

# **IN AND BEYOND YOUR FACULTY**

**ELECTION PROGRAMME 2025**



**GSB.FYI/VOTE**

# **Election Programme 2025**

**GMA of 12 March 2025**



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## 0. Introduction

**Your vote matters – especially in times of change.** Higher education is under pressure due to budget cuts, and students face increasing challenges. The Groninger Student Union (GSb) calls on you to support us in the faculty council elections at the University of Groningen. Why? Because we are committed to improving your university experience. Accessible education, student well-being, and social safety are being compromised, and we are here to make a difference.

We take action where needed and put pressure on administrators to achieve concrete change. That is why we are participating in the faculty council elections at the faculties of Behavioral and Social Sciences, Arts, Law, Science and Engineering, Economics and Business and Spatial Sciences. We advocate for more democracy and transparency within the university, including greater insight into decision-making processes. Students have the right to have a say and demand openness in governance.

Furthermore, we are dedicated to improving the position of international students, who increasingly face vulnerabilities due to housing problems, bureaucratic hurdles, and a lack of support. The university must be inclusive for all students.

These budget cuts are just the beginning. It is naïve to think this will be a one-time reduction. If this continues, the academic world will be gradually diminished with all the consequences that follow. But it is not too late. Together, we can organize and fight back.

GSb is more than just a voice in the faculty council – we are a broad and active student movement that stands up for your rights, both inside and outside the university. In recent years, we have successfully fought for the abolition of the long-study penalty and the student loan system. Our fight does not stop at one faculty. Choose change, choose progress, choose the Groninger Student Union in the faculty council elections. **Vote GSb!**

## 1. Quality of Education

The university frequently implements preventive budget cuts without clear necessity. This results in essential study facilities being removed and funding for student initiatives being withdrawn. Education and student-centered projects should not suffer due to uncertain financial policies. We demand that the university only takes drastic measures when a real need for savings is evident.

Quality education must remain accessible to everyone, but budget cuts threaten this accessibility. Students should have the freedom to shape their studies in ways that suit them. However, budget cuts lead to the elimination of specializations and elective courses, limiting students' ability to focus on subjects relevant to their academic and professional goals. We fight to preserve these courses so that students can personalize their studies and grow academically.

Following the pilot for a smarter academic year, we advocate a week's holiday between the end of block 2 and June, e.g. during the May school holidays! We also want a real Christmas break, without big deadlines shortly after it. Students do not get enough time to rest. It is also important that international students have enough time to go home during the Christmas break, this is currently not always possible. Students should be able to see their family more than once a year.

We advocate for fair working conditions for our lecturers. Overtime and temporary contracts must be reduced to prevent burnout. By taking good care of our lecturers, we invest in better education for everyone.

Moreover, education should not be limited to a singular perspective, decolonize education! Many faculties still heavily rely on Western frameworks, neglecting the importance of diverse global perspectives. We strongly advocate for a decolonized curriculum that incorporates knowledge from different cultural and intellectual traditions. This means diversifying course materials, reassessing core literature, and ensuring that a broad range of voices are included in academic discussions.

- No unnecessary cuts to essential study facilities and student initiatives.
- Preservation of specializations and elective courses to allow students to personalize their education.
- A May vacation and a real Christmas holiday.
- We advocate for fair working conditions for our lecturers.
- Decolonize education.

## **2. Diversity, Accessibility, and Inclusion**

Improving the position of international students is essential. They often face additional obstacles, such as language barriers and a lack of information about support services. Providing easily accessible confidential advisors within each faculty is especially important for them, ensuring they feel heard and supported in what is often a new and unfamiliar environment. Additionally, accessibility in education must take international students into account. Lecture recordings can make a significant difference, allowing them to review classes and understand the material more effectively. An inclusive university means that all students, regardless of their background, have equal opportunities to succeed.

Every student should feel safe and welcome at the university. The removal of the Diversity & Inclusion Office and the lack of sufficient confidential advisors have weakened support systems for students. This is concerning because students must always have a place to turn to with their concerns.

We call for faculty-wide confidential advisors who serve as accessible contact points for students dealing with issues related to social safety, discrimination, and well-being. This prevents students from getting lost in a bureaucratic system and ensures that support is always within reach.

