

Minutes 257th FC meeting (ext)

Thursday May 23th 2024, 10:30 AM – 12:00 AM

FC members
Xena Welch Guerra (XWG)
Taslim Alade (TA)
Luca de Jong (LJ)

EB members
EB Secretary (SEC)
Dean of RSM (Dean)

Guests
Cluster Director of Academic Services RSM – representative for TER (TER-rep)
Project manager on Faculty Model (Project manager FM)

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Minutes

SEC: I haven't taken a look at the minutes yet, but I will comment on them via email.

Updates

Recruiting Deans

Dean: Inga Hoever is now our new Dean of Research, but we all know her from her position as Associate Dean of IDEA. It's good for you also to know that we're in the process of trying to find a replacement for her in that role as well. I hope in June we will be able to announce a new person in that role.

Internationalization

Dean: In terms of internationalization, not a lot has changed. Regarding the bachelor program in Dutch, the requirement there is that it shouldn't be more than one-third in English, where it's very likely that the way in which that will be judged will be on the basis of the exams. As far as we know now, that doesn't really pose a problem.

For the IBA, it is very likely that there will still be either imposed on us or requested by the government through self-regulation the idea of bringing down the number of international students. For RSM, even that doesn't necessarily need to pose a big problem, as long as we don't always need to use the numerous fixus number as the only instrument. For example, by slightly changing the requirements for the Dutch students, you could actually bring up the number of Dutch students in the cohort, and therefore, given that we have a numerous fixus, bring down the number of international students.

This is, apart from the more general feeling, I think, that all of this causes both international students and international staff to feel less welcome than they did before. So far, we haven't noticed a real decline, also not in interest.

Future proof

Dean: Since December, several things happened that rapidly changed the financial situation. There were for example the labor agreements and the change in 'referentieramingen'.

Now looking at the current situation of the government, I would like to name two things. The first is that it's unclear whether incentive grants will still be used in the way that they were intended and actually, whether or not they exist will be under scrutiny. I'm afraid that they will be out of the window, which means quite a big thing for RSM.

Secondly, as you've probably also seen, there is talk about the sector plans, which will potentially hurt RSM in two ways. First of all, we are part of what is called an SSH-breed sector plan on which we have hired anywhere between 10 and 15 assistant professors. If you read the text of the current plans, it indicates that they're going to cut those programs. However, we still have these people on the payroll and they are just normal part of RSM, so that means we have an additional financial issue. There is a lot of resistance about these plans.

One way or another, it means that the outlook has worsened in terms of financial situation. The CvB has approved the plans as we have discussed them with you previously. Now we are in the process of jointly looking at which measures we need to take in order to curb costs in a way that RSM will be future proof again. I think that will undoubtedly hurt because it's just too much to just go unnoticed, but I do think it should be possible in a way that will keep the strength and the core of RSM intact. It will take a heavy toll on a whole organization if you're in a situation where you need to curb costs to the extent that we currently need to do.

In that process the Faculty Council, specifically the employee section, will probably get a crucial role and responsibility. The amount of work that comes along with it might to some extent come as a surprise, so I think it's just good to be prepared and to also understand your needs in that, because I think that means that we need to facilitate that to the maximum possibility.

Question on public vs private funding

LJ: Just theoretically, to what extent is it possible to shift our international student population within IBA from EU students to non-EU students? Because that would mean that we would not be dependent upon government anymore for some part of the student population.

Dean: There are different answers to this. The first is that it would require us to start specific marketing campaigns, which at this moment in time we cannot because we can't recruit people for these types of programs.

Then I think the more general idea that you're alluding to is whether or not we should try and ensure a shift from public funding to private funding. However, you have to consider that research is highly dependent on government funding. Therefore, we also might need to think about other funding sources also for research, like second and third money stream funding. That's something that should also be part of the future plan, which is a route forward that is very promising for RSM, because I think there is a large market for the knowledge that RSM has, but it doesn't completely comply with our tradition.

Regarding completely new revenue streams, there could also be possibilities in for instance, something like the eMaster. This is basically a privately paid master program, completely accredited, completely quality assured, but through the private entity of the BV. Ultimately, perhaps even more important, it helps us to live up to our mission, because we can reach out to many more people than we currently can through those types of programs.

So, yes, you are absolutely right in saying that we need to think about whether or not our current mix in education, public and private, is future-proof.

Question on E-master

XWG: To follow up on this, who exactly would in our new setup of the EB be responsible for initiating this type of E-Masters?

