

Minutes 244th FC meeting

Thursday March 16th 2023, 10:30 AM – 12:00 AM

FC members	EB	Guests
Luca De Jong(LdJ) (Chair)	Myra van Esch (MvE)	Pursey Heugens (PH)
Jacomijn Klitsie(JK) (Vice-Chair)	Werner Brouwer (WB)	Michel Lander (ML)
Bas Crombag (BC)		
Silvija Prancane-Verhoef (SPV)		
Luuk Veelenturf (LV)		
Anass Boukakar (AB)		
Max Meuser Bourgognion (MMB)		
Helena Suarez Groen (HSG)		
Boudewijn Pieteron (BP)		

1. Opening
2. Agenda
3. Announcements
 - Faculty model

ML There is a working group that we meet with every week and there is also a steering group meeting weekly. Hiske from HR, myself and Daan Stam are in the working group. In the steering group, there are two department chairs and Inga Hoever, the dean of diversity and inclusion. The first question we will discuss is what the faculty grid should look like. Second, we will discuss the time allocation between teaching, research and other type of activities. Third, we will discuss the steps on how to get from A to B. We also need to revise the tenure track system. We already had three meetings and the internal deadline we set for a document with a general overview is on April 2nd. On the 15th of April, we aim to organize meetings to gain input from faculty members and we will take a couple of weeks to process the feedback. I hope that in the end of May/beginning of June we have a general overview of the faculty model. After this, we still need to take care of a fully worked out role description, tenure processes and much more. This is not going to happen before June and we will do this over the summer.

LV It might be good to already start scheduling meetings to collect input from faculty members instead of doing this 'last minute'.

ML That is a good point. I will discuss this on Monday.

JK We can schedule a discussion in the June meeting then.

ML Yes.

- Negative budget

MvE We finished up the calculations and there is a negative result of 2.8 million. There are a couple of reasons for that. One of the reasons is the announcement of the additional funding coming in. Because of this, the CvB told us to start allocating funds right now because they are mostly worried about not being able to incorporate all of the money coming our way. Last year, we also spend quite some money on positions where we knew there were problems and we had to assign additional resources. Our reserves are now down to 1.5 million, so we cannot afford to have another year like this. With all of the money coming in, I do not think this will be the case.

JK Can we see the figures of the budget?

MvE Sure. You can see that we expected to have a negative result 1.6 million, but ended up with -2.8 million. By definition, we like to put a lot of ambition in our budget. As a result, you often do not make the budget. The 'bestuursakkoord' fund have also not been processed yet.

JK Will that be corrected or has it been forfeited?

MvE I think it will happen in 2023.

JK There was of an option to take funds in 2022 already. Have we not taken those?

MvE We did not take those funds yet, but this money is not gone because we can take it 2023 as well.

XWG You can take it only one year after, right?

MvE Correct.

WB For me, the most important thing is that we know what is going on and that we are in control. This is the case, so going negative in a certain year is not nice but also not a problem.

MvE The indexation of salaries was higher than expected and there is a higher income from non-EU students, which is currently up for discussion.

JK Why are external and internal vacancies split up?

MvE Because external vacancies are almost always more expensive.

JK That is fair. Is the header 'provision leave days' for people who have not taken their leave days?

MvE Yes, and there is some discussion about it because you are not sure if everyone takes their leave days, but it is their right.

LV There is a limit of five years, right?

MvE Yes.

LV We had a lot of vacancies that were not filled in this year. If we would have filled these in, the budget would have been even worse. Is this a worry?

MvE Yes. Even though we have new funds coming in, it is an ongoing battle. We need extra resources to alleviate work pressure, but we do not have the funds.

WB The common personnel cost will indeed go up if we fill the vacancies, but the external hires will go down which is typically more expensive resulting in a more positive financial outcome.

LV I do not think that all vacancies are filled by external hiring. It is often fixed by people working harder.

LdJ What is the strategy on the strategic reserves? Do you plan on working to increase them, roughly breaking even or spending less?

MvE The way that we have worked is that we try to aim at spending all the money we are getting. We need to invest in alleviating work pressure and it seems awkward to say that we saved three million while people are working too hard. However, it is very hard to aim for zero so I think the strategy is to have some reserves. We feel that a reserve of 1.5 million is a little uncomfortable for such a big school, so we want to have some more reserves. On the other hand, we do not want people to feel squeezed out, while we are saving money. That is a difficult balance, but we will never be a school that has 10 million on the bank while everybody is working extremely hard.

SPV Is there a minimum requirement?

MvE Yes, and we are reaching it which means the CvB will put a magnifying glass on us.

WB I agree with Myra that I think we have to spend the maximum within our abilities to reduce the workload. On the other hand, it might be good to increase our reserves a little bit to absorb any kind of negative result in a certain year for whatever reason and also to have a strategic budget available

- Opening times Mandeville building

MvE We agreed with RAF to not change the opening hours right now, but we are going to do a pilot from the 1st of April to the 1st of October where we ask everybody who wants to be in the building after 19:30 to register, which is also helpful in terms of safety. You cannot register 30 minutes before, so it requires a bit of planning. However, you can still go to one of the other buildings. It will help us to know how many people actually make use of the building in the late hours and then we can have a data driven discussion.

