



INTER Policy Paper

“To bring Student Politics back to those who matter, the students”

2024-2025

Abstract

INTER brings student politics to the students. Too often student politics is only made by a few and not by the large student body at the UvA, leading to improper representation, missing out on the real issues of students and unsatisfactory policies. We therefore invited the students to participate with us in “student forums” where we discussed their problems and needs and explored possible solutions. This document provides a summary of what was discussed and formulates policies based on the students' insights. In the next step, **INTER advocates for these policies to be discussed by the CSR and FSRs**. To support our policies and our approach to bring student politics back to those who matter, the students, you can vote for INTER in the upcoming election in May and follow our social media for more.

Please note that **we do not claim completeness** with this document! It is a collection of problems and ideas that reached us as students and that we thought to be crucial. We fully acknowledge that this is just a snapshot of all possible improvements for our University and progressing in the five dimensions we value most: *quality of education, diversity and inclusivity, student welfare, sustainability and the environment, and democracy and transparency*. Therefore, we stay open to insights, thoughts, and ideas.

Do you agree with our values, but know of an issue not mentioned here? Reach out to us!

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Join us to make an actual change for students!

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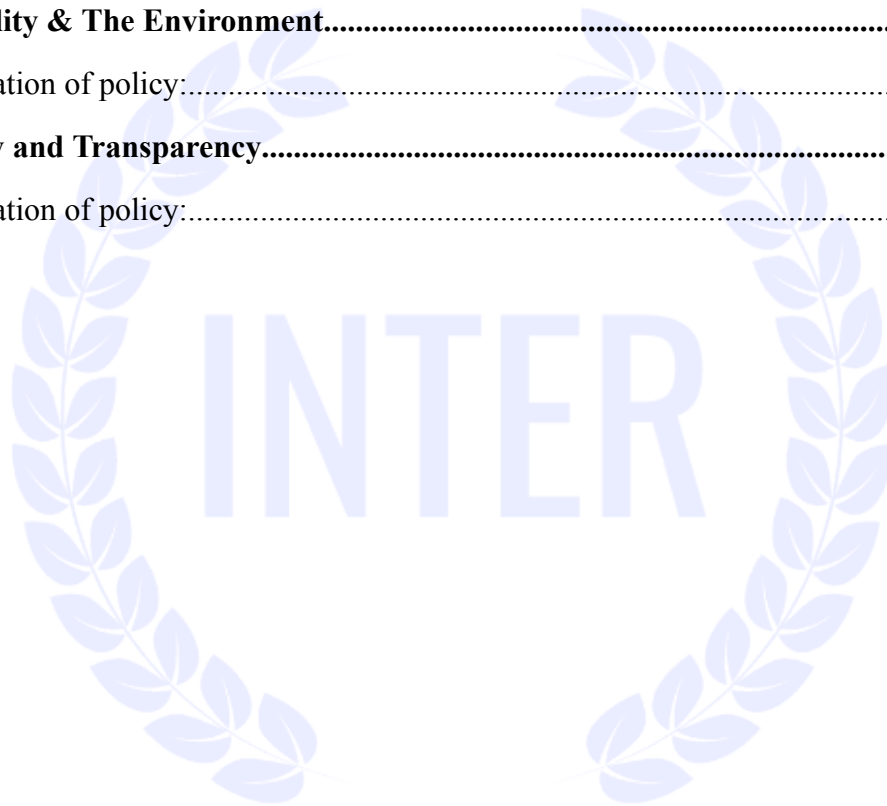
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Policy Highlights

1. [UvA run Housing Network](#)
2. [Fair and transparent grading and appeals on exams and assignments](#)
3. [Recorded lectures](#)
4. [Leniency with BSA with regards to attendance policy](#)
5. [Increasing the number of scholarships](#)



Quality of Education

We stand for a university that is based on the needs of its community of students and staff.

