



Instructions regarding student influence¹

These instructions were ratified by the Vice-Chancellor on 31 August 2021 and are in effect as of the same date.

Dnr HS 2024/20

¹ This is a translation of the Swedish version (Anvisningar för studentinflytande, registration number HS 2021/717. In the event of any discrepancy, the Swedish version of this document shall prevail.

Table of contents

1	Introduction.....	4
1.1	Different forms of student influence	4
2	Parties in charge of student influence.....	5
2.1	Board of Governors, Vice-Chancellor and Faculty Board.....	5
2.2	School and Support Services Management Groups.....	6
2.3	Teachers	6
3	Support and training for student representatives	6
4	Student influence through participation on committees, councils and other bodies	7
4.1	The University's formal groups	7
4.2	The student representative's role in the group.....	8
4.3	Chairperson's decision	8
5	Vice-Chancellor's decision-making meetings	9
6	Student influence when a single individual prepares or takes decisions	9
6.1	Decisions related to education.....	9
6.2	Organisational decisions.....	11
6.3	Work delegation decisions	11
6.4	Decisions about employment.....	11
7	Contracts concerning problems and student legal rights questions.....	12
8	Dialogue meetings.....	12
8.1	Vice-Chancellor's dialogue meetings.....	12
8.2	Faculty Board's dialogue meetings.....	12
8.3	The School's dialogue meetings.....	13
8.4	Support Services dialogue meetings.....	13
8.5	Dialogue meetings concerning university-wide questions	13
9	Follow-ups of courses, programmes and study environment	13
9.1	Course and programme evaluations	14
9.2	Programme meetings and forums for work-related connections to education.....	14
9.3	Follow-up dialogues with doctoral students.....	14
9.4	Annual follow-ups of degree programmes and six-year follow-ups of courses and programmes	14
9.5	Student barometer, doctoral mirror and other questionnaires	15
9.6	Yearly reports and follow-ups of annual student union letter	15

10 Referrals.....15
11 The document is in effect as of16

1 Introduction

Student influence is a central quality aspect of the operations at the University of Skövde (the University). The term “student” includes students at all levels of education, i.e. students at the first-cycle, second-cycle, and third-cycle levels. General regulations concerning student influence are available in ”Work procedures at the University of Skövde”. These instructions describe the University's work in greater detail, focusing on fostering student influence and the local regulations that exist in this regard.

Rules and regulations pertaining to student influence can be found in higher education legislative regulations, such as in the Higher Education Act and in the Higher Education Ordinance as well as on an international level in Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the European Area (ESG). A summary of these regulations can be found in the appendix.

The aim behind student influence is, among other things, to assure and develop the quality of education. According to the Higher Education Act, the quality assurance work is the joint responsibility of the university staff and the students. The university must aim to ensure that students take an active part in the quality assurance work. This means that the experiences and knowledge of the students must be taken into account. This concerns both the involvement of individual students and those students who act as representatives in the Student Union in Skövde (Studentkåren)². Within the student union, there are a number of sections for students within different areas of education as well as a special doctoral council for students at the third-cycle level.

1.1 Different forms of student influence

At the University of Skövde, student influence is primarily ensured and realised in the following way:

- Objectives and regulations in steering documents (including work procedure, the instructions in this document, and specific instructions regarding questions and complaints from students)
- Cooperation agreements between the University and the Student Union which primarily concern the University's financial support to the Student Union and those duties that the Student Union has in relation to that support (the

² In accordance with the decision taken by the University's Board of Governors, the Student Union in Skövde holds the position of official student union at the University of Skövde.

agreement is updated on a regular basis, normally on a yearly basis)

- Support and training for student representations, including an invitation to participate in the University-wide courses which are arranged for university staff
- Students' participation in formal groups
- Students' participation in the Vice-Chancellor's decision-making meetings
- Procedures for conveying information to and seeking council with students when decisions are prepared or taken by one individual
- Contacts between the Student Union and different bodies in the event of specific problems and student legal rights questions in accordance with the specific instructions regarding questions and complaints from students
- Dialogue meetings at different levels
- Follow-ups of courses and programmes as well as the study environment
- Students' participation in handling referrals

The different forms of student influence are described in the different sections of this document.

2 Parties in charge of student influence

In a similar way to the University's general procedures, the division of responsibility concerning student influence follows the structure and contents presented in the Regulations of the University (Högskolans arbetsordning) and underlying organisation documents.

