



Regulations for Student Influence at Umeå University

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Regulations for Student Influence at Umeå University

Introduction

These regulations for student influence are based on the notion that all activities related to education at Umeå University will be based on collaboration between the University's staff and students. This cooperation shall in turn be based on mutual trust and responsibility.

These regulations are based on the existing legislation pertaining to student influence and student participation and aim to concretise what this means at Umeå University. The practical application takes place in the day to day work at the various organisational levels.

General information about

In this document, student refers to an individual who has been admitted to and pursues higher education at a first-cycle, second-cycle or third-cycle level.

The students' experiences and views are resources that must be utilised in both the planning and implementation as well as the evaluation of Umeå University's activities. Students can influence Umeå University's activities in several ways: through direct participation in education, through representation in various bodies and through their organisations. In addition to issues that are directly related to education and quality, there are also issues of a more general or broad nature that concern the students.

It is important that the students are provided with opportunities to participate and exercise influence in discussion forums and working groups as well as other preparatory and decision-making bodies at all levels of the University. Through their organisations¹, the students have an important task to apply their combined knowledge to supporting the student representatives'² work.

An important prerequisite for successful student influence is that students take an active and committed role both as individuals and collectively. All students have a joint responsibility to influence and develop education. It is important that Umeå University, in various ways, encourages the students to become active in their education and in Umeå University's work in general.

¹ According to Chapter 4, Section 9 of the Higher Education Act, a student union's "principal purpose is to monitor and participate in the development of the education and the conditions for studies at the higher education institution" and Section 11 "be able to represent the students within the union's operational area".

² In accordance with Section 8 of the Student Union Ordinance, a student representative in a body at the higher education institution shall "represent all students within the body's area of responsibility".

The students' right to influence

The students shall be entitled to exercise influence over their education at higher education institutions. The higher education institutions shall work to ensure that students take an active part in the work with further developing the education.

(Chapter 1, Section 4a of the Higher Education Act)

Student influence can only be realised if students assume an active and engaged role as individuals and as a collective. It is important that Umeå University encourages the students to become actively involved in the University's work, especially in matters of education and its provisions. A prerequisite for this is that the students feel that their views, opinions and suggestions are welcomed and are treated with interest and respect.

Umeå University has a responsibility to introduce all new students to the workings of the University, not least the potential to influence their studies and the study environment. Such an introduction will be carried out in collaboration with the student unions where appropriate. The doctoral students will receive a corresponding introduction at the department when they commence their studies.

Umeå University sees the student unions as collaborative partners in issues regarding education³ and the students' situation. In the event of major organisational changes, affected students and student unions shall be involved in such matters. Umeå University is also responsible for providing an introduction and information to new student representatives at all organisational levels as well as members within union activities. The student unions shall be given the opportunity to inform Umeå University staff when necessary.

To enable student influence through information and consultation, regular meetings will be held between student representatives and staff with decision-making and preparatory functions at all organisational levels. Units within the administration may also be encompassed by this when it concerns issues relating to education and its conditions.

Umeå University shall practically facilitate students in conducting their union work during their education – in parallel or through approved leave from studies – by inter alia:

- assisting student representatives with adjusting their scheduled tuition based on current commissions of trust (where possible),
- enabling student representatives who have missed parts of their tuition to recover lost modules, especially when it relates to mandatory modules,
- providing students with extensive commissions of trust, priority for internships or clinical placements in Umeå or directly adjacent municipalities⁴
- extending doctoral students' employment or grant period for student union positions⁵

Umeå University also has a responsibility to establish functional procedures for the exercising of influence by students in other locations, distance education students and students taking internet-based courses.

Students must be able to, on request, obtain written certification from the Vice-Chancellor, Dean, head of department or equivalent pertaining to extensive assignments within Umeå University.

³ In this context, education refers to all levels; first-cycle, second-cycle and third-cycle.

⁴ More detailed information regarding priority regulations is found in the Vice-Chancellor's decision Ref. no. 102-501-08.

⁵ Regulations for third-cycle education. Ref. no. 500-2559-11

Representation in the university board and disciplinary

Teachers and students at higher education institutions are entitled to be represented in the university board.

(Chapter 2, Section 4 of the Higher Education Act)

The students have the right to be represented by three board members.

(Chapter 2, Section 7a of the Higher Education Ordinance)

The students have the right to be represented in the (disciplinary) board by two members.

(Chapter 10, Section 4 of the Higher Education Ordinance)

A student union at a higher education institution may appoint and dismiss student representatives in the bodies at the institution in which such representatives are entitled to participate. If a body at the higher education institution encompasses several student unions' operational areas, those tasks referred to in the first paragraph may be carried out in a manner agreed upon by the unions. If the unions cannot reach a consensus, the institution may determine how student representatives are appointed, following consultation with the unions.

(Section 7 of the Student Union Ordinance)

Specifically, the above cited sections of law imply that Umeå University always turns to the student unions with inquiries on student participation, but that the student unions themselves determine *who* shall represent the students. If there is no student union within one of the higher education institution's operational areas, the institution shall arrange a direct or indirect selection of student representatives from among the students within the area (in accordance with Section 9 of the Student Union Ordinance).

It is the student unions' responsibility to appoint their own representatives. Umeå University cannot decide that the seats be distributed in a certain way or that any particular person be appointed. Sometimes a particular distribution may be appropriate for various reasons, such as that there are both first-cycle and third-cycle students or that a body concerns students with different study specialisations, where the person responsible for the body may propose distribution but the relevant union(s) make(s) the decision.

