



Election Programme 2024-2025



Contents

- Contents..... 1
- List of Abbreviations..... 2
- Foreword..... 3
- In Short..... 4
 - Quality of Education..... 4
 - Internationalisation & Inclusivity..... 4
 - Communication and Transparency..... 5
 - Student Well-Being and Visibility..... 5
 - Sustainability..... 6
- Quality of Education..... 8
 - Student Participation..... 8
 - Active Learning..... 9
 - Accessibility Measures..... 9
 - Workload Distribution..... 10
 - Program Committees..... 10
 - Working with AI..... 10
- Internationalisation & Inclusivity..... 13
 - Decolonisation and Inclusivity of Study Materials..... 13
 - Solving the Language Barrier..... 13
 - Diversity & Inclusivity..... 13
- Communication and Transparency..... 15
 - Clear Communication and Transparency from the Faculty Board..... 15
 - Consistent Communication with the Student Body..... 15
 - Language of Communication..... 16
- Student Well-being and Visibility..... 18
 - Visibility and Accessibility of Support Resources for Students..... 18
 - Mentor Programme..... 18
 - Study Associations..... 18
- Sustainability..... 21
 - Accessibility & Renovations..... 21
 - Green Office..... 21
- Candidates..... 22

List of Abbreviations

LV - Letteren Vooruit

RUG- Rijksuniversiteit Groningen (University of Groningen)

FoA - Faculty of Arts

PC - Programme Committee

AL- Active Learning

F9- Faction 9, the previous year's faction for LV

Foreword

Dear students,

I am proud to present to you the Election Programme of the Tenth Faction of Letteren Vooruit. Over the past years, LV has been a successful and growing party within the Faculty of Arts council, and this programme aims to continue the legacy left by previous factions. It is built upon the hard work and foundational tenets established by our predecessors. As we are a party that strives to move the faculty forward, these tenets have developed over the years to fit the current circumstances and, most crucially, the needs of our students.

In the upcoming year, I will be working closely with a motivated group of students who all hold the best interests of our faculty and its students at heart. I am more than honored to be a part of such a diverse and skilled collection of students, and look forward to working towards our common goals with them. Each individual member of our faction brings a unique perspective, skill set and character to the table, which I am confident will make for a successful year together, both for us as well as for our faculty's students.

Our programme covers topics that have established LV as a stronghold in student representation at our faculty, such as Wellbeing, Quality of Education and Internationalization & Inclusivity. With your support, and of course your vote, we will strive to implement our progressive ideals to the best of our ability in order to ensure that the Faculty of Arts is the best it can be.

Sincerely,

Tim Tresoor

Faction Chair, Letteren Vooruit '24-'25

In Short

In this short overview of our programme, you will find our main points of interest for the academic year 2024-2025. These points will be elaborated on in their own sections.

Quality of Education

The Quality of Education at the Faculty of Arts has and will be one of our main priorities. We remain committed to creating positive change through directly impacting and improving the student experience at the RUG. One of the key points that we will focus on is creating an open conversation between ourselves and the student body, as we believe in fostering an environment of open feedback and collaboration. Our aim is to enhance student participation in decision-making processes and ensure that our voices are heard by the Faculty Board. This coincides with how we wish to enhance Active Learning within the Faculty, striving for clear communication and collaboration with Cluster Assessors and Programme Committees. In doing so, we will also aim to improve the workload distribution, which can vary between programmes, creating a more unified and transparent system. Furthermore, we also wish to engage with AI in a more constructive manner than the current situation within the Faculty. We plan to promote better education and training to empower students and staff to understand the potential of AI for academics. For example, students with learning disabilities could benefit from the software. Thus, we will also strive to increase the accessibility measures in our faculty, such as in the form of recorded lectures.

Internationalisation & Inclusivity

We aim to ensure that the Faculty of Arts is able to maintain its international character in times when we see 'dutchification' around us. LV recognizes the value that international students and their vastly varying perspectives bring to our classrooms, canteens and associations and aims to break down any existing language barriers. We want to see a greater availability of Dutch language courses for staff and students, while ensuring that communication between the Faculty and our international community is still done in English. Regarding the language courses, students should receive more help with developing their Dutch language skills through courses that have a workload that can be combined with the studyload of their main study and language courses that are better available. Students shouldn't feel obliged to learn Dutch, but they should be made aware of the possibilities that are available if they wish to learn (some) Dutch. This will help students who wish to stay after their studies with finding a job and integrating into Dutch society, which will make them feel more at home.

