

The Student Union of the University of Oulu Policy paper

Accepted in the Student Council meeting 2/2016

Amended in the Student Council meeting 2/2017

Unofficial translation

***Board proposals for the Council Meeting 2/2018 are in red bold cursive. Removals are in strikethrough.
The sections that are opened are marked.***

1 INTRODUCTION

2 This document defines the central political standpoints of the Student Union of the University of Oulu
3 (OYY). This policy paper reflects the values of the Student Union's strategy: openness, courage,
4 effectiveness and communality. The policies defined by this paper bind the work of the members of the
5 Executive Board and the staff of the Student Union. This policy paper will be updated if deemed
6 necessary by the Student Council.

7 This policy paper defines the Student Union's position on the following issues: equality, quality of
8 education, flexible studies, study counselling and guidance services, campus development, housing,
9 livelihood, sports and physical exercise, dining and restaurant services, healthcare and welfare, student
10 recruitment, tuition fees, education system, and structural development.

11 The strategic values of the Student Union will also apply on those issues not separately specified in this
12 policy paper. The Student Union's stand on central issues of municipal politics are defined in our
13 municipal politics programme which is a corresponding document to this policy paper.

14

15 EQUALITY

16 Every student is an equal member of the university community. No one should be discriminated against
17 based on their sex, age, origin, nationality, language, religion, convictions, political activity, trade union
18 background, family relations, condition of health, disability, sexual orientation, or other personal
19 reasons. Studies in the University of Oulu must be freely accessible so that everyone, regardless of their
20 background, has an equal opportunity to pursue their studies. Opportunities for education must not be
21 based on socioeconomic background but rather on the willingness and motivation of an individual. Every
22 student must have an equal opportunity to engage in the operations of the University, the Student Union
23 and its various organizations.

24 The university community and the city of Oulu must be open to people of various backgrounds and
25 encourage everyone to engage in intercultural encounters. Communications and services must be
26 accessible to students both in Finnish and English.

27 The Student Union condemns all manner of harassment, bullying and discrimination. The threshold of
28 reporting such conduct must be low. Harassment, bullying and discrimination will not be tolerated
29 anywhere within the university community. The Student Union actively promotes equality in the
30 University of Oulu.

31

32 THE QUALITY OF EDUCATION

33 The University of Oulu must offer high-quality education in all its faculties and study programmes. The
34 quality is to be ensured with the use of a uniform feedback system which is based on the learning
35 objectives of courses and study programmes. The feedback system should provide real-time information
36 on courses. It should be used to proactively develop not only individual courses but also entire study
37 programmes. The feedback must be processed in an extensive, systematic and transparent manner.
38 Students should consider it important to give feedback. Students themselves also must be ensured
39 opportunities to receive constant feedback on their studies to facilitate learning and recognize
40 individual competences.

41 The education must be up-to-date, topical and prepare students for the needs of the surrounding world.
42 Teaching staff are to be motivated to develop their work and acquire sufficient pedagogical skills,
43 consequently assuring versatile teaching and assessment methods. Changes in the staff must not
44 compromise the quality of education. The assessment of students should be systematic and equal, and
45 base on learning objectives. The sum workload of all courses must be taken into consideration when
46 planning the curriculum.

47 Students are a heterogenous group when it comes to learning methods. This means that different needs
48 must be considered when planning the education. The university must include students in the designing
49 of teaching and teaching materials. Students should reach their highest academic potential during their
50 time in the University of Oulu. To ensure this, the education must not only focus on the subject matter of
51 individual study fields but also on developing critical thinking and argumentation skills. The high quality
52 of education should be the university's greatest asset in student recruitment.

53 High-quality partner and exchange universities, both domestic and international, must complement the
54 education offered in our university. The selection of study programmes should be sufficiently varied and
55 multidisciplinary to ensure that our students are well equipped to face the (employment) needs of the
56 future. Study and exchange programmes must be of equally high quality to the international students of
57 the University of Oulu.

