



INTERSTEDELIJK
STUDENTEN OVERLEG

ISO in English

Who are we and what do we do?

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Interstedelijk Studenten Overleg

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Why this document?

ISO (Dutch National Student Association, or 'Interstedelijk Studentenoverleg' in Dutch) is the biggest nationwide student organisation of the Netherlands and represents the common interest of the more than 750.000 students in the Dutch higher education system.

ISO is an association. Its members consist of local student fractions, councils and unions, from both research universities and universities of applied sciences, that are active in participation in decision-making ('medezeggenschap').

Since the share of international students in Dutch higher education and in participation in decision-making is increasing, ISO finds it important to provide information to non-Dutch speakers as well. That is where this document comes in: it contains all relevant information about ISO and participation in decision-making that can be found on our website (www.iso.nl), but then translated to English.

Table of contents

Why this document?	1
About 5	
What is the ISO?	5
ISO's vision	5
Membership	6
General Assemblies	6
Trainings	6
Not a member, still participating	7
History.....	7
The early years	7
Name change.....	8
Our standpoints	8
Accreditation and external supervision	8
Quality of teaching	9
Legal position of the student	9
Educational innovation and privacy	10
Student wellbeing and studying with a functional dependency.....	11
Funding of higher education	12
Income position of the student.....	12
Education and the job market.....	13
Student finance and public transport	13
Accessibility, connection and transfer	14
Decentral and master selection	15
Internationalization	16
Education and research.....	17
Talent education	17
Participation in decision-making	18
FAQ: participation in decision-making ('medezeggenschap').....	19
How do I find out if participation in decision-making is something for me?.....	20
How long does one term in a participation in decision-making council last?	20
How can I become a student participation council member?	20
How can I prepare for elections?	20

How can I prepare for a council year?	20
Do I receive a reimbursement for my work in participation in decision-making?	20
Could my involvement in participation in decision-making possibly have negative consequences?	21
What if the Executive Board, faculty board or dean does not follow the council's advice?.....	21
The council did not give consent on a subject to which the council has a right of consent. What will happen now?	21
Mediation has not resulted in a solution, what now?	21
Who determines whether you go to the Disputes Committee?	21
What does the Disputes Committee assess?	21
Are there any options after the Dispute Committee?	21
What exactly does the Enterprise Chamber do?	21
Who is the chairperson of the council?	21
How do I get an overview of the educational institution of which I am a participation council representative?	22
Can I put a topic or proposal on the agenda of the Executive Board?	22
How do I increase the chance that my proposal will be accepted?	22
How do I know which topics the council has right of advice on and which topics it has right of consent on?	22
Is there a training budget?	22
Does the central council also talk to the Supervisory Board ('raad van toezicht')?.....	23
Which information am I entitled to?.....	23
How often am I entitled to an official central council meeting?	23
What are the minimum rights of consent I have?	23
What are the minimum rights of advice I have?.....	23
At what time should the EB ask the council for advice?	24
How do I know what the EB does with the advice of the council?	24
What if the EB does not want to follow the advice or does not want to follow it entirely?	24

About

What is the ISO?

The ISO (Dutch National Student Association, or ‘Interstedelijk Studentenoverleg’) is the biggest nationwide student organisation of the Netherlands and represents the common interest of the more than 750.000 students in the Dutch higher education system. The ISO is a regular conversation partner of, amongst others, the Dutch Ministry of Education, Culture and Sciences, political parties and the umbrella associations of the research universities and universities of applied sciences.

The executive body of the ISO consists of an executive board and fifteen student employees. The board, consisting of five fulltime board members, changes every year at the start of summer. Employees are usually active for a period of two years.

ISO's vision

Higher education offers students the opportunity to develop themselves as an individual. Equally important is the transfer and discovery of knowledge and experience that can contribute to the progress of society and the economy.

ISO chooses to represent the interests of ambitious, critical and curious students, as well as students who want to make these attributes their own. This calls for high-quality education that is provided by students and teachers in consultation with the labour market and society.

In ISO's ideal world, students reach their full potential in a close-knit educational community. Student, teacher and institution are closely connected. Students and teachers possess the necessary capacities and show commitment. A teacher has both content-related and didactic capacities. Participation in higher education is valuable and inspires both students and teachers day in, day out. Once started, there is no room for lack of commitment: students are actively engaged in their educational process. This is guaranteed by a critical and constructive attitude of teachers towards students and vice versa. In this way, individual freedom and the acquisition of knowledge are combined with taking responsibility. Students will naturally look for extra-curricular challenges that, in addition to education, contribute to their personal development. This gives space to self-development, but it is always done in consultation with teacher and university. After all, the student is involved in the educational process and feels responsible for its implementation. Students should be able to make full use of national and international opportunities.

Adequate governmental financing is a key condition for fulfilling ISO's ideal. The student's own investment, in addition to governmental funding, should be financially acceptable. A fair balance between generations must be ensured in financing the higher education system. Society and the private sector contribute there where the added value to education and students is visible, as long as their contribution does not compromise the independence of the higher educational institutions.

To achieve this ideal, the ISO cooperates with its constituency ('achterban') and partner organizations and actively approaches the political arena. They recognize the ISO by its young, fresh, open-minded tone and passion for education. ISO-employees and board members approach and present their views to students, partners, politicians and the media in a dynamic and creative manner. The organization forges strategic alliances and actively forms coalitions so that broad support can be achieved. In this process the organization is reliable, honest, but also pushes the limits. The ISO is known as a learning organization that is proud of its successes. With ISO's ideal image in mind the organisation shows itself to be a realist. That means devising, proposing and defending alternative solutions. The ISO is always willing to discuss alternative options: dialogue is essential. The door of ISO's office at the Bemuurde Weerd will therefore always be open to those who are in for a good conversation or a vivid discussion.