Furthermore, we will continue to promote the use of inclusive and diverse study material. This includes decolonizing the existing material and teaching students to challenge existing hegemonic structures. Students and staff should be aware of biases of the sources and study material presented to them.

We also want all students to feel welcome, regardless of their background or religion. Therefore we aim to advocate for no deadlines and exams on religious holidays, so that both staff and students feel respected and accepted for who they are.

Communication and Transparency

At Letteren Vooruit, we understand the pivotal role we play in the communication and transparency our students get from the Faculty of Arts. We are committed to use this role to emphasize the importance of an open dialogue and collaboration between staff and students. This can be achieved by improving the communication the students receive from the Faculty Board. Important topics, such as the educational reforms (the change to scrap many 5 ECTS courses and turn them into 10 ECTS), the financial situation of the Faculty, and the upcoming renovation of the Harmony building, should be more clearly communicated to the student body. Many of our students are unaware of these changes and should therefore be updated and taken into account. We also wish to open up communication between the Faculty Council and the student body, by making more information accessible on our website and social media channels. In doing so, the language of communication is of high importance and we will strive to make communication at the Faculty available in both English and Dutch.

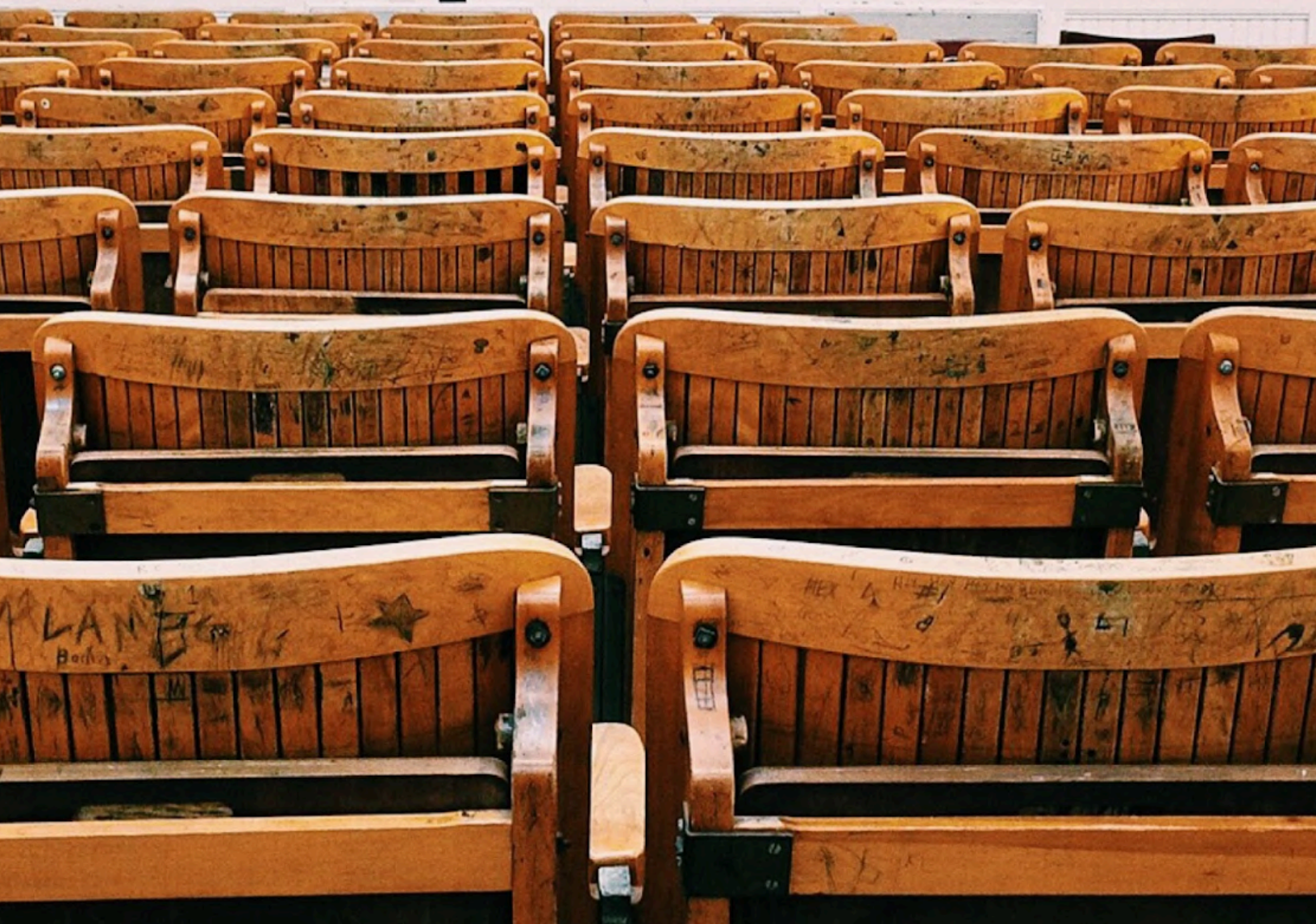
Student Well-Being and Visibility

LV fully acknowledges the struggles that students face when it comes to their own well-being in these turbulent and uncertain times. We will continue to strive for a more solid mentorship programme to build a stable first step in helping students with their well-being. We aim to make the support programmes that are already in place at the faculty more accessible and more visible. LV believes that a well-structured working environment will help us face the mental health crisis collectively. This entails improving the (student) mentor programme and staying in close contact with study associations, who we believe can play a big part in helping fellow students as they are easily accessible. We will continue our goal of growing the awareness of both student well-being itself as well as of the resources available to our students.

Sustainability

LV will continue to promote its positive stance on sustainability policies at the faculty. We will continue to steer the board towards sustainable and green solutions for the upcoming renovation of the Harmony building. Further, we will advocate for student input in these renovations, as the Harmony Building is our home after all. Once again, awareness among students and staff plays a central role in our plan to create a more sustainable faculty and so we hope to promote green choices as much as possible. Lastly, we will stay in close contact with the parties in the University Council, to help us promote sustainable options and encourage a green mindset.

