



**Policy plan**

**Pro Geo**

**31st board**

**2022-2023**

Dear reader,

The academic year of 2022-2023 is promising to be a refreshing year. As COVID-19 restrictions have mostly been lifted and student life has returned to campus, Pro Geo is excited to continue improving education and student life at the Faculty of Spatial Sciences. This policy plan outlines our plans for this year.

We, the 31<sup>st</sup> board of Pro Geo, have prepared this policy document, which incorporates an overview of policy issues that will form the focal point of our term. The policy plan has been divided into three overarching themes:

1. Student well-being
2. Improve education standards
3. Visibility

In this guiding document, these themes have been further subdivided into sections that contain our viewpoints on specific issues that fall under each respective overarching theme. Our goal is to structurally provide you, the reader, with an informative overview of our stance, concerns, and ambition on policy issues for this academic year.

Kind regards,

*The 31st board of Pro Geo*

Harm Verbeek      *Chairman*

Penda Jobarteh      *Vice-Chairman & Secretary*

Aidan Mc Clements      *Treasurer*

Csenge Kunos      *PC Commissioner*

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## **A. Student well-being**

### *A1. Mental health meeting*

Over the years the mental health of students has become an increasingly big topic, especially during the COVID-19 pandemic. Now that COVID-related restrictions have mostly been lifted, the situation has improved. However, Pro Geo still sees mental health as one of the key issues regarding student well-being.

In the previous academic year mental health meetings were set up within the faculty to monitor the situation and discuss measures of mental health. This year Pro Geo will continue this initiative to have an overview of the major challenges students face while studying. By meeting with the study advisors, Ibn Batutta, Confidential Counsellors and Student Assessor four times a year.

### *A2. Awareness of mental health facilities*

The faculty and the university as a whole, have facilities available to aid students with their well-being. For instance, the student portal has a mental wellbeing site which provides guidelines depending on the personal circumstances. Moreover, there is an opportunity to apply for personal coaching at the Faculty of Behavioural and Social Sciences, which can help manage the challenges students face.

As these are accessible and mostly free resources, Pro Geo will give special attention to promoting these facilities on Instagram during and after each exam period.

Additionally, efforts Pro Geo will undertake themselves include coffee hours after every exam period (4 times per academic year). These will provide a chance for students to engage in discussions on stress management.

## **B. Improving education standards**

### *B1. Feedback on education*

Better connections and transferability between courses are an important topic for Pro Geo. Pro Geo has received feedback that for certain bachelor courses, students do not find it obvious what skills they have acquired and how they are transferable to their main field of study. It is proposed that in addition to stating what skills are transferable, teachers demonstrate what these skills are and how to apply them in different contexts. For examples of this, it is suggested to look at the master programmes.

Some courses are directly linked to the subject of the study but appear to be taught almost in isolation. Students may understand why it is useful regarding spatial sciences but the synergy between the different courses is not immediately apparent. Pro Geo proposes a clearer connection between the different courses of the programmes.

More practicality could be incorporated into certain classes, potentially through more interactive classes featuring computer programmes either within the class environment and/or as part of the FSS Career Services. These could include architectural design software such as but not limited to AutoCAD and Sketchup, rendering programs, computer programming software (Python). A survey will be sent

to students to determine which programs they deem the most useful. The use of these programs can be accompanied by workshops to provide tutorials and crash courses in this software, as well as other skills including design portfolio making. Not only does this provide concrete examples to help students in their understanding, but it also helps the faculty further its progress in digitalisation and better prepare students for a society where digital skills are increasingly highly valued.

Consequently, this year, the Pro Geo aims to build a long-term plan in collaboration with the faculty to introduce a computer programming elective. It will be useful to hold workshops and make new software accessible to faculty students as this will be complementary to the existing Career Services software workshops.

### *B2. Internationalisation*

The Faculty of Spatial Sciences is an internationally focused faculty. Through the transition undertaken by the faculty, a diverse and rich student body emerged. Additionally, the international focus should also be reflected in the education the faculty provides. In practice this means that sufficient international case studies or examples should be given during courses. Throughout the year Pro Geo will stress the importance of international examples in all courses. Special attention will be given to courses that have historically been very focused on The Netherlands.

### *B3. Use of English*

The faculty has made great efforts to shift all courses and administration from Dutch to English, and these have mostly paid off. However, there are still many, usually relatively minor, cases of this transition not being complete. Pro Geo aims to oversee that all teaching materials be available in English if possible, or at least, have an English translation provided alongside. Additionally, special attention should be given to lecture slides that have been reused from previous years.

### *B4. Digital learning*

Since the start of the COVID-19 pandemic, the university has gained a lot of experience with digital learning. This has made the university more resilient in adapting to sudden changes and led to innovative ways to provide education. Pro Geo sees the benefits of on-site education and would like to see a “hybrid” approach going forward with high rates of on-site attendance and engagement while still allowing for flexibility for students. Pro Geo is therefore of the opinion that certain aspects of online/hybrid learning including lecture recordings and the flexibility of online meetings should not be entirely disregarded. As a result, Pro Geo will try to make sure the benefits of both physical and online education will be utilised.

Furthermore, starting this academic year the university has switched from Nestor to Brightspace for their digital environment. Pro Geo expects issues to arise throughout the year as both students and teachers get used to a new way of working. We will monitor the situation and supply the faculty with feedback regarding implementation and use of Brightspace.

## **C. Visibility**

### *C1. Visibility of Pro Geo*

Visibility is a key topic for Pro Geo. It has been noticed that the function or capabilities of Pro Geo are not widely known to students of the faculty. Therefore, it is important to promote not just the activities of the board of Pro Geo but also the Programme Committees (PC's) and the Faculty Council. Furthermore, it is important to educate students on the Board's role in the Faculty Council.

To increase visibility, the Board will work on improving accessibility to Pro Geo representatives, particularly through the PC's and outreach to students. It is our intention to strengthen the connections between the PCs and the students to increase engagement with feedback and input to improve representation. To achieve this, PC members will be strongly urged to make themselves known in their year by giving lecture presentations and engage students through chat groups and by word of mouth. Our aim is therefore for all students to know who their PC Member is and for them to feel comfortable sharing their opinions and feedback with them.

Great effort will be put into engaging with students both online and in person through social media and lecture talks. The aim is to encourage and open communication channels between Pro Geo and students of the faculty.

### *C2. Promotion*

Social media channels and the Pro Geo website are key in increasing online visibility. To make better use of these mediums a promotion plan will be created. Within this promotion plan, a strategy will be set to increase the number of followers on Instagram and LinkedIn as this will increase the reach of future posts. Another goal is to reach 500 followers on the Instagram account by the end of the academic year.

Additionally, a planning will be set for the regular distribution of several informative posts on the website. Among the content posted will be updates of the public affairs of the board. By making Pro Geo more approachable, more feedback will be received from the students which will improve the learning environment.

### *C3. Contact with FSS staff, board, and students*

Continuing the work of previous boards, close cooperation will be sought with the faculty staff section. Together, we will look for opportunities to increase student input and thus the Faculty Council's knowledge of what is going on among students. Of course, this also applies reciprocally to the input of the faculty staff.

To represent the students as well as possible and improve their input, Pro Geo will introduce a physical suggestion box which will allow students to anonymously relay concerns that play a role in their university experience. In this way, Pro Geo tries to get in touch with fellow students and understand their vision of the best faculty for all.

On top of that, Pro Geo aims for inter-faculty collaboration with other faculty bodies and staff to organise and participate in interesting, engaging, and fun activities that will foster good relations between faculty students and staff.