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1. Introduction

The Aurora Student Ambassador programme started in the 2021/2022 academic year as an informal **initiative of the Aurora Student Council**. It was started to facilitate broader student engagement and to creating a true community of Aurora Students.

After two informal editions in 21/22 and 22/23, the Aurora Student Ambassador programme has been formalised in the Aurora 2030 project, as concrete activity of ***Task Team 7.2 – Development of the Aurora Student Community***.

Specifically, the task aims to create a programme that allows for students to engage with key Aurora topics, develop their personal and professional skills and engage with task team outcomes.

The task team initially aimed for at least **5 participants per university per year**, on average. Since its inception, the Aurora Student Ambassador programme has grown exponentially. What started with 68 participants in the first informal iteration in 21/22, grew to **284 participants in 24/25**.

The rapid growth of the Student Ambassador programme shows the appeal of Aurora to our students. At the same time, such rapid growth comes with certain challenges that force us to adapt and develop our initial concepts, to ensure a meaningful experience for our students.

In this deliverable, ***Draft components for the report on the Aurora Student Program (D33)***, we will report on the 23/24 and 24/25 editions of the student ambassador programme, analyse their outcomes, and describe the path ahead for the next two cycles to be organised in the framework of the task team.

2. Concept 2023/2024 and 2024/2025

This chapter will describe the concept of the 23/24 and 24/25 Aurora Student Ambassador programme cycles. This section will detail the programme of activities for these first two editions, as well as the philosophy behind them.

In 23/24 and 24/25 the primary goal of the programme was to give students **a low-threshold, voluntary opportunity to find out more about Aurora**, complemented with interesting workshops related to personal and professional development.

These opportunities centred around key Aurora topics and outcomes, included both online and in-person sessions moderated by academics, as well as student-moderated peer-to-peer learning sessions.

Programme of Activities

The programme of activities for the Aurora Student Ambassadors consisted of online and in-person workshops touching on the core topics of Aurora. The focus was on topics related to Aurora's education hubs, which are at the heart of the Aurora 2030 programme.

For reasons of scalability, accessibility and efficiency, the focus of the first two editions lay with online participation opportunities, although there is a gradual move towards a more in-person approach.

Online

The key online session is the online Kick-off meeting, which serves as an introduction to Aurora, its history and the range of possibilities. These initial meetings are crucial in getting the student ambassadors acquainted with Aurora. As such, these sessions play a vital role in fulfilling our ambition of sharing Aurora. These sessions took place as live on-line calls, but dedicated recordings were made available for students to follow the introduction asynchronously, too.

We also organised frequent optional drop-in sessions, for student ambassadors to connect, share updates and ask questions.

In addition, the programme offers topical online workshops. These include online asynchronous learning opportunities, such as a course on International Competences, offered by the URV. The programme also featured the opportunity to take the [Beliefs, Events, and Values Index \(BEVI\)](#) test, which helps students develop awareness of their outlook on the world, as well as the experiences and beliefs that underpin it.

The 24/25 edition saw the introduction of topical online group work. Based on student feedback, as well as best practices shared by other alliances, the 24/25 cycle introduced creative group-work assignments for participating students. Here, students had the opportunity to sign up for an Aurora topic of their choice and work together with other

students from across Europe to work on a mini-project of their choosing. Each group was provided with a facilitated brainstorming session, after which they were expected to select a group-leader and self-organize follow up meetings.

Finally, the online programme of activities included Aurora 2030 task team participation. Here students could sign up for a task team of their choosing, aiming for broad student participation across project. The 2024/2025 edition aimed to develop this further, with an online bulletin-board to match task team activities with interested student ambassadors. However, due to technical difficulties on the Aurora website, it was not possible to implement task team integration in that cycle.

In Person

Universities were further motivated to organise local meetings with the student ambassadors and include them in local Aurora activities whenever possible. Such meetings included informal get together to introduce students to the local Aurora possibilities, to helping out with the organisation of local Aurora conferences. Aurora Student Ambassadors have for example been involved, either as volunteers or paid student assistants, in the organization of the Aurora Annual Conference 2024 in Naples, the Annual Conference 2025 in Paris, and the Aurora Peace Conference in Innsbruck, and many more local initiatives.

