

**Program of principles 2006 – 2009**  
**The Norwegian Association of Students**

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## **1. Fundamental principles for The Norwegian Association of Students (StL)**

The Norwegian Association of Students (StL) is an independent, non-party-political, special interest organisation for students at Norway's institutions in higher education. Local student democracies may choose to become member of StL. StL's objective is to secure the life of students and education quality. StL promotes the students' interests via being their spokesperson nationally and internationally. StL shall be constructive, and via cooperation with organisations put student and education-policy issues on the agenda.

StL's policy and involvement are based on four fundamental principles:

### **The overall responsibility of the state**

For Norway, a highly educated population is important for future progress. Norway should have a population which can be competitive in a tough international competition for knowledge and new jobs. The right to higher education for everyone must be secured, irrelevant of financial background. The state must therefore have the overall responsibility for financing higher education, and must secure high quality of education and research at every educational institution. Both the perspective of profession and refinement must be attended to in higher education. Via higher education the state must secure that knowledge, education and the skills of the labour force are in line with society's needs, as well as the individual's needs is taken care of. The state must also arrange for studies via financing of studies and student welfare organisations.

Higher education is a good, available to those who are qualified. Education and competence improvement are important means to secure development in society and achieve one's potential. The state must secure this availability by full financing of all academic degrees.

### **High quality in education**

Quality assurance of Norwegian higher education must secure that the education which is offered at Norwegian educational institutions is of high standard and satisfies international requirements. The lectures offered must be relevant, and the educations must be based on state-of-the-art research and development work. The students and local student democracies are important participants in the continuous work of quality assurance at educational institutions. They must therefore, via co-determination at all levels, be involved in work on quality in higher education.

### **Equal rights to education**

Equal right to education is a fundamental principle in education policy. Equal right to education is necessary for an education system which is not distinguished by class distinctions, rather a focus on equal rights for everyone. The state has the responsibility to secure equal rights to education for everyone, mainly via arranging a complete public education system. Differences of social or cultural background, financial or geographical circumstances, gender, age, sexual orientation or different level of disability must not be an obstacle to study and participate in higher education. Different points of view and personal background contributes to a diverse education system. The aim is not that everyone should take higher education, but the right to higher education must be equal for everyone.

### **The student's participation and responsibility**

Higher education must be challenging and make demands from students. This implies that the students are given responsibility and must take responsibility for their own learning. The student must be an equal partner in the higher education system, and be encouraged to

participation, active reflection of and involvement in his/her situation. Each student has a right and a morale obligation to actively participate in local decision-making processes which affect education. Via active participation the student contributes with different perspectives, experiences and approaches and may be an enriching element in higher education and research. Active participation makes students conscious and influential in developing the subject field.

## **2. Value-based education**

A natural and overall aim must be that the learning and working environment at Norwegian educational institutions are distinguished by equality, equal opportunities and tolerance. The focus on anti-discrimination, religious freedom and freedom of speech must be as obvious as the focus on academic quality. StL argues that tolerance and sincerity between people are prerequisites for achieving a developing diversity at and among educational institutions.

### **Inclusive learning environment**

Students are a group of people of all ages, different civil status and social, cultural and financial background. These groups have other conditions and needs than the traditional student, and development forces rethinking for physical, psychological, social and especially pedagogical arrangements.

Higher education must be available for everyone, and resources must be of disposal in order to emphasize this importance. The arrangement of the studies is important, as well as aspects of a complete learning environment.

### **Equality**

Equality is not just about a balanced staff-student environment, but also as much about education passing on attitude and values which rate both parties equally. The equality perspective must be integrated in all subject fields. In every academic milieu an even gender balance must be sought. Diversity in cultural, geographical and linguistic background must be attended to in education, academic career and research. Specific measures may also be necessary to introduce.

An even gender balance in the different educations must be arranged for. Linguistic minorities must, via different ways of adaptation, have equal opportunities for an academic career.

The academic staff must be given more flexibility so that researchers who have responsibility for child care or family members may participate in research projects.

On campus students and staff must be treated with respect and tolerance, independent of cultural or religious background. All sorts of racism and bullying are unaccepted, both in higher education and elsewhere in society. StL argues that when an increasing number of people from an ethnic, cultural or religious minority background take higher education, it is positive for the Norwegian community.

### **Universal design**

Many people can not develop their skills and participate in society due to lacking arrangements. Since students are becoming more heterogenic the link between demands in higher education and each student's needs and conditions is becoming topical. Educational institutions are public institutions where demands for universal design must be made. Universal design implies that increased accessibility is secured via solutions which provides for students with disabilities. Buildings used for lecturing must meet the given requirements at all times.

### **Commercialising**

There has been a significant increase in use of funds for marketing by Norway's educational institutions. Marketing of studies must not be done at the expenses of efforts for research and academic development. Norwegian educational institutions must not become a place where

commercial actors can promote their products and services. Books on the curriculum should not contain advertisement. Time set aside for lecturing must not be used for commercially-based marketing.

