



# The 'Partij voor de Utrechtse Student'

Election program 2020-2021



Dear reader,

Since 2007, the PvdUS (Party for the students of Utrecht) has dedicated itself to represent all active students. After all, studying is about much more than taking exams and getting credits. During your student years, you become independent and develop yourself. I value the fact that students can develop themselves alongside their studies, for example by joining a social, sports or study association. This can vary from small sports associations with a few dozen members to large social associations with thousands of members. The PvdUS represents the interests of all these students in the University Council. Our candidate list reflects the wide variety of students and opportunities in our beautiful cathedral city.

Unfortunately, this active student life has been under pressure in recent years. Due to the student loan system and the competitive atmosphere at the university, the pressure on students is high. Added to this is the performance pressure from education itself, the uncertainty surrounding housing and the inflexibility of studying.

In these strange times, it is easy to forget the things that are important to our party, but normal life goes on at the same time and the problems at our university and in our city do not disappear. This crisis should not distract us from our goals: I am confident that the Utrecht student sees these elections as he or she would normally see them.

Our party is there to make sure that studying becomes, is and will remain a great time. In this election programme, we set out nine themes that we want to work on in the University Council next year.

With kind regards, I sign,



Pepijn Lapidaire  
Party leader, Partij voor de Utrechtse Student '20|'21



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## Flexibility

### Flexibility, especially during the corona crisis

Times are strange. The coronavirus has thrown a spanner in the works for many. The bustling city centre isn't the same. The UU and its student organisations have had to close their doors temporarily. The PvdUS values high-standard education greatly, as well as student life through which students can develop themselves optimally. PvdUS believes it's important that students are given the best possible opportunity to organise their education in their own way. This way, they can get the most out of their time as a student.

### University Library access policy

In the coming year, we want to ensure that a number of aspects are facilitated to the student's advantage. The University Library is a second home for many students. For many, studying in a cramped student room surrounded by noisy housemates is impossible.

The description is in the name: the library is for university students. However, these study places are currently shared with students of the Hogeschool Utrecht (University of Applied Sciences) and even a few high-school students. There are not enough places to accommodate everyone. That is why we plead for an adapted admission policy. We want the University Library to only be accessible for students of Utrecht University, throughout the whole year. We also strive for the closing time to be extended from eleven o'clock to midnight throughout the year.

### "Flexstudying": paying per credit and enrolment at any time

Tuition fees are a monthly expense that is difficult for many to cope with. That is why the PvdUS advocates a flexible system. We advocate for a system in which a student only pays for the courses they enroll in. Fortunately, thanks in part to our work, a pilot has already been started in 2019 to make this possible for a number of study programmes. We would like to see this extended to as many study programmes as possible.

The corona crisis is hitting it hard, but that doesn't mean that ambitious students should put their ambitions on hold. An extracurricular function can lift a student's development to a higher level. But what if a crisis like the present one blocks these activities? Not a desired, but unfortunately it is a real possibility. The student starts his or her extracurricular function in good spirits and does not enroll in any courses during that period, or that year. Then imagine a second wave of the corona can cause work to grind to a halt once again. Picking up studying, then, is a logical decision for the student. That's why we want to make it possible for students to enroll in courses later on even though they may have indicated that they would not enroll in any courses because of their extracurricular activities.

### For you, PvdUS aspires:

- To expand UB opening hours
- To expand UB access policy
- To be offered the possibility to register for courses at all times
- To expand the "flexstudying" pilot



## Education

Education is a top-priority. The step between high school and university is big, and new and greater responsibilities are involved. Finding your own way is difficult, but it is an important aspect in a student's development. In doing so, the university should not adopt an overly scholarly attitude, and should leave students as much freedom as possible to respect their flexibility and freedom of choice. In addition, the PvdUS attaches great importance to guaranteeing the quality of education. The PvdUS is committed to education at a high level, for the benefit of the student.

