



STUDENT
COUNCIL

BI-YEARLY REFLECTION REPORT

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Written by the UC Student Council 2023 - 2024



20

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ABBREVIATIONS

AAO	Academic Affairs Officer
BoS	Board of Studies
CAR	Campus Affairs Representatives
FLISS	First Generation Low Income Scholarship Students
MT	Management Team
GDA	Gender Diversity Alliance
UCSA	University College Student Association
UCSRN	University College Student Representatives of the Netherlands
UCUC	University College Utrecht Council
Rep	Representative

INTRODUCTION

The bi-yearly reflection report is written by the UC Student Council every year. The UCSC constitutes the student side of co-governance at UCU: members sit on various governing bodies of our college and are involved in the making and checking of academic and non-academic policy. One of our primary roles is representing the student voice in these processes – which means that we actively seek student input on matters being discussed. This year's UCSC members are:



Violeta Bagazgoitia (She/Her)
Chair, Vice-chair UCUC



Eugenie Vuillefroy de Silly (She/Her)
AAO, Student Rep. UCUC
UCSRN Academic Rep.



ELaurens van Hofslot (He/Him)
Student Assessor, student member
MT, visiting member BoS



Muriel Owen (She/Her)
AAO, Student Rep. UCUC



Doortje Koldewey (She/Her)
Secretary, Student Rep. UCUC



Karsten Heebing (He/Him)
AAO, Student Rep. BoS

Our work is in part determined by the themes and activities of the respective bodies in which we hold positions and in part by the day-to-day work that comes with running our board. Additionally, every UCSC board plans out several aims and projects to work on during their board year.

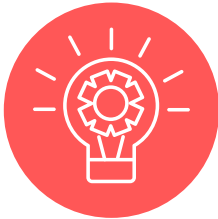
In this report, we will outline the progress regarding the aims we set for our board year, but also highlight other relevant achievements. Having presented our goals to the student body at the beginning of the academic year, this report serves to provide students with an update on past and upcoming work. This also contributes to our aim of increasing the transparency and visibility of our work and gives students a means of holding us accountable. Additionally, this report serves the board with a checkpoint to provide us with an overview of our work thus far and allows us to consider the remainder of our board year. This report will also give our successors a clear overview of our year's work.

THE AIMS OF 2023-2024



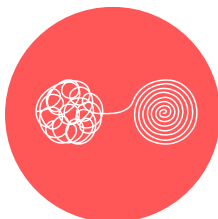
Wellbeing

UCU is a fast-paced and high-intensity educational program. We are aware that the program can take its toll on the physical, mental, and emotional well-being of students. In our work, we aim to improve the support systems present and raise awareness in College Hall about this topic.



Clarity

Both UCU and the UU have a wide array of resources available to students, but there is an overall lack of clarity. We aim to clarify these resources in order to improve their accessibility for UCU students, while also aiming to clarify the role of the UCSC to improve communication between students and staff.



Future

Future first of all evolves around the improvement of the college. This is incorporated in our daily task, but also encompassed in bigger projects. Next to this we want to actively contribute to the future of all UCU students by organizing future-related events.



Inclusivity

Everyone on campus should be able to enjoy our education without feeling excluded, discriminated against or otherwise disadvantaged. We, together with different bodies, work to increase inclusivity and to raise the voices of perspectives that are currently underrepresented in the discussion of diversity on campus.



Engagement

The effectiveness of our work relies on input from the student body. We will continue to work on the UC Student Council's engagement with campus both physically and digitally. This way everyone knows how they can approach us with any issues they face or input they wish to share. From our side we engage with enough students in focus groups, course evaluations, and the relevant bodies and teams.

LOOKING BACK

BODIES & TEAMS

All members of the UC Student Council take part in various co-governorship bodies, teams, and groups. In this section of the report, we reflect on our activities in the UCUC, BoS, MT, UCSRN, Diversity Platform, Voorzittersoverleg & URaad, and the Sexual Misconduct Task Force, GDA, FLISS and the Wellbeing Platform.

