

**Policy Plan of the
Student Council
of
2024-2025**

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Introduction

Dear Students and Staff,

As the Student Council, our main objective is to cultivate a space where students feel valued, supported and empowered during their time at AUC. We serve as the mouthpiece to the student body, striving to ensure that their perspectives are heard and considered, enabling student participation in decision-making processes, as we have the legal power to influence changes related to academic standards, student welfare, campus facilities, and more.

We thereby present our Policy Plan, wherein we outline our approach for the upcoming year, including projects we wish to continue developing further, as well as new forthcoming initiatives tailored according to what we believe is in the interest of the student community. In all our efforts, we aim to be as transparent as possible about our role in student governance and the rights that come with our responsibility. In return, we strongly encourage both students and staff members to advocate for changes they wish to implement at AUC, and welcome any relevant input that may be of consequence to improve and enhance our wider community.

We are honoured to be entrusted as your student representatives this year, and thank you for your support in helping us advocate for necessary changes. Please do not hesitate to reach out with any concerns you may have.

Love,

AUC Student Council 2024-2025

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Visibility and Transparency

To accurately represent the student body, we need students to know about the Student Council and to have a clear idea of what we can do for them. In order to be transparent we need, first and foremost, to be visible. Our council has made it a priority to focus on making ourselves more seen by both the student body, as well as the administration, in an effort to establish transparency across campus. We aim to fulfil this initiative through a variety of different measures, including certain projects we would like to keep alive.

Continuity of Projects

a. Voices of AUC

Voices of AUC is an event that seeks to bridge the gap between students and staff through sessions that gauge student opinions in order to find solutions through collaborative discussion. This is an opportunity for student-led initiatives to unfold beyond what the student body representatives can generate, allowing both students and staff to express what they think about a certain topic in an environment where each is entrusted to listen. It is our ambition to develop this event into a panel or talk, where students can also attend to learn more about the proceedings of their institution.

b. Open Assemblies

Open Assemblies offer students a space to express their unfiltered concerns in the absence of faculty. This event enables the Student Council to update students on their work, and thereby further promote transparency, but also receive student commentary in a controlled and more accessible space, addressing them directly. Thereafter we will compile the input gathered from these assemblies and revise our Policy Plan midway through our term to accommodate for emerging perspectives.

c. The Toilet-Paper Newsletter

This periodical is a great way to increase Student Council exposure through fliers that disseminate information informally and concisely. The Toilet-Paper news “roll” will be used to summarise our recent achievements, promote upcoming events, distribute surveys as a way of collecting student input, refer readers to our Canvas page and website, and much more.

As previously mentioned, our visibility is what enables us to be transparent with the very students we are entrusted to represent. As the Student Council, this value is at the heart of our mission and encapsulates our fundamental duty, as stipulated by Dutch law, to “promote

openness, publicity and mutual consultation in the university” (article 9.32 paragraph 3 & 4 WHW). In order to fulfil this role as representatives of the student body, we intend to be transparent whenever, and wherever, we can.

Social Media

The Student Council aims to remain active across all social media platforms. We will mostly use Instagram to promote events and update students on recent achievements, but our website will be the primary source of information. Students are also encouraged to attend consultation meetings with the dean, and review our minutes, which are all published on Canvas, as it is within student rights to know that such information is public and easily accessible.

Office Hours

We are scheduled to hold Office Hours twice a week, on both Mondays and Fridays during lunch time, to address student concerns. These needs may vary from IT support to campus facilities, or the academic curriculum, and conversations surrounding mental health, in which case we could also refer students to the wellbeing team if need be. The office hours are also a way to make your voice heard whereby our main objective is to listen and gather input for the sake of accurately representing the student body. In case students do not feel comfortable approaching a council member directly, they can submit an anonymous entry in “Da Box,” a transparency tool where students can raise questions or voice their unfiltered concerns. We also intend to introduce a digital version of “Da Box” to allow for remote feedback so as to enhance engagement.