Quality of Education



Quality of Education

Student Participation

LV considers students' participation and feedback of vital importance to ensure the quality of education. With the open comment section now being removed from the standard course evaluations, receiving feedback from students has become harder. We will aim to try to find a way in which students can still provide feedback (anonymously) without staff members receiving unconstructively negative comments. Since it is the task of the Program Committees to review the course evaluations every block, we would like to work with them on finding a solution. For example, an idea could be to have the (student) members of the PCs filter any negative/rude comments before the professors receive the feedback. Furthermore, Program Committees sometimes have to draw conclusions from a small percentage of students giving their opinions. Many students often do not take the time to fill in the course evaluations and think it is of no importance or will not bring about change. Thus, there is a need to emphasize the importance of feedback, since some smaller departments really rely on this form of feedback in order to create the best quality of education possible. For example, having the students fill in the evaluations during the last class of a course has shown an increase in feedback and participation.

Moreover, another way to increase students' participation and receive feedback is through panel evaluations conducted by the Program Committee student members. This is an effective way for students to provide their insight and feedback. However, it has not been running very smoothly yet, as PC student members are not always aware of this task and how to conduct it. We would like to improve the process of conducting panel evaluations, with the help of the Institute of Education and the Arts Committee of Assessors, both of whom can provide training for PC student members.

Finally, another important way of receiving feedback from students is talking to them directly. However, a majority of students do not know of the existence of structures such as the Program Committees, Cluster Boards, and the Faculty Council. Hence, we aim to improve the visibility of these structures, especially the student representatives within them so that they can become a point of contact for the rest of the student body.

Active Learning

Letteren Vooruit sees the potential of Active Learning (AL) as a philosophy which aims to improve the student learning experience. However, our aim is to improve the implementation of AL to ensure its effectiveness in enhancing the quality of education. While AL aims to make learning more engaging and participatory, the current implementation can sometimes lead to increased workload and stress for both students and teachers. Therefore, we aim to advocate for a collaborative approach to develop a comprehensive AL policy, in consultation with the Faculty, Cluster Assessors, and Programme Committees. This collaborative effort will facilitate better feedback mechanisms and improvements to the AL policy.

