



**Studenten
Organisatie
Groningen**

University-Council

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 the most valuable experience you can enjoy during your time as a student. By dedicating yourself at the SOG for the interests of 31.000 students, you will obtain a central role in the decision-making of the RUG, a 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 join a University Council meeting, or one of the Committee Meetings aimed to prepare for the University Council. In this document you will find the upcoming meeting dates and a link to the topics of discussion. 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 get in touch with us! We would love to hear from you.

Your SOG-faction 2020-2021,

Christopher De Bruijn

Lotte Karsten

Hannah Jelkmann

Femke De Ruiten

Jordy Ossendrijver

The Association

Student Organisation Groningen (SOG) is the oldest party in the University Council, where the SOG is active since 1972 in the promotion of students' interest. The association was formed in its current form in 2001 when the Student Organization 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 organizations 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 three pillars: the active student, the international student and the 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 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. Three years ago we therefore argued for a sustainability subsidy for study associations. Last year we were the initiators of a Sustainability Leadership Group to use our position as a U-Councilmember to make the RUG a leader in the field of sustainability. This year we are working on making the Sustainability policies and guidelines more transparent.

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 as an 'international representative' and this year this is Hannah Jelkmann.

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 and activities.

The current board of the SOG consists of:

Kondwani Mkorongo	Chairwoman
Julianne Veltman	Secretary
Thom van der Wal	Treasurer
Angelica Bercx	Internal Affairs
Johannes Hütten	External Affairs

Committees

The board not only implements the activities in the policy plan itself, it also directs committees and supports the faction and the SOG Law Office. A campaign team is established every year for the campaign which will start preparations for the election campaign starting December and will assist

the candidate group in conducting the election campaign. Other committees, besides the political group and the campaign team, are the political activities committee, the social activities committee, the congress committee, the first year committee, the KEI committee, the SOG education committee, the International Student Council, the editors of the SOG magazine de Ruggegraat and the law office.

The Faction within the SOG

As a SOG faction you are part of the SOG. As said, the group reports on what it is 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 national level are sometimes decided in consultation between the faction and board. Furthermore, the board and faction actively work together for activities and they meet each other monthly in the board-faction meeting (BFM). The board and the faction also share the office on the Muurstraat 16. The people from the faction are also an important active members of the association being present at the activities, lectures and drinks of the association.

The Faction

As a member of the University Council, we are at the meeting point between the governing and studying parts of Groningen. Our advice and approval is requested on all important decisions that are taken by the Executive Board. As 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 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 as a SOG faction member try to maintain the best possible contact with the student. Good contact with the various study, sports, cultural and social associations, faculty associations and (national) student organizations is essential, so we pay a lot of attention to this. We therefore strive to get hold of all constitution drinks! We maintain more frequent contact with a number of organizations to discuss important topics, but in general we speak all contacts a couple of times a year and regularly inform them about

our work, for example by our monthly update. Of course we visit the club 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 the last Thursday of the month. It is furthermore 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 exists of 24 members: twelve staff seats and twelve student seats. The staff members are chosen once every two years and exists of two factions: the Personnel faction with 8 seats and the Science faction with four seats. The student members get chosen every year and currently consist of four factions: the SOG with five seats, Calimero with 5 seats, the Free Student with one seat and the DAG with one seat. Upcoming elections only the student seats will be chosen.

The University Council has a daily board: the presidium. The presidium consists of one chairperson and six vice-chairpersons. 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 Thursday before the University Council the meetings of the committees take place. The committees serve the purpose of preparing for the University Council and to evaluate the broader developments within the university. They are accessible to all the Council members, yet only three people per faction are allowed to be there. One of the members of the Board of the University is also present to give an explanation to those university developments. The committees are of a more informal character, making it possible for the factions to give much of their own input. During these meetings the documents for the University Council the week after and the position of the factions becomes more clear.

There are three different committees: Education & Research, Governance and Finance. The committees are programmed in such a way to mirror the agenda of the Board of the University, who have the same categories. The Rector is primarily responsible for Education and Research, the vice-chair at Finance and the chair of the Board at 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:** strategic plan of the RUG, University Campus Fryslân, academic business, vision on education, profileringsfonds, and re-organisations.

Competences

The University Council has, as central co-governance organ, the right of advice, consent and initiative on the headlines of the university policy. This means that the Board is obliged for some topics to ask for advice or consent from the Council. Apart from that, basically everything the Board decides comes to the table as a discussion or information document. This is because the Groningen 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 always try to come with a joint opinion or compromise on the 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. The University of Groningen is the only university in the Netherlands working with this model, and thereby noticeably has more influence than other university councils.

Looking at it the other way around, the Board is informed about the headlines of what is happening at the faction level, in order for them to anticipate on this 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. In our experience this model achieves a lot more than a conflict model, especially because staff and students are in the Council together instead of discussing in different organs. 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 the last couple of years because of confrontational, heated discussions where not everybody was or could be satisfied, and where parties did not feel like compromising. The SOG is the party working the hardest to keep the harmony model and the good relationship with the Board alive, especially because of the shared goal we all have: improving the RUG for both student and staff.

