



**DE VRIJE STUDENT**

**PARTY PROGRAM 2025-2026**



**UNIVERSITY OF AMSTERDAM**



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*“Een universiteit is geen plek voor vanzelfsprekendheden. Het is een plek voor vragen. Voor wrijving. Voor het kritisch bevragen van iedereen – en dus ook van wat ons vertrouwd is.”*

~ Willem Volker

*"A university is not a place for assumptions. It is a place for questions. For friction. For critically examining everyone – and therefore also what is familiar to us."*

~ Willem Volker



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## **CHAPTER 1 - EXCELLENCE IN EDUCATION AND RESEARCH**

The university's primary mission should be to provide world-class education and cutting-edge research. De Vrije Student envisions the University of Amsterdam as a leading institution, continuously striving for higher academic rankings and global recognition. To achieve this, we advocate for a student-centered approach that maximizes flexibility and fairness.



## 1.1 ABOLISHING MANDATORY ATTENDANCE

De Vrije Student believes that **education should be built on trust**, in students' independence, maturity, and ability to take responsibility for their own learning. That's why we advocate for **abolishing mandatory attendance wherever possible**.

Learning outcomes, not physical presence, should be the primary measure of academic progress. Students should be free to choose how and when they engage with course material, especially in lecture-based courses where flexibility enhances accessibility and personal learning styles. However, we recognize that in certain formats, such as lab work, discussion-heavy seminars, or practical training, active participation is a core part of the learning process. In those cases, requiring attendance can be justified by the nature of the education itself, not by control for its own sake. By removing unnecessary attendance requirements, the university can empower students to take ownership of their education, while still maintaining academic rigor where it truly matters.

## 1.2 MORE STUDY SPACES ON CAMPUS

In order to truly support academic success, the university must provide sufficient study spaces. Many students struggle to find quiet and accessible places to study, especially during exam periods. De Vrije Student calls for the expansion of both individual and group study areas on all campuses, with longer opening hours, improved facilities, and a focus on creating a productive study environment.

## 1.3 OPPORTUNITIES FOR ACADEMIC EXCELLENCE

Ambition and achievement should be encouraged and celebrated. De Vrije Student believes that students should have opportunities to distinguish themselves academically. Therefore, we support the preservation and expansion of honours programs and cum laude distinctions. These programs not only challenge high-performing students, but also foster a culture of excellence and intellectual curiosity. The university should actively promote and improve these opportunities, ensuring that students from all backgrounds have access to them.

## 1.4 BRIDGING THE GAP BETWEEN STUDY AND CAREER

In recent years, the University of Amsterdam has consistently scored below average in the National Student Survey (NSE) when it comes to preparing students for their future careers. This signals a clear need for change and an opportunity. De Vrije Student believes the university should do more to help students transition from academic life to the professional world. We envision a university where practical experience is not an optional extra, but a natural part of the academic journey. Internships should be more widely available and better integrated into degree programs, giving students the chance to apply their knowledge in real-world settings and build valuable networks.

Education should inspire, challenge, and equip students not just with academic skills, but with the tools to succeed after graduation. By connecting studies more closely to professional practice, the university can empower students to take confident steps toward their future.



## 1.5 FLEXIBLE STUDY OPTIONS

The ability to structure study programs flexibly should be expanded, allowing students to tailor their studies to their personal circumstances. Whether combining studies with work, an internship, or personal development projects, students should have more control over their academic trajectory. This approach not only enhances accessibility but also encourages lifelong learning.

## 1.6 PAY-PER-CREDIT SYSTEM & FLEXIBLE TUITION

Students should only pay for the courses they actually take. A pay-per-credit system ensures a more equitable and accessible university experience, particularly for part-time students or those with other commitments. This would reduce unnecessary financial burdens and provide students with the autonomy to shape their academic journey according to their own needs.



## CHAPTER 2- ACADEMIC FREEDOM

Academic freedom forms the backbone of a thriving university community.

It provides students and lecturers with the space to freely share knowledge and debate controversial topics without fear of social exclusion. De Vrije Student strives for an academic climate in which diversity of thought is cherished and intellectual curiosity is encouraged. This means universities have the responsibility to create an environment where both established and new ideas can be explored without fear of social repercussions.

