

VeSte

For active students



VeSte Policy 2023

VESTE | STUDENT COUNCIL PARTY | WUR

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Introduction

Dear reader,

We are happy to present to you the VeSte policy 2023. VeSte is a party in the Student Council (SC) of Wageningen University & Research (WUR). As party we represent and support the active students of WUR in the policymaking at our university. In this policy plan, we present our goals and vision as 26th VeSte faction. This yearly policy plan is based on the Structural Policy, which can be found at www.vestewageningen.nl.

VeSte has three core values that are the foundation of the party: *Future-proof Education*, *Personal Development* and an *Active Student life*. At all times, these three pillars ensure that the interests of active students within Wageningen University are represented and applied to every dossier and initiative VeSte works on. More information regarding these pillars can be found in the Structural Policy of VeSte.

This year's faction has set itself several goals and objectives to achieve in 2023. First of all, VeSte is focused on maintaining and further improving the quality of education. Topics like flexible studying, career orientation, and maintaining and improving the impact of the Quality Agreements require focus. Also, VeSte strives for more attention on skill based learning and practical experience in every study programme. Nevertheless, education is not the only subject high on the priority list. Wellbeing of students, personal development, sustainability at WUR, and improving facilities for students are also focal points for 2023.

This policy plan is divided into two main chapters, *Internal Affairs* and *External Affairs*. The section *Internal Affairs* explains the goals and aims of individual functions and VeSte committees. The chapter *External Affairs* is divided into three main topics: *Education*, *Students at WUR*, and *Organisation of WUR*. Within the different sections, a detailed explanation of this year's ambitions can be read.

Finally, we are really looking forward to take up the challenging task to improve the quality of education in the broadest sense here at Wageningen University. Enjoy reading our policy plan 2023!

Faction 2021 - 2022

The division of functions between the party members from September 2022 until September 2023 is presented below. What every individual member will aim for with ancillary functions and committees will be elaborated on in Chapter 2: Internal Affairs.



Sanne Vermeij
Chair



Wybrig Bakker
Vice-Chair



Geert Schroën
Secretary



Robert van Houten
Treasurer



Wessel Weterings
Commissioner Internal Relations



Maartje van den Bosch
Commissioner National Affairs



Levi Kusters
Commissioner Public Relations



Wietske de Groot
Commissioner Events & Association

Internal Affairs

This chapter covers an elaborate explanation of the 26th VeSte faction. By *Internal Affairs* is meant the functioning and structuring of the party. This entails the internal functions, internal committees, and the newly launched and promising Veste Association.

Internal Functions

For the first time in six years, this year's faction consists of eight members. Every member has their own function, and next to this, some have a specific function in the Student Council (SC). For the following members this is applicable:

- VeSte Chair fulfils the role of SC Chair;
- VeSte Treasurer fulfils the role of SC Treasurer;
- VeSte commissioner Public Relations fulfils the role of SC commissioner Public Relations;
- VeSte commissioner Events & Association fulfils the role of SC Secretary.

Note that the functions explained below are only applicable within the VeSte faction, which is a separate body within the Student Council.

A more detailed explanation of the basic tasks and responsibilities per function can be found in the VeSte Structural Policy. The more specific priorities for the coming year are explained below.

Chair

The Chair is the face of the party, and the first contact point for the press. During public speaking events or when for example The Resource wants to publish something, and the Chair shares the voice of active students. In order to represent VeSte in all ways, close contact with the Commissioner Public Relations is essential. The Chair is also in close contact with central councils and universities throughout The Netherlands. This is done by means of national bodies and alliances such as LOVUM, 4TU and EWUU. The Commissioner National Affairs will operate on this national level together with the Chair, to represent VeSte and thereby the active students of Wageningen. After the elections, the Chair is responsible for ensuring all candidates are well prepared for their takeover. This will be done together with the vice chair, and by keeping track of the written take-overs as well as providing shadow days for all successors.

This year, the Chair will focus especially on communication to the constituency. For example, the changed resit policy must be explained clearly to students, or the decision to change temperatures outside so called “comfort hours” on campus, and to close more buildings, etc. Many students are not aware of taken measures, and the Chair wants to improve this by for example making more informative posts on social media, and by standing with some VeSte members at the larger associations on Monday evenings to lower the threshold for information exchange.

Vice-Chair

The Vice-Chair focuses on close collaboration within the faction to ensure organisational and content-wise consistency. As a result, the Vice-Chair will be responsible for the stability regarding the identity of VeSte and therefore is accountable for the policy of VeSte. This will be done in close contact with the Chair. This year, the Vice-Chair operates in different committees within VeSte, the Student Council and the WUR-Council. As a result, the Vice-Chair is involved in more detail and on content than the chair. Therefore, the Vice-Chair amplifies the Chair who is more the umbrella of the faction. Together they complement each other resulting in a smooth functioning of the whole party.