Accommodation

The Accommodation pillar is the most recent addition to our Policy Plan that arose during the final revision cycle. We find it crucial to acknowledge the significant lack of awareness amongst staff regarding accommodation matters, and therefore intend to take proactive steps moving forward to address this issue.

Accommodations are offered for a variety of different reasons, ranging from disability, neurotypicality, illness, family-related issues, etc. The form that such proceedings take will therefore vary depending on the circumstances of any given case. It is our job as the Student Council to direct students to where they could find resourceful information and seek further assistance.

Earlier last year, a student by the name of Pauline Lütticke spearheaded efforts to increase accommodation practices on campus. Alongside AUC professor Dr. Anne de Graaf Kupovykh, Pauline is currently working on policy proposals aimed at improving structural accessibility composed by insights collected from students. The document pertaining to these policy changes has yet to be finalised, but will be shared as soon as it has been approved.

This initiative further consists of institutionalising the Disability Handbook, which was created a few years ago by AUC student Lisa Dondainas as part of her CP/I project. This handbook provides resources for both students and staff that detail accommodation procedures, but also offers support services to ensure that students receive the proper accommodations they need. It is promoted on the AUC website, but not currently mandated.

It is our intention to also monitor any changes made to the UvA house rules, Social Code of Conduct, Board of Examiners rules and regulations, and the Academic Standards and Procedures to ensure their guidelines are in alignment with the values of the institution, but also to be able to properly guide students to the best of our capacity.

Finally, there is the FAPDEI, the Framework and Action Plan for Diversity, Equity and Inclusion, which provides a set of guidelines for fostering diversity and inclusion within the institution. We intend to revisit the revision of the FAPDEI to ensure it reflects current needs and ongoing challenges within the institution. It goes without saying that this past year has undoubtedly shown how important it is for our community that such policies are revised and put into action. for our community.

Diversity

Diversity is the very pillar that AUC is built on. As your student representatives we aim both to represent *all* students and to make an inclusive environment at AUC. We aim to build on the work of the previous Council regarding accessibility and introduce our own aims for representation to address the concerns and needs of every student at AUC.

Continuity of Projects

We plan to continue to strengthen our ties with DivCom, a commission that is officially in charge of helping AUUSA be more inclusive in their events. There is a pre-existing framework for accessibility at AUC, but we intend to fortify this initiative by working alongside DivCom, aligning their efforts to correspond with relevant and ongoing issues. We are both also involved in the institutionalisation of the Disability Handbook. Our previous council had planned on having workshops with AUC staff about accessibility in the classrooms, but were unable to go through with it. Thus, we plan to pick up where they left off, and work alongside the Diversity Leadership Group with initiatives related to institutional diversity and inclusion.

Representing Different AUC Parties

One of the biggest steps in understanding the scope of diversity as members of the Student Council is to enable students to speak up about it. We plan to disseminate surveys for students, staff and faculty on a regular basis to assess and identify areas for improvement that we are able to address. These surveys will be accessible through QR codes which will be displayed on screens in and around the academic building, as well as across active and relevant group chats. In some instances, we may attempt to contact specific students, or groups of students, if we find their perspective particularly applicable to a given cause.

Cultural Representation

We aim to display decorations in the academic building for at least one major festival from each religion and/or culture—Diwali, Hanukkah, Eid, Lunar New Year etc., to promote the celebration of diversity at AUC. We intend for this to become a student-led initiative in collaboration with the ArtBoard to create these decorations by hand so as to minimise financial expenses. As far as the right to display such decorations, we aim to monitor and, if

need be, negotiate revisions to the UvA House Rules by engaging in conversations with the Central Student Council.