### **Environmental perspectives**

The educational institutions should via their educations pass on knowledge which enables students to see their own education and profession in relation to a perspective of society and environment. This is knowledge and understanding of issues related to development and use of resources in a global perspective. Educations must make students capable of involvement in issues of this character, and also the ability to critically evaluate how the international community administers current and future resources. The educational institutions must act with environmental concern.

### **Responsibility as a citizen**

The intention of higher education is first and foremost to give students knowledge and competence related to a profession. The educational institutions must also take responsibility for passing on common values such as human decency and understanding. The educational institutions and students have a mutual responsibility for students becoming good citizens when educated.

### **3. Organising of higher education**

Higher education is an important means for development of society via passing on knowledge and coming up with knowledge. Education is also a personal investment and realisation. This interaction must be taken into consideration when planning the future of higher education. Higher education must to a certain extent be controlled so that society has skilled and relevant employees, and value creation and innovation are secured. In this situation qualified students must also be able to choose their education freely.

#### **The educational institution's function**

Universities and university colleges constitute Norwegian higher education. Primarily these institutions shall via research and lectures educate competent employees who will contribute to development of society and innovation. The educational institutions must also contribute to passing on knowledge to the general public, and must have a role regionally, nationally and internationally. Each educational institution must via political and financial regulations have a precise mandate which secures dividing the responsibility so that both profession aspect and the generally educative aspect are taken care of by the educational institutions' operations.

#### **Cooperation, control and freedom**

The educational institutions must work together under the generic term "Norwegian higher education". All educational institutions must offer education of high quality, and they must cooperate in order to make Norwegian higher education as best as possible. This means that the educational institutions must have an academic dialog regarding what high-quality education and research is and in particular which courses should be offered in Norway. Academic dialog must secure the same grades for equal performances at each educational institution.

The dimensioning of higher education must be done in dialog between the educational institutions and national political level, and must aim at taking care of regional and national interests. The dialog must secure predictability for the educational institutions. Decisions of the dimensioning must be based on the educational institutions' competence, and the perspectives must be long-term.

Each educational institution should organise their educations via course and study plans and teaching program, but within the scope given by The Norwegian Agency for Quality Assurance in Education (NOKUT) and relevant overall plans.

The state has the overall responsibility for higher education and making sure the educations have a good financial foundation to operate from. The governmental educational institutions must be organised as a public administrative body. Governmental economic incentives should be used in order to stimulate some prioritised fields in research and education. The financing model must secure the stability of the offer of education.

Via the legislation the state must control the general academic demands to the educational institutions and leadership structure.

It must also be national control of the development process in higher education in Norway.

#### **Private educational institutions**

Primarily education is the state's responsibility, but private educational institutions shall be a supplement to the public-based education. The demands for quality in education and research

must also count for the educational institutions. Governmental finance must only be given to educational institutions which do not take profit from the service they offer.

**The future of higher education**

There must also be national control of the development process in higher education in Norway.

#### **4. Financing of higher education**

Given the state's responsibility for higher education, financing of higher education must primarily be done via governmental subsidies. The financing implies the financing of the educational institutions and the students, by financing of studies and financial support to operate the student democracy.

##### **The financing model**

The financing of the educational institutions must consist of a strategic basic grant and a smaller grant, a production-based component. The production-based component must be based on research, development, passing on, cooperation projects with other participants in society, internationalisation, art, culture, innovation and achievement of ECTS credits. In order to secure that the production-based component is not misused strict demands must be set for quality assurance, documentation and use of external examiner. The ECTS-credit share of the production-based share must be relatively small.

Each educational institution has its own mandate, and therefore the distribution of the production-based share of the financing must be scaled differently. The scaling must reflect the tasks given in the mandate for the educational institutions. A predictable basic grant must be given which shall secure education to students and jobs to the staff independent of cyclical fluctuations. The financing model must also take into consideration that some degrees are more expensive to operate than others. The costs of being in training must be included here.

##### **Financing of research**

In order to secure breadth in research the financing of research at the educational institutions must primarily be the responsibility of the state. Government finances must secure independent research and publishing of results. The Research Council of Norway's (Norges forskningsråd) program structure must reflect both the research areas at the free, basic courses and research and development work for the different professions. As a supplement to governmental finances, externally financed research should also contribute to research at Norwegian institutions of higher education. This financing must function within the frame of independent research and publishing of results.

Governmental finance of research must be competitive with the external finance, so the choice of research areas is not affected by the financial situation.

##### **The principle of free education**

The educational institutions which receive government finance can not charge students for studying. This is applicable to all degrees, basic education or supplementary education at all public and private educational institutions. Educations which qualify for ECTS credits must be free of charge for students.

The principle of free education also implies that students who earn a degree must not pay for being able to use their achieved title.

Being in training must not result in additional expenditure for students.

