AUC STUDENT COUNCIL

POLICY PLAN

2021-2022

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Dear Reader,

We are delighted to share with you, the AUC Student Council Policy Plan for the 2021-2022 academic year.

The role of the student council is to bridge the gap between AUC students and the AUC Administration. Through communication and collaboration with other governing bodies in our AUC community and beyond, we aim to work in the best interest of students. By actively listening to their opinions and what matters to them, we seek to represent the students’ voices and make improvements to the AUC experience on the basis of this.

The purpose of publishing the policy plan is for our goals, ideas, and markers of success to be explicit, and to be held accountable for these by our constituents. As stakeholders in the AUC community, the work of the Student Council can directly affect you, so please do not hesitate to reach out to us with your questions, concerns or just to have a chat.

We thank you for trusting us as your student representatives, and we look forward to the year ahead!

Yours truly,

Freya, Max, Daniela, Helena, and Sanch
Diversity is known to be one of AUC's most representative values. As such, it is our responsibility to be devoted to inclusivity and accessibility in both social and academic settings.

1. Framework and Action Plan for Diversity, Equity, and Inclusivity (FAPDEI)

a. The Student Council will continue to highlight the FAPDEI project as one of the most important documents at AUC. We will work with the Diversity Leadership Group to co-host and initiate events and assure the thorough and correct implementation of FAPDEI. We will continue our work with AUC Management and other relevant bodies to make AUC a better place for students of all backgrounds.

1.2 Initiatives to Diversify the Curriculum and AUC Experience

a. We will encourage lecturers to support initiatives that work towards diversifying the AUC curriculum. We will support the implementation of voluntary work (as extra-credit) that furthers the diversification and decolonization of AUC curricula. This is an idea that comes from an initiative within the International Relations (IR) track where students were encouraged to research and recommend non-Western IR literature.

b. We will continue to support the “Who’s in Town?” event, using it as an opportunity to invite a diverse range of experts to speak, which students may otherwise not have been exposed to.

1.3 Pluralization of Learning Materials and Opportunities

a. We will continue to encourage the use of diverse learning materials such as texts, videos, interviews, interactive websites, and more. This will help to integrate many ways of learning (kinesthetic, visual, aural, verbal, etc.) to accommodate the diverse learning styles present in the study body.

1.4 Accessibility and Inclusivity

a. We would like to actively encourage the AUCSA, their committees, commissions, and teams, as well as other bodies, to give special attention to ensuring events and activities are accessible and inclusive to all, irrespective of mental, cognitive, and physical differences.

b. We urge the AUC Management Team to adapt the AUC website to be IAS (Integrated Accessibility Standards) compliant. For example, videos with a sign language adaptation and/or correct Closed Captions. This is concurrent with the UN Disability Treaty and the Dutch Ministry of Health, Welfare and Sport (VWS) standards, that the right to information should be accessible for everyone in order to make decisions independently.

1.5 Pronoun Inclusion

a. We urge lecturers and faculty to always include their pronouns and ask for students to share their pronouns during class. It is important to realize that not all students identify within the gender binary, and asking how everyone prefers to be addressed is a simple sign of respect. The Student Council is happy to facilitate information sessions or workshops to inform lecturers about this matter’s pertinence and how to go about creating an inclusive environment for all.
2. MENTAL HEALTH & WELL-BEING

Whether it be the transition from high school to university, social isolation as a result of the pandemic, or pre-existing mental health struggles, Student Council has plans to ensure students are supported during their time at AUC.

2.1 Mental Health Guide and Awareness

a. Together with Peer Support, the 2020-2021 SC Board spearheaded the effort to create the ‘Mental Health Guide’. With the project now passed to us, we will work hard to ensure that this resource is published by the end of our term.

b. We will work to increase awareness for Peer Support’s Mental Health Awareness Week and support them in their endeavors wherever possible.

2.2 Mental Health and Support Services

a. We will continue to consistently promote the mental health services available to students. This is one of our top priorities and will involve consistent collaboration with various bodies such as the Student Life Officers and the rest of the Well-Being Team.

b. In order to ease the process of moving to Amsterdam from all over the world, the Student Council will work on creating a step-by-step guide of how to get started and avoid unnecessary difficulties.