Diversity in Academia

We aim to encourage and reinforce student and staff initiatives to integrate more diverse perspectives into the curriculum, not as a perfunctory effort to be inclusive, but rather to make this value pertinent across all disciplinary courses, so as to highlight diverse perspectives and their contributions to a given field of study. One way to propel these efforts is to designate a certain section of the course evaluations to suggestions for a concept or author that students would have liked to see included in the course. The initiative to ‘Decolonize the Curriculum’ bore great success, which was part of the broader aim of improving inclusive teaching and structural accessibility at AUC. We find it important to consistently revise the curriculum and consider ways in which courses can be made more inclusive and representative, dispossessing academics of elitism and bringing it more in line with AUC’s long-standing commitment to inclusivity and diversity. We will venture to expand upon this project and continue the mission of crystallising diversity in academia even further. In a similar spirit, the FAPDEI stipulates that AUC offer diversity and inclusivity lectures on occasions such as the Symposium, but this can be organised more sporadically throughout the year as well. Furthermore, we will insist that AUC consider the different economic circumstances of its students, and make all course materials freely available on Canvas.

Academics

Each year presents new challenges on the academic front: policies that influence students' lives, course changes that impact students' futures, and an ever-changing curriculum that students are often not aware of. These are all discussions where the student voice needs to be represented. There are several measures we have chosen to include in the Policy Plan to guarantee students the opportunity to excel in their academics.

Academic Standards and Procedures

The Student Council is once again in charge of revising the Academic Standards and Procedures, a document that outlines the norms of academic life at AUC. In line with the previous Council, we aim to revise the attendance policy in light of the new academic calendar. We will attempt to accommodate for various holidays in the attendance policy as well to account for the diverse backgrounds of AUC students. We also aim to take part in several measures to assess student opinion on this renewed calendar structure by appointing a member of our council to represent the student body at deliberations with the steering group.

Mandatory Courses

Past discourse has revolved largely around mandatory courses, with students questioning their content, mandatory nature, and sheer existence. We will continue working with the Board of Studies and the Director of Education to ensure that these mandatory courses are easier to plan and aimed at academic excellence, catering to the needs of the students instead of imposing skill sets on them that do not align with their academic trajectory. We will attempt to establish a clear grading-rubric for all mandatory courses. We will also explore the possibility of allowing students to show their proficiency in certain mandatory courses to offer them exemption.

Course Planning

Due to a number of reasons, such as the financial stressors currently impacting the college, decisions have been made regarding the AUC curriculum. With this in mind, we aim to implement off-campus courses into the newly established 'Constellations' to encourage students to expand their curriculum across both the UvA and the VU. Through discussion with the Board of Studies, we will also explore the possibility of creating or reinstating more

Humanities courses, to ensure that Humanities majors are able to attain enough course credits for their respective academic trajectories.

Wider Initiatives

We have devised several initiatives aimed at making academic life easier for all students. Firstly, we will attempt to cement the tutoring system within AUC where students may tutor one another in certain subjects. Secondly, we would like to institutionalise class breaks to make for a regular detente from class discourse. Third, we plan on introducing a rule that all teachers should have their office hours and contact information in their email signature, to make this information more readily available to students. We will also institutionalise book fairs at the start of each semester and college-wide study sessions during exam season, both for the economic benefit and for the sake of community building amongst students.

Mental Health and Well-Being

At AUC, there is a strong dedication and commitment to fulfilling high academic standards. We recognize that there is a strong correlation between academic performance and mental health, and thus, establishing a secure mental health and support system is imperative. As student representatives, we feel compelled to acknowledge this reality and identify areas where improvements can be made to enhance our academic experience. While AUC has made considerable progress in developing mental health support systems, our commitment to fulfilling the standards we set for ourselves drives us to push our efforts even further. Moreover, there is a call for increased funding to enhance these initiatives. We plan to build on the great work of previous Student Councils and extend it to the fullest extent of our capacity.

Continuity of Projects

We aim to keep strengthening our collaboration with the Well-being Team by holding regular meetings and prioritising the annual revision of the Mental Health Guide, with a focus on educating international students about the Dutch mental health care system. Promoting awareness for Student Life Officers (SLOs) is also crucial; we aim to ensure that students are well-informed about the kinds of resources and support systems they can offer. We will also continue advocating for the implementation of an AUC appointed psychologist, or at the very least, work to improve the referral system to UvA psychologists, which is currently laden with significant bureaucratic burden. Lastly, we will continue working on the Consent Board; an initiative started by the previous Council intended to establish another student-led facet of the Well-Being Team, specifically tackling issues of consent and sexual awareness.

