

## **Questions and Answers: Possible Sale of Dining Hall**

*Town Hall - 05.12.25*

*Written up by UC Student Council, with input of the Management Team*

This document aims to answer the most frequently asked question during Friday's town hall. They are separated per overall topic: Dining Hall, Voltaire, UU Strategic Housing Plan, Clock Tower (Cantecleer) and Future of Campus, and UCU administration. We might have missed some of your questions so if you want to talk to us in person, learn more on how to get involved or get some clarification don't hesitate to email us or come by office hours.

### **A) Dining Hall**

#### ***Why is UU trying to sell buildings and why Dining Hall?***

The cost of housing, energy, maintenance, etc. across Utrecht University are very high and consume too much money that is intended for education and research. To structurally have more money left for education, UU started a strategic housing plan to reduce space and to make buildings more sustainable. In the light of this plan, six years ago the UU decided to sell the entire campus. Thankfully, that decision was pulled back last year. Part of the decision to retain this campus was to try and find a buyer for Dining Hall. A potential buyer has now been found.

Dining Hall houses many social and campus functions for UCU, but also has a lot of unused or inefficiently used space. Developing the entire building into something useful for education or research would be a huge investment. It is much more economical to sell DH and house its social and campus functions elsewhere. If a buyer can be found for Dining Hall, that is what will happen.

#### ***When is DH going to be sold?***

Right now, it is not guaranteed to be sold, but that it is for sale. The timeline is very unclear, so far the only known things are that the University is interested in selling the building as part of their integral housing plan and that the ministry of defense has expressed seemingly strong interest in buying it. It is also currently unknown what would happen to Dining Hall and when, if it were not to be sold.

#### ***How can we coexist with the military if Dining Hall is sold to them?***

The ministry of defense would most likely move their fence to be around Dining Hall, resulting in no changes in the "coexistence" between us as neighbours.

#### ***Is UU open to selling the building to someone else?***

Yes, they will probably consider it and sell to whoever makes the best offer.

#### ***For what price is DH for sale? How much is the ministry of defense offering?***

UCU does not know and is not involved in this process. It is a slow process that has just started.

### **What if no buyer will be found?**

What will happen if no one buys Dining Hall is unclear.

### **How has the UU executive board (CvB) included student voices in the decision?**

Technically, the U-raad ([University Council - Organisation](#)) is the channel for student (and staff) voices to the CvB. To what extent the U-raad was involved in this decision is unclear. (“The University Council consults with the Executive Board regarding University-wide policy on teaching, research, finances and human resources. The Council provides the Board with solicited and unsolicited advice, and has the right of consent in certain matters.”) There are currently no UCU students in the U-raad. Elections of the 12 student members happen on a yearly basis. UC Student Council has reached out to student members of the U-raad to explore ways to push for UCU student voices. The U-raad was informed about the general housing plan, which did not include DH yet, longer time ago and had approved it. It is to be expected that the U-raad will also approve any new versions of the same plan. To our knowledge no students have been asked for their opinion before adding the possible sale of Dining Hall in this overarching plan.

The CvB also has a student assessor, a full-time position rotating on a yearly basis, that all students can apply for. The CvB assessor is technically a student voice, but for example not from UCU. ([The Executive Board - Organisation - Utrecht University](#))

### **How is this sale allowed?**

The CvB ([The Executive Board - Organisation - Utrecht University](#)) is UU's highest administrative body with decision-making power. Thus, the decision does not need approval by other boards. The topics of facility management and housing fall under the acting president's areas of responsibility.

Under Dutch higher-education governance, the Executive Board is responsible for ensuring that this portfolio is financially sustainable. Since UU has a long-term policy to reduce the total number of square meters it maintains—partly due to rising energy, maintenance, and security costs—it is within the Board's formal mandate to sell buildings that are considered inefficient or too expensive to keep.

The University Council (U-raad) has a right of consent on major housing plans, and the overarching real-estate strategy—including the intention to reduce space on campus—was approved there. UCU's Management Team does not have veto power over such decisions, and UCU students are not represented on the U-raad, which means there is no structural student involvement at the moment decisions of this scale are made.

