B.A.R.T. Results - April 20th, 2021

On Tuesday the 20th of April during the break, the fifth edition of the Business Administration Reflection Time (B.A.R.T.) took place. This memo gives you a summary of the results.

In total, 12 students and 15 staff members joined discussions about the following three statements:

Online education after the corona measures
Posed statement: 'When the corona measures do no longer exist, online education should still be used.'

Summary of the discussions: Although both students and teachers recognize advantages of online lectures and online elements within education, both prefer education in an on campus setting. However, offering a few online tutorials per course and allowing for online exams could be beneficial for a select group of students. Furthermore, while online education can be of a very high quality, the form in which this will be conducted should be finetuned with the specific contents of courses.

Student's ability to influence the curriculum
Posed statement: 'The current opportunities for students to influence the contents of the curriculum Business Administration are insufficient.'

Summary of the discussions: At this moment, student feedback on the curriculum is mainly gathered by looking at students' opinions in the course evaluation questionnaires. This method could be supplemented by a less one-way oriented evaluation/feedback structure, like for example panel meetings between students, teachers and management. Besides that, students would also appreciate more feedback of the course coordinator on the course evaluation. Higher student response rates within the current course evaluation methods are necessary. Furthermore, students should be better informed about their possibilities to influence the curriculum.

Elective space
Posed statement: 'Students make insufficient use of the electives offered in the curriculum.'

Summary of the discussions: Indicate clearly where information about electives can be found and inform students about electives in their first year of study already. Furthermore, more detailed information of what can be expected about elective courses should be provided in course descriptions and the number of electives should be increased.

The detailed results of the lively discussions between students and teachers about the statements can be found in the report below.

Topic 1: When the corona measures do not longer exist, online education should still be used
Although both students and teachers recognize advantages of online lectures and online elements within education, both prefer education in an on campus setting.
Students prefer education in an on campus setting, since social interaction with fellow students is of great importance to them. The participants make clear that online lectures are valuable to them, but online seminars are not, because of a lack of interaction. The chat function that is often used during online lectures facilitates interaction well and has resulted in students asking more questions during the online lectures than they would have done during lectures on campus. Therefore, participants suggest to keep organizing lectures in a hybrid way, so students can ask questions via a chat function during the lectures on campus. They however also acknowledge that this could create an organizational challenge and that it might be disturbing for the lecturer. In addition, students make clear that they think it's challenging (for both lecturers and students) to well communicate about subject matter in an online environment, and therefore also prefer education in an on campus setting. However, they do think that information with regard to organization, set-up and structure (for instance organizational information about the bachelor thesis) can be well communicated in an online environment.

Offering a few online tutorials per course could be beneficial for a select group of students.
The option of an online tutorial for a specific group of students such as students abroad, students with health issues, or for first year students who do not have a room in Nijmegen yet, would be beneficial. A disadvantage of doing this, would be that students within these tutorials would be less integrated with the group of regular students, which could be at the expense of the quality of education. Another disadvantage would be that these specific groups of students would have less interaction with others and develop less social skills during their studies, since they will not be in touch with a lot of other students.

Online education can be of a high quality, but the form in which this will be conducted should be finetuned with the content of a course.
Decisions with regard to offering online lectures or tutorials should *not* be made based on the size of the group, but on the contents of the course. Generalized decisions regarding online education are very difficult to make, as courses differ so much from each other. The knowledge of programme and course coordinators should be taken into account when making decisions about online education. Furthermore, if we want online education to be effective, it's important to have clarity about the setup of online education and the expectations from teachers with regard to student participation.

Offering online exams can be beneficial to some students
Online exams can be beneficial because it makes use of different exam formats which might create a bigger learning value for students (like exams with open questions or open book exams). Also, some students perform better in an at-home setting. Furthermore, offering online exams would create the possibility for foreign students to entirely complete an exchange program from abroad. However, it is important not to underestimate the possibility of fraud that comes with online exams.

Topic 2: The current opportunities for students to influence the contents of the curriculum Business Administration are insufficient.
At this moment, student feedback on the curriculum is mainly gathered by looking at students' opinions in the course evaluation questionnaires. This method could be supplemented by a less one-way oriented evaluation/feedback structure, like for example panel meetings between students, teachers and management.
While the current course evaluation questionnaires are useful to gather students' opinions on the course, more detailed and specific feedback on the course is necessary, and should be provided for in direct contact between students and teachers. Direct contact prevents underlying details of evaluations to be overlooked, makes results of evaluation forms better interpretable, and students will experience that they are being heard more. An example of such supplementary structure is a panel like the B.A.R.T.. Additionally, the evaluation structure needs to consist of people from all levels within the program (e.g. course coordinators, teachers, and students).

Students wish for more feedback after having completed the course evaluations
Students currently often miss feedback of teachers on the course evaluations they fill out while they don't look back at the Brightspace page of a course they've already finished. As a solution for this problem, it is suggested to let teachers place a Brightspace announcement at the beginning of a course in which it is summarized what the results of last year's evaluations were and how the teacher wishes to implement this feedback in the current set-up of the course.

A higher student response within the current evaluation methods is necessary
Teachers wish for a higher response rate among students for the course evaluations. At this moment, it is too low. A proposed solution to this is to make the evaluations compulsory for first-year students and impose an evaluation/feedback culture. An alternative is to have the evaluations completed during the final lecture, since most students are present during these.

Inform students about their options to influence the curriculum.
Students indicate that they would like to have more information on how they can exert influence on the curriculum. They often do not know how to make their voices heard. The visibility of events regarding changes to courses and the curriculum could thus be increased. It is also mentioned that the average student does not know how they are represented in the decision making with regard to the curriculum and what, for example, the programme committee can mean for students.

Topic 3: Students make insufficient use of the electives offered in the curriculum
Clearly indicate where information about electives can be found
There are many options offered by the university for selecting an elective. However, students still find it difficult to get an overview of all available options. Especially the options for electives offered by another faculty within the university are often unclear to students. A possible cause is that there are currently several channels and platforms that provide information about electives. A suggestion would therefore be to create an up-to-date document, portal, or website page that shows all possibilities regarding the electives.

Inform students about the electives in the first year of study already
Currently, first-year bachelor students can attend an information lecture about the specializations and minors offered within the study program. Nevertheless, it remains unclear to many students what options are available regarding the electives. A suggestion would therefore be that the university should take on a more facilitating role by giving first-year students a mandatory information lecture about all the options available regarding electives. Aside from informing the students on time, it is of course also important that students adopt a proactive attitude.

Provide more (detailed) information in course descriptions
At the moment, it still happens that students register for several courses and decide afterwards for which one they want to deregister. This makes it difficult for teachers to create an overview of the number of students who will actually attend the course. A possible explanation is that the course manuals become available to students only after they have registered for a course and information on Osiris is sometimes not complete or representative. As a result, students do not always have the appropriate information available to decide which course they want to register for. A suggestion would therefore be to make detailed information available to the students on time.

Increase the offering of electives
Some popular electives have (too) many participants, making it hard for teachers to maintain a high quality of education. Offering more electives might improve the quality of education, if it leads to smaller groups. This is preferred by both students and teachers. In addition, electives and/or minors could be offered by the faculty that provide students with the opportunity to enter other studies and faculties. Collaborations with other faculties (for example in developing minors) could provide for more opportunities for students. Finally, more in-depth and specialized elective courses within the master's track should be considered, since this will ensure that students develop more expertise.