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Bètastuf Policy Plan 2018-2019



BÈTA STUDENT FEDERATION

Introduction

Bètastuf was founded in 1986 to act as a uniting community for all student representatives in the Faculty of Science and Engineering (FSE). It allowed students to work together to accomplish their mutual goals regarding student related matters on the faculty. Today, Bètastuf is a well-established organization that strives to represent the collective opinion of the beta students of the University of Groningen.

For the academic year of 2018-2019, the board of Bètastuf will consist of the following members:

- Lisl Miedema, Chair
- Joeri ten Kate, Vice-Chair and Assessor of the Faculty board
- Henriëke Polinder, Secretary
- Jasper Somsen, Treasurer

In the following document, the board of 2018-2019 states their plans for the next academic year. The first section provides a brief summary of the main objectives of Bètastuf. The second section covers the structure of the Bètastuf meetings (Meeting Management). Relationship Management, Project Groups and Activities will be discussed in the subsequent sections. The board of 2018-2019 hopes for the support of the Bètastuf community concerning their policy plan.

The board of Bètastuf 2018-2019



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Objectives

Bètastuf acts as a uniting community for all student representatives in the FSE. Throughout the years, six objectives can be distinguished with respect to its role in the student community of the FSE. The objectives are expounded below:

- **Provide information:** to inform all student representatives about current topics, issues and activities concerning education and research in the FSE.
- **Organize students:** to organize activities through which student representatives meet, share ideas and work together towards common goals.
- **Facilitate:** to provide a platform for students from the FSE to meet and to facilitate collaboration among these students.
- **Advise the FSE:** to forward policy proposals and to advise from the Bètastuf community to the faculty board by e.g. outcomes of brainstorming and final reports of Project Groups.
- **Unite:** to unite all student representatives under the Bètastuf umbrella and overcome barriers in order to work towards common goals.
- **Representation:** to represent, through its members, all FSE students as much as possible and to ensure that FSE students are adequately represented at university level, through close contact with the FSE representatives of the University Council student faction.

Outreach

Bètastuf has been established as an organization to connect student representatives of various positions with each other. The organization of student representation can be seen as complex and rather formal. Therefore, the board of 2018-2019 wishes to be accessible to all students who are interested to work towards the improvement of the FSE, even if those students are not a formal student representative. Bètastuf strives to represent all student representatives studying at the FSE and in doing so, information about what Bètastuf is and offers should not be hard to find for these students. The board of 2018-2019 aims to improve this by making more information readily available to students by making use of the Bètastuf website and Facebook.

Website

Nowadays Bètastuf administers a neat website that enables the student representatives to increase their visibility. The board of 2018-2019 aims to expand the site by including the policy plan and keeping it up-to-date by e.g. providing the courses and trainings that will be given this year and for which students these courses are available.

Facebook

We feel that the Facebook page can be put to use more often. We aim to augment the visibility



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about what Bètastuf is and does by keeping the Facebook page up-to-date about what has been organized and present the formal meetings as an event. In addition to this, a platform can be provided to the student representatives to increase their visibility as well. To make sure interesting updates will not be forgotten, a media action plan could be developed by the board.

Meeting Management

The board would like to continue the current setup of having a meeting once every six weeks. Including the keynote speaker, brainstorm if appropriate and social drinks afterwards at Het Heerenhuis.

Meeting layout

In general, the composition of a Bètastuf public meeting will be as follows:

Formal meeting

Every formal meeting will start with a pre-approved agenda. This is where voting, if required, will take place following the voting procedures and guidelines as established in 2015 (see appendix 2). In order to provide all invested parties the change to read all documents, the board will make sure that all documentation will be available to the community at least 1 week before the meeting in question.

Keynote speaker

Every meeting, effort will be made to invite a keynote speaker who is relevant to the theme of the meeting. Afterwards, the possibility will be given to ask questions and have a discussion regarding the topics discussed.

Themes

As done the last years, the board of Bètastuf likes to attach themes to each meeting whereas speakers that are relevant to the theme will be invited. These themes can also function as kickoff points for a brainstorm. The board of 2018-2019 shares the opinion that brainstorms are only organized if the theme is a fitting subject for discussion and therefore leading to a useful outcome. Below, some themes are mentioned and explained as to why they can be to the interest of the student representatives that are visiting the meetings. It is possible to expand upon these, or remove some as the year progresses.