Furthermore, during the elections the Vice-Chair will take the lead in creating a smooth process and an active involvement of potential successors. Finally, team building is an important task of the Vice-Chair to guarantee adequate and peaceful functioning of the faction.

This year, the Vice-Chair strives to contribute to creating a clear view for the constituency and external parties about what VeSte is doing and where the party stands for. Creating this policy will play a role in that, but being active in a lot of different projects and work closely together with the Chair as spokesperson of VeSte, to exchange a lot of information with, will contribute to make more visible what VeSte is and what the party is doing.

Secretary

The Secretary deals with the VeSte hardcopy and e-mail. Writing minutes during the VeSte Internal Meeting (VIM) and the production of the VeSte newsletter once per period are also responsibilities for the Secretary of VeSte. As the contact person of the faction, the Secretary keeps a positive attitude towards the constituency and external parties. An example is helping students with their questions via mail or via the office phone (+31317485584). Next to that, keeping track of invitations for constitution drinks and how many people attend constitution drinks is a task of the Secretary. Finally as Secretary, keeping a good structure in the mail and drive is essential for the party and the SC to work well.

This year, the Secretary investigates possibilities to professionalize the VeSte newsletter. Asking different writers to contribute to the newsletter and giving the newsletter a nice lay-out contribute to a professional newsletter. Lastly, the Secretary works on fixing the phones in the office and updates the phone list. The bigger goal of this is to increase awareness among students what VeSte is and does. It would be nice if the subscribers list of the newsletter increase by 50 students by the end of the year.

Treasurer

The Treasurer is responsible for the financial health of the VeSte faction. For this year the Treasurer wants to further professionalize the different financial reports by giving more explanation on the financial figures and making the reports easier to understand for other members of the faction. As a result, there will be more transparency towards the other members of VeSte as well as predecessors and coming successors. Moreover, clear explanations on financial choices that will be made this year can assist the next year's Treasurer in making good decisions.

Furthermore, the Treasurer will continue organizing working actions to strengthen the liquid assets of VeSte. Since the Treasurer is also the chair of the acquisition committee, a goal is to attract more and better collaborations with companies for promotion during the elections. The Treasurer wants to do this by putting more effort into approaching companies and by critically thinking what the students would like to receive as promotion during the elections.

Besides that, the Treasurer is accountable to the financial control committee of VeSte. This committee preferably consists of three old VeSte Treasurers. A few times in a year the Treasurer will meet with the financial control committee to discuss several financial topics including the budget and the financial report. The financial control committee will also approve or disapprove the budget and the financial report. The Treasurer will make sure the dossiers handled in the financial control committee are of high quality and are approved by the faction beforehand.

Besides that, as the new VeSte Association (VA) has its own Treasurer, this and upcoming years it is important to keep close contact with the VeSte Association Treasurer and to collaborate. One of the main topics in which the Treasurer works closely with the VeSte Association Treasurer is making sure the separation of financial resources and accountancy between VeSte and VeSte Association is dealt with smoothly and clear financial agreements between VeSte and VeSte Association are made.

Commissioner Internal Relations

The main focus of the Commissioner of Internal Relations will be on maintaining relations with VeSte's constituency. This means that the Commissioner of Internal Relations contacts the constituency, demonstrates the added value of VeSte to the constituency, but also collects input from the constituency. The Commissioner of Internal Relations will communicate VeSte's policy to its constituency and create appropriate expectations. Furthermore, the Commissioner of Internal Relations will focus on maintaining contact with former VeSte members and, where conducive, request input.

This year, the Commissioner of Internal Relations will focus on controlling to what extent the constituency feels represented by VeSte. This means that their opinion is represented and can be seen in the decisions taken by the Faction and that the supporters are behind the elected candidates. This representation is probed during informal moments with the boards of the constituency. By this, the faction can focus on the representation of the constituency where necessary. Furthermore, the Commissioner of Internal Relations will update and expand the Contact Plan to improve the relations with and increase awareness of VeSte's activities within the constituency.

Commissioner National Affairs

The Commissioner of National Affairs represents VeSte and therefore the (active) students of Wageningen University on a national level. This is done by spreading VeSte's vision on different topics, as well as keeping VeSte members informed about relevant topics that are being discussed on a national level. The Commissioner National Affairs will stay in close contact with the *Interstedelijk Studenten Overleg* (ISO), the *Landelijke Kamer van Verenigingen* (LKV) and the *Landelijk Overleg Fracties* (LOF). By attending meetings of the ISO, valuable information is gathered about national student- and political affairs relevant for WUR.