At the Law Faculty, such confidential advisors already exist, and we aim to use this as a model for implementation in other faculties. Within the faculty council, we actively work toward making this a reality for Behavioral and Social Sciences. Our goal is to provide every student with an accessible and reliable place to seek support. We will continue to fight for an inclusive university where everyone feels heard and supported.

GSb also seeks to enhance accessibility by ensuring that lecture recordings are available online so that students who cannot always attend classes can still receive quality education. Lecture recordings are a crucial resource and should be made structurally available. If recordings are not uploaded on time, adequate replacement materials should be provided to prevent students from falling behind. Additionally, we advocate for optional digital skills training for lecturers who need it. This will optimize educational innovations and maintain high-quality education.

We oppose the Binding Study Advice (BSa). It does not currently function as intended by the law, but is used as thinly disguised selection. Higher education institutions now have

good experience with alternatives such as a progression norm, or non-binding study advice.

- Implementation of faculty-wide confidential advisors.
- Fair treatment and inclusion of international students, opposing policies that limit their opportunities.
- Availability of recorded lectures for all students.
- Optional digital skills training for teachers to improve education quality.
- Free menstrual products in all faculty buildings.
- Sensitivity training for faculty and staff to ensure an inclusive learning environment.
- End the Binding Study Advice (BSa)

### **3. Facilities and Study Spaces**

Several faculties face a shortage of accessible study spaces, making it difficult for students to find a place to study or collaborate. This not only affects convenience but also limits opportunities for cooperation and knowledge exchange.

The solution is not only to construct or rent additional study spaces but also to make better use of existing ones. We have observed that study rooms are sometimes underutilized, such as when students reserve group study spaces for individual use. This issue is particularly problematic during exam periods. We advocate for an improved reservation system and clearer policies per faculty to ensure a fairer and more efficient distribution of study spaces.

Additionally, students and student organizations face unclear regulations regarding posters and flyers in various faculties. There must be a clear and accessible policy to enhance the visibility of student initiatives and improve communication within faculties.

We are committed to a university where students have the physical space they need and where facilities are used fairly and efficiently.

- More and better-accessible quiet and study spaces.
- Clear policy and better enforcement for student initiatives' posters and flyers

#### 4. Democratization and governance

The role of student representation within university governance needs improvement. Currently, university administrators often see student participation as an obstacle rather than a valuable contribution. Additionally, many student council recommendations are merely advisory rather than having real decision-making power. We believe students and faculty should have a greater say in university policies. Democratize! The GSb was the reason we gained democracy starting in 1970. It's time again!

Decision-making must also be more transparent and inclusive. At present, students and staff are often excluded from the decision-making process. We demand that university leadership involves students and faculty members early on, ensuring broad input from all levels of the academic community, not just senior professors. De-hierarchize the university for better governance and social safety, for example, through the election of administrative positions.

We oppose the merging of our small faculties. In Groningen, the small faculties are the best of them all! Large faculties are actually inefficient, hierarchical, and bureaucratic. Moreover, it is undesirable to suddenly dissolve faculties with centuries of history. Universities must remain spaces for free expression and critical thinking. The recently introduced protest rules, which restrict demonstrations, must be abolished. Protests – including disruptive ones – are an essential part of academic debate. Students and staff must be able to voice their opinions without fear of repression or sanctions.

Collaborations with other universities and organizations must always meet our standards for human rights, academic freedom, and social justice. The university must not engage with institutions involved in human rights violations, oppression, or unethical practices. This also means that research funding and partnerships must be transparent and critically assessed for their ethical impact. We advocate for clear guidelines and an independent oversight mechanism to ensure that our academic community does not contribute to injustice but instead takes a leading role in responsible and just academic policy.

- Greater voting rights for students and faculty on key decisions, such as the budget.
- More transparent and inclusive decision-making processes.
- End to the protest rules.
- No mergers of the faculties.
- No collaborations with institutions that violate human rights.

