



**Studenten
Organisatie
Groningen**

Faction/University Council 24-25

Information Package

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Introduction

Dear student,

This information package from the Student Organisation Groningen (SOG) serves the purpose of giving you more clarity on the activities of a Faction Member in the University Council, the SOG as an association and the role of the SOG in the academic community.

A year in the Council is in our opinion an extremely valuable experience you can enjoy during your time as a student. By dedicating yourself in the SOG for the interests of 32.000 students, you will obtain a central role in the decision-making of the UG, an unique position of access to all the different factors in student life, and an amazing Board year outside of your bubble with students from all over this University.

The current Faction Members will gladly tell you about their experiences as a Faction. Apart from that, you can always follow a University Council meeting, or one of the Committee Meetings aimed to prepare for the University Council. Please send an email to fractie@studentenorganisatie.nl if you want to attend one of these meetings, or if you want to drink a cup of coffee with one of us to talk about a Council year.

Further on in this document you can find our contact details and the address of our office. Do not hesitate to get in touch with us! We would love to hear from you.

Your SOG-Faction 2023-2024,

Herman Ritzema

Anna Salzman

Amélie Ryan-Borde

Verena Erich

Fiducia Clark

The Association

Student Organisation Groningen (SOG) is the oldest party in the University Council, where the SOG is active since 1972 in the representation of students' interest. The association was formed in its current form in 2001 when the Student Organisation Rijksuniversiteit Groningen (SORUG) and the Student Faction Groningen (S.F.G.) merged. As an association, SOG is the advocate for students in the broadest sense possible, by working for the interests of students in general, both within and outside the University Council. The SOG represents associations and organisations that focus on student life and development and the organisation of politically and society oriented activities.

The vision of the current SOG Faction focuses mainly on the three pillars: **The Active Student, Career & Education**, and **Sustainability** of the UG. In concrete terms this means the following: the University must offer flexible education that effectively prepares students for their future career and offers all the space they need to develop themselves as a student inside and outside the University. The existing student community must be cherished and supported.

We are also fighting for a UG that is at the forefront of sustainability. In doing so, we argued for a sustainability subsidy for study associations. In the previous year we focused on more transparency in the UG's sustainability policies and guidelines by virtue of writing our SOG Sustainability memo. This year we are working on more Greenery in and around the University.

Characteristic of the SOG is that as a party for all students of the UG, we also enable internationals to represent themselves on the Council. That is why the third person on the list for the SOG is always an international student in order to be the 'international representative', which is this year Amélie Ryan-Borde.

The Board

The Board is primarily responsible for activities and daily tasks of the association and also monitors the continuity of the SOG. At the start of the term, the Board proposes a policy plan and budget. One of the most important tasks of the Board is to allocate the resources to the various parts of the association and to support these parts in their activities.

The current Board of the SOG consists of:

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| Ivar Hesse | Chairman |
| Luke Talman | Secretary |
| Petros Tsiamparlis | Treasurer |
| Fiducia Clark | Internal Affairs (and Faction member) |
| Joanna Helt | Public Relations |

The Board not only implements the activities in the policy plan itself but also directs the Think Tank and supports the Faction and the SOG Law Office. A campaign leader from the Faction is appointed every year and will start preparations for the election campaign starting December as well as assisting the Candidate Faction in conducting the election campaign. The campaign leader will put together a campaign team consisting of people from both the Faction and the Board.

The Faction within the SOG

As a SOG Faction Member, you are part of the association. As said, the Faction reports on what they are doing at the General Member Meeting (GMM), but besides this, it has autonomy in the field of university politics. University-related issues that play a role in the city or at the national level are sometimes decided in consultation between the Faction and Board. Furthermore, the Board and Faction actively work together for activities, and they try to meet each other monthly in the Board-Faction meeting (BFM). The Board and the Faction also share the office on the Oude Kijk in 't Jatstraat 5. The members from the Faction are also important active members of the association by being present at the activities, lectures, and drinks of the association.

