

VeSte Structural Policy

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Preface

Before you lies the structural policy plan of the Student Council (SC) party VeSte. This policy plan consists of the established norms and the constant elements that make up the core identity of VeSte and whom it represents. This document is the basis of the yearly VeSte policy and ensures the continuity for members of VeSte, enabling them to provide what the active student needs in order to thrive.

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Introduction

Mission

As a Student Council party, VeSte represents and supports active students of Wageningen University (WU). This includes students who are motivated to develop themselves both inside and outside the classroom. These students develop themselves by engaging in extracurricular activities in various organisations and associations, and/or by engaging in activities concerning with talent, knowledge and skills development. These students create an atmosphere in which academic and personal development can thrive.

History and identity development

VeSte (Verenigde Studenten; English: United Students) is a Student Council party founded in 1997 by members of the Contractus student associations W.S.V. Ceres, K.S.V. Sint Franciscus Xaverius, SSR-W and Unitas Wageningen. The party was erected in order to keep representing these associations and their members in the newly empowered Student Council of Wageningen University. Over the years, VeSte has sought to become more inclusive by cooperating with various kinds of organisations, both within Wageningen and on a national and international level. VeSte represents active students, which is at the core value of the identity of VeSte.

Vision

The VeSte vision consists of three pillars: *World-Class Education*, *Broad Academic Development* and a *Vibrant Student Life*. These three pillars are of grave importance, as they define the interest of the students we wish to represent. By improving the internal and external environment of Wageningen University with a focus on these pillars we aim to support all active students.

Hereunder, we will elaborate more on what each pillar entails:

- I. *World-Class Education* should be strived for, for every student at Wageningen University. Therefore, VeSte actively contributes to maintaining and improving the *World Class Education* at Wageningen University, which is often seen as one of the foremost excellent institutions within its domain worldwide. That is not only visible in rankings, but also from the experiences of both current students and alumni. The highest level of education consists of the following aspects according to VeSte: small-scale interactive education, close supervision of courses and theses, an international learning environment and atmosphere, flexibility within and between programmes and multidisciplinary education. These are merely a few of the aspects of education contributing to the impeccable transfer of skills and knowledge. VeSte will always strive for educational excellence of WU by engaging with students and staff.
- II. Another essential aspect of being a WU student is the opportunity for all students to achieve *Broad Academic Development*. This concept entails participating in the activities that stimulate personal and professional development. Both must be stimulated in courses where skills and knowledge are combined in the classroom. However, much progress is achieved outside the classroom as well, where students take part in training programmes, (international) student exchanges, board tenures, and other activities. It is essential to stimulate students in partaking in these activities as learning paths take place both in- and outside the classroom.
- III. In the external environment of Wageningen University, VeSte sees the need to support a *Vibrant Student Life*. Wageningen University should play an active role in facilitating this as well. In this student life, a variety of organisations are embedded, connecting and supporting students, and making Wageningen their home. Student organisations contribute to the *Vibrant*

Student Life of Wageningen and create a truly global society within a small Dutch city. As VeSte, we support these organisations in their activities, and we value these communities strongly. Therefore, we contribute to the *Vibrant Student Life* of Wageningen.

Veste utilises these three pillars as the basis of their discussions within the Wageningen University and Research (WUR) organisation. Hence, initiatives of the Student Council and decisions made by the Executive Board, involving the Student Council should have these pillars at their foundation. The Student Council has various rights to help implement their vision into WUR policies. These rights are the right of approval, the right of advice, the right of information and the right of initiative. When external actors are involved, such as the municipality, the faction will be in close contact with them as well, which is often especially relevant for the *Vibrant Student Life* in Wageningen.

Student Support

VeSte is a two-way bridge between WU and her students, functioning as a central node in the Wageningen student community. Our support organisations deliver crucial input to us, which is vital for making reasoned and well-advised decisions on WUR policies. However, VeSte also functions the other way around, aiming to deliver valuable information to these partners. We value all these organisations as they all contribute to our work. Each organisation supplies with its own point of view on policies of WU, as a result of a (slightly) different relationship with the university.