## 2.1 TWO THREATS TO ACADEMIC FREEDOM: INTERNAL AND EXTERNAL

Academic freedom today is under pressure from two directions:

- **Internal pressure**, such as cancel culture and an increasingly narrow ideological climate, where students and staff may self-censor due to fear of social backlash. This can discourage critical debate, marginalize dissenting views, and create conformity of thought.
- **External pressure**, including political influence, government interference, or funding mechanisms that threaten institutional independence. International examples show how academic agendas can be shaped, or restricted, by political forces, and we must remain vigilant to prevent this in the Netherlands as well.

De Vrije Student believes that universities must be resilient against both forms of pressure, maintaining their core mission as places of independent thought and open inquiry.

## 2.2 OPPOSING CANCEL CULTURE

The growing trend of cancel culture within universities poses a threat to open debate. When students and academics are afraid to express their opinions for fear of public condemnation, the essence of academic freedom disappears. De Vrije Student opposes this development and advocates for an academic environment in which ideas are countered with arguments, not social exclusion.

Freedom of expression must be the norm within the university. Everyone, regardless of political beliefs or ideological background, should have the space to defend and question viewpoints. Only through open discussion and confrontation of ideas can we arrive at deeper understanding and innovation. It is essential that students and lecturers are protected from social exclusion as a result of their beliefs, as long as those beliefs remain within the boundaries of respect and academic integrity.

Moreover, it is important that universities promote a culture of tolerance and resilience. Students must learn to deal with differences of opinion without immediately feeling attacked or offended. Academic institutions have an educational role in this: teaching critical thinking, debate skills, and the ability to analyze opposing viewpoints without dismissing them outright.



## 2.3 FACILITATING OPEN DEBATE

A university that takes academic freedom seriously must actively facilitate open debate. This means that universities should not only provide space for controversial topics, but also actively foster a culture in which debate and dialogue are encouraged. In addition, students and lecturers should be encouraged to ask critical questions and explore differing opinions. A university should not be an ideological bubble in which only the most accepted opinions are tolerated; it should be a breeding ground for intellectual diversity and innovation.

Open debate also means that universities must recognize the importance of scientific and philosophical diversity. This entails creating space for both left-wing and right-wing perspectives, for both religious and secular views, and for both traditional and progressive ideas. A one-sided approach to social and academic issues undermines the university's fundamental mission as a place for the development of knowledge.

Furthermore, the university must act as a neutral facilitator of debate. This means university administrators should refrain from adopting political or ideological stances and instead focus on creating an environment where every opinion, if well-argued and expressed respectfully, can be heard.

## 2.4 PLURALISM IN CURRICULUM AND DEBATE

A healthy academic environment thrives on a variety of perspectives, in both the classroom and the curriculum. De Vrije Student is concerned that in many faculties, the intellectual landscape is becoming too narrow. Courses often reflect a dominant ideological lens, which can unintentionally marginalize alternative political, philosophical, or methodological approaches.

To uphold academic freedom and ensure genuine intellectual development, we believe:

- The curriculum should include a minimum representation of key schools of thought within each discipline whether philosophical, scientific, or political. This ensures that students are exposed to the full depth and complexity of their field.
- Students must be given access to courses grounded in different ideological frameworks, allowing them to understand, compare, and critically evaluate multiple worldviews.
- The university should actively promote diversity of thought, ensuring that education challenges assumptions, encourages reflection, and fosters open-mindedness rather than reinforcing a single narrative.

Academic freedom is not only about the right to speak, it is about creating an academic environment that stimulates genuine exploration, independent thinking, and resilience in the face of complexity.



## CHAPTER 3 - SAFE CAMPUS

The University of Amsterdam should be a hub of knowledge, innovation, and new ideas, a place where academics come together to learn, debate, and grow. However, this can only happen in an environment where both physical and social safety are guaranteed. Every student must feel free to study, debate, and participate in university life without fear or intimidation.



### 3.1 STUDENT PROTESTS

In recent years, safety at the UvA has not always been a given. Escalated demonstrations and disruptions have shown that maintaining a safe and accessible campus must always remain a priority regardless of the cause or message behind a protest. Escalated demonstrations and disruptions have shown that a balance is needed between academic freedom and maintaining a safe environment for all students and staff. De Vrije Student recognizes the importance of the right to protest but believes that this should never come at the cost of campus security and accessibility.

Unfortunately, we have seen recent protests escalate into vandalism, resulting in millions of euros in damages to university buildings and facilities. This is unacceptable. The university must take a clear stance: while peaceful protest is a democratic right, those responsible for destructive behavior must be held accountable, including financial consequences where appropriate.