Meeting cycle

The Council has a meeting cycle of a month. As stated earlier, every last Thursday of the month there is the official Council, with everybody from the factions and Board present. This is a formal meeting in which decisions are being taken. Usually all the agenda points have already been discussed the previous week, supposedly making the official Council more streamlined. For some reason however, this has not been the case in our year, with the official Council taking a long time as well. One of the reasons why is the harmony model under pressure, as mentioned earlier.

Apart from the committee meetings and the Council meeting, there is usually, but not always, an armchair meeting the second Thursday of the month; an informal meeting in which one specific topic is usually discussed. Some armchair meeting topics have been for instance sustainability, co-governance, Campus Fryslân, and re-organisations within the RUG.

The meetings of the committees and the Council are public and take place in the large meeting room of the Board building at the Oude Boteringestraat 44. Everyone is welcome to come by anytime you want! Send an email to fractie@studentenorganisatie.nl to find out when there is a meeting and what topics are on the agenda. Next committee meeting will be February 6th and it starts at 9:00, but you can get on the public bench anytime you want. The week after, on February 13th, the Council will take place at 9:30. The agenda and topics of discussion can be found at www.rug.nl/uraad/

Board and Bureau 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 exists of three members with each their own dossiers:

Chairman:	Prof. Dr. Jouke de Vries
Vice-chair:	Drs. Hans Biemans
Rector Magnificus:	Prof. Ciska Wijmenga

Within the bureau 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 Kortten for legal aspects, and Stephan van Galen as the director of the Bureau. 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 Bureau 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 his or hers own dossiers with specific cases and research topics. For this it is vital that you stay in contact with the different faculties, study and student associations - it is important you get input from every corner of our community. It is also a lot of fun, because your network in the top regions of the university can help the smaller study associations in achieving 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. Examples are the General International Students Platform (GISP) or the organisation of rocking up Xmas this year together with Albertus and Vindicat. Furthermore, we also work closely together with some municipality parties, mostly the student & stad faction.

Interstedelijk Studenten Overleg (ISO)

The SOG is also involved on a nation wide 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 co-operation with parties in other cities which aim for the same goals as the SOG at other universities. Furthermore, through this co-operation we have also become a discussion partner of the Landelijke Kamer van Verenigingen, a lobby organisation specifically designed for study and student associations.

Function description

Chairperson

The Chairperson 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 chairpersons dossiers. Internally the chair keeps an eye on the headlines of the SOG faction policy. He or she prepares and leads the meetings. To get a good sight on the SOG in the Council he or she is 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. He or she will have to clearly 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, this year Teun Havinga

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Vice-Chair

The vice-chair substitutes the chair when he or she isn't present and is important to the chair as sparring/discussion partner. Together they watch over the quality, process and strategy of the faction. The vice-chair also supports the chair with guiding the individual faction members when necessary. He or she also notices problems when they occur and solves them. To work together as good as possible it's important for the chair and vice-chair to have structural and a big amount of 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. A lot of the informal communication and debate in your council year will therefore be in English as well. In the council itself there will be a simultaneous translation available.

General Faction members

The general faction members hold varying portfolios, contact persons, contact associations and general tasks. Every faction member takes a seat in one or more council committees and other advisory bodies. The eleven faculties of the UG will also be divided amongst the faction members, this means that you'll be responsible for visiting the faculty council and keeping contact with the faculty and study associations. The faculties, contact associations and portfolios will be divided amongst the faction members at the beginning of year. This will be done by mostly looking at the personal background and interests of the individual faction members. This way every faction member will get interesting and fun duties that they can work on for a year. Last but not least 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 own research and visit the different staff members and departments of the Bureau of the University.

Time investment

It is in fact possible to study a bit besides your work for the university council, even for the chair of the faction. To make this possible there's 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're doubting 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.

Compensation

For the council work you'll be compensated with a co-governance grand of 6 months per person from CUOS. This is almost €4200, 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 grand the membership of the council makes up for one of the best paid boardyears in Groningen.

Timeline

The application deadline for the SOG faction is **February 14th 2021 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 general members meeting in which the candidate faction is presented and installed the candidate faction will start writing their election program. Starting march the last few things for the campaign week will be worked out. The Campaign Team (CT) will be of big help to the candidate faction, they already started in December with preparing for the campaign week. 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 CT you'll be organizing different stunts, stunning PR material and activities.

The elections will take place in **may 2021**. This time will fully consist of promotion by doing lecture talks, stunting, debating and flyering. In may this 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 in weekend with your candidate faction and the current faction, on which you'll get to know all the in's and out's of the council work. This work in period will last till the end of august, in the council of 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 a few hours a week on the SOG after the installation as candidate faction. You'll have tasks like the writing of the election program and all the other preparing like written above, but also attending constitution drinks of other associations. This will make sure you'll be completely prepared for your council year, but also helps

to try to get as many seats as possible during the elections. This makes the election report tense and exciting for the whole candidate faction. After this report the work in period will be more relaxed than around the elections and you'll get to plan this with your predecessors.

Additional information

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

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

Contact

There'll always be someone from the faction or board in the office, so for more questions you can visit us at:

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