The University College Utrecht Council (UCUC)

The University College Utrecht Council (UCUC) is a body within the College that ensures that the interests of students and staff are represented. Comprising of four staff/faculty members and four UCSC members, the Council has engaged in discussions, advised, and granted approval on various topics throughout the academic year. Notably, we examined and approved the budget for 2023-2024. Another crucial task of the Council is synthesizing the course evaluations and creating summaries of the valuable feedback given. These summaries are then examined to find areas of improvement and are brought to course instructors, fellows, cluster chairs, and the BoS. Furthermore, we participated in a TAQT workshop on diversity and inclusion, offering insights into how we, as a council, can ensure and advocate for inclusive practices within the College. This enlightening and informative training prompts us to recommend its continuation for future UCSC/UCUC boards to take part in and for further discussion of these topics.

The Board of Studies (BoS)

In the Board of Studies, we have discussed everything from educational vision and interdisciplinarity to approving new courses. The BoS consists of the BoS AAO, the Student Assessor, the Director of Education, the Head Tutor, and all five Cluster Chairs. The role of the two UCSC members is to provide the student perspective in all decisions regarding the curriculum. In discussions about the evaluation of new courses, the AAOs supplied the Board of Studies with important additional student feedback. During the Fall semester, Karsten and Laurens contributed to the development of the newest courses in the curriculum, including The Truth: Political History of Press and Populism, Programming, and Nature, Biodiversity, and Health. Student feedback has proven to be pivotal here, as the UCU curriculum is awaiting refinements on methodology and courses in a variety of tracks overall - stay tuned!

The Management Team (MT)

In the MT meetings this year we discussed many things, ranging from UCU's budget to our housing and the quality of our education. An important topic this semester has been the follow up to the student workpressure report from last year. Similarly, to bring issues of student well-being to the MT we also organized a Town Hall in which students could share their experiences with the staff in an informal setting. Other issues the MT has been busy with are the Scholarship funds, the accreditation process and strengthening our relations and collaborations with other faculties at

LOOKING BACK

BODIES & TEAMS

The UCSRN

Being a part of UCSRN allows UCU to stay connected with the other University Colleges in the Netherlands and ensure that the quality of education at all universities is being held to a high standard. A Student Council member represents UCU on the Academic Committee of the UCSRN.

The AcCo meets biweekly and plans academic events across the University Colleges and allows for consistent check-ins. All UCs can ask questions and share information on various topics during these meetings. This year, a Symposium is being organised by the AcCo for students from every University College.

Diversity Platform

This year the Diversity platform was reinitiated with the help of the Diversity Committee and particularly Juliet (Vice Chair DC). The Diversity Platform consists of the various groups on campus that are involved in matters of diversity. The monthly meetings are also open to any student interested. During these meetings, groups update each other on what they have been working on and can ask for advice on specific topics. The main goal of the Diversity Platform is to advise for policy changes, with the help of the Diversity Committee. The first two meetings have been successful and we are excited to continue this upcoming semester.

The Voorzittersoverleg & URAAD:

UCU governance functions within the larger institution of Utrecht University. To stay informed about what is happening in other faculties, the UCSC Chair attends the monthly 'Voorzittersoverleg' (Chairs Meeting). In this meeting, the staff- and student chairs of UU's eight faculties discuss what has been on the Faculty Council agendas and exchange useful information or resources. Additionally, we stay in close contact with the URaad through monthly meetings. We use these meetings to gain perspectives from outside UCU, find a knowledgeable sparring partner, and (like the Voorzittersoverleg) exchange information or resources. The promotion of co-governorship positions and proper compensation/payment has been a recurring topic during these meetings.

