

Minor Space Policy

The minor space is part of the planned differentiation space (15 or 30 ECTS) in Bachelor's degree programmes. The minor space makes it possible for students to create more flexible and personal learning paths. The University of Groningen (UG) offers a wide range of options within the minor space, from broadening study tracks to placements or a period of study abroad. This document elaborates on policy concerning the minor space. Part A focuses on the UG's vision and objectives, and Part B specifies UG-wide regulations.

It is important to make a clear distinction between the following two terms: Minor Space: Programmed space for differentiation in a Bachelor's degree programme. Minor: Cohesive set of course units that can be taken as part of the minor space.

Part A: Vision, objectives, and content of the minor space

Vision on the minor space

In its 2021-2026 Strategic Plan, 'Making Connections', the UG describes its vision on the role of university education. The UG encourages students to fully realize their potential. Students are challenged to acquire knowledge and skills across the boundaries of traditional disciplines, and to work with others to contribute to solving complex academic or societal problems. Students are encouraged to continue to develop and improve their knowledge and skills. The UG supports them in these efforts, for example by adjusting the form and content of teaching to meet the students' needs.

The minor space in Bachelor's degree programmes is ideal in this context because it offers students a personal learning path and strengthens collaboration between disciplines, as well as between teaching, research, and society. The minor space allows students to add their own accents to their educational career. They learn in an international, multidisciplinary or interdisciplinary environment,¹ within or outside of the UG. Through the minors, they are also brought into contact with complex issues that require a multidisciplinary, interdisciplinary, or transdisciplinary approach.

Objectives of the minor space

Student perspective

The minor space plays an important role in offering students a flexible and personal learning experience. It gives students the opportunity to align their curriculum with their specific learning needs, interests, and future career plans. Thanks to the various options for filling the minor space, students can present themselves in a way that suits them, in terms of both content and mode of study.

Although the content of the minor space differs from student to student, the course units the students take in the minors contribute to their academic development. The general learning outcomes of minors are the acquisition of new knowledge and skills, stimulating intellectual

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 Schools Framework.*

curiosity, and training critical thinking. Making students responsible for their own study choices helps them take their first steps towards lifelong learning.

UG perspective

From the UG's perspective, the minor space can help meet the changing needs of the labour market and society. Minors can be used to integrate new research themes and current societal problems, without necessarily having to launch a new degree programme or track. Minors can also be used to experiment with new teaching methods. The minor space can challenge students and lecturers to look beyond the boundaries of their own discipline. It stimulates interdisciplinary initiatives, inter-faculty collaboration, and joint research projects.

Filling the minor space

The UG has made a conscious decision to offer a wide range of options for filling the minor space, allowing students to choose a study path that suits them. The UG offers the following options for filling the minor space.²

1. University minors: Getting to know a different discipline

University minors introduce students to one or more disciplines other than their own. A characteristic of university minors is that they are open to all UG students, irrespective of study background. The multidisciplinary group composition of university minors challenges students to work together with students from different disciplines. We distinguish discipline-specific and cross-disciplinary university minors.

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, 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 solve transdisciplinary problems and work with others in multidisciplinary environments.

The UG's policy on university minors is set out in the 'University Minors Policy' document.

2. Faculty minor/specialization: Teaching within the degree programme or faculty

A characteristic of faculty minors/specializations is that they are in principle only open to students from a specific degree programme or faculty. Students acquire knowledge, skills, and methods that prepare them for specialized Master's degree programmes or specific roles on the labour market. A number of faculties give students the option of following a faculty minor that falls outside the specializations offered by the student's degree programme, but requires specific prior knowledge and is therefore only open to students within the relevant faculty.

3. Teacher-training minor

² *The Teaching and Examination Regulations of the student's Bachelor's degree programme specify which options are available for filling the minor space in the relevant degree programme. In principle, a student can choose from at least two options.*

Students who follow a Bachelor's degree programme that corresponds to a school subject can opt to fill the minor space with a teacher-training minor. In 30 ECTS, they are introduced to teaching via theoretical course units offered by the University and an intensive practical placement at a secondary school. After completing their Bachelor's degree programme in combination with a completed teacher-training minor, participants obtain a limited grade two teaching qualification for teaching in preparatory secondary vocational education (VMBO-TL) and the lower years of senior general secondary education and pre-university education (HAVO-VWO).

4. Study period abroad

A period of study abroad stimulates students' personal growth, and helps them acquire intercultural competences and take on new perspectives.

Students broaden their world view through the cultural dimension and the new knowledge and skills they acquire. Students can take both discipline-specific and transdisciplinary course units at a university abroad.

5. Research placement

In a research placement, students apply their newly acquired knowledge and skills in a research project, within or outside the University. They are given the opportunity to work with experienced researchers, which gives them a preview of an academic career. The research placement can also introduce students to further study in a Research Master's degree programme.

6. Societal placement

A societal placement teaches students to apply their knowledge and skills in practice. It is a valuable way of becoming acquainted with the professional field, and helps students to acquire knowledge, skills, and a network in the field in which they want to work in future.