This year, the Commissioner National Affairs will focus on enhancing the contact with the student parties of other student councils in the Netherlands who have a similar constituency as VeSte. By enhancing the contact via meetings with the active factions, VeSte can consult the other factions and learn and get inspiration from them. The founding of the VeSte Association can be a suitable subject to gain information about, since comparable student participatory parties in other Dutch cities do already have an association in where students are involved in the policy making of the university.

Commissioner Public Relations

Many students are active on social media and at associations. Hence, the Commissioner of Public Relations continues reaching out to students via the social media channels of VeSte, being the VeSte website, Facebook, Instagram, and LinkedIn. On top of that, the Commissioner of Public Relations will regularly visit the major associations during member evenings to increase the visibility of VeSte and to gather input from students. Next to that, several lunches will be organised to have input from the constituency at a low threshold. This year, the VeSte website will be updated to further strengthen the communication towards students, as well as to further promote the VeSte Association. Due to all the on-campus possibilities for education and activities this year, the Commissioner of Public Relations will ensure on-campus promotion events are effective, by seeing what worked well prior years. Finally, the commissioner Public Relations will investigate how to expand the reach of VeSte, without compromising the current constituency.

Commissioner Events & Association

The Commissioner of Events ensures that all events that will be organized are in line with the pillars of VeSte and relate to topics that are relevant in time. The Commissioner of Events is the one who holds the ultimate responsibility of all events organised by VeSte.

The Commissioner VeSte Association will take part as a general board member in the VeSte Association board. The role of Commissioner VeSte Association will be to assist the VeSte Association board with their tasks if necessary. Within the VeSte faction, the commissioner VeSte Association gives updates about important topics within the VeSte Association, this is in line with another role of the Commissioner VeSte Association, namely, facilitating smooth contact between the VeSte faction and the board of the VeSte Association.

VeSte Association

In 2021 the VeSte Association has been set up and this year the first activities and working groups will take place. The aim of VeSte Association is to make the WUR and its policy-making and educational affairs more accessible to students. By bringing (active) students, the VeSte Faction, and the student participatory bodies at WUR closer together, students are involved in public dossiers VeSte is dealing with as a participatory body. As a result, students can more easily contribute to improving WUR as an organisation. In this way VeSte Association members get a better insight into WUR decision-making and education affairs in general, and have the chance to develop beneficial skills such as networking and thinking critically about university dossiers.

Membership is without obligations; one can take part in the events one is interested in. Besides enhancing the WUR, the members of the VeSte Association can also come with initiatives and ideas to work on which influences the direction VeSte heads into. Members can become as active as they want themselves; they can take part at certain events, join general member meetings and/or take part in committees and working groups. The VeSte Association does not only organise serious events, but will also arrange fun activities for members to get to know each other. In this way, the VeSte Association brings constituents and faction closer together in a way where the faction can get direct input from its constituents.

The VeSte Association board, responsible for the daily business of the VeSte Association, consists of four members: a chair, secretary, treasurer, and a faction member as general member. The board of the VeSte Association will be in close contact with the faction to make sure all the important information is properly communicated between both parties. This is facilitated by the Commissioner VeSte Association, as the commissioner is a faction member but also a member of the VeSte Association board. The committees that will be part of the VeSte Association are the education, elections, events, and promotion committee.

Internal committees

Within the VeSte faction several committees are operating to pursue and support the mission of the party. Every member takes part in a couple of these committees respectively. This year the VeSte committees are:

- Acquisition
- Elections
- Events
- Promotion & Design
- Trainings
- VeSte Association
- Ad hoc FOS Association Boards

The specific focus points per committee are explained below. For a more general overview of the committees, excluding the ad hoc committee, is referred to the VeSte Structural Policy.

Acquisition committee

This year the Acquisition committee wants to collaborate with local companies to arrange discounts with their company. These discount coupons will be handed out during the elections. The goal of handing out these coupons is to make students more familiar with VeSte. The reason for this is that the current faction noticed that not every student is acquainted with VeSte and the Student Council at all. Because the VeSte logo is on the coupon and the coupons are handed out by VeSte candidates, more awareness for VeSte and the work the party is doing within the university is created. The goal of the Acquisition committee is to collaborate at least with three companies for the coming elections. Starting from January the committee will contact local companies to propose mutually beneficial collaborations. The content of the mutually beneficial collaboration will be determined with the companies involved.