We would also argue to recognize the diversity among programmes within the faculty, which calls for flexibility in AL policy implementation. Each programme has its unique characteristics, which needs its own modified approaches to AL. We trust programmes to determine the most suitable AL strategies and degree of implementation for their specific contexts. To help each other within the faculty, horizontal communication between programmes will facilitate sharing of experiences and best practices, enriching the AL implementation process.

However, in order to fully embrace AL principles, we will also call for the expansion of Active Learning Classrooms within Faculty buildings. These spaces are vital to foster active discussions and collaborative learning experiences. By increasing the availability of AL classrooms, we aim to create an environment which will increase AL practices across all programmes.

Accessibility Measures

At Letteren Vooruit we are dedicated to creating an inclusive learning environment where all students have equal opportunities to thrive. Our commitment to accessibility measures encompasses various aspects, including support for students with learning disabilities and the implementation of inclusive practices. We believe that the faculty is in charge of providing adequate support for students with disabilities to ensure their success at the FoA. LV will advocate that the faculty facilitate access to assistive technologies and software that aid in learning for students with disabilities, such as AI. As well as push the faculty to also take physical disabilities into account and assist where necessary.

One significant positive development in recent years which was advocated for by Letteren Vooruit, is the adoption of recorded lectures. The value of recorded lectures

accommodates diverse learning needs and promotes flexibility in learning schedules. LV will continue to argue its importance as a helpful tool for students who cannot attend due to health issues and other extenuating circumstances.

Workload Distribution

Workload distribution is something we take very seriously at Letteren Vooruit. Currently, there is a discrepancy between courses within the same program and between different programs, in terms of the amount of workload appropriate to the ECTS values. We will advocate for a balanced approach to assignments and assessments. By directly collaborating with multiple students from various FoA programmes, we can ensure that Letteren Vooruit is up to date with how students experience their programmes. This leads to more insights, making students feel more involved through somewhat active participation in the decision-making process.

Our goal is to create an educational system in which every student's workload is manageable, thereby fostering a positive and enriching learning environment. By implementing the measures required to eliminate discrepancies between courses, we are committed to supporting the holistic development and well-being of our students. Let's work together to build a future where education is empowering, not overwhelming.

Program Committees

Program Committees (PCs) are responsible for ensuring the quality of education in a program. However, due to lack of information and training for both staff and student members, they often do not know what their tasks exactly entail and what they can/should do. For example, some of their tasks include checking the Teaching and Examination Regulations every year and ensuring that the course workload is appropriate to the ECTS values. As mentioned before, there is a discrepancy between courses within the same program and between different programs. Since Program Committees exist to keep these in check, we want to make sure that the PCs function as they are intended to. For example, by advocating for a clear and easily accessible guideline for student and staff members of the Program Committees so that they know what they should do and how they can do it. This guideline would also provide uniformity for all the PCs in the Faculty of Arts.

Working with AI

The arrival of Artificial Intelligence is an important development in the world of education and must be handled with the appropriate response by students and staff.

LV does not look at the software as a threat to academics, but sees it in more of a positive light. Our stance is centered on advocating for embracing AI as a tool for innovation and inclusivity rather than avoiding it due to fear or uncertainty. An important step that has already been taken is that AI checkers cannot be used by professors, as these often gave false positive results. Nonetheless, we acknowledge that the faculty and the university is still hesitant to incorporate AI and will give pushback to such potential plans. However, we will advocate to address concerns and aim to optimize AI tools for the benefit of students and staff.

For example, as mentioned earlier, AI holds immense potential to support students with learning disabilities. AI offers options for students to use, like speech-to-text software, to simply explain difficult terms and texts. Thus, these technologies can help level the playing field and empower students to achieve their academic goals.

However, in our wish to accept AI into academic life, the faculty staff will need to be able to work with and recognize it. Our predecessors have already taken the initiative in this, with their request from the faculty to provide mandatory training for professors regarding AI. We believe that education and training are crucial in accepting AI and proficiency among faculty members.

