

# The Student Union of the University of Oulu Policy paper

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*Unofficial translation – in case of ambiguity, the Finnish is the official version*



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## INTRODUCTION

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

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

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

## EQUALITY

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

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

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

## THE QUALITY OF EDUCATION

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

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

60

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

68

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

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## 76 FLEXIBLE STUDIES

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78 The university must recognize that students come from various backgrounds and are in  
79 different situations in their lives. To actively facilitate their studies, the university has to offer  
80 genuinely flexible ways of completing studies. The need for mandatory presence in the courses  
81 must be considered within each study programme individually to ensure that it is in line with  
82 learning objectives. Mandatory courses are offered each year. Sufficient number of courses  
83 should be available during summer in both Finnish and in English to ensure that students are  
84 able to advance their studies according to personal schedules and plans. Courses should be  
85 offered in collaboration with summer universities, open university, the University of Applied  
86 Sciences, and partner universities.

87

88 The flexibility of studies should be ensured by recognizing competences acquired elsewhere.  
89 University students should be able to strengthen their academic skills by actively engaging in  
90 hobbies, work life and decision-making within the university. Every student must have the  
91 possibility to include an internship period in their studies. The Recognition of Prior Learning  
92 (RPL) should be a uniform and explicit process. Students should be aware of the RPL process,  
93 and the RPL support services should be extensive. Versatile assessment methods must be  
94 employed to avoid bottlenecks in studies and to ensure that courses can be completed more  
95 flexibly. Course assessment should be comprised of multiple elements to avoid the weaknesses  
96 of a one-time evaluation. Evaluation on courses with group work must be based on the  
97 individual's performance. A weak performance by the rest of the group cannot affect the  
98 individual's grade. Exams based on memorization must not be the sole method of assessment.  
99 Continuous assessment increases the fluency, and thus, the flexibility of studies. It is also  
100 important to utilize the *Examinarium* as well as various digital methods of working. The quality  
101 of education benefits from increased flexibility. While digitalization should be based on the  
102 needs of students and staff, rather than on novel technology, the used equipment should be  
103 modern. Teaching staff must have sufficient skills and support to utilize IT and communication  
104 technologies in their teaching.

105

106 Majority of the students of the University of Oulu wish to engage in an exchange programme.  
107 Information on exchange programmes must be readily and extensively available, both on the  
108 university's and the individual faculties' web pages. In addition, the university and the faculties  
109 need to support students who wish to engage in an exchange programme by organizing  
110 information events and extensive guidance services. The structure of studies must facilitate  
111 and include affordances for an exchange period, and studies conducted abroad must be  
112 compatible with the student's degree. Exchange destinations must be of high-quality, and the  
113 studies completed during an exchange period must add value to the student's degree. No  
114 student should fall behind in their studies due to an exchange period.

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## 117 **STUDY COUNCELLING AND GUIDANCE SERVICES**

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119 The quality of education, the fluent progress of studies, and the welfare of students should be  
120 greatly promoted via study counselling and guidance services. There are sufficient resources  
121 allocated for counselling and guidance services to ensure that services and functions that serve  
122 students work continuously. Students beginning their studies in the University of Oulu should  
123 be considered as a whole, comprising of degree students, international degree students,  
124 Master's degree students, doctoral students, and exchange students. Students must be engaged  
125 in the university community already during the first year of studies, which enables them to  
126 become active members of the community both during and after their studies. The engaging  
127 process needs to be furthered by motivated student tutors and teacher tutors in conjunction  
128 with other forms of effective guidance and counselling. Teacher tutoring has enough resources,  
129 it is high quality, and it will be developed based on collected feedback. Its quality and quantity  
130 are also monitored regularly.

