

Improving the position of students in Programme Committees

The Programme Committee (in Dutch: *Opleidingscommissie* or *OpCie*) is the formal institution that takes decision on the setup and content of a study programme (or more). A Programme Committee consists of a number of teachers and the same number of students (normally 4 or 5). VeSte appreciates the autonomy of Programme Committees. They consist of teachers and students who are really into education, often more than policy makers.

Know-how for students in the 'Grand Meeting'

On February 24th 2016, VeSte organized the very first *Grand Meeting for Education-Involved Students*. All students who are somehow involved in assuring a good quality of education were invited: the aim of the evening was to make these students better capable of using their power and exchange best practices.

Students in Wageningen can have enormous influence on their education, if they just know how to use their power.

- Tiny van Boekel, WU Dean of Education

During the meeting, 6 university-wide topics were discussed. Experts from the university policy department guided the discussions. Very briefly the general conclusions were:

Best practices for students in Programme Committees: Students in a Programme Committee should actively organize themselves in order to be good representatives.

Course Evaluation: In order to improve the response rates of the digital course evaluation, a culture shift among students is needed. Study associations and programme committees take an important role in this culture shift.

Digitalization: Education will increase to digitalize, therefore the people that make education have to stay well-informed. If implemented well, digitalization creates a lot of opportunities.

BSc programmes fully in English: There are both advantages and disadvantages to BSc programmes fully in English. The general tone was that students like the language division as it is made now.

Development of skills within BSc programmes: More feedback and repetition are the most crucial points of improvement that can be made for the integration of skills in BSc programmes.

Social Sciences: A lot of myths about Social Sciences seem to go around, while, if you look to the numbers (e.g. effective study load, passing rates) the Wageningen Social Science programmes don't seem to differ much from other programmes in Wageningen.

Transparency in admitting students to Programme Committees

Admitting procedures for students in Programme Committees are not always completely transparent. VeSte observed that a lot of students, who have the formal right to apply for a position in the Programme Committee, just did not know that a place had become available. In some cases it was the study advisor or the study association deciding on the new committee member, while formally the Programme Committee should take this decision on its own. With consent of the study commissioners (StuCom) of study associations, VeSte suggested the following guidelines to the OWI-board, who approved them.

The new guidelines are:

1. All students (of the relevant programme) should have the possibility to apply.
2. Study association as well as study advisor have responsibility in making the vacancy known.
3. The Programme Committee decides on application procedure. Everyone should be treated the same.
4. The Programme Committee decides on the candidate. Motivation is requested.

If you as a student or organization run into little transparent or unfair admitting procedures for a Programme Committee, VeSte will be more than willing to help you.