Dean: When it comes to E-Masters at present, that has been the Dean of Education who will always be responsible for at least the quality of it. However, when it comes to the more commercial aspect of it and the mission-driven aspect of it, it's also the Dean of Engagement.

Question on role of DoEn in future proof

XWG: Okay, because there will be a different, separate discussion that we will be having in the near future with the Dean of Engagement, regarding his role in particular with regard to our budget. To what extent are we really putting this person on a mission of also future-proving RSM Foundation?

Dean: I'll give two answers to that. He has a central role, both in terms of at the BV site and certainly for Custom and Open, but also for the other programs. The same goes for the second and third money stream funds.

Second answer is I don't want the pressure of this to be on one person in the EB. I think this is an obligation on all of us. We need to move forward jointly.

Starter- and incentive grants

Dean: Regarding incentive grants we need to temporize a bit in order to see what will happen, also on government level.

SEC: The starter grants are embedded and up and running. The Dean of Research has said that they are working on something, but it's too early to discuss, so maybe in June or September she can say more about it.

XWG: Right, so currently all starter grant holders can feel safe that there are no government plans to kill those. But, it did occur to me that there is a somewhat unfair situation currently. For instance, when it comes to conference funding, if you have a starter grant, there is money for conferences, but the majority doesn't. It is actually quite a lot of money for conferences, so if the financial situation becomes more and more severe, then I do see that it becomes more and more symbolic.

Dean: Yes and that's a difficult one. The way in which we have discussed the starter grants within RSM was already immediately considering that type of justice. Back then, it was easier to accept because of the assumption that at the end of the day, everyone would get something due to incentive grants. If that no longer flies, I still think that with the money flowing to the departments and the investments in infrastructure, also on the individual level, we're helping the collective in the way that we've set this up. But yes, there will be a bit of an imbalance.

Faculty model

XWG: The Dean of Faculty was telling us in the agenda meeting was that you are new and there is a new project structure. So, maybe you can just tell us a little bit about that. So, what is your role? How does the new project structure look like?

Project Manager FM: I have been with RSM for a little over a year right now. I have a background in IT business consultancy and project management. As such, I have been asked to manage this project. So, what we have done so far is we have structured the project based on Prince2. The Dean of Faculty really wanted someone who could provide some structure to the project, because as I understood last year, it already had run, but with some delay due to lack of structure.

What we have done right now is we are basically past the preparation phase. The document that you have seen is a project proposal, a project brief, so not the final plan yet, but more of a proposal of how we are going to do it. Once that is basically approved by everybody who needs to approve it, we will move to the initiation phase, where we will set up the steering committee and basically start on getting more details towards working packages for the different working groups.

Working groups

XWG: Who will be in the different working groups? Is that already known or that will be decided later?

Project Manager FM: We know who will chair the working groups, which is mentioned in the document, but the different members of the working groups will have to be recruited at this point. It is also because the different working packages have not been fully defined yet, so based on that we need different people with different forms of knowledge and expertise.

LJ: How would you decide upon who gets into those working groups? Can people also request to be in the working groups?

Project Manager FM: Definitely, at this point we also ask the members of the previous working groups. They are right now discharged from their earlier positions in those working groups, but they are also invited to participate in the new working groups if they want to.

Timeline of different elements

XWG: We have been aware of the complexity, but initially we kept asking about the timeline to the whole process and there have been varying answers to that. It sounds really good to us that you are now in place and there is now a very systematic, structured approach to it, but it seems that we will be busy with that now for a long time, apparently. On the other hand, we do see that we already have a clear impact with the things that are already happening. Which elements will be the most difficult ones, the slowest to finalize? Where can we see the first or the latest changes being implemented?

Project Manager FM:

Workgroup 1 would be on education, on the education profiles. That is almost finished, but there are still some open endings. Everything right now depends on the steering committee being installed and getting started, because before we have them in place and before they have the appropriate mandate to start working on the project, we cannot start running anything. I can give you some guesstimates, but I don't know if that has a lot of value right now.

Dean: What we have experienced so far is also a kind of frustration with how long things take. And I think that also partly comes from two things. First of all, this is a complex dossier that strikes at the heart of who we are as RSM, so it requires a lot of discussion.

But secondly, I think we were unable to really structure the steps that we want to take in an efficient way. Think of having a moment in time to talk with stakeholders about a proposed change, going back to the drawing board, having a next discussion, and then coming to a pre-final thing, where people can still say something, and finally the real decision.