## **5. Financing of studies**

The financing of studies must secure that those students who are interested, irrelevant of background, may study at higher education. The financing of studies must make it possible for students to study full-time. It must therefore be of such standard that students, while studying, have financial safety and do not need a job.

The investments which society and the individual do should be reflected in the allocation of study grants. The study grant should consist of a grant, and a loan which is not of an unduly large amount.

Parts of the loan should be converted into a grant for those who pass their courses. This system must not lead to a financial burden for students with special needs who are delayed in their educational progress. The first year must not be based on passing courses. This is because the student must be given the chance to adapt to his/her new situation.

The grant must be given by the state, via the Norwegian State Educational Loan Fund (Statens Lånekasse), and the grant must be founded on the law in order to secure predictability for students.

In order to realise the full-time student, the grant must cover the living costs for twelve months or ten months with no income limit for the two last months. If students need a grant for twelve months they should be given the grant for the two last months via an own arrangement with the Norwegian State Educational Loan Fund which secures sufficient subsistence.

The cost norm must be at 2x the basic amount for twelve months in order to accomplish the full-time student. Students who wish and have the opportunity must be able to work during holidays, but full-time studies imply that students should also have holiday, as employees have.

The travel grant is a subsidy scheme meant to reduce origin as a hinder for choice of educational institution in Norway. In order to secure this the grant must level the costs. All students must be entitled to the travel grant, regardless of age.

The repayment of the study grant must be flexible and predictable. Students repaying must be able to choose a floating or a predictable fixed rate of interest over time. The loan must be interest-free while studying and the repayment free of fees. The repayment should be dependent on annual income.

A completed master degree and corresponding supplementary education and supplementary training must result in a write-off of parts of the loan.

The State Educational Loan Fund must have a social profile and be based on the fact that students are a group of people with unique needs. There must be specific regulations for students in need of this, and arrangements allowing humane judgments.

## **6. Research and development work**

Research and development work is about understanding, developing and passing on knowledge, as well as creating knowledge. The work on research and development work performed at the educational institutions plays an important role in the development of a community with knowledge. Public effort for research must be overall and cover the educational sector, and also bring up the relationship between research by public and private sector.

### **Distribution of responsibility**

The state has the overall responsibility for national research. Governmental research strategies must include all areas and participants within the sector of higher education, and use a variety of methods for research.

The division of responsibility in research must be in line with the mandate of the educational institutions. This means that some institutions have the primary responsibility for basic research while other educational institutions have their main focus on applied research, research on profession and regional research. Research on professions must secure relevant content in educations, relevance for the professions students start working as and improving competence of the academic staff.

The educational institutions must self create arenas where the internal division of responsibility is put on the agenda.

It is important for society that all categories within research are subject to prioritisation which secures equal terms. The governmental financing must reflect this. Different research categories complete each other by different ways contributing to society's development.

### **Cooperation and common responsibility for research**

The educational institutions are together responsible for the total research effort contributing to development and quality, rather than competition. This encourages cooperation between the educational institutions. The educational institutions must make use of each other as resources via strategic efforts, cooperation and network which include common research projects, use of scientific equipment, research education and guidance.

### **A research-based education**

Education must be based on state-of-the-art science, the latest within research, updated knowledge from experience and development work within the special field. Research and lecturing must take place in close cooperation and in the most neutral and objective way. However, research must not be done at the expenses of the quality of lecturing.

Public authorities must support research-based educations via incentives related to increased research activity, improving competence and recruitment to research.

Different demands for established research at bachelor, master and Ph.D.-level must be set.

### **Involving student in research**

At an early stage in their education students must be able to meet established and experienced researchers. Via participation in research projects students gain experience from the edge between theory and practise and achieve better understanding of own knowledge and competence. It is important for students to get insight and knowledge of different research methods in order to secure student involvement in research.

All research must be within the ethical boundaries set by the research ethical committees. The educational institutions and every individual research environment must take responsibility for carrying out this, and maintaining a continuous debate on ethical boundaries.

### **Education based on research and recruitment**

Research-based educations and students involved in research are means for recruitment to research. The academic staff must via the educational institution's mandate and strategy be encouraged and given the opportunity to improve competence. It must be an aim that 30 per cent of academic staff at bachelor-level and 50 per cent of academic staff at master-level have research experience. These lecturers must be linked with teaching. This must not be at the expense of breadth and pedagogical approach to lecturing and guiding when students are in training. The level of research experience among academic staff must be as high as possible, and not under any circumstances below 20 per cent.

There must be focus on active recruitment, for example via increasing the number of Ph.D. and scholar positions. The educational institutions must via cooperation have the majority of Ph.D.-scholar positions. In research there must be specific focus on recruitment and follow-up of the under-represented gender, the young and minority groups.

Equal opportunities in the academic sector is not only a question of justice but also an important quality element. Therefore, it must be worked on strategically, both nationally and internationally in order to find proper means which evens out differences in the research environments.

### **Internationalisation of research**

Participation in international research sets higher demands for priorities. In order for Norway to be an international research participant the sector must find their focus areas. There must also be a balance between spearhead and broad research.