131

132 Each student in the University of Oulu makes a personal study plan approved by their teacher  
133 tutor. The University has general guidelines for all faculties for the personal study plans. The  
134 University actively monitors the number of approved personal study plans, as well as their  
135 quality and if they are being followed or not. To fulfil the principles of thesis guidance in each  
136 faculty, enough resources need to be directed to the guidance of these works. Peer support is  
137 organised for students to help working on their thesis. Students must be provided with support  
138 especially in applying for internship placements, in securing the financing of the internship, as  
139 well as in turning working experience into academic credits. Career counselling should serve  
140 the needs of students as well as advance their employment opportunities. The university must  
141 develop career counselling in collaboration with the Student Union and student societies.  
142 Challenges regarding the employment of international students need to be taken into  
143 consideration, and the university must extensively offer courses on the Finnish language, the  
144 emphasis being on developing spoken language skills.

145

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

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## 155 **SAFE, HEALTHY AND COMFORTABLE CAMPUSES**

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157 Students must have a round-the-clock access to all necessary studying premises at the  
158 campuses via, for example, electronic passes. Students must have access to joint premises as  
159 well as premises applicable to a variety of studying fields. Study environments must be safe,  
160 healthy, calm and comfortable. Students have a chance to advance their studies for free in  
161 spaces and premises that have low utilisation rate. In addition to versatile study premises,  
162 campuses should offer enough premises for leisure activities and relaxation. There must be  
163 affordable sports and culture services at the campuses. Spaces for guilds and organisations are  
164 guaranteed. Security at the campuses must be guaranteed also in the night-time. Campuses  
165 must be continuously developed in collaboration with students. There is a sufficient amount of  
166 safe bicycle parking, as well as bicycle maintenance stations, and students have the  
167 opportunity to use shower rooms. In addition, space for free car parking at the campuses has  
168 to be secured.

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## 171 **PUBLIC TRANSPORT**

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173 Students must be ensured access to the campuses via good and fast public transport  
174 connections also from the surrounding regions. Students are offered a student discount and  
175 different ticket options at a reasonable price. Faster connections are achieved by utilising  
176 separate bus lines and using the highway. The issue of crowded busses during peak hours needs  
177 to be addressed, and connections must be available also in the evening and night time as well  
178 as during weekends. Good and quick connections to the railway station and the airport of Oulu  
179 as well as between the Linnanmaa and Kontinkangas campuses must be secured. There is a  
180 direct busline between the city centre, Toppila, and Linnanmaa. The busses have clear signs for  
181 routes and stops to ensure that, for example, international students know which bus to take to  
182 the University. Cycling opportunities are improved by introducing fast cycling lanes between  
183 Linnanmaa, the city centre, and Kontinkangas. Walk and bicycle ways as well as signposts and  
184 lighting are to be well maintained year-round.

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## 187 **STUDENT HOUSING**

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189 Every student must have an opportunity for good-quality, safe, accessible and affordable  
190 housing. There is a sufficient number of student apartments, and they should be located near  
191 the campuses or next to convenient connections, including in the surrounding regions. The  
192 region aims to be carbon neutral in terms of its urban structure. The Linnanmaa–Kaijonharju  
193 area is an attractive and lively campus area. The new production of student apartments is to  
194 be supported by inexpensive ground rents, necessary changes in the city plan, and the  
195 execution of current construction projects approved by a construction permit. Energy efficient  
196 tall blocks of flats should be the focus of construction of new buildings in Linnanmaa. As the  
197 area reserved for parking continues to be reduced, the structure of the city becomes more  
198 compact without complete removal of green areas. The varying needs of students are taken  
199 into account in apartment planning by offering apartments in different sizes and types.  
200 Furthermore, a sufficient number of furnished apartments needs to be reserved for exchange  
201 students. There are accommodations near the campuses that are available for renting for  
202 visitors. The Student Union continues to work in a close collaboration with the Student Housing  
203 Foundation of Northern Finland. Student housing is to be supported with general housing  
204 allowance which is individually granted.

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## 207 **STUDENT INCOME**

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209 The student financial aid is the student's social security, which enables full time studying  
210 regardless of the student's socioeconomic background. The student financial aid system must  
211 be flexible enough to support students in different life situations. The student financial aid  
212 mainly consists of study grants. The study loan is an optional form of supplementing a student's  
213 livelihood. Unused student loans are not considered income when the need for income support  
214 is evaluated. Students have a right to supplement their livelihood by working within reasonable  
215 income limits. The social security system is developed towards a more detailed, gratuitous and  
216 sufficient basic income, which students are also eligible for.