The main in-person events organised for Aurora Student Ambassadors is the Aurora Student Conference, of which at least one takes place each academic year. To date, three such events have been organised. More information about these events can be found in the dedicated chapter.

Peer-to-Peer Learning

In line with the progress made by the *Task Team 7.1 Coordination of Student Support Services and Engagement*, peer-to-peer support and peer-to-peer learning grew to become one of the leading philosophies for the development of the Aurora Student Community.

Aurora's concept of Peer-to-Peer learning in the framework of the Aurora Student Ambassador programme centres around the Aurora Student Council (ASC). The ASC is the highest student body within Aurora, through which Aurora students are directly represented in decision-making.

In the framework of the Student Ambassador programme, the ASC organises yearly peer-learning workshops. These workshops draw on the ASC's students' expertise, and focus on topics related to key Aurora-activities, such as Health & Wellbeing and Diversity & Inclusion. The peer-learning workshops both educate the Aurora Student Ambassadors, and strengthen the community ties between the ambassadors and the ASC.

Recruitment Strategy

As the goal of the 23/24 and 24/25 cycle was to acquaint as many students with Aurora as possible, the recruitment strategy focused on casting a broad net.

As such, the application threshold was deliberately set as low as possible, without strict selection criteria. Eligible students could simply register for the programme through a centrally administered online form after which their university would be informed of their application.

The student ambassador programme was promoted through Aurora's central communication channels, including the Aurora website and social media, as well as institutionally, at the universities' discretion. Universities promoted the ambassador programme through relevant local channels, ranging from website, emails and social media to presence at local events and student fairs.

Out of the used channels, local channels, particularly presence at local student events and emails, proved to be the most successful. This shows in the registration numbers, with the universities that heavily promoted the programme locally generating significantly higher numbers.

3. Aurora Student Conferences

The Aurora Student Conferences are a fundamental part of our vision on creating an international Aurora student community. Moreover, the conferences play an integral part in complementing and strengthening the representative role of the ASC.

The Aurora Student Conferences are dedicated conferences by students for students. From its inception, peer learning and co-creation have been guiding principles in our approach to these conferences. The conference programmes are in large part developed and organised by the ASC. The ASC also pick the overarching theme for each conference, from among Aurora's key priority areas.

In the description of action, the task team is committed to organising at least one Aurora Student Conference per year. Three Aurora Student Conferences have been organised in the first 24 months of the project.

The Aurora Student Conference is organised on a rotating basis among Aurora Universities to ensure broad institutional buy-in and further foster diversity and intercultural exchange.

Below, please find a more detailed description of the conferences organised to date.

Tarragona Aurora Student Conference 2024

The first Aurora Student Conference organised in the framework of Task Team 7.2 was hosted in Tarragona by Universitat Rovira i Virgili on 14 and 15 February 2024.

The conference brought together 26 participants from across Aurora to connect on topics related to Diversity & Inclusion. The programme featured an extensive cultural programme in which students had an opportunity to present their own cultural background and get acquainted with Catalan culture.

This was complemented by a peer learning workshop, courtesy of the ASC on Diversity and Inclusion. The conference also featured sessions such as introductory sessions about the Aurora Student Ambassador Programme, as well as on Aurora and the European Universities Initiative in general.

[More Information and Pictures of the Tarragona Aurora Student Conference](#)

Olomouc Aurora Student Conference 2025

Palacky University Olomouc (UP) hosted the 2025 edition of the Student Conference between 27 and 29 January 2025. The event welcomed 50 students from across Aurora universities in Olomouc.

The programme featured a range of student-led workshops, and professional training sessions, focusing on the topics of Inclusive Internationalisation & Mental Health and Well-Being.

Topics covered included a peer learning workshop on Student's Mental Health & Well-being, the presentation of a student survey on Inclusive Internationalisation, as well as a workshop on the [Beliefs, Events, and Values Index \(BEVI\)](#).