### **Innovation**

The educational institutions must contribute to innovation value creation via contact with the private and public sector. Innovation requires research and development work at the educational institution and development projects in order to develop new products, services and solutions for the society.

Innovation is also about promoting and developing each student's ability to use his/her own academic competence and making students capable of transforming knowledge into practical activity.

## **7. The quality of higher education**

High academic quality must be an obvious aim for lecturing. Arrangements must be made for dialog between staff, students and industry on what is relevant for education. Academic quality presumes cooperation between research and practise, pedagogical means and student involvement.

### **Teaching and evaluation methods**

Different ways of learning must involve students and focus on process, variation and flexibility. They must also be built on a broad range of pedagogical ideas and methods related to the distinctiveness of the academic field. The types of evaluation are linked with ways of lecturing, the distinctiveness of technical literature and the profession the students educate themselves to. The types of evaluation must be adjusted according to the principles of universal design. The implementation of the Quality Reform must be followed up by the management at each educational institution in order to secure that the regulations for varied types of evaluation are realised.

### **Cheating**

The educational institutions must have precise routines for handling cheating, and have the responsibility of providing students with relevant information. It is the responsibility of students to be aware of the rules and regulations worked out. Students' security under the law must be secured in such cases, for example with the right to complain. Until a decision is made in cases of cheating the censoring must be carried out as normal.

### **In training**

The training in profession-focused educations is an important part of the education as the theoretical elements, and must secure high quality and relevance. When students gain knowledge, skills and attitude by training they are better prepared to critically reflect on the subject, ethics, position and society. The training must be subject to the same demands for quality assurance as the rest of the education.

The educational institutions must have the overall responsibility for students in training. There must be clarity for everyone involved of what is demanded in the time of training, how it is evaluated and which criteria are to be used. This must be reflected in course and study plans. Students in training must be given guidance from the educational institution and staff at the training site. Students must be given guidance from the head of student training at the training site. The guidance must be done by qualified staff with the relevant education during the time of training. All supervisors must have gone through guiding courses given by the educational institution. The supervisor must be evaluated when the training is finished. Students must not be paid during the time set off for training and must not be considered as labour. This must not be mistaken for work experience.

In educations where training traditionally has not been used it may be necessary to secure relevance via arrangements similar to training.

### **Suitability assessment**

It is not obvious that everyone will graduate and therefore it is taken for granted that those who graduate are competent and qualified to practice the profession according to the ethical and the professional guidelines which exist for the different subject fields. Students who turn out to be not suitable must be directed to other studies.

The assessment must be whole and assess both professional skills and personality. Assessments must be carried out throughout the entire study. Individual differences must be taken into consideration, within the limits of what can be accepted.

### **Security assessment**

Security assessment is a process aimed at making sure students are suitable to practice their profession in a professional way. The criteria for finding a student unsuitable must be national and stated in the law. Students have a joint responsibility for reporting cases of other students which they feel do not meet the criteria of suitability. In this case the educational institutions must inform the students which criteria suitability is evaluated from.

For all health, social and teacher educations students must be informed of the security assessment. Reported cases are handled by a local security assessment committee. There should be a national database of students who are found unsuitable for different educations. The information must be stored for a minimum of three years. The database must be administered according to laws for civil liberties.

### **Certificate of good conduct**

For those educations where students must provide a certificate of good conduct in order to participate in training or clinical lecturing students must be secured a professional and humane evaluation if the facts presented in the certificate are of such nature that a possible decision of excluding a student can be justified. The certificate of good conduct must be provided at admission to the education and at the start of every academic year for all teacher educations and all health and social educations with client/patient training.

### **Grade system**

It should be an overall aim to achieve the best possible objective and fair grading. The criteria for the different grades should have relatively similar content, independent of which educational institution the students have studied at. The academic milieu must work out specific criteria within each course. There should be a national coordination within each academic milieu.

### **Examination results**

In order to secure the best possible evaluation an external examiner must be required for graded evaluation of academic work valued at more than 15 ECTS credits. For work less valued and marked by an internal examiner, the external examiner should check hand-ins randomly. This will be a guarantee for the students' security under the law. External censorship secures calibration of grades and academic discussions between educational institutions.

### **Academic guidance**

Students are entitled to academic guidance while studying so that they are informed of their possibilities and improvement potential. Students must be given both specific feedback on their work, this forms the basis for improving their work, and general professional guidance. Guidance is quality assured by annual evaluations of colleagues, with optional student evaluation, and external evaluation of supervisors every 3rd year.

### **Framework, course and degree plans**

In order to secure a national standard within some profession-focused educations framework plans must govern the content of the education. A framework plan must say something about

the intention of the education, what the superior academic content is and which demands are set for theoretical and practical skills and qualifications. There must be a balance between the interest for local academic freedom and variation and national regulations and requirements.

