

VOS XXII POLICY PLAN

**STUDY ASSOCIATION FOR LINGUISTICS AND SIGN LANGUAGE LINGUISTICS AT
THE UNIVERSITY OF AMSTERDAM**

2021-2022

September 28th, 2021
Amsterdam, the Netherlands

PREFACE

VOS is the study association for students of the Bachelor and Master programmes in Linguistics and Sign Language Linguistics at the University of Amsterdam. The association was established on December 2nd, 1999. All students interested in Linguistics are welcome to become members. The board has the responsibility to update the members on activities, lectures, and other events or opportunities hosted by the association and/or related to the field of linguistics and sign language linguistics.

This policy plan was written and approved by all board members: Chair, Lauren Flemming; Secretary, Emily de Boer; Treasurer, Zion Smith; and the Commissaries of Internal and External Affairs, Emily Duckett and Nilansha Dargan, respectively.

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OBJECTIVES

Goals

As of September 21st 2021, we have a total of 94 members. We aim to both retain our current members and attract new members. It is evident that the previous year being predominantly online has led to a slight decrease in membership. We are hopeful that students' eagerness to return to in-person activities will lead to a substantial increase in membership.

We have also noted a drop-off in member engagement. As most of our borrels and events were conducted online, we saw approximately 25% member turn-out. Through conducting both in-person and online events, we aim to increase our regular engagement to at least 40%.

Additionally, we aim to ensure that our members are not just enjoying their time as VOS members but also being sufficiently supported and kept safe. We plan to achieve this by facilitating open lines communication between the board and the members it serves, as well as implementing the appropriate health and safety guidelines at all of our events. Furthermore, we will ensure that all of our board members are properly trained in how to support members coping with sexual assault, harrasment, or mental health struggles, and refer them to appropriate resources for additional support.

Collaboration

We believe that working together with other associations is a great way for our members to connect with people outside of VOS and their individual degree programmes. The Faculty of Humanities at UvA strives to maintain connections with relevant study associations. Study associations from language and related studies naturally have more overlap in interests and thus a closer association with VOS. This makes them ideal partners for events both large and small. Linguistics at UvA was formerly conducted in Dutch and as a result VOS formed a close relationship with Helios, the association for Dutch Studies. This relationship has continued to flourish despite the Linguistics programme now being offered in English. This switch has, however, opened new doors. We are now forming a close association with Etcetera, the association for the English Literature & Culture programme. We have also conducted events with SCIO (Cognition, Language and Communication), Mare Nostrum (Romance Languages), and Radost (Slavic Languages). We aim to continue to nurture these relationships. Naturally, we are also deeply involved with the overarching body for all study associations within the Faculty of Humanities, ALPHA-FGw. ALPHA-FGw provides funds for activities of its member associations. ALPHA-FGw has also organised large events in cooperation with its member associations, like the Christmas Gala. Alongside the cooperation with the study associations, VOS will also work with the KAT-blad magazine. VOS will contribute to the content of the KAT-blad by contacting members who are interested in writing articles for it.

VOS is also represented in the Alumni circle of Linguistics at UvA. The Alumni circle is very invested in the study and organises multiple events throughout the year. Their events — usually lectures or other linguistics-related activities — can be very interesting for VOS members. We will continue to advertise these to our members. Additionally, we plan to introduce combined events organised by both the Alumni Circle and VOS, starting with the Linguistic Walk and the ensuing borrel.

Outside of UvA, Linguistics programmes are offered in other cities across The Netherlands. These programmes all have their own study associations. Together with these associations, VOS partakes in, among other events, the yearly Linguistics Career Day.

Events

Throughout the year, VOS commits itself to holding events that benefit its members and the linguistic community at large. We host events that will broaden knowledge related to the field of linguistics but also provide a way to connect and meet fellow members in an inclusive space.

This year will be unique. Due to COVID-19 restrictions, we plan to host a mix of in-person and online events. As stated earlier, our primary priority will be to ensure the safety and health of our members. Our fortnightly borrels and most events will be held in person and standalone events will be held online, when fitting. As a board, we reserve the right to immediately cease all in-person events and revert to a fully online schedule if we deem it unsafe to continue. This could be a result of changing COVID-19 restrictions or an increase in infections, but also due to our members not following the necessary health and safety precautions at our in-person events.

Our introduction weekend, TWeekend, is filled with introductory exercises to allow our members new and old to get to know each other. It will be held later in Autumn 2021, once COVID-19 restrictions and spread have relaxed enough to allow for it.

