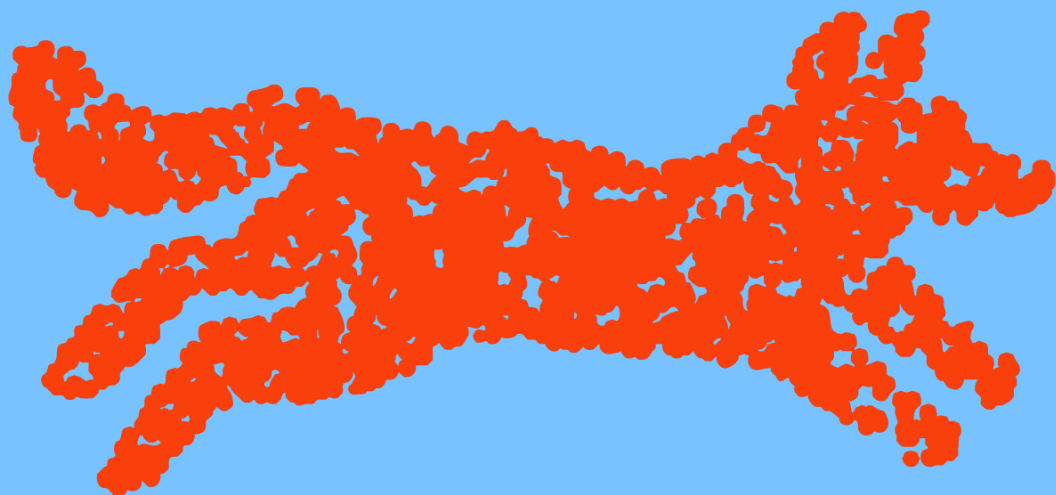


POLICY PLAN

2025 - 2026



Introduction

The Vrije Universiteit Brussel has a rich history of student participation in governance. The student council's policy plan is a continuation of this culture, in which participation and cooperation are central. This document outlines our council's vision and priorities for the 2025-2026 academic year, giving students, staff and external observers an idea of the ambitions we pursue as student representatives.

The academic year ahead will bring significant challenges for both the VUB and its student council. The savings imposed directly on our university by the Flemish government are already having a clear impact on the functioning of the institution. Resources will be scarcer, and tough choices will have to be made. As the student council, we recognise this reality and accept our responsibility to support the VUB in making these decisions. Furthermore, we want to ensure that the interests of students are not lost sight of and that the burden is shared so that solidarity within the university community remains paramount.

Although student facilities will be spared from direct cuts, the elimination of a quarter of the funds for Flemish study grants will have a major impact on the student finance department, and consequently on the entire Division III. Because of the trust that the VUB places in its students, the lion's share of the responsibility for this division falls on us. We are therefore taking a constructive approach to helping make decisions and safeguarding the VUB's social attitude so that we can continue to be a catalyst for social mobility in the future.

In addition to these external circumstances, we want to focus on strengthening our own operations. A first priority is to increase student participation. Too often, student involvement is limited to a small group. Broader representation is necessary to reflect the diversity of our community and to carry out our tasks properly. Moreover, it brings more students into contact with the ins and outs of this body, which will result in more informed candidates participating in future elections. We therefore want to focus on communication between the council and the student population, in both directions.

In addition, we will develop a new organisational structure and a sustainable flow of information for the student council. This means that we will evaluate our internal processes, better define responsibilities and strengthen continuity, so that future student councils can build on a strong foundation. One example that can already be found in this policy plan is the new reorganisation and anchoring of the three coordinator powers. Starting this year, we want to appoint a fixed number of coordinators for future-proof policy themes: education, facilities and community.

This policy plan is therefore not only a response to the current financial context, but also a compass to strengthen the functioning of the student council and give the voice of students at the VUB more power.



Education

Education is at the core of the relationship between the university and its students. It is therefore a priority for our council to work towards an education policy during this academic year that not only guarantees quality and is resilient to the challenges of the future but is also supported by the students themselves.

Student Participation

Today, students are represented in the field of education in the programme councils, faculty councils and competent central councils, but cooperation between these levels is too fragmented. The student council wants to avoid this by organising regular meetings between representatives. Regular consultation, a digital platform for knowledge sharing and uniform positions should ensure that students can more clearly indicate what they consider to be the strengths and weaknesses of education at the VUB.

