



UMEÅ UNIVERSITY

RULE FOR STUDENT INFLUENCE

Type of document:	Rule ¹
Date of approval:	10 November 2023
Reg. no.:	FS 1.1-2069-23
Approved by:	Vice-Chancellor
Validity:	10 November 2023 until further notice
Field:	Third-cycle education First- and second-cycle education Access and foundation education
Office in charge:	Planning Office
Replaces document:	Regulations for student influence at Umeå University (FS 1.1-1950-15) approved by the Vice-Chancellor on 22 December 2015

¹ This document has been translated from Swedish into English. If the English version differs from the original, the Swedish version takes precedence.



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1. Summary

This document describes the practical application of regulations at Umeå University relating to student influence as prescribed by laws and ordinances. This policy document is primarily for university staff, students and student unions. The document describes the right of students to have influence and representation, the responsibility of student unions for appointing students to represent student interests and the University's responsibility and measures for enabling student influence.

2. Background

Overarching regulations on student influence and student representation at the University are found in the Higher Education Act (1992:1434), the Higher Education Ordinance (1993:100) and the Student Union Ordinance (2009:769).

Well-functioning student influence is central to ensuring consideration of the student perspective in all aspects of Umeå University's operations. All activities related to education and the situation of students at the University are to be based on cooperation between the University's staff and students. This cooperation must be built on mutual trust and responsibility.

The student unions are responsible for recruiting and appointing student representatives and participating in the University's operations and activities. The University is responsible for enabling well-functioning student influence. The University's responsibility is met, in part, by what is specified in Section 7 of these rules and, in part, through special agreements with the student associations designated as student unions. According to these agreements, financial compensation is paid to the student unions to improve student participation and create an infrastructure for student influence.²

Beyond what is paid to the student unions, no compensation is paid to student representatives for work in university bodies. The exception is student-appointed doctoral students with doctoral studentships³ and student-appointed members/deputies of the University Board.⁴

In addition to the rules in this document, there are provisions on student influence in the *Rule – Quality system for education*.

² A part of the financial compensation specified in these agreements is financed through indirect government funding that the University receives from the Legal, Financial and Administrative Services Agency (Kammarkollegiet), a part financed through university-wide functions and a part covered by respective faculty and the Umeå School of Education.

³ Student representatives with doctoral studentships are compensated in the form of extensions of their doctoral studentship as specified by the *Rules for doctoral education at Umeå University*.

⁴ Student-appointed members and deputies of the University Board receive compensation as specified in the *Ordinance concerning Remuneration for Positions on Government Boards, Committees, Councils, etc. (1992:1299)*.



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3. Definitions

Body

Body refers to an established council, committee, board, working committee, steering committee or equivalent. A body can be in all organisational levels at the University and refer to both temporary and permanent constellations. The term *decision-making bodies* refers to bodies where a final decision is made on a matter. The term *preparatory bodies* refers to bodies that are not decision-making.

In this document's rules, *bodies* also refers to decisions made by an individual university official.

Student

A student is anyone admitted to and participating in bachelor's, master's and doctoral education.

Student union

A student union is a democratic association of students intended to monitor and participate in the development of education and the conditions applying to studies at the University and designated by the University as a student union for one or more organisational or geographic areas of the University's operations.

Student representative

An individual appointed by a relevant student union to be a part of a university body.⁵

4. The right of students to representation and influence

- 4.1. Students have the right to exercise influence on their education at higher education institutions.⁶
- 4.2. Students are entitled to representation when decisions are made or during preparations that have bearing on their education, situation or ability to conduct studies at Umeå University.⁷
- 4.3. If decisions or preparations are to be made by a single official and that are covered by item 4.2.⁸, a student representative is to be provided information and be consulted in ample time ahead of the decision or preparations.⁹
- 4.4. If a group makes a decision related to the organisation, implementation or quality of a course or programme or to the organisation or quality of research, the students are entitled to at least three representatives. The number of student representatives in

⁵ The exception is the students on the University Board, who are instead called "student-appointed members". See Section 8 of the Student Union Ordinance and SOU 2015:92 *Management investigation*. Developed management of higher education institutions. p. 301–302.

⁶ Chapter 1, Section 4a, Paragraph 1 of the Swedish Higher Education Act.

⁷ Chapter 2, Section 7 of the Swedish Higher Education Act.

