

**Model Regulations for Programme Committees
for the programme(s)**

Vrije Universiteit Amsterdam

With effect from 1 September 2017

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Article 1 Establishment of the Programme Committee

1. The Faculty Board shall establish a Programme Committee for the programme [or a group of programmes].
2. The Faculty Board may delegate the tasks relating to the Programme Committee to the portfolio holder for teaching or the Director of Studies responsible for the relevant programme.
3. New Programme Committee members should ideally be appointed before the start of the academic year, but by 30 September at the latest.
4. The Programme Committee members are entitled to the use of a meeting room. They are also entitled to resources and facilities, including administrative, financial and legal support and training for the proper execution of their duties.

Article 2 Composition of the Programme Committee

1. A Programme Committee has [at least] four members [and a maximum of six].
2. Members of the Faculty Board, the Director of Studies, members of the Examination Board and members of the Joint Assembly may not concurrently serve as members of the Programme Committee.
3. Members elected by and from the academic staff make up half of the membership of the Programme Committee; the other half are students elected by and from the student body.
4. Alternative arrangements for appointing the members of the Programme Committee can be made annually after consultation the Faculty Board and the faculty Joint Assembly. In that case, the faculty regulations will state the procedure for appointing the members of the Programme Committee. The Faculty Board shall publish this procedure in a timely fashion. [The procedure shall contain the criteria for appointment.]
5. Candidates for membership on the Programme Committee who are not students shall be nominated for appointment by the academic staff responsible for the programme(s). The term of office for such a member is [three years]. This term may be extended [twice].
6. Students who wish to become members of the Programme Committee may apply to the Faculty Board. The Faculty Board shall advertise this opportunity to all students in a timely fashion. A student member can serve on the committee for a period of one year. This term may be extended twice.
7. Lecturers may be members of multiple Programme Committees, as long as they teach in the relevant programmes.
8. The Faculty Board announces within the faculty who will be a member of the Programme Committee. Each member of the Programme Committee receives a statement immediately after being appointed, certifying that he/she is a member of the Programme Committee and for which period.

Article 3 Duties of the Programme Committee

1. The committee's duty is to advise on promoting and safeguarding the quality of the degree programme. The Programme Committee is also:
 - a. entitled to approve the Academic and Examination Regulations, as referred to in article 7.13, with the exception of those areas mentioned in the second paragraph under a, f, h-u and x, and with the exception of the requirements referred to in the articles 7.28, fourth and fifth paragraphs, and 7.30b, second paragraph;
 - b. responsible for conducting an annual evaluation of the way in which the Academic and Examination Regulations are implemented;
 - c. entitled to present advice in respect of the Academic and Examination Regulations referred to in article 7.13, with the exception of those areas in relation to which the committee is entitled to grant approval on the basis of (a); and
 - d. responsible for making recommendations to the Director of Studies and the Faculty Board, either on its own initiative or on request, on all matters relating to teaching in the

degree programme in question. This advice will in any case be related to quality improvements within the programme.

2. To this end, the Programme Committee can make use of:
 - aspects taken from the subject evaluations
 - the coherence between subjects in the programme and the various components of academic skills
 - programme-specific elements of the academic guidance offered
 - the manner in which the programme provides information about the programme of study to students
 - the evaluation of the programme of study as a whole in relation to the final attainment levels of the programme(s)
3. If the committee makes a proposal as referred to in paragraph 1, subsection d, to the Faculty Board, the Faculty Board shall respond within [three weeks] of receiving the proposal.
4. The committee sends the faculty Joint Assembly its advice for notification purposes.

Article 4 Composition of meetings

1. At the beginning of its term of office, the Programme Committee shall elect from among its members a chair and a secretary and an alternate for the chair and secretary. These positions may be taken up by a lecturer or a student.
2. The chair represents the Programme Committee, both inside and outside the faculty.
3. If an administrative secretariat has been designated, then the committee shall not elect a secretary.
4. The Faculty Board's portfolio holder for teaching shall consult with the Programme Committee. [The Director of Studies may consult with the Programme Committee on behalf of the portfolio holder for teaching.]

