university of groningen / faculty of economics and business

Strategic Plan

Faculty of Economics and Business

2026 - 2031

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Duisenberg Building

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Executive summary

In the past two decades, the Faculty of Economics & Business (FEB) experienced a strong growth of student numbers, specifically international students, numerous improvements in our education, an increase in international staff and strong performance in academic research. This has led to a strong academic reputation of FEB, for instance reflected in international rankings. FEB has become a truly international faculty.

Currently, FEB is confronted with multiple challenges, such as expected declining student numbers, strong financial headwind, an uncertain (geo-) political environment and the disruptive nature of AI. At the same time the role of universities in society is changing. Universities and specifically also the University of Groningen (UG) are demanded to contribute more to societal challenges and to have sufficient legitimacy in the Northern region.

FEB aims to remain an international excellent research and education institution despite all these challenges. We consider this as the main backbone of the FEB strategy for the coming five years. However, it is also clear that changes must be made to how we operated in the last decade. Specifically, FEB - building on this asset of international excellent research and education - aims to:

- Continue our focus on societal impact, as already developed in the prior strategic plan and reflected in our continued slogan Connecting for Impact;
- Focus more on the Northern region as a living lab for societal impact and funding, especially in education and executive programs, while preserving our international identity and global outreach;
- Embrace AI in education and research, recognizing that short-term costs (training, tools) will precede long-term efficiency gains;
- Advance competency-based education (knowledge, skills and attitudes) in this era of AI to enhance and demonstrate students' academic development and future employability;
- Keep focusing on talent and introduce personal development plans for senior academic staff to emphasize individual qualifications and comparative advantages as part of team science. We aim to empower academic staff to leverage their strengths, avoid the pressure of doing everything, reduce workload, and contribute more effectively to FEB's collective goals;
- Keep focusing on a strong FEB community for students and staff, where physical presence and meaningful interactions with personal connections are crucial.

Graphically this is shown in the figure below. Having a strong community, focusing on talent development and being financial healthy are building blocks for our asset of international excellent research and education. Building on this, we aim to continue working on societal impact, focus more on the Northern region and embrace AI as important goals for the next five years.

This strategic plan places significant demands on FEB as an organization, especially in these turbulent times. Most importantly, our education must be renewed to keep pace with AI developments in education and research. Additionally, shifting focus toward greater societal impact, diversified funding, executive education, and regional engagement requires a fresh approach to staff development.

A major innovation in this plan is the proposal to introduce personal development plans (PDP) for senior academic staff (from associate professor level onwards). This plan should outline individual development goals over a longer timeframe (e.g. five years) with a strong team perspective. It allows staff members to focus on specific areas within their team or department, ensuring that the team as a whole contributes to FEB's strategy. This is a new trajectory, moving us into uncharted territory and requiring fresh approaches to managing departments and staff. However, this shift allows staff to focus on specific parts of the strategy, as success is now a team-based effort where we collectively achieve results. The specifics of how personal development plans will be structured and implemented have to be worked out in the coming years.

To effectively manage performance at the team level and to strengthen community building through personal connections, having smaller departments can be very helpful. For FEB, this also means we must continue fostering a strong community where staff members embody our FEB values, with academic citizenship and collegiality being highly valued and expected. Additionally, we aim to enhance the deployability and flexibility of support staff to further their contributions to research and education. We will also streamline and optimize our supporting processes and the organizational structure of our supporting units to reduce administrative burden and save resources.

This strategy is written under tight financial circumstances within the UG. FEB aims to be financially healthy. Therefore, this plan includes measures that should secure FEB's long-term health both at the revenue side and the cost side. We expect financial constraints to persist and will closely monitor budgets, adjusting the plan as needed. To address this, we will prioritize core activities using a prioritization matrix (see p. 25) and scale back or delay lower-impact initiatives if constraints worsen. Similar, we must remain fully aware of potential working pressure effects. The proposed shifts must not come at the expense of core tasks. We will have to reduce administrative burden (e.g., via AI, streamlined processes) to free up time for research, education, and strategic initiatives.

The current government intends to finance new sector plans and specifically one in the Economics and Business domain, which can be used to finance parts of the strategic plan. Still, there is sufficient uncertainty, and current and future faculty boards should adapt the strategic plan if deemed necessary. The financial plan presented in September 2026, will provide a financial outlook for the coming years.
Moreover, directions should be developed more in co-creation with our academics and support staff. Specific directions—such as the PDP system and AI integration—will be co-created with staff through working groups, pilots, and faculty-wide consultations to ensure feasibility and ownership.

Introduction

The world is changing rapidly; we are confronted with significant geopolitical changes, and AI is profoundly affecting society, business, and education. Particularly in the Northern region, a decline in the inflow of students in higher education is expected, while geopolitical shifts are also impacting the internationalization of universities.

In this evolving environment, it is crucial to develop a clear vision and strategy for the Faculty of Economics and Business (FEB). How can we navigate these changes and remain financially healthy, innovative, and vital while maintaining a strong reputation in research, education, and impact?

The University of Groningen (UG) has articulated a vision to become a fifth-generation university, where inter- and transdisciplinary research and education - with strong ties to the Northern region - will become a cornerstone. Meanwhile, disciplinary research and education remain essential to push the boundaries of science, advance the disciplines in new directions and paradigms, and provide students with robust disciplinary-specific foundations.

In this document, we present the strategy of FEB for 2026–2031, aligning it with UG's strategy for the next five years. We also leverage the strong assets we possess as FEB, including our culture, reputation, human capital, and relationships.

FEB's vision, mission, values

In these rapidly evolving times, it is essential to have a long-term, resilient mission that adapts to a changing environment. For FEB, this means continuing to make a strong impact, conduct outstanding research, and equip students with meaningful competencies. We provide students with an integration of knowledge, skills, and attitudes aimed at enhancing their effectiveness in their future academic and professional roles.

FEB's mission

FEB connects and empowers students, academics, and external stakeholders to jointly have a positive impact on regional, national, and global economic and business challenges in science and society, in a changing technological and geopolitical environment. With this mission statement, we emphasize that FEB's main assets are its students and academics, and that we are driven to connect and collaborate with external stakeholders in order to make a meaningful impact on science, society, and policymakers in the fields of economics and business. We empower our students with knowledge and other today's relevant competencies in our Economics & Business disciplines and to address emerging relevant societal themes.

We conduct high-quality research within the main Economics & Business disciplines and on emerging societal, economic, and business challenges that often require interdisciplinary- and transdisciplinary collaboration. We want to be active, visible, and connected with the Northern region of the Netherlands while retaining our strong national and international focus. We summarize this mission in our slogan: Connecting for Impact.

FEB's vision

In the domain of Economics and Business, we:

- Have an open, inspiring, honest, and safe working and learning environment. Equity, diversity, and inclusion are guiding principles in our community and serve as the foundation for collaboration, talent development, and responsible impact;
- Conduct high-quality research in the main fields within economics and business;
- Exchange state-of-the-art knowledge with students and provide excellent education;
- Develop the relevant knowledge, skills, and attitudes of students to prepare them for their future careers;
- Have a strong positive impact on science, society, and business;
- Maintain a strong international presence while staying deeply rooted in and connected to the Northern region.

FEB's values

Beyond the core values of UG: academic freedom, integrity, inclusivity, sustainability, and openness, the following core values of FEB apply:

- Engaged: We are easily accessible and actively engaged with communities in our region and the broader world - learning about their needs and strengths and applying impactful competences for the benefit of our academic aspirations and society at large;
- Ambitious: We empower students, academics, professionals, and external stakeholders to unleash their potential, making a difference in the communities we are connected to. At the same time, as one of the top 1% of business schools worldwide, we stimulate our staff, students, and alumni to aim high and strive for the best;
- Personal: We debate and cooperate closely with each other as co-producers in teams in a way that is inclusive and individual. We value a personal touch built on trust, mutual respect, and social responsibility and consider team efforts essential for achieving success;
- Entrepreneurial: We aim to take new initiatives to foster our (regional) impact, and to contribute to the long-term health of our faculty.