We believe this is crucial to provide the highest quality of education. Our policies aim to eliminate issues that can hinder the full learning capabilities of students. The UvA should be an engaging and learning environment tailored to students!

Formulation of policy:

1. Introducing a general procedure to appeal the assignment grading
 - a. Tutors are obliged to explain the grade to the student and give proper feedback on what would have to be done differently to achieve a higher grade.
 - b. A second tutor evaluates the student's complaint and can decide on the need for a reevaluation.

The grades of assignments became increasingly important and are now often deciding a large share of the final grade. Unlike in exams, however, there is no general appeal procedure to ask for clarification or reevaluation. If mistakes happen, there is no procedure in place for students to ask for their grades to be reevaluated. The students are bound to their tutors' fallibility. That is unfair to the students and can potentially threaten their study success. The UvA needs to act against that and has to give students the **right to appeal their assignment evaluation** and the **right to proper feedback** that explains the grading transparently. Additionally, UvA has to provide the students with a **simple pathway** to make use of that right to appeal, and reevaluation if necessary.

2. Easing the consequences for missed classes through changes in the attendance policy
 - a. Late and attendance policies have to be fair, and the same in every class. What is **late** should be **defined across the University**.
 - b. If students have not attended the required amount of tutorials but handed in all assignments, they should not be expelled from the course. Instead, a different consequence should be found (e.g. an extra assignment, or lower grading).

The double burden of Binding Study Advice (BSA) and a strict attendance policy makes it possible to end a study career without a lack of knowledge and proper understanding of the material or proper work. Just because students were not able to attend classes while being a

“good student” in any other metric, the strict attendance rule unnecessarily endangers the whole study career. Expecting students to go to the tutorials is in the students' own interest for a more sustainable learning. However, attendance requirements should never lead to barring students who have the academic qualifications and motivation to complete their studies. **Decreasing the consequences for missing the attendance requirement** is therefore more proportional.

3. Lecture recordings should be made available online (at least one week prior to the exam)
 - a. Lecture recordings should be available for students before exams;
 - b. This helps not only with revision, but can compensate for missing a lecture.

There are many reasons for missing a lecture (illness, work schedules, minors or elective courses, etc.). Most lectures are already recorded or at least the infrastructure for lecture recordings is often present. Where possible, **lecture recordings should be made available before exams.** The easiest way to balance keeping interactive lectures and not unnecessarily hurting students that cannot attend them, is to make lecture recordings available at least one week prior to the exam.

4. Exam preparation through mandatory example exam questions and revision lectures
 - a. Comprehensive and representative practice questions should be made available to students for revision purposes;
 - b. Revision lectures should be scheduled for students to clarify their doubts and fully grasp what the exam will consist of.

Exams, the formulation of questions and what is expected in the answers can differ greatly from course to course. In the exam, students should not be confused about what is expected from them or what is important to focus on in the answer. Students should be able to focus on their knowledge and skills rather than the exam formatting! Therefore, **practice exam questions** representative of the entirety of the exam should be made available prior. For clarification on what content exams will focus on, and for better learning and understanding, we also **advocate for revision lectures.**

Diversity & Inclusivity

We believe the UvA should be a place where everyone feels comfortable. From financial matters to social integration, we highly encourage the University to be a safe space for everyone. Diversity in ethnicity, gender, sexual preferences, socio-economic background, but also in literature and perspectives, is indispensable for the quality of education.

We believe that Diversity and Inclusivity are elemental in Society and also in Universities!

- Everyone has the right to come to this University to study, teach and get taught here;
- For that the University has to be a safe space for everyone;
- Everyone profits from diverse perspectives, both in the classroom and the literature, raising the quality of education.

Formulation of policy:

1. More scholarships to the people who need it
 - a. Scholarship opportunities should be rebalanced to accommodate for financial needs more often than merit, to ensure fair access to education at the UvA;
 - b. This can be done through a strengthened alumni network.