58

59 **FLEXIBLE STUDIES (opened)**

60 The university must recognize that students come from various backgrounds and are in different
61 situations in their lives. To actively facilitate their studies, the university has to offer genuinely flexible
62 ways of completing studies. The need for mandatory presence in the courses must be considered within
63 each study programme individually to ensure that it is in line with learning objectives. Sufficient number
64 of courses should be available during summer **in both Finnish and in English** to ensure that students are
65 able to advance their studies according to personal schedules and plans. Courses should be offered in
66 collaboration with summer universities, **open university**, the University of Applied Sciences, and partner
67 universities.

68 The flexibility of studies should be ensured by recognizing competences acquired elsewhere. University
69 students should be able to strengthen their academic skills by actively engaging in hobbies, work life
70 and decision-making within the university. Every student must have the possibility to include an
71 internship period in their studies. The Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL) should be a uniform and
72 explicit process. Students should be aware of the RPL process, and the RPL support services should be
73 extensive. Versatile assessment methods must be employed to avoid bottlenecks **in studies** and to ensure
74 that courses can be completed more flexibly. Course assessment should be comprised of multiple
75 elements to avoid the weaknesses of a one-time evaluation. Exams based on memorization must not be
76 the sole method of assessment. Continuous assessment increases the fluency, and thus, the flexibility of
77 studies. It is also important to utilize the *Examinarium* as well as various digital methods of working. The
78 quality of education benefits from increased flexibility. Digitalization should be based on the needs of
79 students and staff, rather than on novel technology. Teaching staff must have sufficient skills and support
80 to utilize IT and communication technologies in their teaching.

81 Majority of the students of the University of Oulu wish to engage in an exchange programme.
82 Information on exchange programmes must be readily and extensively available, both on the university's
83 and the individual faculties' web pages. In addition, the university and the faculties need to support
84 students who wish to engage in an exchange programme by organizing information events and

85 extensive guidance services. The structure of studies must facilitate and include affordances for an
86 exchange period, and studies conducted abroad must be compatible with the student's degree.
87 Exchange destinations must be of high-quality, and the studies completed during an exchange period
88 must add value to the student's degree. No student should fall behind in their studies due to an exchange
89 period.

90

91

92 **STUDY COUNCELLING AND GUIDANCE SERVICES (opened)**

93 The quality of education, the fluent progress of studies, and the welfare of students should be greatly
94 promoted via study counselling and guidance services. **There must be sufficient resources allocated for**
95 **counselling and guidance services to ensure that services and functions that serve students work**
96 **continuously.** Students beginning their studies in the University of Oulu should be considered as a whole,
97 comprising of degree students, international degree students, Master's degree students, doctoral
98 students, and exchange students. Students must be engaged in the university community already during
99 the first year of studies, which enables them to become active members of the community both during
100 and after their studies. The engaging process needs to be furthered by motivated student tutors and
101 teacher tutors in conjunction with other forms of effective guidance and counselling. **Teacher tutoring**
102 **has enough resources, it is high quality, and it will be developed based on collected feedback.**

103 Each student in the University of Oulu makes a personal study plan approved by their teacher tutor. The
104 number of approved personal study plans is to be actively followed by the university. To fulfil the
105 principles of thesis guidance in each faculty, enough resources need to be directed to the guidance of
106 theses work. **Peer support is organised for students to help working on their thesis.** Students must be
107 provided with support especially in applying for internship placements, in securing the financing of the
108 internship, as well as in turning working experience into academic credits. Career counselling should
109 serve the needs of students as well as advance their employment opportunities. The university must
110 develop career counselling in collaboration with the Student Union and student societies. Challenges
111 regarding the employment of international students need to be taken into consideration, and the
112 university must extensively offer courses on the Finnish language, the emphasis being on developing
113 spoken language skills.

114 The study counselling psychologist cannot compensate for shortcomings in study guidance. The study
115 counselling psychologist acts as a part of the study counselling and guidance services offered by the
116 university. The study counselling psychologist should offer guidance both individually and in group
117 sessions, according to students' needs. The number of study counselling psychologists must meet the
118 demand, and it should be possible to arrange an acute appointment within a week. The university has to
119 be able to quickly react to students' urgent needs for counselling.