Elections committee

Identical to last year, the VeSte Elections committee consists of the Vice Chair, Treasurer, Commissioner of Internal Relations and Commissioner of Public Relations. This composition seems to be the most efficient, since in this way the committee has direct ties to promotion, finance and the internal relations. In addition, delegations of the Acquisition, Events, and Promotion committees are present. All these parts together result in an ideal situation for promotion of VeSte and its candidates during the Elections. In this manner, VeSte strives for acquiring competent candidates to run for elections. By the efforts of acquisition and promotion to make the VeSte party visible in the elections, we all strive for a majority of seats in the Student Council again this year. The Elections committee is responsible for preparing and guiding the faction members and candidates during the elections.

Events committee

The Events committee plans and organizes events throughout the year. The goal of the events committee is to promote VeSte and to educate, communicate, and connect with active students. The events that the faction organizes will be in line with the pillars of VeSte. Events that will be organised this academic year are for example the Board congress, CANS-event, the Board Market, and the Grand Meeting. Throughout the year VeSte supports and collaborates events with other associations. Before the elections, VeSte will organise two or three events that promote VeSte and their candidates. An example of this is the list pusher drink, where list pushers are supported to promote VeSte and its candidates.

Promotion & Design committee

The Promotion & Design committee of this year will proceed with the framework provided by prior years and aims to increase the visibility of VeSte as Student Council party. Taking lessons of the past into account, personal photos will be the main focus of promoting VeSte-related activities on Instagram. These tend to get more attention than Instagram posts without a person in them. In addition to pictures, the topic of the post will be included in the image. As in previous years, VeSte values input from students, and wants to realize a low threshold for giving input. This will be done, among other things, by posting polls on the VeSte-Instagram and by placing the suggestion box in the various education buildings. VeSte believes doing a promotion stunt twice per year, instead of once, increases visibility for the party throughout the year and is a great way to gather input from students. By incorporating the suggestion box in the promotion stunt and by having faction members supervise the promotion stunt the faction aims to improve the visibility even further. Additionally, the Instagram will receive a series of Stories in which lesser known things about WUR are shared. Think of information about where to find all rules and duties as a student, the possibility of getting free hot drinks in Plus Ultra, and all the supporting websites that WUR has for its students. VeSte believes this is information that students want, and therefore will follow us more closely. Finally, this year's faction aims to increase the visibility of VeSte and the input gathered from students by being more active on study- and student associations, except for the election period. Being present at an association evening to answer questions and investigate things students want to see improved at WUR is of great value of representing the constituency in the best way possible.

Training committee

The members of VeSte receive trainings from the university to strengthen their capacities as Student Council members. The purpose of the VeSte training committee is to pass the knowledge gained with these trainings on to boards and committees of other (student) associations in Wageningen. The training committee gives three different trainings: 1) effective meetings, 2) effective teams and 3) time management. Last year the demand for the trainings 'effective teams' and 'time management' was quite low. Therefore, this year the Training committee will revise the offered trainings. The trainings that were not requested at all the past few years will be replaced by more relevant trainings. Also the promotion of the trainings will be a point of attention this year. Via email, Instagram and verbal communication, VeSte wants to promote the offered trainings. After a training, the boards will be asked to evaluate the given training. This feedback can then be used to potentially further improve the VeSte trainings.

VeSte Association committee

The VeSte Association committee is established as supportive body for the board of the VeSte Association. Since the VeSte Association is in an early stage, a lot of matters need to be determined and developed further, which is more than one person can establish on their own. Matters such as obtaining members, filling the VeSte Association board, thinking about topics to discuss within the VeSte Association and help organising activities for the VeSte Association are within the scope of this committee.

The goal of this VeSte Association committee is to help the board of the VeSte Association to set up a stable, well-known association with a continuously growing number of members, where every student can give input and is involved in improving the policymaking of WUR. In this way, the student participatory bodies, and especially VeSte, will become more visible which leads to more input from students. This input can then be taken to the table by VeSte, which means there is a direct bridge between active students and policymakers at WUR.

Ad hoc FOS Associations and organisations

In May of 2023, the Financial Support Students (FOS) regulations will be revised. The ad hoc committee will focus on being well prepared when this review takes place, with the aim of ensuring that the associations (both student and study associations) receive the amount of FOS deemed necessary. This is needed in order to endure as a healthy association, as well as to provide the possibility for students at WUR to have an active student life and develop themselves outside the lecture rooms. Wageningen as a student city does not have the same facilities as big cities such as Amsterdam or Utrecht. Associations, and thereby student boards are the heart of student city Wageningen. It is seen that at this moment that gusto of filling fulltime or parttime boards and committees is low with the financial effects of study delay as one of the main reasons. The total amount of FOS in the profiling fund and the number of months that boards receive FOS for has stagnated since the academic year 2013 – 2014. However, since then the basic grant (NL: Basisbeurs) was cancelled, these has been severe inflation, and the number of members has been increasing rapidly. In some cases, the number of members has *doubled*, and still the association receives the same FOS. Such increases in members leads to an increase in workload and demand for growth in size of boards and committees. As a result, the number of months of FOS received by associations must increase for the continuity of these associations.