Quality Assurance

The quality of a programme is essential to guarantee the value of a degree. The NVAO will conduct an institutional review next year, and the VUB organises annual peer reviews to evaluate itself. Students play a key role in this. The council wants to recruit and guide students more actively to participate in panels, so that the student perspective is structurally taken into account. We want to focus on pre- and post-care and compensation so that students feel more confident in their role as quality guardians and can set aside the necessary time and space for this.

Fraud and AI

The rise of artificial intelligence is radically changing education. Both students and lecturers are increasingly using AI tools for assignments and examinations. The student council wants to work with the university to evaluate how this can be used responsibly, which traditional assessment methods are outdated, and how curricula can be adapted. The aim is not only for graduates to demonstrably achieve the educational objectives, but also to have the digital skills that prepare them for a labour market in which knowledge of AI is essential. Closely related to this is how we as an institution choose to deal with fraud. For example, the student council wants to have a say in the assessment policy to ensure that the methods used are robust. We also want teachers and invigilators to receive sufficient guidance in their tasks of assessment and supervision.

Study Progress

Study progress remains a major challenge at the VUB. Too many students take too long to obtain their degree or have a low study success rate. This costs the university a lot of resources in a financially difficult period and can be discouraging for students. The student council wants to contribute to a policy that intervenes more quickly when problems arise, but at the same time remains fair to vulnerable students. We advocate for additional and more efficient guidance and early detection, so that students receive support before it is too late.



Facilities

A high-quality campus is essential for the well-being and development of every student. In times of budgetary pressure, we want to send a strong message: student facilities are not a luxury, but a necessary pillar of student life. With this policy plan, the Student Council aims to contribute to a future-oriented policy in which existing facilities are protected, better aligned with the needs of the student community, and accessible to everyone.

Sustainable protection of student facilities

In light of the increasing pressure on university budgets, the Student Council wants to emphasize the importance of student facilities. These facilities are fundamental to a high-quality study and living environment and should not be disproportionately affected by budget cuts. The Student Council therefore requests that the university continue to support existing facilities and that any reallocation of resources always be done in consultation with the student representative body.

Expansion of the food offering

The restaurant and dining facilities play an important role in daily campus life. Students must have access to a basic range of food and drinks at all times. The Student Council therefore calls attention to the accessibility of food options outside the regular opening hours of the student restaurant. Vending machines with healthy and affordable products can be a practical addition, especially for students on campus in the evenings.

Policy regarding study spaces and communications

The increasing number of students is putting increased pressure on available study spaces. The Student Council wants to see a balanced policy that focuses on capacity, distribution, and communication. It is desirable that sufficient quiet and group-oriented study spaces are provided throughout the campus, and that there is room to expand the number of available spaces during exam periods. Furthermore, clear and timely communication about available study spaces is crucial. Students often experience confusion about opening hours, reservation procedures, or capacity.

Accessibility and inclusion

The Student Council attaches great importance to a campus that is physically, digitally, and socially accessible to everyone. An accessible infrastructure is not only a legal requirement but also an important signal of respect and equality within the university. It is important to regularly evaluate the extent to which buildings, walking routes, and restrooms are adapted for students with disabilities. Digital accessibility also deserves continued attention, so that all students can use the platforms offered.



Community

This academic year, the community committee wants to focus on strengthening the ties between students, recognised student associations and the student council. A strong, inclusive and well-informed community forms the basis for a vibrant campus. This academic year, the committee's work will focus on three main pillars: student participation and involvement, internal participation of council members, and the evaluation of the functioning of sui generis associations.

Student participation and involvement

Within the VUB community, we still experience a significant barrier between students and the student council. Many students do not know who the student council is, or how they can reach them with their questions or concerns. Most students only come into contact with the council during the election period, which means they have little connection with the student council. Real participation goes far beyond voting.

Our goal this year is to bridge that gap. Together with the community committee, we want to focus strongly on two-way communication this year. On the one hand, students must be able to easily make their voices heard (students to the student council), and on the other hand, we want to make the student council more visible and accessible (the student council to students). In this way, we want to embed participation as a structural part of our community, as a continuous process that is deeply interwoven with campus life.