2.3 Absence Policy

a. Amending the Absence Policy to be fair to our students’ needs, in light of the pandemic and the consequences it has brought with it, will again be something we focus on, as many Student Councils before us have. Ensuring that students can quarantine without concern for the strikes against them is essential in keeping both students and staff safe until the end of the pandemic.

3. SUSTAINABILITY

With sustainability as a core pillar of AUC’s mission and values, it is within our role to advocate for environmentally friendly practices in and around AUC. Through collaboration with AUC caterers and other bodies, we hope to make great strides in this area.

3.1 Canteen

a. With the Canteen back up and running this year, we will aim to reduce the waste in this area. Some ideas include switching to fully reusable cutlery and dishware. We will also work towards lowering the amount of non-plant-based food served, as to be conscious of the environmental footprint of the meat and dairy industries.

3.2 Water and Coffee/Tea Stations

a. We will encourage students and staff to bring their own mugs, reusable cups, and water bottles to the Academic Building, to avoid single-use paper and plastic products. We could incentivize this by offering a small discount for using a reusable vessel.

3.3 Power Use in the Academic Building

a. We want to encourage the use of LED light bulbs, which are significantly more energy-efficient in the Academic Building. With the housemasters of the AB, we want to discuss the possibility of turning lights out in the building earlier in the evening, and keeping them off when sunlight provides enough. Finally, we would also like to have a discussion about the energy plan and source that powers the AB.
Pursuing a degree in Liberal Arts and Sciences is exciting and truly gives you an opportunity to build your future in the way you envision it. However, alongside this much freedom, it is possible for several obstacles to arise.

4.1 Reading Material for Exams

a. We want to raise the issue of teachers uploading exam materials with adequate time for them to be studied. We would like to encourage the best practice that if reading material has not been given two days before the exam, it cannot be included in the tested material.

4.2 Canvas Calendar

a. We would like to implement a firm guideline for teachers, that all assignments must be in the calendar on Canvas. This would stop important dates from being missed, would streamline where students have to look for deadlines and would avoid a work overload on certain days.

4.3 Grading Equality

a. For courses from the Academic Core, there are more than 5 teachers per semester. Many times there is grading inequality between classes on the basis of some teachers being more lenient than others. This holds especially true for writing-based classes like AWS and GIE. For this reason, we want to encourage more lecturers to use a cross-grading system.

Tutors are often the first point of contact for students if they are having issues with their academics. This is why it is important to strive for the best tutor and tutee relationship possible.

5.1 Graduate Futures in tutor system

a. AUCSC would like to introduce two voluntary workshops for second-year students in combination with tutors that: explain how to use the Graduate Futures Canvas Page and all its resources, explain how to use the Master’s Database, and encourage them to fill in a spreadsheet with a plan to envision when and if they plan to start applying to Master’s Programs.

5.2 Tutor evaluation

a. Last year a tutor evaluation form was developed and this year it is our priority to finish this project and implement it before the end of the year in our system. Students will have the chance to evaluate their tutor twice a year and the tutor system once a year. This should also allow for students to change tutors if necessary.
As many AUC students have come to know, course registration is a very stressful time of the year. This year we will continue working on improving this process and making it run as smoothly as possible.

6.1 Course manuals for First Years
a. For many students who are just discovering the intricate way that AUC works, knowing where to find information on their future courses may be confusing and as such, they might not make optimal selections for their first semester. We want to implement a change by providing first years with the course manuals for their major before their course selection period.

6.2 Course Registration Adjustments
a. We want to continue the work of the previous Student Council to give students the opportunity to request priority when registering for a course. This would give students who specifically need to follow a course for their Master’s requirements or future AUC courses a higher chance of getting into the course.

6.3 Course and Lecturer’s Feedback
a. We want to work towards increasing the visibility of the lecturer’s feedback. One way of doing this is by creating a database with teacher reviews and feedback from students, which is accessible to everyone. This is crucial to share with students inside the class and for students who might want to take this class in the future. This allows for a more transparent reflection and holds teachers accountable.

6.4 Schedule Problems
a. We plan on investigating the most common scheduling problems within the different majors and bringing this up to the responsible administration bodies. With this, we aim for more freedom of choice in the curriculum and to avoid clashes.

