UNIVERSITAIRE STUDENTENRAAD

Policy Plan
2026-2027

University Student Council
Vrije Universiteit Amsterdam

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Foreword

Dear reader,

Welcome to the University Student Council Policy Plan for the 2026-2027 academic year. This document presents the ambitions of our council and the direction we want to take in representing students across Vrije Universiteit Amsterdam.

Our vision is of a university in which students can study, develop, and participate without unnecessary barriers. Educational quality must remain strong while teaching continues to adapt to developments such as artificial intelligence. Students must be able to trust that the university takes social safety, accessibility, wellbeing, and their rights seriously. Opportunities for academic and professional development should not depend on a student's financial position, personal circumstances, or existing network. The decisions that shape university life should be transparent, well considered, and informed by the people they affect.

The coming year will require the VU to make choices in a changing environment. Financial pressures, developments in higher education, questions surrounding international collaboration, and the growing role of technology all have consequences for students. The USR must therefore do more than respond after decisions have been made. We want to involve students early, examine proposals critically, and offer practical alternatives grounded in their experiences.

This vision is reflected throughout the three parts of this policy plan. Within Education and Research, we focus on the quality and accessibility of education, responsible AI policy, social safety, student support, and opportunities for personal and professional growth. Within Organisation and Finance, we seek careful financial decision-making, accessible facilities, transparent international partnerships, effective digital services, and strong internal development. Through Communications, we want to make student participation more visible and create lasting connections between the USR, students, Faculty Student Councils, associations, and the wider university community.

None of these ambitions can be achieved by the council alone. Meaningful representation depends on cooperation with students, the Works Council, Faculty Student Councils, programme committees, associations, staff, services, and the Executive Board. It also requires us to remain approachable and honest about our progress. As chair, I want the USR to be a council that listens before it speaks, communicates clearly, and follows through on the responsibilities entrusted to it.

This policy plan provides our starting point, but it is not the limit of our work. New concerns will emerge during the year, and our priorities may need to develop with them. What will remain constant is our commitment to ensuring that the student perspective is present wherever the future of the VU is discussed and decided. I invite every student to engage with us, challenge us, and help us make that perspective as broad and representative as possible.

Jusry Eshun
Chair of the University Student Council 2026-2027

Education and Research

The committee represents students in university-wide education and research policy and develops proposals concerning educational quality, safety, development and support.

Joint Assembly

As representatives of the USR within the Joint Assembly (GV), we are committed to ensuring that the student perspective is meaningfully represented in university-wide education and research policy. We will work closely with the Works Council to develop well-informed and balanced advice for the Executive Board while fostering constructive collaboration between students, staff, and other representative bodies. By promoting evidence-based decision-making, we aim to ensure that policies are informed by student feedback, educational data, and developments in higher education. We will also strive to improve communication between the Joint Assembly and the wider student community by providing transparent updates on policy discussions and demonstrating how university-wide decisions affect students. Above all, we will advocate for policies that strengthen the quality of education, support innovative and inclusive learning environments, protect academic freedom, and contribute to a research culture that benefits both students and staff.

Quality of Education

The Quality of Education portfolio will focus on two main projects: Course Evaluations and AI Policies. While recognising that these projects differ across faculties, the USR aims to support Faculty Student Representatives (FSRs) wherever possible by developing guiding frameworks and facilitating the exchange of best practices. One of our key priorities is improving the quality and response rates of Course Evaluations. Current participation levels are low, raising concerns about how representative and reliable the collected feedback is. To address this, we aim to explore and pilot approaches that have proven successful at other universities. One possible approach is introducing incentive-based participation, for example by offering small rewards such as discounts at the university cafeteria or SPAR. We would ideally pilot such a system early in the academic year, allowing sufficient time to evaluate its effectiveness and make adjustments where necessary before considering wider implementation. Another option would be to explore stronger measures to encourage participation. One possibility would be requiring students to complete the Course Evaluation before receiving their final course results or completing the course administration process. Such an approach would require close cooperation with teaching staff, but we believe many lecturers would support measures that increase participation, as Course Evaluations provide valuable feedback for improving the quality of education.

