

Annual report 2015-16 of the Degree Programme Committee U.S.E.

Contents

- 1. Committee: composition and tasks**
 - 1.1 Composition**
 - 1.2 Tasks**
- 2. Meetings and topics, issued advice**
 - 2.1 Meeting and topics**
 - 2.2 Issued advice and other notes (and reactions)**
- 3. Functioning (this year) and considerations (for next academic year)**

1. Committee: composition and tasks

1.1 Composition of the Degree Programme Committee (DPC)

Since the beginning of 2016 the DPC of Utrecht School of Economics (U.S.E) covers both the Bachelor and the regular Master programmes of U.S.E. The composition of the DPC should reflect as much diversity as possible, both on the side of the staff members and the student members. In 2015-16 the members are:

Dr. Annette van den Berg	(staff, representing Bachelor, and chair)
Drs. Rob Bolder	(staff, representing Bachelor)
Dr. Thomas van Huizen	(staff, representing Master)
Dr. Gábor Péli	(staff, representing Master)
Dr. Jeroen van Raak	(staff, representing Master)
Dr. Carla do Rosario Costa	(staff, representing Bachelor)
Dr. Bastian Westbrock	(staff, representing Bachelor)
Joost Gadellaa	(bachelor student year 1 and honours)
Bojken Gjoleka	(bachelor student year 2)
Ugne Vaiciute	(bachelor student year 2)
Lisa Postma	(bachelor student year 3)
Lisa klein Goldewijk	(master student Law and Economics)
Zineb Lamriki	(master student Economics of Public Policy and Management)
Michiel van der Werf	(master student International Management)

The DPC is supported by administrative secretary Marianne de Jonge.

Staff members usually stay in the committee for several years. The DPC does strive after continuity, so student members are encouraged to stay for more than one year.

1.2 Tasks of the DPC

The tasks of the Board of Studies are described in the Higher Education and Research Act (WHW, Article 9.18). These tasks are:

1. Advising on the Education and Examination Regulations (EER) of the programme.
2. The annual assessment of how the EER has been implemented.
3. Advising (solicited and unsolicited) on all education-related subjects within the programme, especially the course evaluations.

2. Schedule of meetings and topics on the agenda as of January 2016; issued advice

2.1 Meetings and topics

The meetings of the DPC have primarily been split between the Bachelor and Master subcommittees. There was only one joint meeting.

The following table gives a first impression of the main topic of all meetings. Below, each meeting will be briefly explained.

	When	Who	What (<i>main topic</i>)
1	14/1	Volunteers complete DPC	Information meeting offered by UU
2	19/1	Complete DPC	Getting acquainted, short discussion on our tasks
3	27/1	Master committee	Course evaluations period 1
4	2/2	Volunteers Master committee	Dutch-speaking meeting with REBO director of Graduate Studies
5	10/2	Bachelor committee	Course evaluations period 1
6	4/3	Master committee	Changes in EER
7	4/3	Bachelor committee	Changes in EER
8	29/3	Master committee	Course descriptions 2016-17
9	30/3	Bachelor committee	Course descriptions 2016-17
10	8/4	Master committee	Course evaluations period 2
11	21/6	Master committee	Course evaluations period 3
12	23/6	Bachelor committee	Course evaluations period 3

Ad 1. Information meeting about structure and role of DPCs on 14 January 2016.

The meeting was organized by Rhea Dong by order of the Executive Board of the UU, who wanted to investigate the role and structure of the DPCs within the different faculties / departments. Goal: report on best practices.

Ad 2. First meeting of the newly composed DPC. Topics were: Introducing each other; what motivates us; brief clarification of our role; looking ahead at future meetings and topics. A photo was taken of the DPC members, which has become a poster for the purpose of promotion.

Ad 3. Next to the course evaluations of period 1, the student members also informed the DPC about the state of affairs in period 2. The discussions in this meeting have led to two letters to the Director of Studies: one about the course evaluations and one with the concerns about the formats of the new master programmes, which will (almost) all be completely new and become (per period) three courses of 5 ECTS instead of two courses of 7.5 ECTS.

Ad 4. This was an interesting informal meeting with staff and students of the councils of all three sub faculties. No minutes were made.