The Sexual Misconduct Taskforce:

This year, Emma (UCSA) and Eugenie chaired the Sexual Misconduct Task Force, in which we discussed how to make UCU safer with many different groups in the college. We are in contact with College Hall about making a manifesto for UCU, with the help of Amnesty International. Furthermore, we added a section on spiking in the Resource booklet made last year and we are also working on updating the resource guide as a whole. Finally, we are in contact with the UU to obtain relevant training for student boards and groups.

LOOKING BACK

BODIES & TEAMS

The Gender Diversity Alliance (GDA)

The Gender Diversity Alliance, formerly known as the Pronouns Team, has progressed steadily in its vision and goals - successfully enjoying student engagement and inspiration for future projects. Previously, the report from the GDA and the UC Student Council in 2019, based on a survey regarding gender inclusivity at UCU, has been used as the foundation of multiple UU advancements and policies. The past semester, the GDA organised various bake sales to raise money for their upcoming projects. With a full new board, the GDA aims to create a LGBTQ+-related healthcare booklet and hopes to leverage more incredible ideas for initiatives through open meetings. Be sure to check them out on Instagram @ucu.gda!

First Generation Low-Income Scholarship Students (FLISS)

FLISS aims to raise awareness, provide support to students, and advocate for official changes at UCU. Student Council members have worked in close contact with FLISS members to help them establish themselves as well as organize events and get in contact with College Hall. The year started off strong with the Textbook donation and sale where FLISS students could request specific textbooks. All benefit went towards the Scholarship Fund. A few FLISS members were invited to a Pizza dinner with the Director of Education to talk about the institutional support that could be offered. Furthermore, FLISS gave a presentation to the tutor group about how they can help their tutees regarding this topic, which was met with great appreciation. Fliss currently has a large board that has many plans for the upcoming semester: organizing conferences about first generation students as well as providing a resource booklet for incoming students.

The Wellbeing Platform

The Wellbeing Platform is a body wherein the Wellbeing Team, CAR, UCSA, and the UC Student Council collaborate, as we all tackle the topic of student wellbeing from our differing perspectives! The aim of this platform is to share ideas talk about progress regarding student wellbeing. During these meetings, representatives from each body will provide an update as to what recent initiatives they have worked on and plan to work on in the future, and the groups holds discussions on how these bodies might be able to collaborate best to reach our shared goals! In the upcoming spring semester, we will be working together to create a resource booklet to inform students about the available resources, both formal and informal in one easy to navigate document!

LOOKING BACK

PROJECTS

Besides the formal positions that the UC Student Council holds, every board focuses on a few aims and projects in their board year. This section of the report reflects on our projects' activities and achievements thus far in the academic year.

The Year Plan Presentation

We hosted our year plan presentation at the beginning of the semester at the Bar (similarly to last year). The event was wholesome, engaging, and well received by those who attended. Great questions were answered with the aim of giving some more insight on what exactly we are working on this year, what our priorities are, and what our mandate is. Additionally, we paid special attention to the daily activities of the different board positions, so that the audience was informed who to approach for specific questions or comments. Overall, the presentation was a success: track representatives, board members and individual students came to listen to our plans for the upcoming academic year. We ended the presentation with a beer and the chance to answer questions on a more personal environment. Definitely a very exciting beginning to our board year!



Improving the Communication Strategy

This academic year, our board wanted to extend and improve our outreach to the student body, as we deem student awareness an integral part of properly representing the entire student body. Not only have we updated the UC Student Council website (thank you UC Student Council Board 2022-2023 - <https://www.ucstudentcouncil.com>), we have also dedicated a lot more effort into regularly updating our Instagram stories and posts with our activities and information on a variety of our projects. Other social communication such as Facebook and WhatsApp remain active as well. We hope to continue and further improve our communication next semester through interactive stories and more joyful posts!