We also anticipate our Study Trip to take place in the lecture free week in the spring of 2022. We will travel abroad to a linguistically-significant location where members can explore a new city and culture. The trip will be filled with academic enrichment and good times to be had. Activities related to linguistics and/or sign language linguistics will be organised. In the past, these have taken the shape of visiting the local university's Linguistics department or attending a conference.

This year we will also introduce an all-new event, VOS Prom. It will be a themed, end-of-year gala exclusively for VOS members and their dates. We hope to make a fun year-end celebration that everyone can enjoy. Inspired by the North American tradition of proms, we hope it might also make some of our international students feel a bit more at home.

Besides these three major events, we will also plan smaller activities such as Language Cafes, movie nights, as well as day trips to amusement parks, museums, and more.

BOARD MEMBERS TASKS AND RESPONSIBILITIES

In order to achieve the aforementioned goals, each member of the board will take upon themselves a number of tasks and responsibilities in order to ensure that our members' needs are met. These will be detailed in this chapter.

The 2021-2022 VOS board consists of the following members:

CHAIR - Lauren Flemming

SECRETARY - Emily de Boer

TREASURER / VICE CHAIR - Zion Smith

COMMISSARY OF INTERNAL AFFAIRS - Emily Duckett

COMMISSARY OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS - Nilansha Dargan

General Communal Tasks

All VOS XXII board members have the following collective tasks and responsibilities:

- Representing the association
- Being open to new ideas and/or changes from members
- Being available for answering any questions
- Making the policy plan for the year
- Presenting the progress and goals of the board and committees at the General Assembly
- Ultimate responsibility for the committees
- Being present, as often as possible, at all of the events organised by VOS;
- Promotion of VOS activities and services
- Responsible for organisation of VOS/Board-related activities and services
- Recruiting board members for the year 2022-2023
- Making the board transfer as smooth as possible and setting the next board up for success

Responsibilities of the Chair

The chair of the board is the point person of VOS. The chair needs to ensure that they are informed of the goings on within the association, so as to best serve their fellow board members and the interests of the member and the association at large. The chair plays a facilitating and supervisory role for the rest of the board, assuring that their fellow board members are aware of their responsibilities and have everything they need to carry these out.

The chair leads all board meetings and general assemblies. They are VOS' delegate to the board of the Alumni circle, and attend all ALPHA-FGw meetings. At the start of the year, the chair will sign out the old board at the Chamber of Commerce (KvK), and sign in the new board.

This year, the chair is also a chair of the Academics and Career Committee (alongside Commissary of Internal Affairs, Emily Duckett) and Prom Committee (alongside Treasurer, Zion Smith).

Responsibilities of the Secretary

The secretary is responsible for taking minutes during board meetings and general assembly, and making these available to fellow board members and other members of the association.

Additionally, the secretary will monitor and take care of the VOS email account, responding promptly or sending the email to the appropriate fellow board member to respond when necessary. Board members will be informed of any events, invitations, important matters etc. that may appear in the mailbox.

Moreover, this year the secretary will be in charge of maintaining and updating the membership list, and other member related things to keep track of (e.g. sign ups for events). They are also a chair of the Newsletter committee (alongside the Commissary of Internal Affairs, Emily Duckett), and of the Activity Committee (alongside Commissary of External Affairs, Nilansha Dargan).

Responsibilities of the Treasurer

The treasurer is in charge of all the money that comes in and out of VOS. They must keep a detailed account of everything, giving an explanation as to why money has been made or been spent. They are also in charge of making sure the rest of the board, and all committees, are aware of the current financial state, and that they stick to their individual budgets. They must also present a budget at the first GA of the year, and then a repeat of it at the second GA at the end of the year, along with a realisation of how the money was spent.

This year the treasurer will work alongside the Commissary of External Affairs, Nilansha Dargan, as chair of the Study Trip committee. They will also chair the VOS Prom committee with Chair of the board, Lauren Flemming. As these are the two committees that the most money will run through, he is best delegated to chairing these.

In addition to his usual responsibilities, this year the treasurer also will act as Vice Chair of the association as a whole. The Vice Chair will assume the responsibilities of the Chair on the occasion that the Chair is not present.