While an organization's core values should remain stable over time, we have chosen to introduce 'entrepreneurial' as a new key value, replacing 'down to earth'. In the past years, FEB has already made major changes, such as introducing an innovative new career track in education, revising education programs and courses, and developing interdisciplinary, societally relevant themes in research and education. These changes already reflect a strong entrepreneurial and innovative culture, which we want to emphasize more explicitly in FEB's core values.

An entrepreneurial culture promotes initiative, creativity, and responsibility. Knowledge-intensive entrepreneurship is a powerful way to achieve the transitions needed within FEB and society. It is especially critical to take new initiatives (e.g. new education programs to attract more students and fostering transdisciplinary research projects that bridge academic boundaries) and to adapt more quickly to a changing environment (e.g. considering the influence of AI). This should naturally be done with sound reasoning, but we should also be willing to explore directions where the outcome is not yet certain.

SWOT and implications

Strengths	Weaknesses
• Strong international academic institution in E&B (top 100) • Broad portfolio of good, large and efficient educational programs in E&B • Introduced interdisciplinary themes successfully that are linked with UG themes • Established UGBS: a young Business School with unique programs • Strong FEB culture and good attention for DEI	• Strongly dependent on government funding for education • Limited inter- and transdisciplinary educational programs • Not sufficient attention for impact in research valuation • Turnover of UGBS is relatively small (3.5 – 4 million Euro)
Opportunities	**Threats**
• Strong cooperation at national level • Government plans to support new sector plans SSH with E&B as central part • Strong opportunities in EU and Northern region for funding • AI can increase effectiveness and efficiency of operations in support, education and research • Opportunities for themes such as resilience and safety • Entrepreneurial and innovative culture	• Expected decreasing student inflow due to demographic developments leading to lower financial funding • Uncertain political environment • Geopolitical changes: deglobalization • AI is deeply affecting what and how we teach and how we execute research • Strong polarization and strong pressure on academic freedom

In this strategic plan, we build upon our current strengths and opportunities while accommodating our weaknesses and mitigating threats. From our SWOT analysis we derive the following:

- We have a strong research and education base which needs to be continuously improved and innovated considering technological (AI), geopolitical, societal and regional developments. We must innovate while facing less governmental funding and thus explore new funding avenues that also present themselves in FEB's environment;
- We face the challenge to maintain the motivation of our staff and the quality of their performance while noticing the need to enhance operational efficiency.

Given the challenging developments in government funding, increasing costs, and uncertain (decreasing) student inflow, we emphasize the need for financial healthiness, adaptivity, and resilience. Finally, a strong FEB community is required to reach our goals and to create a pleasant and socially safe working- and learning environment.

The key question that we address in this strategic plan of FEB is: In a dynamic and economically shifting global environment with a shrinking potential student market and increasingly pressing standard funding possibilities but growing opportunities at regional and international levels, how can FEB leverage its strategic assets to remain a leading institute in research and education?

We formulate seven strategic directions for the next five years, each of these directsion are aligned with the main strategic priorities of UG as shown to the right.

Alignment with UG Strategic Plan

Each of these directions are aligned with the main strategic priorities of UG as shown below.

FEB strategic direction	Strategic Plan UG
1. International excellent research and education	Independence: strengthening the value of science
2. Societally relevant research and education	Openness: active involvement in society
3. Strongly embedded in Northern Region	Openness: active involvement in society
4. Embracing AI as a disruptive technology	Digitization and AI in education, research and organization
5. Fostering talent and personal development with a team perspective	Openness, agility & independence
6. Financially healthy, resilient and adaptive	Towards a healthy financial situation
7. Strong FEB community	A close-knit university community

In the following sections, each strategic direction will be explored in detail. We will first outline the core principles underlying each direction. Next, we will present the specific objectives for research, education, and management. This will be followed by the relevant Key Performance Indicators (KPIs), prioritization and planning, and alignment with the UG's strategic goals. For the KPIs, a distinction is made between result-focused KPIs (R) and process-oriented KPIs (P). Result-focused KPIs ensure that FEB strives to achieve SMART goals, while process-oriented KPIs clarify the actions required to achieve specific internal outcomes.

Each direction will be illustrated with examples of past and current achievements by our staff and students.

Figure 1: Seven strategic directions of FEB

Direction 1:
International excellent research and education

The international reputation of our faculty and its staff is largely shaped by the high quality of our education and research in Economics and Business. This reputation remains a top priority for FEB. FEB maintains a broad and distinctive profile in this domain, characterized by a strong international disciplinary foundation in both research and education. Our approach is independent through fundamental research, yet we also excel in applied research, enabling us to maintain a broad and distinctive profile in this domain. This profile is characterized by a strong international disciplinary foundation in both research and education, as well as an inter- and transdisciplinary focus that allows us to effectively address societal challenges. In recent years, we have consistently achieved strong rankings in our disciplines, including a top 20 position in Business according to the QS ranking. Additionally, the previous national assessment yielded an excellent research evaluation.

Our ambition is to remain a leading international research institution in Economics and Business in Europe and to secure another outstanding assessment in the upcoming research evaluation, scheduled for 2027.

Moving forward, we will actively promote our strong position and unique strengths through a comprehensive marketing and branding strategy. To achieve our objectives, we believe it is important that the average time devoted to research and impact per research-active employee remains stable over time, despite financial challenges. However, FEB is aware that this might become difficult to achieve due to financial constraints. Moreover, as the number of academic staff members is likely to decrease, output quantity will likely decrease. However, over the five-year plan period, we aim to maintain a similar average output - both in quantity and quality- per research-active employee.

FEB's education programs are valued well, and we have made significant improvements in the past five years. In addition to NVAO, we have fulfilled the accreditation criteria of AACSB and EQUIS for five years, and we will be re-accredited in spring 2028 and 2029. Our programs are attractive for students, and we have been able to achieve a good student inflow, although specifically in the bachelor recently inflow has slightly decreased due to demographic developments and internationalization measures (i.e. no international marketing). For FEB, maintaining a strong student inflow is critical.

Strategic actions

Increase funding from prestigious grants

To sustain our leading position and address financial challenges, it is essential to increase the number of prestigious individual and collaborative grants, such as those from the NWO Talent Line and KIC grants, ERC, NWA, EU Horizon, and potentially "Zwaartekracht". We strongly encourage senior staff to submit more European funding proposals.

FEB will actively support and stimulate academics in developing and submitting high-quality proposals. During annual strategy discussions with departments, funding plans will be reviewed (see also PDP; Direction 5). This approach aims to create a more structured funding strategy at both the departmental and faculty level, with a focus on researchers who demonstrate a higher likelihood of securing funding.

FEB will also invest in enhanced support mechanisms for these funding proposals

Applying for these grants takes time and additional effort from individual staff members and this is considered as a hurdle to submit grant applications. By introducing Personal Development Plans (see direction 5) staff members can choose to achieve grants as an explicit goal, allowing them to focus their efforts on this while not demanding them also to publish. At FEB level, spending more time on grant applications may come at the expense of research output in the short run. However, if successful, FEB will acquire more funding for PhD's, post-docs etc. on high level projects, resulting in more research output in the longer run.

Competency-based education and in-class learning and student engagement

The central aim of our education remains the academic and professional development of our students. In the era of AI (see Direction 4), it is especially important to protect the academic depth that defines science and to strengthen core academic competencies - such as critical and conceptual thinking - while ensuring these competencies align with future employability and are tailored to our educational programs.

The effectiveness of traditional teaching is increasingly challenged by a long-standing decline in student attendance and participation. While this trend predates AI, rapid digitalization and AI advancements influence the perceived value of traditional formats. This issue is particularly pronounced in our major bachelor programs (International Business, Bedrijfskunde, and Economics and Business Economics). As FEB, we are committed to remaining a vibrant, on-campus school. It is urgent to increase attendance to enhance the learning experience and student engagement. We believe that physical participation in class is essential, even in an era of ongoing digitalization, as it fosters the development of professional skills.

To address these challenges, we are exploring ways to evolve our education so that its unique value is better recognized and student participation is actively encouraged. This includes reconsidering the use of large lectures and further developing new forms of teaching and blended education. By combining effective online components (e.g., short digital clips) with high-value, in-class learning in small groups - supported by digital technologies - we aim to foster direct interactions between students and lecturers, deeper student engagement, and revitalize the campus experience.