Midterm Evaluations

Last semester, the Academic Affairs Officers, often accompanied by the respective track representatives, conducted several midterm evaluations. These evaluations play a crucial role in gathering feedback on various courses spanning across disciplines in an efficient and effective manner. The insights gained from these evaluations not only benefit the track representatives and the board but are also shared with track fellows, cluster chairs, and occasionally the Director of Education. This ensures that any concerns raised are promptly addressed while reinforcing positive aspects. We encourage everyone to stay tuned for upcoming evaluations in the Spring, and extend our gratitude to all who participated with honesty and constructive criticism during the fall semester.



LOOKING BACK

PROJECTS

Compensation Project



To continue the efforts of our previous board, the UC Student Council has been working on a report to discuss the current structure of institutional recognition and compensation of the board in relation to its role in the college and our current workload. For the sake of next generations of UC Student Council boards, it is vital for us to maintain and improve the representative nature of the board and this means lowering the (financial) barriers to stand for election for the UCSC (especially for those on a scholarship and/or non-EEA students). We believe it is essential that the UCSC's workload is properly recognized and students are fairly compensated for their important work in UCU's governance, in accordance with UU's policies in this matter.



UU Teacher of the Year Awards



In November, we submitted two nominations for the UU Teacher of the Year Award 2023. This distinction is awarded every year by the University of Utrecht's Executive Board to two teachers who have been nominated by one of the study associations of the faculties of UU. There are two categories: Outstanding Teacher and Teacher Talent Award, for a teacher who has been teaching for less than five years. This year, we nominated Gerard van der Ree - the UCU Teacher of the Year 2023 - for the Outstanding Teacher of the Year Award 2023. The selection for the award consists of various qualifying rounds. Gerard is one of the three teachers who proceeded to the next round so we are currently compiling a second portfolio to support their nomination. For the Teacher Talent Award, we put forward Yosiane White who unfortunately did not make it to the next round. A nomination for this award is very valuable. It shows the student body's appreciation for the teacher, it creates more visibility of UCU within the wider UU, and winning the award can have a huge impact in terms of networking and career opportunities.



Track Representatives

Building on the achievements of the previous boards, we have continued efforts to institutionalize the track representative position and enhance their visibility among students and staff. In summer term, we selected the track representatives and transitioned them on their role, providing information on recent developments, and put them in contact with their predecessor. In Fall introweek, we organized the 'Track Rep Treasure Hunt' - a new event in which track representatives were introduced to all first-year students. As was done last year, in collaboration with Nina Köll, we hosted a decoloniality workshop for track representatives. Throughout the semester, track representatives organized events such as info sessions about internships, masters, thesis, among other initiatives and



LOOKING BACK

PROJECTS



Focus Groups

This past semester saw the Human Geography and Anthropology Focus Groups come to fruition. Both sessions enjoyed a strong attendance from dedicated students of both tracks. Having these group feedback discussions truly shows us the value of processing face-to-face student feedback for a variety of courses at UCU. We want to extend our gratitude to the respective track representatives in making these events a success: Avantika Bhowmik (Track Rep GEO) and Marit Huitema (Track Rep ANT). The AAOs are looking forward to next semester, which will yet again be filled with various other Focus Group sessions - stay tuned!



LOOKING BACK

EVENTS

The UC Student Council aims to host a few public events every year to promote the interaction between the UCSC, the student body, and staff members. In this section of the report, we reflect on our hosted events such as the Town Hall, the Afternoon at the Bar, the Track & Thesis Market and finally our events during introweek.

The Town Hall



In November, the UC Student council facilitated and organized the UCU Townhall: an event where students were able to meet with the Dean, Director of Education, and Managing Director of UCU (and eat pizza). The purpose of this event is to allow students to raise any questions and concerns that they might have, as well as get to know the management team in a more informal setting. Thank you to all the students that came and engaged in productive discussion! For those who may have missed the event: no worries, as there will be another Townhall in the spring semester!