The Faction

As a member of the University Council, we are the meeting point between the governing and studying parts of the RuG. Our advice and approval are requested on all important decisions that are taken by the Executive Board. As a Council, we receive various documents (mostly public for everyone, some confidential) from the University Bureau in preparation for the Council- and committee meetings. As a Faction, we discuss these matters and determine our opinion on them. These we address to the Board and the other parties through speech in the U-Council, Internal Council or committee meetings. In addition, we can manage the policy process ourselves by writing memos, asking critical questions, and making good use of the corridors (office officials) of the UG. In addition to the meetings with the Executive Board, it's often the case that Faction members are part of advisory and preparatory working groups and committees, representing students amongst employees.

In addition to the formal and informal contacts within the University, we try to maintain the best possible contact with the student. Communicating with the various study, sports, cultural and social associations, faculty associations and (national) student organisations is essential, so we pay a lot of attention to this. Therefore, we strive to get hold of all constitutional drinks! We maintain more frequent contact with several organisations to discuss important topics. Generally, we speak with all contacts a couple of times a year and regularly inform them about our progress. Of course, we visit the association activities of the SOG as often as possible and help where possible!

The University Council

The University Council is a monthly public meeting, usually on a Thursday. Furthermore, it is the highest organ of co-governance at the University of Groningen. The University Council is a constant discussion partner of the Board of the University and has 24 members: 12 staff seats and 12 student seats. The staff members are chosen once every two years and consist of two factions: the Personnel Faction with nine seats and the Science Faction with three seats. The student members get chosen every year and currently consist of three factions: the SOG with five seats, Calimero with five seats, and De Vrije Student (DVS) with two seats. In the upcoming elections, student and staff seats will be chosen.

The University Council has a daily Board: the Presidium. The Presidium consists of one Chair and five vice-Chairs. The Chair of the University Council is an external person, not a member of the Council. The vice-Chairs of the Presidium are the Faction Chairs of the current Factions.

Committees

As stated, every second Thursday of the Council cycle, the meetings of the committees take place. The committees serve the purpose of preparing for the University Council and evaluating the broader developments within the University. They are accessible to all the Council members, yet not every member of the factions will be there. One of the members of the Board of the University is also present to explain those university developments. The committees are more informal, making it possible for the Factions to give much of their own input.

There are three different committees: Education & Research, Governance and Finance. The committees are programmed in such a way as to mirror the agenda of the Board of the University, which have the same categories. The Rector is primarily responsible for Education and Research, the vice-chair for Finance, and the Chair of the Board for Governance. The content of the committees is the following:

- Education and Research: Internationalisation, effectiveness, binding study advice, reforms of education, E-learning and student psychologists.
- Finance: the budget, real estate, ICT facilities, facility management and student housing
- Governance: the strategic plan of the RUG, University Campus Fryslân, academic business, vision on education, graduation fund, and re-organisations.

During these meetings, the documents for the University Council become more clear, so your faction can construct an opinion. The week after the committee meeting, you can discuss your opinion with the rest of the Council during the Internal Council. This is a meeting where the Board of the University is not present, and you can discuss together what your stances will be during the official University Council meeting, the week after.

Rights and Competences

The University Council is a central co-governance body that has the right to advise, give consent, and propose initiatives on the major topics of the University's policy. This means that for some matters, the Board is required to seek advice or consent from the Council. Apart from that, everything the Board decides is shared with the Council as a discussion or information document. This is because the Groninger University Council works with the harmony model. This model entails that the University Council and the Board of the University are transparent towards each other and try to come up with a joint opinion or compromise on different topics. An important factor in this is the transparency from the Board to the Council. The Presidium of the Council functions as the bridge between the Factions and the Board.

Looking at it the other way around, the Board is informed about the headlines of what is happening at a faction level for them to anticipate and not be taken by surprise. This model demands a governing position from the Council, as the Council is not just a lobbyist, but also actively thinks about solutions for problems occurring. However, it also shows that the opinions within the Council can be far apart from each other. This is one of the reasons that the harmony model has been under pressure for the last couple of years. The SOG is the party striving to work with the harmony model, nevertheless, this does not imply that we will always follow the Board's directions. In doing so, the SOG is not afraid to take a stance and will work intensively with other Factions to improve the UG for both students and staff.

