

Tuition fee free board year

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1. Introduction

On the 16th of February 2016 the House of Representatives of the Netherlands (in Dutch: Tweede Kamer) unanimously passed an amendment which enables universities to offer full-time student boards a tuition free board year, while remaining the right to borrow at DUO and to make use of the student travel product. This amendment passed the Senate (in Dutch: Eerste Kamer) on the 14th of June.

As full-time student boards contribute to the student society of a city and the university in general, it is valuable for the university to make this an attractive option for one to consider. Besides it offers extracurricular development for the student in that position as well. Most of the students that are active in these student boards, do not make use of the ability to follow courses or obtain ECTS, because they are too busy with their board related activities. From the research that VeSte conducted this also turned out to be the case in Wageningen. Despite the fact that these students do not obtain ECTS, they do pay the tuition fee for that ability. Now the law will most likely enable students to renounce themselves from this unused ability, while formally remaining a student.

LKvV, ISO and VeSte believe that a university should offer this option to all student boards that are considered full-time by the university. These students are basically paying a fee to receive education, while not receiving education. Taking the abolishment of the basic study grant in mind, LKvV, ISO and VeSte believe this could help to maintain a full-time board year being a reasonable option in a student's career.

2. The Amendment in the Dutch Law (in Dutch)

Na artikel 7.47 wordt een artikel ingevoegd, luidende:

Artikel 7.47a. Vrijstelling wettelijk collegegeld in verband met bestuursfunctie

Indien een student bij een instelling is ingeschreven voor een opleiding kan het instellingsbestuur eenmalig en voor een periode van één studiejaar die student vrijstellen van het betalen van wettelijk collegegeld, indien die student voltijds:

a. het lidmaatschap bekleedt van het bestuur van een studentenorganisatie van enige omvang met volledige rechtsbevoegdheid, de universiteitsraad, het orgaan dat is ingesteld op grond van de medezeggenschapsregeling, bedoeld in artikel 9.30, derde lid, of 10.16a, derde lid, de medezeggenschapsraad, of de studentenraad, of

b. activiteiten op bestuurlijk of maatschappelijk gebied ontplooit die naar het oordeel van het instellingsbestuur mede in het belang zijn van de instelling of van het onderwijs bij die instelling, mits de student gedurende die periode geen onderwijs volgt of examens of tentamens aflegt aan de instelling of een andere bekostigde instelling, en het onder a bedoelde lidmaatschap of de onder b bedoelde activiteiten niet commercieel van aard zijn.

Clarification (in English)

If you do not participate in education, it is weird to pay a tuition fee by law. The authors of this law therefore have the opinion that education institutes receive unjustified legal tuition fee from students that fulfil a fulltime function and subscribe themselves for a university to receive their study loan without receiving education or making exams. The activities done by the student have to be in the interest of the university and cannot be commercial. The authors think that when students choose for a tuition fee free board year, they are not allowed to receive education or make exams, also not at another higher education institute. Furthermore the authors state that this period can last maximum 1 year.

3. Definition of a full time board year and eligible boards

The definition of a full-time board may vary as different approaches exist. The Executive Board can state that the amount of FOS-months provided to a board member for his function is a clear indicator of a full-time board year. When this definition gets adopted and only the full-time board members who receive 12 months FOS are taken into account, the following boards qualify:

- Student Council (12)
- Board WSV Ceres (7)
- Board KSV St. Franciscus (7)
- Board SSR-W (7)
- WSR Argo (8)
- AID Board (5)
- SWU Thymos (6)

This will add up to a total of 52 students who will have the ability to do a tuition free board year.

4. Opinion of the full time boards in Wageningen

The Student Council asked the different full-time boards in Wageningen to write a letter about the tuition fee free board year as can be viewed in the attachment. We read the letters and made a summary of the findings of the different boards.

Thymos

Thymos is the sports organization in Wageningen. Sport is very important for your health and it is also proven that doing sports boosts your study performance. The university is aware of this and considers it as very important, according to the building of a new sports hall which was opened by Louis Fresco. The Thymos board dedicates a full year to organizing events and making sure that all the sports competitions and facilities are managed. Since their office is at De Bongerd, they rarely make use of the university facilities. Furthermore they don't follow any courses and exams, because of their board activities. They also point out that they experience a high financial pressure, because of the loan system that was implemented by the Dutch government a few years ago. The board underlines that keeping the 'sports image' of Wageningen is very important and that doing a board year should be made financially affordable to guarantee new board members of Thymos in the future.