## **5. Faculty-specific Programmes**

### **5.1 Faculty of Arts**

#### **1. Academic & Talent Support**

- Arts New Student Support Project
  - A buddy/mentor project run by trained second-year, third-year and Master students for quick questions about courses, exams and life in a new city and new university. With a low barrier to entry aimed specifically at students who consider studying at the faculty or who have just arrived.
- Talent Support
  - Faculty support for students who are engaged in high level sports, music or public service careers. This will help create a framework for supporting talent in the Arts Faculty in being able to study and compete/work at a high level. Examples can be agreements on changing deadlines or being able to do alternative work when a class is missed

#### **2. Affordable Study Materials**

- Textbook-loan Fund
  - Textbooks should be able to be loaned with a lending arrangement where a fee is paid when a book is used for a semester and it can be returned after. Based on American university book loan agreements.
- Second-Hand Book Fair
  - Organized in the Harmonie foyer during the first week of every semester, with an online catalogue for students who are still abroad.

#### **3. Real Student Voice in Governance and Your Program**

- Publish readable one-page summaries of every Faculty Board meeting within 10 days.
- Create a clear calendar with the dates of when important decisions are taken
- Online form for students to submit questions before votes are taken.
- Phase out survey based course evaluations and replace them with qualitative feedback moments at the end of a course.

#### **4. Better Roadmaps for Masters and Jobs**

- Create a better pathway to careers after university
  - Especially important for arts students who do not have as clear a career

path as other faculties have.

- Bachelor Master Roadmaps
  - One clear webpage per study showing what masters you directly qualify for with your bachelors and for which you need to do a specific minor or pre-master.

## **5. Protect Small-Scale Specialized Teaching**

- No compulsory, one-size-fits-all faculty courses that water down disciplinary depth.
- Keep tutorial groups small (maximum 25 students in BA Year 1) so every student gets personal attention.
- Safeguard a wide range of electives within each programme, giving you real freedom to shape your degree.

## **6. Keep the Arts Faculty Unique**

- Reject mergers into an oversized, generic “mega-faculty.”
- Support optional interdisciplinarity, but defend the specialized tracks and identities of our Arts programmes.

## **5.2 Faculty of Behavioural & Social Sciences**

### **1. Continuation of the English Psychology track**

The abolition or downsizing of the English Psychology track excludes international students from our faculty and undermines our international character. A diverse student body creates a richer learning environment and better prepares us for the professional world. We believe the faculty must do more to retain its international students.

### **2. BSS students should be given priority to study at the faculty**

Currently, the study spaces at our faculty are overcrowded with students from other faculties during exam periods. As a result, our own students are left without a quiet place to study. Therefore, our students should be given priority access.

### **3. No elimination of elective courses, support the preservation of the thesis**

At least 15 courses in Psychology and the Research Master are already being cut, and this cannot continue. The fewer choices we have, the less opportunity we have to specialize, and the more we as students are limited. The thesis is also a vital part of training social scientists. While the rise of AI has been used as a reason to suggest abolishing the thesis, in practice this appears to be mainly a cost-cutting measure, without any adequate alternative being implemented.

### **4. Immediate availability of lecture recordings to all students**

Over the past year, our faction has worked hard to guarantee access to lecture recordings for all students. Denying access to these recordings disproportionately affects students with disabilities, functional limitations, or chronic illnesses. These students rely on recordings to successfully complete their studies. That is why we advocate for an inclusive policy regarding lecture recordings, where students are granted access by default or, at the very least, provided with high-quality and adequate alternative materials.

### **5. Freely accessible quiet rooms for sensory recovery, prayer, and other needs**

At present, students must reserve the quiet room in advance. This is not always practical. Panic attacks, for instance, cannot be scheduled. There are countless reasons why students may need access to a quiet space, and we believe it is unnecessary to introduce bureaucratic hurdles for something so essential.

## **6. Stop the erosion of the Research Master's programme.**

Starting this academic year, seven fewer elective courses are available compared to last year, including several that are essential for obtaining certain specialization labels. This limits students' ability to tailor their education to their interests and career goals. Additionally, the opportunity to work as a research assistant is being removed. As a result, students no longer have the chance to gain experience in the research sector during their Master's programme. Furthermore, non-EU students are being excluded from this Master's due to the discontinuation of the Talent Grant. We believe that cost-cutting measures are being implemented too hastily, without sufficient exploration of alternative ways to reduce expenses that do not involve eliminating courses or student job opportunities.