The ISO chooses to represent the interests of the student who is involved with his or her own education. The ISO derives its strength and right to exist from this.

Membership

ISO was founded in 1973 by students who were active in participation in decision-making at various Dutch universities. Nowadays the ISO has 39 member organizations and 3 aspiring member organizations that are located throughout the Netherlands. These member organizations are the local student fractions, councils and unions, from both universities and colleges of higher education, that are involved in education at their own institution.

All participation in decision-making councils are eligible to becoming a member of the ISO. For information about membership of ISO and for more information about the different member organizations you can always contact ISO.

General Assemblies

Together the membership organizations form the General Assembly (GA), ISO's highest body. The member organizations participate in all kinds of working groups and committees. Both specific and general issues are raised during these working groups and committees. When several member organizations identify problems, the ISO then tries to do something about it.

Trainings

In addition, the ISO organizes various activities and events for its member organizations throughout the year. Training courses are also provided by the ISO or external agencies. Examples of this are a training weekend for new fraction and student council members, a campaign training in the run-up to the local student council elections, open house days and a best practice day.

Every year, the ISO organizes a training weekend for new council members. During this weekend there are many trainings planned that will fully prepare you as a participation in decision-making representative for the intensive year that you are heading for. The Saturday evening party is legendary and you will have plenty of opportunity to get to know the other student councils from all over the country!

Not a member, still participating

Even without membership in the ISO you can still benefit from the ISO. The ISO pays a lot of attention to keeping students up to date (in participation in decision-making), training participation in decision-making councils and providing a platform.

History

On January 26, 1974 the ISO ('Interuniversitair Studentenoverleg', literal translation: Interuniversity Student Consultation) was established as a national umbrella organization for five research university councils from various Dutch cities. The students in these councils felt the need to discuss certain issues with fellow student board members from other cities and to exchange information and experiences. In this way they could strengthen their position at their own higher educational institution. Soon the ISO expanded and represented students from all over the Netherlands. In 1995, the ISO changed its name from 'Interuniversitair Studentenoverleg' to 'Interstedelijk Studentenoverleg' (literal translation: Intercity Student Consultation, proper translation: Dutch National Student Association). Since then the ISO also represents Dutch students studying at a university of applied sciences (HBO) at the national level.

The early years

In the early years, the ISO was no more than a suitcase with some documents. The board met at most once a month and then this suitcase opened. The minutes were typed out by the secretary with a typewriter, using a carbon paper for the necessary duplicates. Scholarships for student board members, provided by the Ministry of Education, were not yet available in the 1970s. At that time the internal politics of the Ministry had not yet become acquainted with the Dutch 'polder model' (consensus-based policy-making) and so subsidizing your own opposition was not exactly common practice yet. The meetings usually took place in Utrecht in the Academiegebouw (Academy Building) because that was centrally located and free. There was no chair because the ISO did not have a formal structure yet, and due to a lack of money no treasurer was needed either.

The end of the 1980s was a pivotal time for the ISO. Due to immense cutbacks in higher education there were many student protests. Since its inception the ISO had never been this busy. This was caused by the policymaking of the Ministry of Education that, together with the introduction of student finance ('studiefinanciering') and the Harmonization Act ('wetsvoorstel Harmonisatie Collegegelden'), demanded a lot of attention from the ISO. It was time to take matters seriously and after a visit to the notary, ISO became an official association.

The Harmonization Act in particular encountered a lot of oppression. This is why, together with the LSVb ('Landelijke Studentenvakbond', the Dutch Student Union, another major student organization in the Netherlands) and the LKvV ('Landelijke Kamer van Verenigingen', National Chamber of Associations, an umbrella organization for all traditional student associations), under the name LAS ('Landelijke Aktie Studenten', National Student Action) the largest student demonstration ever was set up with 40,000 students. This resulted in the ISO-chair being featured on the eight o'clock news. The

discussion on the Harmonization Act was postponed in the House of Representatives ('Tweede Kamer') until June 1988. Eventually, the Harmonization Act was passed after being partially amended. A well-known member of the Senate ('Eerste Kamer') told the press that the Harmonization Act was the worst law that the House of Representatives had ever adopted.

Professionalization continued. In the early 1990s, a new period for the ISO began. The ISO and all its contacts underwent a process of professionalization and the media were employed more and more. By setting up committees the work became increasingly intensive: 40- to 50-hour working weeks were no exceptions for the board. For the first time, the ISO had a number of fulltime board members. But the knowledge of these people was primarily present in their head. This changed with the emergence of the first ISO-office on the Oudegracht in Utrecht, a professional office where the board members worked on a daily basis.

Name change

In the academic year 1995-1996 the ISO underwent a change that permanently changed its character and objectives. 'Interuniversitair Studenten Overleg' (Interuniversity Student Consultation) became 'Interstedelijk Studenten Overleg' (Intercity Student Consultation); this because the ISO also wanted to be there for the universities of applied sciences (HBO). The challenge remained to extend the plan of adding the universities of applied sciences to concretely cooperating with HBO-organizations. This proved to be difficult at first. Based on personal networks and on a case-by-case basis, the ISO supported a number of HBO-organizations. In a short period of time many universities of applied sciences were contacted and the ISO became a full partner for all parties involved in the field of HBO.

Our standpoints

Below, ISO's formal standpoints in several relevant areas are listed. Each topic has three subheadings: 1) general information, 2) recent developments and 3) vision of the ISO.