AI Policy

The continued growth of AI has presented challenges and opportunities for academia and our university community. The VU has already shown commitment to a fair and effective use of AI by providing AI tools such as Nebula and Cogniti, protecting students from false AI fraud accusations by banning AI detection tools, and exploring further opportunities with the VU-UvA task force on AI and the AI Competence Network. However, the USR sees ways to improve the VU's AI policy, with a focus on AI harm reduction and AI literacy. Our proposals aim to improve communication of the VU's AI policies and tools, develop AI tools for students, and expand AI literacy efforts to raise awareness of AI's negative societal impacts and enable students to use AI critically and safely. These policies include:

- Establishing a central page on the VU website for all AI-related information and regulations.
- Centrally adopting the AI Assessment Scale (AIAS) by lecturers in all courses to clearly communicate permitted AI use for students.
- Providing students with a general-use AI chat environment that prevents their data from being stored or used for training by AI companies. The USR is eager to explore multiple options to achieve this goal, including but not limited to:
  - Adapting the Network Institute's Nebula for general student use.
  - Adopting the UvA's AI Chat infrastructure for the VU.
  - When launched, adopt SURF's EduGenAI for general student use
- Expanding and improving communication of AI literacy resources to students with integration into pre-existing Academic Skills modules, AI literacy courses with ECTS credits, online resources, and ensuring safe AI use resources are accompanied by awareness of AI's negative societal impacts. Although not a main project of the USR this term, we remain fully available and willing to help and cooperate with FSR who seek to discuss and modify their BSA requirement within their faculty.

Social Safety

Policy for Confidential Advisors for Inappropriate Conduct: CAIC

Complaints Procedure for Inappropriate Conduct: CPIC

Complaints Committee: CC

Ensuring students' safety during their studies is the university's top priority. Unfortunately, over the past few years, a pattern of failures to protect students' safety has eroded trust in VU's social safety procedures. To rebuild trust, the structural flaws of the social safety system must be addressed. Our policy recommendations aim to do this by improving the communicability of the current complaints procedure, reducing obstacles to complainants in filing a complaint, and creating further protections for complainants throughout the process. The current social safety system suffers from poor communication, with information fragmented across multiple disconnected pages; weak regulations on confidential advisors, with no conditions for their withdrawal from a case; and contradictory roles, as both guides to the complaints procedure and adjudicators of whether cases can be investigated. Complainants also face significant obstacles, including the requirement to resolve issues informally and multiple rounds of filing the same complaint, which Essanhaji's (2023) paper on the VU's complaint procedure calls "work on top of work". Complainants also lack clear anti-retaliation measures, further discouraging the reporting of misconduct. During adjudication, the process also lacks clear appeal procedures for the complainant and remains bureaucratically complex. Fears of retaliation are also a common obstacle to making complaints. Given this, there should be stronger measures to protect from retaliation and impose interim protective measures While we look forward to the proposals from the VU's own internal investigation into reforming the social safety system, the USR believes the following changes would be important steps in ensuring a safe university for all students.

Transparency and effective communication of policy

- Consolidating information on reporting inappropriate conduct to a central page, with clear communication on how to report inappropriate conduct, the timeline and the procedure of the complaints process.
- Creating a complaints form on the central page to book appointments with confidential advisors and submit a complaint's relevant details as an alternative to emailing.

    - A model for a complaint form is TU Delft's Speak Up reporting system
- Providing the complainant and respondent with the CC's final report, after sufficient anonymisation
- Publishing an anonymised annual report by the CC on its performance, and providing recommendations for improvements in procedure.

Complaint support protection and reduction of administrative burden

- Amending CPIC Article 6.1 to remove informal resolution as a prerequisite to filing an official complaint. Offering mediated informal resolution as a support offered by confidential advisors, not a prerequisite to filing an official complaint.
    - The CC may still mandate mediation after hearings are held
- Allow the complainant to request interim protective measures during first contact with a confidential advisor, along with the initial complaint.
- Offer anti-retaliation protection by defining retaliation towards a complainant by a respondent as inappropriate conduct.
- Allow complainants to submit anonymous complaints
- Provide clear avenues for a complainant to appeal decisions by the CvB or CC to the Disputes Advisory Committee on requests for anonymity, interim protective measures, demanded mediation, admissibility of complaint, and complaint foundedness.
- Allow for collective complaints of individuals with shared experiences.