Maintaining a strong inflow of students

Our ambitious goal is to sustain current enrolment levels, even as regional student numbers are going down. We strive to keep the same student inflow in our program by continuous improvement, strengthen links with Universities of Applied Sciences, reduce dropout rates in our bachelor programs, increasing the stay-rate between bachelor and master programs and introduce by introducing new programs or tracks. The changing environment and the expected decline in student inflow require FEB to develop new profiles (specializations), tracks, or programs to remain attractive to both the evolving student population and the labour market. Due to financial constraints, new programs should optimally utilize and redesign existing courses. Additionally, we will continue to refresh our current programs to ensure they remain up-to-date and relevant, which will also help improve the transition rate from FEB bachelor's to master's programs.

Summary and KPI's: result KPI (R), process KPI (P)

Objectives	KPI		Timing	Alignment UG
High quality research and education	-	Average research output per FTE remains constant (R)	2026-2031	Independent through quality
	-	AACSB re-accreditation (R)	2028	
	-	EQUIS re-accreditation for five years (R)	2029	Independent through fundamental research
	-	The average number of publications per FTE in top economics and business journals remains constant (R)	2026-2031	
	-	A (very) good research evaluation in the SEP assessment of 2027 (R)	2027	
Increase funding	-	Between 2026 and 2031, funding for prestigious grants will increase gradually each year. By 2031, funding will reach a level that is 20% higher than the average over 2023- 2025 (R)	2026-2031	Independent through fundamental research Financial healthy
	-	Increased funding support (P)	2026-2031	
Competency-based education and in-class learning and student engagement	-	Development of competency-based programs that reflect both academic rigor and societal relevance (R)	2026-2031	Agile through flexible education
	-	Enhance student engagement (R) through e.g., more small-scale teaching (P)	2026-2031	
Maintaining a strong inflow of students	-	Refresh current programs (P)	2026-2031	Agile through flexible education Openness: acting across disciplinary boundaries
	-	Keep current student inflow (R)	2026-2031	
	-	Reduce dropout in bachelor programs and increase the stay-rate of bachelor students to master (R)	2026-2031	
	-	Launch Circular Economy Master Track with FSE (P)	2028-2029	
	-	Introduce new digital business profile in MSc BA (P)	2028-2029	

Jutta Bolt

Professor of Global Economic History

Jutta Bolt recently received a Consolidator Grant of two million euros from the European Research Council (ERC) for her research on the transformation of employment in Africa between 1920 and 2020. In her project Africa@Work, Bolt aims to examine how work and livelihoods in Sub-Saharan Africa have evolved. Her research focuses on long-term comparative patterns of economic development, particularly in Africa.

"In my latest project, for which I was awarded the ERC Consolidator Grant, I turn my attention to the evolving landscape of African labour markets. Covering 33 countries spanning the former British, French, Portuguese, and Belgian empires, Africa@Work will reconstruct detailed occupational structures from 1920 to 2020, using colonial censuses, labour surveys, and post-independence microdata. The central aim of the project is to explain why certain employment patterns — such as the high prevalence of informal work and the persistence of strongly gendered occupational outcomes - have persisted, and to identify where new opportunities for work have emerged. Throughout the application process, I benefited from extensive, tailored support from our funding officer, including help in identifying editing services, preparing the budget, and coaching for the interview. Colleagues within my research group also read multiple drafts and provided detailed feedback, making the process highly collaborative and significantly strengthening the final proposal."

Read more on Jutta's ERC project on FEB's **website**.

Direction 2:

Societal relevance in research and education

Societal relevance remains a key priority in our strategy, in line with our mission. At FEB, our established Centers of Expertise (CoE) - such as the Customer Insights Center in marketing - have long served as bridges between disciplinary research and practical applications in policy, institutes and industry. In the previous strategic period, we further strengthened this focus by introducing five societal themes:

1. Public Health
2. Digital and AI
3. Leadership and Governance
4. Energy Transition
5. Future Prosperity and Sustainability

These themes are strongly linked to the four interdisciplinary schools at UG:

1. Aletta Jacobs School for Public Health (AJSPH),
2. Jantina Tammes School (JTS) for Digital and AI,
3. Wubbo Ockels School (WOS) for Energy and Sustainability, and
4. Rudolf Agricola School (RAS) for Social Cohesion, Safety, and Resilience.

Strategic actions

Keep five societal themes and adapt

The societal themes have been successful in setting up joint research projects, acquiring funding, introducing new focus areas within master courses, and new minors for bachelor students. Sustainability and digitalization have been integrated as topics in all education programs, and we have developed outstanding examples of how gaming can enhance student experience and learning relevant competencies. The importance of the themes will only grow considering recent developments, such as the launch of the AI Factory in Groningen and new geopolitical challenges impacting our economy. The themes are also strongly present in our executive education with short programs and Executive Master Business Administration (EMBA) tracks in health and energy.

We aim to adjust the themes to align with the updated focus of UG's schools. We also aim to move the "sustainable environment" topic from the *Future Prosperity and Sustainability* theme to the *Energy Transition* theme. The *Future Prosperity and Sustainability* theme should then refocus on integrating social cohesion, safety, and resilience as key societal challenges. Within the Leadership and Governance theme, the integration of the Centre of Expertise In the Lead is planned to further strengthen that theme. The objective is that themes will be integrated fully in the faculty and at the end of this strategic plan FEB should consider if dedicated investments in these themes are still required.

In our education programs we aim to introduce a limited number of new inter- and transdisciplinary (challenge-based) courses in the 3rd year of the bachelor's programs and the master's phase, while reducing disciplinary electives/courses).

Value impact more and develop career paths with an impact profile

In our discipline, impact is defined broadly and includes impact on business/management, public policy, and society at large. FEB should also reward this impact more. This can be done by valuing impact more as an output of research by broadening our valuation of research output which we already have done with introducing and rewarding impact cases. Achieving concrete impact goals, can be part of a Personal Development Plan (see Direction 5).

An additional measure is to introduce a research-based impact career trajectory. In the previous strategic period, FEB introduced the career track education profile successfully in line with university-wide Reward & Recognition policy. In this new plan, FEB aims to introduce a career trajectory focused on generating impact through research, as is already being used by the Faculty of Medical Sciences and the Faculty of Science and Engineering. This trajectory begins at the associate professor level, ensuring a strong disciplinary research foundation, and provides guidance on qualifying for full professorships with an emphasis on impact in economics, business, and beyond. Within the planning period of this strategic plan, this could result in a limited number of full professorships dedicated to high-impact research. For this FEB must clearly define what research-based impact means. Already awarded impact-cases can be used as input for this, as well as the impact tracks used by other faculties. It will be a co-creation effort of department chairs, research- and education directors, the faculty board, and experts to create such a track and to fit it in into the current promotion policies.

Dissolve specific Centres of Expertise

While FEB has hosted CoE for two decades, evolving market demands and shifting strategic priorities now call for a reassessment of their role. Recent evaluations show that the CoEs COOP (Operations) and HRM&OB do not sufficiently serve market needs, have low revenues, and/or lack leadership. Therefore, we propose to dissolve these two CoEs. COELO is a CoE focusing on municipal public finance. Given that public finance in municipalities is not a core topic for FEB and succession of leadership is difficult, we also consider dissolving COELO.

Focus programs relevant for the labour market and demonstrate employability

FEB aims to prepare graduates for the labour market. Our alumni find jobs shortly after graduating, but the fast-changing labour market requires us to continuously improve our programs so that relevant knowledge and skills are taught. We also strive to structurally integrate professional practices in our curricula. Furthermore, we aim to communicate transparently to the student body about which competencies they develop, thus strengthening their employability profile. We will increase the focus on competency- (see direction 1), and employability profile-based education guided by an expanded network of active collaborations with regional, institutional, and corporate partners, alumni and study associations.

To strengthen the practical relevance of our (executive) education, we aim to better leverage our staff, particularly those in (small) part-time roles and Professors of Practice.

University of Groningen Business School

The University of Groningen Business School (UGBS) is committed to targeted growth through focus, network activation, and service excellence. Its ambition is to combine executive education with academic depth and demonstrable social impact, with quality and relevance at the

core. In the future, the UGBS will explicitly position itself as a partner in societal transitions, with a strong focus on the FEB themes. Growth is achieved through scalable programs, supported by technology, without compromising on personal interaction and quality. At the same time, efforts are made to strengthen networks - alumni, faculty, and partners - to increase both enrolment and impact.

