring progress and most importantly, establishing solid mechanisms to anchor social justice and diversity.

Therefore, we are c**ommitted to investigating the university's progress since 2016** and to **push for the establishment of a mechanism following the "Let's do Diversity"** report's recommendations for increasing diversity of the academic staff. The CSR will also focus on outreach and gathering support from scholars, workers' associations, and student associations in order to strengthen their demand. Furthermore, the CSR is not making any demands that the university has not already shown public interest in achieving, the CSR simply wishes to aid the university at achieving those goals under the expert recommendations previously established taking social justice as a top and non-negotiable priority, which is also invaluable for delivering the highest standards of education and to make a historical step towards fighting hegemony and democratizing and decolonizing knowledge production and dissemination.

Diversity

Establishing Diversity in Learning - Decolonising the Curriculum

The CSR takes the matters of **quality of education and social justice as interdependent priorities.** As described in the 2016 diversity report:
"The question of diversity in relation to knowledge practices has been contextualized in relation to the geohistorical location of the university. It must be recognized that the university has played a central role in the reproduction of the modern/colonial division of knowledge. The university has been implicated in epistemic violence; that is, in the reproduction of the hegemony of a dominant knowledge that is monocultural in kind and that has had the effect of erasing and invalidating other knowledges and other worlds of meaning.
The university has a key role in addressing global social and environmental justice through being actively engaged in epistemic justice and in cultivating an academic community concerned with its direct impact on social and environmental issues.
(https://hdl.handle.net/11245/1.546181 , p. 67)

Henceforth, we are committed to **advocating for epistemic justice and decolonising the curriculum at a central level.** The CSR advocates for the application of the 'decolonisation toolkit' currently being developed by the CDO to be established at a central level. We aim to work in close contact with the CDO, to follow the developments of the toolkit and to facilitate its implementation by advocating for appropriate policy. We are eager to help the UvA accomplish such a historical leap towards quality of education and social justice together with the guaranteed enthusiastic collaboration of the CvB.

Diversity

Religion at the UvA

Religion and its place within the university has always been a longstanding topic of discussion. The official stance of the university is that of religious neutrality. The CSR takes neutrality to mean: equatable attitude towards, and facilitation for, all students of the UvA. Unfortunately , we feel that there are instances within the university policy where the manifestation of the policy places undue burden or stress upon a specific subgroup of students.

The CSR aims to do several things. **Firstly,** we want to examine the role that religion plays at this university at a multidimensional level. We believe that as the university becomes increasingly diverse, policies should reflect the varying needs of the student body. The CSR will work on this in order to ensure that all students feel at home on campus.

Secondly, we want to help **create awareness about the CDO** amongst the general student population. We believe that the CDO can help students work on issues that concern them and make the university a more inclusive space. We would also like to help facilitate the CDO become more accessible to the general student population.

Accessibility

First, the CSR would like to strive for a more **centralised accessibility policy** at our university. Right now, each faculty operates independently regarding accessibility, with little communication between faculties. This leads to every faculty getting at least some accessibility measures right, but refusing to implement others even though they are sorely needed. It also leads to more accessible education at the faculties that just so happen to have more resources at their disposal, while students at all faculties equally deserve to have accessible education.

Second, whether accessibility measures are implemented is decided by either the deans or the study advisors. However, sometimes they don't even have any knowledge about the disability in question, so they decide arbitrarily without being aware of the consequences that decision can lead to. That needs to change. Deciding bodies for accessibility measures should receive training on what various disabilities entail, and people with that actual disability should be involved in the decision making process. They will know best if it is a fair thing to ask for or not. Decide with these students, instead of about them. This includes the following points:

1: **Students with a disability should be involved in the policy process** from inception to implementation. At least one, preferably more students with the disability that the measure pertains to should be involved in this process. If it is impossible to involve students of the UvA, we should get external advice from someone with the disability the measure pertains to.

2: **The burden of complaint should not be on the vulnerable students**. If something in the system of our university is wrong, it is up to the university to minimise the burden on the students that suffer as a result as much as possible. Right now, if any measure is missing, the entire administrative burden falls on these students. For example, having to write a detailed motivation letter for each possible measure.