Responsibility for an area that is connected to education and/or the students' situation in any way always includes the responsibility of student influence. This responsibility further includes follow-up measures designed to monitor that the channels for student influence are functioning well.

2.1 Board of Governors, Vice-Chancellor and Faculty Board

University-wide bodies which hold the role of responsibility for student influence consist of the Board of Governors, the Vice-Chancellor, and the Faculty Board.

The Faculty Board is also connected to a subordinate groups where student influence is central. The bodies in question are the

Curriculum Committee, the Council for Assessment of Pedagogical Qualifications as well as the Council for Docent Assessment.

2.2 School and Support Services Management Groups

Heads of Schools and the University Director have the overall responsibility for student influence within Schools and Support Services. At the operative level, Heads of Divisions and Office Directors have the responsibility for student influence.

The Heads of Division at the Schools also are also responsible for the workplace environment for the students connected to the courses and programmes that the respective division offers. The workplace environment responsibility involves, among other things, the responsibility of promoting equal opportunities for the students and preventing discrimination, harassment, and violations.

2.3 Teachers

The teachers that the students come into contact with and who are in charge of teaching the course have an important role as regards student influence. This responsibility is outlined in the remits for the academic commissions (Subject Coordinator, Programme Coordinator, Course Coordinator, Examiner and Director of PhD Studies).

The Vice-Chancellor's Office

On a university-wide level, the Vice-Chancellor's Office is responsible for support and coordination concerning student legal rights questions and for dialogues with the Student Union.

3 Support and training for student representatives

To create good preconditions for strong and independent student influence, the University must provide different forms of support and training for student representatives. Having responsibility for student influence within different areas includes providing such support and training.

Examples of activities of this kind is that the Vice-Chancellor's Office arranges training courses for newly appointed presidium within the Student Union (chairperson and deputy chairperson), normally once a year. In some cases, it may be fitting to document the agreements that have been reached between the University and the Student Union (see sub-section 1.1), concerning student representation in formal groups. The Faculty Board is in charge of introducing new student representatives to boards and committees. Several divisions within

Support Services also offer support and training within their respective areas of responsibility, such as HR-questions or financial matters. Specific training is provided to those students who are to act as mentors for new students during the introductory period.

Furthermore, whenever it is deemed fitting, the representatives of the Student Union are to be invited to different university-wide courses arranged for university staff, such as staff days which occur twice a year, quality assurance seminars and seminars about ethical questions.

4 Student influence through participation on committees, councils and other bodies

As per the student union ordinance (2009:769), the Student Union appoints those student representatives (including doctoral representatives) who are to participate in councils, committees and other bodies, i.e. the University's formal groups. In some cases, the groups have the mandate to make decisions, while serving in an advisory and/or preparatory capacity in other cases.

4.1 The University's formal groups

A web-based list of the University's formal groups, "Committees, councils, and other bodies", is accessible via the University's external web site, on the Student Portal, and on the Staff Portal. The Chairperson or convener of a group is in charge of ensuring that the group has been listed in this document and that the information is correct and up-to-date.

Most groups treat questions that can – directly or indirectly – have a bearing on courses and programmes or the students' situation. Since doctoral studies are closely linked to the University's research activities, groups working with research matters are also included in many cases.

The chairperson or convener of a group should have a dialogue with the Student Union about the purpose of the group and about whether it is appropriate to have a student representative or whether student influence should be assured by other means. Since some questions may seem less pertinent, from the student perspective, it is entirely up to the Student Union whether they wish to decline the offer of participating in bodies that may be deemed less important ³.

In some cases, it may be deemed appropriate to document the agreements that are continually reached between the University and

³ Compare prop. 1999/2000:28, Student influence and quality assurance development in higher education institutions, p. 28.

the Student Union (see sub-section 1.1) regarding student representation in formal groups in the official cooperation agreements.

4.2 The student representative's role in the group

Student representatives in a group have the same rights and obligations as the other members/participants of the group.

The chairperson or convener of the group is responsible for ensuring that each new student representative receives a relevant introduction to the functions and working procedures of the group (see section 3). Furthermore, the student representatives, like the rest of the group, must have access to information and decision-making material in good time.