The programme also featured sessions on the advancement of the Aurora Student Community. Particularly the conference hosted an Open ASC-session for students to connect with the ASC, as well as a feedback session on the Aurora Student Ambassador programme. These sessions generate valuable feedback and facilitate student co-creation of the programmes that constitute the Aurora student community.

[More Information and Pictures of the Olomouc Aurora Student Conference](#)

[Innsbruck Aurora Student Conference & Aurora Open 2025](#)

A second student conference was organized in the Academic year 2024/2025. Combining the typical two-day student conference with an Aurora Student Beach Volleyball Tournament, the Innsbruck Aurora Student Conference & Aurora Open took place between 25 and 28 June 2025 at Universität Innsbruck.

The overall concept of this conference sought to add a new dimension to student community building through sports.

The programme facilitated dialogue on the Aurora Student Community and featured dedicated feedback to gather input on the student ambassador programme.

Moreover, the ASC facilitated another open ASC-session, which served as a forum to discuss the future of the Aurora Student Community. The further featured peer-learning workshop focussed on Aurora Student Community building, as well as lectures on topics related to Health & Wellbeing, provided by UIBK PhD students.

[More Information and Pictures of the Innsbruck Student Conference & Aurora Open](#)

4. Participation Statistics

This section will describe in detail the number of participants in each edition of the ambassador programme. It will give a breakdown of the total number of participants, as well as the number of participants per institution. It will also compare this number to the base and target values, set as KPIs for this activity.

Key Performance Indicators & Benchmarking

The Key Performance Indicator (KPI) used to measure the successful development of the Aurora student community is the total number of registered participants in the Aurora Student Ambassador programme.

As mentioned, the Aurora Student Ambassador programme is rooted in the informal Aurora Student Ambassador Scheme initiated by the Aurora Student Council in 2021, with a second edition taking place in the 2022/2023 academic year. The participation statistics of these two cycles, which took place before the start of the Aurora 2030 programme, were used to set the KPI for this activity. As such, these numbers serve as an important benchmark and base rate for the KPI.

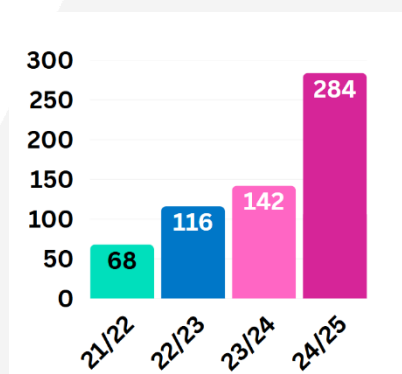
When looking at the editions that pre-date the start of the programme, the 2021/2022 cycle had a total of 68 registered participants, whereas the 2022/2023 cycle had a total of 116 registered participants. This led us to set a **KPI base value of 184**.

The goal for this activity was set modestly at a **cumulative total of 400 registered participants** at the end of the project period. Two years into the project, the cumulative total registrations have already **surpassed 600 registered participants**.

Annual Participation Breakdown

The annual Aurora Student Ambassador Programme participation numbers have shown a clear upward trend, strongly accelerated by the formalisation of the activity in the framework of Task Team 7.2.

The chart below shows the incremental increase in registrations over the past two years. Please note the 21/22 and 22/23 concern the iterations of the programme that predate the start of the Aurora 2030 programme.



The overall participation and registration statistics are an encouraging proof of the rapidly growing Aurora Student Community. These numbers demonstrate the success of the Student Ambassador programme in getting a substantial number of our students more acquainted with Aurora.

