University Minors Policy

Most University of Groningen Bachelor's degree programmes offer a minor space (15 or 30 ECTS) in Semester 1 of Year 3. Students have a number of options for filling the minor space (see Minor Space Policy), including a university minor. This document describes the policy and regulations concerning university minors. Part A centres on the vision and objectives of university minors. Part B specifies the UG-wide regulations for university minors.

Part A: Vision and objectives of university minors

Discipline-specific and cross-disciplinary university minors
University minors introduce students to one or more disciplines outside their own field. A characteristic of university minors is that they are open to all UG students, irrespective of study background. The multidisciplinary group composition in university minors challenges students to work together with students from different disciplines. University minors can be discipline-specific or cross-disciplinary in nature.

Discipline-specific university minors introduce students to a single discipline outside their own degree programme, such as law, psychology, or astronomy. This allows them to broaden their academic profile with knowledge and skills from another discipline.

Cross-disciplinary university minors take a multidisciplinary or interdisciplinary approach,[1] based on a central issue or theme, such as energy, health in the Northern Netherlands, or religion in modern society. Students learn to take a broad approach to issues and acquire knowledge and skills that they can use to address complex cross-disciplinary problems and work with others in multidisciplinary environments.

University minors contribute to realizing a number of the UG's strategic objectives, both content-based and didactic. An example of this is the development of new cross-disciplinary university minors linked to themes in the Schools for Science and Society. University minors also act as a field lab for innovative teaching methods and modes of assessment, for example the development of multi-level course units for students from secondary vocational education (MBO), higher professional education (HBO), and university education (WO).

Revised 2023 University Minors Policy
This revised University Minors Policy includes three additions/amendments with respect to the previous University Minors Policy. 1) University minors and the Schools for Science and Society, 2) start and development of new university minors, and 3) periodic evaluation of university minors.

1. University minors and the Schools for Science and Society
One of the cornerstones of the 2021-2026 Strategic Plan 'Making Connections' is an expansion of interdisciplinary programmes that are aligned with the societal themes of the four Schools for Science and Society. With the Schools, the UG has created a space where academic disciplines can meet and collaborate in teaching. In its Strategic Plan, the UG expresses its ambition to develop new interdisciplinary university minors that fit within the themes of these Schools.

The 'Teaching in the Schools' policy framework was established in 2022. One of the objectives of this framework is to make sure that half of all university minors are aligned with the Schools' themes. Before 2027, at least eight new cross-disciplinary university minors will be

[1] *There is currently a discussion in academia around the concepts of multidisciplinary, interdisciplinary and transdisciplinary teaching. In this policy document, multidisciplinary teaching refers to teaching that involves multiple disciplines, without explicit integration. Interdisciplinary teaching involves integrating concepts, theories, and methods from various disciplines. Transdisciplinary teaching involves working with stakeholders from outside academia. This type of teaching integrates academic knowledge from various disciplines and practical knowledge. See also the explanation in the Guidelines for University Minors.*

developed, in line with the agreements of this policy framework. These university minors will therefore be developed by at least three participating faculties, be interdisciplinary/ transdisciplinary and challenge-based in nature, and offer course units that are aligned with the academic and societal themes of the Schools.

In addition to developing eight new university minors, we will make more explicit how all existing university minors are thematically aligned with the strategic themes chosen by the UG in the Strategic Plan.

Alongside cross-disciplinary university minors, we will continue to offer discipline-specific minors. Discipline-specific minors have a multidisciplinary group composition and introduce students to a single discipline outside their own degree programme, such as law, psychology, or astronomy. This allows students to broaden their profile. Discipline-specific university minors are often designed to accommodate large groups of students. This is important, because every year, 1800-2000 students follow a university minor.

2. Start and development of new university minors

The decision to start a new university minor is decoupled from the quality assessment of the subject of the university minor. In the first phase, the intended responsible faculty submits a short proposal, using Part 1 of the Application Form for a New University Minor. The Education Council plays an advisory role in the strategic considerations on whether or not to launch the design phase of a new university minor. Once the Education Council has issued a recommendation and the Board of the University has approved the short proposal for the new university minor, the responsible faculty is asked to elaborate the plan further into a complete proposal (Part 2 of the Application Form for a New University Minor). Once the design phase is completed, the UCO, mandated by the Board of the University, assesses the quality of the design and the quality assurance of the new university minor. See elaboration of criteria under Part B: Characteristics and regulations concerning university minors.

3. Periodic evaluation of university minors

The number of university minors on offer has grown organically in the past years. At university level, the need is therefore felt for a quality assurance system for these minors. That is why we are introducing an evaluation system for university minors, whereby university minors are offered for a period of six years. An interim evaluation takes place after three years, and the minor can be adjusted where needed. A final evaluation takes place after five years. At this point the decision is made whether to offer the minor for another period of six years.

