

Principles UvA-VU Science Education

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Motivation

The abortion of the joint housing plans requires us to rethink our ambition and approach towards joint educational efforts, both the existing one as well as potential new initiatives. In the aftermath we need to take into account the understandable disappointment and other emotions of all involved. These emotions should, however, not induce us to break down joint activities which are still worthwhile and feasible. For this purpose we postulate in this memo a number of principles for UvA-VU cooperation in education, given the new reality of bilocation of staff. These principles should give guidance, but are by no means strict rules.

Principle 1: Bilocation of programmes

The bilocation of staff has consequences for the location of educational activities. Curricula in which there is a substantial contribution (e.g. 20% or more) of both universities will be taught on two locations; the level of bilocation should roughly correspond to the level of contribution. The operational form of the bilocation is left to the program directors, in consultation with staff and students.

The principle of bilocation also applies to joint bachelor programs. However, the nature of bachelor bilocation requires extra attention. In particular, it is essential that bilocation does not stand in the way of student community building, which is an important factor in student satisfaction and study success. A notion of “primary” and “secondary” location can be considered, in particular in the first year.

Principle 2: Focus on Master portfolio

UvA-VU educational cooperation on Master programs precedes the housing plans. The strong rationale for joint Master programs is unchanged: together the two universities can offer a more diverse and wider set of Master programs of top quality, attractive for both Dutch and international students. Also, uni-location of Master programs is not as important as it is for Bachelor programs, provided proper scheduling is done (e.g. no travel between locations on a single day).

Opportunities for exchange of elements (courses, research projects) between related Master programs can be organised if there are mutual benefits for all involved, but without complicated organisational or financial implications.

Principle 3: No strict location profiling

The housing plans were coupled to a thematic profiling of the two locations (ASP: Science for Sustainability & Fundamentals of Science; VU Campus: Human Life Sciences &

Information Science). This profiling cannot be realized in the new reality of staff bilocation and therefore not used anymore as guiding principle for location of educational programs.

Principle 4: Identity

In the past the joint programmes and joint degrees have led to loss of identity of students with respect to their (co-)host university. This unintended development was in fact one of the hurdles in the talks with the student councils when discussing new joint programs. UvA and VU must implement simple but effective methods so that it is clear for a student at which university(-ies) he/she is studying, and, at the same time, make clear what the added value is of following a joint program.

Principle 5: Fair division of costs and benefits

UvA and VU have different cost models for financing educational activities. Efforts to come to identical models are not likely to be pursued further in the new situation. This implies that for educational programs with joint efforts we have to rethink the financial agreements, such that they do justice to both the UvA and the VU resourcing model, with principles that are simple and transparent.

Principle 6: Solving admin issues remains top priority

Because the joint educational efforts continue, albeit in a bilocation fashion, all the administrative problems identified earlier still need to be addressed. It is essential not to let the sense of sense of urgency slip away; the universities should progress in this with the intended speed. Our students deserve no less, and all teaching staff need to be supported efficiently so that they can concentrate on their prime task.