It is recommended that student representatives, and other members alike, attend all of the meetings of the group. Moreover, the student representatives should whenever possible gather opinions from the students who will be affected by the group's work, confirm decisions with them and provide them with information on a continual basis.

If problems were to arise as regards the participation of a student representative in a particular group – for example concerning a lack of attendance – the chairperson or convener of the group should primarily contact the student in question. If the issue is not resolved by means of this contact, the chairperson or convener of the group should contact the Student Union presidium.

The University must facilitate the students' involvement as student representatives during their studies. If the meeting schedule clashes with course or examination components, a dialogue should be held between the chairperson or convener of the group, the student, and the course coordinator in question. Different alternatives should be discussed.

4.3 Chairperson's decision

As concerns urgent matters, it may be necessary for the chairperson to take a chairman's decision. Before such decisions are taken, the students are to be given the opportunity to present their views within a certain amount of time, related to the urgency of the matter.

Chairman's decisions are equated with decisions that are normally taken by one individual (see section 6).

Examples of urgent matters where chairperson's decisions may have to be taken are the Faculty Board's decision on appointing a Subject Coordinator or Curriculum Committee decisions about changing a course syllabus.

5 Vice-Chancellor's decision-making meetings

Vice-Chancellor's decisions are usually taken at decision-making meetings which are held approximately every other week. A representative from the Student Union participates in these meetings. In this way, student influence is ensured since the decisions are taken by a single individual in these cases (see section 6). The Vice-Chancellor's decision mandate is outlined in work procedure regulations and the Vice-Chancellor's delegation order.

Since the possibility of affecting the matters that are brought up at the decision-making meetings is limited, the students are to be included at an earlier stage if the matter concerns the students' studies or their situation. This is mainly to be achieved by including the students in preparatory bodies (see section 4), through specific consultation such as dialogue meetings (see section 8) or by providing the opportunity for them to submit their viewpoints on the matter within the framework of internal referral dispatches (see section 10).

In exceptional cases, the Vice-Chancellor may have to make decisions outside of the decision-making meetings. If such a decision concerns education or the students' situation, special consultation must take place with the Student Union prior to the decision.

6 Student influence when a single individual prepares or takes decisions

In the higher education ordinance, there is a regulation concerning student influence in relation to one single individual taking the decisions. If such a decision concerns education or the students' situation, the student representative must be provided with information and must be consulted in good time before the decision is taken or before the completion of the preparations.

In this section, the special procedures that exist at the University to ensure that this regulation is followed are described. The procedures are based on the guidance provided by the Higher Education Authority's report *Student influence when a single individual prepares or takes decisions – UKÄ's assessment of 20 types of decisions*, Report 2020:19.

6.1 Decisions related to education

6.1.1 Preparation of decisions in matters concerning programmes and courses offered by the university

Decisions about the range of programmes to be offered are taken by the Vice-Chancellor during those special meeting where the students participate (see section 5). Preparation of these matters takes place at the school level and suggestions regarding new or changed programmes are submitted by the Head of the School in question. The Head of School is responsible for ensuring that consultations with students take place during the preparation process.

The Heads of Divisions at the schools are responsible for the preparation and decisions pertaining to the courses that are offered. During the preparation stage and before decisions are taken, consultations with the Student Union are conducted.

6.1.2 Preparation of decisions about changing programme syllabi and course syllabi

Decisions about changing programme syllabi and course syllabi are taken by curriculum committees where the students are represented.

The preparation of matters concerning changes of programme syllabi is carried out at the school level, primarily by programme coordinators, subject coordinators and heads of divisions at the school connected to the course in question. The Head of Division, who submits a suggestion about changes of a programme syllabus to the Curriculum Committee, is responsible for ensuring that consultations are conducted with students within the programme in question and/or with the Student Union. The completion of the consultation is to be checked by the Head of Division in the form that is to be submitted to the Curriculum Committee.

Matters concerning changes of course syllabi are prepared at the School level, primarily by the Course Coordinator, applicable Programme Coordinators, and the Subject Coordinator. The Subject Coordinator, who submits suggestions of changes to the course syllabus, is responsible for ensuring that consultation with the Student Union is conducted.

6.1.3 Decisions concerning infrastructure, student administration, student support and teaching resources

Decisions pertaining to infrastructure, administration of studies, student support and learning resources can in many cases be crucial for the studies or the students' situations. The students should therefore be given the right to influence during the final decision-making stage. Examples of this can be decisions about limiting the access to practice rooms or other rooms or decisions about implementing a new learning platform.

