

University Council statement on Yantai, 29 October 2015

The following statement is a statement on behalf of the entire University Council.

The Yantai case and discussion are currently sources of much confusion for many. In order to gain a better understanding for all persons and organisations involved, the University Council believes several improvements in the current process must be made. The current discussion is often focused on the minute details of this huge plan which are proving impossible to predict, making the whole process very frustrating and negative for everyone involved; the CvB, University council, faculty councils and staff at their respective faculties.

We believe this is partly because we are focussing too much on the question of information. Everyone involved keeps requesting information, but we understand that in most cases there simply is no extra information to hand over. We acknowledge that the CvB has been continuously supplying this council with more information, and we have more now than we had in June, we thank you for that. This is why we propose a different, more constructive alternative to the current negative spiral surrounding the Yantai discussion.

For the benefit of the entire University, the University Council unanimously put together a list of requests. Answering these requests is essential in the process of regaining the trust and support of the staff and students of the University of Groningen.

First of all, the council requests the CvB provide a clear Yantai business case. The council is not alone in this. The Faculty of Economics and Business also asks for a clear business case. This request for a Business Case has also been done twice by the Dutch Ministry of Education in meetings between the Ministry and representatives of the Bureau of the University. We need a clear outline of current and potential problems that the University of Groningen may face; a clear list of opportunities at Yantai need to be made to solve above mentioned problems; and a clear and honest list of the risks and potential dangers. We suggest that this Business case roughly mirrors the proposed points offered by the FEB Yantai Advisory Committee.

Secondly, We would like to receive the documents already signed by the Board, to get a better view on what is already decided upon. In order to better inform ourselves and engage in constructive debate, the council needs to be informed beforehand on documents that will be signed. This is directly linked to the 10th commitment made in the June council meeting, which reads: *“De UR zal in het licht van het harmoniemodel continu betrokken blijven bij het besluitvormingsproces. Binnen en buiten officiële vergaderingen.”*

Thirdly, We request for the date of a single GO/NO GO moment. We quote commitment 5: *“Adviesrecht op GO/NOGO na akkoord van Chinese Ministry of Education.”* This GO/NOGO preferably takes place a reasonable time before the establishment of the University of Groningen Yantai as a legal entity.

Therefore, as a fourth request, in pursuit of clarity, an updated timeline should be offered by the CvB, including the decisions being made and the decisions which are yet to be made and when. It is essential that this timeline keeps being updated to facilitate the process and communication towards the University staff at the faculties involved.

In order to regain support, and offer a counterargument towards misinformation and hearsay, it is vital that the Board of this University is open about its intentions regarding Yantai, including all the positives, negatives, opportunities and risks. Therefore a concise, concrete Business Case, with a clear vision that tells the complete story, needs to be circulated among the academic community as a whole.

If this is attained, both the potential for opportunity and any potential pitfalls will be made clear. It's effects will ensure that both the CvB and the University Council, will be able to inform students and staff on a decentral level in a more constructive way.

The general consensus is clear, that the academic community of the University of Groningen needs a concrete answer and overview of the 'why' question surrounding Yantai.

To summarize, the council requests the following:

1. A concrete overview or business case with a problem sketch of a future without Yantai, an overview of solutions that Yantai will provide for these problems, and an overview of current risks and opportunities of the project.
2. We would like to receive the documents already signed by the Board, to get a better view on what is already decided upon. In order to better inform ourselves and engage in constructive debate, the council needs to be informed beforehand on documents that will be signed.
3. The date of the Go/NoGo moment
4. An updated time path based on the "Planvorming" document of June. We request that the board will update this time path when any changes occur and send it to the presidium so that the council can be informed about changes in the time path.

We look forward to your response.