Summary and KPI's ((R) result KPI; (P) process KPI)

Objectives	KPI	Timing	Alignment UG
Keep and update five societal themes	- Retain 5 societal themes, but update themes of Energy and Sustainability (P) - Increase the number of inter- and transdisciplinary courses (10% higher than 2026 baseline) (R)	2026-2027 2026-2031	Openness through collaboration outside academia
Dissolve Centers of Expertise	- Specific CoE's are dissolved (P)	2026-2028	Independent through profiling
Impact career path	- Research-based Impact career track launched (e.g., Associate professor and above). (P)	2028-2029	Openness through collaboration outside academia
Connecting with labour market and employability	- Strong and transparent employability profiles introduced in all programs (P)	2026-2031	Open through boundless education and research

Eda Shehu

Professor of Digital Marketing

"As blood cannot be manufactured, it faces persistent shortages making the maintenance of a continuous blood supply a major societal challenge. Therefore, it is even more important that blood donors continue to give blood or that more donors are found. My research developed and tested a novel, scalable communication strategy that informs donors when their past donation was used to help others. Including this information in donor appeals significantly increases future donations, a life-saving public service. Large-scale field studies with national Red Cross organizations show that the approach increases donations among both active and inactive donors and has been adopted in practice. The research has generated substantial societal impact by improving donor retention, increasing life-saving donations, and enhancing the university's visibility through international media and practitioner uptake.

The research resulted in an 11.98% increase in the reactivation probability of inactive donors and a 9.8% increase in the annual donation volume of active donors. Following the study's recommendations, collaborating Red Cross organizations adjusted their donor communication strategies, directly benefiting blood banks, donors, and the patients who depend on a stable blood supply. By strengthening donor-organization relationships, the research delivers concrete value to a wide range of stakeholders, including blood banks, donors, and patients. Even under conservative assumptions of one annual donation per donor, this translates into more than 10,000 additional blood donations for a medium-sized blood donation service with 100,000 donors, 20% of whom are assumed to be inactive. Because each donation can benefit up to three recipients, this represents an impactful increase in available transfusable blood units."

Direction 3:
Strongly embedded in the Northern region

FEB has a very strong international and national reputation and FEB aims to maintain this position. The regional role of UG and FEB has become particularly important as also reflected in our mission. The majority of our Dutch students come from the Northern region, and having a strong link to the region and the city is crucial for their talent development (see also direction 5). The Nij Begun (New Beginning), Economic and Social agenda provides significant opportunities to contribute with our knowledge, expertise, (executive) education programs, impact, and public engagement, thereby aligning with university initiatives. The Northern Region is therefore considered as a living lab for societal impact and funding, especially in education and executive programs, while preserving our international identity and global outreach.

Strategic actions

Increase regional projects and impact with funding

In the past, several new initiatives have been set up with regional funding, like the Groningen Digital Business Center with funding from Samenwerkingsverband Noord-Nederland (SNN). Nij Begun provides ample opportunities related to our societal themes and to initiate more projects that can contribute to the Northern economy and broader welfare. FEB aims to be prominent in the Nij Begun program and in other ongoing programs (i.e. Nationaal Programma Groningen (NPG), SNN) focusing on knowledge development and grant applications, in close collaboration with external partners (triple and quarto helix ecosystems). Strong regional engagement depends on trust and inclusive partnerships.

The UGBS can play a leading role within the academic and regional context, with an international reach and strong roots in the North. This requires flexibility, innovation in educational offerings, the strengthening of continuous learning pathways, and further professionalization of the organization and its processes. This will contribute to structural growth and a future-proof executive education portfolio.
We aim to do this in three general areas:

- Projects clearly related to our research expertise (i.e., societal themes);
- Projects focusing on human capital development through Lifelong Learning with our business school UGBS;
- Projects focusing on building an entrepreneurial ecosystem in the North, for example, around the AI Factory.

In 2025, we established a working group to explore and develop these opportunities. This effort requires a long-term commitment and a sustained presence in the region, as well as dedicated time and effort from staff to invest in regional initiatives. Our societal themes can play a key role in collaboration with the UG Schools. Additionally, academic staff members can incorporate a stronger regional focus, with specific goals, into their Personal Development Plans. It is important to note that FEB does not expect all staff members to be regionally active.

Talent development for the region

As the leading academic education provider in the field of Economics and Business in the North, we consider our contribution to developing talent for the Northern region as essential. Currently, many students search and find a job in the western part of the Netherlands for economic, personal and professional reasons. We aim to increase the retention rate of our students in the region by strengthening connections with regional practitioners (see also direction 2) and develop valuable and impactful interactions for both students and practitioners (internships, final work/thesis projects, safari-projects, challenges, part-time master's programs, executive teaching). In this regard, we will also explore innovative approaches such as apprenticeships (combining work with study), which is a successful approach used in France. Furthermore, internships should become more seamlessly integrated into the curricula of programs.

Shorter and more flexible learning routes

In our Northern region, we have three Universities of Applied Sciences that offer economics and business programs: Hanze, Stenden/NHL, and Windesheim. Together, we share the responsibility to educate students who aim to have a bachelor's or master's degree in economics and business, albeit at different levels. To create shorter and more flexible learning journeys and to create a better fit between students and their chosen program level, we would like to deepen our cooperation. Some students thrive at university, while others thrive better at Universities of Applied Sciences. We see multiple opportunities:

1. Starting in 2026, students at universities of applied sciences will be able to complete the pre-master requirements for a selection of FEB's master's programs during their bachelor's studies. While this may reduce enrolment in our underfunded official pre-master program, it is expected to attract more students to our master's programs
2. Actively monitoring first-year bachelor students to facilitate smoother transfers to another institution
3. Clearly communicating differences between a bachelor's program at the Universities of Applied Sciences and at FEB in student recruitment activities

The faculty board has already started (bi-)annual meetings with one of the Universities of Applied Sciences to discuss cooperation in education and beyond.

Summary and KPI's: result KPI (R), process KPI (P)

Objectives	KPI	Timing	Alignment UG
Increase regional presence	- ↟ Regional projects related to our research expertise (P) - ↟ Regional projects focusing on building an entrepreneurial ecosystem in the North (P) - At least one publicly funded UGBS impact program has started in the region (R)	2026-2031 2026-2031	Open through collaboration outside academia
Talent development for region	- ↟ Retention rate in region for our students (R) - Innovative approaches are introduced to strengthen ties with regional practitioners (P)	2026-2031	Open through boundless education and research
Collaboration with Universities of Applied Sciences	- Deepen cooperation with Universities of Applied Sciences (P) to smoothen transition to MSc programs (R)	2026-2028	Agile through flexible education Agile through good external relations

Evelien Croonen

Associate Professor

"Since 2022, I have organized several 'Northern Business Safaris', where students visit multiple organizations during a day to interact with practitioners – such as entrepreneurs, business owners, and managers – in their own 'habitats'. Each Safari visit follows a structured format: an introduction to the business, a guided tour, and a creative problem-solving session where students develop ideas addressing a strategic question posed by the practitioner. Students then present their ideas and receive immediate feedback, followed by a reflective session at the end of the day. These Safaris generate value for both students and practitioners, contributing to regional impact. Students deepen their knowledge and professional skills, gain insight into a regional career and entrepreneurial opportunities, and expand their professional networks. Practitioners benefit from fresh strategic and managerial perspectives, creative ideas, and access to potential future employees.

Early outcomes demonstrate tangible benefits. For example, one host obtained a valuable strategic idea proposed by a student, while another recruited a Chinese student to support expansion into China. Building on these results, I continue organizing the Safaris, while systematically assessing their regional impact and refining the format where needed. The Safaris strengthen university-industry collaboration and enhance the visibility of our university in the regional ecosystem."