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## 219 **EMPLOYMENT**

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221 The students' working life readiness and working possibilities are at a good level after  
222 graduation. Student employment is promoted with paid internships offered by the region, the  
223 city, the university, and companies. Practices regarding paid internships are standardized  
224 between different programmes. The region supports companies in increasing internships and  
225 summer vacancies by, for example, regional summer work vouchers. Programmes and support  
226 services that promote the international students' work experience are available, and their  
227 employment post-graduation is supported. The region, the City of Oulu, and the University of  
228 Oulu openly inform students of any open internships and thesis opportunities.

229

230 The region is an attractive area for companies. The success and the opportunities of expansion  
231 of companies in the Oulu area create new employment opportunities for students and new  
232 graduates. The regional employment services invest in increasing employment for highly  
233 educated people, and also focus their services for academic applicants.

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## 236 **SPORTS AND CULTURE**

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

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## 250 **STUDENT MEALS**

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



260 activities. The capacity of the restaurants is increased as the number of students increases at  
261 the Linnanmaa campus.

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## 264 **HEALTH & WELLBEING**

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

271

272 The availability of services, quality, and appropriations of the Finnish Student Health Service's  
273 (FSHS) Oulu unit are maintained at a nationally comparable level during the regional reform  
274 as well. The special needs of the Kontinkangas campus are taken into account in the opening  
275 hours. In addition to the Linnanmaa FSHS station, a new office will be opened at Kontinkangas  
276 to serve all higher institution students. As the students from university of applied sciences are  
277 also covered by FSHS, its resources must be increased to meet the increased demand without  
278 a decrease in the quality of the services or increases in payments.

279

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

289

290 The funding that the FSHS receives from the students is collected through semi-annual  
291 reasonable health care fees. Although the FSHS is a private service provider, it carries out  
292 public health care tasks and complies with the obligations imposed on it, and therefore an  
293 increase in public funding is justified. Students are involved in the decision making of FSHS in  
294 the future as well.

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## 297 **STUDENT RECRUITMENT**

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

306

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



312

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

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### 323 **TUITION FEES**

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

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

337

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

343

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

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### 350 **EDUCATION SYSTEM AND STRUCTURAL DEVELOPMENT**

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

359

360 First-time applicant quotas are not the best way to get young people quickly into working life.  
361 Changing one's field of study in the university is smooth and easy. The reason for moving to  
362 comprehensive bachelor's degrees are extensive development of contents and increased  
363 working life relevance. The degree structures include the ability to complement one's skills





364 according to their own starting points and interests while giving the readiness for lifelong  
365 learning. The universities must be guaranteed autonomy in student selection. Entrance  
366 examinations do not require unreasonable lengthy preparation, and they take into account the  
367 differences between disciplines. There must also be a chance to attend university without a  
368 certificate of matriculation.

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370 All parties involved benefit from increased cooperation between the universities and the  
371 universities of applied sciences, as long as the cooperation prioritizes the quality and contents  
372 of education and research, and retains the functions and characteristics of both institutes. In  
373 particular, the arrangement of language studies is done in cooperation with the University of  
374 Applied Sciences. The closer co-operation does not lead to decrease of contact teaching and  
375 guidance.

376  
377 The University of Oulu maintains its position as a high-level, multidisciplinary, and  
378 international science community. The University of Oulu cooperates with foreign universities  
379 to allow students to complete double or joint degrees. To ensure competitive research, the  
380 University of Oulu is developing international research networks.

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### 383 **THE STUDENT UNION**

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385 The student union offers quality advocacy and useful services for its members, and joining the  
386 student union is attractive for all the students of the University of Oulu. In the future, the  
387 membership of student unions is voluntary. The student unions are granted a lengthy  
388 transitional period for this change. The student union prepares for the voluntary membership  
389 financially before the transition period begins.

390