Student Associations (Ceres, SSR-W, KSV)

The student associations in Wageningen are an important factor in making sure the student life runs smoothly. The amount of members is rising because of the growing student numbers at the university, so the workload of the board of the different student associations increases as well. Being a board member at a student association means that you have to be available from at least 9:00h until 19:00h every day of the week and most of the days in the evening as well. No time is left for following courses or using other facilities of the university. The boards emphasize that a board year is not only good for your own self-employment, but by doing this board year they are able to organize different activities that lead to self-employment of the members of the association as well. The boards organise different educational activities and provide members with a big network that can be used when the members are looking for a job after their study. Self-employment can be partly taken away because of a too high financial burden, both for the boards as for the members of the student associations. Doing a side job during your board year is almost impossible since you are working during the week. But it is important that doing a board year will still be a financially feasible option for everyone and not only one for an elite of students. A board year should be kept attractive and affordable.

Argo

We didn't receive their letter

5. International Students

International students have different regulations compared to Dutch students who commit their selves to a full-time board year. They now receive a discount on their tuition fee up to the point they pay just as much as a native student. We think it is fair that they also do not have to pay tuition fee, when the tuition fee free board year is implemented.

6. Tuition Fee Free Board Year at other higher education institutes in the Netherlands

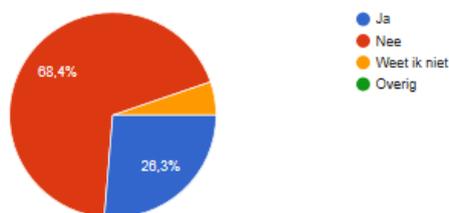
In September, ISO (Interstedelijk Studenten Overleg) has sent a survey about the tuition fee free board year to all their member organisations. This survey was filled in by 21 member organisations from different (parts of) higher education institutes.¹ From this survey it turned out that at that moment at 26,3% of the 21 (parts of) higher education institutes it is possible to pay no tuition fee during a full-time board year. These higher education institutes are Universiteit Leiden, Erasmus Universiteit Rotterdam, Fontys, Hanze hogeschool and Saxion Deventer.

25% of the (parts of) higher education institutes discussed the topic, but did not make a decision yet. For example at Rijksuniversiteit Groningen there is a big chance the tuition fee free board year will be implemented. If so, this will be confirmed in December. TU Twente, TU Delft, Radbouduniversiteit Nijmegen, Universiteit Utrecht, Vrij Universiteit Amsterdam still need to make a decision.

10% of the (parts of) higher education institutes decided not to implement a tuition fee free board year. 20% has no idea about whether or not it will be implemented.

Is er op jouw instelling de mogelijkheid om geen collegegeld te betalen wanneer je fulltime bestuurder bent, terwijl je het recht behoudt op studiefinanciering (incl. mogelijkheid tot lenen en reisrecht - mits je hier nog aanspraak op maakt)?

(19 reacties)



¹ Higher education institutes of which representatives filled in the survey: HAN, Fontys, Rijksuniversiteit Groningen, TU Delft, Haagse Hogeschool, Hogeschool van Amsterdam, Saxion Deventer, TU Eindhoven, Christelijke Hogeschool Ede, Vrije Universiteit Amsterdam, Erasmus Universiteit Rotterdam, Wageningen University, Radbouduniversiteit Nijmegen, TU Twente, Hanze Hogeschool, Universiteit Utrecht, Hogeschool Leiden, Universiteit Leiden

Als deze mogelijkheid er (nog) niet is: is er op dit moment al duidelijk dat de instelling deze eerder beschreven regeling (tot collegegeldvrij besturen) mogelijk zal maken?

(20 reacties)



7. Costs for the university

The costs for the university may vary, due to it merely being an option. Most probably not all full-time board members will use this option, as it is motivated by personal reasons. Some students still want to do re-exams or follow a course. As the case is now, the university receives a tuition fee from all the board-members defined above. Relatively most of this money would be used for giving education and having exams. A smaller part would be used for additional services as sport facilities, IT-accounts, mail accounts, etc. As we are with so many students at the university, we expect the marginal costs will turn out very low. This should be investigated more. Therefore after the consultation meeting of the 1st of December, we want to plan a TO with staff members.

8. Conclusion

As VeSte we believe that the university should encourage students for personal development. Doing a board year is a great opportunity to develop yourself and others in a lot of different ways. Therefore VeSte thinks it should be financially attractive to do a board year, so doing a board year is a possibility for every student who wants it and not only the ones that have the financial means. With this position paper we hope to convince the university of the importance of implementing a tuition fee free board year.