6.5 Course Market
a. We hope this year to continue the Course Market. This is an opportunity for students to ask lecturers and Heads of Science, Social Science, Humanities, and Academic Core questions and get their opinion on classes. We hope this will take place in an in-person format this year to get the most student turnout possible.
7. LIFE OUTSIDE AUC

Although AUC is connected to two parent universities, the VU and UvA, it is easy for students to stay trapped in the “Bubble of Science Park”. These initiatives should help our students expand their horizons.

7.1 Life Outside of AUC

a. We would like to open the “Walk with a Stranger” Initiative to all students, in collaboration with Peer Support. We would also like to integrate AUC more with our parent universities using sports teams, in collaboration with Catch, and to facilitate discussion and focus groups about topics that students at all universities can relate to, such as living as an international student in Amsterdam during corona times.

7.2 Attending Courses at the UvA and VU

a. By further familiarizing tutors more with UvA and VU curricula, we aim to help students pick courses outside of AUC more easily. Likewise, we are interested in the development of AUC Portal to bypass the Service Desk on this matter but include the necessary approval process provided by the Board of Examiners.

8. GRADUATE FUTURES

Applying to Master’s programs and preparing for life after AUC can be a very daunting task for students. Offering as many resources and as much support as possible will make this easier on our students and help them prepare for a bright future.

8.1 Master’s Database

a. We aim to improve the biannual survey that is extended to all recently graduated alumni to: expand the database to include their track at AUC and course requirements for their Master’s, include necessary information on pre-masters, intermediate jobs, and/or work experience that may have helped with admission, and contact information for willing alumni to give advice, information or give notice about job/internship opportunities. This will be in collaboration with the AUC Alumni Association.

8.2 AUC Service Desk

a. Recognizing the issue of generating graduation certificates on time in the last two years, we want to help AUC with speeding up practical processes. For this, we want to work towards hiring a person whose main job is working closely with the BoE on document revisions. This will increase productivity and should reduce the waiting times.
Electing a qualified and competent board is essential to a Student Council running effectively. In light of the pandemic, student interest, and engagement in holding a student representative position have been reduced.

9.1 Advertising
a. This year our aim for the Student Council elections will be to attract more candidates than last year by advertising the process and the mission of the SC more. We will advertise the elections on social media, the dorms, and the AB.

9.2 Voter Turnout
a. We will aim to increase the voter turnout to at least 40% of the students since this will make the elections more democratic. For this, we will motivate people to vote with various campaign strategies and by motivating the candidates to be creative in reaching a broad audience of prospective voters.

We are aware that not everyone is familiar with what the Student Council does exactly. To combat this, this year we will make a concerted effort to try and increase our visibility and transparency.

10.1 Social Media Visibility
a. We will do our best this year to heighten the social media influence of the Student Council. With Facebook being used less, and TikTok and Instagram being used more, we plan to alter our social media strategy accordingly to better engage with the student body.

10.2 Website
a. We plan for our website, aucsc.nl, to be continually updated with relevant information. We intend to upload insights into the portfolios we are working on, important messages, and naturally, this policy plan. Making our website a reference point will hopefully help students know where to find information and keep them up to date with what the Council is working on.

10.3 Canvas Page
a. We would like to increase awareness about what information is available to students on our AUC Student Council Canvas Page. It contains information about our board, newsletters, and minutes from our internal meetings. Access to these minutes will increase transparency between the study body and ourselves because they know exactly what we are doing on a weekly basis.
The unpredictability of the pandemic makes it difficult to confirm how much longer corona measures will be in place and having an impact on both academic and personal areas of our lives.

11.1 Self-testing and Tracing

a. Firstly, we want to ensure that all students stay at home and get tested when necessary. Especially taking advantage of the [free self-tests provided by the UvA](https://www.uva.nl).

Secondly, we encourage all students to use the CoronaMelder App. In the event a student happens to test positive, their close contacts, some of whom will be their classmates, will receive a message and can take the advice of the GGD and quarantine accordingly.

11.2 Online Alternative to Class

a. We believe that lecturers should offer a hybrid or alternative online option for their in-person classes whenever a student is unable to come to class due to coronavirus concerns. We are aware that this is more work for teachers, however, it would severely disadvantage students who are taking symptoms or exposure to coronavirus seriously by staying at home.

Thank you for taking the time to read our Policy Plan. Please reach out to us with any comments, questions, or concerns!