Structural reorganisation

- Remove CAIC, Article 4.5 of the "Policy for Confidential Advisors for Inappropriate Conduct", or amend with stricter conditions for confidential advisor resignation
- Clarifying that supporting complainants in writing a formal complaint to the CC is a duty of confidential advisor to CAIC, Article 4.1
- Sending complaints directly to the CC's secretary, and informing the CvB of a complaint only after the CC completes their final report.
- Remove requirement in CPIC article 2.2 for complainant to avoid harm to interests

Student Development

During this term, Student Development will centre on two priorities: strengthening the Honours Programme and expanding students' opportunities to undertake internships as part of their degree. Both projects are intended to give students more freedom to develop their abilities, discover their interests and gain experience beyond the standard curriculum. Our first priority concerns the Honours Programme. The programme provides motivated bachelor's students with interdisciplinary and faculty-based education alongside their regular studies. Participants complete 30 additional credits during the second and third years of their bachelor's degree. Admission is normally based on completing the first year with an average grade of at least 7.5, while receiving the final honours distinction also depends on maintaining this average and completing the bachelor's degree within three years. The USR will examine whether these conditions allow students from different programmes and personal circumstances to participate on equal terms. A student's academic potential cannot always be captured by a single grade average, particularly because workloads and methods of assessment vary between degree programmes. The additional workload may also be harder to manage for students who work, have caring responsibilities, live with a disability or chronic illness, or experience other circumstances that affect their studies. We therefore want to discuss whether motivation, personal development and individual circumstances can receive greater

consideration in admission and completion decisions without reducing the academic level of the programme. We also want students to have a clearer understanding of what participation entails before applying. Information about faculty courses, schedules, expected workload, available support and possible exceptions should be easy to locate in Dutch and English. Furthermore, we will gather experiences from current and former participants to better understand differences between faculties, reasons for leaving the programme and opportunities to improve its academic and social community. Through our participation in the Honours Committee, we will represent these findings and encourage the regular involvement of students in decisions about the programme. Our second priority is increasing access to internships during the bachelor's degree. Although the VU's elective space can be used for an internship in certain programmes, the available possibilities and procedures differ considerably between faculties. Some students can receive credits for an internship, while others encounter unclear rules, limited options or lengthy approval processes. Students are also frequently responsible for finding an organisation and arranging supervision themselves, which can disadvantage those without an established professional network.

We want to explore how internships can become a more widely available part of the minor or free-choice period. One possibility is to develop flexible internship components worth different numbers of credits, allowing students to combine practical experience with minor courses or other electives. This should remain academically relevant and include suitable learning objectives, university supervision and transparent assessment. Faculties may need different requirements, but every student should be able to understand which opportunities are available and how to apply for them. In addition, students need more practical assistance when searching and applying for placements. We will advocate for a central overview of internship opportunities, faculty procedures, contact persons and requirements. Career Services, degree programmes and external organisations should cooperate more closely to offer vacancies, application guidance and matching activities. Particular attention should be given to international students, students with disabilities and students who do not already have access to professional networks. Financial accessibility will also form part of this project. An internship should not become an opportunity that is available only to students who can afford to work without adequate compensation. We will therefore raise questions about fair internship allowances, reimbursement of necessary expenses and possible support for students who would otherwise be unable to participate. Through consultation with students, faculty representatives, programme directors, Examination Boards, Career Services and the Honours Committee, we aim to develop practical proposals for both projects. Ultimately, student development opportunities at the VU should be challenging, valuable and realistically accessible to students with different backgrounds and circumstances.