## **5.3 Faculty of Law**

### **1. Pushing for Better Opportunities to Practice**

Too many courses consist of only lectures and a book. We believe that practice makes perfect and we will push for more working groups or at least more opportunities to interactively practice with the course materials. In a world where students pay good money for education, it shouldn't be possible to get away with only uploading one old exam.

### **2. Diverse Perspectives and Critical Discussions**

Legal systems are entangled in a variety of socio-political and cultural ideas. In order to enhance critical thinking about the law, our faculty should seek to include material from diverse sources. This is particularly important in discussions of international law, which has a documented colonial past.

As a faculty which includes students from a diverse range of backgrounds, we should additionally seek to gain feedback from students about what topics they would like discussed, to ensure that all voices are heard and valued.

GSb will stimulate all opportunities for critical discussions, as this doesn't only broaden perspectives, but also creates better lawyers.

### **3. More Lenient Entry-requirement For Dutch Masters**

The entry requirements for masters are very high and often require a premaster, this stops students from other Dutch universities from going for a masters here in Groningen. For RUG students without civil effect, the choice of masters is also very limited, although there are plenty of job opportunities for those not pursuing a career as judge and such. GSb wants our faculty to be more competitive with other universities and more attractive for master students and will therefore push for better accessible masters.

### **4. Wider Choice Selection and Better Communication**

Students want to have options and GSb supports this. We fully support people deciding what they want to learn and what lawyer they want to be. Our faculty has 6 tracks for Dutch bachelor students, however, the OER (Art.7.14) formally gives the opportunity for students to have their own tailor made track on top of that. This is just one of the examples where there are more opportunities in this faculty than most of us are aware of. We want students to get informed about this better. Finally, GSb will always

stimulate the faculty to offer a broader choice of courses and won't accept budget cuts to limit our opportunities.

## **5.4 Faculty of Economics & Business**

### **1. Clear Information on Graduation Tracks and Master's Progression**

Currently, profiles chosen during your Bachelor's restrict your opportunity to follow certain Master's programmes. This information should be shared clearly and at multiple times, such as during information sessions, before choosing a minor, and also during the Master's open day. We also advocate for more flexible admission policies for Master's as is done with similar programmes in the Netherlands

### **2. Retaining Tutorials in the First Year**

We are opposed to the complete removal of tutorials for first-year students. These tutorials provide an important opportunity for students to receive extra support from instructors. Eliminating this would lower the quality of education.

### **3. Preserve Current Contact Hours in the Curriculum**

We support maintaining the current number of contact hours as laid out in the existing curriculum. We believe any reduction of contact hours will negatively impact the quality of education.

### **4. Qualified University Lecturers for Tutorials**

Tutorials should be led by qualified university instructors to ensure a high standard of education.

### **5. Closure of the Zernike Library**

We oppose the complete closure of the Zernike Library. The book delivery service is valuable for students who would otherwise need to travel to the city center. We argue for a partial closure, where the book ordering system remains available.

### **6. Shortage of Power Outlets**

We advocate for the installation of more power outlets across the Zernike campus to meet student needs.

## **7. Improved Communication Between the Faculty and Its Students**

We demand better communication from the faculty board and the faculty council to students. The current communication is highly inadequate.

- We want a newsletter with regular and relevant updates about the faculty, for instance about changing policies.
- We want more opportunities for information and feedback, such as open information meetings, and open hours with the student assessor or faculty board.

## **8. Transparent Decision-Making**

There should be clear and accessible information on:

- Who makes decisions,
  - Why those decisions are made,
  - What roles those individuals have within the faculty,
  - And whom students can contact with questions or concerns.
- This should be facilitated through well-structured pages on the faculty website.

## **9. On-Demand Online Access to Lectures**

Students who cannot attend lectures for valid reasons should be given the opportunity to follow or review them online. This ensures accessibility in education for students with chronic illnesses, disabilities, or any other justified reason for needing flexible access.

## **10. Language Policy**

Official communication must be inclusive for all students. Any official information shared by the faculty must be accessible in both Dutch and English.

