



Policy Plan

Pro Geo

30th Board

2021-2022

As we are slowly but surely returning to a physical way of learning we face the challenges to make the next year a successful one for all students of the Faculty of Spatial Sciences. As we have encountered several recurring challenges throughout our studies, we would like to tackle them this academic year.

With this being said, the themes we focus on in the academic year of 2021/2022 are as follows:

- A. Quality of teaching
- B. Well-being
- C. Internal affairs

The 30th Board of Pro Geo

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A. Quality of Teaching

Communication from/with the teachers

This academic year, we, as a board, aspire to create an environment that will lead to a smooth transition from fully online teaching to a hybrid one for all students within our faculty. We believe communication is a foundation for this transition, therefore we suggest some actions that could improve it. We advise that all channels of communication should be clear and understandable at all times. Currently, there is a mixed usage of email, Nestor announcements, and oral announcements that are sometimes at risk of being contradictory. We advise the choice of one communication channel so that students who may not have been present do not miss crucial information. We will raise this issue in the Faculty Council to make the staff aware of this problem and start the conversation in order to find a solution. Besides that, teachers should make clear when and how they are reachable.

With regards to hybrid education, we want to ensure the following qualities:

- Adequate sound quality for lecture recordings
- Lecture recordings uploaded in a timely manner (as soon as possible after the lecture)
- The option to remotely (online) attend a lecture and seminar
- Suggesting lecturers to host an (online) question hour, to avoid slow email/discussion board communication

This can be achieved by cooperating with both the Faculty Council and the Director of education, to make sure that these points will be taken up into the Lecturers Handbook.

The assessment of courses needs to be explained clearly and understandably. This includes a detailed/standardized course guide, clear instructions on where to submit/find assessments within the Nestor course and good examples of what is expected in assignments and on exams - either from previous years or created by the lecturer.

In relation to that, we would like to work on a standardised course guide template, which can be uploaded on the student portal. The course guide template combines all relevant information that can currently be found for all courses on Ocasys and the timetable in one document. This includes a general course description, all exam and assignment deadlines and requirements, assessment, as well as important dates such as fieldwork. A standardised course guide template benefits both students and staff. Students will get a clear overview of what their courses will look like and what they can expect. By filling out the template, staff can prevent having to repeat themselves to answer frequently asked questions. We would like to make the standardised course guide the new norm that will be incorporated from this year onwards.

Organisation Student Portal

A repeating issue we have been encountering is the inconsistent layout of tabs of courses on Nestor which creates confusion for students. Therefore, with the upcoming change of the student portal, we would suggest creating a uniform template to make finding course materials easier, while still considering differences between courses. This issue has been brought up at the Faculty Council, we will remain in close contact with the Faculty Board to provide them with feedback from a student perspective. A well-organized course page would especially benefit first-year bachelor and master students to be able to find all information in a timely manner.

Use of English

The Faculty of Spatial Sciences, despite being in the Netherlands, has switched to an all-English environment in 2017. Everyone should always follow this guideline. This concerns all channels of communication, written and spoken. We will stay alert about this and communicate to staff if this is not the case. The concrete problems that we came across are as follows. During the

Faculty Council meeting, we encountered that not all documents relevant to the meeting were provided in English. Besides that, we have noticed that not all lecture materials (e.g. PowerPoint slides) are completely in English. Pro Geo will stress this issue within the Faculty (Council).

Digitalisation of courses

With digitalisation forthcoming, the Faculty should expand its teaching to include more software and computer programming related classes. This could be achieved by cooperation with other RUG faculties, for example, inviting lecturers from other faculties to give classes or expanding the use of GIS in other courses. This is something Pro Geo will suggest to the Faculty Council and see which steps need to be taken from thereon. Besides that, we will keep working on the development of an elective related to computer programming that was started by the previous board. We feel this is a good addition to the course programme, as students will obtain skills useful for the work field later on.

B. Well-being

In the last year, the students have had an unusual year under the regulations for online and hybrid teaching. With the RUG starting up regular education again, we think it is crucial to keep students' mental well-being in mind at all times. It can be very overwhelming, in particular for second-year students, who have not received a standard form of education yet.

Support

During the course of the year, we want to put a bigger focus on what the RUG has to offer mental support-wise. We will promote contacting the FSS study advisors, psychologists, LC mentors, Ibn Battuta's confidential counsellors and ourselves when students are struggling. We will direct students in need that contact us to the right organisation so that they can receive help in the best way possible.

We as Pro Geo aim to be more in touch with both confidential counsellors and study advisors. The study advisors and confidential counsellors have also expressed interest in strengthening our networks. This will improve the advice that can be offered to students. We want to establish a communication channel that later boards can continue to use.

Furthermore, all of the support mentioned above should be actively promoted to students through multiple means of communication, such as lectures, emails and social media. This academic year, the study advisors aim to do more lecture talks during exam periods to underline the importance of mental well-being. Besides that, they are creating a brochure including all information about mental health facilities in the university. We have offered our help and will stay in close contact with them regarding this subject.

C. Internal affairs

The foundation Pro Geo should be visible and approachable to students. Therefore, we need to establish a routine on updating our online presence for all interested parties. This includes updates on the Pro Geo website, as well as the social media accounts of our choice.

We will stay involved in the Master and Bachelor introduction period for the following year. Besides that, throughout the year we would like to organize an activity in collaboration with Ibn Battuta and host a few coffee hours to be approachable for students.