Report on VU Amsterdam’s Philosophy programme development discussion, 6 October 2017

Introduction
During the development discussion two topics were dealt with: internationalization and customized study advice.

1) Internationalization
The department intends to offer an English-language and a bilingual Bachelor’s programme in Philosophy from the autumn of 2018. It is investigating how it should approach this development and invites suggestions from the panel. The panel gives the following recommendations:

• An English-language Bachelor’s programme calls for more than simply translating the existing curriculum into English. Institutional changes are also needed (regulation, communication, etc.).
• An international classroom provides an enormous stimulus for Dutch students, but this requires a significant proportion of foreign students (at least 30%), so that the learning environment can be designed consistently in English.
• It is also useful to offer targeted activities that enable Dutch and international students to mix with each other outside of their studies.
• Another topic worth reflecting on is admission policy: how will the programme assess the entrance qualifications of potential students?
• Consideration should be given to reading texts in German and French during the courses.
• When providing information, it must be clear to international students what they can expect in terms of the guidance offered to students.

2) Customized study advice
The department acknowledges that the success rate for programmes is problematic and would like to discuss the effectiveness of measures designed to improve this aspect. Many initiatives have already been taken (e.g. matching), but so far without significant effect. The panel gives the following recommendations:

• Creating more structure and incorporating more assessments and challenges into the programme can have positive effects on student retention and study progress.
• It is also important for students to feel part of an academic community. There should be rooms where students and teaching staff can meet.
• Another suggestion is to set up a tutoring system to which one credit is assigned, so that it becomes obligatory.
• Organizing challenging extracurricular activities in which students can participate, such as seminars, workshops and congresses.
• Lastly, the programme can benefit from a clearer image, an identity to which specific student groups are attracted. A characteristic of VU Amsterdam, for example, is that education is well organized and that the university embraces a clear set of values.