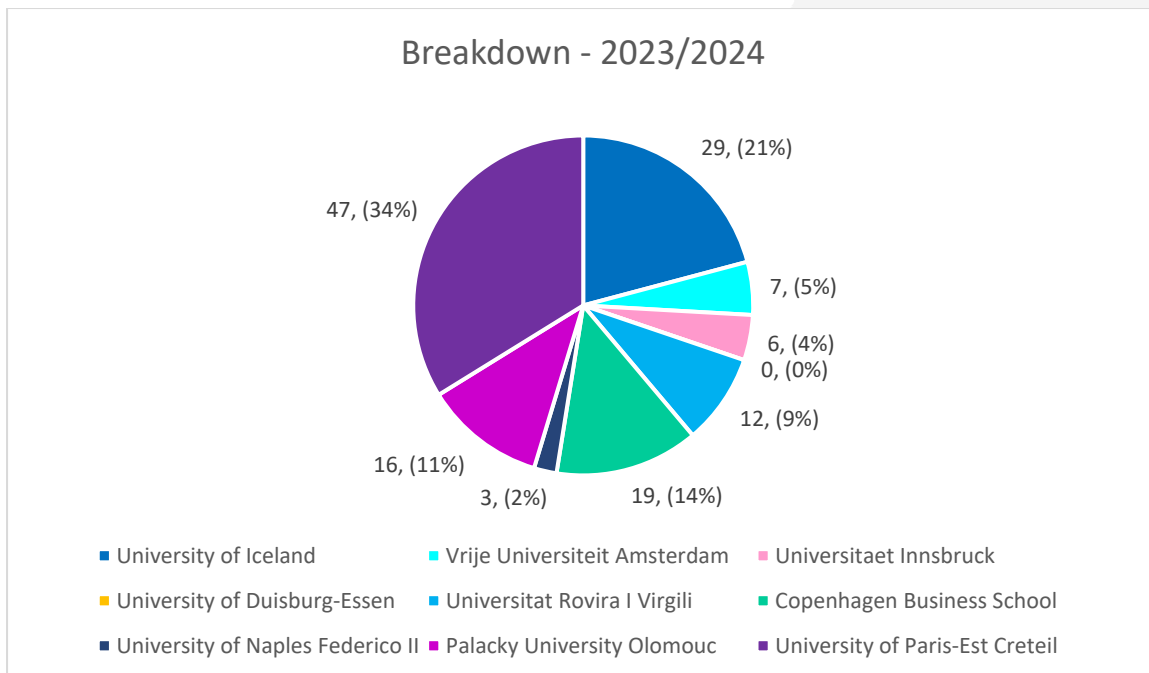
This section will continue with a detailed breakdown of the registration numbers for the 2023/2024 and 2024/2025 academic years, looking at institutional registration rates. These institutional rates are based on total annual culminative registration, not taking into account participation rates or mid-cycle dropouts, as institutions applied different conditions in this regard.

2023/2024 Aurora Student Ambassadors

Aurora recorded 142 registered Aurora Student Ambassadors for the first cycle organised in the framework of Aurora 2030.

Due to the complementarities with previous informal cycles of the Aurora Student Ambassador programme, recruitment for the 23/24 cycle started immediately at the start of the project (M0).

The chart below shows a breakdown of the applications by university.



Of note in this graph is the unequal distribution of registered student ambassadors between participating universities.