Article 4a Order of meetings

1. The Programme Committee shall establish a meeting schedule during its first meeting of the academic year. This shall be submitted to the Faculty Board, the Director of Studies and the Joint Assembly. The meeting schedule shall also be posted on the faculty website. If possible, an indication will also be given of the topics to be discussed in the various meetings, and in which meeting the consultation with the Faculty Board or its representative will take place.
2. Furthermore, the Programme Committee shall convene on any occasion two or more members [representing students and lecturers] to submit a request for a meeting to the chair.
3. Any member of the Programme Committee may submit a subject for inclusion on the agenda.
4. Except in urgent cases, the invitation and agenda shall be sent to the members of the Programme Committee at least [one week] before the meeting is scheduled to take place.
5. The Faculty Board or its representative shall provide the Programme Committee with the information it needs in a timely fashion, either upon request or upon its own initiative, so that it may carry out its duties. The secretary will send the agenda and underlying documents to the committee members at least one week before the meeting. Complex information should ideally be sent two weeks prior to the meeting.
6. The meetings of the Programme Committee are held publicly, unless the subject under discussion is a specific person. The Programme Committee will maintain confidentiality with regard to all information dealt with during a closed meeting.
7. The Programme Committee may invite experts to speak at its meetings.

Article 5 Advice and approval

1. The Programme Committee shall have the opportunity to consult with the Faculty Board or its representative before it issues a recommendation or before deciding to grant an approval.
2. The Programme Committee may convene subcommittees charged with a specific task. Both lecturers and students shall be represented in these subcommittees.
3. Programme Committee recommendations and approvals shall be issued in writing, with due regard for the deadline set by the Faculty Board. The deadline shall be at least [two] weeks after the consultation referred to in paragraph 1.
4. The Faculty Board shall issue a written response within [three] weeks, indicating whether the recommendation will be adopted. If the advice is rejected or only partially adopted, then this decision must be fully substantiated. If the advice is rejected, or if the Faculty Board fails to reach a decision within the prescribed period, then the Programme Committee may initiate a dispute in accordance with the legally prescribed procedure.

Article 6 Voting

1. Before voting, the chair shall formulate the decision to be voted on.
2. All votes will be cast orally. Voting may take place in writing if the Programme Committee decides to do so.
3. Recommendations and approvals may only be formulated if a majority of members is present at the meeting. If a majority is not present, then the subject shall be discussed in a subsequent meeting. At that meeting, no majority is required in order to issue a recommendation or approval.
4. If so requested, the Programme Committee members shall vote on a recommendation or approval. These shall then be determined by majority vote. In the event of a tie, no recommendation will be formulated or no approval will be issued. This will be reported to the Faculty Board as soon as possible.

Article 6a Reporting and documentation

1. The secretary shall ensure that a report is written on all meetings, in consultation with the chair.
2. Such a report shall include at least the names of the members present and a description of each decision made by the Programme Committee during the meeting.
3. Reports shall be approved by the Programme Committee at their subsequent meeting.

Article 7 Programme Committee performance

1. During the final meeting of the academic year, the Programme Committee shall assess its performance and activities of the past year and shall draw up a list of points for consideration for the following academic year.
2. Before 1 October, the Programme Committee shall issue an annual report on the previous academic year, which shall include an evaluation, for the benefit of the Faculty Board.

Article 8 Amendment and adoption of the regulations

The Programme Committee is entitled to amend and readopt these regulations at any time, in consultation with the Faculty Board and after voting to do so by a two-thirds majority.

Article 9 Entry into force

These regulations will enter into force on [date].

Article 10 Notification

The chair shall send these regulations to the Faculty Board.

The Programme Committee regulations were adopted on xxxxxx

Notes on the model regulations for Programme Committees

With effect from 1 September 2017, the Programme Committee will take on a new role. This implies that the Programme Committee now requires a set of procedural regulations. VU Amsterdam had already established model regulations for Programme Committees at the university. These regulations have been adapted to the new legislation and now also serve as the procedural regulations.

1. Nature of the model regulations

The Faculty Board may deviate from the model regulations, provided that this deviation does not result in any restriction or extension of the rights or duties of the Programme Committee. The Faculty Board may delegate the tasks relating to the Programme Committee to the portfolio holder for teaching or the Director of Studies responsible for the relevant programme.