- Mental Health

The attention for the mental health of students on our university is increasing. We think this topic is highly applicable to a lot of students since they are exposed to a growing amount of responsibility as their curriculum proceeds. Therefore, we would like to invite a speaker that lectures about feelings of stress amongst students and how to prevent these.



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- *Quality Agreements*

In the former academic year, a brainstorm is held about the quality agreements: the agreements with respect to the funds that are released by repealing the scholarships. The aim of these funds is to gain a maximum increase in the quality of the education and the agreements have a time span from 2019-2024. Students and staff are represented in the decision making process on where the funds should be invested in the FSE. Therefore, the board would like to invite a member of the working group at the faculty that explores the investments of these funds to talk about the current situation and development

- *Diversity*

Last year, the male-to-female ratio of the University has been discussed and scrutinized. As diversity keeps increasing its importance in our society and university, we would like to shift the focus to our attitude towards the LGBTQ+ community or students with a disability, as it is of great importance for student representatives to know how to open up to these groups.

- *Sustainability*

Sustainability can be explained in many ways. One way of creating a sustainable university is to improve the faculty's buildings, as has been done by creating the climate neutral Energy Academy. We would like to invite a speaker that is able to address the facilities, difficulties and properties of such a building to create awareness and enthusiasm for sustainability.

Social Drink

All meetings will be followed by a social drink at Het Heerenhuis (Spilsluizen 9). This informal setting allows people from all kinds of organizations functioning within the FSE to discuss a wide range of topics.

Relationship Management

In this section, the board would like to outline what relationships we intend to strengthen and which ones seem adequate. External relations are vital to Bèstastuf since knowledge and common interests can be shared.

Study Associations

Boards of study associations are essential in maintaining contact with the student population. Efforts have been made to involve the boards more in Bèstastuf. The board of 2018-2019 strives to do so, by providing relevant keynote speakers and organizing soft skill courses and trainings that are to the interest of the study association boards. The proposed courses are discussed in detail under *Activities*.

Program Committees

Thanks to a formalization of the program committees, they are more easier to reach and Bèstastufs



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aims to improve the relationship with individual PC members. The board would like to support the PC's by organizing a special course for their field.

Faculty Council

We would like to involve the Faculty Council more in meetings and brainstorming if organized. Soft skill courses will be organized for Faculty Council members as well. Also, the board will organize a social drink the evening the results of the Faculty Council elections of 2019 are announced, to congratulate the new Faculty Council members.

Similar Organisations as Bètastuf

Bètastuf is not the only organisation of its kind within the RuG. Communication between these similar organizations might provide useful insights into how to tackle certain issues. In order to facilitate a dialogue, the board will look into the possibility of a social drink for all of these organizations. The board of 2017-2018 has been close to the board of Network of Arts, creating a fruitful relationship with them. We would like to maintain this relationship.

Project Groups

The board acknowledges the value a Project Group can bring Bètastuf in order to inform and advise the student representatives, but it is very important that the Project Group has a clear goal from the beginning. Last year, no Project Groups have been started and until so far, no initiatives have been brought up to start one this year. Since we don't want to lose the possibility to give students a chance to start a Project Group, the results and subjects of the finished Project Groups will be available on the Bètastuf website.

Activities

In this section we outline which activities we want to organize as the Bètastuf board of 2018-2019. We think these activities are vital to accomplish the objectives of Bètastuf and therefore we will strive to organize the following activities.

Skill courses

The board of 2018-2019 intends to continue providing soft skill courses that are useful for its members. In order to do this as effectively as possible, we will bring back the courses that received positive feedback, and actively seek out new trainings that might be relevant, e.g. the training for the Program Committees. Budget has been allocated for these courses, ensuring that they remain free for the participants.



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We identify three different categories of active students, i.e. students in Program Committees, the Faculty Council and board members of study associations.

Planned courses

These courses have already been arranged and will be given in the first half of the academic year.

- Intercultural Competences
- Meeting tactics

Possible courses

We are eager to facilitate the following courses:

- Conflict management
- Time management
- Effective teamwork and communication
- Campaigning
- Speed reading
- Program Committee training

Summer Weekend

Towards the end of every academic year BètaStuf organises the Summer Weekend for Student Representatives, and boards and their successors in order to facilitate a smooth transfer of knowledge. Naturally there will be another one of these weekends in 2018. This year it will be held from the 28th until the 30st of June.