### The scholarly attitude of the university

The scholarly attitude of the university is reflected in various aspects. Take, for example, the obligation to attend lectures, which still applies to many study programmes. We believe that it is the student's own responsibility to attend his or her lectures, and that a sanction for absence is not appropriate. Being able to study flexibly in everyone's own way is something the PvdUS advocates.

The hassle of shifting between seminars is another example of the lack of independence that the university leaves to the student. It often happens that a student is not allowed to shift between seminars without a clear reason. The PvdUS is in favour of a more flexible policy when it comes to shifting between seminars. This is in line with the policy to offer students room to organise their studies independently.

Furthermore, the scholarly attitude of the University is evident from the repair policy that is used in some studies. The rule that you can receive a maximum of a 6.0 when retaking an examination does not encourage you to do your best for a retake, and certainly has a negative effect for honours students who have to deal with a grade requirement. It seems that with this policy, the university wants to prevent students from counting on the resit too quickly, without really working for it at the first opportunity. In our opinion, the (fairly strict) minimum mark requirement of a 4.0 on the first examination already prevents this. Barely any other university in the Netherlands carries out this rule and even within Utrecht University this repair policy is not applied everywhere. A central resit policy is something we are committed to, in order for all students to receive equal opportunities.

### Quality of education

For the PvdUS, the quality of education is an important point of attention. Especially in these times in which physical education remains impossible for the time being, the PvdUS wants online education to be kept at the right level. Transparency, clarity, and knowing where you stand are important points that the PvdUS wants to make a case for.

At a more general level, the university must of course continue to keep up with today's developments. In various quality studies, Utrecht University scores well. However, the results of those studies are often based on the number of scientific publications published by researchers associated with that university, and the awards that the same researchers receive for these publications. In this way, the interest of the student is quickly overshadowed. The PvdUS pleads for a guarantee of the quality of scientific research with regard to publications e.a., but above all for the improvement of education, especially on points that affect the interests of the student.

### For you, PvdUS aspires:

- A resit worth more than a 6.0
- Ensuring the quality of education, for the benefit of the student
- Reducing the university's scholarly attitude so that you can study flexibly



## Digitalisation

### Drawing lessons from corona

We can't ignore it: everything will be digital in the near future. Lectures, seminars, meetings, deadlines, we have to find a way to deal with the 'new normal'. Because everything takes place online now, it is the time to look ahead to the future and see what consequences this digital era has on our working methods and on our education. What can we learn from this present quarantine situation in terms of digitalisation, even when physical education gets reintroduced?

### Flexibility through digitalisation

With regard to digitalisation, the recording of lectures is a step in the right direction. It contributes to the flexibility students need when organising and planning their courses. This way, the material can be reviewed wherever and whenever. The same goal will be achieved by recording knowledge clips on a larger scale. These will be an asset to the quality of already existing lectures. Thanks to knowledge clips, lecturers will get the opportunity to discuss subject matter more in-depth, as the basics will be provided within the clips. In these strange times, PvdUS wants to guarantee the quality of lectures recorded at home. Technical support can be given to teachers if necessary. In the long run, PvdUS believes that knowledge clips and the recording of lectures will increase the flexibility offered to students.

### Transition from Google to Outlook

An important development at the UU in the digital field is the transition from Google to Outlook. This is a major step that will bring many changes. The PvdUS considers it important that students are guided in this as much as possible and that this transition does not come at the student's expense. Therefore, PvdUS wants to monitor the transition process and advocate extra help for students if necessary.

### One complete student portal

The university's digital environment is a jumble of platforms: Blackboard, Remindo, Revisely, Osiris, MyTime-Table, to name just a few of the programs being used. Especially if a student is new to the university, they can quickly lose overview. This can have major consequences, for example if they have to sign up for courses. The introduction of one digital student portal is something that is needed to overcome this inconvenience. PvdUS advocates this.

### For you, PvdUS aspires:

- Drawing lessons from the corona crisis and continuing digital developments
- To realise more recordings of lectures and knowledge clips
- A well-guided transition to the new email service
- One digital student portal



## Student Association life

Utrecht, the city known for the versatility of student associations. Besides studying, this form of sociability is a good outlet for many students. PvdUS wants to help associations in the future to run their association life as carefree as possible, especially since they can use some extra help in this insecure era.