<p>DPC/2016/03 (15-2-2016)</p> <p>Reaction BC (11-3-2016)</p>	<p>Course Evaluations Bachelor period 1 2015-2016</p> <p>The DPC has some comments and suggestions regarding five courses. In addition, four broader comments are made: 1) move the larger part of the course evaluation to the last tutorial, since the response is always low during the final exam; reserve just a couple of remaining questions for right after the exam. 2) Delete question 2 of the evaluation form; 3) Please avoid the use of the cinema for lectures. 4) The DPC pleads for special provisions for repeaters in case the contents of a course has drastically changed.</p> <p>The bachelor coordinator has passed the DPC's comments on to the respective course coordinators. W.r.t. the five suggested points, only the first one is not (yet) feasible.</p>
<p>DPC/2016/04 (10-3-2016)</p> <p>Reaction BC (29-3-2016)</p>	<p>Bachelor's Degree Programme in Economics and Business Education and Examination Regulations 2016-2017</p> <p>The DPC agrees with most adjustments and has just a few remarks. Art. 3.8.5. now states that students can be excluded from the Honours programme 'after a year'. The DPC proposes to adopt the text from the Model EER, so that underperforming Honours students can also be excluded at a later stage of their bachelor studies. Art 6.2 The DPC requests to specify the mentioned special situation and to be clear about the cases in which the re-sit is due to a special provision. Annex 5. The DPC requests to clarify the special status of MDE in the Honours programme.</p> <p>The first and third remarks of the DPC have been acknowledged and adopted, the second will stay as it is.</p>
<p>DPC/2016/05 (10-3-2016)</p> <p>Reaction DoS (7-4-2016)</p>	<p>Masters' Degree Programmes in Economics Education and Examination Regulations 2016-2017</p> <p>The DPC agrees with most adjustments and has just a few remarks. 2.1: Law and Economics: The discussion is whether a recommendation should be mentioned in the EER, as it is not a binding requirement. 3.1 par 6 second bullet: The DPC thinks that it is better to rephrase the last part of the sentence, e.g. independently developing the topic of one's thesis. 3.1 Exit Qualifications of Law and Economics are missing. Moreover, the formulation of all exit qualifications seems arbitrary and incomplete. 3.6 first table: All formulation must be coherent in brochures, on the website, et cetera, the word 'programme' is used in a confusing way. 3.6 par 1: The DPC would prefer that Law and Economics would a) have a study load of 5 EC per course as well; and b) also offer the course Professional Skills. The DPC suggests the Director of Studies to bring this up for next year. 3.6 par 2 & 5.14 par 3-4: The exact phrasing can be improved. 3.8 par 1: In 2016-2017 the thesis will be spread out over period 3 and 4, which means that the mentioned exception for period 4 has to be removed/rephrased. Furthermore, the DPC wonders whether the amount of contact hours will stay the same in the new system with 5 EC courses.</p> <p>Acknowledgement of most of the DPC's suggested alterations. Law & Economics remains different for the moment, but DoS continues to strive after the desired alterations.</p>

DPC/2016/08 (20-4-2016)	Course Evaluations Master Courses Period 2 2015-2016 The DPC comes up with several detailed remarks and a few broader ones, which are listed below: 1) There are quite some courses with a passing rate of (almost) 100% before retakes. The optimum should be 70-80 and after the retake 100%. This is probably related to the fact that a lot of assignments are group work, which is hardly ever graded with less than a 6. 2) Study hours. As 2/3 of the students do not spend more than 15 hours a week on a course, there seems room for extra work.
Reaction DoS (21-6-2016)	“You correctly observe that the weight of individual work in final grades increases as the weight assigned to group work cannot exceed 50% as of next academic year. As to the course load, we continue to stress that courses should become more demanding, also in line of UU-policy in this regard.”
DPC/2016/09 (21-4-2016)	Course evaluations Bachelor degree programme Period 2 2015-2016 Since hardly any courses were evaluated, this is a very short note.
Reaction BC	Not applicable
DPC/2016/10 (24-5- 2016)	Advice DPC on teaching allocation system For the DPC, this is a very serious issue, as the members consider the current allocation system opaque and not completely fair regarding implementation.
Reaction DoS (21-6-2016)	“The observations that you raise require an in-depth discussion of the allocation system. Although I cannot indicate that the allocation will be adjusted accordingly, I will certainly take your concerns into account with the regular review of the allocation system. This review will not be done before the next academic year starts, and will affect the allocation, if at all, as of September 2017 only. In due time you will be notified about the outcome of our discussion. Of course, if we need your additional advice we will not hesitate to contact you on this matter”.
DPC/2016/11 (7-7-2016)	Masters’ Degree course evaluations, Period 3 2015-2016 Most of the courses received satisfactory ratings and comments. Two courses have a considerably lower overall score of more than 1 point as compared with last year. Further, the rating for the difficulty level of the courses is below 3 for all courses except one. The student DPC members indeed confirm that the level is mostly too low. For next year the coordinators have to be urged to make the courses more challenging.
Reaction DoS	Not yet received
DPC/2016/12 (7-7-2016)	Bachelor’s course evaluations, Period 3 2015-2016 Below, the general remarks are listed 1) It is a pity that several coordinators did not find the time to reflect on their course evaluations, despite reminders by the Support Office. Participants of all courses are entitled to a reaction by the course coordinator, in particular regarding the question whether any adjustments are foreseen for the next year.