Accreditation and external supervision

General information

In Dutch higher education, there is a system of accreditation that aims to guarantee the basic quality of programmes and institutions. If a study programme is accredited, students are entitled to student finance and diplomas are recognized by the government. Within the current structure, accreditation is set up in such a way that a panel is selected and then visits the relevant program. By means of many discussions between the panel and people within the study programme - this is called peer review - a visitation report is written, which is then sent to the NVAO. The NVAO is the Dutch-Flemish Accreditation Organization that, on the basis of frameworks, reads the visitation report and determines whether a study programme is accredited or not.

Recent developments

The recently adopted Custom Accreditation Act ('wet Accreditatie op Maat') has made it possible for students to play a greater role in visitations, for example by strengthening the position of the study programme committee ('opleidingscommissie'). There will also be a

student chapter in the final visitation report that is written by students and has a free design.

Vision of the ISO

Within the European landscape of higher education, we signal a shift from accreditation at programme level to accreditation at institution level. In the Netherlands too, steps have been taken towards institutional accreditation through the Institutional Review Quality Assurance ('Instellingstoets Kwaliteitszorg', ITK) and the Limited Training Assessments ('Beperkte Opleidingsbeoordelingen', BOB). The ISO is of the opinion that quality of education is of great importance and that it is therefore extremely important to once in a while determine whether sufficient quality is provided by the study programmes. In addition, the accreditation system should not only determine the quality of education, but it should also help improve education. This is already done, for example, by naming the strengths and weaknesses of a study programme in a visitation report. The student's voice must be included clearly and consistently throughout this process.

Quality of teaching

General information

The ISO is of the opinion that the performance of students depends to a large extent on the quality of their teachers. For this reason, it is important that there is a vision of the skills that higher education teachers must have. Such a qualification (the BKO, 'Basis Kwalificatie Onderwijs', Basic Qualification Education) was jointly recognized by all research universities ten years ago, while the comparable qualification for universities of applied sciences (the BDB, 'Basis Didactische Bekwaamheid', Basic Didactic Competence) is not yet widely recognized.

Recent developments

The ISO has an annual "Teacher of the Year" election. This teacher is an example for many in the field of education and is appointed by an expert jury. In addition, the ISO is always looking for further professionalization of teachers. Through consultation with institutions, umbrella organizations and politics, we look for the best ways in which teachers can align their lessons with the real world and with the wishes of students.

Vision of the ISO

The ISO is always committed to good teachers in higher education and acknowledges that institutions do a lot when it comes to teacher quality, but sharing of knowledge and a common vision are lacking sometimes. The ISO believes it is important that there is a clear vision of the capacities that teachers in higher education must have. From this point of view, the ISO therefore strives for joint recognition of the Basic Didactic Competence (Dutch: BDB), in addition to the comparable Basic Qualification Education (Dutch: BKO).

Legal position of the student

General information

Within the ISO, the independent National Student Law Office (Dutch: 'Landelijk Studenten Rechtsbureau', LSR) monitors the educational problems that students experience. They successfully do this by providing advice, but also by possibly initiating legal proceedings. Furthermore, the ISO believes it is important that there is a good provision of information

to students about their rights, both within their study programme and at their institution in general information.

Recent developments

The ISO signals problems concerning the legal position of students with regard to the number of tracks, directions and variations that higher education institutions offer within study programmes. There is a great diversity in tracks, but many terms are also used interchangeably in the naming of programmes. Moreover, there is no clear definition of tracks, which means that they are sometimes indistinguishable from other options such as minors.

Vision of the ISO

The ISO believes that a framework for tracks is important for the legal position of the student. In addition, a clear framework can contribute to a better-informed study choice of students. The ISO does not want a jungle of tracks to emerge that students cannot fathom properly.

Educational innovation and privacy

General information

Every day the ISO concerns itself with the question: how can we make higher education even better? Innovative ideas and developments play an important role in this, in particular new technologies, digitization and flexibilization. Digitization is a big part of our lives; students are inextricably linked to digital resources. Higher education uses digital resources but is also investigating how these can best be used for students and teachers. Innovative ideas and developments play a major role in this.

Recent developments

Currently, experiments with flexible studying are taking place at various institutions. The first results are already known, for example at the Windesheim University of Applied Sciences. They showed that as a result of the experiment, in which students paid tuition fees per study point, fewer students dropped out. The ISO expects an evaluation of the experiment at the end of 2018 and will use this as the basis for determining what is needed to further shape flexible studying. The ISO is involved in the implementation of the acceleration agenda in higher education. Through this agenda, various digitization plans are being accelerated in higher education. The ISO is a member of the steering committee responsible for this, consisting of SURF, the Association of Universities of Applied Sciences (Dutch: VH, 'Vereniging van Hogescholen'), the Association of Universities (Dutch: VSNU, 'Vereniging van Universiteiten') and the Ministry of Education. The ISO closely monitors the quality of education here.

Vision of the ISO

Every student is different and has different qualities, learning styles and needs within his study programme. The ISO believes it is important to pay attention to this within education, so that all types of students can learn as much as possible. However, standardized study programs regularly cause restrictions. The way in which education is designed organized must not be an obstacle. The increasing pressure on students due to efficiency measures on the one hand and the growing demand and need for development within and outside the study therefore requires more flexible education. It is therefore important to give students more room to compile a personalized study path with courses, extracurricular

activities, an experience abroad or internships that they deem relevant for their development. The ISO therefore considers it important that higher education is organized in such a way that it is possible for students to study at their own pace regardless of time and place. Flexible studying is seen as an important means of achieving this. Digitization offers many opportunities for higher education. For example, developments such as blended learning (campus education supported by web technology) and the flipped classroom (a variation on blended learning, which still revolves around campus education, in which the transfer of information from a course is partly moved to home and supported through blended learning), open Educational Resources (digital educational material that is available for reuse) and Massive Online Open Courses (a new development in distance learning) are increasingly coming to the fore, but it remains difficult to implement them properly. In this context, attention must always be paid to a separation between the learning and performance environment of students, and the privacy of students must be guaranteed.