Course and study plans must contain a description of academic content, learning and evaluation methods, demands for training, opportunity for going abroad, practical and organisational circumstances and demand for obligatory attendance.

### **Research in practise-oriented educations**

The requirement for research-based lecturing in profession-focused educations must not be at the expense of the requirement for training and profession-oriented focus in educations. An academic approach secures that students acquire a critical reflection, methodology and the ability to see his/her own profession in a larger context. Scientific focus in studies is intended for linking practise with theory. This can be done by directing research towards the profession within each education.

### **Overbooking**

Overbooking may lead to reduced academic quality, and therefore it must not be possible to accept more students than the number which can be offered a qualitatively good admission to a field of study. However, it is acceptable to calculate a number of drop-outs, and allow admissions accordingly.

### **The degree system**

The education system in Norway must be based on three categories – bachelor, master and Ph.D. degrees. The bachelor degrees must be research-based degrees of three years, and must develop competent students within the subject field and form a basis for starting to work or further studies. The master degree must be based on previous studies, be research-based and set demands for independent work on research.

### **Pedagogic-didactic competence of academic staff**

Every member of the academic staff must have pedagogic-didactic competence. The educational institutions must prioritise pedagogical development and strive for arranging obligatory courses frequently.

### **Temporary visits by academic staff**

For profession-focused educations the academic staff should be encouraged to visit other educational institutions. The visits must be relevant for the course lectured and should be take place frequently.

### **Framework**

StL recognises the importance of development of tools which makes it easier to understand different academic qualifications across borders, and this way aims at increasing mobility.

The national and international framework must be a solid tool in that sense that it says more than what can already be understood from the present system and laws. The framework must be adapted to the distinctiveness of the sector and be built on existing tools and established elements. The national frameworks must look after each country's autonomy. A national framework must be seen in relation with educational institutions work for quality assurance. Student involvement must be secured when working out and implementation of

such a framework. A national framework must be complex enough so that all educations are looked after, and it is evident what is needed in order to move on in academic progress.

## **8. Quality assurance**

Quality of education is important for both students and society. All parties must play an active role in work for quality assurance. The systems worked out must contribute to both securing and developing the quality at educational institutions.

### **System for quality assurance**

The main aim for national quality assurance must be development of quality in higher education. NOKUT must contribute to this via organising and control of higher education and the educational institutions. This work must take place when visits to educational institutions and reviews of the educational institutions documentation are carried out. Quality assurance of higher education must be a two-way process which involves both approval of the educational institutions quality system and accreditation of the educational institution.

There must be a set of national criteria worked out which are used to evaluate the educational institutions. Criteria must be worked out by NOKUT, in cooperation with the higher education sector. Expert committees must be responsible for evaluating if the criteria are not met. NOKUT must, while supervising quality, contribute to development of quality via recommendations to educational institutions in addition to conclusions of the evaluation. It should also be a main task to pass on examples of good practise to the rest of the higher education sector in Norway.

### **Evaluation of the quality assurance system**

System control of higher education is a necessary consequence of the institutional autonomy. Quality assurance must have the intention to control that education in Norway is of high standard, relevant and research-based. The educational institutions' quality assurance systems and NOKUT's criteria must look after all the educations' aspects, both at the educational institution, in training and parts of the education which can be taken abroad. The institutional system must secure that work on quality in higher education is lasting and gives an idea of the state of the quality at the educational institution.

### **Accrediting**

The requirements for accrediting of educational institutions must imply an approved quality assurance system, satisfactory involvement of all parties, infrastructure which arranges for studies and research. The institution's organising and management must also be evaluated in the accrediting. Accrediting is crucial for deciding whether the educational institution may award degrees and at which level awards can be made. New educational institutions and educational institutions which apply for a change of category must be accredited according to the criteria before the decision is put into action.

### **Up-to-date knowledge**

Supplementary training and supplementary education are important in order to maintain the quality of lecturing. This must be one of the criteria for quality assurance.

### **Quality assurance by students**

Students and the student democracy are crucial in the quality assurance and development at the educational institutions. Students must be involved in the quality assurance work at all levels and must be introduced to all levels of the process. Both when determining type of evaluation, designing the evaluation process, implementing the process and analysing the results and compiling possible measures.

Student representatives are an important actor in NOKUT's expert committees. Students must contribute in all aspects of the evaluation, as well as all the other experts.

### **Passing-on information**

Information from people on official visits to the educational institutions must be collected and evaluated. This includes specific challenges for the educational institutions and also national and international issues which have consequences for each educational institution. The national quality assurance must contribute to promote and spread solid measures and good quality, but the body must not propose any type of ranking of the educational institutions.

### **The Norwegian Agency for Quality Assurance in Education (NOKUT), and Ministry of Education and Research**

The academic evaluation of the quality system and the decision whether the educational institutions have achieved accrediting is the responsibility of NOKUT. The decision of whether the recommendation from NOKUT must be followed lies with the last body to the ministry which is responsible for higher education.