### Physical introductory periods as soon as possible

A new year starts with an introductory period, the perfect opportunity to get to know each other. With a beer in one hand and a bitterbal in the other, students are offered the opportunity to get acquainted with their fellows. Such introductions normally take place physically. Unfortunately, for the time being, these activities will be digital instead. Student life is the best life, in which a foundation is built for the future and friendships are made for life.

The PvdUS finds it important that students can look each other in the eye when they make these commitments. That is why we advocate for introductory activities to be shifted so that they can still take place physically. That the world is completely upside down is a fact. We will have to maneuver through it. But delay does not have to lead to adjustment. We propose to shift all introductory activities that normally take place in August to another time within the academic year.

### Freedom for student associations to carry out their own culture

There is a specific kind of culture within study, sports and student associations. In order to safeguard this multi-cultural student society, the PvdUS pleads for more freedom for the associations to shape this in their own way. The financial support given by the UU should not be an obstacle to the creative interpretation of the student associations. The point of view should be: trust, instead of distrust.

### More money for student associations

Utrecht is a student city. Besides studying, the association life is very important for the mental health of the students. Students have a place to relax and also to build a social life. A happy student, is a healthy student. That is why we want the financial tap to continue to flow from the UU. In order to optimize associations and the health of students, the university must be able to facilitate these resources. Of course, this support comes with conditions, but transparency and communication are the keys to optimal cooperation between student organisations and the university.

### For you, PvdUS aspires:

- To support student organizations during this crisis
- Allow physical introductory activities in the academic year
- Freedom for associations to carry out their own culture
- Trust, instead of distrust
- More money available for student associations

## Student Sports

An essential part of student life is student sport. Last year, for example, more than a fifth of the students from Utrecht were members of a student sports association. The PvdUS is proud of what it has meant for sporting students over the past year in collaboration with the University, but at the same time we're also aware of what can still be improved. The future of sports facilities at the Uithof and guaranteeing the quality of the rowing water in Utrecht are two key points that the PvdUS will work hard for.

### Subsidies for ALL sports associations

Over the past four years, the PvdUS has worked hard for the future of student sports associations in the participation council. The university affiliated organisation U.S.S. Mesa Cosa imposes the condition on sport associations that all members must purchase an "OlymPas". Only if the association meets this condition can it claim a subsidy from U.S.S. Mesa Cosa. Since this subvention would not outweigh the costs, the SHOT-associations (SPIN, U.S. Histos, A.U.S.R. Orca and U.S.R. "Triton") chose not to participate in this system, thus receiving no subsidy. After all, they have their own facilities and therefore did not need those of Olympos. Last year, using the PvdUS as an intermediary, the sports associations signed an agreement with Mesa Cosa on the distribution of sports funds. As a result, after a long period of time, the SHOT associations have the prospect of a subsidy stream again.

### Merwede Canal

However, a new threat to student sport in Utrecht has arisen: the expansion of the number of bridges over the Merwede Canal. The municipality plans to build five new bridges in order to make the Merwede district more compatible with the rest of the city. This threatens the future of the Utrecht rowing water; you don't win a Varsity by stopping in front of a bridge every 100 metres. The PvdUS pleads for an active lobbying attitude of the UU in favour of the interests of sports students towards the municipality in these kinds of issues.

### More space for student sports at Olympos

Another urgent problem is the overcrowded sports fields of Olympos. The sports centre does not have enough space to allow students to play sports properly. In both the short and long term, student sport, which is so important for the health and well-being of students, is under pressure. The PvdUS therefore sees the redevelopment of the Uithof as an excellent opportunity to give student sport the space it needs.

