



# Instructions regarding questions and complaints from students<sup>1</sup>

These instructions were ratified by the Vice-Chancellor on 12 October 2021 and are in effect as of the same date.

Dnr HS 2024/18

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<sup>1</sup> This is a translation of the Swedish version (Anvisningar för frågor och klagomål från studenter (dnr HS 2021/840)). In the event of any discrepancy, the Swedish version of this document, which is the official version, will be used.

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# 1 General information

According to the Swedish Higher Education Act, students have a right to exert influence over their education.<sup>2</sup> Different forms of student influence at the University of Skövde (the University) are described in general terms under “Instructions on Student Influence” (Instructions regarding student influence). These instructions outline details concerning student influence that deal with questions and complaints from students.

The student union can provide support concerning the contact with the official body that is referred to in the instructions. Student union representatives can also act on behalf of the student concerned, if the student so wishes.

The instructions deal with questions and complaints from both first cycle and second cycle students as well as from students enrolled in qualifying education. At the third cycle level (doctoral studies), there are other channels of communication as regards questions and complaints from students, primarily through supervisors and the director of doctoral studies concerned.

# 2 Protocol

Questions and complaints from students are viewed as important information which constitutes a base for continued development of the University’s operations. Regardless of whether the student’s questions and complaints are justified or not, the student is to be taken seriously and must receive correct and respectful treatment.

University rules and requirements cannot be waived as regards specific courses/programs or university education in general. The University’s resources must also be used appropriately which may entail certain limitations in terms of the possibility of individualized solutions. In those cases where uncertainties arise concerning the interpretation and application of rules and requirements, consultations between university official bodies must take place and, if necessary, also with the official at the Vice-Chancellor’s office in charge of student legal matters in general, see section 6.

Within the framework of the current stipulations regarding requirements, rules, and limitations, a student-centred approach is to be applied, i.e. the best interest of the student should be in focus. Such an approach is based on care and consideration, one of the three core values that are highlighted in the University’s strategic plan.

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<sup>2</sup> The education act chapter 1 section 4: The students shall have the right to exert an influence over the operations at the universities [in Sweden]. The universities should ensure that the students become active parts of the work in the development of the education.

### **3 Questions and complaints via formal groups**

Questions of a comprehensive nature which concern the University's operations are to be treated within the framework of different formal groups (bodies). A web-based list of the groups, "committees, advisory boards, and other bodies" is available on the University's external web site, internal web site (Medarbetarportalen) and web site for students (Studentportalen).

The students have the opportunity to pose questions and file complaints with the formal groups via student union representatives.

### **4 Procedures for certain types of questions and complaints Rutiner för vissa typer av frågor och klagomål**

In accordance with national and local regulations, there are established procedures as regards certain types of questions and complaints which pertain to the student's education. Cases where such procedures exist are, for example, when grades are to be reviewed or when a decision about a student not fulfilling the entry requirements of a course or program is to be reassessed.

In the appendix, there is a list of cases with established procedures. Information about the procedures connected to questions and complaints in the different cases is available in the steering documents as well as at Studentportalen.

Decisions in matters with established procedures are made by different officials within the University, for example, admissions officers or examiners. The decision mandate is based on national and local regulations. This means that the decisions cannot be reassessed or overruled by the management of the official bodies in question or by the Vice-Chancellor or any other body at the University. In certain cases, the decisions may be appealed to the Board of Appeals at the University.<sup>3</sup> The decision will then contain an appeals reference.

If a student has a complaint that pertains to the actual handling of the case, i.e. if the student perceives that a case has not been dealt with correctly, the matter will be referred to the management of the official body responsible for the case, see section 6. Examples of this can be that a student feels that national or local regulations have not been followed.

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<sup>3</sup> The Board of Appeals at the University is an authority which is tasked with the hearing of appeals pertaining to certain decisions made within universities or vocational colleges.

## 5 Other questions and complaints

In cases where there are no established procedures for the handling of questions and complaints, the teacher responsible or the official responsible within support services should be contacted.