2. Appointment of members

With effect from 1 September 2017, the law assumes that the Programme Committee will be elected. However, at the faculty level, a different manner of selecting the Programme Committee may be used. This requires an agreement between the Faculty Board (or the Director of Studies) and the faculty Joint Assembly. The alternative method of selection is then included in the faculty regulations and is reconsidered annually. The university's model faculty regulations will be amended accordingly. These model regulations do not assume that the Programme Committee will be elected but that an alternative method will be used.

Lecturers are nominated by colleagues from the same programme(s). Lecturers may be reappointed twice. The individual faculties may set their own limits, as evidenced by the square brackets. The duration of the appointment period is also at the faculties' discretion.

Student members are also nominated for appointment by their fellow students. It is therefore essential that the Faculty Board plays an active role. Currently, the Faculty Student Council often nominates new student members. This is in no way desirable. Both bodies have very different tasks, and for this reason alone they must operate independently, while continuing to fulfil their duty to keep one another informed. The Programme Committee must periodically inform the programme's lecturers and students of the proposals that have been submitted to the Programme Committee and on which decisions have been taken.

The members of the Programme Committee must be appointed with care. In the past, it was discovered that a student had been appointed as a member of a Programme Committee even though he was not registered in the relevant programme. It goes without saying that such an appointment is invalid. The Executive Board requests the Faculty Board to monitor these situations.

3. Composition of the committee

The faculties with many small-scale programmes have requested that the minimum number of Programme Committee members be reduced to two. The Executive Board considers this undesirable. A committee consisting of one lecturer and one student is particularly vulnerable, especially on the side of the students. The Executive Board suggests convening one (or multiple) large Programme Committee for all (or a substantial number of the) small-scale programmes offered by the faculty. The committee can be composed in such a way that each programme is represented by at least one lecturer and one student.

For the record, the Executive Board notes that the Bachelor's and Master's are two distinct programmes. A separate Programme Committee may therefore be established for each one. A single committee for both is equally conceivable and to be recommended.

4. Participation by non-members

The question was put forward of whether, and to what degree, non-members may speak during the Programme Committee meetings. There is no objection, as long as it is clear that the non-member in question is regularly invited to speak on specific topics at committee meetings.

It should be noted that the meetings are public (which is why a meeting schedule should be published). Anyone may attend and listen, but not everyone may speak. The latter is reserved for the members and for those who have been invited to do so.

5. Financial support for Programme Committee members

Recently, the Executive Board has had to deal with members of Programme Committees who in good faith have submitted a request for financial support (FOS), even though they were not entitled to it. These misunderstandings arose from the often incomplete information provided by FSC students to incoming council members. Programme Committee members are not automatically entitled to compensation from the Student Financial Support Fund. The student member must be registered as a student in the relevant programme and may not have been studying for any more than the nominal duration of the programme, plus one year.

Explanatory notes on the Articles

Article 1

Article 9.18 of the Higher Education and Research Act forms the legal basis for the Programme Committee regulations. The law does not prescribe how many members a Programme Committee must be composed of. However, it does stipulate that half of the members come from the programme for which the Programme Committee has been established.

It is recommended that the Programme Committees not be too big. Four to six members are generally sufficient, even in the case of combined programmes, e.g. a Bachelor's and a Master's in the same field of study.

Furthermore, it is advisable to seek the widest possible distribution of members according to programme, specialization, etc. This does not mean that each specialization must appoint a representative to the Programme Committee, but the members of the Programme Committee must have some kind of affinity with the specifics of the programme.

The ratio of staff to students is determined by law: it is 50/50.

The Programme Committee regulations shall be incorporated in the faculty regulations. At the very least, this will include regulations concerning appointment and composition of the committee.

The Improved Governance Act specifically mentions that the Programme Committee is entitled to training and to administrative, financial and legal support. The chair of the Programme Committee is responsible for the performance of committee members. For example, the chair must see to it that new committee members are properly equipped for their duties.

To reduce confusion, it has been proposed to use the Dutch abbreviation OLC to denote the Programme Committee. OC is the abbreviation for subcommittee (OR).

Article 2

The composition of the Programme Committee is the faculty's responsibility, with the proviso that half of the members are students registered in the relevant programme. The other members shall be lecturers in the relevant programme.

The law does not stipulate how members are to be appointed. Elections or cooptions are possibilities. However, selection based on criteria published in advance may also be considered.