Reaction BC (5-10-2016)	<p>2) Inspired by the success of the volunteer student panel in the course Strategy and Organisation, the DPC finds this such a good practice that it would be good if this were implemented in more (or even all) courses: Not only to improve the courses, but also to improve the students' involvement.</p> <p>Point 1) is acknowledged and action has been taken; On point 2): "We acknowledge the success of this volunteer student panel. I will recommend this approach during the next staff meeting".</p>
DPC/2016/13 (7-7-2016)	<p>Miscellaneous points of attention regarding the Bachelor</p> <p>1) If you look in Osiris at the new course descriptions of both Introduction to Social Sciences and to Introduction to Law, you can see that both offer only 4 contact hours. We cannot check this for the introductory Geo minor course, as this information – strangely enough – is not mentioned in Osiris. According to the EER, first year students should on average receive 12 contact hours (2x6) per period. What is your viewpoint in this matter?</p> <p>2) The DPC supports a pilot concerning anonymous grading of exams, but the practical problems cannot be properly overseen.</p> <p>3) It would be sensible to formally standardise the use of a guessing factor in MC exams. If coordinators then decide to deviate from this standard, the participants must be duly informed of the grading system in place.</p>
Reaction BC	Not received
DPC/2016/14 (18-7-2016)	<p>Composition of DPC as of September 2016</p> <p>With the complete change of the Master curriculum, six different programmes will come into being. Also in light of the expected substantial growth in the number of participants, we suggest that the number of student DPC members should increase from three to four: one member as representative for Economic Policy, one for Law & Economics, one for the combination of Banking & Finance plus Financial Management, and one for the combination of International Management plus Business Development and Entrepreneurship. Automatically, this change from three to four student members implies that also one extra staff member needs to be appointed.</p>
Reaction DoS (14-9-2016)	Request approved via email.
DPC/2016/15 (18-7-2016)	<p>Request for training day in October 2016</p> <p>In the course of the upcoming academic year the new law, 'Wet Versterking bestuurskracht' will be implemented and this law explicitly states that Degree Programme Committees (DPCs) should professionalise with the aid of training, so as to contribute to the quality of the education and curriculum. The DPC requests to be trained in October, as soon as all new members are installed, on matters such as knowledge of the (new) law, how to act with respect to the EER, meeting techniques and the like.</p>
Reaction U.S.E. Board (21-9-2016)	Request approved via email.

3. Functioning (this year) and considerations (for next academic year)

At the end of this first academic year of the DPC in its new format, two DPC members have evaluated its functioning with the Director of Studies and the Bachelor coordinator. All in all, there is agreement that many things have been achieved (see the previous section) but that there is also room for *improvement*. Two matters stand out, which will be discussed first.

1. Communication between DPC and Director of Studies (DOS) and Bachelor coordinator (BC).
2. Communication within the DPC, notably between student members and staff members

Ad 1. Problem:

Several important policy issues and board decisions have not been shared with the DPC before their implementation. In order to be able to give timely and useful (unsolicited) advice, the DPC needs more information and at an earlier stage. A clear break with the recent past has been the decision not to send the education board's minutes anymore to the DPC, who is therefore less aware of the issues in play and significant developments. Also, the reaction of DOS to the DPC's notes and advices often took a long time.

Proposed solution: As of upcoming academic year, representatives of the DPC will meet monthly with DOS and BC to discuss current affairs in an informal way, so as to become better informed. The DPC will also receive the decision list of each education board meeting, while the clarification thereof will take place during the informal meetings.

Ad 2. Problem:

In a few instances there was some miscommunication between student members (and the Student Interest Body StIB) and the staff members of the DPC. This does not alter the fact that the understanding between staff and student members has always been good. Twice, the request for items to be added to the agenda came (too) late. The first occasion was the most serious one as this concerned a few late objections of the student delegation against the new EER. Formally, the DPC (staff members and student members jointly) had already given its advice and this advice was also already discussed in the education board. There was some agitation about this and several serious talks with the people involved have taken place. The second occasion was a very late request to add items to the agenda but that was still before the meeting, so that could be realized.

Proposed solution: As of upcoming academic year there will be a scheduled meeting of the DPC chair with one student representative ahead of the DPC meeting, to exchange information and to jointly set the agenda.

Another issue related to communication is the information that study association ECU'92 gives to candidate student members during the recruitment phase. Last year several new student members thought that they were only asked to join the StIB, not the DPC. During the upcoming recruitment phase, clearer information will be given, in view of correct management of expectations. After all, being member of the DPC is an important and responsible function. It is very good that two student members will stay on in the upcoming year, for the sake of continuity.

All DPC members have the feeling that their functioning could improve via a training day. On the one hand more knowledge of legal matters can be useful (also in view of the upcoming change in the law), while on the other hand some relevant tips concerning meeting skills might make the DPC function more effectively. This request has been sent to the U.S.E. board.

All things considered, the DPC has made a good start, will learn from the experiences and is looking forward to the upcoming academic year.

Utrecht, 15 October 2016