Student associations play a vital role in organising leisure activities in Wageningen, in which they contribute to maintaining and improving the *Vibrant Student Life* of Wageningen and creating a broad integration between students of various years and study programmes. Furthermore, by acquainting students with soft skills and a strong social network, through either partaking in or organising these activities, they contribute to the *Broad Academic Development* of their members. We collaborate by actively engaging with these organisations in various forms of consultation and providing training courses to them.

Study associations make major contributions to the student community by organising both social and academic activities. By doing so, they stimulate the *Broad Academic Development* of their members, the development of the *Vibrant Student Life* in Wageningen and the improvement of the relations between students within study programmes. Furthermore, the involvement of study associations within WUR aids university staff and students in maintaining our *World-Class Education*. We aim to proactively engage with study associations in our decisions and activities, by inviting them for regular dialogue.

Likewise, the sports organisations in Wageningen have a great contribution to the active students of WU as well. The opportunity for *Broad Academic Development* in these organisations can be found in the students active in the boards and committees of these associations. Moreover, sports are an excellent opportunity to interact in a relaxed environment with different students from different backgrounds and cultures contributing to the *Vibrant Student Life* we have. Being active in sports also benefits the well-being of students. This of course includes the students partaking in sports individually.

The cultural student organisations of Wageningen contribute to similar goals. Making music together in an international orchestra or choir enables contacts and integration between students. On top of that also taking part of the many committees and a board at one of the cultural organisations is

benefiting the *Broad Academic Development* of these students as well. Professional and/or career-oriented organisations facilitate students in broadly developing themselves by acquainting students with entrepreneurs and business opportunities such as internships. The skills students acquire in doing so can also benefit these students in their education and future career. These organisations are essential in giving students insight in the relation between their studies and the opportunities that lay ahead.

Internal affairs

Functions

The members of the VeSte faction are responsible for realising our vision and mission. They do so in their respective functions, but also in the committees of VeSte, the Student Council and the WUR Council.

Within the VeSte faction, there are several functions, which are described in the following paragraphs. The exact division of tasks per year depends on the election results. The functions named in the structural policy are based on seven seats in the student council.

Chair

The function of the Chair is to ensure an orderly conduct of the VeSte faction. This is achieved by overseeing the organisational consistency over the course of the academic year. This is realised by setting up and chairing meetings, keeping track of upcoming dossiers and overviewing the individual functioning of all VeSte faction members. In doing so, the Chair is aided by the capacity of the Vice-Chair of VeSte. If necessary, tasks of the Chair are delegated to this Vice-Chair. The Chair is also the one who carries the final responsibility for a correct VeSte take-over to the next board. Cooperation with the Vice-Chair before and during this take-over is vital for ensuring a proper transition.

Furthermore, the Chair generally functions as the face of the VeSte faction. In the Daily Board of the Student Council (DB SC), the VeSte Chair meets with the chairs of the other parties and the technical support to discuss the daily routine of the SC.

Vice-Chair

The main role of the Vice-Chair is to enable a good cooperation and atmosphere within the VeSte faction. Next to this, the Vice-Chair carries responsibility for maintaining content-wise stability of the standpoints of VeSte. By writing the policy of VeSte and overviewing that the VeSte faction members apply the VeSte policy to their decisions, active students of WU can always build on the core values of VeSte.

It is important that the Chair and Vice-Chair regularly convene to discuss ongoing affairs. This close contact results in a good overview for the Chair, concerning organisational consistency, and for the Vice-Chair, concerning content-wise consistency. The VeSte Vice-Chair also, in cooperation with the Chair, ensures the correct transition to the new faction. An important aspect of this is organising the interest drinks, coordinating the application procedure for new candidates, setting up the application committee, consisting of former VeSte boards members, and aiding in structuring the elections. Moreover, the Vice-Chair coordinates the contact with the Advisory Board of VeSte.