120

121 **SAFE, HEALTHY AND COMFORTABLE CAMPUSES (opened)**

122 Students must have a round-the-clock access to all necessary studying premises at the campuses via, for
123 example, electronic passes. Students must have access to joint premises as well as premises applicable
124 to a variety of studying fields. Study environments must be safe, healthy, calm and comfortable. **Students**
125 **have a chance to advance their studies for free in spaces and premises that have low utilisation rate.** In
126 addition to versatile study premises, campuses should offer enough premises for leisure activities and
127 relaxation. **There must be affordable sports and culture services at the campuses. Spaces for guilds and**

128 **organisations are guaranteed.** Security at the campuses must be guaranteed also in the night-time.
129 Campuses must be continuously developed in collaboration with students. The number of safe bicycle
130 parks and bicycle maintenance stations at the campuses needs to be increased. In addition, space for
131 free car parking at the campuses has to be secured.

132

133 PUBLIC TRANSPORT (opened)

134 Students must be ensured access to the campuses via good **and fast** public transport **connections also**
135 **from the surrounding regions. Faster connections are achieved by utilising separate bus lines and using**
136 **the highway.** The issue of crowded busses during peak hours needs to be addressed, and connections
137 must be available also in the evening and night time **as well as during weekends.** Good **and quick**
138 connections to the railway station and the airport of Oulu as well as between the Linnanmaa and
139 Kontinkangas campuses must be secured. **There is a direct busline between the city centre, Toppila, and**
140 **Linnanmaa. The busses have clear signs to ensure that, for example, international students know which**
141 **bus to take to the University.** Cycling opportunities are improved by introducing fast cycling lanes
142 between Linnanmaa, the city centre, and Kontinkangas. Walk and bicycle ways as well as signposts **and**
143 **lighting** are to be well maintained year-round.

144 **Thanks to a compact structure of the city, a tramline travels between Linnanmaa and the city centre in**
145 **2030. This line is extended as necessary to other areas.**

146

147 STUDENT HOUSING (opened)

148 Every student must have an opportunity for good-quality, safe, accessible and affordable housing. **There**
149 **is a sufficient number of** student apartments, and they should be located near the campuses **or next to**
150 convenient connections, **including in the surrounding regions. The Linnanmaa–Kaijonharju area is an**
151 **attractive and lively campus area.** The new production of student apartments is to be supported by
152 inexpensive ground rents, necessary changes in the city plan, and the execution of current construction
153 projects approved by a construction permit. **Tall blocks of flats should be the focus of construction of**
154 **new buildings in Linnanmaa.** As the area reserved for parking continues to be reduced, the structure of
155 the city becomes more compact **without complete removal of green areas.** ~~One result of this could be a~~
156 ~~tramline connecting the city center and Linnanmaa by 2030.~~ Students of various backgrounds, such as
157 students with a family, **The varying needs of students** must be taken into consideration in apartment
158 planning. Furthermore, a sufficient number of **furnished** apartments needs to be reserved for
159 international **exchange** students. **There are accommodations near the campuses that are available for**
160 **renting for visitors.** The Student Union continues to work in a close collaboration with the Student
161 Housing Foundation of Northern Finland. Student housing is to be supported with general housing
162 allowance which is individually granted.

163

164 STUDENT INCOME (opened)

165 The student financial aid is the student's social security, which enables full time studying regardless of
166 the student's socioeconomic background. The student financial aid system must be flexible enough to
167 support students in different life situations. The student financial aid mainly consists of study grants. The
168 study loan is an optional form of supplementing a student's livelihood. Unused student loans are not
169 considered income when the need for income support is evaluated. Students have a right to supplement

170 their livelihood by working **within reasonable income limits**. The social security system is developed
171 towards a more detailed, gratuitous and sufficient basic income, which students are also eligible for.

172

173 EMPLOYMENT

174 ~~In their decisions, the City of Oulu takes into account the needs of business life by planning according to~~
175 ~~companies' needs in the city centre and other areas, by increasing co-operation between companies and~~
176 ~~the third sector, and by estimating the companies' views during decision making. The growth and success~~
177 ~~of companies create new jobs for students.~~

178 **Higher education prepares students for working life.** The students' working life readiness and working
179 possibilities are at a good level. Student employment is promoted with paid internships offered by the
180 **region**, the city, the university, and companies. **Practices regarding paid internships are standardized**
181 **between different programmes. The region supports companies in increasing internships and summer**
182 **vacancies by, for example, regional summer work vouchers.** Programmes and **support** services that
183 promote the international students' work experience are available, **and their employment post-**
184 **graduation is supported. The region**, the City of Oulu, **and the University of Oulu** openly inform students
185 of any open internships **and thesis opportunities**.

