

Elaborate update VeSte period 3+4

1. Study Progress

Reminder last update:

*Amongst others, the EER (education and examination regulations) contains rules about study progress and prior knowledge needed before starting a thesis, ACT, an internship or a course. **Study progress** refers to a certain amount of points needed. **Prior knowledge** refers to specific courses or learning outcomes. The latter can be mandatory or assumed. At the moment mandatory prior knowledge (maximum 12 credits) can only be asked for theses and internship.*

The OWI board (educational institute) has a couple of proposals with regard to study progress and prior knowledge. They invited the Student Council for a discussion on this topic, since the proposals require a change in the EER we have to approve. The proposals are the following:

- 1. Asking 90 credits of study progress, of which the entire first year, before starting a BSc thesis.*
- 2. Including required study progress of 24 credits for the MSc internship and 36 for the MSc thesis.*
- 3. Asking 24 credits study progress for ACT/AMC (academic master cluster, a disciplinary specific replacement of ACT).*
- 4. Making it allowed to ask mandatory prior knowledge for courses, under certain conditions. These conditions are not yet defined.*

At the moment we are forming our opinion about these proposals within the Student Council.

The OWI board decided to continue with topic 1 and 3 and drop the other proposals (for now). The Student Charter committee and the OWI board had two meetings together and a technical meeting with the ACT coordinator. With the information from these meetings in mind, the Student Council formed the following opinions regarding the proposals.

1.1 BSc thesis

First of all, the Student Council is in favour of one rule for all BSc theses. At the moment every programme applies a different (unofficial) rule, which makes it hard for students to know what their rights are.

The Student Council agrees with the OWI board that the BSc thesis is the end proof of the bachelor programme. Asking a certain amount of credits before starting a theses is in line with this vision.

In the beginning, especially VeSte had some doubt about asking all B1 (first year bachelor) courses. We were wondering whether it wouldn't harm the flexibility of students. After talking with some of our followers, we realised that 90% of the people thought it was quite fair to ask all B1 courses before starting a thesis. Since you can also make 5/6 re-exams of your B1 course, we decided not to make a big deal out of this point. However, before approving we want to know how many students start their thesis without all B1 courses at this moment. We asked this to the OWI board to make sure how many students are affected by the proposal.

1.2 ACT

There is a 'in-between period' between registration for ACT and starting ACT. This period is needed to find projects and make suitable groups. This means that the proposal of the OWI-board means: 24 credits earned before you can register, but 36 credits followed ('in-between period'). Quick calculations turn out this makes it only possible to do ACT in p5 or p6 in M1 (first year master) or in M2, which is meant for internship and MSc thesis.

Note: this is already the rule ACT uses in practice. Although some study advisors don't take it very seriously.

The ACT coordinator explained he notices differences in the level of English and disciplinary knowledge between students doing ACT in p3+4 and students doing ACT in p5 or p6. This hampers the quality of the end-products. However, the Student Council doesn't believe the quality increase of 12 credits is proportional to the decrease in flexibility. Especially since more interesting and thesis preparation courses are scheduled in p5 and p6.

In addition p5 and p6 deal the most with capacity problems of group rooms. The Student Council proposes the following rules:

'A maximum of 12 credits can be required before a student can register for ACT.'

This means students can start ACT when they have followed 24 credits, so also in p3+4.

1.3 Procedure

A letter containing our last question on BSc thesis and our opinion on the ACT proposal is going to be send to the OWI board this week. We are curious to their response and hope they can provide us with the information about the BSc thesis. With regard to the ACT proposal it's up to them to go into discussion with us now or postpone the discussion until the moment the EER (education and examination regulations) is send to us for approval on the changes. Both proposals will be a change in the EER.

The Student Council also had a discussion with the Executive Board with regard to the implementation of the new rules, independent on what the rules will be. At the moment the EER also contains rules on what can be asked before starting the BSc thesis. However, a lot of programmes don't stick to these rules. How can we make sure the new rules will be followed once implemented?

Both the Executive Board and the OWI board said they see the problem and will take this into serious consideration. We will come back to this point when the rules are established.