At VU Amsterdam, the traditional practice of members or former members of the Faculty Student Council nominating student members is not appropriate. The Faculty Student Council, which is composed of students, and the Programme Committee, a body of mixed composition, are very different and each have their own individual tasks and responsibilities.

Article 3

The law prescribes the Programme Committee's duties. It also stipulates that its pronouncements (advice, approvals) must be forwarded to the faculty Joint Assembly.

The Programme Committee shall refer to the [Manual for Quality Assurance of Teaching and Learning](#) when formulating recommendations on the quality of the programme. The Programme Committee is also authorized to issue advice upon its own initiative. The Faculty Board must respond to such advice within [three weeks].

Article 4

The Programme Committee will appoint a chair from among its members. He/she may be either a lecturer or a student. A secretary is also chosen, unless the Faculty Board has provided secretarial support. An administrative secretariat will in principle be assigned to larger Programme Committees.

Proposals to grant the Faculty Board the power to appoint a chair cannot be accepted. Indeed, the purpose of a Programme Committee is to elicit an opinion from students and staff on the measures (etc.) that the Faculty Board wishes to enact. In other words, it is a matter of checks and balances. If the Faculty Board were to appoint a chair, then the Faculty Board would introduce bias into the system, causing imbalance.

Designating an alternate for the chair and secretary is primarily intended as a measure to address any gaps in attendance (during the holidays for example). A double office such as secretary-deputy chair might also be considered.

To avoid misunderstandings, it should be noted that the Programme Committees of multiple programmes may convene their meetings jointly if so desired.

Article 4a

The schedule of meetings creates clarity for members, but also for third parties. For this reason, a meeting schedule must be drafted at the start of the academic year. Arrangements are also to be made regarding how a meeting is to be convened, who can place a subject on the agenda of a meeting and who can access the meeting and speak.

Article 5

Programme Committees need all relevant information in order to formulate sound recommendations. In practice, however, committees often have difficulty obtaining this information. The Faculty Board (or its representative) will ensure that the Programme Committee is able to acquire all requisite information.

Furthermore, the Programme Committee will be given the opportunity to consult on the issue at hand with the Faculty Board or its representative. The Programme Committee must be given sufficient time to formulate its pronouncements (recommendations or approvals). In general, this will be a period of two weeks following the consultation with the Faculty Board.

The pronouncement shall be published by the Programme Committee in a timely fashion. In special cases, the Programme Committee may postpone the publication of its pronouncement if more time is needed. Such a postponement may not hinder timely decision making, however. The law provides the Programme Committee with an important resource: if the Faculty Board's proposal is not supported and the Faculty Board disregards this, the Programme Committee may apply to the national Arbitration Committee. This shall be preceded by an attempt to settle the issue amicably and internally, involving the Executive Board.

Article 6

At least half of the members must be present in order to issue a recommendation (a majority). If the committee is unable to reach a majority decision on an issue, then the same issue should be discussed at a subsequent meeting. At that subsequent meeting, no majority shall be required for *this issue*.

A recommendation or approval may also be issued without a vote. In the case of serious internal disagreements, a vote can be a useful tool to determine which recommendation enjoys the greatest support. In the case of a vote, members must comply with the relevant provisions. Naturally, a majority vote is required. If the vote yields no majority, then no pronouncement

shall be issued. This must then be reported to the Faculty Board. The Programme Committee may also postpone its pronouncement until a subsequent meeting in order to seek to reach a collective position. This meeting must take place within the deadline set for the relevant pronouncement, or the Programme Committee must request an extension from the Faculty Board or its representative.

Article 6a

The decision-making process of the Programme Committee must be recorded so that it can be verified.

Article 7

In order to enhance its overall effectiveness over the long term, it is recommended that the Programme Committee regularly conducts evaluations of its own performance. The evaluation may optionally be discussed by the Programme Committee and the Faculty Board or its representative.

At the end of its current term of office, the committee presents an [annual report](#) to the Faculty Board. As well as serving information purposes, the annual report is intended to be an instrument for evaluation and improvement in the continuous quality assurance cycle.

Articles 8, 9, 10

These final articles set out the procedure for amending the regulations. They also specify when the regulations will enter into effect and how they will be communicated.