7. Personal minor

Finally, students have the option of putting together a personal minor. This is a study programme proposed by the student, of 15 or 30 ECTS, and consisting of course units at the UG or elsewhere. These can be course units from existing minors, but also optional course units, or learning experiences tailored to the student's needs.

Part B sets out UG-wide regulations for the minor space.

Part B: Characteristics and regulations regarding the minor space

Part B sets out UG-wide regulations for the minor space. Article 1. Scope and

programming of the minor space

1. Every Bachelor's degree programme offers a minor space with a scope of 15 or 30 ECTS.
2. Every Bachelor's degree programme can decide on the scope of its minor space (15 or 30 ECTS) based on the nature of the degree programme and its learning outcomes.
3. A degree programme can only dispense with the minor space in case of compelling objections, such as a civil effect (employability) requirement, the need for deepening within the major in order to achieve the learning outcomes of the Bachelor's degree programme. The Board of the University decides whether a Bachelor's degree programme can dispense with the minor space, in response to a substantiated request from the relevant faculty.

Article 2. Place in the curriculum

1. For all Bachelor's degree programmes, the minor space is planned in Year 3, Semester 1 (30 ECTS). If the minor space represents 15 ECTS, it is concentrated in Semester 1, Block 1.

2. There is no derogation from this rule.

Article 3. Students' freedom of choice

1. Freedom of choice is the key focus of the minor space. Depending on the learning outcomes, degree programmes can offer students two or more of the following options for filling the minor space (see Article 4 for further details):
 - i. University minor
 - ii. Faculty minor/specialization/track
 - iii. Teacher-training minor
 - iv. Study period abroad
 - v. Research placement
 - vi. Societal placement
 - vii. Personal minor
2. Freedom of choice for students can only be waived in case of compelling reasons. The decision to waive freedom of choice rests with the Board of Examiners of the relevant degree programme.
3. The options offered for filling the minor space are listed in the Teaching and Examination Regulations of the relevant Bachelor's degree programme.
4. Each degree programme guarantees that it will provide students with timely and comprehensive information about their options.

Article 4. Explanation of the minor types

1. University minor: A cohesive package of 15 or 30 ECTS that is open to students from all UG Bachelor's degree programmes.³ University minors introduce students to one or more disciplines other than their own. University minors can be discipline-specific or cross-disciplinary in nature. The policy on university minors applies across the University and is set out in the 'University Minors Policy' document.
2. Faculty minor/specialization/track within the Faculty or degree programme: A cohesive package of 15 or 30 ECTS that is open to students from a specific specialization or faculty. A characteristic of faculty minors/specializations is that they are in principle only open to students from a specific degree programme or faculty. Students acquire knowledge, skills, and methods that prepare them for specialized Master's degree programmes or specific roles on the labour market.
3. Teacher-training minor: A minor that is open to students who follow a Bachelor's degree programme that corresponds to a school subject. A completed teacher-training minor, in combination with a completed Bachelor's degree programme, leads to a limited grade two teaching qualification.
4. A study period abroad: A study period at a university abroad via an exchange programme or an online or in-person partnership (for example ENLIGHT), or as a free mover. Students in principle organize their stay abroad via the Faculty exchange office.
5. Research placement: A research placement at a research institute, institution, or company.
6. Societal placement: A placement focused on the professional field in an institution or company.
7. Personal minor: A study programme compiled by the student, representing 15 or 30 ECTS, and consisting of course units at the UG or elsewhere. These course units may be part of existing minors, but also contract course units.
8. If a student misses a course unit within their minor, they can, pending permission from their Board of Examiners, fill this space with another course unit.

³ A few university minors overlap so closely with Bachelor's degree programmes that students cannot follow these university minors as part of their minor space.

9. Faculties and degree programmes may establish their own policy for the above-mentioned minor types, with the exception of university minors, which are subject to UG-wide policy.

Article 5. Quality assurance of the minor space

1. The Teaching and Examination Regulations of every Bachelor's degree programme specify the following:
 - i. The scope of the minor space (15 or 30 ECTS)
 - ii. The options for students within the minor space (minimum 2 options as specified in Article 3.1)
2. Minors fall under the regular quality assurance protocols of the faculty responsible for the minor.
3. An exception to this are the quality assurance provisions for university minors, which are set out in the University Minors Policy.

Article 6. Role of Boards of Examiners in minors

1. The Teaching and Examination Regulations of the Bachelor's degree programme in which the student is enrolled specify which of the options for filling the minor space require prior permission from the Board of Examiners.
2. If a degree programme allows students to follow university minors, they do not need permission from their Board of Examiners to follow the minor in question.
3. The Board of Examiners of the responsible faculty determines whether all the course units from a minor must be completed with a passing mark.
4. For personal minors, the student must submit the minor programme for prior approval to the Board of Examiners of their Bachelor's degree programme.
5. The Board of Examiners of the student's degree programme decides whether all the course units of the personal minor must be completed with a passing mark.

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

