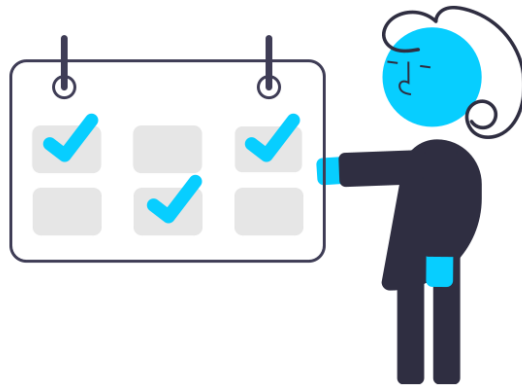




DE VRIJE STUDENT



Manifesto 2021 – 2022

Foreword

Dear fellow students,

This year, Independent Student will once again enthusiastically present its election program. We are once again committed to a free, responsible and student-oriented university. This way everyone can choose how they organize their student life.

We have had a very special year and for the time being it is not going to be normal. However, this does not mean that we cannot look ahead to the usual situation and how it can be improved.

We explain in this election manifesto what our plans are. We wish you a lot of reading pleasure and hope to receive your vote in May.

Sincerely,

The Independent Student

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Chapter 1. Student-oriented University

Students' opinions about our university follow two clear trends. The first trend is that students are largely happy with our university: we have good lectures, it is cozy and the sober Groningen atmosphere is good. The other trend was a bit more critical: according to many of us, the policy is too focused on success rates.

Of course, success rates are also important: they ensure that our university scores high in the rankings. However, this does not mean that this should be the only thing on which the focus is placed. **The Independent Student is committed to a policy that is aimed at *students*, not just their *grades*.** This chapter explains our plans for this.

§1. Flexibility

The university should encourage its students to develop in addition to their studies. This development can take place in many ways: by taking additional courses, by gaining experience by means of boards or side jobs, by building a network through associations, etc.

In addition, it is important that students learn to work independently. Many university rules hinder students in this. These rules may lead to higher success rates, but they will have to go because it is too late to become independent after your studies. The university should not patronize us, but should help students learn from their mistakes. (See also §3.1 Overview of Auxiliary Organs).

For this it is necessary that students can organize their own time themselves. **The Independent Student will therefore make education at the University of Groningen more flexible**, so that students have the freedom to develop optimally.

§1.1 Abolition of attendance obligation

Many faculties have a duty to attend (work) colleges. The Independent Student is against this for two reasons: developing independence is important. In addition, we know that the quality of seminars increases by abolishing a duty of attendance.

Developing independence

The idea is that you learn to work yourself in your student days and discover how you do it best. For this it is important that you decide for yourself how and when you study.

Unfortunately, this is made impossible by the obligation to be present. It may help students get their degree, but there is no room for self-employment. This lack of independence is a problem in the workplace: for most jobs, your supervisor will not check at what times you work on which task.

The obligation to attend should therefore be abolished so that students are given more independence.

Quality (work) lectures up

One of the consequences of the seminar obligation is that the quality of the lectures is low. Many students only come from obligation, with the result that many students are unprepared. The students who are prepared are often explaining the entire tutorial to fellow students, instead of going deeper into the material. As a result, the seminar adds nothing for the hardworking students.

The obligation to attend should therefore be abolished so that students who are (voluntarily) present can simply focus on the material.

§1.2 Abolition of homework obligation

Too often homework is mandatory for obtaining a course, without it being part of your grade. This is an infringement of the ability to develop independence.

This is why Independent Student wants to abolish this homework obligation.

§1.3 No maximum study duration

Independent Student wants students to decide for themselves how they organize their study career. One opts for a nominal study programme of four years and the other is doing a little longer.

We believe in studying without restrictions. **That is why Independent Student is against a maximum duration of study.** Independent Student wants Groningen students not to be limited in their abilities by unnecessary rules or arbitrary measures. The Independent Student is very much in favour of free studying!

§1.4 Flex studying

To shape your studies yourself, 'flex studying' is crucial. Flex studying means that you can pay per course, instead of for an entire academic year. This is the only way students are really free to organize their own time. Whether they want to spend this on a board year, a part-time job or caring for sick relatives, this should be possible in advance.

The House of Representatives has now approved the introduction of flexible studying in 2023, partly thanks to the efforts of De Vrije Student. We're pretty proud of that. **We will keep up the pressure so that flex studying is introduced as soon as possible!** Together with other innovative ways of teaching, an optimal curriculum can be put together for each student, with a healthy space for all those other activities that give us student time quality.