## **9. Students' quality**

The students' final competence is a manifestation of the quality of education. In addition to the quality of education the students' quality is dependent on the students' prerequisites, guidance, academic and social development and the demands set during the studies.

### **Guidance when studying**

An important element related to the quality in higher education is the guidance students receive at upper secondary school/high school and during studies at higher education.

Guidance at upper secondary school must be of such quality that students have a fair chance of making a choice of education which is well founded both academically and socially.

Demands must be set so that students can be instructed to end or not start an education if it not suited for the student. The student's academic achievements and personal suitability must be considered.

Good communication between secondary schools and higher education must be arranged for so that it is evident which requirements educational institutions make for academic level and level of maturity in order to participate in a constructive way.

### **Admission**

Finishing upper secondary school with pass grades or better must be the main criteria for applying admission to Norwegian higher education. The requirements for achieving pass grades must be so high that one is secured good quality of pupils finishing upper secondary school. Relevant requirements for grades and training may be introduced at certain educations. It is also possible to be assessed on the basis of vocational training. There must be possibilities for having other ways of assessment admission and admission requirements in cases where special competence is fundamental in order to start an education.

### **Competence achieved when graduated**

It is a fundamental principle that higher education must be challenging and make demands of students. Students must be capable of making use of the competence the study tries to make students competent at. Also, higher education must contribute to making students capable of reflecting critically on their own subject field and personal development and be able to use this reflection. Higher education is a process leading to making students aware and development within the subject field and in society in general.

## **10. Student welfare**

The principle of equal right to education implies a well-developed welfare service which promotes an overall learning environment. It is important to take into account that students have different needs and that everyone must have the opportunity to study at higher education.

### **Responsibility of hosting municipality**

Students contribute to value creation in society, both economically and culturally, and must be given equal status with other citizens in the municipality when it comes to access to public subsidy schemes and services and independent of whether students are registered as citizens with the local municipality or municipality of origin.

The hosting municipality must arrange for housing for students in cooperation with the student welfare organisations.

### **Student welfare organisations**

The educational institutions are responsible for the students' learning environment and welfare service. Public and private educational institutions must be affiliated with a welfare organisation, which have the responsibility for arranging for student welfare. The educational institution must offer a "free station" to the welfare organisation.

Students have the same basic needs as the rest of the population, but have in some areas need of more flexible and adapted solutions. Therefore, the student welfare organisations' main activity must be to offer services as a supplement to the services the hosting municipality is responsible for. The welfare organisation must be governed by students. This means to still have the right to choose whether students want a majority in the welfare organisation's board, and keeping the right to call back student representatives from the board.

The financing of student welfare organisations must consist of public allocations, semester fee and income from own services. The profit from own services must be returned to students.

The welfare organisations must function as a means of pressure towards public authorities in order to secure that the students' welfare needs are attended to.

### **Housing for students**

The state has the responsibility for allocations for building housing for students. The hosting municipality has a responsibility for providing fair or free sites for building housing for students. Two out of ten houses must meet the criteria of universal design. The welfare organisations must focus on building and offering housing for market regulated price. Welfare organisations must be the main provider of student housing. The pace of building must be at such an extent that housing is available at all times. The state and the welfare organisations are responsible for following up maintenance of the houses.

The hosting municipalities must also offer cheap housing for students and youth who are in an establishing phase. In order for the whole housing market not becoming too expensive it is important that students and young people do not compete each other off the market when establishing.

### **The Learning Environment Committee (LMU)**

LMU must, with students learning situation as starting point, work with issues related to the general studying environment and students social, pedagogical and learning environment.

LMU must have an overview over and the responsibility for following up the work for quality at the educational institutions, in relation to the wholly learning environment.

LMU must play a central role in work on quality at each educational institution and must have a defined role in the educational institutions formal decision structure. It must be up to each educational institution to consider whether LMU must be given more comprehensive tasks related to following up the quality of studies. How the committee is organised and its competence must at all times reflect the tasks the committee is set out to handle. The educational institutions must arrange for sufficient use of resources for LMU. It must be equal division between students and staff in the committee. The committee should cooperate with other actors at the educational institution which work with learning and working environment. LMU must be able to report incidents to the Norwegian Labour Inspection Authority (Arbeidstilsynet) regarding poor physical conditions.

### **Health and social aid**

The hosting municipalities have the responsibility for offering a wholly health service to all students who live in the municipality while studying. This includes both medical treatment and psychological health service. It is the state's responsibility that the number of students is calculated into the financing of the "permanent-doctor arrangement". All educational institutions must offer a health and counseling service. A national arrangement which secures students cheap dentist service must be introduced. It is important that students do not bare a loss if illness or injury may occur while studying.

### **Public transport service**

Discount for public transport may contribute to students developing sound traveling habits, when thinking of use of public transport. Discount arrangements are a common responsibility between municipalities, county municipalities and the state. All students, regardless of age and place of study, must be qualified for the student discount.