It is the students' responsibility that student representatives be appointed to those bodies open to student participation. In the wait for new representatives to be appointed for a term, Umeå University calls upon the former representatives, unless directed to the contrary by the relevant student union.

The University Board

The student unions' appoint, in their own order, three (3) student representatives to the University Board along with one (1) group alternate.

Disciplinary Council

The student unions' appoint, in their own order, two (2) student representatives to the Board along with two (2) group alternates.

Representation in other decision-making and preparatory bodies as well as consultation during preparatory activities and decisions by individual officials

The students have the right to be represented when decisions are made or preparatory activities takes place that are of significance to the education or the students' situation.

(Chapter 2, Section 7 of the Higher Education Act)

In Chapter 2, Section 7 of the Higher Education Act (1992:1434), there is a provision regarding the students' right to representation when decisions are made or preparatory activities takes place. If decisions are to be made or preparatory activities conducted by one individual person, information must be submitted and consultation entered into with a student representative in advance of the decision or the completion of the preparatory activities. If decisions are to be made by a group of individuals in accordance with Chapter 2, Section 6, second paragraph⁶ of the Higher Education Act, the students have the right to be represented by at least three members. The number of student representatives in such a group may however be fewer if there are special circumstances with regard to the total number of members in the group. In general, a higher education institution decides itself regarding such entitlement to student representation as referred to in the first paragraph.

(Chapter 2, Section 14 of the Higher Education Ordinance)

Under the sections of law cited above, the students have the legal right to be represented at all organisational levels at Umeå University.

Information on all permanent decision-making and preparatory bodies is to be made available on home pages at all organisational levels and updated regularly. Specific individuals in charge of updating the information on these pages shall be found at each organisational level. The information shall state the responsibility of the body in question and list the members. When a new body – temporary or permanent – is established, the relevant student union shall be provided the opportunity of participating in this.

The students have the right to be represented in those contexts where issues of significance to the education and its provisions are handled. The departure point is that it is the students who determine if it is relevant or not for them to be represented⁷ in a certain body. An exception however is the Personnel Responsibility Committee whose composition is specifically regulated for all government activities. This includes forums where internal staff and workplace issues are discussed.

All bodies that provide some form of decision basis that does not comprise purely factual information shall in this context be considered preparatory. The same applies to bodies where decision proposals are discussed prior to decisions being made by a decision-making body or individual decision-maker.

It is also essential that the students' opportunity to participate and influence does not cease through decisions not being made in bodies with members, but instead being made by the head of department or other individual. Umeå University officials have a duty and a responsibility, during the preparatory process and in advance of decisions, to inform and consult with students regarding issues of importance to them. In such a decision, it shall be noted that consultation has taken place in the matter in question. The students also have the right to attend the decision meetings and, if necessary, enter a dissenting opinion in the records (University Board

01/10/2008). This order applies for decisions made by the Vice Chancellor, Dean, head of department/equivalent and head of unit within the administration or by persons delegated to make these decisions on their behalf.

The student unions must provide information regarding what bodies they will be participating in as well as annually report which representatives have been appointed to which bodies. The report is presented to the Academic Secretary. Umeå University is to remind the student unions of bodies in which representatives are lacking.

⁶ The Higher Education Act, Chapter 2, Section 6, “Decisions are to be made by individuals with research or artistic competence if these decisions require appraisal of

1. the organisation, implementation or quality of a course or programme, or

2. the organisation or quality of both research and the artistic development work.

If the appraisal referred to in the first paragraph above is to be made by a group of individuals, the majority of them shall possess research or artistic competence. The Board may however decide that such a majority is not needed if there are specific reasons for doing so. Act (2010:701)”.

⁷ The Student Union Ordinance, Section 7 states that “A student union at a university or higher education institution may

appoint and dismiss representatives for students in those bodies at the institution in which such have the right to participate.” Section 9 “If there is no student union within one of the higher education institution's operational areas, the institution shall arrange a direct or indirect selection of student representatives from among the students within the area.”

Course evaluations

The higher education institution shall provide those students who are participating in or have completed a course the opportunity to present their experiences and views on the course through a course evaluation organised by the institution. The institution shall compile the course evaluations and provide information about the results and any actions resulting from the course evaluations. The results shall be made available to the students.

(Chapter 1, Section 14 of the Higher Education Ordinance)

Course evaluations are an important instrument for the students' and teachers' participation in quality work, for the teachers' pedagogical development and for the students' learning. Evaluations are to be performed on all courses and programmes within the first cycle and courses within the third cycle. A course evaluation shall focus on:

- content
- implementation
- examination
- issues regarding the education's other conditions

At the **course level**, the evaluation shall, among other things, include issues regarding intended learning outcomes (FSR). In general, it is up to the faculties and departments to, within the framework for the University's regulations, determine the scope of the evaluation and how it shall be designed.

At the **programme level** the evaluation shall also include issues regarding internationalisation, collaboration with surrounding society, generic knowledge and issues relating to the progression within the programme. In general, it is up to the host faculty and programme board to, within the framework for the University's regulations, determine the scope of the evaluation and how it shall be designed.

The faculties must annually follow up the departments' and programme boards' work with course and programme evaluations⁸.

Current implementation and responsibilities, see *Administrative Procedure for Course Evaluations*.

⁸ Change from "course/programme development