



extensus

honours association

GRADUATION
YEARBOOK
2020



Table of Contents

A word from President, Board of Extensus 2019-2020	4
About the Extensus Alumni Network (EAN)	5
A word from President, Board of EAN 2019-2020	6
Graduating Students A-J	9
Graduating Students J-M	16
Graduating Students M-Z	23
Thanking the Committee	29



Dear students of the Class of 2020,

First, I want to congratulate all of you with your graduation. We live in very confusing times and I hope that you and your family are doing well. Graduation is something you want to celebrate with classmates, friends and family. Unfortunately, a ceremony is not an option at this time due to the outbreak of COVID-19. I do sincerely hope you were able to make the best out of the situation and have a moment to be proud of your accomplishments.

This is a time of looking ahead to your next step in life. Are you going to start a master's degree, maybe start working or take a gap year? These decisions can sometimes be very stressful and it feels like you are deciding the path you will be taking for the rest of your life. However, it is most important that you do something that you like. And the decision you make right now does not set anything in stone. There will be plenty of opportunities to explore what you like and what you want to do in life.

On the other hand, this is also a time of looking back. Looking back at your years at university and all that you have learned, not only academically but, most importantly, personally. Looking back at the new friends you have made and all the experiences you have encountered. Whether they were big like an exchange semester, or small like a group project, these are all experiences that teach you more about yourself and what you want out of life. All these experiences meant stepping out of your comfort zone. And every time you do so, your comfort zone grows. If you think about the person you were when you graduated high school, you have probably grown so much as a person by now. And that is something to be proud of.

Finally, this is a time of being thankful to be inspired. Inspired by your parents, family, friends or maybe a teacher. There are people in your life that motivate you to be your best self and to get the best out of life. These people also make following your ambitions worthwhile, because they are there every step of the way and they bring you joy and laughter. I want to ask you to take a moment to stand still and see who these people are for you and what they mean to you. Be grateful to them and treasure the time you spend with them. High grades and a good career are all very important, but without those people in your life it would be meaningless.

I wish you all the best in the future!

Stay safe,

Lara Valent

President

2019-2020 Board of Honours Programme Association Extensus

About EAN

To not have to rely on blissful but rare encounters with other Honours alumni in the future, the Extensus Alumni Network (EAN) organises a few events per year to stay connected. During ‘borrels’ and reunite days, we meet each other, catching up with old classmates and getting to know other Honours alumni. If you’ve enjoyed the Amsterdam Honours Programme, we think that you’ll also like EAN events and hope to see you during the first-drinks-of-the-year borrel coming Fall!

You can find more information about EAN at alumni.extensus.org and use the QR code to sign up to become an EAN member.



Your best question

A message from Tom Veeken, class of 2014, president of the Extensus Alumni Network

Imagine that you're on your way to meet your best friend. It's Sunday afternoon and you've slept terrifically, are wearing your favourite outfit, and are well on time. Your body feels relaxed and strong at the same time and it feels as if anything you'll touch will turn into gold. To reach your destination you should turn left, but something suggests looking towards the right. The car driving towards you stops and she waves that you can cross the road. Without thinking much of it, you follow the impulse to take the detour. With the warmth of the sun on your back, you take a closer look at the well-maintained front gardens in the street. Then you hear someone calling your name from behind, and another time as you turn around: "Hey, is that you?" An old classmate is reflecting the same smile you feel on your own face.

Everyone remembers a day like this, feeling filled with joy and amazing encounters. It's almost as if you're a magnet attracting the same vibe. Most people would also describe these feelings as their goal in life: "I want to be happy." If that's the case, then how do you get there, at least more often?

Dear graduate, you've just completed your Bachelor's Degree with Honours. Congratulations! That is a great achievement, quite uncommon actually; I hope you're proud of it. Completing the Honours Programme means that you have a broad interest and like asking questions from various perspectives, so you will probably enjoy the following self-inquisition. Being on the verge of new adventures after your bachelor programme, I agree with the Extensus board that this is the perfect time to reflect!

There is no formula that one can write down to be happy more often; to that, I think we can agree. The next best thing I can think of is an experiment. The experiment goes as follows: you think about something, and then you figure out what emotions come about, using your body and mind as instruments. Let's apply this to the past few years of extracurricular study; stop reading for a moment and ask yourself: "How did I feel taking these extra classes?" "How did I like studying and discussing with students from different disciplines?" "What topics did I most enjoy studying?"

