Report on development meeting Regional Studies 1 – Revision of BA and MA programmes
CROHO number(s): 50623 (BA American Studies), 60845 (MA North American Studies)

20 November 2025

The conversation covers **three main topics**:
(1) **Integrating AI** in teaching
(2) **Attracting more students** to the American Studies BA and MA programmes
(3) **Gender balance, workload, and staff well-being**.

1. AI in the Program

- **Integration:** The group discussed how to practically integrate AI into teaching, noting that Middle Eastern Studies has already made progress in this area.
- **Approaches:** Suggestions included sharing best practices with other programs, refining AI prompts as a skill, and balancing AI use with traditional learning (e.g., teaching students to write without AI before using it).
- **Challenges:** Concerns about AI's environmental impact and its current limitations in contextualization and close reading were raised, though it was acknowledged that AI is improving.

2. Attracting Students

- **Enrollment Concerns:** The program faces declining and less diverse student numbers, especially at the BA level, with fewer international students and more local Dutch applicants.
- **Possible Causes:** Factors include rising living costs, political climate (e.g., Trump policies), and waning interest in American Studies in Europe.
- **Strategies:** Ideas to boost enrollment include:
    - Emphasizing Dutch-Caribbean connections and existing regional ties.
    - Developing an Erasmus exchange with LMU Munich as an alternative to US study abroad.
    - Rebranding the MA (e.g., as "American Culture and Politics") and embedding it in English or History to attract more students, including those from International Relations.
    - Offering a sponsored study trip to the US, similar to Amsterdam's program.
    - Adjusting the MA's academic pitch to be less PhD-focused and more vocationally oriented.

3. Gender Balance, Workload, and Well-being

- **Gender Imbalance:** The program team is currently underrepresented due to sick leave, with international staff (especially women) particularly affected.

- **Workload Issues:** High workload, lack of social integration for international staff, and students' tendency to seek non-academic support from staff (especially female and minority staff) were highlighted.
- **Solutions:** Suggestions included better workload management, clearer boundaries for student support, and structural changes to prevent burnout and improve work-life balance. Address cultural differences in academic expectations (e.g., holiday use, support systems).

Main conclusion: The program is grappling with modernizing its approach to AI, adapting to changing student demographics, and addressing systemic issues around workload and staff well-being. Collaboration, flexibility, and proactive communication are seen as essential for moving forward.