§2 Innovation

The world around us is changing: new techniques are being developed, studying is becoming more international and more and more things can be done digitally. **In order for the University of Groningen to keep up with its time, Independent Student advocates for educational innovation.** The plans for this are explained below.

§2.1 Recordings of lectures

Independent Student has been committed to making lectures available online for years. This gives students the opportunity to divide their own time. It is also fairer to have lectures available online: if a student has (been) ill and has therefore missed lectures, they can still look them back. In addition, lectures do not have to be excluded when teachers are abroad.

This year we finally succeeded! We must, of course, admit that this is a bit due to the prevailing pandemic.

Of course, we hope that the consequences of the pandemic will soon disappear. However, it would be a shame if this meant that lectures go completely offline. **The Independent Student will ensure that lectures remain available online next year.**

Privacy detention

However, The Independent Student believes that the privacy policy in this area should be tightened up. Currently, teachers can see when students have viewed which online lectures. This is an invasion of student privacy, so this feature must go. (See also Chapter 3. Privacy)

§2.2 Better digital platform

A good digital platform is important. Such a platform must have a clear layout, work well on your phone, everything must be easy to find and the website must be unambiguous and clear.

Since Nestor does not meet any of these requirements, **Independent Student advocates a user-friendly platform with an app**. In this app students can view all the necessary information about their subjects. Also, the website must work properly on all devices: computers, tablets and phones

Schedule in app

Independent Student also advocates a timetable app. In this you can click on the courses you follow once and these remain visible in your schedule. In addition, you can easily get timetable changes forwarded.

§2.3 Other Innovation

Of course, Independent Student has many more ideas for educational innovation. Also look at '§1.4 Flex studying', 'Chapter 2. Sustainability', 'Chapter 3. Privacy' and actually our overall program.

§3 Clarity

Our university is not clearly organized. No one knows what to ask where: students do not know what bodies are there to help them, how to participate or what the board is doing. **Independent Student wants more clarity for students**. The plans for this are elaborated below.

§3.1 Overview of Auxiliary Organs

Studying doesn't always come naturally. For this reasons, the University of Groningen has all kinds of bodies to support students: study advisors, student psychologists, workshops, etc.

Unfortunately, students often don't know where to go with what problem. This makes it difficult to ask for help, so it often happens (too) late or not. This is a shame: aid agencies don't work when no one can reach them. **For this we call for a clear overview of which aid agencies there are**. This overview must always be found online and sent to (novice) students at the beginning of the year.

§3.2 Insight into Participation Bodies

Much is also unclear in the area of participation. There are many bodies with which students can express their opinions and improve their education: faculty councils, education committees, public participation meetings, etc.

These organs are important, but do not mean anything to students who are not familiar with them. **Independent Student therefore advocates a clear overview of participation bodies**: what are they for and what do they do?

§3.3 Transparency of Governance

Independent Student has long been committed to a transparent board. The Executive Board is finally moving from the old model – where a lot happened behind closed doors – to a public model. We are proud of this, but we believe that transparency can be improved.

We believe that recordings and minutes of council meetings should be requestable so that directors can be better kept to their word. In addition, we want WOB requests to be handled faster. After all, this makes the work of student interest organizations a lot easier. **With this, Independent Student ensures a more transparent board**.

§3.4 Clarity on Sustainability

At the moment it is unclear what the University of Groningen is doing in the field of sustainability. We regularly hear that it is 'one of the priorities of the University of Groningen', but what exactly

happens to it is unclear. After all, at the moment we drink coffee from disposable cups, readers have to be printed and we have lectures in poorly insulated buildings.

This is why we want the university board to give students more insight into how they want to achieve 'a more sustainable university'.

Of course, Independent Student also has plans for a more sustainable university. See 'Chapter 2. Sustainability'.

§4. Further student focus

There are many more ways to make the university more student-oriented. Below are our plans for this explained.

§4.1 More study places

There are too few study places. Many students live in small, poorly insulated rooms with many roommates. Studying in a house like this is hard.

Students who live in a student house should not notice this in their study results. Figures shouldn't be based on the rent you can afford in any way. A good study place must be included in tuition fees.

More study places also leads to quieter study places. Crowds can then spread and dissolve. For this we have the following solutions:

Empty spaces as study places

Rooms at the University of Groningen are empty a lot. Especially during exam weeks. **Vacant spaces must be made available as study places.**

Libraries open longer

The Zernike Library also needs to extend its opening hours. As a result, the crowds disperse, reducing the lack of study places.

§4.2 Anonymous examination examinations

It is important that students are treated equally. **The Independent Student wants to guarantee equal treatment through anonymous assessment.** There is no need for teachers to know whose exam they see when checking. This can lead to discrimination. Anonymous assessment, encourages the privacy of students. (See also 'Chapter 3. Privacy').