## **11. No Exams Before 9:00 a.m.**

## **5.5 Faculty of Science & Engineering**

### **1. Democratisation of the FSE**

We believe that to protect student rights and well-being, the students themselves should have representation in the university administration. The university itself would also greatly benefit from student co-governance, since the perspective of students is invaluable to the smooth running of the university, and these can only be represented by the students themselves. Therefore, we demand that decision-making must also be more transparent and inclusive, so students and staff can participate without hurdles, as now they are excluded from important rulings. We demand that the university leadership starts involving students and faculty members early on in decisions, ensuring broad input from all levels of the academic community.

At FSE the decision-making process and committees are opaque at best, and unknown at worst for most students. This leads to inaccessibility and the ineffectiveness of already existing student representations. Therefore, we wish to involve students by informing and organising regular open meetings, where they can meet with us, their representatives and voice their concerns. Moreover, we want to work on better ways to give updates regarding what the faculty council is working on, create a newsletter that gives monthly updates about what is happening with the governing of the Faculty Council. We also want to give detailed updates and opinion pieces in the newsletter "Nait Soez'n" which is a newspaper affiliated with GSb.

### **2. Budget Cuts and the Quality of Education**

The university is an institution of learning and all of us want and deserve quality education. Quality education, however, is not just given to us: it needs continuous work and investment. This makes it all the more dangerous that the Dutch government is in the process of attacking our education with budget cuts that. Although the budget cuts were cut in half thanks to the effort of thousands of students and unions, such as the GSb, the cut still covers a total 1 billion euros just for the next year. That's 1 billion too much.

Some people seem to think that in places like the FSE, we will be safe from the effects of these budget cuts, but STEM does not get unlimited money. At our faculty, TA's are already receiving less pay for the same amount of work as before and the number of TA's is decreasing: some courses with over 100 students have to try to get by with just a single TA. That's no quality education. These effects are direct results of the cuts.

Additionally, other Dutch universities have already been cutting staff members, including professors in the middle of their courses. [<https://www.erasmusmagazine.nl/en/2025/02/14/university-of-twente-dismisses-dozen-s-of-staff-delft-also-cuts-back/>]

Of course, members of the faculty council can't vote in the Dutch parliament and directly fight these cuts. However, in times like these, with education in danger, it's more important than ever that students are represented by a strong voice that will fight for them. The faculty will have no choice but to make certain accommodations to the cuts, but when and where things get out of hand we – the GSb – will march into battle for you.

### **3. Lecture Recordings**

Some professors choose not to upload lecture recordings in an effort to boost attendance, however, research from the BSS faculty proved that this is not the case. Moreover, this reasoning fails to acknowledge that students might be unable to attend lectures for all kinds of reasons outside of their control; be it disability, chronic illness, common seasonal infections or personal circumstances. This practice only reinforces existing barriers to education. GSb is committed to eliminating these barriers for all students. In the faculty council, we will work to educate professors about the real consequences of this misconception. We, the GSb, are already organising information sessions to demonstrate how simple it is to upload lecture recordings to Brightspace, removing any perceived technological intricacies in the process. These sessions will also feature personal stories from students directly impacted by the lack of recordings, highlighting the tangible harm caused by this policy.

### **4. Charging Access In The Feringa Building**

The university's newly constructed Feringa building. Despite the significant investment, the building lacks adequate charging outlets for student use at study spaces and tutorial rooms. This oversight impacts students' ability to work efficiently on campus. In the Faculty Council we will advocate for the immediate installation of additional accessible charging stations in study areas, and tutorial rooms.

### **5. Inaccessible Buildings for Students with Mobility Challenges**

Feringa remains inaccessible for students who use wheelchairs or have limited mobility, as building doors can only be opened from the inside. This results in discrimination, and exclusion from campus life. We will actively be in touch with the Faculty Board to find

suitable solutions for this problem, such as creating the ability to open the emergency doors from the outside, so people in wheelchairs can open them.

## **6. Unclear Location of Gender Neutral Bathrooms**

In some FSE buildings, gender neutral bathrooms exist but are poorly marked or hard to find. This compromises inclusivity, privacy, and comfort for non-binary, transgender, and gender-diverse students, and may deter use altogether. We will campaign for standardised, visible signs at entrances and key corridors to clearly indicate the location of gender neutral bathrooms.