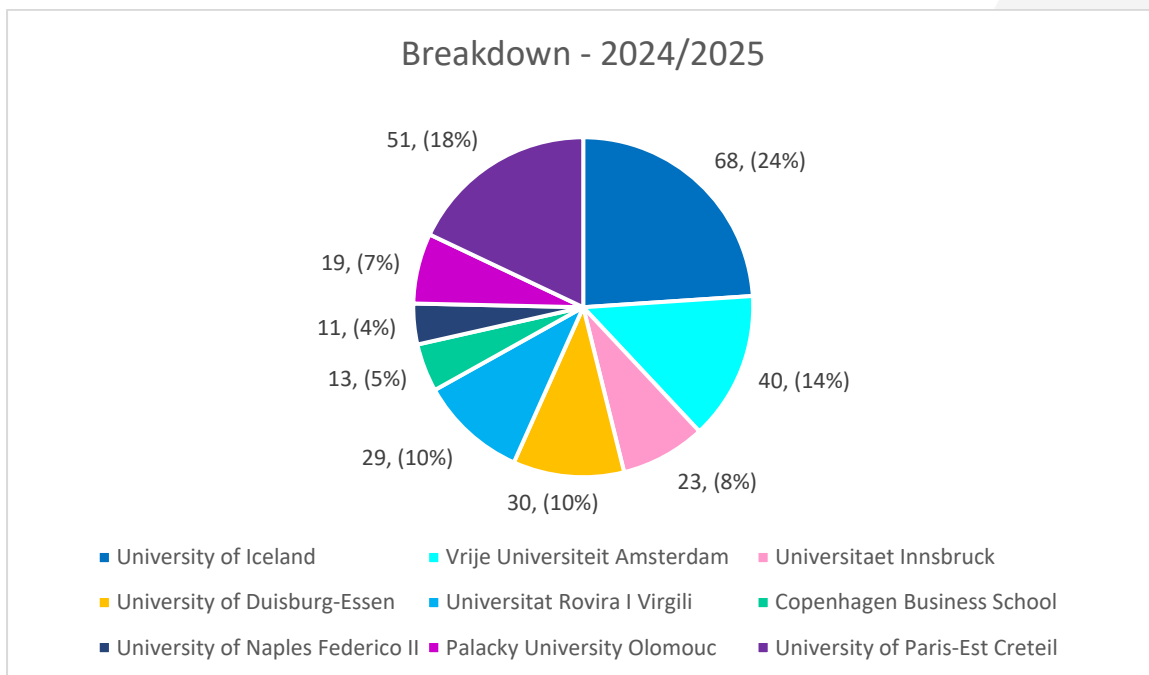
This disparity is in part explained by the early opening and promotion of the Ambassador programme in M0. This ensured the continuity of the ambassador programme, but hindered the recruitment and implementation at particular universities, due to disparate academic calendars and available promotional resources. This led to the fairly unequal proportional distribution of participants.

This disparity nonetheless proved very informative for shaping future recruitment strategies, as it highlighted the importance of local embeddedness and promotion above all.

2024/2025 Aurora Student Ambassadors

With 284 registered students, the 2024/2025 cycle of the Aurora Student Ambassador Programme experienced a rapid growth, with registrations doubling compared to the previous year.

The chart below shows a breakdown of the applications by university.



Of note is not only the significant overall increase of registered ambassadors, but also the more even spread of applications across our universities. This year, all universities were represented by a significant cohort of registered students.

This more equally distribution is in a large part a result of the longer promotional run-up to the programme. This allowed all universities to promote the programme through relevant local channels, in line with their distinct academic calendars.

Moreover, the overall increase, as well as the proportional developments are a clear indication of increased awareness and institutional embeddedness of Aurora and its activities.

5. Conclusion

This chapter will focus on the conclusions and lessons learned from the first two cycles of the Aurora Student Ambassador programme.

It also aims to describe the updated concept for the upcoming two cycles of the Aurora Student Ambassadors programme.

In general, the first two editions of the Aurora Student Ambassador programme have met and exceeded expectations in terms of overall participation. This rapid growth has led to some issues that the task team aims to address in the upcoming editions of the programme.

Assessment of 2023/24 and 2024/25 cycles

From an organisational point of view the number of registrations and interest in the Aurora Student Ambassador programme has exceeded expectations and projections.

Certain growing-pains came with the rapid and continuously growth of the number of registrations. On the one hand, it is an indication that the Aurora Student Ambassador programme resonates with our students. On the other hand, the high number of registered ambassadors makes it challenging to accommodate their needs and provide all participants with the depth of activities we strive for.