Student Oriented Support

The Student-Oriented Support portfolio will focus on three closely connected priorities: access to mental-health support, support for students with disabilities, and greater attention to students' physical health. Across all three areas, our aim is to ensure that students can find the right support, understand how to access it, and receive help within a reasonable period of time. First, we will work to improve the accessibility of mental-health services at the VU. Although different forms of support are available, including academic advisers, student counsellors and student psychologists, students may not always know which service is appropriate or how to reach it. Information is often scattered across different webpages, while long waiting times and bureaucratic procedures can create additional barriers. We therefore believe that support services should be more visible and easier to navigate. Students should be able to find, in one central location, what support is available, what it can be used for and how they can get in touch, in both Dutch and English. We will also encourage preventative initiatives that address student wellbeing before problems become more serious. Second, we will advocate for students with disabilities, chronic illnesses, neurodivergence and other personal circumstances that affect their studies. Our focus will include physical and digital accessibility, the

process for requesting accommodations, and the consistent application of approved accommodations across faculties and courses. Students should not repeatedly have to explain or defend their needs.

Access to the special examination room should also be simplified. Students who are entitled to use this room currently have to register separately for every examination and resit. Because of the strict registration deadline, students may miss the opportunity to use an accommodation they genuinely need. We therefore want to work towards a simpler system, for example by automatically registering students once their entitlement has been established. Third, we will bring greater attention to physical health, which is often neglected in discussions about student wellbeing. Students may experience difficulty finding a general practitioner, understanding the Dutch healthcare system, or knowing where to seek help outside regular university services. These barriers can be particularly significant for international students and students who have recently moved to Amsterdam. We will investigate how the VU currently informs students about medical care and advocate for clearer, practical guidance on general practitioners, urgent care, health insurance, sexual health and other relevant services. Students also need proactive and timely guidance during important transition periods, such as starting a degree programme, looking for an internship, going on exchange or preparing to graduate. Degree programmes and faculties should clearly explain in advance which steps students need to take, which deadlines are important and where they can go with questions. Another important issue is cooperation between faculties and central services. Students are sometimes sent from one department to another without it being clear who is responsible. Better coordination is therefore needed, with one clear point of contact for students. To achieve these goals, we will maintain close contact with students, relevant VU departments, support professionals, representative bodies and student organisations. Through consultation, collaboration and practical policy recommendations, we aim to promote an inclusive support system. Finally, the University Student Council believes that a quiet and prayer room should be established in the New University Building. Students who wish to pray, meditate or briefly withdraw should also be able to do so at weekends, when the existing facilities in the Main Building have limited availability. This space should be accessible to students from a variety of religious and philosophical backgrounds.

Organisation and Finance

The committee follows the university's financial, legal, physical and digital conditions and works to ensure that decisions remain transparent, accessible and attentive to students' interests.

Financial and Economic Affairs

The Financial and Economic Affairs (GV FEZ) portfolio focuses on the financial planning, monitoring, and accountability of the VU and on the connection between financial decisions and university policy. The USR works together with the Ondernemingsraad (OR) through the Joint Assembly to assess key financial and planning documents and to provide input on the financial and policy choices made by the VU.

The portfolio covers the VU's Planning & Control cycle, including the Kadernota, budget and Year Plan, progress reports, and Annual Report. It also includes the evaluation of the budgetary process, support for decentralized participation bodies, quality agreements, and the VUSAM and KDM allocation models.

The USR will focus on carefully following the financial developments of the VU, preparing the GV for its formal rights, and ensuring that relevant financial and policy implications are adequately discussed within the Joint Assembly. Particular attention will be paid to maintaining a constructive dialogue with Finance and the Executive Board and to involving other GV committees where financial decisions have consequences for their policy areas.

Financial Support Student/Study Associations

Student and study associations play an important role in fostering student community and providing students with opportunities to participate in university life. However, associations are facing challenges in attracting and retaining members, which can make it more difficult to organize activities, maintain a strong community, and ensure continuity. Financial constraints can further limit their ability to respond to these challenges and provide meaningful activities for their members.

The USR believes that student associations should have access to sufficient and accessible financial support to sustain their activities and strengthen their communities. At the same time, available resources should be used effectively and in a way that supports the long-term sustainability of associations.

The USR will therefore investigate the current financial support available to student and study associations and identify where associations experience financial barriers or limitations. This includes examining the different funding streams available, the conditions attached to them, and whether the current distribution of resources adequately supports associations in maintaining and developing their activities.