Simplified Process for Accommodations

We aim to simplify the process for obtaining accommodations for students with disabilities by reducing the bureaucratic barriers that often hinder access to necessary support. Additionally, we hope to make the attendance policy more accommodating to students struggling with mental and physical health, offering more flexibility and support where it is needed.

Peer Support and Mental Health Workshops

We are committed to strengthening our relationship with Peer Support by collaborating closely on mental health workshops and campaigns. These initiatives can help raise awareness and equip students with tools to manage their mental health effectively. We advocate for an increased number of workshops at the beginning of the academic year, focusing specifically on social diversity and etiquette, as well as mental health. This approach will further enhance the overall well-being of our community.

Healthy and Nutritious Meals

Student well-being is significantly influenced by diet, and we are eager to explore ways to make healthy and nutritious meals at the AUC canteen more affordable while also providing options for various dietary restrictions (e.g., halal, kosher). Reducing cafeteria prices or employing students in the kitchen is a more economical alternative and could alleviate financial stress while also encouraging those passionate about cooking to contribute to the well-being of our community. The previous Student Council's proposal to introduce a kettle near the microwave is something we will continue to push for as well.

Safety and Medical Aid

The Student Council is deeply committed to ensuring the safety and well-being of all students at AUC, recognizing that this is just as important to letting students learn and grow as good mental health. Our goal is to ensure that all students have access to the resources and support they need to feel confident and secure, whether during campus events, emergencies, or daily routines. Recognizing this, we have identified key areas where safety protocols can be enhanced to better protect students.

Medical Aid at all AUC events

AUC is unique in the bonding in its community, organising multiple events that may sometimes have an impact on our health and well-being. So, it is essential to have medical aid at every event, no matter how big or small. This could be provided by having a designated person that has gone through first-aid training at all AUC events, or hiring someone to be responsible. In order to facilitate this process, we suggest that all AUCSC members and other students go through such training. Although the possibility of a medical emergency is small, it is not impossible and it has occurred at previous AUC events, even those which did not include physical activity or the consumption of alcohol.

Emergency Drills

Implementing regular emergency drills, including fire drills, ensures the safety and preparedness of students and staff by familiarising them with procedures and evacuation routes in case of an actual emergency. This can be achieved by scheduling drills once a semester, for example during reading weeks in order not to disturb classes. Students would then come to the academic building during designated time slots, to ensure that everyone gets the same training whether or not they have to attend a course. Collaborating with local emergency services could help us provide clear instructions and training to all members of the school community.

Funding for First Aid Courses

Advocating for increased funding of first aid courses available to students and staff will be a significant step towards enhancing the overall safety and health of the school community, ensuring that more individuals are trained and ready to assist in emergencies. These trainings will be required for all AUC teachers and for those students to whom it is deemed necessary by their respective organisations. This can be implemented by organising annual training

sessions in collaboration with certified first aid instructors, ensuring participants receive practical, hands-on experience and certification upon completion.

Emergency Contact Authority

Currently, although AUC employs a person specifically for the sake of physical safety, their contact is not known by most of our students. Besides the first-aid box by the front desk, there seems to be no one specifically responsible and no place to go in case of physical emergencies. We will attempt to make up for this detriment, by appointing one such person who is present at the AB for full working days. The contact of this person will be made known and available to everyone, to ensure the safety of students and staff at the AB.

Incoming and Outgoing Graduates

The transition into and out of AUC represents two of the most significant phases in a student's academic career. As incoming students join the AUC community, they face the challenges of adapting to a new environment and navigating the challenges of life at university. Similarly, as outgoing graduates prepare to leave AUC, they encounter the crucial task of transitioning into the professional world or further academic pursuits. By ensuring a smooth transition for incoming students and equipping outgoing graduates with the skills and connections they need, we can help them maximise their potential and confidently face the opportunities and challenges ahead. The initiatives we propose aim to provide comprehensive support, empowering students to thrive both during their time at AUC and beyond.