Students to the student council

To increase student engagement, the student council will focus even more on physical campaign activities on campus this academic year. We want to actively engage with students and gather their ideas, concerns and suggestions. To achieve this goal, an ideas box will be placed in a central location on campus so that students can easily share their input with us. In addition, this year we will place a special focus on communication, with Instagram as our spearhead. With our new branding, we want to use accessible and light-hearted content to highlight the student experience and give students a voice about campus life, their studies and their daily reality.

We will regularly analyse and discuss the collected input within the student council so that we can better align our policy with the needs of the student community.

Student council to the students

Communication works both ways. As the student council, we therefore want to not only listen, but also proactively communicate with students. It should be easy for students to ask questions or provide feedback. Social media plays a key role in this: it offers an accessible way to get in touch.

We want to offer direct support via Instagram, for example by organising regular Q&A sessions. This creates an open channel where students can ask questions and get quick answers. We also strive to communicate more frequently and transparently about our ongoing projects and initiatives. By better informing students and actively involving them in our work, we build greater trust, recognition and engagement within our community.

In this way, we want to make the student council an open, recognisable and cohesive platform where students not only feel represented, but can also actively contribute to the policy, community and future of the VUB.

Internal participation and volunteer policy

Participation is a crucial element for the functioning of a community, and this applies in particular to the student council. Active involvement is not only important in the interaction between students and the student council but also begins within the council itself.

To strengthen internal participation, a participation and volunteer contract will be drawn up. This contract sets out the mutual expectations between members and the council and provides a framework for evaluating the involvement and commitment of members. Based on predetermined parameters, it will be determined whether council members are fulfilling their administrative and moral duties properly, and action can be taken where necessary. In addition, a revision of the General Regulations of the Student Council and the Stuvoraad is necessary to embed these measures and ensure a clear, consistent and transparent framework for participation within the student council.

Review of the current sui generis guidelines for subsidies

This academic year, we plan to evaluate the functioning of the sui generis associations. The aim is to strengthen both the involvement and effectiveness of these associations, while ensuring the transparent and accountable allocation of the funds provided. The community committee will work with the sui generis associations to formulate concrete objectives that are in line with their mission and vision. The subsidies will be linked to these objectives, so that the available resources are used in a targeted manner for goals that have been jointly identified as feasible and relevant.



Additional Considerations

Internationalisation

As an Urban Engaged University in the capital of Europe, it is only natural to have a large proportion of international students. It therefore goes without saying that this student group should receive the attention it deserves. This academic year, we are continuing the approach taken by previous student councils of weighing the impact on international students in every decision. In addition, it is essential that this year we work on how to strengthen, frame and make the representation of international students more sustainable.

Participation & Communication

By familiarising ourselves with the new corporate identity and seeking closer ties with the wider university community, we are increasing the visibility of the student council on campus. We focus on establishing contact with various departments, policy bodies and partner organisations. In addition, we strive to be present at all VUB events to ensure that our institution is not perceived as being without students.

Jette

The student council consists mainly of members whose university life takes place primarily on the Main Campus. However, we represent not only them but also the 2,000 students located on the Health Campus. We want to ensure that this group is not just an afterthought but that the Jette student, together with their needs, is a tangible concept within the council. Activities that used to take place only on the campus in Ixelles, we are trying to consistently provide in Jette this year as well. It is essential to good student representation that our (bio)medical and pharmaceutical students feel represented in every decision.



STUDENT COUNCIL VUB 2025 - 2026

President: Leon Bauweraerts

Vice-President: Laura Frans

Coordinator Education: Adam Haegeman

Coordinator Facilities: Marie-Isabel Adriaens

Coordinator Community: Lucie Delmeire

Administrator International: Elias Sahlieh

Administrator Participation, Communication & Governance: Wout Vanhelden

Administrator External: Munya Kalambay

Administrator Jette: Yngwie Derycker

Other members:

Aube Bouwen

Helena Legier

Hendrik Tillemans

Gaia Claire Franco

Lorenzo Rouire

Margo Van der Ougstraete

Marieke Lobert

Mila Todorof

Oskar Bonte

Theo De Pillecyn