The USR will also engage with student and study associations to better understand their financial needs and the challenges they face in attracting and retaining members. Based on these findings, the USR will assess whether the current financial support provided by the VU is sufficient and whether available resources are distributed and used effectively. Where necessary, the USR will formulate concrete recommendations for improving the financial support and long-term sustainability of student associations.

Campus Development

The portfolio Campus Development focuses on the physical environment in which students study, live, and participate in university life. The USR aims to contribute to a campus that is accessible, functional, and supportive of students' academic and personal wellbeing. This includes the availability and quality of facilities and services during important moments in students' studies.

Examination Accessibility

The USR believes that examinations should be reasonably accessible to all students. Long travel distances to external examination venues can increase stress and uncertainty and may also result in additional travel costs. While the use of external venues may sometimes be necessary due to capacity constraints, accessibility should be an important consideration when selecting examination locations.

The USR will therefore evaluate the current external examination locations together with the relevant VU services and assess whether these locations are sufficiently accessible for students. Where feasible, the USR will advocate for the use of examination venues that are closer to the VU or otherwise more accessible. Where distant locations remain necessary, the USR will explore whether appropriate support for students' travel can be provided.

To ensure that this assessment reflects students' actual experiences, the USR will collect and analyse student feedback on external examination locations. Based on this evaluation, the USR will formulate evidence-based recommendations for the Executive Board and the responsible services.

Study Spaces

The USR believes that clean, accessible, and quiet study spaces are essential for a productive learning environment. The availability of suitable study spaces becomes particularly important during periods of high demand, such as the weeks leading up to and during examinations.

The USR sees potential to improve the use of the OZW building as a study environment, as the building currently offers relatively few study spaces compared with other locations on campus. The USR will therefore investigate how OZW could become a more attractive and suitable place for students to study, including whether existing spaces can be used more effectively.

In addition, the USR will look at the utilization of existing study spaces across campus. Rather than focusing solely on creating additional study spaces, the USR will explore whether existing spaces can be made more available, accessible, and suitable for studying.

Through these efforts, the USR aims to contribute to a campus where students can reliably find appropriate places to study, particularly during periods of high demand.

Legal Matters (JZ)

The Legal Matters (JZ) portfolio focuses on the regulations, legal frameworks, and rights that shape the position of students and the university's governance. In addition to reviewing changes to regulations, the portfolio provides legal input on broader policy dossiers where legal, procedural, or regulatory considerations play an important role. The USR aims to ensure that these frameworks are clear, transparent, and aligned with the rights and interests of students.

International Collaborations

The VU collaborates internationally with universities, knowledge institutions, and other organizations. These collaborations are important for education, research, and knowledge exchange, but can also

raise questions regarding academic freedom, human rights, funding, and potential conflicts of interest. The USR believes that international collaborations should therefore be assessed through a transparent, consistent, and sufficiently independent process.

The USR aims to strengthen the VU Assessment Framework for International Collaborations, with a particular focus on transparency and accountability. The framework should provide clearer insight into the criteria used to assess international collaborations, the actors involved in the assessment, and the way in which decisions are reached. The USR also believes that the framework should explicitly address ethical considerations, including potential risks related to human rights, academic freedom, and conflicts with the VU's core values and societal responsibility.

An important part of this is greater transparency regarding the funding of international collaborations. The USR will advocate for more insight into the public and private funding streams used for international projects and partnerships, and into the extent to which financial interests or dependencies may affect the independence of education, research, or decision-making. Where relevant, these financial considerations should form part of the assessment of a collaboration.

The USR will also advocate for greater openness about international partnerships and the decision-making process surrounding them. This includes exploring which information on partnerships, funding, assessment procedures, and decisions can be proactively disclosed. The USR will further explore whether the VU can, in specific cases, voluntarily publish information beyond what is legally required, including in situations where exemptions under the Wet open overheid (Woo) would otherwise apply.

Finally, the USR wants to strengthen safeguards around independence and conflicts of interest. The assessment of sensitive international collaborations should take place with sufficient independence, including clear rules on the disclosure of relevant interests and, where appropriate, the involvement of independent expertise or representatives from within the university.