§4.3 No exams on weekends

The weekend should be free for students. After all, many students no longer live with their parents, so the weekend is an opportunity for them to look up their family. Many students also have a part-time job on weekends to pay their rent.

This is why we want the weekend to be free for students. This can be arranged in different ways: it can be checked per study whether exams can be replaced by alternative forms of assessment, or the exam weeks can be better distributed.

§4.4 No exams between 10 and 10

Adolescents do not function properly until after 10 a.m. This is not due to laziness or because they party a lot in the evening. The reason is simply biological: your natural clock runs later during adolescence than in your adult life. Therefore, students should not be expected to take exams before 10 a.m. in the morning.

Even after 10 o'clock in the evening DVS no longer wants exams. The times when students are now expected to take exams are antisocial and only take into account the planning of the university. We shouldn't do anything to anyone at night.

This is why Independent Student no longer wants exams between 22:00 and 10:00.

§4.5 Rights in online exams

In online exams, students must have the same rights as in ordinary exams. Unfortunately, due to complicated online surveillance, this does not happen, while the needs of students are the same.

Independent Student wants the rights of students to always be guaranteed, so that they can also go to the toilet and take medication during online exams.

§4.6 More accessibility

Many UG buildings are not sufficiently accessible for wheelchair users. There are few disabled toilets, corridors are narrow and lecture halls are too cramped.

We want the university to provide more accessibility, since the university has to be for. For example, we want a disabled toilet on each floor and a wider layout of lecture halls and corridors.

§4.7 Deaf interpreter on request

University events must be intelligible to everyone. **Independent Student wants a deaf interpreter to be requested for every event** by the deaf and hard of hearing.

Chapter 2. Sustainability

Moving with the times means sustainability. Read about our plans in this chapter.

§1. Paper waste

A lot of paper is used in college. Since we still want to pass on our planet to future generations, Independent Student would like to reduce this. We want to do this in two ways: **we want to reduce paper waste and only recycled paper in the printers.**

§1.1 Preventing paper waste

Second-hand book system

Books are often newly ordered, while old books are dusted in the cupboard. This is a shame. **This is why Independent Student wants a book point with which second-hand textbooks are resold.**

At a book point you hand in your old textbooks. A code is pasted on each book and when this book is sold you will receive the amount deposited into your account. Of course, the selling price of the books then depends on the condition in which they are returned. As a result, students are cheaper and less paper is wasted.

Readers' PDFs

Often readers have to be printed mandatory, while the texts can be printed online. **Independent Student believes that all readers should be available as PDF.** The student can then choose whether they also want a printed version.

New pressure not mandatory

The difference between two editions of a book is small: usually it concerns one or two chapters. However, the new print is often mandatory, so you cannot buy your book second-hand. **For this is why Independent Student wants the new printing of books to no longer be made mandatory**, but that the deviating chapter(s) should be placed online as a PDF.

Digitally submit essays

Also, a lot of paper is wasted because essays often have to be submitted physically (and digitally).

That is why we want essays to be allowed to be submitted only digitally. This not only saves paper, but also time and effort for the students.

§1.2 Recycled paper in printers

Because students still have to have the opportunity to print their texts, **the paper must be recycled in all printers.**

§2. Reduce travel time

There's too much travel for college. This not only takes time and money, but is also harmful to the environment. **We want the University of Groningen to reduce travel times.** Below are plans for this.

§2.1 Recordings lectures

The Independent Student is for the inclusion of lectures. (See also '§2.1 Recordings of lectures'). This is better for both students and the climate. When the lectures are recorded, students do not have to get in the car, bus or train. That saves a lot of emissions. **So we are advocating recordings of lectures in order to save the environment.**

§2.2 Guest speakers online

The University of Groningen often invites guest speakers who come from a long way away. This means that they travel by train, car or plane. This is often for a single reading, which puts unnecessary burdens on the environment. **Independent Student wants guest speakers to travel less,** for example by doing their lecture online.

§3. Insulation buildings

Many university buildings are still poorly insulated. This means that many lectures and exams take place in draughty, noisy rooms.

The UG buildings need to be better insulated, so that students are no longer on the trek, can concentrate in silence and less hard-fired. **Independent Student goes for more and better insulation.**

Association buildings

The association buildings must also be more sustainable. **We want the University of Groningen to set up a fund for the sustainability of association buildings.** Associations can borrow interest-free from this. These loans are paid off from the savings in energy bills.