XWG You mentioned safety. Have there been any safety issues before?

MvE No, this is just an added benefit. The reason for doing this is purely sustainability.

LdJ This is meant to measure the demand for working in the evening in Mandeville. Don't you think that having to register demotivates people to work in Mandeville in the evening?

MvE That could be, but it is a trade-off.

JK Can people just stay in their office while not being registered?

MvE Security does a round and they have a list of the people who registered, and they will remind these people of registering.

LdJ How does this work for students?

MvE There are special student areas, but you do not have to register. The demand is measured by counting the number of students.

LV Before Christmas, people were continually counting. What was this about?

MvE This was for measuring occupancy rates among staff. Before Corona this was about 33% and now it is 18%. This creates a discussion on how to use our building more optimal if it is only used for 18%. Therefore, we are considering working with more flexible offices. This enables people who share offices to find a quiet spot. The idea is that people check in at a desk and then you can easily find people if you need them and there is currently a pilot for this on T5 and T4. You can do this via the app or via the QR code on the desk. If we continue with this after the pilot, it will also be connected with Outlook.

WB If you opt for more flexible use of space, you may still want people from the same department to have access to rooms in the same area, so that everybody from your department is within close distance. It will take some getting used to, but I believe the changes are manageable.

LV What is the risk of everybody having a key to several offices in terms of security?

WB Leaving personal belongings in your room may become somewhat more risky, also because colleagues may forget to lock the door. This is one of the things that will need some getting used to. Lockers may be used to leave personal belongings.

4. Follow-up minutes 243rd meeting

LdJ The minutes are approved.

5. Bestuursakkoord (With Pursey Heugens)

PH I will give a broad introduction on where we stand and then I can take questions. There is more money coming in for alleviating work pressure which is good news. However, it is very complicated to incorporate this money. This is not money that we can add to our first money stream and spend freely. We are talking about three different groups of funds coming in and they all have different criteria. First, we have the sector plan moneys which is meant to appoint new assistant professors in the area of digitization and AI, and we opened 15 vacancies this year. The largest moneys coming in is for the starter grants, which is to support starting scientists and offers assistant professor positions. In the long term, we can offer 17 of these starter grants this year which entails 214K per person. Finally, we also have around 3 million coming in from incentive grants which we can mostly use for the associate category. We can use this moneys for more selective purposes such as the retention of talent. These grants are again for alleviating work pressure and stimulating free science. Each of these grants have different difficulties of onboarding them properly and responsibly. In total, this ends up at 8 million on the school level per annum for the next 8 years at least.

LdJ We had a question about potentially not taking all of the money. Can you give an indication about how much money you are going to take? If you are not taking all of the money, what is the reason for this?

PH Our desire is to leave as little money on the table as possible. We have done the scenario analysis and I think we come a long way. We may not be able to absorb all of the starter grants, but it seems that we can absorb all of the different grants reasonably. We do not want to take unnecessary risk and the biggest difficulty lies within the starter grants.

LdJ The grants are coming in until at least 2031. After this, we face some risks. How are you dealing with those risks and how are you dealing with the fact that it is harder to address work pressure if you do not take all of the money? How is the balance between these two factors?

PH In terms of the risk from getting people on the payroll, take into account that the moneys from the starter grants will still continue to come to us structurally. I do not think that giving people contracts is much of a risk. For the incentive grant, it seems to be more temporary in terms of money coming in. It might be used for hiring PHD's, which receive a temporary contract and they will leave the university as well.

LdJ Are we right now forfeiting any money because we are behind other faculties in regards to applying to bestuursakkoord funds?

PH No, because the moneys that were supposed to come in in 2022 can be reserved for 2023 as well. We have until the end of the calendar year to assign all of the starter grants. In principle, we can start handing out the first grants on a reasonably short notice. We have to do a very good analysis on who is eligible and what they can spend the money on.

JK How does the spending work?

PH The university has decided that you can spend the money in a window of 3 to 6 years.

LV Is this only for new hires or also for current employees?

PH The criterion for allocation is that it has to go to a person who holds a position of a tenured assistant professor where their permanent contract has been given a maximum of 2 years in advance of receiving the starter grant.

LdJ Does the bestuursakkoord change the way the tenure track is structured?

PH Yes. The changes will probably be discussed the next time you meet up. It is difficult because these grants can only be allocated to tenured assistant professors. In the current tenure track, you move from an untenured assistant professor to a tenured associate. In the revision of the tenure track, we are creating two potential moments where we can decouple the tenure and promotion decision. This will give some extra security for employees earlier in their career. In the end, these employees will get a tenured contract 2 years sooner than normally if everything goes well in their research career. In that window, we can start allocating starter grants.