If the student is uncertain as to which teacher or official is responsible for the question – or if there is no established procedure for the case in question – Student services, the University's general student service desk, may be contacted.

### 5.1 The teacher responsible

If a question or complaint pertains to teaching and/or examination within a specific course, it is primarily the teacher responsible who is to be approached. The teacher responsible is foremost the individual who is teaching the course.

As a second option, the course coordinator may be contacted. If the matter concerns examination, it is recommended that the examiner is contacted.

If the student is enrolled in a program and the matter is related to the program studies, the students should contact the program coordinator.

*Consultations with the head of subject, the subject coordinator and the curriculum committee*

The teachers responsible can consult with the applicable head of subject or subject coordinator as regards certain questions. Such consultations must always take place if the student's questions concern questions and complaints which pertain to the quality of the education/studies.

Questions concerning general quality aspects related to course syllabi or program syllabi can also be handled by the curriculum committees. These committees – which are constituted by heads of subjects and subject coordinators within related subjects – ratify and revise course syllabi as well as revise program syllabi. In each committee there are two student representatives.

### 5.2 Support services

If a question or complaint pertains to studies or the study environment in general – and not directly to teaching and examination within a specific course -

the student can contact the official body in questions within the University's support services. Such a question could, for example, pertain to procedures for on-campus examination or the University's IT-system.

If the need arises, Student Services can also connect students with the applicable official body.

## **6 Possibilities of taking a matter further**

If issues remain unresolved after communication with the teacher responsible or official bodies within Support Services, the case can be referred to the next level of responsibility in accordance with the order of responsibility as per the University's work procedure and underlying organization and delegation document.

In the following sections, the channels of communication are described which pertain to questions and complaints that a student wishes to take further in cases where the matter has not been resolved by the teachers responsible.<sup>4</sup>

### **6.1 Head of Division or Head of School**

The University's courses and programs are conducted at different schools which in turn are divided into divisions. If a matter cannot be resolved via a direct contact with the teacher responsible, the student should turn to the Head of Division at the applicable division of the school in question.

In those cases where the matter concerns more than one school, consultation should take place between all relevant Heads of Divisions before an answer is conveyed to the student. An example of such a matter is if the matter concerns a program course which is not provided by the school where the program belongs.

Since Heads of Divisions to a large extent are responsible for the operative work at the schools, the majority of the matters may be resolved at this level. If a solution cannot be reached, the matter may be referred to the applicable Head of School, the official responsible for the whole school. If the matter concerns several schools, consultations between the applicable Heads of Schools must take place.

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<sup>4</sup> If the question or the complaint pertains to a problem which has not been resolved within Support Services, Student Services can refer the student to the management official in charge of the matter.

*Consultations with the Faculty Board and the Vice-Chancellor's Office.*

If the student's questions and complaints concern the quality of the education, the Head of Division and the Head of School can consult with the Faculty Board, via the Dean or the Pro-Dean (the Chair and the Deputy Chair of the Faculty Board).

At the Vice-Chancellor's Office, there is a specific body that handles general student legal matters.