Currently, the animosity for boards is not seen as a problem by the university. The committee knows boards are having more troubles finding successors, but only from word to mouth. Therefore, the aim of this committee is to find the numbers on this, by close contact with the constituency, in order to make this message clear to the university as well. From there, work will be done to find a suitable solution whereby the associations can continue to exist in a healthy way. This data will be collected during consultations with the associations and student organisations in which it will also be determined where the biggest points of contention currently lie for students to opt for an administrative year. In addition, these consultations will determine what is considered necessary from the members' point of view to improve with regard to FOS and filling the boards.

External Affairs

Within the Student Council and WUR Council, and together with the Executive Board and the municipality, VeSte is working on several topics to represent the active students of WUR. This year the focal points of the 26th VeSte faction comprise:

- maintaining and improving the quality of education at WUR;
- creating an inclusive and safe environment for students with an emphasis on broad personal development and attention for student wellbeing;
- striving for an enhancement of sustainability and facilities at campus, a strong resilience of WUR as an organisation for future societal challenges, and a vital connection of WUR with the municipality to ensure an active student life both on campus and Wageningen as a city.

Education

Quality of Education

According to the *Keuzegids*¹, WUR is the best university in the Netherlands for 18 consecutive years. As VeSte, ensuring future-proof high quality education is one of the main goals. Therefore, the party wants to make sure WUR remains the best in its fields of study and keeps on raising the bar at global scale. Some features of this future proof high quality education are putting emphasis on flexibility, small-scale teaching and multidisciplinary study programmes.

The past years have shown that education can change rapidly due to unforeseen circumstances. Covid-19 affected WUR and its students in many ways. A highly creative and flexible approach was required to preserve the high education and wellbeing standards at WUR. In the future, more unforeseen pandemics or other challenging circumstances might occur. Therefore, VeSte focuses on ensuring that education at WUR is future-proof. This will be executed by working on subjects like the Quality Agreements, flexible studying & career orientation. In addition, VeSte believes that education on campus is important, as it contributes to the personal small-scale contact between lecturer and student.

This year, important topics regarding education are among others English requirements for masters and fieldwork or excursions for every study programme. This year VeSte aims to strengthen communication between students on and off campus, by raising the level of English language required to start a master programme at WUR. By taking this decision, groupwork and collaboration between students is expected to improve. Furthermore, it is one of the core qualities of WUR that besides high excellent theoretical education, students also receive the tools to bring it into practice. VeSte thinks this combination largely contributes to being the best university. Therefore, VeSte will stress the importance of field work and excursions for all study programmes at WUR. Other topics contributing to quality of education where VeSte aims to work on this year are elaborated on below.

Resit policy

Last year, crucial decisions have been made to implement a new resit policy which will be put into practice from the academic year 2023-2024 onwards. The new policy entails that students have only two exam opportunities per course per year. Since this decreases the workload of teachers, they will have more time and energy to invest in the small-scale education. This is a change with large impact on students. Therefore, VeSte will aim to keep a close eye on their wellbeing and academic results, by monitoring the effects of the new resit policy. Further improvement of small-scale education will be an important topic in this. Finally, providing a clear overview of students' rights and duties in the EER, which will be revised in April, will also be a point of attention for the faction.

¹Casu, M., van Leeuwen, V., van de Weijer, E. & van Steennis, J. (2022). *Keuzegids universiteiten 2023*. Keuzegids.

Quality Agreements

As a result of the implementation of the student loan system, Dutch universities received funding from the government to invest in improving the quality of education. The ambitions of WUR regarding this extra amount of money are defined in the Quality Agreements. The main lines of the Quality Agreements are retaining small-scale education, improving and expanding study guidance, differentiating education, professionalising teaching staff, and providing adequate educational facilities. From academic year 2023/2024 onwards, study grants will be implemented again, resulting in an alteration of the Quality Agreements funds. From 2024 onwards, the Quality Agreements will be structurally funded from the Dutch government. VeSte aims to maintain the effects of the Quality Agreements by lobbying for a separate budget for the structural funding from 2024 onwards instead of the Quality Agreements fund going to the lumpsum of the university budget.

Flexible studying

Flexible studying is another relevant topic for ensuring the three pillars of VeSte. Educational innovation and thinking outside the binary of either being a full-time student or no student at all is an important issue for VeSte. VeSte will focus on flexible studying in two ways; the option of free bachelors and looking for possibilities to realize the opportunity for following separate courses for which you can pay separately. Both would encourage flexible studying and support the pillars of VeSte. However, this is with the sidenote that it should not be at the expense of the quality of education. The diploma students receive should be worthy of the high-quality education of WUR and really prepare students for their future career. It should not only be a set of courses with a sufficient level about a certain topic. Therefore, this also touches upon the VeSte pillar future-proof education.

