



Guidelines for student influence

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Description	The purpose of these guidelines is to guarantee student influence at Södertörn University. They contain descriptions of regulations, responsibility and the organisation of student influence, including the types of cases and bodies/groups, and other relevant contexts.

This translation is for information purposes only and has no legal force. In the event of discrepancies, the Swedish-language version takes precedence.

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Introduction

The right of students to exert an influence on their education is regulated in laws and ordinances. Additionally, work to achieve high quality education must be a shared priority for the university's staff and students. At Södertörn University, student participation in work to improve quality and to develop courses and programmes is fundamental.

These guidelines describe the students' right to representation and are related to formal and collective student influence at Södertörn University; this is the context in which students are representatives and in which decisions that are important for education and the students' situation are prepared or made.

In these guidelines, a student is a person who is admitted to and conducting studies at first, second or third cycle (Bachelor's, Master's or doctoral) level. Students on Police Education are covered by these guidelines if they are not employed by the Swedish Police Authority.¹ Other contract education is not covered.

These guidelines are primarily based on the provisions relating to student influence and representation in the Higher Education Act (1992:1434), Higher Education Ordinance (1993:100) and the Ordinance on Students' Unions (2009:769). In addition to these regulations, higher education institutions must also observe the Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the European Higher Education Area (ESG).

Additionally, student influence is also regulated in the document *Rights and obligations – rules for studying at first and second-cycle level at Södertörn University* and the agreement between the university and the students' union. Guiding principles for work on student influence are stated in the *Policy on student influence*. The influence exercised by students through course evaluations is regulated in *Guidelines for implementing, compiling and archiving course questionnaires and course evaluations*.

Student representation at the university applies to issues that are managed both by collegial bodies and by management. The guidelines apply to all areas of the university – to the university as a whole, the academic schools and their equivalents, the library and central administration.

Duties as a student representative

Chapter 1, Section 4a of the Higher Education Act states that students are entitled to exert influence over courses and study programmes at higher education institutions. The students are entitled to representation when decisions or preparations are made that have bearing on their courses or programmes or the situation of students, as stated in Chapter 2, Section 7 of the Higher Education Act.

¹ In cases where the university's guidelines do not agree with those of the *Förordning om utbildning till polisman* (2014:1105 – Ordinance on education as a police officer), the ordinance takes precedence. The university's guidelines do not apply to cases processed by the Swedish Police Authority.

Under the first paragraph of Section 7 in the Ordinance on Students' Unions, student representatives may be appointed by the student collective that the governing board has given the status of a students' union. Only student representatives appointed by the students' union are legitimate student representatives.

A student representative has the same rights and obligations as other members/participants. Rights include receiving information and documentation in good time, having the opportunity to present an opinion and to register reservations about a decision by having objections noted. Obligations include participating in meetings unless there is a valid reason for absence, following rules on conflicts of interest and participating in decision-making.

A student representative must safeguard the students' interests and represent students as a group. A student representative represents all students at the university, regardless of educational level and whether or not they are members of the students' union.

If student representatives feel that the regulations on student influence and student representation are not being followed, they must inform the students' union, which then contacts the relevant contact person (see below, *Contact persons regarding student influence*).

Student representatives at the first and second cycles (Bachelor's and Master's) receive compensation in accordance with the decision of the students' union. Doctoral students are compensated in accordance with guidelines decided by the vice-chancellor. The position of student representative on the Governing Board is compensated in accordance with the decision of the Swedish government.

Responsibility at the university

The vice-chancellor has overarching responsibility for giving students the opportunity to exert influence at the university. The vice-chancellor must have regular discussions with the students' union about student influence, about what works well and where it may be necessary to better ensure the students' right to exert influence.

Managers, heads of school or the equivalent and chairs/conveners must ensure that students' right to exert influence is fulfilled. They must also inform the students' union if a student representative does not participate in meetings or does not take the necessary responsibility in other ways.

Managers, heads of school or the equivalent and chairs/conveners are responsible for staff members' understanding of the importance of student influence and student representation, and that they know the requirements and that they are followed. This applies to national regulations, as well as the university's governing documents and organisation for student representation.

The university must regularly inform and train its staff about issues of student influence and student representation. This is done through information from appointed contact persons (see below), training for managers and staff with other types of responsibility (e.g. subject

coordinators, programme coordinators, directors of study) and in information for new employees and introductions for new members of various bodies.

On its website, the university must have staff information in Swedish and English regarding student influence and student representation, and about the students' union. Student Support Services and the students' union are responsible for the correctness of this information.

Contact persons regarding student influence

The academic schools, teacher education, central administration and the library must each have a contact person with overall responsibility for student influence. Heads of school, the academic head of Teacher Education, director of Student Support Services (contact person for central administration) and the library director delegate responsibility as they find suitable.

The contact person must function as a link between their unit and the students' union. The contact person must disseminate information to staff and students regarding the importance of student influence and student representation, the associated requirements and the relevant routines and structures at the university. The contact person must also inform the students' union and Student Support Services of bodies, groups, etc., where student representatives need to be appointed.

Bodies, groups and contexts with student representation

Students are entitled to representation when decisions or preparations are made that have bearing on their courses or programmes or the situation of students. These may relate to resources, infrastructure, opening hours and recruitment, as well as issues directly linked to education. The sections below describe what are considered to be preparatory and decision-making bodies, the number of representatives to which students are entitled, consultation with student representatives and limitations in students' right to exert influence.