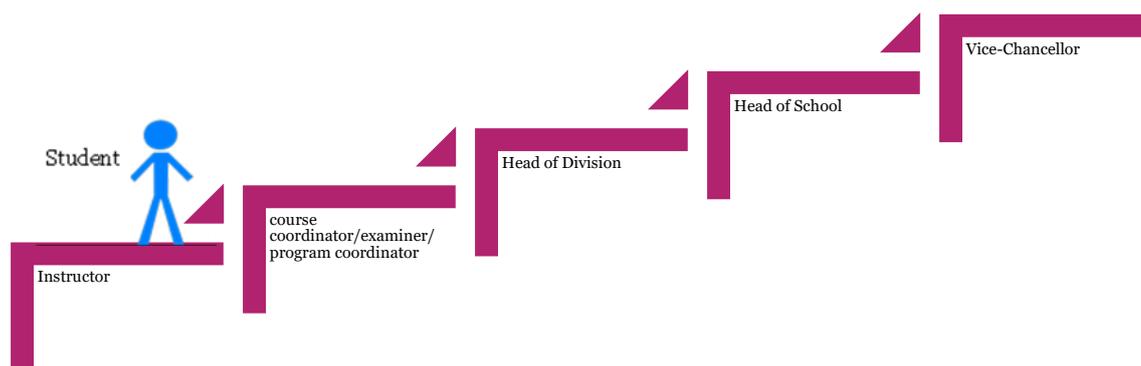
## 6.2 The Vice-Chancellor

In cases where an issue remains unresolved after communication with the Head of School, the student may refer the matter to the Vice-Chancellor. The Vice-Chancellor will investigate the matter with the support of the official body in charge of student legal matters at the Vice-Chancellor's Office (see above). If the matter concerns the quality of education, consultations with the Faculty Board may take place (see above).

Matters which are referred to the Vice-Chancellor that have not first been processed by the school will be referred directly to the Head of Division in charge of the matter.

## 6.3 Order of responsibility

The order of responsibility described above are depicted in the form of steps in figure 1.



**Figure 1.** Order of responsibility as per the University's organization and delegation document

The order of responsibility should be respected. If a matter is referred to a higher official body than the one outlined in the order of responsibility, it will be transferred directly to the applicable official body. A case may have been filed with several different official bodies at the same time, for example via email from a student. In such circumstances, the recipients should refer the student to the applicable official body in the order of responsibility.

## **7 Filing a complaint with UKÄ**

The majority of the questions and complaints that students put forth are best dealt with at the University - and preferably as close to the operations and as far down the organization as possible. This generally results in a speedy solution for the student, and for the University it may result in possible deficiencies being rectified swiftly (see section 8 below).

If a student perceives that the University has violated a law or regulation connected to the higher education sphere, however, there is always the option of filing a complaint with the Swedish Higher Education Agency (UKÄ). UKÄ monitors universities and colleges with the students' legal rights in focus. More information about filing a complaint with UKÄ is available on the authority's website ([www.uka.se](http://www.uka.se)).

## **8 Follow-up procedures**

Cases concerning questions and complaints from students are to be systematically followed up in order to improve and develop University operations. This review is to take place on different levels as part of a systematic quality assurance procedure. Special focus is to be directed towards repeated complaints within the same area, which could entail a need for measures to be taken on the part of the University.

Every year the Student Union compiles a special official missive, the Student Union missive. In this missive, the strengths and developmental potential of the University's operations are brought to light from a student perspective. The Student Union missives are studied by the University on a regular basis, in accordance with specified procedures.

## **9 The document is in effect as of**

The document is in effect as of October 12, 2021, and replaces Instructions regarding questions and complaints from students (dnr HS 2018/871).

## **Appendix: Procedures for certain types of questions and complaints**

There are established procedures for certain types of questions and complaints that pertain to the student's education:

### *Matters concerning admission, deferment of studies, and approved leave of studies*

- a decision about the applicant not fulfilling the entry requirements for admission to a course or program
- a rejection of the applicant's application for exemption of entry requirements of a course or program
- a rejection of the applicant's application for deferment of studies
- a rejection of a student's application for approved leave of studies with guaranteed admission

### *Matters concerning examination and grading*

- applications for corrections of grades
- applications for reassessments of grades
- applications for change of examiner

### *Matters concerning course certificates, degree certificate, and credit transfers*

- decisions about credit transfers connected to studies or vocational work
- rejections of requests for degree certificates or course certificates

### *Matters concerning equal treatment*

- reporting on discrimination, harassment, and humiliating or abusive treatment
- rejection of application for study support for students with disabilities

### *Matters concerning tuition fees*

- requests for refunds of tuition fees

Information about the procedures can be found in the steering documents and on Studentportalen.