### 3.2 CAMPUS REGULATIONS

De Vrije Student wants to work with the University of Amsterdam to reassess and, where necessary, improve current safety measures. Our goal is to ensure that every student feels safe and welcome, regardless of background or beliefs. This includes establishing clear guidelines for demonstrations, investing in preventive security measures, and strengthening communication between students, staff, and the university administration on safety issues.



## CHAPTER 4 - INTERNATIONAL POLICY

De Vrije Student envisions the University of Amsterdam as a welcoming and inclusive academic community that values both its Dutch roots and its global outlook. International students enrich university life with new perspectives, contribute to academic excellence, and help position the UvA on the global stage. At the same time, the university must remain closely connected to Dutch society; culturally, linguistically, and institutionally. We believe the UvA should welcome all international students who are eager to engage with Dutch society, while remaining aligned with the government's long-term vision for internationalisation. This means balancing international accessibility with integration, and ensuring that internationalisation supports, rather than undermines, the university's core academic and social responsibilities.

## 4.1 STRATEGIC INTERNATIONALISATION: BALANCED, PURPOSEFUL, FUTURE-PROOF

De Vrije Student believes that internationalisation should be a means to an end, not an end in itself. We value the contributions of international students and staff to the academic and social environment, but we must also recognize the pressure that unregulated growth places on housing, accessibility, and the Dutch institutions, a factor which may compromise the experience of many regardless of nationality.

That's why we support a balanced and targeted approach to internationalisation, with the idea to make sure that internationals are not brought into oversaturated programs and left to insert themselves in a foreign job market after graduation without the proper support. In line with this intent, we call for:

- A **more nuanced intake policy**, where student growth is encouraged especially in sectors with pressing labour market shortages, thus ensuring a space in the economy after the studies.
- Limiting or slowing growth in **oversaturated programs** with low stay rates and high local pressure.
- A focus on increasing the stay rate of international students. If a program is to grow, there must be **clear job opportunities** in the Netherlands that match the skills and ambitions of its graduates. Education must connect to the real economy.

This strategy allows UvA to focus its resources on where internationalisation **adds the most value** for students, for society, and for the future of the University.

## 4.2 LANGUAGE POLICY: DUTCH WHERE POSSIBLE, ENGLISH WHERE NECESSARY

Dutch should remain the default language of instruction wherever possible, particularly in nationally oriented programs. However, English must remain available in internationally focused degrees, to support global academic exchange and ensure accessibility for international students. The Faculty of Economics and Business offers a strong example of this dual-language model, with all programs available in both Dutch and English. This kind of approach promotes inclusivity without eroding the Dutch academic tradition, and should be expanded where appropriate.

## 4.3 PROMOTING DUTCH LANGUAGE SKILLS FOR INTERNATIONAL STUDENTS

Integration into Dutch society is key for international students who wish to live, work, and contribute here long term. Language plays a central role in that process. De Vrije Student strongly supports the inclusion of Dutch language education in the university experience for international students as a structured part of their academic journey. To be effective, these courses must be:

- Free or low-cost, so that financial constraints do not prevent participation;
- Flexible, allowing students to take them alongside their regular programs;
- Connected to future employability, with attention to Dutch workplace culture and communication.

By investing in Dutch language education, the university can better support international students in building a future in the Netherlands, while also strengthening ties between the international student population and the broader university community.

Attracting international talent is only the first step. The University of Amsterdam must also equip students to thrive academically, socially, and professionally within Dutch society. By fostering an environment that combines international openness with local engagement.



## **CHAPTER 5 - THIRD PARTY COLLABORATIONS**

Third-party collaborations are vital for advancing scientific research and innovation, but they must be approached with caution to maintain academic integrity. Ensuring transparency, safeguarding academic freedom, and upholding ethical standards are key when partnering with external parties. By carefully assessing potential risks and remaining committed to global cooperation, universities can drive progress while staying true to their core values.

## 5.1 ACADEMIC DIPLOMACY

In an increasingly polarized world, De Vrije Student believes in the value of **academic diplomacy**, the idea that contact between academics, even across ideological or geopolitical divides, can serve as a **force for openness and change**.

Engaging with scholars from countries with questionable regimes can:

- **Combat isolation** and prevent intellectual stagnation.
- **Support critical thinkers** working under authoritarian conditions.
- **Keep us informed** about academic freedom and human rights situations abroad.