Incoming Graduates

Accessible information before starting at AUC

There is a lot of information available to incoming students related to their academics, but very little when it comes to visualising what life beyond AUC would look like. Through coordinating our promotion strategy more closely with AUUSA and AUC, we aim to give a cohesive view of student life within the AUC bubble and within Amsterdam at large, by way of informative videos, interactive maps of spots in the area, and more information regarding living conditions on the student website. Especially for non-EU students, it can be hard to navigate life in a new environment. We plan to have information sessions on where to find halal food, where the closest Asian stores are, questions about immigration, health insurance, how and where to find work as a non-EU passport holder, and other such questions that can only be answered by someone who has lived a similar experience.

Information sessions

There are many students at AUC who are actively looking for part-time jobs, including many non-European students who are unsure, and even intimidated by, the Dutch system for work arrangements. Thus we aim to facilitate information sessions on the process of acquiring work permits and also present possible part-time job opportunities (at workplaces of students who are already working, for example). Furthermore, along with the Management team, teachers and tutors, we also plan to organise information sessions with staff members who specialise in specific fields in order for students to be able to organise their curriculum based on possible requirements for future degrees.

Outgoing Graduates

Career Panels

In order to help students prepare for their future, it would be conducive to organise career panels where speakers are invited to talk about their own postgraduate pursuits as a way to inspire students and allow them to discover potential career paths. This initiative could be explored in collaboration with the Alumni Committee, providing students with valuable guidance, networking opportunities, and insights into their chosen fields by connecting them with experienced professionals who were once in their very same shoes. It would allow students to gain practical advice, build professional relationships, and enhance their understanding of industry expectations, ultimately improving their chances of success in their future careers.

Internal Collaboration

This year, it is one of our main priorities to develop the internal collaboration between AUCSC and other administrative bodies, such as the Board of Studies and the Works Council, as well as other student bodies, such as the AUCSA and Peer Support. Through regular meetings and other initiatives, we aim to strengthen the bonds between organisations to supply the student body with a fully-rounded experience at AUC.

The Sounding Board

Every month, we will have meetings with AUCSA and Peer Support to discuss ways in which the three boards can show up to one another, through possible collaborations, a combined promotion strategy, and generally being more mindful of respective roles at AUC. Through these collaborations and discussions we hope to foster an environment where students are mindful of their fellow peers, are able to engage with their student government, and contribute to the AUC community, while safely and mindfully growing into their own. We also hope that these collaborations can better distinguish individual organisations within the institution by both combining and underscoring how we each function and what we stand for.

The Board of Studies

We aim to hold regular meetings with the Board of Studies; at the start of the year, to establish a rapport and introduce initiatives we would like to introduce or collaborate on with the Board. One such initiative is trying to support the Board of Studies in taking a more proactive approach to their position, by empowering their creativity as inspired by the voices of students. Students often have great ideas regarding course structure, content, and objectives, and the Board of Studies could play a pivotal role in adding to the existing canon of courses at AUC, by maintaining an avenue for the students to express these ideas directly to the administration.

AUCSA Commissions

Although the work of AUCSA and AUCSC do not often intersect, we are bridged in part by SusCom—a commission that is officially in charge of helping AUCSA make their events more sustainable. We have endeavoured to schedule regular meetings with them so that their members can inform us of issues relating to sustainable practices endorsed by AUC they may

have noticed in the hopes of leading to renewed initiatives that are motivated by the voices of several students.

Student Staff Platform (SSP)

In light of the genocide occurring in Palestine and the protests that emerged on campus as a result, the SSP was initiated to foster open dialogue, as well as to rebuild trust and understanding at AUC. More generally, the SSP seeks to connect students and staff, and generate discussions on the role of the institution in our contemporary world. The Student Council will assist in the development of this independent entity to ensure that dialogue is translated into tangible action that reflect the diverse needs of the wider AUC community.