Altogether, the Vice-Chair plays a vital role in upholding the VeSte ideology and ensuring this is taken up in the daily practice of the members of the VeSte faction.

Secretary

The Secretary is responsible for the incoming and outgoing VeSte mail (veste@wur.nl), which is discussed in the VeSte Internal Meeting (VIM), or with the Chair if a reply is time-bound. For a correct involvement of VeSte faction members, the Secretary needs to have a good overview of the responsibilities of the different members of the VeSte faction as well as of all ongoing topics in the Student Council. The Secretary is also responsible for the minutes and the action list of the VIM. During the VIM the discussions and conclusions are written down in the minutes. Important arguments are written down so VeSte members can rely on the minutes as a base for their work. Furthermore, the treasurer is also responsible for the creation and distribution of the VeSte newsletter, both tangible, as well as digital.

Treasurer

The Treasurer is the one carrying the final responsibility for the financial continuity of VeSte. Decisions with a financial impact on VeSte should, therefore, be made in accordance with the Treasurer. To advance financial continuity, the VeSte Treasurer sets up the budget for the VeSte party yearly. Moreover, the Treasurer oversees all non-financial resources as well.

Commissioner Internal Relations

The primary responsibility of the Commissioner Internal Relations (Commissioner IR) is to receive input from support organisations and VeSte alumni, and to distribute specific relevant information from WUR to each support organisation. The Commissioner IR is the primary contact person for these support organisations. Cooperation with the VeSte Secretary is vital for maintaining smooth communication.

Where the Chair is the face to external parties, the Commissioner IR is the face of VeSte to our support organisations. By maintaining good communication, both formal and informal, with these different associations and organisations, the Commissioner IR takes up and spreads information, as well as keeping VeSte an approachable organ for bringing input to the university. Finally, the Commissioner IR is involved in the recruitment of new candidates using the broad network of support organisations.

Commissioner National Affairs

The VeSte Commissioner National Affairs (Commissioner NA) represents VeSte on a national level, by spreading VeSte's vision on different topics as well as keeping VeSte members informed about relevant topics that are being discussed on a national level. This is primarily done in the contact with the *Interstedelijk Studenten Overleg* (ISO). By attending meetings of the ISO, valuable information is gathered about national student and political affairs relevant for WUR, but also current WUR issues can be discussed at this national platform. Keeping in touch with other national organisations and Student Council parties, such as those within the 4TU federation, is also the responsibility of the Commissioner NA. Actively representing the active students of Wageningen in these organisations is of vital importance.

Commissioner Public Relations

The Commissioner Public Relations (Commissioner PR) notifies the students of WUR what the Student Council, and primarily VeSte, is working on and how students are represented in WU. This can be done

through various (social) media: Facebook posts and events, Instagram posts, newspapers (Resource or local newspapers), posters, the website, vlogs, verbal communication etc. Altogether, even though the Chair can serve as the spokesperson, the Commissioner PR is the overall coordinator of the actions with respect to image management.

Additionally, the Commissioner PR functions as the primary contact person for the municipality. This implicates that the Commissioner PR always is informed about and initiates contact with the municipality. Finally, being present at external networking events is vital as input can be gathered here and output can be given.

Internal Committees

VeSte has six internal committees. The tasks of these committees are essential for promoting the VeSte faction and ensuring its continuity.

Acquisition

To keep VeSte in close contact with our supporters we organise several activities. To finance these activities external acquisition is needed, which can be both monetary or tangible. Therefore, VeSte will focus with this committee on approaching companies actively for acquisition. Moreover, by working for bodies within WUR and externally, funding might be acquired. These funds will be used for promotion during the elections and will be used to organise events.