Rather than automatically cutting ties based on political developments, universities should pursue **constructive engagement** where possible, while always being guided by **ethical principles** and not political motives.

Academic diplomacy is not naive, it is pragmatic and principled. It recognizes that open academic exchange can be a quiet but powerful agent of change.

## 5.2 INTERNATIONAL UNIVERSITY PARTNERSHIPS

The Vrije Student strongly supports collaborations with other universities worldwide. Free academic exchange strengthens scientific research and fosters innovation. As stated by the University of Amsterdam: 'Our globally shared scientific methods are stronger than political differences.' However, academic freedom is not unlimited. Universities must ensure that they do not become complicit in human rights violations or war crimes.

To uphold these principles, the university should rely on specialized advisory bodies, such as the Advisory Committee on Third Party Collaborations, to assess the ethical risks of specific partnerships. These committees provide important expertise and analysis, but it must be clear that their role is advisory, the final decision always lies with the Executive Board (CvB).

De Vrije Student also believes that the work of such committees should be more transparent. Their assessments and recommendations should be communicated clearly to the university community, within the bounds of confidentiality. This transparency builds trust and ensures that the university community is aware of the ethical considerations behind collaboration decisions.

To uphold these principles, the university should rely on specialized committees, such as the Advisory Committee on Third Party Collaborations, to assess potential risks. If such a committee determines that a collaboration is involved in serious ethical concerns, the partnership should be reconsidered or paused.

However, even in cases where collaborations are suspended, the university must remain engaged in dialogue. Efforts should always be made to restore partnerships when conditions improve, ensuring that academic cooperation is not permanently severed.

## 5.3 TRANSPARANT COLLABORATIONS

De Vrije Student values the independence and integrity of scientific research. Collaborations between the university and external parties must always be transparent and should never compromise academic independence.

## 5.4 SAFEGUARDING ACADEMIC FREEDOM

If commercial interests threaten scientific freedom, these partnerships should be reassessed and, if necessary, discontinued. However, this decision should be made with nuance and care, ensuring that academic collaborations are protected while maintaining ethical research standards.



## CHAPTER 6 - ACCESSIBILITY

Accessibility should be a basic standard, not an afterthought. While it may not be the most visible part of university policy, it plays a crucial role in ensuring that all students, regardless of personal circumstances, can fully participate in academic life. De Vrije Student believes the UvA must actively consult with students with disabilities to identify and remove barriers. Every student deserves the same opportunities to succeed.





## 6.1 ACCESSIBILITY IN A BROAD SENSE

A truly welcoming university doesn't only cater to one group, whether that's dietary preferences, learning styles, or personal circumstances. Accessibility must be understood in a broader sense. De Vrije Student calls on the UvA to embed accessibility into the core of its policy and planning. Not as an afterthought, not as a box to tick, but as a principle that strengthens the entire academic community. Only when every student is able to participate fully and equally can the university live up to its promise of excellence and opportunity for all.

## 6.2 PHYSICAL ACCESSIBILITY

Campuses, lecture halls, libraries, and other university facilities must be fully accessible to students who use wheelchairs or mobility aids. The university must also ensure that students who are blind, have low vision, are deaf, or hard of hearing, have equal access to educational content and communication. This means investing in assistive technologies, sign language interpretation, screen reader-friendly platforms, and clear campus navigation. These efforts must be guided by regular consultation with students who experience these challenges firsthand.

## 6.3 FINANCIAL ACCESSIBILITY

Rising tuition fees, overpriced canteens, and the cost of study materials can make higher education inaccessible for many. We advocate for more affordable food options in university cafeterias, more transparency in tuition-related costs, and better access to financial support services. We support student initiatives aimed at lowering canteen prices and improving cost transparency. Student-led efforts that tackle financial barriers deserve institutional backing, not just approval.



## CHAPTER 7 - FINANCES

The financial choices a university makes reflect its values. At a time when budget cuts are imminent and students are already feeling the pressure of rising costs, the University of Amsterdam must take a clear stance: educational quality comes first. De Vrije Student believes that financial decisions must be made with care, transparency, and a constant focus on the student experience. Every euro should directly benefit education and research.



## 7.1 CRITICAL EVALUATION OF UNIVERSITY EXPENDITURES

The university must regularly and critically assess whether its spending aligns with the interests of students and academic staff. Transparency is essential: budgets should be open to public scrutiny, with clear justifications for major expenses. Particularly in areas like external consultancy, marketing campaigns, or large non-academic projects, the university must be able to demonstrate concrete value for the academic community. Spending should never be driven by appearances, only by purpose.