Student wellbeing and studying with a functional dependency

General information

The ISO signals that the pressure on students is being increased on several sides; students have to study quicker, they have to borrow to pay for their studies and gain useful (work) experience during their studies to build their CV. On the one hand, this pressure comes from increasingly stricter social norms that translate into policy measures, such as the introduction of a Binding Study Advice (BSA) of sometimes as many as 60 ECTS and the introduction of a loan system that causes more students to work alongside their studies. On the other hand, this pressure also comes from increasingly compelling social standards, whereby it is the norm to mainly share successes and good experiences/moments on social media and show "the perfect picture".

Recent developments

At the Windesheim University of Applied Sciences, student wellbeing has been researched and the results were quite shocking. 38.9% of responders indicated that they experienced mild to moderate anxiety and depression symptoms and 14.4% even had serious symptoms. Many students had burnout complaints and indicated that performance pressure plays an important role here. Subsequently, a student wellbeing action plan was written in which 5 pillars are mentioned to promote student wellbeing and the Ministry of Education, Culture and Science wrote a joint ambition in which the bottlenecks regarding student wellbeing were identified and possible improvements were looked into. It is now up to individual institutions to specify further details here, together with the participation in decision-making bodies and possibly with the support of experts.

Vision of the ISO

Starting to study brings new responsibilities and young people need the time and space to find out how to study. That is why the ISO wants to focus on a healthy study climate at every institution, focusing on the prevention of psychological complaints among students. Good and accessible (psychological) assistance must also be available at every institution, so that every student can be helped with complaints. In addition, the ISO believes it is essential that more attention is paid to tighter social norms and expectations and the negative effects that

increasing pressure on performance has on students, for example in the form of a national survey on performance pressure and student wellbeing.

Funding of higher education

General information

The funding portfolio revolves around the way in which Dutch higher education is financed. At the moment, the income from Dutch universities and colleges simply consists of three funding streams. In addition to income from the government (the first funding stream), universities receive funding from the NWO and KNAW for specific research projects (the second funding stream). The third funding stream consists of all other income, such as resources from the EU. Finally, tuition is a source of income. Universities may charge a statutory tuition fee for the programs they offer. Students outside the EEA region or students following a second study pay the institutional tuition fee rate, which is much higher than the regular statutory tuition fee.

Recent developments

The Coalition Agreement states that the funding system for higher education will be revised, with specific attention to technical programmes. As an interlocutor of the Ministry of Education, Culture and Science, the ISO wants to participate in discussions about the ways in which the funding of higher education will change. Partly due to the large increase in student numbers and the overall decrease in funding per student, the ISO signals worrying trends in the current funding system.

Vision of the ISO

The ISO stands for future-proof higher education and appropriate funding. A recent report from the Education Council (Dutch: 'Onderwijsraad') indicates that if higher education wants to fulfil (wider) societal assignments and strive for higher quality, there must also be sufficient funding to achieve this. According to the ISO, it is therefore important that more money is assigned to higher education.

Income position of the student

General information

Student income has deteriorated considerably in recent years. The 'basisbeurs' (literally: basic grant; system where part of governmental student finance was a gift) was abolished in 2015, which has caused students to borrow considerably more. In total, it is expected that as a result of this abolition, students will borrow approximately 6,000 euros more, resulting in an average total debt 21,000 euros. This leads to a huge mountain of student debt, which also makes it harder for students to get a mortgage.

Recent developments

The cabinet of Rutte-III has given students a 'present' which in reality is paid from students' own pockets. The government has halved the tuition fees for first-year students, but students will more than pay for this through a higher VAT rate.

Vision of the ISO

The ISO is committed to a good income position for students. The income position of the student has suffered considerably in recent years. It is time for this to turn around. Measures that the ISO supports include at least a broadening of the supplementary followed by an increase of this grant. In addition, the ISO is committed to providing former

students with a greater chance on the housing market by arguing that the impact of a study debt on a mortgage must be reduced with politicians and the Ministry of Education, Culture and Science.

Education and the job market

General information

The ISO believes that every student is studying to increase his or her knowledge on a specific topic. At the same time, after completing their studies, every student wants to work in the professional field for which he has studied. The ISO is of the opinion that institutions, together with other stakeholders, of course including the professional field, must take up the gauntlet if we want to ensure that education prepares well for the labour market. It is nobody's wish that a graduate student has to search for a long time to find a job on the labour market. If the study programmes pay timely attention to the connection between studying and the job market, we can prevent this type of search.

Recent developments

The ISO watches if institutions do their best to create a match between study programmes and the labour market demands, but there is still much room for improvement here. The Minister of Education, Culture and Science has also instructed student organizations and umbrella organizations to jointly analyse how higher education courses connect to the labour market. In addition to this analysis, the ISO is committed to providing clear information to students, so that students are informed during their studies about their chances on the labour market and how to seize the available opportunities.

Vision of the ISO

The ISO believes that the general development of students in higher education must be a top priority. At the same time, the ISO signals that after their studies, students want to find a place on the labour market within the field in which they have studied. If there is too much focus on the general information broadening of knowledge, the connection to the labour market can sometimes be at stake. The ISO monitors this and looks for solutions to timely solve this problem.

Student finance and public transport

General information

The student travel product is an important condition for students to study. HBO and WO students can use the student travel product for a maximum of 5 years in case the nominal duration of a study is 4 years.

Recent developments

In December 2017, the Minister of Education, Culture and Science announced that the intended savings on the student travel product, through a better use of educational buildings and teaching times, were not successful. This included better spreading of lecture times throughout the day and more digital distance education. With the intended money saved, the minister wanted to invest in the quality of education.