⁸ See UKÄ's (Swedish Higher Education Authority) report "Student influence when a single person prepares or takes decisions – UKÄ's assessment of 20 types of decisions 2020:19" for guidance on what types of decisions that UKÄ considers that students have the right to have student influence.

⁹ Chapter 2, Section 14, Paragraph 2 of the Swedish Higher Education Ordinance.



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such a group, however, may be fewer if there are special grounds defined in the Higher Education Ordinance.¹⁰

- 4.5. According to item 4.2., decisions or preparations by a single person in an official matter involving an individual are not valid, unless special exceptions are listed.¹¹ Such decisions and preparations include, but are not limited to, exam results, course grades, admission to education at access, bachelor's or master's education, issuing of degrees, credit transfer, approved leave from studies, deferment of studies, educational support and the like.¹²
- 4.6. As per item 4.2., this provision does not apply to the University's Staff Disciplinary Board and bodies where only internal staff and workplace issues are discussed.¹³
- 4.7. In addition to items 4.2. through 4.6., application of item 4.2. is decided in consultation between the student unions and the University.
- 4.8. Students are entitled to appoint three members to the University Board.¹⁴ In addition, students have the right to appoint a joint group deputy to the University Board.¹⁵
- 4.9. Students have the right to two representatives on the University Disciplinary Board.¹⁶
- 4.10. For other permanently established decision-making or preparatory bodies at university-wide level, the number of student representatives is regulated in *Rules of procedure for Umeå University* or the relevant decision of the Vice-Chancellor to establish the body in question.
- 4.11. The University is to provide a list of permanent bodies at university-wide level where students have the right to representation.

Each faculty and the Umeå School of Education are to provide a list of permanent bodies at faculty-, programme- and department-wide levels where students have the right to representation.
- 4.12. In connection with the annual report for the University, the student unions have the opportunity to comment on the University's development and results.¹⁷
- 4.13. Student representatives have the right to have a dissenting opinion at a meeting noted in the minutes of a decision-making body.¹⁸
- 4.14. The student unions are to be included when requesting comment from university referral bodies on matters of significance for programmes, students or academic conditions.

¹⁰ Chapter 2, Section 14, Paragraph 3 of the Swedish Higher Education Ordinance.

¹¹ Inspection at the Swedish University of Agricultural Sciences 2011, 2012:16 R, National Agency for Higher Education, p. 20 / *Högskolans regler i praktiken – erfarenheter från Högskoleverkets tillsynsbesök 1998–2012 [Higher Education regulations in practice – experiences from the Swedish National Agency for Higher Education's inspections 1998–2012]*, Report 2014:16 R, Swedish Higher Education Authority, p. 12.

¹² Chapter 2, Section 14, Paragraph 4 of the Swedish Higher Education Ordinance.

¹³ Chapter 2, Section 14, Paragraph 4 of the Swedish Higher Education Ordinance.

¹⁴ Chapter 2, Section 7a, Paragraph 2 of the Swedish Higher Education Ordinance.

¹⁵ Rules of procedure for Umeå University (FS 1.1-195-18).

¹⁶ Chapter 10, Section 4 of the Swedish Higher Education Ordinance.

¹⁷ University Board decision FS 1.3.8-19-14, 20 February 2014.

¹⁸ The University Board decision p. 66, 1 October 2008.



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5. Student unions

- 5.1. The primary purpose of a student union is to monitor and participate in the development of education and conditions applying to studies at the University. Student unions are to be organised democratically and be able to represent their students within their area of activity.¹⁹
- 5.2. The University Board's decision to designate a student association as a student union is for one or more organisational or geographic areas of the University's operations. This area is referred to as the student union's area of activity.²⁰
- 5.3. The University is to enter into agreements with the associations given the status as a student union. These agreements are to specify the student unions' commitments to the University. These commitments include the responsibility to work for and conduct activities aimed at improving student participation at the University. The student unions are responsible for actively contributing student perspectives on education, the students' situation or conditions applying to studies at Umeå University and appointing student representatives to university bodies where students have the right to representation as per Section 4.
- 5.4. The student unions are to strive for good internal knowledge transfer across academic years and when new student representatives are elected.