Promotion & Design

The aim of this committee is to increase visibility and awareness of VeSte among active students, as well as to present the actions and efforts of VeSte in an attractive way for all students. A special focus is on reaching out to and informing new students who are not aware of the existence of VeSte yet. VeSte should be visible throughout the year and the committee strives to investigate ways to involve students with more in-depth information. This committee must, therefore, ensure students and student bodies and organisations are able to reach us when they feel the need. In collaboration with the Events committee, publicity events are set up. Promotion of these events is an important motive for ensuring an eye-catching design. Designing the posters of VeSte and new gadgets is among the responsibilities of this committee as well.

Events

The main goal of the events VeSte organises is to create awareness of current issues VeSte is working on, to promote personal development, but often more importantly, to gain input on the projects VeSte is working on. With these events, VeSte aim to inform and involve students in the content VeSte works on and large policy changes within WUR.

Training

As a faction of the SC, VeSte is offered a lot of useful training in a variety of skills. These training courses offer a lot of information and skills which should be available for all active students of WU. Therefore, VeSte decided to offer training courses to student boards, committees or other groups who desire to learn how to effectively work together and get things done, stimulating a *Broad Academic Development* and a *Vibrant Student Life* at the same time.

VeSte Elections

This committee coordinates the actions of VeSte during the elections and aims to ensure a good result of the elections. Therefore, it is important that at least the Vice-Chair and Commissioner IR take place in this committee, as they are in their function involved with selecting new candidates and keeping in touch with other organisations.

During the year, this committee sets up a strategy for the elections. VeSte feels it is important to have a range of highly qualified and motivated candidates for next year's faction, with diverse backgrounds within Wageningen, so that all students can feel confident that their voice is represented in the new VeSte faction.

What is considered most important during the elections, is that the VeSte ideology, which focuses on active students, is effectively transferred to students, so everyone knows what a vote for VeSte entails. Furthermore, the elections are a period of great exposure, making it a great moment to gather input from students on our functioning and policy.

External affairs

Student Council

To optimally exercise the formal rights of the Student Council, the dossiers, activities and initiatives need to be processed properly. This processing is done in the various committees of the Student Council, each with their own expertise.

Boekel Education Enhancement committee

In the Boekel Education Enhancement (BEE) committee, educational issues relevant for Wageningen University are discussed. This committee focuses mainly on the assurance of education quality, as well as dealing with education innovation and improvement. It does so by critically reviewing the central educational policies of the WU and by dealing with complaints and questions of students directly brought forward to the SC. For an efficient and effective way of functioning, BEE maintains warm contact with Programme Committees and the Board of Education. Furthermore, the BEE committee also independently proposes ideas to ensure the *World-Class Education* offered at WU stays world-class. Furthermore, VeSte wants students to be active in their education. Students active as student assistants or Programme Committee members are good examples of this. The aim is to strengthen the position of these students within the educational ecosystem of WU. Therefore, it is essential that these students receive the support from the university and VeSte that they need.

Finance committee

The Finance committee is responsible for ensuring the opinion of students is taken into account in financial matters of the university. By reviewing the WU Budget, the budget for the Student Profiling Fund, and by coming up with initiatives, VeSte ensures there is sufficient budget available for policies supporting the three pillars in our own policy. A thorough understanding of financial processes is vital, which is why a close cooperation with the WUR Council Finance committee is necessary. VeSte strives to retain its pro-active attitude towards the finances of the university.

Internationalisation & Integration

Wageningen University promotes itself as one of the most international universities in the world. This is not only about students coming to Wageningen from all over the world, but concerns students going abroad as well. Many students are going abroad for courses, internships or to write their thesis. Exchange possibilities for students of Wageningen University are essential to maintain.

Next to exchange possibilities, WU focusses on developing its international identity. This is in line with the idea of the online educational ecosystem. Another focus of the university is the international classroom, also for bachelor students. It is beneficial for every student that in an international classroom, we have an integrated group of students, where students understand and learn from each other's backgrounds regardless of nationality. The international environment and classroom contribute to the experience, skills and knowledge students acquire during their time studying at WU. A rapid process of internationalisation must not harm the convenience of students currently enrolled at WU.

