

Report LUS Breakfast Club 1: The Hague

November 1st from 9:00-10:00 at the Wijnhaven Building in The Hague

Present:

- Hester Bijl (Vice Rector Magnificus)
- Jeroen 't Hart (Director Expertise Centre Student and Educational Affairs)
- LUS members: Ghislaine Voogd (LUS chair), Enrico Priora (FGGA), Daniël Vossenbergh (FdR), Naomi Nota (FGW), Iris van der Hoeven (LUMC), Julius Pilzecker (FdA), Julia Sinnige (FSW), Yuri Bonnanno (FWN)
- Assessors: Esmee Braam (FGGA), Olivier Fajgenblat (FGW), Anne Leerling (LUMC)
- Dirk van Vugt (History)
- Dorien Veenstra (Public Administration)
- Anthony Hughes (International relations)
- Lotte (CSM)
- Gilberto Morishaw (Public Administration)
- Iris Vocking (Business Administration)
- Gavin Fielding (International Relations)
- Judith Marinussen (MPA)
- Rogier te Paske (Linguistics)
- Goldie (International Studies)
- Olena Sorkina (Public Administration)
- Haris Papathomas (Public Administration)

The two main topics that we discussed during this meeting were the following:

1. Bridging the gap

There are two separate communities between both the Leiden and The Hague campuses: how do the students in The Hague and Leiden feel about this separation? Is there a need for more overlap?

2. Internationalization

The integration of internationals in a Dutch student environment can still be improved: what are the main difficulties internationals encounter?

1. Bridging the gap

1.1. *Living and studying in the same city*

Most students studying in The Hague live in The Hague, and do not feel the need to go to Leiden. Students from Leiden feel the same way. Most student-related facilities can be found in The Hague. However, the student capacity is small, Wijnhaven does not offer enough space to house all the students that want to study during the exam period. Exams are given in external places to the University (e.g. Opera room, Nieuwekerk), which can be loud and cold during winter. For administrative problems, students are expected to go to Plexus in Leiden. The USC (University Sports Center) is in Leiden, and most students in The Hague do not want to travel for this. Within a year a new sportscenter will be built in The Hague. Still, the other facilities should also be offered in The Hague in order for students living and studying there to be able to use them easily.

Summarizing, students don't necessarily feel the need to have an overlap between the campuses. If they are interested in discovering the other campus, it should be a possibility to receive

information easily (through the University's website, or by having an excursion to the other campus during the Introduction week at the beginning of the academic year).

2. Internationalization

2.1. Language

A lot of students encounter a language barrier with internationals, and do not necessarily approach students that speak English as easily. The difference in language and culture causes internationals some difficulties as well. Free language courses and/or an introduction to the Dutch culture should be provided in order for these students. Preferably, international students could have a meeting about his topic before their study begins, so that they can deal with these problems together. Some teachers lack a good language level when giving courses in English. It should be required for employers to pass a mandatory language test before they start teaching in English.

2.2. Extracurricular activities and Student Associations

Students would like to be involved in more extracurricular activities. More space should be given in order to participate in activities (e.g. committees, board-years, language courses, joining associations). Possibilities in extracurricular activities should be promoted more, not only for Dutch but also for international students. Most student associations seem to put less effort in involving internationals. The inclusion of internationals in associations should be promoted more and membership of these associations should be made available for a shorter amount of time. Nowadays, when students want to join an association, they are expected to stay for a longer amount of time. International students would integrate much easier being a part of a bigger group. Joining associations will help them to find their way in Leiden by surrounding themselves with locals.

2.3. Housing

More (affordable) housing possibilities should be offered to internationals. A lot of housing options explicitly say: 'NO INTERNATIONALS'. Because of this exclusion, a lot of international students struggle with finding housing. Some of them end up in really expensive real estate houses. The language barrier is also a big problem facing international students in the Netherlands. Advertisements, contracts and information concerning their rights as tenants are usually only available in Dutch. International students do not know their rights and duties as a renter as well as they should. Being included in the Dutch housing system with roommates would also make the separation between the two communities diminish.

2.4. Travel expenses

Some students have to travel back and forth between both campuses (The Hague, Leiden), and have to pay money as they do not have the right to the OV card. Students from Europe have the right to ask for the OV card when working around 14 hours a week. Information about this system should be offered by the University. There is a need for a transportation mode between both campuses for students, preferably free of charge. This would really make The Hague also more attractive for Leiden students and vice versa. It would really promote exchange between the two communities.

2.5. Career opportunities

Career events are mostly for Dutch students, more opportunities for Internationals/English-speaking students should be given. There is an annual 'international career event' at Plexus every year, which The Hague students should be invited to.

2.6. Classes standardization

Both international and Dutch students suggested, in order to be able to better cope with the high workload of Masters, to have more standardized classes in terms of deadlines, assignments and time required to be spent in class. Most of the times, each class is organized differently from the others: students would like to see a common format adopted across classes.

Some of them also proposed a preliminary (not-mandatory) class at the beginning of masters teaching them the best way to approach classes' workload: for instance how to study, prepare lectures, managing time.

Overall, there is a need for more inclusion of international students. More information should be provided, in order to make the integration in the Dutch culture less difficult.