6. Student representatives

- 6.1. The student union that works with a particular organisational or geographic area of the University's organisation (see item 5.2.) appoints student representatives within this area of activity.²¹
- 6.2. Student representatives to bodies that cover several student unions' areas of activity, as well as board and deputy members to the University Board, are appointed in the manner that the relevant student unions jointly agree on.²²
- 6.3. If the student unions cannot agree as per item 6.2., the University decides how the student representative and members and deputies to the University Board are to be appointed. If the student unions cannot agree, they are to inform the University, which will decide on the matter.²³
- 6.4. A student representative is also to represent students who are not members of a union.²⁴

¹⁹ Chapter 4, Section 11 of the Swedish Higher Education Act.

²⁰ Section 4 of the Student Union Ordinance.

²¹ Section 7, Paragraph 1 of the Student Union Ordinance.

²² Section 7, Paragraph 2 of the Student Union Ordinance.

²³ Section 7, Paragraph 3 of the Student Union Ordinance.

²⁴ Section 8 of the Student Union Ordinance.



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- 6.5. In addition, a student representative is also to take an overall perspective on the University's operations.
- 6.6. The relevant student union always decides on the appointment of a student representative as per items 6.1. and 6.2. As such, the University cannot decide who is to be appointed as student representative to a certain body.

However, the University can note that the tasks and activities of a certain body make it appropriate with a certain type of representation. For example, student representatives who represent doctoral education should be included in bodies that prepare or decide on issues of relevance to doctoral education.

- 6.7. The student unions should consider gender equality when deciding on student representation to university bodies.
- 6.8. The student unions are responsible for notifying the University when a student representative has been appointed or dismissed. This notification is to include the name and email address of the appointed student representative.

For university-wide bodies, a compilation of all appointed student representatives is to be sent annually to the Planning Office at the University Administration. This applies regardless of whether a new election has been held.

For bodies at faculty, department and programme level, the compilation is to be sent as per instructions from respective faculty, the Umeå School of Education or department.

- 6.9. A student representative is dismissed by decision of the student union that appointed the representative.²⁵ The University may not adjust the term of office for a student representative.
- 6.10. The student unions are not able to dismiss members and deputies of the University Board that they appointed.²⁶ For this reason, the decision to appoint students as members or deputies of the University Board applies for a fixed term of office as per the *Rules of procedure for Umeå University* and may be at most three years.²⁷
- 6.11. If at any time there is no student union within any organisational or geographical part of the University's operations, the University will organise direct or indirect elections of student representatives. In these cases, the Vice-Chancellor decides on any necessary supplementary rules.²⁸

7. Measures for promoting student influence

- 7.1. The student unions are to have the opportunity to inform university staff about their activities as appropriate for the relevant context.

²⁵ Section 7, Paragraph 1 of the Student Union Ordinance.

²⁶ Section 7 of the Student Union Ordinance.

²⁷ Chapter 2, Section 7 of the Swedish Higher Education Ordinance.

²⁸ Section 9 of the Student Union Ordinance.



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- 7.2. New students are to be informed about opportunities to influence their education and the academic environment. This information is to be provided in collaboration with the student unions when appropriate. Each faculty responsible for a programme or Umeå School of Education is responsible for ensuring this introduction is offered. Doctoral students are to receive a corresponding introduction at the department or equivalent when they begin their studies.
- 7.3. New student representatives for each body are to receive information about the body's activities. Furthermore, representatives of the student unions are to receive an introduction to the University's organisation and current issues for the organisation.
- 7.4. To enable students attending distance education to serve as student representatives, it should be possible to participate in meetings online, by telephone or in other ways.
- 7.5. Regulations for approved leave from studies from bachelor's and master's education for student union assignments are specified in *Regulation for first- and second-cycle study administration*.
- 7.6. Regulations for deferments from commenced bachelor's and master's education for student union assignments are specified in *Admission procedure for first- and second-cycle education*.
- 7.7. Provisions regarding priority for placement for student union assignments are set out in the *Rules for administration of placements and study visits at Umeå University* and in the associated procedure adopted by each faculty and the Umeå School of Education.
- 7.8. Where possible, student representatives are to receive assistance in adapting scheduled classes, compulsory elements or examinations to enable them to complete their assignments.
- 7.9. Provisions on access by student unions to university premises for conducting their work and activities for improving student participation at the University are specified in *Rules for premises*.²⁹
- 7.10. Upon request, students are to be provided a written certificate from the Vice-Chancellor, dean, head of department or equivalent regarding extensive assignments within the University.

²⁹ Chapter 1, Section 13 of the Swedish Higher Education Ordinance.