

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 – in case of ambiguity, the Finnish is the official version

Board proposals for the Council Meeting 2/2018 and 3/2018 are in red bold cursive. Removals are in strikethrough. The sections that are opened are marked. The changes have been decided on in the Board meeting 18/2018

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. **Mandatory**
64 **courses are offered each year.** Sufficient number of courses should be available during summer **in both**
65 **Finnish and in English** to ensure that students are able to advance their studies according to personal
66 schedules and plans. Courses should be offered in collaboration with summer universities, **open**
67 **university**, the University of Applied Sciences, and partner 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. **Evaluation on courses with group work must**
76 **be based on the individual's performance. A weak performance by the rest of the group cannot affect**
77 **the individual's grade.** Exams based on memorization must not be the sole method of assessment.
78 Continuous assessment increases the fluency, and thus, the flexibility of studies. It is also important to
79 utilize the *Examinarium* as well as various digital methods of working. The quality of education benefits
80 from increased flexibility. **While** digitalization should be based on the needs of students and staff, rather
81 than on novel technology, **the used equipment should be modern.** Teaching staff must have sufficient
82 skills and support to utilize IT and communication technologies in their teaching.

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

92

93

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

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

107 Each student in the University of Oulu makes a personal study plan approved by their teacher tutor. The
108 **University has general guidelines for all faculties for the personal study plans.** ~~The number of approved~~
109 ~~personal study plans is to be actively followed by the university.~~ The University actively monitors the
110 number of approved personal study plans, **as well as their quality and if they are being followed or not.**
111 To fulfil the principles of thesis guidance in each faculty, enough resources need to be directed to the
112 guidance of these work. **Peer support is organised for students to help working on their thesis.** Students
113 must be provided with support especially in applying for internship placements, in securing the financing
114 of the internship, as well as in turning working experience into academic credits. Career counselling
115 should serve the needs of students as well as advance their employment opportunities. The university
116 must develop career counselling in collaboration with the Student Union and student societies.
117 Challenges regarding the employment of international students need to be taken into consideration,
118 and the university must extensively offer courses on the Finnish language, the emphasis being on
119 developing spoken language skills.

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

126

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

128 Students must have a round-the-clock access to all necessary studying premises at the campuses via, for
129 example, electronic passes. Students must have access to joint premises as well as premises applicable
130 to a variety of studying fields. Study environments must be safe, healthy, calm and comfortable. **Students**
131 **have a chance to advance their studies for free in spaces and premises that have low utilisation rate.** In
132 addition to versatile study premises, campuses should offer enough premises for leisure activities and
133 relaxation. **There must be affordable sports and culture services at the campuses. Spaces for guilds and**
134 **organisations are guaranteed.** Security at the campuses must be guaranteed also in the night-time.
135 Campuses must be continuously developed in collaboration with students. ~~The number of safe bicycle~~
136 ~~parks and bicycle maintenance stations at the campuses needs to be increased.~~ **There is a sufficient**
137 **amount of safe bicycle parking, as well as bicycle maintenance stations, and students have the**
138 **opportunity to use shower rooms.** In addition, space for free car parking at the campuses has to be
139 secured.

140

141 PUBLIC TRANSPORT (opened)

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

153 ~~Thanks to a compact structure of the city, a tramline travels between Linnanmaa and the city centre in~~
154 ~~2030. This line is extended as necessary to other areas.~~

155

156 STUDENT HOUSING (opened)

157 Every student must have an opportunity for good-quality, safe, accessible and affordable housing. **There**
158 **is a sufficient number of** student apartments, and they should be located near the campuses **or next to**
159 convenient connections, **including in the surrounding regions. The region aims to be carbon neutral in**
160 **terms of its urban structure. The Linnanmaa-Kaijonharju area is an attractive and lively campus area.**
161 The new production of student apartments is to be supported by inexpensive ground rents, necessary
162 changes in the city plan, and the execution of current construction projects approved by a construction
163 permit. **Energy efficient tall blocks of flats should be the focus of construction of new buildings in**
164 **Linnanmaa.** As the area reserved for parking continues to be reduced, the structure of the city becomes
165 more compact **without complete removal of green areas.** ~~One result of this could be a tramline~~
166 ~~connecting the city center and Linnanmaa by 2030.~~ Students of various backgrounds, such as students
167 ~~with a family,~~ **The varying needs of students** must be taken into consideration in apartment planning.
168 **The varying needs of students are taken into account in apartment planning by offering apartments in**
169 **different sizes and types.** Furthermore, a sufficient number of **furnished** apartments needs to be reserved
170 for international **exchange** students. **There are accommodations near the campuses that are available**
171 **for renting for visitors.** The Student Union continues to work in a close collaboration with the Student
172 Housing Foundation of Northern Finland. Student housing is to be supported with general housing
173 allowance **which** is individually granted.

174

175 STUDENT INCOME (opened)

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

183

184 EMPLOYMENT

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

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

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

201

202 **SPORTS AND CULTURE**

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

212

213 **STUDENT MEALS (opened)**

214 Quality is considered an important factor when developing student meals. Meal subsidy is an important
215 form of support for the students. Student meals continue to be guided according to the Social Insurance
216 Institution's student meal recommendations. Additionally, versatile and affordable snacks are available
217 at campuses, also in the evening. Students with dietary needs are taken into account. **The quality and**
218 **quantity of vegetable and vegan food is improved. The contents of the meals are clearly marked in**
219 **Finnish and in English. The food is as ecological, Finnish and locally produced as possible.** The feedback
220 system is open and the results are visible. Students are involved in the development **and competitive**
221 **tendering** of restaurant activities. **The capacity of the restaurants is increased as the number of students**
222 **increases at the Linnanmaa campus.**

223

224 **HEALTH & WELLBEING (opened)**

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

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

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

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

253 **STUDENT RECRUITMENT**

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

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

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

272

273 **TUITION FEES (opened)**

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

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

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

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

292

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

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

300 First-time applicant quotas are not the best way to get young people quickly into working life. Changing
301 one's field of study in the university is smooth and easy. The reason for moving to comprehensive
302 bachelor's degrees are extensive development of contents and increased working life relevance. The
303 degree structures include the ability to complement one's skills according to their own starting points
304 and interests while giving the readiness for lifelong learning. **The universities must be guaranteed
305 autonomy in student selection. Entrance examinations do not require unreasonable lengthy preparation,
306 and they take into account the differences between disciplines. There must also be a chance to attend
307 university without a certificate of matriculation.**

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

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

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