§4. CO₂-neutral new construction

The University of Groningen is a growing university. Every year, more and more students sign up to study in Groningen. More students also means more buildings. **Independent Student wants all new construction to be CO₂neutral.**

§5. Green Office

The Green Office is a department of the University of Groningen that supports sustainability projects of the university and student organizations. **The Independent Student wants to make more resources available for the Green Office.** In this way, this department can offer more grants and support for sustainable initiatives by student organisations.

We also believe that the Green Office needs to become more well-known. After all, having such an organization only makes sense when people also use it. This is why the university needs to give more

clarity to students about sustainability within the University of Groningen. (See '§3.4 Clarity on Sustainability').

§6. 'Goodiebags' only on request

Goodiebags are fun, but too often – together with their contents – they end up unused in a waste container. This is a shame, since information packages can also be sent online.

We want to reduce this waste mountain by only providing 'goodie bags' on request. In addition, we only want to fill these goodie bags with sustainable goodies and flyers made of recycled paper.

§7. Discount on Coffee

Disposable cups are used in our canteens. These are made from a mixture of plastic and paper, making them difficult to recycle. To reduce this waste, **Independent Student provides a discount on hot drinks when you bring your own mug.**

Chapter 3. Privacy

Student privacy is very important. However, digitisation increases the risk of data being on the streets. This risk must be shielded.

Studying must be possible in a safe environment so that students can study carefree. This benefits the academic learning process, is useful if the university does not want regulators on its roof and ensures that students with roots in less free countries can make use of freedom of expression.

§1. No tracking on Blackboard

One feature of Blackboard is that all its administrators can track students' click behavior. This is used to see if a student has opened an online lecture. This feature is not necessary and infringes on the digital security of students. **Independent Student wants a digital platform where 'tracking' is not possible.** (See also '§2.2 Better digital platform')

§2. Student data in public files

Too often, teachers share files that contain privacy-sensitive information about fellow students. This occurs when teachers conduct surveys, publish grade lists, or want students to provide each other with feedback.

Although it is against the law that this happens, the university does little about these malpractice. This is disrespectful to students and can cause legal problems. That is why Independent Student wants the university to tackle this problem. **Employees need to be better informed about the privacy law and compliance with it must be ensured.**

§3. Stop unsolicited recording

It is also important when attending seminars that the privacy of students is guaranteed. At the moment, however, recordings are often made of students without their permission. **Illegal withdrawal should stop as soon as possible.** After all, students must be able to refuse to be admitted. In addition, it is as neat as students know that they are being admitted.

§4. Best Practices

Not every faculty's privacy policy is a mess. At the faculty of law, for example, the privacy law is perfectly complied with. **Independent Student wants faculties to learn from each other in the field of privacy and for the university to focus on spreading good policies.**

Chapter 4. Career-oriented University

Everyone understands that studying is the first step towards a successful career. Unfortunately, the University of Groningen is not doing enough of this. Read our plans for a working career policy here.

§1. Better information provision

At the University of Groningen, the provision of information on internships, career opportunities and workshops is limited. Many students do not know what to do after their studies. This has to change.

The university needs to provide students with more active information about applying for a job, writing a CV, internships, etc. **The Vrije Student wants a clear career policy, in which everything a student needs can be found.**

§2. More career events

In many studies, too little attention is paid to the future. There needs to be more career events. This gives students insight into their career opportunities and the business community gets to know young talent. **Independent Student advocates for more career events.**

§3. University-wide career events

Career events are currently organized per faculty or study. Independent Student believes that these events can be better and bigger when faculties work together. This allows students to make the most of the career help that the university offers. **This is why there should be university-wide career events.**

Chapter 5. Educational quality

The University of Groningen has been high in the ranking of Dutch universities for years. However, The Independent Student sees that we must continue to improve in order to maintain a high quality of education. In this chapter we have drawn up plans for this.

§1. Student Assistants Training

Student assistants are often thrown into the deep end. This can therefore be seen in the quality of the seminars. **Independent Student wants mandatory training for student assistants.** These training courses must be both professional and about teaching itself.

§2. Trade evaluations

Professional evaluations often take place only after the end of the block. This is not effective, as the feedback is only given when nothing changes for the student. Many students are therefore not motivated to complete the evaluations properly.

The Independent Student wants a better method to evaluate courses.

§3. Requirements level English teachers

Often the English level of teachers is substandard. As a result, the lectures are difficult to follow. **This is why we want the English of teachers to be at the level.** This can be done, for example, with additional courses or by doing lectures – when possible – in Dutch.

Chapter 6. International Policy

Because the University of Groningen is so good, it attracts a lot of international attention. This means that we are getting more and more international fellow students and cooperation partners. This also leads to problems. Partners are not always reliable and the University of Groningen is not sufficiently equipped for the influx of international students. The housing market in Groningen is also bursting at

the seams. In order to preserve the quality of education, research and the student city, we need to address issues.