On the basis of information from the students' union, managers, chairs/conveners and other individual decision-makers must ensure that all participating student representatives have been appointed by the students' union.

Preparatory and decision-making bodies

Under Chapter 2, Section 7 of the Higher Education Act, students are entitled to representation when decisions or preparations that have a bearing on their courses or programmes or the students' situation are made. This means that they have the right to be represented on the Governing Board, steering committees, committees and councils, and in hearing groups and work/project groups, i.e. bodies/groups that are permanent or temporary.

When a body/group is established, the decision on its composition must state whether student representatives are included and, if so, how many. In cases where there is a lack of

clarity about the position on student-related issues, the students' union should be consulted regarding student representation prior to its establishment.

Number of student representatives

Under Chapter 2, Section 7a of the Higher Education Ordinance, students are entitled to have three members on the Governing Board.

The same number also applies to other *decision-making* bodies/groups at Södertörn University, on which students have the right to be represented and which will be composed of a majority of members with research qualifications. However, there may be fewer representatives in exceptional circumstances, considering the total number of members/participants, as stated in the third paragraph of Chapter 2, Section 14 of the Higher Education Ordinance. Exceptional circumstances are small group sizes or groups with a large proportion of lecturers, making it difficult to achieve the legislated requirement for the majority of members to have research qualifications for decisions on the design, execution or quality of education. In exceptional circumstances, there should be places for at least two student representatives. The reason for deviating from the general rule on three student representatives must be documented.

In *preparatory* bodies/groups at the university, student representatives must have at least two places.

The students' union has the right to appoint as many substitutes as ordinary student representatives. Substitutes may be present and speak even when the ordinary student representatives participate.

Information to and consultation with students during preparatory processes or decisions made by one person

Under Chapter 2, Section 14 of the Higher Education Ordinance, the student representative is entitled to be given information by the university and, through consultation, to present opinions and requests during preparatory processes or decisions made by one person. This applies to preparatory and decision-making contexts such as managers' presentations to the vice-chancellor, chief administrative officer or head of school/equivalent, in which students must be given the opportunity to participate, and preparatory processes and decisions that take place without a presentation at which a student is present. This also applies to decisions made by a chair. The student representative is responsible for responses to consultation.

In these contexts, the university's guidelines for preparatory processes and decisions made by one person, *Riktlinjer för studentinflytande vid beredning och beslut av en enda person*, must be followed.

Limitations to the students' right to exert influence

There are some limitations to students' right to exert influence in cases that are relevant to education or the students' situation.

Students at Södertörn University must not, in any case, assess academic quality or expertise. These assessments must always be made by people with academic qualifications. However, in cases where part of the preparatory process or decision-making refers to the assessment of academic quality or expertise, such as during recruitment, promotions, admission of doctoral students or the evaluation of education, students must be given the opportunity to present their opinions.

Student representatives at Södertörn University must not participate in individual student cases, such as in the assessment of a student's study performance, credit transfers or the replacement of a doctoral student's supervisor or examiner. However, under Chapter 10, Section 4 of the Higher Education Ordinance, students have the right to have two student representatives on the Disciplinary Board. Students are also entitled to participate in the admission of doctoral students, because preparatory processes and decision-making are conducted in collegial bodies with student representatives.

The university's students must not participate in cases relating to individual employees, other than those regulated in processes for employment, recruitment and promotion. Students are not represented on the Staff Disciplinary Board.

The guidelines for preparatory processes and decisions made by one person, *Riktlinjer för studentinflytande vid beredning och beslut av en enda person*, recommend that agreements are made between the decision-maker and the students' union regarding the types of cases on which there will be consultation with students and how this will be done. Such an agreement is intended to facilitate the normal work of the university.

Register of student representation

The university must have a register of the bodies, groups and decision-making occasions on which students have the right to be represented (including the number of places). This register will be updated annually by Student Support Services using information from the university's contact persons for student influence. The students' union is entitled to access the register.

The students' union must have a register of all appointed student representatives and vacant places. The university is entitled to access the register.

Recruitment of student representatives

The university and students' union have a shared and mutual responsibility for the recruitment of student representatives.

The students' union appoints and dismisses student representatives and informs the university of who has been appointed and dismissed.

Teaching staff must encourage students to participate and exert influence, and to become student representatives. This includes creating a welcoming and inclusive environment for student representatives on bodies/groups and other contexts in which students participate.

The university must help students to hold their position as a student representative, which may require adapting elements of teaching and examination as permitted by the syllabus.

Information to students and introductions for student representatives

The university website must have information in Swedish and English regarding student influence and student representation, and about the students' union. Student Support Services and the students' union are responsible for the correctness of this information.

At the start of each semester, the university and students' union (and Doctoral Students' Committee) must provide information about student rights, opportunities and obligations, and about what student influence entails and opportunities for it.

Student representatives on committees, steering committees, boards and similar must, along with the other members, be given an introduction to their role as a member, the body's task, role and position at the university and how it works. This must be done at the start of the mandate period and for members appointed during this period. The chair or convener of the body/group is responsible for this. Student representatives who participate at presentations when decisions are to be made by one person must also receive an introduction.

Follow-up

Follow ups must be conducted in two ways. A review of the relevance of governing documents must be conducted annually or when necessary (particularly of regulations and the university's organisation). Guidelines must be reviewed in their entirety at least every three years, including a follow up of whether the guidelines are observed. Student Support Services initiates these follow ups.