Direction 4:
Embracing AI as a disruptive technology

AI has a strong influence on society, our economy, business, future jobs, and therefore on FEB. The impact should not be underestimated. For FEB, AI provides both opportunities for research (i.e., new research topics), our support operations, and regional cooperation (i.e., AI Factory, a local initiative funded by European, national and regional funds and part of the European network of AI Factories), as well as challenges, as it strongly affects what and how (including assessment) we teach and how we perform our research. Moreover, the strong development of AI also poses questions on responsible and ethical use, digital sovereignty, as well as its strong impact on global energy consumption. FEB believes that AI should be considered as a unifying thread across education, research, support, and collaborations, with an emphasis on innovation and ethical responsibility.

In the coming years, it is crucial for FEB to significantly invest in AI and thoughtfully adapt our education, research, and operational processes to align with ongoing AI advancements. This includes a focused effort to develop AI competencies among our staff, which will be integrated into our investment plan. These initiatives should be pursued in close collaboration with UG. We thus aim to embrace AI in education and research, recognizing that short-term costs (training, tools) will precede long-term efficiency gains. Furthermore, AI has the potential to increase or amplify existing inequalities if fairness and inclusion are not explicitly considered.

The most prevalent changes are though currently occurring in education and support. In the past two years, FEB has had several working groups considering the impact of AI on education, which has already led to specific policies for dealing with AI in thesis and course assessment and thesis supervision. In our education, we follow the Collaborative Mastery Principle (CMP) that provides guidance for the integration of AI in our education.

Strategic actions

Integrate AI in research

In terms of research, AI will make the Digital and AI theme (see direction 2) more prevalent, and in disciplinary fields, this will affect what is being studied. FEB aims to be at the forefront of these developments, also benefiting from investments in the AI Factory. Our research organization will also carefully consider how AI can support the execution of our research. This requires ample attention and the research directors will develop a plan together with internal experts and front-runners on how FEB should use AI effectively.

Continue the adequate integration of AI and other technologies in education

The Collaborative Mastery Principle functions as the central principle guiding the integration of AI within FEB's education. Rather than treating AI as an additional technological component in the curriculum, CMP provides a framework with two complementary approaches: developing core academic skills and deep domain knowledge *without AI* and learning to collaborate effectively and critically *with AI* systems. The latter also requires the mastery of AI competencies, such as output evaluation and ethical awareness as well as learning about the role of AI in the domain of a program. This has several implications for FEB we will continue to be working on:

- Integrate learning with, without and about AI in our curricula, taking into account evolving professional and societal demands. This requires an iterative cycle, starting in spring 2026 and repeated annually, allowing programs to continuously adapt to developments in AI;
- Developing appropriate (alternatives for) final works. Currently, a new working group has started to consider the consequences of AI, building on prior discussions on this topic, and will deliver concrete recommendations in 2026. Students should be challenged to achieve higher-level, more complex outcomes now that AI can assist with the basics;
- To ensure academic development without AI, more intensive in-class learning processes should be developed and implemented. AI can also facilitate the learning process, and in the next few years, we should start using AI, for example, to provide personal feedback, enable adaptive learning, and incorporate it in simulations. Furthermore, we aim to design group-assignments with clearly divided, diversified roles to ensure individual accountability and genuine knowledge and skill acquisition;
- Utilize AI *as an assistant* to ensure controlled, accurate, and transparent grading of open-ended responses and assignments in compliance with professional standards and regulatory and legal requirements. FEB will continue with experiments on AI-assisted grading in close cooperation with UG;
- FEB staff requires the competencies to integrate AI appropriately in their education (see Direction 5).

Use AI to reduce workload and save costs

AI provides multiple opportunities to save costs and reduce workload. In education, FEB aims to make progress with using AI-assistance for grading large-scale exams and assignments, leveraging the strength of large language models. This saves time but also, importantly, reduces work pressure and can increase the quality of assessment. Jointly with UG, we will start pilots in areas such as student support, admissions, education quality, and marketing to include AI in our processes. We expect that this can save costs as processes are being automated.
However, it also clear that AI requires initial up-front investments which are being budgeted and adaptation of staff and additional efforts to change courses and programs. Potential costs savings can be achieved in longer-run. Adapting to AI is though crucial for FEB.

Summary and KPI's: result KPI (R), process KPI (P)

Objectives	KPI	Timing	Alignment UG
Integrate AI in research	• Plan for AI in FEB research completed (P)	2026-2027	Digitization and AI in research
Integrate AI in education	• Continuous process of integrating learning with, without and about AI in our curricula (R) • Staff trained on AI integration in teaching (P) • Final work alternatives developed (P)	2026-2030	Digitization and AI in education
Increase student engagement	• Evaluation of student engagement and learning experience in course evaluations (.5 score higher than 2026 baseline) (R)	2026-2031	Digitization and AI in education Agile through flexible education
Safe costs and reduce work pressure of academic and support staff	• Implement appropriate use of AI-assistant for grading (P) • AI using for support processes; pilots implemented (P) • ↑ AI funding (research & education) (R)	2028-2029 2026-2028	Digitization and AI in organization Agile through efficient and sustainable business operations

Wout van Wezel

Assistant Professor

"Economists and business scholars have spent centuries improving the work of others: automating tasks, removing inefficiencies, and replacing human labour with machines. As a researcher in behavioral operations management, I have actively contributed to this tradition. Now, however, it seems to be our turn. AI can draft a textbook in the time it takes me to prepare a single lecture. It can create a computer program in one hour that would take me a week. And it has more patience than I do when explaining concepts to students again and again.

As someone who loves computers, I am excited about the technological possibilities. At the same time, however, I fear the speed at which AI takes over tasks that we assumed too intellectually demanding to automate. And I struggle with how these changes affect the quality and depth of interactions with students and their learning outcomes.

Centuries of operations management have taught us: resisting automation never works. But from my own research, I also know that it has to work with people, not around them. So I focus on how to use AI well: in ways that improve learning and support, rather than erode, the human work of teaching."

Direction 5:

Fostering talent and personal development with a team perspective

Developing talent and maximizing the potential of our staff and students is central to FEB's mission and vision. To achieve this, FEB must remain a place where all staff, academic and support, can thrive, even amid the challenges of a shrinking organization with fewer growth opportunities. We recognize the need to tailor our approach:

- For early-career staff, we provide clear career paths to build a strong foundation for an academic career;
- For senior staff, we emphasize autonomy and the strategic deployment of their expertise to advance FEB's ambitions and organizational needs.

In the past decades we have seen a shift in the needed talent. Where there always has been a strong research emphasis, education talent is now much more valued with the introduction of a career path in education a few years ago. With the stronger emphasis on the societal role of FEB and universities at large, impact and entrepreneurship are becoming more important. FEB aims to continue the existing career tracks in education and research in the junior phase, but we now also aim to develop an impact trajectory for more senior academics (see direction 2).
FEB also aims to pay more attention to personal development of students in the programs, which is for example clear in our stronger focus on competency development and employability profiles (see directions 1 and 4).
Within UG, FEB will make a strong pledge for focusing more on talent development and attractive career trajectories for support staff. We want to pay more attention to broad employability of support staff, by working with a 'development landscape', focusing on competencies and transferable skills. We want to do this in close cooperation with other parts of UG. We also aim to introduce Personal Development Plans (see also below) for support staff, to stimulate a competency focus, and a more long term perspective.

If financially possible, teaching assistants should remain a part of our teaching capacity, both for flexibility and quality reasons, It additionally offers some students a valuable stepping stone to a career in education.

Strategic actions

Development and introduction of Personal Development Plans

Academic staff members have different talents and competencies, and autonomy is important for academic professionals. Furthermore, academic careers are dynamic, and interests may differ over time. To some extent we already acknowledged this with the successful introduction of the MERIT model in the R&D cycle and the mentioned different career paths (typically at the junior level). The MERIT model addresses five performance domains of the academic professional (management, education, research, impact and team spirit).

Furthermore, FEB has well-established systems for measuring and rewarding academic output, with a strong emphasis on publications, though other contributions (e.g., PhD supervision) are also valued.
While this system has been successful for decades, it may inadvertently underemphasize or under-reward strategically important tasks such as securing funding, achieving societal impact, innovating in education, and providing leadership.

The goal is to introduce Personal Development Plans (PDPs) for senior staff. This instrument acknowledges and rewards the diverse motivations, ambitions, and talents of academics at different career stages, ensuring continuous personal growth and recognizing that different people may need different forms of support to succeed. The plans should be based on talent and personal preference.