§1. International marketing

As long as there is a staff shortage at the University of Groningen and there is a housing shortage in Groningen, DVS does not want international marketing. The increase in international students is the biggest cause of the capacity problems. A stop on international marketing reduces the influx, solving these problems. **The University of Groningen is not allowed to invite students when there is no room for them.**

§2. Cooperation with other universities

Independent Student wants the university not to suffer academic freedom for cooperation with other universities. The Confucius Institute, which is now being worked on, violates the privacy and freedom of students who are Chinese citizens. Fudan University - which works together - also rejects academic freedom. We want students in Groningen to be free from censorship.

Therefore, without academic freedom, cooperation should not take place. The University of Groningen should pay attention to privacy violations by partners. A good test is to see if academic freedom is enshrined in the statutes of other universities. In this test, Fudan University falls through the cracks and we therefore want the cooperation with this university to be terminated. Only when such universities re-establish themselves behind academic freedom can cooperation continue. Until then, Independent Student wants us to take the nctv's warnings seriously. After all, without freedom, no academy.

§3. Dutch courses

It is good that international students take Dutch courses despite the low capacity. We wholeheartedly support every student who wants to learn Dutch. **Therefore, the course capacity should be increased.**

In addition, the level of courses should be increased. They don't go beyond A2 level at the moment. Independent Student wants this offer to be broadened to B2 level.

Chapter 7. Security

The university must be a safe (work) place for everyone. This concerns both the safety of the buildings and social security. The Vrije Student wants to underline a number of aspects. **We want to increase support in the areas of trust issues, harassment, privacy and fire safety.**

§1. Confidants

When something happens to you, you have to be able to go somewhere with it. This is what confidants are for. They are bound by a non-disclosure agreement and can advise you on seeking help. They can also enable the right channels when you are the victim of a crime. Confidants are therefore very important.

The university has only one confidant. Since we have almost 30,000 students, this ratio doesn't seem right. **This is why Independent Student wants more confidants: at least one per faculty.** In addition, it must become clear to students who these are and how they can achieve them. (See also '§3 Clarity').

§2. Harassment

The university must be a safe place to study. This means that there should be no (sexual) harassment.

Unfortunately, harassment can never be completely prevented. **The Independent Student wants it to be clear to the student what they can do and who they can turn to, when they are victims of harassment.** In this way, steps can be taken to punish the perpetrators. This makes the university a little safer.

Independent Student wants more fire safety and flight possibilities!

§3. Privacy

The university can only be truly safe when the privacy of its students is guaranteed. Independent Student is therefore committed to this. See Chapter 3. Privacy."

§4. Fire safety

The university buildings are not fireproof. The Independent Student wants visual fire systems. This concerns both more fire buttons and more signalling signs indicating escape routes.

There are also only a limited number of escape routes for people with a disability. Since the university must be safe for everyone, there must be an infrastructure that works for all students.

Chapter 8. Student organisations

Student organizations form the backbone of student life. They create the opportunity for students to get to know and develop new people. Independent Student supports these organizations and wants the university to cherish them.

Student organisations have an essential role in groningen student life. They organize thousands of events, from internships abroad to cultural events; and from social gatherings to sporting events.

Independent Student wants the university to support all student organisations, to help them improve and increase their valuable activities.

§1. Accreditation of associations

Independent Student wants a fairer accreditation policy. Earlier this year, we saw that an association could lose its accreditation on the basis of arbitrary and ill-founded motivations.

Association boards do what they can to comply with the rules applicable to them. If compliance is correct, the University of Groningen may not remove accreditation.

Independent Student wants more transparency about the accreditation process. The Executive Board can now remove accreditation without the reason being discussed with the U-Council. Such procedures violate trust between association and university. This can't be the point.

§2 Fund to make student organisations more sustainable

We also want the University of Groningen to support student organisations in making their buildings more sustainable. See '[Association buildings](#)'.

Chapter 9. Student accommodation

Many students experience problems finding a room in Groningen, or they have had a lot of trouble with it in the past. The room shortage will also not decrease in the coming years. For international students, this is an even bigger problem, they cannot look for a room through their own network.

Independent Student wants the university to take more responsibility in the room shortage. It is unacceptable that students should sleep in tents, hostels or on sofas at the beginning of the academic year.

This is why we believe that student housing must first be in order before the university can grow. Independent Student believes that these housing problems can be solved by spending less money on the growth of the university. The money saved can be invested in student housing. (See also §1. International marketing).