Career orientation

Furthermore, VeSte believes education should be focused on *career orientation*. This is directly connected with future-proof education since connection to the labour market is a point of improvement for WUR. Moreover, VeSte thinks a good connection to the labour market is essential for students, and therefore the faction will stress the importance of events such as career days. This year, VeSte will also look for possibilities to collaborate with other organizations which are focused on this connection to the labour market to organize internship- and career orientation events.

Digital education

The infrastructure for digital education has come on in leaps and bounds over the last two years. VeSte wants to vouch for optimal digital services and thereby quality of education for students at WUR. This year, the following topics regarding the digitalization process of WUR are within the spearheads of VeSte.

Bring Your Own Device (BYOD)

Recently, WUR implemented the *Bring Your Own Device (BYOD)* policy. This means that all students are required to bring their own laptop for education, self-study, and exams. Since the implementation, many problems have been encountered and most of them, fortunately, have also been solved. VeSte wants to ensure students experience as little problems as possible regarding this policy. The faction wants to achieve this by ensuring students are aware of the risks of working on a laptop (e.g. CANS), that software availability is not an issue, and that the responsibility of the costs is clearly communicated beforehand. Additionally, IT-help and CANS prevention equipment should be accessible for all students. Therefore, VeSte strives for equal discount and accessibility of CANS prevention equipment, regardless of left- or right-handedness. Additionally, VeSte is looking into creating more ergonomic workplaces on campus. The party is continuously monitoring and evaluating the status of Bring Your Own Device by consulting students and discussing options to improve this policy with the product owner of Bring Your Own Device.

As part of Bring Your Own Device, students take exams on their laptops. While the start-up was not without bumps in the road, most exams go by without issue now. However, to ensure clarity in case of digital failures, VeSte wants to expand the Education and Examination Regulations (EER) to include student rights concerning digital failures.

Software systems

The app MyWURToday is now in use for the second year. VeSte heard from students that the app is not functioning optimal yet. Therefore the faction is closely involved in further improving MyWURToday. VeSte also wants to add an event calendar to the app so organisations and associations can add events and other information for their followers to MyWURToday. VeSte thinks that further improvement of MyWURToday is important since both the app can become the general forum where all used systems at WUR are visible at once and the app can improve the communication options to students to a great extent.

Next, the transition phase from Student Service Centre to Osiris and Myportal to Time Edit has ended. VeSte wants to make sure the quality of education stays high by monitoring developments in the software systems.

Regulating digitalisation

All above-mentioned changes need to be documented in the right way. VeSte wants to make sure that new regulations are written down in the EER, an important student charter document. Documentation of and complying with the rights and duties of students concerning digitalisation by the university is an important issue to VeSte.

Students at WUR

Next to academic development, important aspects of studying at WUR and obtaining a successful future career are attention to personal development and gaining soft skills, such as public speaking, working in a team and giving and receiving feedback etc. Therefore, VeSte wants to stress the importance of having an active student life, where students can do all kind of extracurricular activities and create a network of close friends and connections.

Extracurricular experiences

VeSte believes that personal development is essential for students. Both within and beyond study programmes students need to get the possibility to develop themselves. Within the university there are many possibilities for students to develop skills and useful knowledge. Student Challenges, language courses, and career orientation paths are examples of that. Every student is different and has their own learning trajectory. Student associations are a great opportunity for students to develop themselves off campus, for example in organization competences or soft skills. VeSte acknowledges the added value of these experiences and therefore wants to make sure students get enough time for extracurricular activities. This will be done by addressing the importance of extracurricular activities to employees and the Executive Board so students get enough time for extracurricular experiences.

Furthermore, good communication between students is vital for an active student life and personal development. This year VeSte aims to strengthen communication between students on and off campus. By organizing events and promoting the VeSte Association the faction tries to connect students.

Student Wellbeing & Social Safety

Over the past three years, where students have been obliged to work from home, wellbeing became more important than ever before. According to VeSte, when working on *Student wellbeing*, what includes both mental and physical wellbeing, creating awareness regarding this topic among students at WUR is of high importance.

VeSte believes *mental wellbeing* is a major concern and it aims that the university bears some of the responsibility for this. To increase *mental wellbeing*, VeSte wants to establish that the workload of students is manageable, does not cause unnecessary stress, and ensures room for personal time and development. To accomplish this, VeSte is highly involved in policy making of facilities regarding wellbeing and the daily schedule. Besides that, the party is also busy with projects like thesis delay to make clear agreements about what to do when a student is not able to finish their thesis in time.