Third, we would like the university involved in making the social side of being a student more accessible and inclusive. That is, study and student associations, as well as exercising at the USC, should be made more accessible. Right now, many study and student associations create hurdles if you want to join with a disability. Not all, but many. This is because there is no knowledge about the disability in general and it seems that the associations don't know how to deal with it. For these associations, creating accessibility can seem like a huge hurdle, but with a few small steps there can already be a great impact. There should be a support system in place for students with a disability that wish to participate in the student life more actively. At the moment, it is always up to these students to convince the associations, which takes a lot of time and effort on their part. Sometimes, as a student, you really have to force your way in and prove yourself first, which is very exhausting to deal with, especially combined with studies that also aren't completely accessible.

The social side of being a student is often forgotten, but it is arguably one of the most important aspects of university life. Half of being a student is building friendships and connections that will help immensely later in life, both in a social context as well as for your later job opportunities.

Fourth, there is also the **physical side of accessibility** that needs work. That includes but isn't limited to:
· No guiding lines on the floor
· The revolving doors that are not accessible
· Some elevators not announcing which floor you are on, which means that it is very easy to get off on the wrong place and get lost
These are just some examples, but there are many other things that also need work.

Fifth, there is **no urgency for students with a disability when looking for a home**. While there is a lack of housing for everyone, students with a disability face other, unique problems, which makes the selection even more limited. Examples include:
· Is the building accessible?
· Is it at least relatively well connected to the public transportation network? Sadly, for most of these students biking everywhere just isn't a possibility.

The CSR will be focusing on **accessibility and inclusivity** in the following ways:
· The accessibility of education
· The accessibility of student social life
· The physical accessibility of the buildings
Through this the CSR aims to make life at our university more accessible for every student.

Profileringsfond

Changes to the Profileringsfond

The Profiling Fund was initially established with a noble objective - to mitigate the effects of study delays. However, its current operation leaves much to be desired, as it inadvertently results in inadequate compensation for dedicated students who actively engage in their student and study associations, union, and participation council.

It is imperative that the Profiling Fund undergoes a transformation. This transformation should involve regular adjustments to account for inflation in conjunction with the CAO collective labour agreement, which allowed for UvA staff to get a 9% raise starting this academic year. Such inflation corrections ensure that this compensation remains relevant and fair to the students it aims to support. Furthermore, we believe that a critical examination of the fund's functioning should include meaningful input from students themselves.

By reevaluating and reshaping the Profiling Fund in collaboration with students, we can work towards a more equitable and effective system that recognizes and compensates the valuable contributions made by our active student community. In doing so, we can align the fund's objectives with the principles of fairness and student welfare.

Conclusion

These were some of the main goals and projects that the CSR 2023-24 will focus on in the upcoming year. It is important to keep in mind that the main role of the Central Student Council and the medezeggenschap is to participate in policy conversations, to influence and advice on policy decisions. The power to achieve proposals that are coming from the side of the CSR depend mostly on the agreement of the Executive Board of the University. This means that no matter how much council members work on their specific gaols, success is not a guarantee. However we can guarantee that we are doing our best, and always act, advise and take positions in the interest of us students.

If you are interested in the work that the CSR is doing throughout the year, you can follow us on our instagram account @uvacentraal, and check out our website: studentenraad.nl/. There, you can also find archives of documents, as well as agendas and minutes of plenary meetings (PVs) as well as official meetings with the executive board (OVs). You will also find the times these meetings take place, **in case you would like to join in person!**

Should you have any questions for the CSR as a whole, please don't hesitate to reach out to our secretary (csr@uva.nl), or otherwise, directly to our chair Noah (Noah.Pellikaan@studentenraad.nl).

If you have any questions or comments regarding the projects the council and the committees are working on, feel free to reach out to our committee chairs for O&F - **Ihab (Ihab.Laachir.CSR@gmail.com)**, for O&O - **Mic (Mic.Cimmino.CSR@gmail.com)** and for O&M - **Sanaa (Sanaa.Kashif.CSR@gmail.com).**

If you would like to see more elaboration of our year plan, and celebrate the consitution of our council, come join us at our COBO and year plan presentation! The date and time for this will be posted on our social medias!

All the best,

The 2023-24 Central Student Council of the University of Amsterdam