Internationalisation & Inclusivity



Internationalisation & Inclusivity

Decolonisation and Inclusivity of Study Materials

This year we will continue previous F9's efforts in promoting bias awareness in the study materials. The programs in the Faculty of Arts are a place where students are taught critical thinking skills. In order to do this, the study material and content should take different perspectives into account. We will advocate for expansion of the considered vision within the study programs through inclusion of non-European-centric perspectives. Both students and staff should be aware of biases that occur in the study material. A critical attitude should be taught, and study material from different perspectives should be used rather than only the Eurocentric perspective.

Solving the Language Barrier

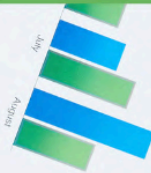
Mastering the language of instruction is an essential step in the process of learning. Insufficient English and/or Dutch proficiency poses a challenge both for students and staff. Many students have difficulties in their studies with the use of academic English in coursework. The main reason for this is a lack of previous knowledge and instruction. As a result, LV will promote the importance of introducing classes that would help students gain a better understanding of academic language. To do so, we want to increase the visibility of such (academic) English courses offered at the Language Centre and Student Service Centre (SSC). We plan to encourage research programmes to include academic writing skills courses in the first year. The same stands for Dutch language courses. LV will advocate for students to receive more help with developing their Dutch language skills through courses compatible with the workload of their main study and language courses. On top of that, we will encourage the increase in the availability of the courses in order to give all keen students an opportunity to learn the national language.

Diversity & Inclusivity

Diversity is an important pillar of both Dutch and the RUG's society and thus must be embraced. All genders, races, religions and any other identity values should feel welcome and respected at the Faculty of Arts. Our goal is for students to feel encouraged to express themselves and be supported by their environment, in this case, the faculty. We aim to kick-start this project by advocating for the removal of exams or deadlines on religious holidays, so students (and staff) can uphold their beliefs and traditions without damage to their studies (or job responsibilities).



Communication and Transparency



Communication and Transparency

Clear Communication and Transparency from the Faculty Board

The past couple of years has been extremely turbulent not only for the whole world, but also for the educational institutions that had to navigate through the pandemic, endless conflicts within the international arena, as well as economic turmoil. Furthermore, there is an expectation regarding the development of the educational reform planned by the Dutch government as well as long-running internal Faculty projects that have direct effect on students. Currently, many students, including the Faculty Council, find out about upcoming developments through third parties such as ukrant.nl, etc.

While there most likely will be cases when a democratic conversation between the Faculty Council and the Faculty Board will not be possible due to urgency and the compulsory nature of some governmentally mandated decisions, we will continue investing our time and effort into a long-running discussion with the Faculty Board on the best ways to keep all affected parties informed in a detailed and timely manner. Our aim is to facilitate a clear and transparent communication from the Faculty that will allow students to keep their fingers on the pulse and, where possible, participate in the decision making process of the upcoming changes implemented by the Faculty.

Consistent Communication with the Student Body

Nonetheless, the previous point still leaves the majority of the student body unaware of the changes being made by the Faculty Board/Council within the faculty. This year, we will aim to enhance transparency and communication between Letteren Vooruit and the student body by taking a more active role on social media with updates on the decision making process, while also trying to hold informal discussions with members of the student body for them to express their concerns and gain a better understanding of the structure of our faculty.

These goals aim to make Letteren Vooruit a more representative party of the students within our Faculty and to increase the engagement and interest of our students about the future of the faculty. Additionally, we aim to have a stronger presence in our social media platforms in order to generate more interest but also have a greater reach to our students, a large part of whom relies on social media output in order to gain information, news and resources.

Language of Communication

At the moment, Faculty Council meetings are mainly held in Dutch and translated into English with the help of a translator from the Language Centre via a Google Doc. This takes quite a long time, and details are often lost in translation. As a consequence, international students and non-Dutch speaking staff are unable to actively participate in meetings. While it is not possible to hold meetings entirely in English as not all faculty members speak it fluently, we will aim to improve the process of the Faculty Council meetings. Our goal is to continue F9's efforts towards creating a procedure that will allow non-Dutch speakers to have time to read through notes in-between speakers, bringing everyone to the same page.