Responsibilities of the Commissary of Internal Affairs

The main responsibilities of the Commissary of Internal Affairs include the promotion of VOS activities and events and maintenance of VOS social media accounts on Instagram, Facebook, etc. The Commissary of Internal Affairs is also responsible for the maintenance of relations with VOS members, as well as curating the website and keeping it up to date. In the event of the Secretary's absence, the Commissary of Internal Affairs will assume the responsibility of taking minutes during meetings.

The Commissary will work together with the Secretary, Emily de Boer, on the Newsletter Committee. She will also co-chair the Academics and Career Committee alongside Chair of the board,

Lauren Flemming. Outside of these responsibilities, the Commissary of Internal Affairs also functions as a general board member, picking up any tasks that may come her way.

Responsibilities of the Commissary of External Affairs

The main responsibilities of the Commissary of External Affairs include being the main contact point between VOS and the outside world, and being accessible for questions from parties outside VOS. These include communicating with faculties and other student associations in our community, as well as outside companies and organisations. They will serve as a liaison between relevant parties and VOS members when planning activities and events, as well as serving as the VOS spokesperson for the Linguistics Career Day. They will also be giving assistance to the Commissary of Internal Affairs, Emily Duckett, to promote VOS events and activities.

This year this Commissary will be co-chair of the Study Trip Committee, alongside Treasurer Zion Smith. Additionally, they will chair the Activities Committee (alongside Secretary, Emily de Boer).

COMMITTEES

Activity Committee

VOS strives to create a sense of community among its members, and this committee works towards this goal by planning, organising, and executing all social VOS activities, excursions, borrels, and small parties. Activity Committee members will be encouraged to exercise their creativity to come up with a variety of fun events for our members. Since activities happen all year long, this committee too will work all year long. The committee will be meeting once every week for an hour and may require more work to be done at the members own time. This year the committee will be chaired by Commissary of External Affairs, Nilansha Dargan, and the Secretary, Emily de Boer.

Study Trip Committee

After the unfortunate cancellation of the annual Study Trip the past two academic years, the VOS board is committed to bringing this large event back this year, so long as Covid-19 restrictions allow us to do so safely. This committee is also responsible for planning the annual TWeekend trip, which was also unfortunately cancelled this last academic year. Committee members will collaborate with their chairs on choosing a location and venue for both of the trips, as well as planning all sorts of fun (and academic) activities to do on-location. Both of these events will have a limited attendance, but members of this committee have guaranteed admission to both, if they so choose. Due to TWeekend happening in the first semester, and the Study Trip happening in the second semester, this committee will work to some degree all year round, with the frequency of meetings increasing as the respective trips draw closer. The Study Trip Committee will be chaired by the Treasurer, Zion Smith, and the Commissary of External Affairs, Nilansha Dargan.

Newsletter Committee

This year the VOS board has decided to continue to release the newsletter fortnightly. The newsletter will inform members of upcoming events, job and internship opportunities and other fun linguistic information or important news. The committee will write the articles and format the newsletter as a whole. Additionally, at the end of the year, the committee will be responsible for the 'yearbook' edition of the newsletter at year-end. The committee will meet once weekly. The Newsletter Committee will be chaired by the Secretary, Emily de Boer, and the Commissary of Internal Affairs, Emily Duckett.

VOS Prom Committee

This year we will introduce an entirely new event, VOS Prom. For that, we've designated an entirely new committee! This committee will plan the prom, organise ticket sales, and advertise the event. For the first semester, the committee will meet once a month to assign tasks and plan. As we get closer to the event in the second semester, frequency of meetings will ramp up until they are meeting once a week to iron out final details. The VOS Prom Committee will be co-chaired by Chair of the board, Lauren Flemming, and Treasurer, Zion Smith.

Academics and Career Committee

We will also introduce a new committee this year to plan linguistics and career-focused events; such as Language Cafés, guest lectures, study sessions, and career workshops. Some of the

goals of this committee are to look at “Life after Linguistics,” and help students prepare for life in graduate school or the workforce, as well as plan fun linguistics-related events. The introduction of this committee allows the separation of the more social events planned by the Activity Committee, and the more academic-focused events of the Academics and Career committee. This committee will meet weekly. The Academics and Career Committee will be chaired by Chair of the board, Lauren Flemming, and the Commissary of Internal Affairs, Emily Duckett.