Afternoons at the Bar



The Afternoons at the Bar are organized as a great opportunity for students to meet the wonderful staff at UCU in an informal setting. This year we organize them twice a semester. The year started with a full bar during our introweek Meet the Staff Borrel during which the incoming students had a chance to already meet their teachers. In October we held a Halloween-themed Afternoon at the Bar during which both staff and students appeared in amazing costumes. Make sure to come to the next Afternoon at the Bar!

The Track & Thesis Market



The Track and Thesis Market is one of the most exciting and fulfilling events that the Academic Affairs Officers organize. Held in Dining Hall, each track was represented with its own stand. The majority of track representatives and fellows attended, ensuring thorough preparation with syllabi, track overviews, and textbooks. The turnout was exceptional, with students of all years in attendance, gaining insights into the various courses offered at UCU (& UU), curriculum enrichment options, and thesis preparation!

LOOKING BACK

EVENTS

Improving our Introweek Presence



Introweek is the very first introduction to the members of the UC Student Council and the board's activities for many students. Therefore, we wished to support UCSA by volunteering and make our presence visible by organising many events:

Craft-Your-Curriculum Workshop

This Introweek we kept the presentation made by our previous board as they worked on making it more interactive for incoming students. We encouraged questions and made sure that every slide was understood by the students. At the end we gave out an empty curriculum template for the next three years and helped answer any questions. Finally, we distributed a Craft your Curriculum Recap with all the necessary information, requirements and options offered at UCU.

Track Rep Treasure Hunt

During our Track Rep Treasure Hunt, we introduced the incoming students to our amazing Track Representatives. We aimed to make track representatives more visible and introduce the new students to all the different tracks available at UCU. Families had to run around the quad to find the Track Reps positioned around. Students had to guess which track they represented as well as a fun fact about them! All groups were rewarded with ice cream, and the first team to complete their sheet won house plants for the full family.

The Meet-the-Staff Borrel

The Meet-the-Staff Borrel boasted an open tab for beer, soft drinks, and snacks, as well as an opportunity for incoming students to introduce themselves to professors and staff members at UCU in a relaxed environment. We were thrilled with the student engagement, as the turnout was great, and all parties were enthusiastically participating in the conversations.

LOOKING AHEAD



Life After the Bubble Symposium

During the week of the 12th of February, we organized and coordinated a week-long Symposium with the aim of presenting UCU students with the tools they have to better face the years after they graduate. It was a well-attended success, students enjoyed the events which ranged from CV-checking sessions to an alumni “Life After UCU” workshop to a company case workshop. The week ended with a an exciting, cv-themed party. We are incredibly grateful for the collaborations we were able to explore with many committees. Thanks to them, the event surpassed all our expectations!



Language & Culture Focus Project

This past semester, Karsten and Flora Izar Thompson (Track Rep Language & Culture) discussed the various options for attaining concrete feedback for all language courses taught at UCU, as one Focus Group would likely not be representative of all related classes. As a result, the Language & Culture Focus Project was born. At the end of the academic year, we hope to publish a cohesive report containing student feedback from many L&C courses. Flora and Karsten have had a blast visiting Beginner Dutch and Arabic L&C II already and are looking forward to conducting much more in-class evaluations going forward.



Elections & Transition

In the very near future, the candidates running for the UC Student Council '24-'25 will be announced. As we prepare for the election season, we look forward to hosting an amazing set of events where candidates can talk to the student body about their vision and ideas. Before the election week, we are hosting multiple info sessions and open meetings to invite everyone curious to explore whether a UCSC board year would fit them. After the elections, we are excited to transition the next board, as it is a vital first step to a successful board year. Transition includes position-specific meetings, intensive work weekends, and plenty of time to bond and get to know each other.