Student Well-Being and Visibility



Student Well-being and Visibility

Visibility and Accessibility of Support Resources for Students

Unfortunately, based on the 2023 student well-being survey conducted by the Trimbos Institute, 84% of students have struggled with their mental health in the past year (which is a 4% increase from last year), making the improvement of the well-being of students one of the most critical issues we face at the FoA. The Faculty, not without LV's help, has come a long way in the most recent years, especially with the recent creation of the explanatory study guide. However, LV will continue to promote the importance of continuous allocation of resources towards such programs. Currently, while students have a better knowledge than previously of where and how they can get the support they need, this created demand that the faculty was not ready for, resulting in long waiting lists.

Mentor Programme

The (student) mentor programme's aim is to serve as a great first point of contact for our first-year student. It helps them find their way around our faculty, both in terms of their educational and social lives, while decreasing the pressure of having to take in so many overwhelming new impressions. However, LV has noticed that the usage of the mentor programme differs significantly between departments and also between other faculties and our own. Too many departments are not getting the most results out of this programme, running the risk of having students feeling lost or confused in their new environment. By communicating with the departments and their (student) mentors, we hope to get a clearer understanding of how the programme can best be put to work in order to ensure the greatest benefits to the students. This includes looking into establishing mandatory mentor meetings and the duration of the mentoring programme.

Study Associations

A cornerstone of student well-being is managing to settle into a new environment. Whether they are looking to join lectures, social activities or to be creative, the faculty should always offer the opportunity for everyone to find their place. LV is very proud that the faculty has many active study associations that give students the chance to fit in and become active members.

Study associations have been a great tool to bring both Dutch and International students together and ensure they can be active within our faculty. We will continue our collaboration with boards of these associations to see what we can learn from each other. LV believes that the associations can play a role in improving the well-being of students as they serve as tight support communities. Many associations already have a confidential advisor programme set in place and we will put efforts into its effective implementation. It is important to keep in mind however, that the associations are not run by professionals and that they know where to redirect students to in case professional help is needed.

Lastly, LV will look at how to improve the visibility of our study associations. As of now, mainly international students are struggling to find their place within the faculty and its associations. This is partially because there is a lack of understanding about what study associations are and how they may differ from other types of associations. Since such inclusion is essential for bridging the social gap, we are glad to see that so many associations are starting to use English as their language of communication and hope to see that increase in the coming year.

Sustainability



Sustainability

Accessibility & Renovations

As you are aware, the Faculty of Law recently moved out of the Harmony building and into the Röling building. Although the parts of Harmony which had previously been occupied by Law professors and students had been subject to renovation plans, reportedly to be started in the academic year '23-'24, said plans have been moved up to 2029. As within the previous year, we aim to have an active role in giving feedback on the Faculty Council's suggestions regarding how such (sustainable) renovations should be carried out, making sure to include and emphasize the importance of students' opinions and needs in our recommendations to the Faculty Board.

We are particularly attentive to how we can make our university buildings more physically accessible. A number of buildings used by the Arts Faculty are not wheelchair-accessible at all, and in all of our faculty's buildings other than Harmony, wheelchair-accessible toilets are only available on the ground floor. LV will advocate for adaptability to all students' needs and aim for equal access to our shared university buildings.

At every step of the way, we plan to gain insight into students' opinions and needs for the future Harmony building, and using your feedback, we will do our very best to work with the Faculty Council to create the best possible faculty building for students and staff alike! In order to achieve this, we intend to be part of (and active in) the upcoming project groups surrounding the renovation.

Green Office

This upcoming year, we will continue to promote the Green Office Embassy at the FoA, as well as encourage the Faculty to come up with more sustainability campaigns and initiatives. Although many of these initiatives are university-wide, and therefore under the jurisdiction of the University Council, we will remain in good contact with the University Council student parties so that we can combine efforts when necessary, and also bring university-wide topics regarding sustainability, such as the accessibility of more sustainable milks, to our Faculty's attention.

Candidates



Tim Tresoor, #1
Chair



Anna Astakhov, #4
Secretary



Dominic Kruize, #5
Treasurer



Grace Woods, #7
Public Relations



Lana Fahham, #2
Vice Chair of the
Council



Alana Swinkels, #3



Savvas Parasidis, #6



Hessel Berger, #8



Ruben Feddes, #9