



VAASAN YLIOPISTON
YLIOPPILASKUNTA

Policy Paper

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Introduction

The purpose of the Student Union of the University of Vaasa is to advocate for its members on campus, regionally, and nationally. The Student Union ensures that students can fully enjoy their time at university, and that daily life during studies is smooth and meaningful. At the center of our operations is communicating our members' needs to policy makers for backing their decisions. In addition to Vaasa, the University offers teaching in Seinäjoki, Kokkola, and Pori; all campuses offer an equal, safe, and sustainable learning environment to students. The aim of the Student Union's Policy Paper is to promote student wellbeing, involvement, and equity in all areas of life.

The goal of the Student Union is to create a vital, diverse student community that everyone can feel a part of. The Student Union interacts with its members and the organizations operating within it and offers opportunities for social interaction and participation in decision-making. We pay careful attention to integrating international students into our community.

The key values in the Student Union are equality and all students' right to equal treatment. The Student Union has a Declaration of Equality that guides its operations. The wellbeing of the student community is possible when all students are guaranteed accessible studies and the opportunity to partake in the university community. Both the teaching spaces on campus and the leisure facilities must support these principles and offer a safe and considerate environment.

The University of Vaasa

Together with the Student Union, the University of Vaasa advances the sense of community, improves the quality of teaching, and ensures that the students' voice is heard in decision-making. Curricula are developed to better respond to the needs of working life and to support students' individual paths. The University invests in wellbeing during studies by offering support and flexible study solutions to students at different stages of their studies. The campus offers the facilities for research, learning, and community.

Education

Developing the quality of education is pivotal at the University of Vaasa, and curricula acknowledge the diverse needs of students and the workload of studying. The Student Union's Language Policy Recommendations support the linguistic diversity and internationality of the university community. The contribution of students to research and projects is notable, and their right to their own work must

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be protected with clear practices surrounding intellectual property. Pedagogical expertise is the basis for the quality of teaching, and the University ensures that the teaching staff's skills stay current. Students actively participate in developing teaching, and the contents in teaching are planned to respond to the needs of working life. Additionally, the balance between in-person and remote teaching is maintained to ensure student wellbeing and high-quality learning.

Our university

- The University develops courses and degrees based on feedback, which it actively collects from students. The feedback processes of the University are transparent.
- Students receive individualized feedback during and after their coursework.
- Teaching is high-quality regardless of the degree programme or teaching language.
- The University offers all students adequate teaching on sustainable development, and issues of responsibility are taken into account in teaching, research, and projects.
- Courses respond to demands and do not include too much overlapping content.
- Finnish degree programmes mainly include courses taught in Finnish.
- The University ensures that the pedagogical skills of its teachers are current and at a high level.
- Students are a part of planning the curricula. Planning curricula takes into account the overall workload of studies and diverse learners.
- The guidelines for completing studies are mainly university-wide and not individual to schools.
- Internships are voluntary, and they can be accredited in the degrees.
- The recognition of prior learning is smooth and the criteria transparent.
- Students have the opportunity to share or hide their gender and specify a chosen name regardless of the personal data listed in the identity repository of the Digital and Population Data Services Agency.
- The University implements uniform guidelines for thesis supervision to all academic schools. The guidelines ensure the opportunity to receive individual supervision based on the student's needs.
- Theses can be completed as individual work.
- Students have the opportunity to publish their Bachelor's theses.
- Bachelor's degree programmes focus on in-person teaching instead of remote teaching. Additionally, Master's programmes offer the opportunity to participate in in-person teaching.
- The mandatory in-person teaching during Master's degree studies is justifiable and brings additional value to students. The form of teaching is shared in the study guide well in advance.



- Studies do not merely focus on remote teaching, and a balance of in-person and remote teaching is maintained to support wellbeing and a good learning experience.
- As the number of students increases, the capacity to take exams electronically is also increased. More electronic exam spaces are offered where necessary.
- In addition to coursebooks, the University library offers a wide selection of literature to support other educational fields and general academic knowledge. There is a sufficient number of physical books in addition to electronic material.
- The University gives clear guidelines on the intellectual property rights of course work, so students understand their rights and responsibilities.
- The digital materials and platforms utilized in teaching are accessible.
- The University enables students to easily switch between degrees and offers supplementary studies to enable transferring to another field.
- All decision-making bodies at the University have an equal tripartite representation.

Cooperation with the Vaasa University of Applied Sciences

Cooperation with the University of Applied Sciences must not mean that entire study modules are transferred to another sector. Instead, collaboration must aim to improve the quality of education and research. The University may offer its students the opportunity to take courses at the Vaasa University of Applied Sciences, but this must not decrease the selection that the University's own programmes offer.