We aim to shift from a focus on counting publications to a 3–5 year individual development plan for senior staff. This plan will align personal ambitions with the strategic goals of the department and faculty, fostering a team-based approach. At the department level, it is essential to ensure contributions to FEB's strategic objectives. Ultimately, we seek to empower academic staff to leverage their strengths, reduce workload pressure, and contribute more effectively to FEB's collective goals.

Within the department, a mix of individual ambitions should be composed. This could imply that academics focus in a specific period on achieving prestigious grants, others on leadership or on achieving high quality publications. By doing so we believe we can get the best out of an individual by giving more autonomy to the individual senior researchers and providing more trust. This should induce that academics are willing to formulate more risky ambitions (i.e. large individual grants or EU horizon projects, or to pursue publications in top-tier journals) or take serious leadership tasks. At a faculty level, these plans should not only lead to motivated and satisfied employees, but also to more funding (see directions 1& 3). Furthermore, it should be clear that academic quality remains very important (see direction 1), and that some form of quality measurement remains required.

To effectively manage at the team level and to strengthen community building through personal connections, having smaller departments can be very helpful. For FEB this also clearly implies that we need to continue building a strong FEB community (see direction 7), where staff members act in line with our FEB values and academic citizenship and collegiality are highly valued and required.

We clearly understand that the pathway (and how to implement the personal development plan) is not clear yet, as it is a shift from a counting system to a more individual-team, trust-based performance system.
It is clear, though, that the shift in system requires a careful design to maintain (research) quality and productivity, while also allowing flexibility for strategic, other type of activities (e.g., fundraising, consortium-building, leadership). Most importantly, the new system should use methods and safeguards to ensure quality and accountability, including setting measurable outcomes (also for non-publication outcomes), clear entrance criteria, and midterm evaluations. The specifics of how personal development plans will be structured and implemented have to be worked out in the coming years.

Maintain level of PhD positions

We have seen a strong increase in PhD positions (from around 35 yearly to 65 in 2025) and defences (24 in 2021, 39 in 2025). The higher inflow is mainly because of the use of starting and stimulating grants to appoint new PhD candidates, but also because of an increase in external funding. As these grants have disappeared with the past government budget cuts, this will be only a temporary increase. Hence the increase in PhD candi-

dates should be based on the level before these grants came available. With a stronger emphasis on funding (see directions 1 & 3) and the renewal of FEB's part time PhD program, we aim to increase the number of PhD candidates and subsequent defences. We also continue with and look for more double degrees with FEB's international partners and strategic partners of UG. FEB will keep funding PhD candidates from the first money stream, also to finance funding-free research.

Continuation of ReMa and PhD education program

For attracting scientific talent an attractive research master is very important, and FEB aims to continue this. At the same time such a program is expensive with a limited number of students. We aim to keep the ReMa and achieve efficiencies and potentially a richer set of courses through cooperation with the Dutch faculties in Economics and Business building on an agreement signed by the deans in 2025. Furthermore, within UG we will look for more cooperation in creating more joint courses with for example the faculties in the Social Sciences and Humanities, in areas like statistical methods and experimental research.

Summary and KPI's: result KPI (R), process KPI (P)

Objectives	KPI	Timing	Alignment UG
Personal development plan	- Introduction of PDP for academics and support staff (P)	2027-2029	Open through an entrepreneurial culture
PhD students	- Maintain a stable inflow of PhD candidates of on average 35-40 per year (R) - Approximately 35 PhD defences per year (R)	2026-2031	
Rema and PhD education	- Renew and expand the part time PhD program (P) - Strengthen collaboration in doctoral education with other Dutch faculties in Economics and Business via a pilot program (P)	2027-2029 2026-2027	Openness through collaboration outside academia Agile through flexible education

Emma Field

PhD candidate

"I am Emma Field, a new PhD candidate in the Department of Innovation and Organization. My FEB supervisors are Philip Steinberg and Björn Mitzinneck. Originally from England, I have spent the past five years in the Netherlands studying sustainability, with a focus on the governance and policy dimensions of sustainability transformations. I hope to bridge the gap between academic research and real-world impact to contribute to driving just transitions.

My research project, 'Civic Wealth Creation Strategies for the Energy Transition,' investigates how to organise the energy transition to maximize its societal benefits. Using qualitative methods, I explore how public, private, and civic stakeholders can collaborate to create innovative solutions. This project, partially funded by the New Energy Coalition, aims to provide actionable insights for energy practitioners to embed social considerations into their plans for the energy transition, to ultimately contribute to a just and sustainable energy future.

I chose Groningen for my PhD due to it's leadership position in the Dutch energy transition, which is reflected in the university's expertise and networks. I'm also fortunate to participate in the UG's double degree program with Macquarie University in Sydney, where I'll spend the second half of my program, to further enrich my research with a different international perspective."

Direction 6:
Financial healthy, resilient and adaptive

In the past years, universities and FEB faced several challenges affecting our revenues. First, after an initial rise in the government budget until 2024, budgets have been reduced for higher education. Second, we have been confronted with increasing costs, due to rising energy prices, resulting inflation, and higher wages. Third, the national debate on internationalization and specific measures including restrictions for international student recruitment have affected international student inflow. Currently, the Ministry of Education, Culture, and Science (OC&W) predicts a decrease in student inflow for UG due to demographic trends and an expected lower inflow of international students. Although the demographic inflow can be predicted, the international inflow is less predictable given the geopolitical dynamics in, for example, the US.
FEB has already taken measures in the past years to successfully save around 2 million euros. For the next period, we need measures focusing on both increasing revenues and cost savings to remain financially healthy.
In the prior and following directions, specific revenues and cost-saving measures are discussed:

- Increase external funding (region, nationally, Europe (Pillars 1, 2 & 3);
- Attracting more students through new programs, profiles and tracks, improved programs, shorter and more flexible learning routes, and the marketing of our education offerings;
- Increase efficiency of support (processes) through closer cooperation between education and supporting staff, the use of AI to optimise supporting processes, harmonization and standardisation, critically reviewing steps and forms to determine their necessity and purpose, and cooperation within UG, and use of AI in education to save costs. As already noted, AI requires initial up-front investments which are being budgeted and potential costs savings can be achieved in longer-run;
- Increase turnover in the UGBS through new programs, more funding and internal process improvements (see directions 2 & 3).

Strategic actions

Capacity in departments and functional building up departments financially based

To achieve a decrease in costs, capacity should be in line with the financial projections and expected student inflow. We currently have a system to allocate capacity to programs, courses, and subsequently departments. The uncertainty in terms of inflow of students and finance requires more flexibility in our planning. Therefore, we will implement a system, which is based on new student inflow data and historical data/predictions, with a fixed capacity and a flexible component that can be adjusted based on new data. We also aim to provide programs and departments with more flexibility and autonomy in scheduling available teaching hours, and with less rigid enforcement of contact hour rules.

To be financially healthy and to have departments with a well-balanced team setup is important. Strategic personnel planning is therefore essential. In the past, FEB and other faculties at UG had a tenure track system guaranteeing promotion to full professor in case of good performance. In recent years, the tenure track has been replaced by a career track, guaranteeing a promotion to associate professor in case of good performance. Higher positions (i.e., full professor) will be filled based on the long-term setup of the department and discussed in the annual Strategic Personnel Planning (including financial perspective) meetings with the faculty board. An internal open procedure has been developed for open professor positions, that provide equal opportunities to potential candidates. We will further stimulate that assistant, and associate professors qualify for IUS promovendi, so they can act as first supervisors of PhD candidates.