As with every experiment, you have to conduct the experiment and then read out the instruments. Conducting the experiment means sitting down and pondering a topic for a while. You can think about something that has happened, like the Honours classes you took, or about something hypothetical, like a master's programme you are considering. Reading out the instruments means observing how it makes you feel to examine the topic, both physical and mental. Not everything can feel epic, for otherwise it would not feel so special. The contrast is essential: "no light without darkness." Besides thinking on your own, you can also think out loud – sometimes, your response is more apparent with/to the other person.

You might object that this experiment is no different from anything you already do in life: we think about stuff, which gives us emotions. I would have to agree to that. However, treating 'thinking' as an experiment has two advantages: first, it makes us more aware which response belongs to which experiment. Secondly, we can look for reasons underlying our responses by asking: "Why does this topic make me feel like this?" Answers to such questions are gold, for they can yield a better understanding of yourself and help deliberately choosing your direction. Your instruments are sensitive: the better the question, the better the response. What are the best questions you can ask yourself?

On behalf of the Extensus Alumni Network board, I wish you many fruitful experiments, giving you joy and sometimes contrasting misery. You can't fail; you can only try and learn. On your post-Honours adventures, I hope it helps you deliberately choose your directions and makes you say: "I am happy," at least more often!

Add Tom to your LinkedIn network using this link:
www.linkedin.com/in/tom-veeken/



Amanda Anh Pham



Study Program: Econometrics and Operational Research
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"The 5-year mark of my journey studying abroad has just passed. As I look back and connect the dots, all I want to do is go back and hug my scared young self, who took a lot of steps out of impulse not knowing what will happen. After many nights of disappointment and disillusionment, I have thought about quitting all - I still have not figured out what kept me hanging in there. Kudos to my loved ones, including my family and friends for their supportive words that helped me through the tough times during my study. I realized failures were not so bad after all and it was mostly about changing our perspectives towards them, only for the better."



Anna Spiliopoulou

Study Program: Communication Science

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"Mini trips around Europe with friends, family support and reflecting on past achievements helped me get through tough times."

Elise Beijer

Study Program: Medicine

"My name is Elise Beijer, and I am an enthusiastic, pragmatic and inquisitive medical student who likes a challenge; I have a lot of perseverance and fun in the things that I do. In the future

I intend to become a specialist in a teaching hospital with special attention for education and scientific research. I am always so happy, satisfied and excited when I can teach or explain to others and support them in their development as a person and/or as a doctor. I think a balance in relaxation, work and study is very important to continue enjoying everything you do. Find what makes you happy :)

Chase your dreams and ambition!"



Gianni Versteeg

Study Program:
Econometrics and Operations Research



"I'm glad to say that I finally stepped outside my comfort zone, and made a wonderful trip to Scotland without knowing (almost) anyone. Cheers Edinbruv!"

Ingmar Plijter

Study Program: Biomedical Sciences

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"Studying biomedical sciences was already a party, which I could expand with the Honours Programme. Because of the Honours Programme, I had to spend some evenings in the lecture halls, but the drink afterwards with new friends was more than worth it. I got to know people that I will not soon forget: some a bit weird, others very sweet, but all very smart. I am sure I will have a beer with the people I met in the coming years.

**Remember the guy who gave up? Yeah, neither does anyone else.
(Harvey Specter)"**



Jim Hu

Study Program: Dentistry

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"Broadening our horizons, attending extracurricular lectures, learning new things during Honours courses. Over the past 3 years we've all been through this. Although these aspects helped me to develop myself academically, it's not the main lesson that can be drawn from my Honours experience. The Honours programme created an environment where students with other academic backgrounds come and work together. You become friends. When you don't feel like studying, you meet up. You eat at Loetje and drink cocktails in the city. It made me realise that the most memorable experiences are the ones you create."



Justin Smael



Study Program: Amsterdam University College

A decorative graphic consisting of several overlapping, thick, colorful sticks in shades of yellow, orange, and pink, arranged in a chaotic, crisscrossing pattern.