In short: the sale is possible because the Executive Board has decision-making power in this matter, the broader reduction of university real estate has already been approved at the central level, and UCU has limited formal influence over these central decisions.

## **B) Voltaire**

### ***What is happening with Voltaire?***

Part of the deal that UCU could stay on this campus was to use academic buildings more efficiently. As other buildings in the city are being sold and many faculties/programmes have to squeeze into smaller spaces; UCU will also have to share more. Part of the plan on how this condensation will go about is repurposing Voltaire. The current plans focus on concentrating UCU in Newton and Locke. In this scenario, the current plan would then also be for UCU to “get back” the groundfloors of Newton and Locke, which are currently being used by other faculties.

### ***What will happen with the study area in Voltaire?***

Because the exact repurposing plans for Voltaire are not established yet, it is unknown if the study area will remain. However, the building is intended to be a shared education building, with a likelihood of needing a study area as well.

### ***What will happen with UCU housing in top floor Voltaire?***

There are currently no plans to remove UCU housing from academic buildings.

### ***What will happen to the humanities, academic quality and course variety?***

The UCU classes and offices currently housed in Voltaire will move to Newton and Locke. The humanities will not disappear, and their academic quality shall not be influenced by a relocation. Course variety will not be influenced by this. Currently, ground floor Newton and Locke are rented out to the UU Humanities, we will get those classrooms back. In case (although not expected to happen) of shortage in UCU classrooms, the option of evening classes or classes in Spinoza/other buildings will be explored. Nevertheless, as stated in the general housing plan, UCU is entitled to a specific number of square meters of education spaces (e.g. classrooms). Thus, solutions will be found.

## **C) UU Strategic Housing Plan**

### ***What is the connection between closing buildings in town and budget cuts?***

The UU has been trying to shrink its housing portfolio for years, long before the recent Dutch budget cuts. The possible sale of the Dining Hall is part of this broader strategy, just as the idea of selling the entire campus once was. Part of the deal that UCU could stay on this campus was to use (academic) buildings more efficiently. As other buildings in the city are being sold and many faculties/programmes have to squeeze into smaller spaces; UCU will also have to share more. Part of the plan on how this condensation will go about is repurposing Voltaire so that it can be used by other faculties that had to move out of their original spaces. The issues related to UU facilities/space and thus the

strategic housing plan have existed before the budget cuts were implemented and have been going on for years. Nevertheless, the increase in energy costs and the budget cuts have only made the situation more tense.

## **D) Clock Tower (Cantecleer) and Future of Campus**

### ***If Clock Tower has been unused for so long, why not sell that building instead?***

The high costs and unused number of square meters in Dining Hall are the main issues. The costs for the necessary renovations to transform Dining Hall into a building suitable for UU's housing plan are too high nevertheless. It is not only about revenue of the sale but about bringing down the cost of heating, maintenance, cleaning, security, etc. In the metrics used by the UU, the only way to bring down operating cost of housing is to bring down the amount of "unused" square meters.

### ***Why were Clock Tower renovations not considered earlier already?***

Unknown to UCU. The plan to sell/relocate the entire campus six years ago might have played a role in not renovating Cantecleer earlier. Additionally, Clock Tower has been kept renovated on the outside, only the inside would have to be renovated

### ***Where is the money for the renovations of Clock Tower coming from?***

UU. Their money and savings allocated to housing and facilities, and the savings from reductions in square-meters according to the strategic plan.

### ***What is the size of Cantecleer?***

Cantecleer is approximately 700 square meters.

### ***How do you envision future campus life? How are we going to fit all social spaces and activities elsewhere? How will a community be fostered without the space for it?***

It is certain that the catering and social facilities will remain on our campus. In case of a sale, a fully-fledged alternative will come in its place. The three pillars of our program - academic life, residential life, and social life - will remain fundamental to our program and will remain on our campus. The question is only about where the community fostering activities will be able to take place, not if. UCU, as guaranteed in the strategic housing plan, is entitled to a specific amount of space for social/campus life/space. If Dining Hall were to be sold, the relocation of social spaces will be the focus.