Vision of the ISO

The ISO stands for student mobility and, because of that, the student travel product. This means that students can study at the institution of their choice without being hindered by financial considerations. After all, it is not the case that students do not spend money on

public transport besides their student travel product. The Nibud (Dutch organization that informs and advises households and individuals on financial matters) calculated that students spend 63 euros on average per month on public transport alongside the student travel product. In addition, the ISO considers the student travel product of great importance because it offers students the opportunity to develop themselves outside of their city. Examples of this are an internship or a minor at another location.

Accessibility, connection and transfer

General information

For years, the ISO has been calling for accessible education in which everyone can enjoy equal opportunities. The starting point is: equality by making a difference. Within accessibility of education, the ISO distinguishes three different important phases; admission, connection and transfer.

To the ISO, admission to higher education revolves around (prospective) students who want to get a place in higher education. They must have the opportunity to follow the study programme they want to follow. They must receive proper assistance here in order to make the right choice and not to encounter unnecessary barriers. Selection and additional admission requirements must be avoided as much as possible. If a study programme sets or selects additional admission requirements, then this must be clearly communicated and substantiated. The additional requirements or selection criteria must also be well, and scientifically, substantiated. The admission must also take into account the background and general situation of the (prospective) student. Education benefits from diversity and everyone must have equal admission chances. Admission is custom work!

The various forms of education must connect to each other as well as possible. Where this is not the case, students must be properly supervised. When looking at good connections, it is not only about returns. The ISO sees study success in a broader and different light than just returns and efficiency, for example by looking at the room for self-development of the student through extracurricular activities or facilitating a healthy study climate through extra supervision. Thus, study success can mean something different to every individual student, ranging from, for example, obtaining a diploma (without being bound by time pressure), to gaining new professional experiences that will benefit the student later in life.

Not every student arrives directly at the right place and at the right level of education. This is of course perfectly logical; not everyone develops at the same pace and in addition it is extremely difficult to at a young age know what you like and what you are good at. Fortunately, our education system offers the possibility to switch or move on to a higher level. Unfortunately, this has become increasingly difficult for students in recent years. On the one hand due to financial pressure, on the other hand due to increased additional admission requirements and required bridging programs. Obviously, it is important that students are sufficiently equipped to start a study programme, but there must still be room for this. The ISO believes it is extremely important to offer transfer opportunities.

Recent developments

In recent years, a large number of policy measures have been taken in higher education with an (in)direct negative effect on accessibility, connection and transfer. First of all, the

hard cut (Dutch: 'harde knip') was introduced in 2012/2013: a student must now first have completed his entire bachelor's degree before a master programme can be started. In addition, various things have changed with the Quality in Variety Act (Dutch: Wet Kwaliteit in Verscheidenheid): the automatic admission right for someone with a HBO propedeuse to a research university bachelor's degree has expired, the automatic admission right to a transfer master's degree has been abolished (leading to more possibilities for selection in the master's degree), further prior education requirements for MBO-students who wish to continue at HBO-level have become possible, the central draw (Dutch: 'centrale loting') for *numerus fixus* study programmes (programmes with a limited number of places) has been abolished and the 'basisbeurs' (where a significant part of governmental student finance was a grant instead of a loan) has been abolished. Moreover, far-reaching internationalization has potential consequences for the accessibility of education and due to the above-mentioned act, selection for Master programmes have increased enormously in recent years. In previous years four reports have been published that map the (in) direct consequences of these measures. The figures in the various reports do not lie; the aforementioned measures have a negative effect on the accessibility of higher education. All students, but certainly specific groups, experience the adverse effects of, among other things, increased selection and admission requirements, strict BSA standards and the higher costs of studying due to the abolition of the 'basisbeurs'. It is high time to change this. Fortunately, the minister also finds accessibility very important. In the coming year, this will therefore be a priority topic for the ISO.

Vision of the ISO

Students should be able to get to the right place and have equal opportunities: that must be the starting point. It is impossible to deny that the background of a student always influences the chances a student has. However, we must ensure that this influence is minimized and that students who need this receive extra support in developing their talents. The emphasis must be on equal opportunities by making a difference. In the coming period, a lot of work will have to be done on drawing up a vision. The first step is to recognize the importance of accessible education and equal opportunities. A second step is to jointly identify the problems and attention points. Measures must then be devised, worked out and taken. The input from student organizations is essential here, as it is of direct concern to them.

Decentral and master selection

General information

Since the abolition of the draw system (Dutch: 'lotingssysteem'), there is the possibility for institutions to select students. The ISO is pleased that as a result of this there is more attention for the individual student and that a student does not have to rely on luck to get into a study programme. However, in recent years the ISO sees a proliferation of selection requirements, which exposes students to unnecessary selective measures.

Recent developments

The ISO signals that there is not enough consultation between higher education institutions about methods of selection that ensure that the right student ends up in the right place. The ISO investigates what well-founded methods of selection are and tries to discuss this with institutions in a constructive way.

Vision of the ISO

The ISO is pleased with the abolition of the draw system, because this was an unfounded way to select students. However, the result is that a switch has been made to selective measures and these are not always scientifically based. The ISO warns against such a proliferation of selection requirements, because this will create a wall for students and endangers the accessibility of higher education.

Internationalization

General information

Internationalization in higher education covers several topics. Firstly, it is about the internationalization of study programmes in the Netherlands. The range of international programmes is increasing, and more and more institutions are embedding internationalization in their business operations. Secondly, internationalization in higher education is about outbound mobility. More and more Dutch students are going abroad for (part of) their studies. Finally, internationalization is also about European legislation in the field of education. Although education is not a direct competence of the European Union, much has already been determined jointly through harmonization legislation. This concerns, for example, the recognition of each other's diplomas and the common recognition of the bachelor's-master's structure.