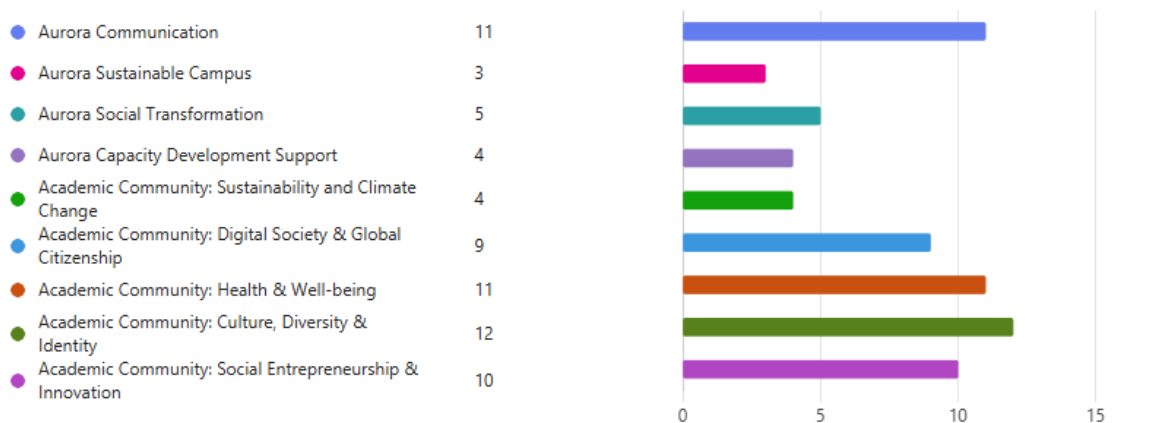
On a practical level, centralised communication with such large numbers of participants creates a bottleneck.

Task Team Implementation

Implementing the Aurora Student Ambassadors into task teams across Aurora 2030 has also proved challenging. **In some cases, task team implementation proved successful and meaningful** to both the task team and the student ambassadors, in general however, **it proved difficult to align student and task team expectations and needs**. In the 2023/24 academic year, students were given the choice out of eleven task teams, selected for their comprehensive nature, excluding overly technical task teams. These were the following:

1. Task 2.1 Establishing the Hub for Sustainability & Climate Change
2. Task 2.2 Establishing the Hub for Digital Society & Global Citizenship
3. Task 2.3 Establishing the Hub for Health & Well-Being
4. Task 2.4 Establishing the Hub for Culture: Identities and Diversities
5. Task 3.1 Deliver Courses on Social Entrepreneurship and Innovation
6. Task 4.2 Education for Sustainable Development
7. Task 6.2 Aurora Sustainable Campus
8. Task 7.3 Implementation of Capacity Development Programme in CEE
9. Task 8.3 Internationalisation of Institutional Cultures
10. Task 9.3 Aurora Values
11. Task 10.1 Aurora Communication and Dissemination

Together, a total of 69 registrations were gathered in 2023/2024. They were distributed as follows:



Contact information between task team staff and students was exchanged by email. Out of these eleven groups, Digital Society & Global Citizens, the Aurora Communication and Dissemination groups reported positive outcomes. In case of the other task teams, constructive student integration proved more challenging. On several occasions, students introduced to a task team reported not being included in the task team’s communications, or not being presented meaningful ways to contribute. Other task teams, on the other hand, reported difficulty getting the students to contribute, and highlighted difficulties adapting task team work flows and schedules to meet the students availability.

Technical difficulties surrounding the Aurora website further halted developments to centrally facilitate such inclusion in the 2024/25 edition.

Student Participant Feedback

Gathering student feedback is an important part of the Aurora Student Ambassador programme. Equally important is the continuing development of the programme in line with the provided feedback.

For the 2023/24 and 2024/25 editions of the programme, feedback was gathered in the following ways:

- Ad hoc feedback provided by participants, by email or during online drop-in sessions
- In-person feedback sessions, organised as part of the Aurora Student Conferences
- Formal feedback through dedicated forms, shared with participants at the end of the academic year

As the 2024/25 cycle is currently nearing its conclusion, the formal feedback has not yet been processed. However, ample feedback was gathered through the other in-person feedback sessions, and ad hoc channels.

The feedback received on the Aurora Student Ambassador programme is overwhelmingly positive, with students highlighting the added value of inclusive and international nature of the programme, as well as the strong sense of community it fosters. This positive feedback centres around the Aurora Student Conferences, as well as local in-person participation opportunities.

The received feedback on the online opportunities is also mostly positive, but markedly less so. Student feedback across the two editions **explicitly stresses the students' preference for in-person opportunities**.

It is also noteworthy that participation rates and interest in these activities are also remarkably lower for online opportunities. In some cases, lack of interest in online opportunities dampens the impact of interesting opportunities.