As mentioned, *Mental wellbeing* is intertwined with *physical wellbeing* according to VeSte. As physical exercise is good for students' health, is stress-reductive, and gives the opportunity for social interaction, VeSte is involved in the maintenance of good exercise facilities on campus. Physical wellbeing also includes RSI/CANS prevention. VeSte will draw more attention to this topic, by actively encouraging students to take breaks more often and by providing good ergonomic workplaces on campus.

Student wellbeing goes hand in hand with a *balanced development* of students. For VeSte, this means a proper balance between future-proof education and an active student life. A student should have sufficient possibilities to obtain learning opportunities both within and beyond their studies and should also have the possibility to relax. VeSte takes this standpoint into mind when talking to the Executive Board.

Last academic year the student council proposed a new VeSte initiative to the Executive Board about implementing a *Studying without Limitations* platform. *Studying without limitations* is a platform, which offers support for students at Wageningen University. In this platform, there will be a buddy-

to-buddy system to help students with daily problems that arise from their limitations. The platform will be for students, by students, in the form of peer coaching, but student deans will be involved as well. The Student Council will stay in close contact with the working group created for this project. Meetings about enrolling and improving the platform or parts of it are taking place regularly.

The feeling of *social safety* is essential for the *mental* wellbeing of students. In November 2021, a report called “Monitor Mentale Gezondheid en Middelengebruik van Studenten” has been published about the mental wellbeing among students studying at higher education institutions². The report shows that many students experience mental issues such as loneliness, tiredness, and stress. Furthermore, one in four students have had the wish to die or sleep and never wake up. These outcomes are shocking and VeSte will take this up the coming year.

Two years ago, VeSte initiated the Social Road Map at WUR, a map that shows easily where students can find help within the organisation³. However, many students still do not know where and how to get help. VeSte will find new ways to communicate this better to students, for example by including the social roadmap in a Brightspace quiz. In general, many students start looking for help too late, as they do not recognise their complaints as real symptoms. Preventing is better than curing, and therefore, as well as communicating where students can find help, VeSte will also focus on informing students better about preventing mental issues in the first place.

Furthermore, the discussion about social safety within the organisation, such as (verbal and physical) sexual harassment, has been drawing more attention over the past years. As mentioned above, improving the accessibility and visibility of student support is one of the focus points of VeSte in the coming year. With special regard to social safety and sexual undesired behaviour. Wageningen University has a very holistic view on their students, and has small-scale, personal education. VeSte thinks this should also be incorporated into how social safety is addressed and assured.

Integration & Inclusion

VeSte values an inclusive environment and wants to improve it at WUR. Everyone at WUR should feel included, regardless of gender, sexual preference, religion, culture, or financial situation. Establishing an inclusive environment will contribute to better integration of the students. The new gender inclusive language policy, which was initiated by VeSte, will gradually be implemented over the coming years and VeSte will monitor the execution of this. VeSte believes the gender inclusive language policy is one step closer to creating a culture at WUR in which people from all genders can feel safe and supported. A next step VeSte wants to take to make sure everyone feels included and accepted at WUR is to pay more attention to social inequalities, by for example raising awareness via Social Media, and putting this topic on the agenda of de WUR more prominently.

Student rights

Every year members of VeSte are working on further improving the EER. This is the most important document regarding the educational rights and duties of students. The document is quite extensive and for some students hard to understand. Therefore, VeSte wants to make the EER more understandable and make students more aware of their rights they have regarding education. VeSte wants to achieve this by making a summarized EER version on Brightspace which is clear and understandable for every student. Additionally, VeSte wants to develop a Brightspace quiz about this EER document. In this way, every student becomes aware of its right and duties regarding studying at WUR.

Organisation of WUR

Another important topic for VeSte is WUR as an organisation. Studying at WUR is more than only following education and gaining academic skills. Facilities at the university, the extent to which sustainability is taken into account, and the collaboration between WUR and the municipality are topics of which the value should not be underestimated, according to VeSte.

Facilities

The facilities WUR offers are of great importance for students. The Facilities & Organisation committee has a wide range of projects and initiatives. After years of complaints about study place availability, the new study building Aurora has created more *study places* on campus. VeSte wants to make sure sufficient study-, thesis-, and group workplaces are present on campus which are also of good ergonomic quality. Furthermore, hybrid education requires new possibilities for on-campus education. Besides that, this year VeSte will specifically focus on investigating the possibilities for improving the quality and the amount of thesis workplaces per chair group. Currently, it is not yet clear how this subject will be tackled, but it is on the agenda of several committees within both the Student Council and WUR Council. At the moment, these committees are looking into possibilities to improve the quality and the amount of thesis workplaces.

