

Faculty Council Year Report 2023-2024

Introduction

The Faculty Council consisted of three staff members, Maia Casna, Letty ten Harkel and Merlijn Veltman, and three student members, Jesse Kuijt, Tristan Hoekema and Arlen Leffel. Merlijn Veltman was chair of the council, Jesse Kuijt the vice-chair and Letty ten Harkel took on the role of secretary. The minutes taker for the meetings was in 2023 Thijs Karens, who, due to finishing his studies, was later replaced by research master student Noud Visser. As the council consisted of almost entirely new members (with the exception of Jesse Kuijt), a lot had to be learned and experienced from scratch. Be this as it may, the council looks back on a fruitful and eventful year, in which many challenges were met, ideas became policy, and the council worked together with the Faculty Board on a number of issues.

Actions taken during 2023-2024

The Faculty Council wrote documents containing advice to the Board on a number of occasions, as well as worked towards regulation and systematisation of several still quite unclear policy (such as what constitutes the main points of the budget). Furthermore, the council held meetings with students and staff on a number of issues, including the problems arising from external fieldwork programmes, the problems pertaining to the pre-master programme, and on the subject of practicals in classrooms. The Faculty council also took on an active role in thinking about the process of culture change at the Faculty of Archaeology, which was catalysed due to the ‘case’ against one of her professors.

Moreover, the Faculty Council examined, advised on or consented to, the relevant passages of the OER, the main lines of the budget as well as the detailed budget for 2025-2029, the Education report, the ARBO-report and plan, and the visitation on Research at the Faculty.

The Faculty Council decided that it wanted to work towards the implementation of one project for the benefit of the community early on in September 2023. After discussion, the focus of this project became the external fieldwork projects, as especially the student members wanted to tackle how this was handled at the Faculty. The background for this project was that, for several years, an external project was advised as a good opportunity to students, while the situation at the fieldwork project was anything but ideal, with reports of students being harassed in town and at the hotel, the hotel lacking locks on doors, amongst other things. This was a public secret, and most students knew about these problems. However, as these significant issues were not (apparently) known to the staff that suggested this fieldwork to the students, students were still told that this was an excellent fieldwork opportunity. The Faculty Council set out to change this, by creating a monitoring system in which students could anonymously report their experience at external fieldwork to the Field Unit/the Study Advisors, who would then be able to inform the specific region coordinators for this fieldwork about its problematic nature. This should prevent students from going on fieldwork of which other previously attending students gave bad reports. A pilot of this system is underway, and the council hopes that this will aid students in choosing the right external fieldwork project for them.

Plans for next year 2024-2025

The council has two new student members, while Arlen Leffel will continue as part of the Faculty Council in 2024-2025. The council now has more experience and is acquainted with the various policy decisions taken during the year. It has set out several goals for the upcoming year, while it is still considering the main project it would like to tackle in 2024-2025. The goals are as follows:

1) The Faculty Council wishes to become better known and more approachable for the community of the Faculty of Archaeology. This will be achieved by a more tangible, planned out, (social) media presence throughout the year and within the Faculty, as well as by hosting a number of so-called 'townhall' events, where members of the community can voice their concerns to the Faculty Council.

2) The Faculty Council wants to be more proactive when it comes to the regular parts of its work - the OER, the budget, the ARBO-plan and other regular tasks are planned out throughout the year, and therefore allow the council to be more proactive towards the policy formulated in these documents. The council would like to be more involved in the formulation of the policy in these documents at an earlier stage, so that the comments that the council might have can already be included in an earlier phase. This will make the process of consent/advice more streamlined, as comments of the council can be implemented in the formative stage for these fixed tasks, leading to a faster process of consenting to or advising on these documents. Similarly, especially with regards to the potential budget cuts in the future due to the new Dutch cabinet, the Faculty Council would like to be active and aid the Board in shaping policy to ameliorate these budget cuts in the least painful way possible.

3) The Faculty Council recognises more and more that it is not 'alone' in the sense that other Faculty Councils, as well as the University Councils, are important allies and sources of knowledge. Therefore, the council would like to create more steady and consequent lines of communication between the various councils that our university contains. This will allow a more steady flow of knowledge towards the Faculty Council, as well as potential concerted action between the various councils. This also counts for the various committees that our Faculty contains.

Conclusion

The Faculty Council looks back on an eventful year in which it has learned much and matured into a strong counterpoint for as well as aid to the Board of the Faculty of Archaeology. On that note, the council hopes to continue its trajectory this year, working with the Board to make the Faculty of Archaeology a cohesive, communal place for both academic work and study.