The responsibility for this type of matter lies primarily with support services but in some cases also with the schools. Regardless of the

body that prepares or takes the decisions – the University Director, a Head of School, a Head of Division, or an Office Director – consultations with the Student Union must be conducted.

6.2 Organisational decisions

The students have the right to influence when decisions are taken in regard to establishing or discontinuing groups, if the group is going to handle (or has handled) questions related to studies.

Decisions about establishments or discontinuations of such groups at the university-wide level are taken by the Vice-Chancellor at special decision-making meeting where the students can participate (see section 5). In cases where such groups are established or discontinued by other bodies – such as by the University Director, Heads of Schools, the Director of the Vice-Chancellor's Office, Heads of Divisions or Office Directors - consultations with the Student Union must be conducted.

6.3 Work delegation decisions

Programme Coordinators, Course Coordinators for courses at the doctoral level as well as Course Examiners at the doctoral level are appointed by the respective Head of School. The applicable Head of Division at the respective school, who prepares the matter, is responsible for ensuring that consultations with the Student Union are conducted. The completion of the consultation is indicated in the decision form, which is to be filled out by the Head of Division and signed by the Head of School.

Decisions about Course Coordinators and examiners of courses at the first-cycle and second-cycle levels are taken by the applicable Head of Division at the School in question. The Subject Coordinator, who prepares the matter, is responsible for ensuring that consultations with the Student Union are conducted. The completion of the consultation is indicated in the decision form, which is to be filled out by the Subject Coordinator and signed by the Head of Division.

6.4 Decisions about employment

The students have a right to student influence regarding the employment of teachers. In accordance with the regulation which outlines the University's appointments procedure, the Student Union should always be invited to participate in recruitment groups that prepare matters concerning the employment of teachers.

When it comes to other employment positions, an assessment should be made on a case to case basis as regards the need for consultation with the Student Union.

7 Contracts concerning problems and student legal rights questions

In cases when specific problems concerning studies and the students' situations are noted by the Student Union, those procedures that are outlined in "Instructions regarding questions and complaints from students" are to be followed. The procedures entail that it is primarily the teacher responsible or the applicable body within Support Services that are to be contacted. If the problem is unresolved, the matter should be brought to the attention of the superior in charge. If the matter concerns student legal rights questions, support may be provided by the University's legal advisor. The matter is then followed up at regular dialogue meetings (see section 8).

8 Dialogue meetings

The Student Union or sections of the Student Union are regularly invited to meetings with different University management bodies, within the framework for dialogue meetings.

8.1 Vice-Chancellor's dialogue meetings

The Vice-Chancellor and the Pro-Vice-Chancellor invite the Student Union to dialogue meetings on a regular basis, at least once per term.

The primary aim of these meetings (on a University-wide level) is to create good relations between the University and the Student Union. They also provide opportunities for different types of exchanges of information, for example, as regards future planning within the two organisations.

8.2 Faculty Board's dialogue meetings

The Chair and the Deputy Chair of the Faculty Board (the Dean and the Pro-Dean) invite the Student Union to dialogue meetings on a regular basis, at least once per term.

During these meetings, matters of a general character are treated, connected to quality assessment within programmes, courses and research. The meetings provide the Faculty Board with insights into concrete questions that need to be brought to light in order to improve the quality of both education and research. Matters which concern individuals can form the basis of questions that are brought up during the meetings but details of the matters are not treated.

8.3 The School's dialogue meetings

The management groups of the Schools (Heads of Schools and Heads of Divisions) invite the Student Union (or applicable sections of the Student Union) to dialogue meetings on a regular basis, at least once per term.

During these meetings, general and specific questions and complaints related to the operations of the Schools are treated. The matters can relate to specific individuals, both students and teachers. Follow-ups of particular issues and student legal rights questions that have been brought up at previous meetings may also occur (see section 7).

8.4 Support Services dialogue meetings

The Office directors of certain offices within Support Services invite the Student Union to dialogue meetings on a regular basis, at least once per term. Examples of offices that have such meetings are the University Library and the Academic Affairs and Student Support Office. The remaining Office Directors within Support Services invite the Student Union to dialogue meetings when the need arises.