By having such a structure, we create clarity for ourselves and our stakeholders in order to ensure that we are on a path that will also lead to the deliverables that we have seen. For something as important as this, I think we should have that. While we can really be happy with what we have achieved already, we were also very much all aware of the fact that we had anticipated beforehand to be much further down the road with this. It is also fair to say that even with the deliverables, not everybody was holding hands, cheering and waving flags for it, so seemingly in the process, even though we tried to do it as careful as possible, we did not manage completely to keep everyone aligned with those plans.

LJ: Maybe then a small in-between question on the timeline, because I saw in the document that it said that the steering committee was supposed to be set up in April 2024, but I thought I heard from you that you were still in the process of setting that one up?

Project Manager FM: We're already behind schedule from the document and it's also mentioned in the document that there will be tweaks to the planning. Reason is that we divide our resources on all these different types of projects, who all influence the availability of resources, not just for organizing, but also input is shared among a lot of big initiatives. I think part of the dates that we have here are still feasible, but as soon as we have an update on this schedule, this is a live document, and we will update it.

Fast track opinions during process

TA: Do we have a system in place to ask people anonymously for their response to the faculty model, such that you can fast track, knowing what people feel about certain decisions, and how that can help to move forward in a faster way such that everyone can hold flags.

Dean: I don't think we have foreseen that. I do think we have a large and diverse group of people to actually reflect on them. Sometimes you get the feeling that there is also heterogeneity in terms of preferences within RSM about this, which may to some extent have an age component. I think it's good to have those gatherings but I'm not sure whether it should be anonymous, which would also create circles of similar people. It is good to have for instance the current tenure trackers in one room, and ask them about what they value about these career tracks, because they are actually the people that will move into them.

XWG: Clearly, there are different parts of the organization that have more or less opportunity, willingness to express their interests. And we see that for example the tenure trackers are very vulnerable and need to be heard, but there may be other groups, like PhD students, and in particular untenured lecturers on temporary contracts, which I think are in

a particularly vulnerable spot. Are there systematic institutionalized places where those would be heard or would have the opportunity to voice their opinion?

Dean: No, but I know that the Dean of Faculty especially measured the interests of those groups, also in the previous round. I think he would also be open to build in something that would satisfy this.

TER

LJ: What has changed compared to the first version?

TER-rep: Well, thank you for having me. Here we are again after one year. The TER hasn't changed much this year.

There is the minor programmatic little details, and there's the admissions update. Other than that, there were two articles that required our attention. The improvement options needed to be clarified, and specifically the access to the improvement option: which students can do an improvement option, and what is the cap on the grade.

Then the second one is a promise that we made in this room last year, which was that the article on debriefing and perusal would be aligned between the bachelor and the master there and would be straightened out. So that's what we did.

Improvement option

Regarding the improvement option, what we are now left with is a suggestion that improvement options are accessible to students with a failing grade for the first attempt between a 3.5 and a 5.5. With a cap, so the maximum grade you can get for improvement options, set at a 5.5. That's where we're at and I think that's the main issue that we can still talk about.

It's not final because the examination board was also asked for their advice. It is of course very strongly related to the rules and guidelines and their ideas on assessment. We're still waiting for their advice, but other than that, everyone would be on board so far with this new rule, which is quite clear-cut, obviously.

Debriefing

Debriefing and perusal were cleaned up, so that article has changed quite a lot. It's basically a copy-paste exercise from the assessment policy because we need to align those two documents. However, where the assessment policy is quite broad strokes, here we actually need to define how much time do lecturers have for A, B, C. One question that sort of keeps popping up a little bit is the timing. We suggested in the previous versions that debriefing, so standardized feedback like the answer models, needed to be posted very quickly after exams, like within five working days.

And there was now a request to postpone that a little bit, push that to the back because specifically someone from the Faculty Council said that open questions sometimes require

taking into account all the sort of broad variety of answers that students give. Teachers want to be able to still add those to your assessment criteria.

Perusal date

The perusal date was also still under discussion. First, the deadline for the perusal was the same as the deadline for publishing your grades, which is a bit weird because then you need to do two things at once.

Then we said that the perusal needs to take place seven days after publishing the grade, which also can be really impractical. I would like your advice on these two things because that's where I'm a little hesitant to make a decision.

Question on method of debriefing

LJ: Regarding the model answers, maybe a bit of a fundamental question, but why is it even necessary to provide model answers if we can also give students in-depth feedback at the perusal?

TER-rep: That's a matter of transparency. As lecturers we just need to be able to show the model and how the grades were decided.