Recent developments

Internationalization of education is a hot topic. The number of international students who come to study in the Netherlands is growing enormously. Research universities and universities of applied sciences offer more and more programs in English. Unfortunately, this is not always beneficial to the quality of education and the prerequisites at many institutions and in many cities are not yet in order. Students indicate that the level of English of their teachers is often not yet up to standard and housing for international students is a drama. The ISO remains committed to convincing institutions that they must first get this fixed. The Minister of Education recently presented a vision letter on the internationalization of higher education. It makes a number of important commitments in this regard. It is up to the ISO to properly monitor this. There are also important developments at a European level. The new Erasmus+ program is currently being implemented, known from the Erasmus scholarships with which many Dutch students go abroad. For the ISO it is especially important that the number of available scholarships will increase for Dutch students: there is currently much more demand for scholarships than there is money available.

Vision of the ISO

The ISO has always expressed its support for internationalization, but it has always been critical of its motives, speed, quality and degree. In order to successfully internationalize, choices must be made and concrete measures must be taken. In many places, institutions do not internationalize in a responsible manner, so the added value is questionable. The most important principle remains that the internationalization of education must always contribute to quality. Internationalization entails more than simply changing the language; internationalization is about adding an international dimension to the study programme. In addition, institutions must have the prerequisites in order before they attract more international students. There must be sufficient accommodation for international students

and international students must have the opportunity to fully participate in student life. Thirdly, all Dutch students who want to should be able to study abroad. They should not be deterred by financial obstacles or fear that their credits will not be recognized in the Netherlands.

Education and research

General information

The vast majority of the goals that the ISO sets itself affect both education and research. When it comes to this portfolio, special attention is paid to the synergy between these two concepts. For example, attention is given to research within universities of applied sciences by proclaiming a "Lector of the Year".

Recent developments

The ISO is sceptical about the "PhD-students" (Dutch: 'promotiestudenten') experiment. (In the Netherlands, PhD'ers are historically seen and treated as employees, not students.) The ISO fears that this experiment from the ministry will not achieve the intended objectives and that the so-called 'promotiestudenten' may be better qualified as regular PhD'ers (Dutch: 'promovendi'). The ISO is also involved in a process where scholarships for teachers in higher education are evaluated. The ISO believes that teachers should be given the space and resources to develop and conduct research about issues that are relevant to academia and therefore society.

Vision of the ISO

The ISO always strives for the right balance between education and research. When there is a sound balance, students are helped in meeting their educational and research needs. In addition, the ISO believes that students who want to obtain a doctorate after their regular studies should be given the space, resources and appreciation that they deserve. The ISO will therefore continue to critically monitor the "PhD-students" experiment.

Talent education

General information

Talent education challenges students, teachers and institutions to get the best out of the student. However, the current system is too one-sided and serves a too small group of students. The ISO believes that there must be more paths to promote excellence. The ISO therefore believes that excellence is not a proper name and prefers to talk about talent development.

Recent developments

Efforts are currently being made to broaden talent programs, while also looking at increasing the profile fund (Dutch: 'profileringsfonds'). In addition, in cooperation with the ministries of Education, Culture and Science and Economic Affairs, a good interpretation of entrepreneurship education is being discussed.

Vision of the ISO

The ISO argues that the organizational context of research universities and universities of applied sciences should be adjusted so that students are encouraged to get the best out of themselves. The focus should primarily be on talent development; the educational institution offers education in which all students can perform optimally, regardless of the way in which students are talented. After all, every student is excellent in his own way. One

student seeks challenges in academic expansion or deepening through special study programs, while the other starts his own company, is a top athlete or does a board year, volunteer work or is involved in participation in decision-making. All these forms of excellence are equally valuable to the ISO. These students acquire knowledge, skills and experiences that will help them for the rest of their lives.

Participation in decision-making

General information

Almost continuously the ISO pays attention to the position of students in participation in decision-making councils and program committees. The ISO describes the role of participation in decision-making as a controlling body, which has a say at the highest level of the institution to improve the student's position and to defend it where necessary. The role of participation in decision-making is, besides controlling and cooperative, initiating as well: it comes up with ideas to further improve the institution, education and the student. It is therefore both reactive and proactive. This requires a critical but constructive attitude. The role of the participation in decision-making council member is to be aware of both content and process. The ISO has been committed for years to making the position of participation in decision-making as strong as possible. On the one hand by properly embedding the rights and obligations of participation in decision-making in the law, and on the other hand by training and supporting participation in decision-making as well as possible.

Recent developments

Many bottlenecks that have been known for years in the field of participation in decision-making are still relevant. It remains important that institutions properly facilitate, support and offer training opportunities to the participation in decision-making council. This is not always the case. On the other hand, a lot has happened, central and decentralized participation in decision-making has acquired more and more powers. The participation in decision-making council must now agree with the institutional plan and the main points of the budget, with which they can exert considerable influence on the (long-term) policy of the institution. Since the 'Versterking bestuurskracht' Act, study program committees have the right of consent to certain parts of the Education and Examination Regulations, with which they can exercise significant influence on the quality of education. The quality agreements have recently given an enormous boost to participation in decision-making. The participation in decision-making council must agree to the process of quality agreements and the use of study advance funds (Dutch: 'studievoorschotmiddelen') through the quality agreements. This also entails many responsibilities. The ISO will do everything in its power to ensure that participation in decision-making is as effective as possible.