LOOKING AHEAD



Strengthening ties with the Tutor System

As the UC Student Council, we advocate for policies and decisions that promote student well-being in several governing boards. For instance, pushing for improved policies to support neurodivergent students and suitable accommodations to minimize any barriers. Recognizing a crucial gap in our involvement, specifically within the Tutor Team—an essential element in UCU students' academic journey—we have initiated collaboration with the Senior Tutor Team. By becoming visiting members during Tutor Team meetings and inviting interested students to participate, our aim is to bridge this gap, ensuring accurate representation of the student voice. Through this proactive engagement, we strive for a balanced approach that considers staff capabilities while prioritizing and addressing the diverse needs of students in all academic decisions at UCU.



Learning accommodation agreements

The topic of Learning Accommodations Agreements (LAA's) has come up frequently in the past few years as a subject of complaints among students. In this year-long project, we aim to raise these concerns with the appropriate bodies, to see where changes are necessary and whether they can be made, to make sure UCU can best support its students in need of accommodations. Together with the Wellbeing Team, a survey was conducted among UCU students to identify concerns and strengths of the current practice, and used this data to write a report, which will be discussed in the spring semester. In the meantime, an earlier meeting on the topic has already yielded some concrete changes that will be communicated to students soon!



Dean's Diversity Initiative

In response to the unfortunate and unacceptable occurrences of transphobia on campus last semester, the Dean has commissioned a new yearly event to be organized by the Student Assessor and a new organizing committee: the Dean's Diversity Initiative. This event is meant to bring the UCU community (both its staff and students) together to learn about and discuss topics of diversity and inclusion that may be difficult to talk about, but are nevertheless important to address as a community. The topic will vary every year, and this year the event will focus on the topic of gender diversity and inclusivity at UCU. It will take place on the 5th of March, so mark your calendars!

LOOKING AHEAD



Resources Booklets

This upcoming semester, the UC Student Council is planning on making two Resources Booklets, collaborating with different groups. The first one is a booklet for FLISS students, made in collaboration with the FLISS group representatives. This booklet will be composed of all the information about financial aid and scholarships at UCU, UU and in the Netherlands. It will be distributed to tutors so they can inform their tutees as well as to incoming students. The second one is in collaboration with the Wellbeing Platform and the Neurodivergent group about all the different (formal and informal) wellbeing resources on campus so that students can find them all in one place.

CONCLUSION

It is with proud eyes that we look back at the fall semester, one filled with exciting projects, insightful conversations and very successful events! These include the creation of UCU NEXT: Life After The Bubble Symposium, an independent year plan presentation, improving our UCSC Introweek presence, hosting a track & thesis market, a decolonization workshop for track representatives, and the development of the Dean's Diversity Initiative, among many others.

We have and will continue to work and collaborate on other projects with external parties as well. Examples of this include the Diversity Committee, Wellbeing Team, Green Team, the Sexual Misconduct Task Force, and UCU FLISS.

There are numerous ongoing projects that will increasingly be put into motion in the spring semester. This in part applies to our portfolios on the tutor system, student well-being, and the election and transition of the new board.

Furthermore, some key projects that we will be focusing on include the Dean's Diversity Initiative (diversity and Principled Spaces), improving the board compensation grants, the UCU Teacher Of The Year Award, and potential Resources Booklets. Our plan for this board year was extensive, but we feel as though we have prioritized our energy and time well and are on track with our aims.

We have many upcoming projects and events in the spring semester, which will require a lot of our time – but we are energized and excited to continue doing so. Having learned to work together as an organized board over the course of the last semester will be an advantage going into the next one. It has been a joy representing the student body so far and we look forward to continuing to do so as the rest of our projects and initiatives come to fruition during the second half of our board year!

- Your UC Student Council 2023-2024

ANY QUESTIONS?

Feel free to contact us through

Our Email

ucu.studentcouncil@uu.nl

or visit our Office Hours

Monday 18:00-19:00

Wednesday 13:00-13:45

Our office is located in Dining Hall
(on the right side when coming in)
(we have complimentary coffee, tea and snacks!)

or send us a message on Facebook/Instagram



[uc.student.council](https://www.instagram.com/uc.student.council)



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www.ucstudentcouncil.com