Studying at the UvA becomes more expensive every year. It is unfair that access to education becomes more and more restricted. We acknowledge that this is a national political issue of a fair education policy. In the meantime, we support measures that make education accessible for everyone. Scholarships can be a helpful instrument. As resources for those are scarce, scholarships should not *only* be based on merit, as that might privilege the already privileged. Instead, **scholarships should also go to those who otherwise could not afford studying at UvA**. Possibilities to employ more resources in scholarships, for example through alumni networks, should be explored.

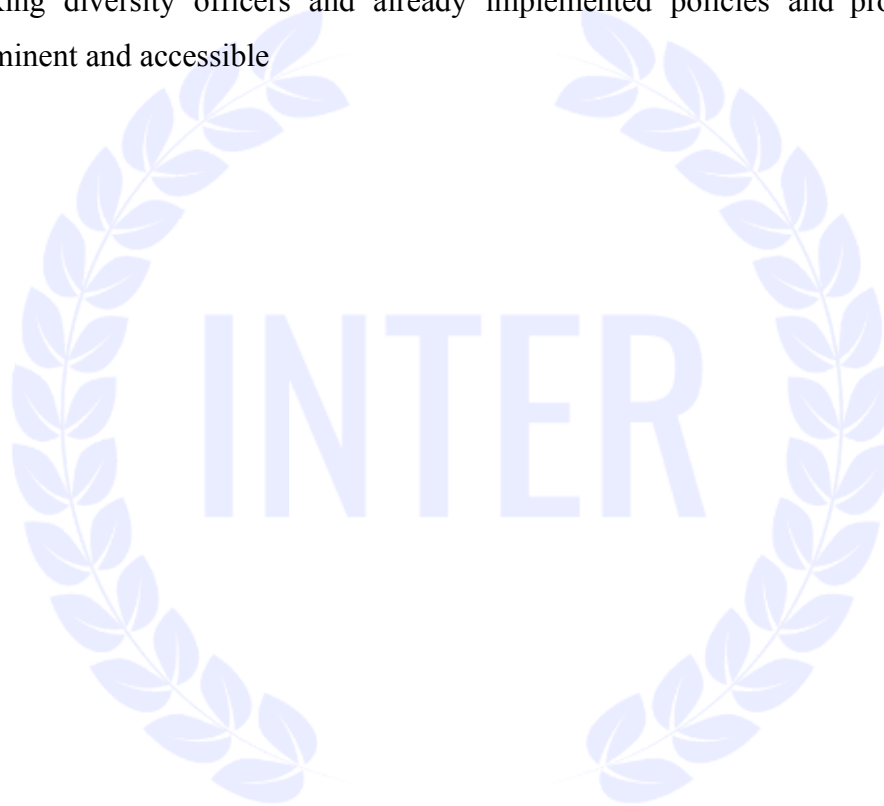
2. Mentor program during the application process
 - a. There should be a peering system from current students to help prospective students with their application to the UvA.

Application procedures at UvA can be complex. Some people can count on family and friends to help them during the application procedure, some do not. This disadvantage for

applicants of less privileged families could be decreased through a **mentor program of UvA students**, such as expanding the role of the student ambassadors, to being available **to help out** whenever needed and providing helpful tips and tricks to have a levelled playing field.

INTER also vouches for a variety of improvements regarding diversity and inclusivity in our University. These are:

1. Improving physical accessibility
2. Encouraging the inclusion of diverse (and decolonial) literature for better science!
3. Making diversity officers and already implemented policies and programs more prominent and accessible



Student Welfare

INTER is committed to fostering an environment that places students at its core. Student welfare is crucial for a positive learning experience. Our policies focus on the creation of a University that is accessible and safe for its community.

Formulation of policy:

1. Interdisciplinary courses should have a transparent statement of the subject to which the credits are awarded.
 - a. The distribution of credits across different disciplines should be made clearer for minors and interdisciplinary courses.