## **7. Social safety**

At the FSE faculty, ensuring social safety is essential for everyone to be free to be themselves — especially when navigating ambiguous situations that can arise within the power dynamics between students and professors. Currently, the process of addressing misconduct might feel impersonal and unclear, with the general confidential advisor potentially being distant. While our student associations do provide confidential contacts, these students typically have only limited training and are peers after all. That's why, in collaboration with the student associations, we as the GSb want to advocate for the introduction of faculty-specific confidential advisors. Inspired by successful implementations in other faculties such as the BSS and law, and supported by the expertise of our GSb colleagues who ran similar initiatives, with this, we aim to provide more accessible and well-trained support for every student.

### **Summary:**

- Creation of newsletter and regular updates in Nait Soez'n
- Organising regular meetings where students can meet with their representatives
- Further mobilisation and organisation against the budget cuts
- Campaign and educate staff to achieve universal lecture recordings
- Purchase of charging outlets for lecture and tutorial rooms within Feringa
- Improve accessibility for students with mobility challenges at Feringa's entrance
- Clearly indicate gender-neutral bathrooms at entrances.
- Introduce faculty-specific confidential advisors.

## **5.6 Faculty of Spatial Sciences**

### **1. Maintaining the Independence of the Faculty**

In the face of upcoming budget cuts by the Dutch Government, the University of Groningen is considering a large-scale faculty merger, which would disband multiple faculties, including ours. Being the only faculty dedicated to Spatial Sciences in the Netherlands, we believe it is a unique asset for the University and our students, something that would be shameful to lose.

We maintain that creating a mega-faculty will not lead to a meaningful reduction in costs, but will only create a large, immobile bureaucratic body, disconnected from both students and staff. The scale of the faculty, 38 years of practice, and its international profile all contribute to making our faculty one of the most open and welcoming within the University.

Importantly, preventing the liquidation of the Faculty of Spatial Sciences is a prerequisite to achieving any of the latter goals in their entirety. It is paramount to prevent this loss of identity, autonomy and potential. We understand that this defence cannot succeed without cooperation with other threatened faculties, and we intend to establish a coherent front against this move.

### **2. Protecting the International Character of the Faculty**

The faculty of spatial sciences has long been an international one, allowing diverse ideas and perspectives to flourish. We believe this is extremely valuable in our field of study, which relies on diverse inputs and learning from other cultures' experiences. English as the language of study has brought opportunities for our faculty, by opening it up to a broader range of applicants, as well as making an international career possible for both Dutch and non-Dutch students.

We are opposed to the reduction of English-language courses and programmes. Not only is it against the interest of our students, but it also undermines the years of experience gathered by faculty staff, many of whom are international.

### **3. De-nomadizing the Faculty**

Today, our faculty does not have its proper place on campus, and our studies are characterised by constant switching of buildings, lecture halls and tutorial spaces. We share infrastructure with other faculties, and have relied on this for years. We want the University to make a commitment that the faculty of spatial sciences will get to settle,

and move away from its nomadic character eventually. In the short term, we want to ensure access to comfortable and modern study spaces and limit learning activities to a specific location to the highest possible extent.

#### **4. Better Clarity on Bachelor Programme Differences**

We need to give students and applicants more information to help them make the right choice. Today, many students are forced to switch between HGP and SPD programmes mid-study or feel unnecessary regret about their decisions. We will push for a refining of faculty websites and promotional materials in this regard.

#### **5. Democratization of Programme Committee Selection**

Currently, the process by which programme committees, responsible for the quality and style of teaching, are selected is confusing and inaccessible to many students. The application for membership in those committees is currently in the hands of ProGeo, unofficially outsourced by the faculty. We want to ensure that in the future, when our faculty is likely to involve multiple parties and student unions, such as the GSb, the process of programme committee selection will be performed by the faculty, either through elections or an accessible and transparent application process.

## **Vote for change, vote for GSb**

GSb is more than just a faculty council party, we are an active student movement fighting for your rights within and beyond the university. In recent years, we have successfully fought for the abolition of the long-study penalty and the student loan system. Our fight does not stop at one faculty. Choose progress. Choose improvement. Choose the Groninger Student Union during the faculty council elections. **Vote GSb!**