186 **The region is an attractive area for companies. The success and the opportunities of expansion of**
187 **companies in the Oulu area create new employment opportunities for students and new graduates. The**
188 **regional employment services invest in increasing employment for highly educated people, and also**
189 **focus their services for academic applicants.**

190

191 SPORTS AND CULTURE

192 The Student Union in the University of Oulu is doing sports advocacy at a local level. The University
193 Sports of Oulu (OKKL) maintains its high standard of service, and services are continuously improved
194 according to the students' needs. University Sports' services are sufficiently available around the year in
195 regions in which the students usually reside. The prices remain reasonable to a students' budget. Special
196 attention is given to those who do not exercise very often and to a low threshold for beginners who are
197 starting exercising. The University of Oulu, the City of Oulu, and the Student Union support the culture
198 created by students, acknowledge the students as a significant producer of culture, and recognize the
199 students' input in the enlivening of the entire city's common culture life. The City of Oulu supports the
200 versatile and affordable culture supply that is easily accessible to students.

201

202 STUDENT MEALS (opened)

203 Quality is considered an important factor when developing student meals. Meal subsidy is an important
204 form of support for the students. Student meals continue to be guided according to the Social Insurance
205 Institution's student meal recommendations. Additionally, versatile and affordable snacks are available
206 at campuses, also in the evening. Students with dietary needs are taken into account. **The quality and**
207 **quantity of vegetable and vegan food is improved. The contents of the meals are clearly marked in**
208 **Finnish and in English. The food is as ecological, Finnish and locally produced as possible.** The feedback
209 system is open and the results are visible. Students are involved in the development **and competitive**
210 **tendering** of restaurant activities.

211

212 **HEALTH & WELLBEING (opened)**

213 The university promotes carefully planned welfare work to increase students' wellbeing in collaboration
214 with other organizations. It is favourable for all parties to focus on early intervention and preventative
215 healthcare and wellbeing services. The students are adequately informed about the health care services
216 offered by the university. A quiet room, which functions as a place for relaxation for different kinds of
217 people, can be found on both campuses.

218 The availability of services, quality, and appropriations of the Finnish Student Health Service's (FSHS)
219 Oulu unit are maintained at a nationally comparable **level in the regional reform as well**. The special
220 needs of the Kontinkangas campus are taken into account in the opening hours. **In addition to the
221 Linnanmaa FSHS station, a new office will be opened at Kontinkangas to serve all higher institution
222 students**. ~~The Finnish Student Health Service are using their resources in a meaningful way.~~ **As the
223 students from university of applied sciences are also covered by FSHS, its resources must be increased
224 to meet the increased demand without a decrease in the quality of the services or increases in payments.**

225 E-services make services easier for students without any reduction in quality **and they increase the
226 accessibility of care**. Students have the right to good health care services around the year and around
227 the clock, **including accident and emergency services**, and the city-region is also aware of its
228 responsibilities in the matter. Healthcare services are also available in English. Adequate resources are
229 allocated to students' mental health care, and visits there are free of charge. Seeking treatment has as
230 low a threshold as possible, and treatment can be accessed according to the National Guaranteed
231 Access to Health Care act. **FSHS will continue to organise preventive supporting measures, such as peer-
232 support groups. All members of the Student Union have an access to affordable and high quality health
233 care services.**

234 The funding that the FSHS receives from the students is ~~mainly~~ collected through **semi-annual
235 reasonable** health care fees. ~~The visit fees must not increase unreasonably.~~ Although the FSHS is a
236 private service provider, it carries out public health care tasks and complies with the obligations
237 imposed on it, and therefore an increase in public funding is justified. **Students are involved in the
238 decision making of FSHS in the future as well**. ~~As the of the University of Applied Science transfers to
239 the FSHS's services, resources must be increased to meet the increased demands without any
240 deterioration in service quality or an increase in fees.~~

241 **STUDENT RECRUITMENT**

242 The University and the Student Union have a clear and consistent vision for marketing and recruitment,
243 which is realized in collaboration with the city of Oulu, as the reputation of the city has a major impact
244 on the attractiveness of the university. All degree programs define and focus their own recruitment
245 plans so that they are consistent with the common recruitment plan. Future and pre-existing surveys of
246 national and international points of comparison are utilized in the creation of marketing plans. The city
247 of Oulu wants to be the best student city in Finland.