Meeting cycle

The Council has a meeting cycle of a month and usually meets on Thursdays. In the first week, you receive the required documents. In the second week, you can ask questions about these documents during the committee meetings. In the third week, you can discuss your stances with the other factions during the Internal Council. Finally, in the fourth week, the official University Council will be held with everybody from the factions and Board present. This is a formal meeting in which decisions are being taken. Normally, all the agenda points have mostly been discussed in the previous meetings, supposedly making the official Council more streamlined. However, this doesn't have to be the case, and therefore Council can take up most of the day. The meetings of the committees and the Council are public and take place in the large meeting room of the Board's building at the Muurstraat. Everyone is welcome to come by anytime you want, but there is limited space to attend physically. Therefore the council meetings are also live-streamed. Send an email to fractie@studentenorganisatie.nl to find out when there is a meeting and what topics are on the agenda. The agenda and topics of discussion as well as the livestream can be found at www.rug.nl/raad.

The Board and Services of the University

The Board of the University is the discussion partner of the Council. As a Council Member, you will be in a lot of contact with them. The Board consists of three members with their portfolios:

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| Chairman: | Prof. Dr. Jouke de Vries |
| Vice-Chair: | Drs. Hans Biemans |
| Rector Magnificus: | Prof. Jacquélien Scherpen |

Within the University Services, there are also many co-workers responsible and very important for the functioning of the University and the Council. For example, Rutger Klein-Nagelvoort for education, Aart Korten for legal aspects, and Stephan van Galen as the director of University Services. During your Council year, you will meet many others who are important advisors to the Board.

Contacts in Groningen

The work of the Faction is not merely aimed at the Board or the Council, but also for maybe an even larger part aimed at the further, broader needs of the academic community. Each Faction member has a portfolio with specific cases and research topics. For this, you must stay in contact with the different faculties, study, and student associations – you must get input from every corner of our community. It is also a lot of fun because your network is in the top regions of the University, and it can help associations achieve more during their Board years. Apart from that, there are also broader bonds and networks within Groningen, which either the SOG Faction or Board is a part of. An example is Het Overleg, where the bigger associations come together to tackle current problems in the student community. Furthermore, we also work closely together with some municipality parties, which is mostly the Student&Stad party.

Interstedelijk Studenten Overleg (ISO)

The SOG is also involved on a nationwide level. As an association and party, we are affiliated with the Interstedelijk Studenten Overleg. This is a national lobby organisation for our Dutch student life, from study associations to co-governance organisations such as the SOG. They are also an official discussion partner of the Ministry of Education. As a Faction, you keep ISO updated on the developments happening at the RUG, and during the General Members Meeting of ISO and the ISO working group evenings, you give input on the national policy aimed for by ISO. Apart from that, the SOG has intensified its cooperation with parties in other cities which aim for the same goals as the SOG at other universities.

Function description

Chair

The Chair is the face of the Faction. To the outside world, the Faction Chair is the first person of contact. Contact with the media is one of the Chair's dossiers. Internally the Chair keeps an eye on the headlines of the Faction's policy. They prepare and lead the meetings. To get a good sight of the SOG in the Council, they are present at all the University Council committee meetings.

Apart from that, the Chair has a couple of pre-set meeting groups within the Council. Within these meetings, the Chair discusses the changes in policy with the other faction Chairs at the Presidium. They will have to deliver the position of the Faction at these meetings, sometimes without being able to consult the Faction on its position beforehand.

As stated earlier, the Presidium is the daily Board of the Council and together, they function as substitute Council Chairs in case the official Chair cannot be present. All the different Faction Chairs together are the vice-chairs of the Council. This way, there is an information stream to all the Factions, and not one vice-chair is responsible for delivering information to the different Factions. The Presidium has an agenda meeting every other week with the Board. Most of what is discussed there is confidential, which is why the Chair of the Faction knows the most about what is happening on the university level. This is also because of the close cooperation with the assessor of the Board, who is Ruben Wagenvoort this year.

Vice-Chair

The Vice-Chair substitutes the Chair when they aren't present and is important to the Chair as a sparring/discussion partner. Together they watch over the quality, process, and strategy of the Faction. The vice-chair also supports the Chair by guiding the individual Faction members when necessary. They also take note of problems when they occur and solve them. To work together as well as possible, the Chair and Vice-Chair need to have structural and multiple meetings.