2. Evening lectures

Reminder send via the mail (then it was in Dutch):

At the moment things have (unfortunately) not much changed as during the presentation in the beginning of December. We read all the statements and handed them to the Executive Board with an accompanying letter. The statements have been read and, at least, our message is clear. It is told it is nice to know where the main problems are and these will be taken into account when designing the pilot (as much as possible).

However, the Executive Board still thinks evening lectures are just necessary to accommodate the growth (giving the fact they don't want to invest). We do have the feeling they see evening lectures as a last resort. Amongst others, we are not thinking along to develop other options to increase the occupancy in the current schedule. In addition we gave ideas like building (relatively cheap) container buildings or renting empty buildings in Wageningen. It is not yet clear to what extent these ideas are used. Of course other ideas from you are welcome!

Last we are starting to orientate on digitalisation in education. This is a process that already started, but not with a lot of pressure. We hope that by already investigating MOOC's and other forms of online education, the evening lectures are no longer necessary. There are also employees within the university willing to work on this.

The working group is busy preparing a pilot for evening lectures. When this plan is ready, it can be determined if the Student Council has a right of approval on it. If the pilot stays small, for example a couple of courses, we will probably don't have this (then the question is also if all consequences can already be overseen). If the pilot is going to be big and includes a lot of student, we probably do have something to say about it.

The extra ideas we addressed are not all taken into account, due to several reasons. Only the option of renting other buildings in Wageningen is partly incorporated. The university is looking into the option of using the Aula for educational purposes.

Digitalisation is further discussed within the Student Council. We are of the opinion that the goal of digitalisation should be increasing the quality of education. If this results in solving (part of) the capacity problem it's a great side effect. In the last consultation meeting the rector promised us a meeting with the people working on educational innovation and people assessing the quality of (different forms of) education. Looking forward to their information.

The initial set-up of the pilot is promised to be finished in March. Then we can take a look at it and try to adapt or add things we want to see measured. This doesn't mean we will approve the pilot. But since it's still not clear if we have approval right on the pilot, it's important to influence what it will look like. In May the Executive Board makes the decision whether they want to introduce the pilot or not.

3. Excellence policy

Reminder last update:

On December 2nd the Student Council organised a debate to discuss excellence within the university and the possibility of an honours programme that is open for every willing student. It turned out the university needs an excellence policy. The current honours programme can be part of this excellence policy, but also other options like following multiple courses at the same time or capita selecta should be in there.

We are currently talking with members of corporate staff about the possibilities to make an excellence policy. The goal is to ask Arthur Mol to make such a policy in the next consultation meeting (February 9th).

If this policy will be made, we want to use the policy as back-up when we work at specific issues . For example the financing of capita selecta.

In the consultation meeting the rector didn't promise us to make a policy. He did however promise a meeting to talk about the communication of existing talent development options. This is one of the problems related to talent development and will hopefully be solved. After better communication the rector wants to take a look at what problems still exist and think about a talent development policy.

4. FOS dispute

Reminder last update:

*The date for the dispute is known: **February 4th**. We are currently discussing with the lawyer if it is wise to have people in the public. If this is the case, you will get an invitation. After the dispute, the dispute committee has 6 weeks to announce the outcome.*

First of all, the dispute was a very interesting thing to experience. The discussion was led by one of the best chairs in Student Council history. The lawyers started with their speeches and afterwards the dispute committee asked questions to both parties. Also see the article in the resource: <https://resource.wageningenur.nl/nl/show/Bestuur-en-studentenraad-bij-Geschillencommissie.htm>

The dispute continues on 3 different points: (1) calculation of the FOS height for non-EER students, (2) OV compensation when having delay in the social science master and (3) FOS height for EER students. On the first point a meeting is promised to explain the calculations. This is something the Executive Board didn't want to do before. The explanation was satisfactory and this point is solved.

The dispute committee will present the outcome on the other two points within six weeks. The committee needs to judge whether we were unreasonable to disapprove the proposal of the university.

5. Candidates

The deadline for applying for VeSte is the 7th of March. If you are interested (or know someone who is) in doing a board year, you can always contact us for more information.