Vision of the ISO

The ISO sees participation in decision-making as a responsible task that must be carried out with a certain awareness. In this way, participation in decision-making contributes to improving the quality of education and the position of the student. The ISO underlines the importance of an open, transparent management and participation in decision-making culture in which mutual respect and trust are self-evident. In a successful participation in decision-making culture, the council is involved in a timely manner in the decision-making procedure and an open discussion is held in which the council is taken seriously by the

consultative partner. The participation in decision-making body must be seen by the institution as a valuable addition, not as a bump in the road. Participation in decision-making must not only be taken seriously on paper, but also in practice.

FAQ: participation in decision-making ('medezeggenschap')

As a participation council member, you represent the students at your educational institution. Your work is therefore extremely important! As the student's voice, you deal with policy documents, budgets, and you regularly consult with the Executive Board. These are things that you don't just do and that is why the ISO is there for you. The ISO wants participation in decision-making (also known as co-participation) in higher education to be as well-equipped as possible in order to be able to perform its task properly. The ISO is therefore happy to share its knowledge and experience. We do this through the annual training weekend, trainings, work group evenings, position papers, information booklets, and our website and social media channels.

Participation in decision-making is anchored in the Higher Education and Scientific Research Act (WHW). Participation council members are interlocutors on the board of (a part of) the educational institution and therefore the horizontal accountability. Through, among other things, the right of advice and the right of consent, the participation council can influence the policy to be pursued by the educational institution.

A distinction is made between divided and undivided systems. In a divided system there is one council for the student section and one council for the employee section. Both councils together form the joint council meeting ('gezamenlijke vergadering'). In the case of an undivided council, the employee and student sections are combined in one council and therefore not separated.

Participation in decision-making takes place at one or more levels. Every higher education institution has at least one central council ('centrale medezeggenschapsraad' or 'universiteitsraad'¹). This council is the discussion partner of the Executive Board ('college van bestuur'). The Executive Board informs the council in writing at least once a year of the policy it has pursued and of the policy intentions for the coming year in the financial, organizational and educational field. If the educational institution consists of more than one faculty or academy, the faculties each have a decentral council ('decentrale raad', 'academieraad' or 'faculteitsraad'). This council is the discussion partner of the dean and / or the faculty board.

¹ In Dutch, the highest participation council at research universities is known as a 'universiteitsraad' (university council) but at universities of applied sciences it is known as a 'centrale raad' (central council). To avoid confusion, we will consistently use the term 'central council' throughout this document.

How do I find out if participation in decision-making is something for me?

To get an impression of how things are going at your educational institution, you can attend a council meeting if it is public. In most cases you can find the meeting dates on the website of your educational institution. In addition, it is also recommendable to speak with current or former council members.

How long does one term in a participation in decision-making council last?

The term of office of the members of the central council is laid down in the regulations of the council, formally referred to as the participation in decision-making regulations ('medezeggenschapsreglement'). The Executive Board determines these regulations. These regulations must be submitted to the relevant council when adopted or amended.

The term of office of the members of the faculty council is laid down in the faculty regulations ('faculteitsreglement'). The faculty council has right of consent in case the faculty regulations are changed.

How can I become a student participation council member?

The seats in the central council and the decentral councils are filled by elections. The educational institution is required to organize elections. To be elected, you need to stand for election in a personal capacity. Depending on how the educational institution organizes the elections, you may have to submit statements of support before you are included in the election list. You can also form a list together with other candidates. With these other candidates you will be listed under one list name in the elections, but the students still have to vote for an individual person on that list.

How can I prepare for elections?

It is important to know when the elections are (when students can vote for you). Make sure that students know in advance why they should vote for you. You can announce your goals with flyers and posters. You can also activate students to vote for you via social media. In this way you also make people aware of the fact that the elections are coming up. When you are on a list together with others, you can also campaign together. Directly addressing students works very well during the elections. Therefore, prepare a short elevator pitch and practice it in advance.

How can I prepare for a council year?

A useful way to find out what the council is doing is to read annual reports that the central council is obliged to prepare and make accessible. Faculty councils at universities must also prepare such a report. These reports must be public and therefore accessible for you. You can often gain a lot of knowledge through a conversation with a predecessor.

Do I receive a reimbursement for my work in participation in decision-making?

Yes, the Executive Board makes resources from the profiling fund ('profielingsfonds') available for the central council and any faculty councils.

Could my involvement in participation in decision-making possibly have negative consequences?

According to the law, the Executive Board ensures that the members of the central council are not "disadvantaged in their position with regard to the university" because of their council membership. This also applies to candidate members and former members of the central council.

What if the Executive Board, faculty board or dean does not follow the council's advice?

The board of the institution ensures that the council is then given the opportunity to consult further before the decision is finally taken.

The council did not give consent on a subject to which the council has a right of consent. What will happen now?

The Executive Board has requested the council to agree and the council has not done so. The board may choose to adjust the plan in such a way that it can count on the approval of the board. They can also withdraw the plan or request mediation from higher authorities (for a faculty council this is the institutional management, for the central council the supervisory board).

Mediation has not resulted in a solution, what now?

If mediation does not result in a solution, the EB can start a dispute. This is done through a petition with the National Higher Education Disputes Committee ('Landelijke Commissie Geschillen Hoger Onderwijs').

Who determines whether you go to the Disputes Committee?

If the board wishes to continue with a plan to which the participation in decision-making council has right of consent, but has not given this, it is up to the board to initiate a dispute.

What does the Disputes Committee assess?

The disputes committee only checks the facts. The decision of the Disputes Committee is binding.

Are there any options after the Dispute Committee?

Yes, you can appeal to the Enterprise Chamber ('Ondernemingskamer').

What exactly does the Enterprise Chamber do?

The Enterprise Section does not look again at the facts as the Disputes Committee has already done so but checks whether the Disputes Committee has correctly applied the law.

Who is the chairperson of the council?