## 7.2 PRIORITIZING EDUCATION OVER PERIPHERAL MATTERS

With financial pressure mounting, the university must resist the temptation to invest in peripheral or symbolic initiatives. Instead, resources must be channeled into the classroom: improving the quality of teaching, reducing class sizes, hiring more academic staff, and upgrading essential facilities. These are the investments that truly strengthen the academic environment. Education should never be compromised for the sake of administrative convenience or reputation-building, true reputation follows naturally from excellent education.

De Vrije Student advocates for a university that makes smart, student-focused financial choices. By prioritizing transparency and consistently putting education first, the University of Amsterdam can maintain its excellence, even in difficult times.



## CHAPTER 8 – PLATFORM CENTRALIZATION

Finding your way through university should be about learning, not chasing information. Right now, students are expected to search across multiple platforms for details about courses, exams, minors, timetables, and student life. This fragmentation creates confusion, wastes time, and makes it harder to stay on track.

De Vrije Student calls for the development of a **centralized platform** where all essential information is brought together in one place. Whether you're registering for a course, checking exam dates, exploring minors, or looking for extracurricular opportunities, it should all be accessible through a single, clear system.

A well-designed central platform would:

- Make academic planning easier and more transparent;
- Reduce the risk of missing deadlines or requirements;
- Improve the student experience, especially for first-years.

The university's digital infrastructure should support students, not stand in their way.



## CHAPTER 9 - AI IN EDUCATION

### Smarter Learning, Without Sacrificing Your Privacy

AI isn't the future, it's the present, moving from sci-fi to the lecture hall. De Vrije Student wants the University of Amsterdam to actively embrace this technological development, but do so critically and responsibly. Not to chase tech trends, but to make education truly better, fairer, and more future-proof.



## 9.1 AI AS A SUPPORT, NOT A REPLACEMENT

AI must never replace what makes university education truly valuable: personal interaction, critical thinking, and space for creativity. But it **can** support and enhance your learning. Imagine instant, intelligent feedback on your essays. Study advice tailored to how you learn best. Less time spent on bureaucratic nonsense, more time for deep, meaningful engagement.

We fight for a university where AI helps you grow intellectually, not just rush you through your degree. Technology should make learning more human, not more distant. AI is a tool. You remain the center of your education.

## 9.2 MANDATORY TRAINING IN CRITICAL AND ETHICAL AI USE

If you're going to use AI, you should also understand how it works. What are the risks of tools like ChatGPT? How do you spot bias? When is AI helpful and when is it just plain wrong?

De Vrije Student advocates for mandatory AI literacy and ethics training in **every** study program, no matter your field. Whether you study political science, law, or medicine: you deserve to be equipped for the digital reality of your future. Thinking critically about AI isn't a luxury, it's a basic skill. And the UvA must teach it.

## 9.3 PRIVACY, TRANSPARENCY, AND UVA-CONTROLLED AI

More and more universities are relying on commercial AI platforms, quietly collecting your data for their own gain. De Vrije Student says: enough. We demand an **independent, open-source AI platform** developed by and for the UvA. Built with academic values, not profit margins.

You have the right to control your own data. You should always know what is being collected, why, and by whom. Transparency isn't a favor, it's a fundamental right. As long as the UvA outsources its digital infrastructure, it gives up its autonomy.

That's why we fight for a university that takes control over its own technology, **with students in the driver's seat.**



## CHAPTER 10 – STUDENT LIFE AND ASSOCIATIONS

De Vrije Student believes that education comes first, but a rich student life is an essential part of a well-rounded university experience. Student associations and fraternities play a central role in that life. They offer structure, tradition, and a strong community. These are elements that help students grow both personally and socially.

Whether through organizing events, taking on responsibilities within a board, or simply being part of a close-knit group, students develop valuable skills like leadership, teamwork, time management, and resilience. These are experiences that contribute to personal growth and can strengthen a student's academic journey, rather than distract from it.

That's why De Vrije Student supports:

- Structural financial support for student associations, recognizing their importance in student wellbeing and development.
- Access to university spaces and facilities for activities that enrich student life.
- A university culture that respects and embraces the role associations play in community building, tradition, and the creation of lasting friendships.

We believe the university should be more than a place to earn credits. It should be a place where students grow, participate, and shape their own experience. Student associations are key to that mission, and De Vrije Student proudly stands behind them.