### **Accumulation of pension**

On the basis of higher education being an investment for society, pension credits should be given equal to "consideration credits" when graduated from a degree of three years or more.

### **Students' attribution to culture**

A very important factor for well-being when studying is the voluntary student culture. Students' contribution to culture in society is of importance and it the therefore essential that both the financial and physical are arranged for. It is a mutual task for the educational institutions, the welfare organisations, municipality, county municipality and the Ministry of Culture and Church Affairs to secure this. The student communities and the subject areas are important arenas for promoting the voluntary student culture.

## **11. Lifelong and flexible learning**

Norway must be a knowledge-based community. This means that there must be good opportunities for choosing different types of educations at different stages in life. Higher education must take advantage of the competence students already have gained from earlier studies, work and life experience. In addition to the structural premises it is also necessary that social concerns are taken in order for this to be completed.

### **Vocational training**

People who can not apply for higher education via Norwegian Universities and Colleges Admission Service (NUCAS) due to lack of formal competence must have the opportunity to have their formal and non-formal competence evaluated as basis for applying for a study.

The admission must take place via documentation of knowledge, skills and insight gained within a subject area. In order for the vocational training to be considered it must be documented and relevant for the specific study. The evaluation of the vocational training must be done by the educational institution which offers the study. If the requirements for vocational training are met the applicant is processed on the same basis as applicants with a score, also in a situation of specific evaluations. When the education lasting three years or longer is finished the applicant must have the same rights as an applicant with completed upper secondary school. In addition the applicant will have the specific competence which was the requirement for the evaluation of vocational training.

Vocational training must not lead to a shorter degree.

Within every overall-plan governed education there must be national guidelines for admission based on vocational training.

### **Supplementary training**

Supplementary training must be courses which do not qualify for ECTS credits. The courses are not considered valid as higher education, but must have high academic standard and fall in under the educational institutions quality assurance system. It must be a supplement to the main operation of the educational institution. The intention must be to freshen up on academic skills and renewing.

### **Supplementary education**

Supplementary education is courses and studies which qualify for ECTS credits and are built on students' basic knowledge. These educations are an important contribution to society's need for continuous competence development. The principles of equal right to education and state responsibility are also applicable for supplementary education. Students taking supplementary education must have the same rights as other students when thinking of financing of studies while studying.

Supplementary education must be subject to the same requirements for quality assurance as bachelor, master and Ph.D. degrees. It must therefore be the same academic breadth and impact in this context, as in all ways of higher education. Aiming for and completing supplementary education must not be done at the cost of bachelor, master and Ph.D. degrees.

### **Flexible progress**

It is an overall aim to accomplish the full-time student on campus. Still, arrangements should be made for flexible study progress for students who do not have the opportunity to be full-

time students or on campus during normal working hours. Part-time studies, Internet-based or group-based and decentralised studies must therefore be a supplement where it is academically justifiable. These studies must be subject to the same quality requirements as the educational institution's general range of studies.

## **12. Student involvement**

The student is a part of higher education and must play an active and participating role in the development of his/her own study. This implies that student must have a genuine opportunity to report back on their study situation. Students must have the right to start a student body which attends to students' interests.

### **Organising student politics**

There must be a student body at all educational institution with a statutory right to represent students and being heard in cases relevant for students. The student body at the educational institutions should be included as part of the formal structure of the educational institution in order to secure that students have the opportunity of being involved in decision-making processes. As equal partner in higher education students must have a fair chance of influencing the decision-making processes. This must be in order at all levels, from decisions made at each study via faculties and all the way up to the strategic decisions made at institutional level. The student body must also be a supplier of terms in national student politics. The student body must represent all students at the educational institution in a professional way, regardless of study, circumstances in personal life and background.

### **Participation**

Students must have a statutory right to attend in boards and collegial bodies with a minimum of 20 per cent and at least two representatives. Students must also have the opportunity to attend discussions which lead to a case being taken to a decision-making body.

Students have the responsibility of using their right to influence. Student participation and involvement implies a will to participate actively and binding.

### **Arrangement**

The educational institution has the responsibility for making arrangements so that the student body is functioning satisfactory. The educational institution and the staff share a joint-responsibility for coming up with measures in order to promote student involvement in general and participation at election turnout and response. It is in the educational institutions interest to have an operative student body which may perform their tasks in a satisfactory way. Student must be considered as partners in the development of the educational institution and its services. The fact that the term "partner" is real must be emphasised.

### **Financing student involvement**

A vibrant and active student democracy is essential in order to secure student involvement at the educational institutions and participation as a critical quality assurance of the education. Each educational institution must secure that the student democracy, both at institution level and faculty level, are provided with good operating terms. A minimum is that resources are allocated to a full-time and paid position and office facilities equal to the standard of staff at the educational institution. Payment of representatives at different levels may also be considered, dependent on the size of the educational institution and the tasks of the student democracy.