248 Both national and international marketing and recruitment are allocated a sufficient amount of funds,
249 so that the university can realize marketing that is professional, personal, and visible. Inspiring
250 marketing creates equal opportunities for both Finnish and international applicants. The marketing
251 utilizes students who are innovative and possess marketing skills, by for example offering internships for
252 students of marketing or communications.

253 Degree programs are excellent units that can be used to reach the best students. The recruitment utilizes
254 the faculties' modern advertising campaigns, information packages sent to study counsellors in
255 secondary schools, and the university's active visibility in the social media. The university website
256 contains an easily accessible list of people who are responsible for degree programs' presentations. In
257 addition, the faculties bring forth the degree programs' career possibilities already in the recruitment
258 phase, as future employment has an impact on the students' choices. Comparative marketing is the most
259 effective way to market our university.

260

261 **TUITION FEES (opened)**

262 Education is free of charge to everyone. The law amendment that charges tuition fees from international
263 students outside the EU and EEA areas attending international programs is cancelled.

264 However, the University of Oulu meets the challenges that arise from the tuition fees for students from
265 outside the EU and EEA countries. The internationality of the university does not suffer, and the university
266 focuses on student recruitment, so that international students will be studying in Oulu in the future as
267 well. Equal quality of education is maintained for all students and each student is treated equally,
268 regardless of whether the student is paying for their education or not. The tuition fees' effect on the
269 internationality of the university is monitored actively and critically. If necessary, the university alters
270 the amount of tuition fees, if there is a drop in the number of international students.

271 The university has a scholarship system that is comprehensive, **equal** and transparent for all students
272 who pay tuition fees. Students have information on the criteria for awarding scholarships as well as the
273 size of the tuition fees already when they are applying, and neither criteria nor tuition fees may be
274 changed during the studies. Additionally, the university offers comprehensive assistance for applying for
275 a scholarship.

276 The construction of the scholarship system and the bureaucracy involved in it are not be covered by the
277 university's basic funding. Scholarships are not funded by the development cooperation appropriations,
278 as funding the studies of a single student in Finland does not meet the requirements of development
279 cooperation.

280

281 **EDUCATION SYSTEM AND STRUCTURAL DEVELOPMENT (opened)**

282 The education system and education network are viewed as an entity. The aim of the structural
283 development of the university field is to streamline and diversify study paths and to remove any
284 overlapping. The Student Union participates proactively in the debate concerning national education
285 policy and is also involved in extensive cooperation with secondary level organizations. The University
286 of Oulu is well aware of recent changes in the university field. Profiling and structural development is
287 performed in a way that is transparent, open for discussion, and based on research information.

288 First-time applicant quotas are not the best way to get young people quickly into working life. Changing
289 one's field of study in the university is smooth and easy. The reason for moving to comprehensive
290 bachelor's degrees are extensive development of contents and increased working life relevance. The
291 degree structures include the ability to complement one's skills according to their own starting points
292 and interests while giving the readiness for lifelong learning.

293 All parties involved benefit from increased cooperation between the University of Oulu and the Oulu
294 University of Applied Sciences **the universities and the universities of applied sciences**, as long as the
295 cooperation prioritizes the quality and contents of education and research, **and retains the functions**
296 **and characteristics of both institutes**. ~~Attention is given to preserving a sufficient amount of contact~~
297 ~~teaching.~~ **The amount of contact teaching and guidance is not decreased.** In particular, the arrangement
298 of language studies is done in cooperation with the University of Applied Sciences.

299 The University of Oulu maintains its position as a high-level, multidisciplinary, and international science
300 community. The University of Oulu cooperates with foreign universities to allow students to complete
301 double or joint degrees. To ensure competitive research, the University of Oulu is developing
302 international research networks.

303 **The universities must be guaranteed autonomy in student selection. Entrance examinations do not**
304 **require unreasonable lengthy preparation, and they take into account the differences between**
305 **disciplines. There must also be a chance to attend university without a certificate of matriculation.**

306