### ***Why is the UCU Management Team telling a narrative that Clock Tower will replace DH when it is not guaranteed to become a UCU space?***

Alternatives for UCU social and campus functions in DH will only be guaranteed when the sale is definite. The clock tower is currently the most probable alternative, but since

the sale is not a fact yet, there are no guarantees. The only guarantee is that the social and campus functions will be replaced.

So the Management Team is not claiming that the Clocktower will replace the Dining Hall but that it is very likely..

They are being upfront that there is no final decision at this moment,. The MT is trying to push for the best alternative spaces, but they cannot promise something the Executive Board has not committed to.

In short: they are not presenting a guarantee, but explaining the main/most probable scenario on the table right now.

***What will you prioritise if UCU gets to redesign Clock Tower? How will students be involved in decision-making?***

This would be developed in cooperation between students and staff, primarily through a newly established working group. They will reach out to the community for brainstorming and input sessions. If you have ideas on how to involve students more directly or have ideas that you would like to communicate to us, feel free to email us at [ucu.studentcouncil@uu.nl](mailto:ucu.studentcouncil@uu.nl) or message us on Instagram (uc.student.council).

***Who is in that working group?***

As of right now, student representatives of UCSC, UCSA, CAR, BarCo, as well as staff members such as Rich Hinam, Maarten Diederix, Babette Heeren, Sjoerd Bosgra, Kim Donaldson, as well as a UCU alumn, in an attempt to bring representatives of the various different groups on campus into this group.. Nevertheless, bigger input sessions will be held so that community needs and wishes can be prioritised.

***Is UCU reaching out to Alumni for help?***

Yes. The Alumni Office has already reached out to alumni to inform them about the situation and to ask if anyone has valuable input. An alum will also join the working group.

## **E) UCU Administration**

***How can you facilitate increasing numbers of students with shrinking spaces?***

The main reduction of space anticipated for UCU in the strategic housing plan is office space for staff members. Space for education will stay roughly the same and space for social and campus functions may be reduced a bit, but a fully-fledged alternative for DH will be available in case of the sale. The question is not if, but where.

### ***Why have students only been informed now?***

The staff and student community has been informed as soon as possible after conversations with the CvB in November. As you know there is still a lot of uncertainty in regard to both Dining Hall and Voltaire, and it was the UCU's Management Team's intention to inform students about the decisions being made at a higher level and this uncertainty nevertheless.

### ***Why are we discussing this after the UU's decision?***

UU wants to sell this building and has been trying to make the campus more efficient for years (as can be seen with the downstairs classroom for other faculties, the classrooms in DH, the use of Spinoza etc.) The intention/decision that UU wants to get rid of DH has been made and then communicated to UCU, there was no opportunity to discuss this possibility with students earlier due to large uncertainties. The sale on the other hand is not decided on. We do not have insights on its progression/stage. Since there seems to be serious interest from a buyer, the Management Team wanted to share the information as soon as possible.

### ***Can students talk directly to the executive board?***

At the moment, no direct information sessions with the Executive Board have been organised. UC Student Council is communicating through the University Council and VIDUIS ([Nieuws - VIDUIS](#)), the student union, to make sure your concerns reach the administration. However, this does not guarantee that these efforts will lead to concrete influence or changes.

Beyond that, the UCU Student Assessor, currently Felicitas, is also a contact point for students as the assessor is part of the management team and thus meets the CvB in the bilateral meetings.

### ***What forms of action can students take against this decision?***

One form of action is to protest, which is your right. That being said, our sphere of influence is very restricted. This is why the management team is focusing on securing viable alternatives and resources in the event of a sale. You can also voice your questions, concerns, and ideas to the different students boards or to meetings and info sessions that will be organised in the coming months. You can also attend the Management Team's office hours to bring up your input directly. Lastly, you can also take a more proactive role and run for one of the boards that has a direct influence, such as the U-raad.