In-line with the dwindling interest in online activities, the overall engagement rate of students is also fairly low, with only **around 20% of participants remaining actively engaged** throughout the academic year.

The low engagement rate can be explained for the most part by the design of the programme, which is deliberately low-threshold, low-commitment and very broad. Other factors affecting the engagement rate reported by the students are difficulty of the conflicting academic calendars to one centralised, mostly online approach. This makes it difficult for student to re-engage with the programme of activities after, for example, an exam period.

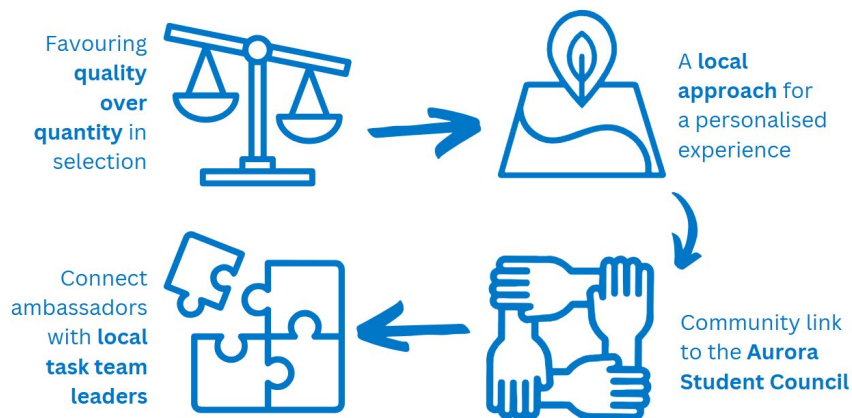
A clear downside to the low engagement is that it limits the community building potential of the programme, with the most engaged 20% reporting disappointed in not finding more students to connect with through the online activities.

Based on feedback, the task team has updated and developed the concept of the Student Ambassador programme for the upcoming cycles, ensuring that we build on the positive aspects.

Concept Moving Forward

Moving forward, the Task Team has updated and revamped the Aurora Student Ambassador programme, in line with the feedback provided by participants, as well as the changing needs of the Task Team.

The image below details the conceptual changes to the Aurora Student Ambassador programme.



One of the main proposed changes, is the introduction of a selective recruitment approach, prioritising quality over quantity of Ambassadors. Universities would now be asked to select the 15 most qualified applicants.

This should allow for a higher engagement rate throughout the academic year and should in turn make the programme more meaningful. It will also give a larger portion of the student ambassadors the opportunity to participate in international and onsite student community events such as the Aurora Student Conferences.

To not lose the broad appeal that shaped the concept for the first two editions, the Task Team will look to publish an Aurora Student Community newsletter for all applicants. This would allow us to still cater to the students who merely wish to be passively informed about Aurora opportunities.

Moving forward, the programme will also have a more localised set up, that prioritises *internationalisation at home* and in-person participation. This will have several benefits.

Firstly, it will allow us to offer more in-person opportunities and build on the positive feedback received on local Aurora student community events.

Moreover, the localised set-up will connect the Student Ambassadors more directly with their local Aurora Office and local Aurora Student Council representatives. This will further strengthen the Aurora Student Community. This approach is mirrored in the Aurora Student Handbook, made by the ASC, which emphasizes the importance of strong ties between the student Ambassadors and the ASC.

Moving away from a centralised approach in favour of localised communication will also ease the communication bottleneck experienced due to the increased number of applicants.

This localised and personalised approach will also impact the set-up of the task team integration of the student ambassadors. Rather than centrally signing up for online task team participation, the local Aurora office will match their ambassadors with local task

team (co-)leaders or participants. This will add an in-person dimension to the task team participation, but more importantly it will facilitate more tailored matching of needs and expectations.

The Aurora Student Ambassadors programme will still feature regular online sessions, but these will be limited to the well-received online Aurora Introductions, and drop-in sessions. The offer of other online participation opportunities and workshops will be limited.

[A step-by-step guide to the Aurora Student Ambassador programme 2025/2026 can be found here.](#)