Another project the Facilities & Organisation committee is working on concerns including bicycle lights in vending machines at the education buildings. Putting those lights in the vending machines would increase safety on the road when it is dark.

Menstrual poverty is another important topic VeSte brought up within the University. With this initiative, VeSte wants to ensure that students have access to menstrual products when needed, regardless of their financial status. Currently, the party is looking into possibilities to make free menstrual products an internship or thesis subject so it can be put into practice as soon as possible.

Lastly, VeSte aims to keep improving facilities at WUR so students can enjoy their student life to the fullest. Furthermore, the party will monitor the functioning of the already implemented facilities, like the Sustainability Fund, WUR Goes Abroad, and the microwaves in all education buildings.

Sustainability

An important topic of WUR is sustainability. WUR is busy with sustainability in the broadest sense. This means in terms of educational programmes and content of courses, as well as in the research WUR is conducting and the buildings on campus itself. Consequently, it is important to VeSte as well.

In previous years, VeSte initiated multiple projects, for example the Green Office, the Sustainability Fund, and the travel fund. The Green Office is now fully grown into a separate independent student organisation, the sustainability fund is running as a three-year pilot, to stimulate students to organize sustainable events and to create more awareness among all the student organizations connected to WUR. With the travel fund, students can get reimbursed for their study travel costs when travelling sustainably.

For this year, VeSte wants to continue this trend of sustainability. This will be done by monitoring the existing projects closely, as well as by initiating new means of making WUR more sustainable. VeSte wants to investigate the possibilities for energy transition of the university, and to increase biodiversity on campus.

City and WUR

This year, VeSte wants to strengthen the connection of WUR with the municipality of Wageningen. Most students go to the campus for their education. However, VeSte believes that the student life is not solely on campus, but also in the city itself. Therefore, a positive connection between students and other residents of Wageningen is strived for this year.

First of all, to strengthen the voice of the students in the municipality and to improve the connection of WUR and the city of Wageningen, VeSte is working on the realization of a student civil servant. This student will work one day per week at the municipality and will work on issues regarding students, the university and the city of Wageningen. By implementing a student civil servant, VeSte expects to improve the communication and the representation of students in Wageningen. This year, VeSte will stay in close contact with the municipality of Wageningen regarding this topic, with the goal of implementing a student civil servant in 2023.

Secondly, in 2020, the “*Wageningse Kamer van Verenigingen (WKvV)*” was founded. The WKvV forms the bridge between student associations, the municipality and the WUR. VeSte believes that good collaboration with the WKvV would be beneficial in representing the active students of Wageningen. This year, VeSte remains in close contact with the WKvV and look for opportunities in which the WKvV and VeSte can complement each other optimally.

Finally, the housing of students in Wageningen is still an issue often voiced. VeSte believes that with sufficient housing of students, *future-proof education*, *personal development* and an *active student life* can be realized. Students benefit from proper housing, as they can invest in extracurricular activities more easily. This year, VeSte is in the Wageningen Housing Committee together with the WKvV and several student associations. Via this committee, student housing issues can be tackled and the municipality can be involved in the student housing problems.

External affairs & pillars

At the core of VeSte, the organisation strives to uphold its pillars. These pillars serve as a thread through the topics VeSte works on. The pillars are elaborated in the Structural Policy. In the table, an overview of the corresponding VeSte pillars for every chapter can be found.

	Future-proof Education	Personal Development	Active Student Life
Education			
<i>Quality of Education</i>			
<i>Digital Education</i>			
Students at WUR			
<i>Extracurricular Experiences</i>			
<i>Student Wellbeing & Social Safety</i>			
<i>Integration & inclusion</i>			
<i>Student Rights</i>			
Organisation of WUR			
<i>Facilities</i>			
<i>Sustainability</i>			
<i>City and WUR</i>			

Epilogue

Dear reader,

After reading the VeSte policy 2023, we hope you obtained a clear insight into the goals and ambitions of VeSte for the coming year. Next to maintaining and improving the quality of education at WUR, we want to pay attention to topics related to student wellbeing, integration & inclusion, sustainability, and subjects which are vital for WUR as an organization, like branding and ensuring close contact with the municipality of Wageningen. As 26th faction of VeSte, we are looking forward to tackle challenges that lie ahead of us and to represent all students of WUR.

Lastly, VeSte would like to thank the previous factions and our constituency for giving input, opinions, and support. Lastly, we would like to thank everyone involved in the evaluation of the policy 2023. If you have any questions or comments after reading this policy plan, please contact us and let's talk!

Kind regards,
The 26th faction of VeSte

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