MISCELLANEOUS

For the people, by the people

The Board of VOS XXII supports the initiative of the previous year's board, VOS XXI, to emphasise the influence of its members and have them play a larger part in how the association runs. This way VOS can truly represent its members and their best interests, as well as making the association more enjoyable overall. The board will continue to no longer be a centralization of power within the association, but rather a means by which the ideas and needs of VOS members can be elevated and carried out. We will strive to give as many opportunities as possible for members to express their ideas. We will open the lines of communication between board and members and make clear we are open to adopting both suggestions and criticisms. The board will take members into account at all times, ensuring decisions are truly made with them in mind, and will not be close minded when new ideas or suggestions challenge the current systems of the association or the board's perceptions thereof. We want to allow our members to help the association evolve so that it is working at its full potential and is enjoyable and beneficial for all members. Ultimately, we believe that the board is in full service of its members and should be held accountable to them at all times.

Trust Persons

This year, we will be appointing two Trust Persons that will provide a listening, non-judgemental ear and help our members with any issues they have and aid them in getting any support they may need. They will be well-versed in and always refer members to any resources available to help them. They will be available at all times to members, whether in person at events or via the contact information below. Any communication with a Trust Person is absolutely confidential and neither the content of the conversations nor the identity of the person approaching them will be revealed to anyone at any point in time, except in the case of the person having suicidal thoughts, in which case the Trust Person will put them in contact with a psychologist for their own well-being. Members will be made aware and reminded often of the opportunity to contact the Trust Persons.

In the year 2021-2022, the Trust Persons will be Lauren Flemming and Emily Duckett. Lauren can be reached via phone/whatsapp (+31 6 42186687), email (lajflemming@gmail.com), or social media (instagram: @lajflemming). Emily can be reached via phone/whatsapp (+33 7 66577713), email (ekducket@gmail.com), or social media (instagram: @duck_emily).

Sexual Assault and Harassment

VOS maintains a zero-tolerance policy on sexual violence and harassment. We strive to nurture safe environments for all of our members at all of our events. We recognise, however, that this is not enough. We aim to make every attempt to raise awareness and support our members that experience it. Our board will all receive training through Our Bodies, Our Voice to learn how we as student leaders can best create an inclusive, safe culture within our association and act as trusted points-of-contact for any member who needs it.

Mental Health Support

Mental health support is an issue that is near and dear to the VOS XXII board's hearts. The COVID-19 pandemic has made clearer than ever our members' need for additional mental health support. We recognise that a major barrier to this is accessibility. We believe that for our members to

succeed, they need an association that will support them and their mental health. To try to solve this, both of our Trust Persons have resolved to become certified in Mental Health First Aid at the University of Twente. They will be available to our members at all times and capable of providing support, advice, and referring them to the correct resources for any additional support.

Rebranding

Another initiative we as a board would like to take on is a rebrand of the VOS promotional material, with the intention of increasing engagement and visibility. Our main focus will be changing the face of VOS, our logo. While the fox mascot will remain an integral part of VOS, we believe that making the fox branding more subtle will increase visibility and approachability. The new logo will be premiered at the first General Assembly. Additionally, we plan to completely overhaul the VOS Linguistics website. This will make information more accessible to both members and non-members. Summarily, we want to ensure the branding and social media to properly reflect VOS' dedication to serving its role in the UvA and broader linguistic communities.

Linguistics Career Day

VOS works together with other universities in the Netherlands and their linguistic study associations to arrange the yearly Linguistics Career Day. The Linguistics Career Day is made to give students in the Linguistics programmes an idea of what opportunities are available to them after graduation. This is usually demonstrated via presentations from a number of speakers, activities, and more. This year, the event will be hosted by VOS in Amsterdam. We aim to work in cooperation with the other boards to produce a fun and informative event for everyone involved. The VOS board representative will be Nilansha Dargan.

General Assemblies

Every year, the board organises two General Assemblies (GAs). During the first GA, we will present the budget, policy plan, and our goals for the future. During the second, we will present the budget realisation, reflection on achievement of goals and policies, and announce the new board. The members are invited to come to both GAs and are able to vote on the presented items. If they are unable to attend for any reason but would still like to vote, they can contact a member of the board and authorise another member to vote on their behalf.

Supervisory Board (KASCO)

The supervisory board is responsible for monitoring the fiscal year and budget. It will check in with the Treasurer at least twice per academic year. This year, we also seek to expand the role of the supervisory board. It will additionally take on an advisory role, meeting semi-regularly with the board. In the year 2021-2022, this board will consist of Zoe Jensen (Secretary, VOS XXI) and Thomas Meere (Treasurer, VOS XXI).