The USR therefore does not advocate for automatically terminating international collaborations. Instead, we aim to ensure that the VU has a robust and verifiable framework through which collaborations can be assessed, monitored, and, where necessary, reconsidered. This should also allow existing collaborations to be reassessed when relevant circumstances, including human rights conditions, change.

Information Technology

The Information & Technology portfolio focuses on the digital systems and services that support students in their education and interaction with the university. The USR aims to ensure that these systems are accessible, functional, and responsive to students' needs.

The portfolio primarily concerns the digital learning environment and other IT systems that directly affect students. The USR maintains contact with the relevant VU departments to raise student concerns, provide feedback, and follow developments in these systems.

Training, Development and Professionalisation

The Training, Development and Professionalisation (TOP) portfolio focuses on supporting the development and professionalization of the USR through training, evaluation, and other learning opportunities. The USR believes that continuous development is essential for the effective functioning of the council and for members to fulfil their roles effectively.

The TOP portfolio is responsible for coordinating training moments and conferences and for identifying and responding to the training needs of the council throughout the academic year. As

these needs may change throughout the year, the USR will continuously assess which training and development opportunities are necessary and discuss these needs within the council and with the Daily Board.

Communications

Visibility engagement outreach and community building

The Communications Committee is responsible for making the work of the USR visible, accessible and relevant to the VU student community. This policy plan translates the committee's priorities into a clear communication approach for the year. It focuses on strengthening social media, increasing the USR's physical presence on campus, supporting events and elections, and improving communication with internal and external partners.

Main Objectives

- Make the USR more visible and recognisable across the VU campus.
- Use social media strategically to inform, engage and involve students.
- Strengthen communication with FSRs, study associations and campus partners.
- Support events, campaigns and elections with consistent and timely promotion.
- Create more opportunities for students to interact directly with the USR.

Visibility and Community

The committee will work to make the USR more present in students' everyday university experience. This means combining strong digital communication with visible and approachable on-campus engagement.

Social media as a key communication channel

Social media will be one of the USR's main tools for communication, community building, and information sharing. The committee will use different platforms strategically and adapt content to the way students consume information. Short-form content will be used regularly to communicate updates in a concise, engaging, and accessible format.

Campus media

The committee will strengthen collaboration with campus media such as Ad Valvas and VU Campus Radio. These channels can help the USR reach students beyond its own social media following and provide more space to explain council activities, student concerns, and ongoing university developments.

Physical visibility on campus

The USR should also be recognisable offline. The Communications Committee will support the council's presence at VU events of different sizes and will help create simple, visible formats for direct contact with students. This can include promotional stands, informal outreach moments, campaign materials, and recurring activities that make the council easier to approach.

Community-building platforms

Existing platforms such as Bridging Success can be used to reach students who may not already be involved in student participation. The committee will use these networks to promote activities, invite feedback, and encourage more students to participate in the wider VU community.

Internal Communication and Relations

The Communications Committee also has an important role in supporting communication between the USR and other student participation bodies. Clearer communication between councils and associations can improve cooperation and make it easier to share opportunities, information and good practices.

Faculty Student Councils

The committee will support communication between the USR and FSRs by making better use of shared channels between presidiums and councils. Where relevant, joint initiatives can also be promoted together, allowing councils to benefit from one another's reach and experience.

Study associations and the UVO

The committee will help improve communication around the University Associations Meeting (UVO) and other engagement with study associations. This includes clearer promotion of meetings, workshops and training opportunities, as well as more tailored communication depending on the needs of associations.

External Relations and Outreach

The committee will support the USR's external relations by communicating its participation in national and international student networks. This is particularly relevant in a period in which universities face shared challenges such as budget cuts and changing internationalisation policies.

External communication should show students that the USR does not operate in isolation. Where relevant, the committee will highlight cooperation, solidarity and knowledge sharing between universities, as well as the USR's participation in wider events and networks.

Aurora

The Communications Committee will also support communication around the Aurora European University Alliance. Aurora connects nine European universities with shared interests in societal impact, innovation and diversity. The committee will promote student engagement opportunities connected to Aurora and communicate relevant outcomes back to the VU student community.

Culture and Diversity

Communication should reflect the diversity of the VU community. The committee will support initiatives that highlight different cultures, identities and experiences and make inclusive participation more visible across USR channels.