XWG You mentioned that there were 15 assistant professors who were already hired for AI and digitization purposes. If I understand correctly, these people do not necessarily have an AI focus.

PH That is right. We have received these moneys before having the manual on how to spend these moneys. However, it does not influence on how we fulfill the requirements as we can show that there are enough people working on AI and digitization.

XWG Are the starter grants for individuals?

PH We need to connect them to individuals, but we have more than enough grants to give to every person who is eligible. For spending the money we have to strike a balance between alleviating work pressure and stimulating research ambitions of individuals. The plan is now to use half of the money to alleviate work pressure on a team level. The other half of the grant can be used to further your research agenda if you are a grant recipient.

LdJ Thank you. I am curious to see the more detailed plans later.

PH Take into account that the tenure track discussion will have to be on your agenda shortly.

6. Selection procedure Electives & Tracks (With Michel Lander)

LdJ We were mostly curious about your view on this discussion.

ML I was not privy to the original bachelor 3 redesign, so some of the design choices are based on the previous team. For instance, the idea of not giving preference to certain students is the equality discussion because a student with good grades might not be able to register at a specific moment. At the MsC level, we had grade systems but there were instances where people would sell their slot. To avoid these kinds of situations, we wanted to keep it this way in order to keep it fair for everybody.

Personally, I do not see a reason to change it. The organizational hassle and the potential downsides are more significant than the upsides. For the tracks, a majority of the students got their first choice.

LV All of them except for the late registrations.

ML The biggest problem is the size of the tracks. Some tracks were more popular than others and there is always a negotiation whether departments are willing to absorb more students.

LdJ How many students get one of their top five choice for electives?

ML This is a question you should ask Mirko or Jacomijn because they have data on this. For future reference, ask this kind of questions to the academic directors. Also, questions on tracks and electives are more appropriate coming from program committees.

7. Follow-up to-do list 243rd meeting

8. Any other business

ML Regarding the CBS exam that had to be retaken, actions have been taken and policies are put in place to prevent this from happening again.

XWG What are broader measures being taken in terms of quality assurance?

ML We have appointed educational coordinators into the departments for two reasons. First, the heads of departments asked for this to alleviate workload on the side of faculty. Second, I believe we are a little lax in terms of our quality assurance and we may not have organized everything to accreditation standards. We are meeting with all academic directors jointly to talk about the quality assurance process. Currently, I am discussing with the academic directors where the program is going, what their vision is and what the changes are. We are now building in a step where we have to validate that the students are actually acquiring the competencies that they need to acquire.

The educational coordinators I mentioned are there to support quality assurance by checking exam questions, for instance. They will do this for 20% of their time and the rest of their time is spent on alleviating work pressure for staff. We have offered this to all departments and almost all departments have accepted this.

XWG I want to add that there is a lot of burden on faculty members to deal with issues such as taking responsibility for checking plagiarism and exams while the rules and regulations to do so are constantly changing. I also hear that they are now checking a lower percentage of course manuals because to be more efficient.

ML The checking of course manual is not in the job description of the examination board. They have to assure the quality after the fact. In terms of checking exams, we are looking at ways to improve this process. For example, on T5 we have a new curriculum information system that should help with checking. We have to get a good balance between oversight and trusting the professionalism of the departments.

LV I saw that some general measures were taken. Is this only for the strategic management master or for all of them?

ML I am going to have a meeting with all of the heads of department to go over all of the quality assurance policies that should be happening and discuss the steps that strategic management has taken. The aim is to collect input from the other departments and then decide on a set of standards.

LV I saw that one of the measures was that it was not allowed to teach a course alone.

ML That is indeed a decision made by that department. This is a trade-off between efficiency and risks associated with teaching alone such as illness.

LV I believe courses are often taught by one person due to the need for efficiency, resulting from the high work pressure.

ML That is true, but I think we do not have a good overview of where the work pressure is, which is a risk.

XWG Will there be implemented anything in that regard?

ML Yes, soon. There is a tool where you have a good overview of who is doing what in terms of teaching and research.

MvE Michel and me are very enthusiastic about it, but we need to have discussion on this because it requires a lot of transparency.

HSG Regarding the exam. I believe we should make sure that these practice exams on Canvas are not downloadable. There is no reason for students to always have these old exams available.

MvE Yes, I agree.

XWG I am in the OGSM workgroup and I am happy that we are working on work pressure. However, I was a bit concerned to see so little faculty members involved in the discussions.

MvE They are invited on an individual basis. We could invite more people, but most of the time people commit and then do not show up. I would love there to be more people and I agree what you mentioned in the meeting about creating more incentive for people to join.

ML We have to use incentives because we are crammed for time. When we talk about the faculty model, there should be much better appreciation for other activities in the model itself. I would like there to be a system where we can account for these kinds of matters, so it is taken into account in terms of your hours.

LV It makes it difficult for temporary position, such as the faculty council. Before you can implement a decrease in your teaching load, the position is already gone.

9. Closing