Change scientific and support department structure

Since the merger of the Faculty of Economics and the Faculty of Business into FEB, the current department structure has been in place with one exception. In 2023, the departments Accountancy and Accounting successfully merged into a new department, Accounting and Auditing. FEB now has seven departments. FEB's departments strongly differ in size, scope, and the number of bachelor and master programs that belong to these departments. In terms of size, the smallest department, HRM&OB, has around 35 staff members, while the largest department, EEF, has around 190 employees. The average size of a department is now 87 employees. Most departments have a disciplinary research program that is strongly linked to the focus of the department. Most departments also have one or two regular master programs in their disciplinary field (with different profiles and tracks) and deliver education to the broad bachelor programs and the UGBS. Since FEB was established the departments GEM and EEF stand out as exceptions. Unlike others, they offer multiple master's programs and cover a broader range of disciplines, such as (global) economics and international business, as well as economics, finance, and econometrics.
To support the ambitions outlined in this strategic plan, FEB aims to enhance its organizational agility. This includes fostering a stronger sense of ownership, belonging, and effective leadership within departments, research programs, and educational programs and offerings. By structuring departments to be more focused and manageable in size (neither too large nor too small), we can ensure that each disciplinary field is well-represented in FEB's decision-making processes. Guided by shared principles, FEB aims to create a new department structure that will serve us well into the next decade.

In a similar vein, FEB will also carefully consider the structure and organization of support departments. Our first aim is to create one student centric department that serves students with advice and career support and aims to improve student well-being. Further re-structuring depends on strategies of UG regarding support. Furthermore, the support departments should be result-oriented, efficient and agile. We also aim to increase the deployability and flexibility of support staff to further expand their contributions to research and education and streamline and optimize our supporting processes and organization to reduce administrative burden and save resources.

Summary and KPI's: result KPI (R), process KPI (P)

Objectives	KPI	Timing	Alignment UG
Healthy finance	- Break-even financial annually (R) - Result of > 500K. (R) - ↑ Collaborative funding proposals (regional, national, EU) with 20% in 2029 as compared to the 2025 baseline (R)	2026-2028 2029-2031 2026-2029	Towards a healthy financial situation
UGBS turnover increase	- 4-5 million turnover in 2028 (R)	2028	Openness through broad education
Capacity planning	- Introduce more adaptive (data-driven) capacity planning (P)	2028-2029	Agile through harmonization
Change in department and support structure	- Implementation of new departments (P) - Implementation of new support structure (P)	2026-2027 2027-2028	Agile through harmonization A close-knit university community

Jaco Schildt

Management Controller

"As a faculty and university we rely on government policy for the vast majority of our income. In recent years we have seen, that policy can change rapidly. In addition, we are facing an expected decline in student numbers and an unpredictable influx of international students, whilst our costs are rising. For a large part of these costs, we are dependent on policies of UG. Within this context, we want to remain a financially sound and flexible faculty. I enjoy contributing to this complex issue through my role.

As a Management Controller, I advise the Faculty Board on the financial implications of (proposed) policies. In this role, I work alongside financial controllers employed by the Financial Shared Service Center but I also liaise with Management Controllers from other faculties and departments. As a faculty, we are accountable to the Executive Board.

We are facing challenging times, with developments unfolding at a rapid pace. But I have every confidence in the resilience and spirit of cooperation within FEB."

Direction 7:
Strong FEB community

A strong FEB community, built on meaningful connections, mutual respect, and a deep understanding of differences, is central to our strategy. It fosters well-being and ensures our employees and students thrive, especially in times of polarization. Such a community is the foundation for functioning and well-being of FEB's employees and students. In the past years, we have strongly focused on diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI), appointed a D&I and (confidential) social safety officer and doubled the percentage of female full professors. Equity is the foundation of our community, shaping collaboration, social safety, and the impact of diversity. It ensures all voices are valued, turns diversity into innovation, aligns strategy with daily actions, and fosters belonging by removing barriers.

We also invested in creating a more diverse and inclusive learning environment, e.g. using more diverse and inclusive course material. There have also been changes to improve internal promotion opportunities. FEB aims to keep a focus on DEI and will emphasize equity more. We aim to remain a truly international faculty where international staff and students feel at home. We also highly value a socially safe learning and working environment and are committed to strengthening it. In alignment with government initiatives, FEB will further invest in student well-being, supported by dedicated government funding. The D&I social safety officer will develop a plan for how D&I and social safety policies within FEB can be further strengthened in line with this strategic plan and building on outcomes of employee surveys evaluating HR policies and prior DEI and social safety policies.

In times of polarization, it is very important that employees and students keep connecting. At the core of a strong FEB community, therefore, we place fruitful connections, mutual respect, and understanding of differences in interactions. A strength of community also is a deep understanding of difference—not just tolerance, but true appreciation. We strive for a strong FEB community for students and staff, where physical presence and meaningful interactions with personal connections are crucial. FEB should clearly be an on-campus faculty. We therefore want to stimulate physical presence of staff and students and take measures to increase attendance and engagement of both staff and students. It should be clear to all staff members, that a sufficient physical presence is required and this should be discussed in annual performance interviews. We will also further invest in the onboarding of new staff and of staff taking a new role or position (such as research or program director).

FEB also aims to stimulate more peer to peer learning and sharing of best practices for all layers in our organization, such as management team members regarding talent retention and feedback, for teaching staff during the FEB education day and the PhD conference (see also direction 5), which can also be instrumental for creating a culture of innovation and entrepreneurship. In this regard, FEB also strives for a culture where constructive feedback can be given in performance talks. Students and staff should be open to receive feedback and provide it in a constructive manner. We will stimulate and strive for good cooperation between support and scientific staff. For that purpose, support departments should be more linked to the scientific departments and offer a clear single front-office for students.

International faculty with strong regional connections

FEB is an international faculty, open to all nationalities, cultures, and religions. This international foundation remains vital, especially as de-globalization and rising nationalism create global dilemmas. To strengthen

Wouter Huiberts

Student Assessor FEB 2025-2026

"Our students are indispensable to the FEB community; they create a vibrant campus and directly contribute to the quality and practical relevance of our education. A great example of this is the annual Accountancy Day, organized by study association Financial Study Association Groningen (FSG) in close collaboration with the faculty. During this event, students from the course Introduction to Auditing (BSc Business Administration), taught by Feikje van der Hoek, step out of the classroom and into the real world. Through a program of lectures, speed dates, and informal activities, they gain a clear understanding of the accounting profession and discover the practical applications of all the theory they've learned.

What I find so powerful about this initiative is how education and practice come together here. The lecturer designs an exam and case assignment that directly align with the course material and the company presentations of the day, and this grade actually counts toward the final grade. The teaching materials and practical cases are co-created with businesses and FSG. Because students, lecturers, and professionals work so closely together, this is, for me, a wonderful example of transdisciplinary education that makes theory incredibly tangible. Additionally, the impact on students' careers is enormous, as these low-threshold interactions have already secured several students excellent thesis placements. By connecting theory, student organizations, and employers—from the Big 4 to regional audit firms—we strengthen our ties with the Northern region and help students confidently enter the job market!"

our legitimacy and regional leadership, we must deepen our ties to the Northern region (see direction 3), while maintaining a strong international focus. As a regional institution, FEB's quality in education and research depends on an inherently international environment.

To further the sense of connection between our community and the region, and in line with new government and UG regulations, FEB is emphasizing and implementing a bilingual language policy with an eye for inclusion. For promotions in the different career tracks, sufficient knowledge of both the English and Dutch language is already a requirement.

Continue stronger leadership developments in departments

As FEB we have invested in stronger management at the department level by introducing management teams. An important change has also been that management positions are now filled using an open procedure where potential interested staff can apply. Our view is that taking leadership positions for academics and support staff should be valued and stimulated (incl. high potentials) and that support should be offered on training and coaching leadership competencies. In the coming period FEB aims to further strengthen leadership. We will introduce a Basic Qualification of Leadership (BKL), thereby aligning with UG and national policies. Furthermore FEB should mentor new staff more that take up leadership positions. In the new department structure, strengthening intervision in general meetings (i.e. sharing best practices, dilemma's) within and between departments should be stimulated.