During these meetings, general and specific questions and complaints related to the operations of the applicable Office are treated. Follow-ups of particular issues and student legal rights questions that have been brought up at previous meetings may also occur (see section 7).

8.5 Dialogue meetings concerning university-wide questions

At least three times per term, the Student Union is invited to a dialogue meeting where University-wide questions are treated. Examples of matters which are treated are the Cooperation Agreement between the University and the Student Union (see section 1) and the Annual Student Union Letter (see sub-section 8.6).

It is the Director of the Vice-Chancellor's Office who invites representatives to these dialogue meetings, in accordance with the Office's responsibility for dialogues with the Student Union on a University-wide level (see sub-section 2.4). The University Director also participates during these meetings.

9 Follow-ups of courses, programmes and study environment

Within the framework of the University's quality assessment system, primarily that part which concerns quality assessment connected to education, follow-ups of courses, programmes and the study

environment are conducted. Included in the term “study environment” are such matters that concern the “students’ situation” (a term that is used in the Higher Education Act). In this section, there is a compilation of the different follow-ups that are conducted systematically.

In addition to the activities outlined below, follow-ups of education and the study environment are also conducted within the framework of the various forms of student influence which are described in the different sections of these guidelines. Follow-ups are, for example, carried out within the framework of the operations of the formal groups and at the dialogue meetings outlined above.

The results from these follow-ups make up the basis of the planning of the University operations. The follow-ups thus contribute to the development of courses, programmes and the study environment.

9.1 Course and programme evaluations

On a regular basis, the students are provided with the opportunity to submit their views on the courses, programmes and the study environment via course and programme evaluations. Course and programme evaluations are described in specific steering documents.

9.2 Programme meetings and forums for work-related connections to education

Students within study programmes are invited to programme meetings and work-linked forums. The activities are described in specific steering documents.

9.3 Follow-up dialogues with doctoral students

The doctoral students’ education and study environment are followed up by means of dialogues with the Director of PhD Studies at least twice a year. The doctoral student’s supervisor is to participate during one of these meetings. The follow-up activity is described in the commission description for directors of studies.⁴

9.4 Annual follow-ups of degree programmes and six-year follow-ups of courses and programmes

The University’s educational practices are followed up on a regular basis, partly by means of annual follow-ups of degree programmes and partly through six-year follow-ups of courses and programmes.

⁴ There are directors of studies for doctoral studies, both for in-house studies and studies conducted in collaboration with other universities.

The annual follow-ups take place at the respective Schools while the six-year follow-ups are conducted by the Faculty Board. One part of the six-year follow-up consists of interviews with the students from the degree programmes which are being audited. The follow-ups are described in specific steering documents.

9.5 Student barometer, doctoral mirror and other questionnaires

Different questionnaires aimed at students – with a focus on both the studies and the study environment – are sent out on a regular basis. Examples of such questionnaires are the student barometer, the doctoral mirror, questionnaires for international students and new students. In the doctoral mirror, there is a questionnaire aimed at the doctoral students as well as one aimed at the supervisors.

9.6 Yearly reports and follow-ups of annual student union letter

Annual follow-ups of student influence are conducted within the framework of the University's yearly reports. The work with student influence during the past year is followed up, generally in relation to the objectives set up in the University's educational plan. The Student Union is also given the opportunity to submit its views on the University's overall activities during the year in a special foreword, with the heading "The Student Union has the floor".

The Student Union compiles an annual student union letter where the views on the University's educational activities are presented. The letter is taken into consideration and is followed up during the following year. When possible, measures are taken to develop University operations and activities.

10 Referrals

The University has well-established routines for handling internal referrals. This means that the majority of the steering documents that are created or revised by the University are handled by means of a university-wide referral procedure. The Student Union is included in the referral procedure and is thereby given the opportunity to have an influence as regards the contents of the documents.

The Student Union is also invited to participate in compilations of views on or answers to external referrals. In the specific instructions available for the handling of external referrals, the importance of the students' participation in the work is highlighted.

11 The document is in effect as of

The document is in effect as of August 31 2021 and replaces the following documents:

- Appendix 2 “Contact routes between the University and the Student Union” in “Instructions regarding questions and complaints from students” (reg nr HS 2018/871)
- “General advice regarding student representation and consultation with student representatives” (reg nr HS 2009/209-85)