International Representative

If the debate is about international students, you'll have to let international students have the word in the discussion. In Groningen, one of every three students in the upcoming years will be an international, and that's why the SOG thinks it's very important to have representatives for these students in the Council. That's why the SOG strives to always have an international representative on the list. Some of the informal communication and debate in your Council year will therefore be in English as well. Still the majority and formal communication in the Council will be in English, but

there will be a translator available.

General Faction members

The general Faction members hold varying portfolios, contact persons, associations, and general tasks. Every Faction member takes a seat in two Council committees and other advisory bodies. The eleven faculties of the UG will also be divided among the Faction members. This means that you'll be responsible for visiting the Faculty Council and staying in contact with the faculty- and study associations. The faculties, associations, and portfolios will be divided amongst the Faction Members at the beginning of the year. This will be done by mainly looking at the personal background and interests of the individual Faction Members. This way, every Faction Member will get interesting and fun duties, which they can work on for a year. Finally, you'll be busy writing memos/notes and formulating questions for the Board of the UG. To do this, you'll have to conduct your research and visit the different staff members and departments of the University Services.

Time investment

Being a Faction Member is a full-time position, but it is possible to study a bit beside your work for the University Council, even for the Chair of the Faction. To make this possible there is an arrangement written down in the 'Studentenstatuut', which makes it possible to skip or reschedule study obligations. It is important to make a fair estimation of how many ECTS you want and can get next to your Council work and most importantly to be transparent about this towards your Faction. If you doubt what's possible, please contact us! The Council work is very flexible and will take a lot more time during certain weeks, but a lot less in others. Generally, your time investment will be between 30 and 40 hours a week. In the candidate period, where you write the election program and have transfer meetings, this will be 10-15 hours per week. The election week itself is an exception since you will be busy campaigning the whole week.

Compensation

For the Council work, you will get compensated with a co-governance grant of 6 months per person from CUOS. This is approximately €4400, with which you can pay your tuition fees and other costs you'll make for the Council work. Of course, this shouldn't be the reason to apply for the University Council, but with this grant, the membership of the Council makes up for one of the best-paid board years in Groningen.

Timeline

The application deadline for the SOG Faction is February 12th, 2024 23:59. Before this deadline, you can make an appointment with one or more of our current Faction Members for more information. Our Faction Members will gladly talk with you about their experiences within and around the Council. It's possible to apply for a specific function, but it's not necessary. After the deadline, you will be invited for an application interview, during which you will hear when you get the result. After the general members meeting in which the Candidate Faction is presented and installed, the Candidate Faction will start writing their election program, this should be done halfway through April. In March, the last few things for the campaign week will be worked out. The campaign leader will be of big help to the Candidate Faction, as preparations for the campaign start already in January. The election program of the Candidate Faction will have to be agreed upon by the general members meeting. When this happens and the campaign week closes in, you'll be full-time busy with the campaign. Together with the campaign leader, you'll be organising different stunts, stunning PR material, and activities.

The elections will take place in the week from the 13th to the 17th of May. This time will fully consist of promotion by doing lecture talks, stunting, debating, and flyering. The preparations before and the activities during this week will take up a lot of your time. After the elections are done, the negotiations between the different parties about the different committees will start. Around this time, the “work in period” will also start in which you'll join the current Faction by visiting the different Council meetings and other Council work. You'll also go on a “work weekend” with your Candidate Faction and the Current Faction, on which you'll get to know all the ins and outs of the Council work. This “work in period” will last till the end of August. In the Council of 31 August, the Candidate Faction will replace the Current Faction and will be officially installed as members of the University Council.

For your own schedule, it's good to keep in mind that you'll spend around 10-15 hours a week on the SOG after the installation as a Candidate Faction till the elections. You'll have tasks like the writing of the election program and all the other preparations written above, but also attending constitution drinks of other associations. This will make sure you'll be completely prepared for your Council year, but it also helps to try to get as many votes as possible during the election week. Altogether, your period of candidacy, as well as the election week, are tense but exciting for the whole Candidate Faction!

Additional information

If you have any questions after reading this document, feel free to contact our current Faction Members or send an email to fractie@studentenorganisatie.nl. They'll happily help you!

Application letters can be sent to our application committee via this email address: sollicitatie@studentenorganisatie.nl

Contact

The email for the Faction is: fractie@studentenorganisatie.nl. Our personal contact information:

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