



Policy on student influence

This policy replaces Studenten som medaktör – studentinflytande för kvalitetsutveckling vid Södertörns högskola (reg. no. 320-40-2004).

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

Introduction

Student participation in the university's work is vital to the quality and development of courses and programmes, and to the university as a place of study. Involvement and responsibility also contribute to student learning. The university must actively involve students in its operations. Student influence is exercised in various ways, including through course evaluations and student representation during decision-making processes. Guaranteeing students' right to exert influence is one element of realising the university's striving for high quality education, student-focused learning and active student participation.

The policy is to be regarded as a focused statement of intent that will enhance the university's activities. It clarifies guiding principles for the way that Södertörn University works with student influence, involving students in planning, executing, evaluating and developing education and other issues relating to the students' situation at the university.

The policy's principles for student representation are supplemented by more precise terms and conditions, some of which are in the *Guidelines for student influence* and in current agreements between the university and the students' union.

The policy applies to student influence throughout the university and for students at all educational levels – first, second and third cycle (Bachelor's, Master's and doctoral). Students on Police Education are covered by this policy if they are not employed by the Swedish Police Authority. Other contract education is not covered.

Basis of this policy

- **Active and significant student influence as a dimension of quality assurance.**
This policy is based upon the conviction that student influence enhances the quality of the university and its courses and programmes. Involving the students and allowing them to have an influence is decisive in the university being able to fulfil its tasks as a higher education institution. Student influence is the shared concern of staff and students.

- **Democratic and academic values.** Students' ability to exert influence is one way of actualising values such as the freedom of speech, openness, integrity, collegiality and responsibility. The university's students are given the opportunity to represent the group and participate in collegial processes by appointing representatives who participate in decision-making processes. They also learn about how the university is organised and how it is governed. This provides valuable experience and preparation for the labour market and active citizenship.
- **Acts and ordinances.** The Higher Education Act and Higher Education Ordinance contain provisions on students' right to exert an influence on their education and their study situation (Chapter 1 Section 4a of the Higher Education Act) and on higher education institutions' obligation to enable students to participate in the development of courses and study programmes. (Chapter 2, Section 7 of the Higher Education Act). The policy is also based on the provisions in the Ordinance on Students' Unions regarding how student representatives on preparatory and decision-making bodies must be appointed by the university's students' union and must represent all students, whether or not they are members of the union (Sections 7 and 8 of the Ordinance on Students' Unions).

Guiding principles for student influence

- **The value of student influence must be emphasised.** The university's students must be given the opportunity and the right conditions to actively participate in quality assurance and development work. Constructive work on quality builds upon utilising the students' knowledge, experiences and perspectives, as well as upon the conviction that open, respectful dialogue is the best way to achieve high quality, both in the development of courses and programmes and in the design of infrastructure and supporting functions. Agreement on the value of student influence is fundamental to improved quality. The university's students must be treated as active partners.
- **Beneficial conditions and support must be provided for student involvement.** The university must encourage students to become involved as student representatives and offer conditions that help them to do so. Students must be actively offered opportunities for influence in various forms on issues that are important for education or the students' situation. Student representatives have voting rights and otherwise the same rights and obligations as other members of the university's collegial bodies.
- **Responsibility for student influence is shared and mutual.** The university must be characterised by a culture of shared and mutual responsibility with the students and students' union, and mutual trust and commitment. This culture includes the conditions necessary for student influence – such as the university's policy and guidelines – being well known and the university and students' union taking their

responsibility in work to recruit and train student representatives. The independence and integrity of the students' union must always be respected.

- **Clear structure and allocation of responsibility.** The university must have a clear structure and allocation of responsibility for student influence, and there must be clear guidelines for the implementation of students' right to exert an influence. University staff must be aware of how the university works to guarantee the students' right to exert influence. Additionally, the university's information about student influence must be easily accessible for students and staff. The university and students' union must have regular discussions about how student influence is working and can be developed.