### For you, PvdUS aspires:

- Actieve lobby-houding van de UU voor de sportende student
- Behoud van de kwaliteit van het roeiwater
- De ruimte om te sporten op de Uithof



## Student well-being

More and more students are experiencing the negative effects of the pressure to perform. In order to have a chance in an increasingly competitive labour market, students are constantly looking for opportunities to improve their resume. This is a disaster for mental health, especially combined with the current financial pressure of studying, studying itself, often combined with a job.

### Continuance and strengthening of the Task Force Students Health

The PvdUS sees this problem as very important and has therefore also taken its place in the Taskforce Students Health. We believe that everyone should be able to get the most out of themselves in a responsible way. This Taskforce has made great strides in helping students with complaints, but the structure by which help is offered needs to be further improved. The PvdUS would like to see the Taskforce continued on a permanent basis while receiving more support.

### Student well-being and the coronacrisis

The PvdUS sees a number of new developments in the field of student health in 2020. First of all, the corona pandemic is of course the most urgent point of attention. Despite the fact that students fall outside the risk group, we will also have to adhere to government and university guidelines in order to slow down the further spread of the coronavirus as much as possible.

### The worrying use of stimulants

Of course, the corona pandemic does not mean that the structural problems in the field of student health should be allowed to get ignored. The strong increase in the use of drugs such as ritalin and the ease with which this can be acquired are a major concern. The PvdUS advocates that the dangers surrounding the use of these substances should be clearly addressed.

### Clarity for help-seeking students

In addition to the increasing use in concentration-enhancing drugs, the entire chain in which a student seeking help ends up in, must be improved. Often students do not have a clear view on who their counsellor is during their studies and contact with counsellors is very limited. The PvdUS pleads for a more active role of counsellors and tutors so that students seeking help know immediately who they can turn to with their problems and who can help them along further.

### Early detection of problems through student organisations

The PvdUS sees an important role for student organisations in helping students with problems. They often have a better insight into the social lives of students and are therefore more readily aware of potential health issues with students. Student organisations should be supported by the university so that they can sound the alarm as early as possible.

### Strive for a change of culture

The PvdUS does not see this as a problem of individual cases but as a consequence of the system as a whole. It is therefore necessary to look from above and system-wide at how we can prevent psychological problems instead of remedying them. We are committed to a change of culture at the university. People need to become aware of the negative consequences of performance pressure and realise that there is no longer a taboo on talking about psychological problems. We also want the university to do more to recognise psychological problems among its students and to offer them accessible and professional help. It is time for the university to take responsibility for the well-being of its students in a sensible way.

### For you, PvdUS aspires:

- To prevent welfare problems instead of cure them.
- Help students with problems sooner through confidential counsellors at student organisations.
- Accessible student psychologists and proactive student advisors.
- A less competitive environment: studying with each other and not against each other.



## Student housing

It's increasingly difficult for students to find a house in Utrecht. Many students have to travel long distances, while continuing to sign up for introductory housing evenings without ever finding a place to live. Especially for international students, this is a real problem, as they are less familiar with the Utrecht housing market.

### **A liveable Utrecht Science Park with more housing**

The PvdUS wants the UU to make an effort to create more housing at Utrecht Science Park. In addition, the university should make an effort to make the Uithof more attractive place to live. This also reduces the pressure on the housing market in the city centre. In their zoning plans, the university should collaborate with student housing organisations to make space available at the Science Park. Facilities additionally need to be improved: think of a fully-fledged supermarket, a larger range of cafe establishments that will remain open after the university closes, and better access to the Uithof at weekends and in the evenings.

### **A smoother permit system for student residences**

At the moment it is very difficult for landlords to receive a permit for student housing. As a result, the students living in these houses are unable to register with the municipality and therefore miss out on many facilities. The UU, as an influential organisation in Utrecht, can use its lobbying power within the municipality of Utrecht to make this policy more flexible. PvdUS wants to pressure the university to use this lobbying power.

### **For you, PvdUS aspires:**

- A smoother permit system for student residences in the city centre.
- A more accessible housing market for (international) students.
- Better housing at the Uithof.
- A liveable Uithof.