When enrolled in interdisciplinary programs, such as PPLE, students are often finding the credits distribution ambiguous. This makes it harder to plan ahead and can hinder access to further programs because of a lack of credits in some disciplines. When students have a path in mind they want to follow, electives and minors can come in to supplement their original programs, providing extra credits in the subjects where it is needed. For this to happen, students should have access to a **clear overview displaying all their core and major courses, with the distribution of credits across subjects**. Such an instrument would allow students to gain access to their master or further course of choice more easily.

2. Psychological help should be more accessible.
 - a. Mental health is seriously accounted for by INTER, this is why we propose that **psychologists on campus should be more easily accessible and that they should be specialised in different fields** to satisfy the students' (and staff's) demand.

Students should know from the beginning of their studies what is available to them and how they can access certain services, this is not sufficiently the case currently and thus change is necessary. Student psychologists exist but appear to be focused mostly on issues that disrupt academia, and do not sufficiently cater to general mental health issues, **this service should be expanded.**

3. Students should be allowed to set preferences for their tutorial schedules.

- a. Mandatory tutorials should not be randomly assigned. Students should have the possibility to pick the time slot (between the available options) that suits them best on a first come first served basis.
- b. This would allow students to pursue other minors, extracurriculars or hobbies.

When studying at university, students are able to delve deeper into subjects they are passionate about. This happens not only thanks to their study program, but also through minors and electives, which are often mandatory to complete study programs. When students are able to pick any class of their interest, it is often the case that lectures and tutorials overlap with those of their main program, rendering students unable to follow classes they are passionate about, and that could benefit their academic journey at the UvA. Being able to **pick their tutorial schedules** on a first come, first served basis, students would have the possibility to adjust their schedules, thus making it possible to follow the main program and an elective, learning more about what they are passionate about!

4. Affordable food options: cheap meals instead of overpriced food courts.

- a. Meals on campus have to be affordable - and that means affordable for students.
- b. INTER applauds initiatives such as “De Nieuwe Mensa” and encourages the UvA to support them to further lower prices and expand on all campuses.

Living and studying in Amsterdam is already expensive – why not offer cheap meals like it is common in many other countries to enhance student welfare? Canteen style cooking does not have to be expensive and can impact many students' lives, by ensuring one **healthy and fulfilling meal for a decent price** a day.

5. Redistribute funding for associations – broaden the scope of associations that are supported

- a. We request fair distribution of funding without prioritising certain initiatives over others.

University is a place for everyone, and everyone should have the opportunity to find an association, a board, a committee that works for them. However, **associations need funding**, but only a few of those are supported by the UvA. We advocate for the UvA to fund diverse student associations and parties for their initiatives and activities reliably.



Sustainability & The Environment

Next to its big potential to add substantially to more sustainable dimensions, the UvA has the knowledge, capabilities, and the responsibility to lead by example. We support and endorse the crucial work of the student-run UvA Green Office, which works to make the UvA more sustainable. Moreover, we advocate for more social and economic sustainable practices.

Formulation of policy:

1. Housing Network for social and economic sustainability

- a. The UvA should create a safe Network page among faculties where to exchange information of housing (students leaving and searching), this should only be accessible to UvA students (inspiration from sites like “Kamernet”).

To address students' housing challenges, we propose creating an **official UvA Housing Network** accessible via a secure website linked to UvA IDs. The platform will include verified housing listings and a roommate finder feature, allowing students to search for housing and connect with peers within their faculties or university-wide. Unlike unregulated Facebook groups, this platform **ensures legitimacy, safety, and ease of use**. Faculty-specific filters, discussion forums, and housing resources will foster **community building and streamline the housing search process**. This initiative aligns with UvA's commitment to improving student welfare and creating a supportive academic environment.