IT

Primary responsibilities of the IT committee are the correct implementation of new IT systems for students, ensuring an optimal availability of IT services for students, and filling the gaps between the needs of students and what is available. Having regular contact with concerned staff of WUR ensures an adequate approach of this committee.

Quality versus Quantity

The university is always changing. Continuously increasing student numbers and new technologies make that the university constantly develops, which should be done with a well-considered long-term vision in mind. The Quality vs Quantity committee has made it its task to be aware of the actions of the university regarding this topic and to make sure the Student Council develops its own idea regarding these adaptations. Moreover, the Quality vs Quantity committee addresses the issues concerning student housing. Since the Student Council does not have legal rights on housing, the most important function is to keep in close contact with the municipality and WUR about housing issues. The main focus is to keep contacts proper and to monitor the housing situation within Wageningen. To ensure students are heard when it comes to housing, good cooperation with other actors, such as the municipality, political parties, the Student Alliance Wageningen (SAW) and actors within WUR is vital.

SC Elections

The SC elections committee safeguards that the elections for the new Student Council are taking place properly. The elections committee is partly dependent on the work of the promotion committee. Better work of the SC promotion committee during the year lightens the work of the election committee during the elections. Especially, since a substantial goal of the election campaign is to create awareness for all students regarding the actions of the Student Council.

SC Promotion

The goal of the Promotion committee is to increase the visibility of the Student Council by organising several events and give insight into the work of the Student Council. This committee has a twofold purpose. The first is to make knowledge of and support for the Student Council more widespread within the student community of WU. By organising inspiring events and making sure the promotion of the Student Council is properly arranged, students can be inspired to participate in organisational affairs of WUR themselves. Secondly, the promotion committee can gather input for the Student Council when getting in touch with students.

Student Charter

In the Student Charter committee, student rights and whether they are implemented correctly by the university are being monitored and evaluated. The Student Council has formal rights on the Education and Examination Regulations (EER), which are handled by this committee, but also various other documents with a legal standing pertaining to several policy topics. It is essential that the WU Student Charter enables all three VeSte pillars to flourish. This committee should always think from the perspective of the student when reviewing documents. Policy changes should, therefore, be beneficial for that group.

Student Facilities

The Student Facilities committee is a committee where concrete ideas concerning facilities can be executed. An important task for this committee is monitoring whether the capacity of buildings and

facilities satisfy the needs of all students. Flexibility for students ought to be encouraged, as well as a healthy and sustainable environment.

WUR Council

The VeSte faction sees the involvement of students within the WUR Council as an important aspect of the representation of students. It is in this council that support for ideas can be discussed and important decisions are taken. Especially, since the WUR Council has formal rights on a broader range of topics influencing active students.

The WUR Council divides their dossiers over different committees, similar to the Student Council. However, some committees have a less clear direct link to students. Several of the committees of the WUR Council, such as E&R (Education & Research) and Finance are closely related to the functioning of likewise committees within the Student Council. Therefore, close cooperation is of the utmost necessity. A good way of ensuring this cooperation is the involvement of students active within a committee in the Student Council in a similar committee in the WUR Council. The appointment of students as committee chairs in the WUR Council can be a good way of ensuring the voice of students is being heard. It must, however, be taken into account that a proper balance between SC members working on WUR Council dossiers and on SC dossiers is essential.

In the WUR Council, VeSte members do not take a seat on behalf of VeSte. However, the VeSte members in the WUR Council process documents based on their experience as an active student.

Contact with the municipality

The municipality of Wageningen is of great importance to VeSte as various matters pertaining to the three pillars of our policy are discussed here. In the vision of VeSte, the Student Council remains independent and does not favour any political party over another, although we do very much support students being active in local politics. This means we aim to stay in contact with all political parties active in Wageningen. Mainly the housing and internationalisation committees deal with dossiers relevant for discussion with the municipality.