"Time is money, efficiency is life"

Katharina Rennert

Study Program: Medicine



"Beyond ambition. What is there beyond ambition, beyond success, beyond the target on the horizon? When going through the whirlwind of new experiences and achievements that was my bachelor, I was often faced with questions like these. A high grade, a new internship, another project – what was beyond my academic triumph? Although I might have answered differently a year ago, I view “Beyond ambition” as taking a step back. Beyond the success of today, allow yourself to swim with the current of life. As Dr. Seuss said: “And when things start to happen, don’t worry. Don’t stew. Just go right along. You’ll start happening too.” (From Oh, the Places You’ll Go!).”

Len Art Kriebel

Study Program: Political Science

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"What lies beyond ambition? The limitations of individual desire and determination become abundantly apparent in the observation of, and confrontation with, an absurd world. A world that is filled with boulders and mountain tops that seem unreachable in the current state of human existence. Let us keep ourselves busy with pushing the boundaries for now, so that we can at least say we did not perish without trying."



Manju Patil

Study Program: Medical Natural Sciences

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"I made my journey more beautiful than the destination. My thanks go to the many wonderful people in my life who helped me to get the best out of me."

Mark O'Neill

Study Program: Communication Science

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"We have the ability and duty to help the world understand its past and outline its future. I want to thank the faculty, friends, and family who continue to support me as I bring my knowledge outside of the classroom now."



Mohammed Faaris Akbar

Study Program: Econometrics and Data Science

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"Raise It High To Keep It High - This picture was taken randomly without me knowing. I was sat in the metro and often, I would think about the future, the things I would like to do and where and what I would like to be. However, sometimes it is important to take a step back and reflect on where we stand today and what we have accomplished. Life can be a bumpy ride. Still, it is important that we enjoy every moment of it. Therefore, let's raise a flag with pride that symbolises our excitement, our courage and our motivation until today, and whenever the flag waves, let it remind us of how far we have come and what other great things we can achieve. Let's raise the flag high to keep it high."



Murielle Posthuma

Study Program: Communication and Information Studies

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"What was your reason to go to university? Perhaps you were eager to explore yourself and to learn more about the subject of your pleasing, but maybe it was just the well-trodden path. I had the ambition to become a journalist and to make documentaries, but during the last three years I explored myself beyond my ambition. The Honours Programme opened the door for me to choose a path beyond my field of study and to explore who I am with more freedom. In its core, the Honours Programme is just a study programme, but it pushes you to be more than a student just following a mapped out path."



My Nguyen

Study Program: Media and Information

"I took a wide range of courses when I first began - I didn't know what I wanted to do until I took my first course in the Honours Programme. Ever since then, my career path has moved a completely different direction. I have learned so much - both about the world and about myself. The programme was definitely thought-provoking and I always learned something that challenged my perspectives. I must say that I am beyond grateful for the things I learned during the Honours Programme. This might sound cliché, but thank you, Honours Programme, for being a part of my journey."

Naina Parasher



Study Program: Media and Information
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"One question I have often been asked in the last three years is "Why Amsterdam?" Truth be told, it was a last minute gut-feeling that brought me here and oh boy, was it right! Moving here and even joining the honours program was a decision driven through and for ambitious goals. But little did I know that such a decision could find me a family away from home. From pushing my boundaries and working on 4 hours of sleep a night to nerdy debates and fun nights out, I couldn't have asked for a better journey than the past 3 years have been. Also, it just sometimes do be like that."

Rosalie Ursinus

Study Program: Biology

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"I would like to thank my arms, for always being at my side. My legs, for always supporting me. My fingers because I can always count on them. My hips, for not lying to me. But most importantly, I would like to thank everybody at Extensus for making my time as a student a lot more interesting and enjoyable."





Tara van Merrienboer

Study Program: Medical Science

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"The Honours programme gave me the opportunity to do more than just learning from books and gave me the motivation to do things I always wanted to do, like doing research and exploring the surgery field. After the bachelor, I start my MD/PhD at the Vascular Surgery department and I hope I become a surgeon in the future."



Vongai Batidzirai

Study Program: Pedagogische Wetenschappen

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"Overpowered by doubt and fear of the unknown, we often choose the easy option and stay put when confronted with new & challenging opportunities just to end up feeling regretful at the end of the day. After 3 years I don't wonder why I didn't do this or that. Instead I can proudly say, I did that, and sometimes how the heck did I do that? And aside from all the delicious knowledge and new skills learned, the friends I made along the way made it even more worthwhile. I'm also very happy I got to eat Nandos again."

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