Part B: Characteristics and regulations regarding university minors

Article 1. Programme characteristics

1. University minors are subject to the general requirements formulated for the minor space, see 'University Minor Space Policy' (including Semester 1, Year 3 of the Bachelor's degree programme, and 15 or 30 ECTS).
2. The responsible faculties have the option to set a maximum number of participants.

Article 2. Admission requirements

1. University minors are open to students from all Bachelor's degree programmes. An exception can be made if the student's regular Bachelor's degree programme overlaps too much with the university minor (to be assessed by the Board of Examiners of the student's degree programme).
2. Students can take part in a university minor in Block 1 without further admission requirements. It is also possible to offer a minor of 15 ECTS in Block 1 and a follow-up minor in Block 2. For the second part of the minor, the successful completion of the first minor package may be set as an admission requirement, based on order and prior knowledge requirements.
3. Master's students and higher professional education (HBO) students are excluded from taking part in UG university minors.
4. Bachelor's students from other Dutch universities and universities abroad may enrol in a university minor.

Article 3. Organizational requirements

1. Each university minor falls under a single responsible faculty, also if it involves a partnership between faculties, and only one faculty is considered to be responsible for the minor. The faculty responsible for the minor may delegate some tasks to other participating faculties or Schools, but it retains overall responsibility.
2. A university minor must be embedded in the quality assurance system of the responsible faculty (see Quality Assurance).
3. The responsible faculty is responsible for administrative alignment with other faculties.
4. The responsible faculty is responsible for the administration in systems such as Progress, Ocasys, and Brightspace.
5. The financing of minor programmes follows the regular financing systems for teaching ('Educational Services'). If needed, the responsible faculty makes financial agreements with other faculties. The responsible faculty in principle finances the development costs for a new university minor.

Article 4. Level

1. The intended final attainment level of university minors must be in line with the target group, Bachelor's Year 3 level.

Article 5. Educational requirements

1. University minors must have a coherent curriculum and it is therefore obligatory to formulate learning outcomes at minor level, and where relevant at the level of course units (course/module).
2. It should be clear how the various elements of the minor relate to one another and to the learning outcomes of the minor as a whole.
3. The teaching methods and modes of assessment should be clearly related to the learning outcomes. There should be an explicit link between the modes of assessment and the learning outcomes.

4. For university minors that have been or will be developed in the context of teaching in the Schools for Science and Society, additional requirements apply with respect to the teaching methods and/or concepts used. These are listed in the 'Guidelines for University Minors'.

Article 6. Quality assurance

1. Every university minor falls under a responsible faculty that monitors the curriculum and quality of the university minor and is responsible for the formal quality assurance cycle.
2. The responsible faculty sets out the rules and guidelines for the university minor in the Teaching and Examination Regulations of one of the Bachelor's degree programmes within the Faculty.
3. The responsible faculty appoints a Board of Examiners responsible for assessment within the minor.
4. The responsible faculty appoints a Programme Committee that plays an advisory role with respect to the university minor and discusses the teaching evaluations.
5. The university minor is subject to the quality assurance policy of the responsible faculty.

Article 7. Starting new university minors

1. Proposals for new university minors are submitted by the intended responsible faculty via the annual plan letter procedure. This requirement applies to university minors that are due to start in September 2025 (plan letter should be submitted in February 2024). Transitional arrangements will be made for university minors with an intended start date in September 2024.
2. A short proposal is submitted in line with Part A of the Application Form for New University Minors. The Education Council discusses the proposals for new university minors in April of the year in which the proposal is submitted.
3. The Education Council has an advisory role in deciding whether to develop a new university minor, and issues a recommendation at least about the following: overlap with existing university minors, potential for partnership between faculties, and alignment with UG-wide educational strategy.
4. The Board of the University decides in May of the year in which the proposal is submitted whether the new university minor can be developed further. Following the advice of the Education Council, the Board of the University may decide to set additional requirements.
5. The responsible faculty elaborates the proposal, taking into account the additional requirements set by the Board of the University, the criteria arising from this framework, and the 'Guidelines for University Minors'. This elaboration is based on Part 2 of the Application Form for New University Minors.
6. The development phase must be completed before 1 November of the year in which the proposal is submitted. Part 2 of the Application Form for New University Minors is then submitted for advice to the UCO and the UG-wide minor coordinator.
7. Before 1 December, the UCO and the UG-wide minor coordinator assess the quality criteria for new university minors. Subsequently, the minor can start in September of the following year.

Article 8. Periodic evaluation of university minors

1. A university minor is in principle offered for a period of at least six years, in line with degree programme accreditations.
2. After three years, the responsible faculty conducts an interim evaluation, and makes adjustments where necessary.
3. After five years, a final evaluation takes place and a decision is reached on whether to continue to offer the minor.
4. Based on this evaluation, the Board of the University decides, in dialogue with the responsible faculty, whether to continue to offer the university minor.
5. The period during which a university minor is offered can be extended by six years at a time.

6. Existing university minors will be assessed in phases and assigned a duration period.

Established by the Board of the University of Groningen on 31-10-2023.