The council must choose a chairperson and one or more deputy chairpersons. In practice they often lead the meeting. In addition, the chairperson, or if he is unable to attend, a deputy chairman, represents the council in court. The procedure for appointing a chairperson and matters such as the term of office can be regulated in rules of procedure drawn up by the council.

How do I get an overview of the educational institution of which I am a participation council representative?

At the beginning of the year, the institution board is obliged to provide the central council with information about the composition of the institution board, the supervisory board, the organization within the educational institution and the main points of the policy already adopted. In addition, material is often available as part of the transition period from the previous council.

Can I put a topic or proposal on the agenda of the Executive Board?

Yes. You can make proposals and express views. The EB is to give a written response to the council within three months. The EB must also give the council the opportunity to discuss this topic at least once.

How do I increase the chance that my proposal will be accepted?

A proposal must be adopted with a simple majority of the council. With an undivided council, where there is an equal number of seats for students and employees, it is therefore important to get the employee part to agree on your proposal. When you involve the employee section in time when developing your proposal, you can work together. Your proposal can, if possible, be enriched by the input from the employee section or can count on support at an early stage. If the Executive Board is positive about your proposal, their support can have a positive effect on the chance that your proposal will be adopted in the council. Before you submit the proposal to the council, you can check with the EB how they think about your topic and you can try to build up broad support. Through these unofficial contacts it is sometimes easier to have a conversation about the proposal and you can work on obtaining a positive response from the EB.

How do I know which topics the council has right of advice on and which topics it has right of consent on?

The Executive Board must draw up regulations for the central council that, among other things, determine the matters to which the central council is entitled to consent and advice and what the powers of the decentral councils are. A number of subjects have been laid down in the WHW on which participation in decision-making has, in any case, right of consent or advice.

Do pay attention! The right of consent to (part of) the Education and Examination Regulations (Dutch: OER) rests with the central council at universities of applied sciences, unless the task of the Executive Board has been transferred to the program director. At research universities, the right of consent to the OER rests partly at the decentral council, and partly at the program committees.

Is there a training budget?

The Executive Board gives the members of the central council the opportunity to receive training. The amount of training must be coordinated between the council and the Executive Board, based on what is reasonable in view of the participation in decision-making tasks. The initiative for this lies with the (individual) council members, because they know which trainings they still miss.

Does the central council also talk to the Supervisory Board ('raad van toezicht')?

Yes, it has been legally established that the central council consults twice a year with the Supervisory Board of the educational institution.

Which information am I entitled to?

A participation in decision-making council is entitled to all information that the council reasonably needs to fulfil its duties. If the participation in decision-making council deems certain information relevant but does not receive it, the council can request it again and ultimately go to the Disputes Committee.

At the beginning of the year, the EB is obliged to provide information about the composition of the institution board, the supervisory board, the organization within the university and the main points of the policy already adopted.

The Executive Board informs the council in writing at least once a year of the policy it has conducted in the past year and of the policy intentions for the coming year in the financial, organizational and educational fields.

How often am I entitled to an official central council meeting?

The EB must give the central council the opportunity to discuss the general course of affairs in the educational institution with them at least twice a year.

In addition, the council is authorized to invite the EB of the institution at least twice a year to discuss the proposed policy on the basis of an agenda drawn up by the council.

What are the minimum rights of consent I have?

- The main points of the budget, for the first time for the 2016 budget;
- The institution plan;
- The design of the quality assurance system and the intended policy in the light of the results of the quality assessment;
- The student handbook ('studentenstatuut');
- The management and management regulations at a research university and the management regulations at a university of applied sciences;
- The choice of participation in decision-making systems;
- The policy of the institutional management when applying the profiling fund.

What are the minimum rights of advice I have?

According to the WHW, the central council at least has right of advice in determining or changing:

- Issues that concern the survival and the smooth running of affairs within the educational institution;
- The budget, which at least shows the amount of the institutional tuition fee. If, by General Administrative Order (Dutch: 'Algemene Maatregel van Bestuur', AMvB) the minister makes it possible for educational institutions to request a higher tuition fee for honours tracks, the budget must also show the level of this tuition fee.
- The general personnel and appointment policy (only the student section);

- The policy with regard to the institutional tuition fees and the tuition fees (only the student section);
- Arrangement of the board of the institution with regard to reimbursement of statutory tuition fees (only the student section);
- The regulation that the board of the institution determines for the selection criteria and the selection procedure (only the student section);
- The regulation that the board of the institution determines for the criteria and the procedure for dispensing with payment of the higher tuition fees (only the student section);
- The rules that the board of the institution determines with regard to the selection (only the student section);
- The rules that the board of the institution establishes with regard to study choice advice and activities (only the student section).

In addition, unsolicited advice may always be given.

At what time should the EB ask the council for advice?

The advice must be requested at such a time that the advice can have a substantial influence on the decision-making. As a council, you must also be given the opportunity to consult with the Executive Board before the advice is issued.

How do I know what the EB does with the advice of the council?

The EB must inform the council in writing as soon as possible of the way in which they follow up on your advice.

What if the EB does not want to follow the advice or does not want to follow it entirely?

The council is given the opportunity to conduct further consultations with the institutional management before the decision of the Executive Board (with which they do not or not fully adopt the advice) is finally taken.



INTERSTEDELIJK
STUDENTEN OVERLEG

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Over het ISO

Het Interstedelijk Studenten Overleg (ISO) is de grootste landelijke studentenorganisatie van Nederland en behartigt de algemene belangen van bijna 750.000 studenten aan universiteiten en hogescholen. Het ISO is vaste gesprekspartner van onder andere het ministerie van Onderwijs, Cultuur en Wetenschap, de politieke partijen en de koepels van universiteiten en hogescholen.

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