## Sustainability

Sustainability is an important social issue. Everyone must do his or her bit to create a sustainable and healthy environment in which future generations can grow up. This certainly includes the UU, which fortunately already does a lot of research into sustainability.

### Sustainable university building

In many university buildings (especially the city center), measures can be taken to achieve more sustainable buildings with less energy consumption. For example, temperature control in the buildings, automatic taps and, where possible, switching to double glazing. The university must also take sustainability into account within the new construction plans for the Uithof, for example by recycling and reusing old construction materials. This is the perfect opportunity to give the university buildings a future-proof design, in a sustainable way.

### PvdUS against paper waste

Wasting paper is also an important topic to which the PvdUS is committed. Approximately 80% of the exams are now digital, which is a good development. Nevertheless, there are still areas where improvements can be made. Partly thanks to our work, in 2020, a nota has been submitted to the Executive Board, which advocates the banning of large-scale submission of assignments on paper. The nota has been adopted. The university agrees that we should fight against paper waste. In the coming year, the PvdUS will see to it that this commitment will also be put into practice!

### Sustainable Development Goals throughout study programmes

A good recent development is the objective in the university's Strategic Plan to implement the UN's Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) in its education. In recent years, the PvdUS has been closely involved in setting up a task force that will structure and concretize this objective of the university. The aim of this implementation is to increase awareness of sustainability, especially in studies that are less concerned with it. Ultimately, the PvdUS aims to implement the SDGs in various courses offered by the university.

### For you, PvdUS aspires:

- Making university buildings more sustainable, and where possible also in the new building plans on Utrecht Science Park
- Less paper wastage, especially for open book exams and large scale submission of papers
- Increased awareness of sustainability among students, through the implementation of SDGs in education



## Internationalisation

Internationalisation is a growing concept within Utrecht University. Internationals are offered the chance to study in Utrecht, and the world wide network of the UU provides its students with the opportunity to travel to more than 500 locations in the world. PvdUS supports this type of internationalisation, as it contributes to personal growth next to the regular study programme. It's a good way for students to broaden their horizon, experience other cultures and explore the world. In addition, it contributes to the independence of students. Therefore, PvdUS is committed to making an exchange year as accessible as possible.

### Nota Internationalisation Student Participation

Last year, PvdUS wrote the nota on the Internationalisation of Student Participation. As a result, from 2020 onward, all documentation and communication concerning student participation will be bilingual. This promotes passive and active participation by internationals specifically in the University Council, and more broadly within the UU.

### More language courses for lecturers

UU's internationalisation, however, also offers some disadvantages. The UU forces a lot of degree programmes to have at least one course in English. This form of internationalisation forces English as the main instruction language, without keeping in consideration the (lack of) functionality of the use of English. From multiple students' experience, this goes at the expense of their education's quality. Often, teachers do not possess the right level of English. This causes frustration, especially when the whole class turns out to be of Dutch nationality. Therefore, PvdUS wants to collaborate with lecturers for them to expand their options on English courses.

### Quality of education above anglicisation

In addition, it's not always favorable for education to force lecturers and students to speak English during seminars. Students might feel embarrassed or inhibited to participate in discussion when they're insecure about their level of English, or simply do not speak English well enough. To give the UU the international character it aspires, we do support the use of English (or other international) literature. This way, anglicisation does not go at the expense of the quality of education during seminars.

### Protection of the Dutch language

Moreover, PvdUS is committed to protect the status of the Dutch language within the university. If the UU wants to stay connected to the Dutch society, there cannot be a large language barrier. After all, a majority of the students at the university are Dutch and so are the majority of its lectures. A switch from Dutch to English entirely, as for example happens at Tilburg University, will increase the gap between university and society. Whomever comes to teach, study and live in Utrecht should eventually learn the Dutch language. Therefore, the UU should provide sufficient language courses to facilitate this.

### For you, PvdUS aspires:

- Merely anglicisation when this is clearly functional.
- Internationalisation that does not go at the expense of the quality of education.
- Protection of the Dutch language within the university.
- The possibility to offer a broader package of language courses to students and teachers.



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