### **13. Internationalisation**

Internationalisation is a valuable element in Norwegian higher education because it leads to exchange of competence and knowledge across borders. Internationalisation places our academic milieu and our education system in a global whole. Knowledge in itself is a cooperation project which is dependent on a complex approach. Internationalisation secures a broader perspective in higher education and will to a greater extent lead to critical reflections of our own situation and starting point.

#### **Norway and internationalisation**

Exchange of staff and students will form a basis for increased internationalisation in Norway. The educational institutions should focus on developing services which motivate foreign students, researchers and lecturers to come to Norway, in order to develop their knowledge and contributing to new perspectives in Norwegian higher education and research within their academic field. The educational institutions must make sure that there are measures focusing on development of culture and integration of foreign students and staff into the Norwegian community and especially at the educational institution.

The educational institutions must acknowledge the value of studies abroad do not only benefit the student but contributes to increased knowledge and competence for the educational institution. This implies that students who have returned from abroad must be motivated to contribute in a positive way with their experiences and informing fellow students of the benefit from studying abroad.

It is important that the educational institutions have lectures and a curriculum which gives a broad international perspective, so that students who do not choose to study abroad also have an international dimension in their study.

#### **Mobility**

Mobility is a means in order to attain internationalisation at the educational institutions. It is especially important that the educational institutions not only arrange for exchange of students but also for their staff. A high level of mobility among researchers, lecturers and administrative staff provides better opportunities for international agreements and involving internationalisation as a natural aspect of lecturing at Norwegian educational institutions.

The educational institutions have the responsibility for providing exchange of students and staff. For international students and lecturers coming to Norway this implies providing solid arrangements for housing and other practical arrangements. Also, there should be focus on the opportunity of choosing courses which are lectured in English for Norwegian students. This may lead to an academic and social integration of between Norwegian and international students.

Exchange agreements and timing of stay abroad must be an integrated part of course and study plans. To a greater extent it must be possible to carry out training abroad.

Internationalisation of staff is of great importance for the degree of internationalisation at the educational institutions, and it must be provided for solid arrangements for exchange of staff. In the same way as it is an aim that students should for a period study abroad, it should also be an aim that all members of the academic staff go abroad every fifth year.

The goal of the exchange should be that the student or staff member should bring back knowledge and experience from their period abroad.

Every educational institution should have a resource center which provides thorough information of the possibilities students have of taking parts of their study abroad. This can be done by starting up international offices or hiring coordinators responsible for contact between international and Norwegian students, both when thinking of academic issues and welfare services. In addition, academic staff must be responsible for traveling abroad and use their contacts in order to establish bilateral agreements. This will also be an important element in the work of quality assuring the range of studies abroad. Students are entitled to an academically sound arrangement, and the educational institution is responsible for offering their students qualitatively good places to study and study programs.

The Norwegian Centre for International Cooperation in Higher Education (SIU) has the overall responsibility for promoting Norway as country of education and stimulate to increased cooperation across borders and institutional borders. SIU should also be a resource and competence centre which the educational institutions may use in order to increase the level of internationalisation.

### **Study abroad for a degree**

StL argues that students who wish to study for a degree abroad are important elements in higher education. This will imply another academic approach and breadth which will lead to development within each subject area. There is a need for people with different education backgrounds in professional life. A stay abroad of certain length may lead to another personal development than what is likely when studying in Norway.

For master and Ph.D. degrees there will be a special need for access to specific studies and specific academic directions. Therefore, it is especially important that access to such studies abroad is secured.

### **Solidarity in higher education**

StL focuses on the notion of solidarity with education as starting point. StL states that everyone must be able to take higher education. Education neutralises oppression, promotes democratic processes and plays a vital role in the fight for liberation and democracy. The emphasising of free and independent research and development reduces the danger of the state using education as a method of indoctrination. Students as a group is an important actor in all political development. Students' right to organise and influence their situation, when thinking of education and society in general, is a fundamental and absolute human right.

### **Globalisation of higher education**

StL sees the value of a broad, international cooperation within higher education. The Bologna Process is an example of European countries taking responsibility for arranging for a higher level of student exchange and a more common approach to quality assurance of higher education. However, it is important to look after different countries assumptions when it comes to this development. Cooperation must be based on mutuality and democracy and a common aim for improving quality and transparency.

Globalisation of education via international agreement systems may have non-intended results which lead to access to competence and knowledge is reduced for some groups of people. This type of agreement system may disturb the power balance between countries and lead to some countries losing the opportunity to create their own education system. The agreement system must secure the participants genuine equal rights and not make demands for

privatisation. The responsibility for higher education is first and foremost based nationally and knowledge in itself is supranational.

Norwegian education must be organised in a way that it does not fall under regulations which may alter the distinctive character and prerequisites for Norwegian higher education. This counts for both financing of studies and welfare arrangements.

In order to secure the development taking place internationally, students must organise in international networks in order to have greater influence and opportunities for participation in international education processes. The international cooperation must be built on the national development, and aim at creating common understanding and development. StL's fundamental principles must also be reminiscent of the processes taking place internationally.



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