2. Less paper cutlery use in the cafeteria, through reusable cutlery and plates

- a. The cafeteria should **promote bringing one's own cutlery and plates** from home by incentivising it through lower prices;
- b. This would ease a transition away from paper cutlery
 - i. Such a goal can be further achieved by **providing reusable cutlery** at the cafeteria;
 - ii. A final goal would be to have zero waste, fully banning paper cutlery.

The UvA set itself ambitious goals to produce significantly less waste in the coming years. Transitioning away from paper cups was a success. Alternatives were provided through free reusable cups given away to every student in the beginning of the year and the ban of paper cups throughout the whole University. We see an opportunity to expand this success to the cafeteria. Paper cutlery, plates and packages are still used there to a great extent. As a first

step, it should be allowed, encouraged and incentivised to bring your own reusable cutlery and plates from home. Secondly, solutions should be explored to use reusable plates and cutlery at the cafeteria and wash these there.

3. CSR and FSR should (help) organise second hand textbook sales

- a. The student councils or student organizations should organize **book sales** for second hand books.

Next to the obvious financial practicability for both buyers and sellers, reusing the paper copies of textbooks also adds environmentally to sustainability.

Finally,

Promoting discussions and awareness around sustainability should be a key focus for the University. Organising more events centered on environmental responsibility can inspire the community to take meaningful action. Events focused on environmental, social and economic sustainability can encourage students and staff to explore the impact of individual and collective actions on a greener future. These can include expert-led discussions on global environmental challenges, hands-on workshops on sustainable living practices, and interactive forums for sharing ideas. By fostering these conversations, the university can strengthen its commitment to sustainability, empower individuals to make conscious choices, and build a culture of lasting environmental, social and economic responsibility.

Democracy and Transparency

INTER stands for transparent processes within our university. Students should be updated and included in decision making regarding their environment and community. We believe democracy and transparency are key to bring student politics directly to students.

Formulation of policy:

1. At the University of Amsterdam, our student party stands for full transparency in external partnerships.
 - a. INTER requests that the UvA is transparent with regards to its own partnerships.

We believe the University must be accountable for its collaborations, especially those that may support harmful agendas or contribute to issues like environmental damage, human rights violations, or conflict. We advocate for **partnerships that are ethical, sustainable, and aligned with the University's values of social responsibility.**

2. Homogeneous, transparent processes throughout all faculties and teachers
 - a. Attendance regulations, appeal policies for exams and assignments and other policies affecting students directly have to be homogenous, clear and accessible. We want explanations of the associated processes on the website and enforcement that every course and every teacher sticks to unless there is a reason for deviation.
 - b. INTER advocates for policies to be in place for assignment appeals. We want clear policies for this, and the possibility to let another tutor check your assignment in case you feel unfairly graded.

It cannot be a surprise or mystery how **attendance** is regulated in a course or how to **appeal an assignment**. There have to be **clear mechanisms in place**, which are communicated well and stuck to by all. Especially for assignments there is a lack of a process, but ambiguity is also in place for other policies, such as attendance, lates, appeal of exams, or inspection of exams.

3. Accessibility and transparency of the work of the student council

- a. We vouch to push transparency and accessibility of the student council's work to make sure students know what their representatives are working on.

One recurring issue discussed in INTER is how to foster more **engagement of students with student politics**. We believe an important prerequisite for this is showing what the student councils actually do and what they can change. We want **easily accessible, transparent information**, e.g. through Instagram, to keep students updated with the **council's work** to show that student politics matters.



Conclusion

INTER's policy paper for 2024-2025 reflects our commitment to making student politics more **inclusive, transparent, and impactful**. Through student forums and direct engagement, we have identified key areas of concern and developed policies that address quality of education, diversity and inclusivity, student welfare, sustainability, and democracy. Our proposals aim to ensure **fair grading practices, greater accessibility to scholarships and mental health services, sustainable campus initiatives, and increased transparency in university decision-making**. While this document is not exhaustive, it represents a step towards a more student-centered university. We invite all students to join us in advocating for these policies and shaping a better academic environment at the UvA.

The INTER Board