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Appendix 1: Dates of meetings

Date	Notes
10 september	Last Meeting previous board
12 november	
7 januari	
25 februari	
15 april	Approval application committee BoB
27 mei	
28-30 June	Summer weekend
9 September	First Meeting Next Board



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Appendix 2: Voting Procedures and Guidelines

Voting Procedures and Guidelines

01-06-2015

Following the discussions of Bètastuf membership eligibility during the round table discussion of 13-4-2015 and the discussion evening of 11 5 2015 the board was asked to provide a clear policy on the voting procedure within the Bètastuf.

Purpose of voting

Voting is done when formal support of the Bètastuf community is necessary. Voting is done among other instances for the installation and discharge of application committees and memos that are to be sent to the faculty. Formal support indicates that the student community involved with student representation of FSE students within the university stands behind the subject up for vote, adding significant interest for the faculty to act accordingly in the case of memos or indicating significant support for the appointment of selected individuals.

Voting privilege

As the purpose of voting is show the support of FSE student representation the board declares the following students or student organizations to have formal voting privileges within the Bètastuf:

Individuals in representative functions (group A):

- Faculty Council members
- University Council FSE representative members
- Undergraduate School of Science student members
- Graduate School of Science student member

Representative student organizations (group B):

- board of Bètastuf
- Programme Committees
- Study Associations

Number of votes

The board declares students who hold a representative functions as mentioned under group A have 1 vote per person. Students from representative organizations as mentioned under group B vote on behalf of their organization and have 2 votes per organization. The board has decided to apply this distinction as during the aforementioned discussions a conflict in the voting balance came to light which ought to be addressed: The different student organizations have varying policies on Bètastuf meeting attendance. Some organizations discuss the agenda beforehand among themselves and send a single representative, others join the meeting with several members. Currently this gives a voting advantage to those organizations that show up to meetings with multiple people, even though their representative vote is valued equally to other organizations.

The board further differentiates between people representing an organization and those who hold a representative function on their own behalf. Students who hold a function on their own behalf also hold individual voting rights, chosen or selected individuals will not be asked or expected to provide a unanimous vote as this does not fit their representative functions. It can be said however that organizations represent a relative larger student body and this should be acknowledged in the voting procedure. The board agrees with this, as such it has decided to grant organizations 2 votes per



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organization. This also allows the organization to show nuances within the organization, for example by passing a double positive or negative vote, but also both a single positive and negative vote.

Attendees without voting rights

Students present at the Bètastuf general meetings who are not part of any of the aforementioned groups are welcome to discuss the subjects up for vote and provide the community with their input and opinions, but are not to vote themselves. They will not be asked to leave during the voting process as the board values transparency towards the student population.

Vote attendance

Only those who have formal voting rights and are present during the voting procedure have the right to vote.

When the vote concerns individuals

In the case of votes concerning application committees the members of the application committee will be asked to leave the meeting when the voting takes place due to safeguard the privacy of the voting members. Members of application committees who have voting privileges as defined under group A will not vote, as they will not be present during the voting procedure (also see 'vote attendance'). Members who hold organizational voting privileges as defined under group B are still allowed to vote, provided there is a second representative present to physically cast the vote. In the case of votes concerning memos the authors of the memos are not asked to leave during the vote and retain their voting rights if applicable.

Voting preparation

To establish a strong and effective voting mechanism the Bètastuf community will need the tools to properly prepare themselves beforehand. Therefore the board of the Bètastuf will provide the following:

- Clearly indicating which agenda points are up for voting

Furthermore, where possible the board will strive to provide:

- Accompanying documents for each subject up for a vote
- A voting addendum attached to these documents in which it is clearly stated what the Bètastuf community will be voting for and if applicable any additional voting procedures not covered by this document.

These measures will insure the Bètastuf community can adequately prepare themselves for the meetings and will allow representatives to discuss the topics beforehand with their organization to decide on their voting strategy.

Practical considerations

At the beginning of the Bètastuf general meetings the attendees list will be passed around. Based on this attendee list the board will decide on the number of valid votes that can be cast during the meetings. Organization representatives must have discussed among themselves beforehand who will physically cast the vote during meetings to avoid confusion during the voting procedure. If a single representative casts a double vote both hands need to be raised to indicate this. Every student and organization who holds voting rights is obliged to vote. If the number of votes cast does not equal the number of valid votes present at the meeting, the vote will be determined invalid and needs to be done again. The voting options are: in favour, against or to withhold.