Carefully monitor and manage work pressure

FEB is fully aware of potential working pressure effects of the strategic plan in these times of transition. The proposed shifts must not come at the expense of core tasks. Administrative burdens will be reduced (e.g., via AI, streamlined processes) to free up time for research, teaching, and strategic initiatives. We further want to reduce bureaucracy and control and stimulate more trust in staff members (i.e. PDP in direction 5) by reducing paperwork and checking procedures and providing more autonomy to departments and staff. Specifically, we aim to reduce the frequency of required changes in learning goals, for courses and programs, from once a year to once per three years. FEB will also install a project group to come up with specific measures for bureaucracy reduction, that immediately affect staff members.
Work pressure should also become a common discussion in annual performance meetings to carefully monitor individual work pressure. If required, the board should also consider taking temporary measures to reduce work pressure, as we did during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Enhance student well-being

In the Netherlands more and more young adults experience a range of well-being challenges that are influenced by social, economic, academic, and technological factors. FEB aims to contribute to the well-being of its students and provides already multiple services, such as a mentorship program for first-year bachelor students, extracurricular well-being activities such as peer groups and workshops on life-study balance, and a team of qualified professional staff to provide advice to students on well-being issues and organise well-being awareness activities. Despite all this, we see room for improvements. Students often struggle to find or access help due to unclear information and high (cultural) thresholds. A central student and career point will be explored to streamline access to support services. Second, lecturers play a critical role in student well-being by fostering belonging, and identifying early signs of distress. A practical training program will be developed to clarify their role and provide guidance on referring students to support services. Third, we will expand onboarding and social integration programs to better assist all new and especially international students in Groningen. In doing so, we recognize that openly discussing well-being is still often taboo, especially for vulnerable groups such as non-Dutch, non-EU, and particularly non-EU women.

Extended FEB community: study associations and alumni

The FEB community is broader than only our students and staff. As a faculty, we want to be instrumental in facilitating and improving cooperation with our study associations by working together through joint strategic goals and initiatives. We also strive to foster deeper student engagement by encouraging active participation in study associations, the Faculty Council, and program committees, while ensuring that internationalization and the involvement of international members are visibly reflected in these organizations. Beyond our current students, we aim to strongly focus on our alumni, thereby further implementing our alumni strategy developed in 2025, focusing on alumni engagement, employability, and networking. Alumni policy should also be beneficial for developing the UGBS. FEB will closely work together with the independent FEB alumni association and will keep an alumni officer. FEB also plans to strengthen cooperation with the Ubbo Emmius Foundation at UG level.

Summary and KPI's: result KPI (R), process KPI (P)

Objectives	KPI	Timing	Alignment UG
Work pressure	• Work pressure perception is stable in Employee Survey (benchmark 2026: 7.2 (reversed), benchmark 2023: 7,6 reversed) (R) • Cut admin through harmonization, standardization, use of AI and critically reviewing unnecessary or too intensive process steps: e.g. update learning goals every 3 years (not yearly) (P)	2029-2031 2026-2031	A Close-Knit FEB community
Leadership	• Introduce Basic Qualification of Leadership (BKL) with UG (P)	2028	A Close-Knit community
International faculty	• % International staff remains stable (R) • % International students remains stable (R)	2026-2031	Independent through quality and profiling
Alumni policy	• Four alumni events per year with good attendance (R)	2026-2031	Openness through collaboration outside academia
Healthy staff -academic -support	• Sick leave * % remains stable * decreases to 10%	2026-2028 2028-2031	A close-knit community
Enhance student well-being	• Create a clear front-office for students (study and career point) (P)	2027	

Susanne Klinkers

FEB alumni officer

"We have developed a structured and collaborative alumni policy together with the FEB Alumni Foundation, aimed at fostering a connected, engaged, and sustainable alumni community. This policy reflects a strategic partnership between the faculty and the foundation, built around shared pillars such as networking, lifelong learning, and engagement. It is implemented through a clear division of roles: the faculty defines the strategic direction and ensures alignment, while the foundation takes an initiating, funding, and executing role in alumni activities.

As alumni officer, I serve as a board member of the foundation and play a key connecting role in aligning both parties and coordinating the development and delivery of alumni initiatives. The Klaas Knot Lecture is a strong example of how this policy translates into practice. As part of the jointly developed annual activity plan, the event is initiated, funded, and organized by the foundation, with support from the faculty's infrastructure, communication channels, and network. The lecture attracts nearly 200 alumni and features a leading FEB alumnus each year, highlighting active alumni involvement in knowledge sharing and thought leadership. Supported by De Nederlandsche Bank (The Dutch Central Bank) and the foundation's donor network, the event reflects shared responsibility for alumni engagement. The evening concludes with an exclusive alumni dinner, reinforcing community ties. Its rapid sell-out demonstrates the impact of this coordinated, strategic approach."

Overview and Prioritization

Our strategic plan is built on seven interconnected directions, each reinforcing the others to create a cohesive foundation for the coming years. These directions are not independent; they form a coherent system.

For example:

- Achieving excellent research and education (direction 1) depends on embracing AI, fostering talent and personal development, maintaining a financially healthy and resilient organization, and nurturing a strong FEB community (directions 4, 5, 6 and 7);
- Embedding in the Northern Region (direction 3) may be essential to secure funding for research (direction 1), which in turn supports societially relevant outcomes and talent development (direction 2).

While remaining an international, excellent research and education institute is our top priority, success requires progress across all directions. Therefore, many measures must be implemented simultaneously to achieve both overarching and specific goals while managing workload. For example, the introduction of personal development plans, in tandem with other initiatives, is necessary to ensure that not everybody needs to do everything, and hence to manage workload.

However, despite this interdependence, prioritization of activities is unavoidable, as workload and funding constraints prevent the simultaneous introduction of all initiatives.

Prioritization of Activities

Below, we propose a prioritization framework for the activities outlined in the strategic plan. The table uses the following column headings:

- To be continued: Activities already underway but requiring further elaboration or implementation (e.g., AI integration in education);
- High Priority: Activities to be implemented as soon as possible;
- Medium Priority: Activities that may be delayed if direct implementation is not feasible due to funding or workload constraints.

The final column in the table below does not align with a specific strategic direction. Instead, it outlines the primary funding enablers required to implement the activities. The feasibility of these prioritized activities depends on securing funding from the following sources:

- Increased grant funding;
- Student retention rates;
- Student inflow;
- Additional income from UGBS activities;
- Sector plan funding.

Strategic directions and priority of measures

Strategic Directions (Aims/ Outcomes)	To be continued	Priority	Medium priority	Intermediate outcomes (funding enablers)
1: International excellent research and education	Competency-based programs that reflect both academic rigor and societal relevance. Average research time per research-active employee: stable Develop circular economy master track (with FSE)	Personal grant proposals submitted Increased funding proposal support Intensify in-class learning, improve student attendance and engagement	Add Digital Business & AI Profile (Lead MSc BA) Developing new forms of teaching and blended education	Increased grant funding (from various sources) Secured student retention rates Keep current student inflow Increase income via the UGBS activities Sector plan funded
2: Societally relevant research and education	Retain 5 societal themes, adapt	Dissolve specific CoEs	New inter/ transdisciplinary courses (B3 & M), fewer disciplinary electives Employability profiles in all programs Research-based impact career path	
3: Strongly embedded in Northern Region	Deepen cooperation with Northern universities of applied sciences Strengthen ties with regional practitioners (variety of student-practitioner interactions)	Regional projects	Enable stronger ties with regional practitioners (e.g., apprenticeships)	
4: Embracing AI as a disruptive technology	Implementation AI in our education: • Integrate learning with, without and about AI in all curricula • Train staff on AI integration in teaching • Develop final work alternatives • Test grading assisted by AI	Plan for AI in FEB research AI funding (research & education)	Add AI to support processes	
5: Fostering talent and personal development with a team perspective	Retain 1st money stream PhD funding	Develop and introduce PDPs Enhance deployability/ flexibility of support staff Keep ReMa, strengthen doctoral collaboration with E&B faculties	Increase initiatives to conduct double degree PhDs Strengthen community of staff with education profile (e.g. CT-education profile, lecturers)	
6: Financially healthy, resilient and adaptive	Department restructuring and optimization Develop a sustainable long-term staffing and promotion policy FEB–University of Applied Sciences student transfers	Collaborative funding proposals (regional, national, EU)	Introduce more adaptive and decentralized (data-driven) capacity planning	
7: Strong FEB community	Remain a strong international community Enhance student & staff well-being Develop a clear student front-office Leadership training for staff	Create project group for bureaucracy reduction Cut admin: e.g. update course dossiers every 3 years (not yearly) if there are no big course changes	Expand alumni strategy Develop a plan targeting at staff attendance	

connecting for impact