LJ: Okay, but if you give an exam and you give the model answers five days later, someone might download it. This goes back to a whole different issue on like the perusal and comments, but what I experienced with fellow students is that if ANS contains a very detailed grading description of where you get points for, that may be even clearer for a student than having the model answers separately. Practically, it's the same idea, but you cannot copy an ANS exam to send to fellow students, which you can do for the model answers.

What we have also had is that we have teachers who publish indeed the model answers after a few days, but then you go to ANS and you see almost no feedback. I think that current system is actually a system that is not good for staff, because their exams get downloaded, published somewhere else, but also not ideal for students, because what at least from my experience from also fellow students, the ideal world for a student would be to just have very clear answers.

TER-rep: This is a matter of how you debrief your students and I think that is pretty much up to the lecturer and the specific type of course and specific type of assessment. There is room to do that in a way that is fitting for each course.

Time span on perusal and debriefing

TER-rep: The main question for us right now is about the timespan. Do you need to do that really quickly after the exam because students then still have the exam top of mind or do you give lecturers a bit more time and do you make sure that at least a couple of days before the perusal students have that insight before they look at their actual work.

XWG: We discussed that earlier both in the meeting, but I think it depends very much on the degree of detail that is expected. A model answer is no problem to provide, but the

more finer grained the allocation of points is, the more irresponsible to do that even midway through the grading process.

Only after grading everything, I really have a comprehensive overview and I can fairly put the final thing together that I want to communicate.

TER-rep: So then pushing it back towards the perusal moment would make sense.

XWG: If you want to have everything at the same time, then it should be late. But I still want to clarify those demands for transparency. It sounds great, but is it really the most important concern that we have as a university? It is also our intellectual property and about teachers who are running out of questions to ask.

You can provide disclosure to a student individually and then provide feedback individually without being forced to publish the entire model

TER-rep: It is not up to me to really. It is policy by the Dean of Education that we need this kind of transparency.

LJ: The way I see it is not necessarily that we should have less transparency, but I think that this is the wrong kind of transparency.

If you ask the average student, would you be okay not having the model answers, if it means that you then get very detailed model answers in your ANS program and have immediately your written work next to it, they would be happier with the second option. Then you are still very transparent, but you don't have to publish an entire exam.

TA: I completely agree with you that it should be after the grading. The reason is because creating knowledge is not based on the staff of the university alone, also on the students. So if you have a rubric, and students really wrote something very good, and that adds to the knowledge of what has been developed, that helps to incorporate what the students have brought in as a form of creativity.

Then secondly, I think we should be very careful. There's a thin line between transparency and creativity. You can be so transparent, then you start spoon-feeding. For me, I look at it as, what kind of future leaders are we building? Because sometimes some kind of demands that students request for, sometimes I feel they just want you to give them everything, such that they can think less, for example.

TER-rep: As for the second timeline that is in that particular article, what do you think is a good timeframe for the course? How much time should we allow for this to take place? Because it was worded to take place within five or seven working days, after publishing the grades. Is that workable, or should we allow for more time?

XWG: I think that's workable, because at the moment where I have released the grades, then everything should be in place.

TER-rep: And how about the improvement option in its current setting?

LJ: I think it is good to have this situation where you can't get higher than the 5.5.

I have one different thing on the debriefing session. It is nice to see that we are now actively also in the TER saying that, a perusal is not a negotiation opportunity. However, what I see

in the perusal now, is that the criteria for making a comment are strict. Only if an erroneous addition of points is made or if the lecturer forgot to assess a part of the test.

TER-rep: I agree with you, it shouldn't be so strict. As far as the rules here say, it doesn't literally say that's the only two things you can ask.

LJ: Yeah. Yeah. Yeah, I understand, but it does like feel like when it's exactly written in the same way, it does feel like we're heading in such a direction.

So maybe would it be possible to add something about learning opportunities or stuff like that. So, if a student actually wants to learn from their exam and wants to learn from their mistakes, I think that would be important to stress.

TER-rep: Yeah, I'm wondering whether we can either include something there or it should be part of the debriefing. Because it's also already a learning opportunity for students to see what should be the answer. That should answer the question of how you did do most of the times. However, of course you should always be allowed to ask a question to a lecturer.

LJ: Yeah, but during debriefing you do not have your own written work yet, so you do not see how something has been graded. It can be that during the debriefing you think that you have full points and then you see on the exam that it's different, so I'm usually wondering where is my thought process wrong.

TER-rep: Let me take it back to the Dean of Education and see if we can look at that. It's not excluded as it is worded now, but I understand what you're looking for.