Culture Day

Culture Day will remain an important initiative for celebrating the cultures represented at VU. The Communications Committee will support the promotion of the event and coordination with participating student organisations and participation bodies. Content around the event can highlight art, food, performances and the diversity of the VU community.

Collaboration with VU partners

The committee will maintain closer communication with the Diversity Office, 3D and the University Relations and Fundraising Department (DURF). These partnerships can help the USR reach wider audiences and support cultural and community-focused initiatives throughout the year.

Events and Public Engagement

Events are a key communication tool because they create direct contact between the council and students. The committee will support the promotion, visibility and communication strategy of USR events, with attention to both students who are already involved and those who are not.

Event promotion

The committee will work towards a more structured system for event communication. This includes earlier promotion, consistent visual communication, clear information about the purpose of events and follow-up content after activities have taken place. A more organised approach should improve reach while also making communication more cost-effective.

Public USR meetings and Tosti Breaks

Public USR meetings will be promoted more actively so that students understand that they can attend and contribute. The committee will clearly explain what a Public USR is and why students may want to participate. Informal formats such as Tosti Breaks can also be used to increase visibility, create low-threshold contact with students and direct them towards the council's work.

Recruitment and Elections

Recruitment and elections are one of the Communications Committee's most important annual campaigns. The aim is not only to encourage students to vote, but also to improve awareness of what student councils do and motivate more students to become candidates.

Election campaign

The committee will support an Election Kickoff Event and coordinate election communication across the USR's channels. Outreach will be connected to the USR's wider communication efforts throughout the year so that students already recognize the council before the election period begins.

Turnout target

Building on the previous combined voter turnout of 12% for the University Student Council, the USR aims for a turnout of at least 15%. The Communications Committee will contribute to this goal through clear, accessible and repeated election messaging, both online and on campus.

Reviewing election communication

Alongside the broader review of the election system, the committee will examine how election communication can better represent the diversity of the student body, reach students across faculties and increase understanding of the role of student representatives.

Working Principles

Across all activities, the Communications Committee will work according to four principles: consistency, accessibility, relevance and collaboration. Communication should be recognisable across channels, easy to understand, connected to issues that matter to students, and developed together with the relevant USR members and partners.

- Consistency: Maintain a recognisable tone, visual identity and posting rhythm.
- Accessibility: Use clear language and make information easy to find and understand.
- Relevance: Focus communication on issues, opportunities and events that matter to students.

- Collaboration: Coordinate communication with USR committees, FSRs, associations and VU partners whenever appropriate.

Afterword

The priorities in this policy plan share one underlying purpose: ensuring that students are not merely affected by university policy, but are meaningfully involved in shaping it. Whether the subject is education, social safety, finances, campus facilities, technology, or communication, our responsibility is to bring student experiences into the rooms where decisions are made and to make those decisions understandable to the community they affect.

The division into committees helps organise our work, but our vision belongs to the whole council. Educational ambitions must be supported by responsible financial choices. Accessibility must be considered in classrooms, digital systems, support services, and physical spaces. Strong representation also depends on communication that reaches students and creates genuine opportunities for them to respond. We will therefore work across portfolios and evaluate our progress collectively throughout the year.

We recognise that a policy plan cannot anticipate every development. New issues will arise, circumstances will change, and some objectives will require persistence beyond a single council term. We will remain responsive without losing sight of the principles that guide us: the quality of education, equal access to opportunities, transparent governance, social and academic safety, and a university community in which students can participate with confidence.

The work ahead depends on cooperation. We value the knowledge and experience held by individual students, Faculty Student Councils, programme committees, student and study associations, staff, university services, the Works Council, and the Executive Board. We will continue to seek their perspectives, communicate openly about our work, and make space for disagreement where it can lead to better decisions.

We thank the students of the VU for the trust placed in us. During 2026-2027, we will work to turn the ambitions in this plan into visible progress and to leave student participation stronger, more accessible, and better connected than we found it. We invite the entire VU community to work with us in building a university that listens to its students and acts on what it hears.

University Student Council
Vrije Universiteit Amsterdam 2026-2027