- At the heart of cooperation is the development of education and research, not saving resources.
- The cooperation between the University of Vaasa and the Vaasa University of Applied Sciences does not reduce the number or quality of degree programmes at the University.
- University students can take courses at the University of Applied Sciences if it serves their degree. Completing the courses is made easy and informed clearly.
- The courses offered by the University of Applied Sciences are used to supplement university studies, but their use must not be excessively emphasized at the expense of the University's own courses.

Student admissions

The student admissions of universities must be fair, equal, and supportive of the students' futures. All applicants must have an equal opportunity to be admitted regardless of previous educational background. Student admissions must emphasize the entrance examination, because it offers the best way to measure the applicants' skills, motivation, and readiness in the field. At the same time, it must be ensured that entrance examinations are based on fitting pre-reading material.

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- The quota for first-time applicants covers at most a half of the study places.
- Entrance examinations are based on fitting and reasonable pre-reading materials in the fields where using them is justifiable.
- Entrance examinations measure the skills and readiness needed for studying in the field, as well as study motivation.
- Scoring the certificate-based admissions takes into account the relevant subjects for studying in the field.
- It is possible to apply to universities regardless of academic achievement in secondary education.
- A student's right to study is not tied to their academic achievement at university.
- The open university route does not equal a paid way into a degree programme without an entrance examination.
- Applying may have a reasonable fee to applicants coming from outside the EU and ETA countries.
- University admissions consider quality of employment and the University's own resources in relation to the number of admissions.

Teaching and student wellbeing services

The University has adequate support services to guide students and support their wellbeing. The University offers its students support services and low-threshold counseling. The University's sport services and physical activity opportunities on campus further support student wellbeing. The University offers guidance counseling, which plays an important role in supporting students and their graduation.

- The University offers sufficient, easily accessible teaching and wellbeing services, and they are a visible part of the university community.
- The University ensures adequate study psychologist resources by offering one study psychologist per every 2 000 students.
- Students can get an acute appointment to the study psychologist within a week of contact.
- The study psychologist does not repair inadequacies in teaching services.
- The support services and counseling offered by the University are non-denominational.
- The University offers comprehensive sport services that are versatile and accessible to students. Gym services must be free of charge and available 24 hours a day.
- A safer space, body neutrality, and general safety are key features of sport services. The quality of the services is high and professional.
- The University fosters a neuro-friendly culture that does not require students to separately apply for special arrangements.
- Guidance counseling is high in quality, and students can easily find information about different forms of guidance.

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- There is a sufficient number of guidance counselors in relation to the number of students in all fields.
- Students can get an appointment with their guidance counselor within a week of first contact.
- The career counseling at the University is comprehensive and supports student employment.

The campus and university facilities

The University ensures general safety on campus. The campus environment, such as the learning facilities, restaurants, and organization rooms, is designed to be accessible for all students to participate without limitations. The University offers facilities on campus for physical activity and leisure time, as well as spaces that enable attending to children's care needs. In addition to Vaasa, the University offers teaching in the Seinäjoki, Kokkola, and Pori campuses, which is taken into consideration in advocacy. Members are encouraged to participate in campus development.

- The University's facilities are open to students 24 hours a day.
- The University employs a Safer Space Policy, and it is clearly displayed around the campus facilities.
- The campus facilities and buildings are accessible, physically and otherwise.
- Sensory hypersensitivity is considered when designing and utilizing the facilities.
- Study facilities support learning and utilize technology to support teaching. Teaching staff and students are guided in using this technology.
- The campus has plenty of shared computers and additional screens.
- The campus has versatile spaces for independent study and group work. The spaces are quiet, without disturbance, and reservable for everyone.
- Classrooms are available to students outside teaching sessions.
- Teaching sessions ensure a calm learning environment.
- Teaching sessions have a safe atmosphere to express oneself.
- The University offers organizations operating within the Student Union free, accessible, large enough facilities on campus to cover the essential needs of the organization.
- The University offers spaces that are suitable for tending to children's care needs.
- Bringing a child on campus and to teaching sessions is considered safe and acceptable.
- The campus has quiet spaces that enable practising religion and calming down.
- Foods and allergens are clearly marked in Finnish and English in the restaurant menus, lines, and electronic services.
- Students are offered student-priced food all day, including the weekend. Students and staff are informed about meal times.

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- The campus restaurants offer meals at different price points, as well as vegetarian and vegan options. Campus restaurants emphasize local food where possible.
- Healthy, filling snacks are available on campus from morning to evening.
- The campus has an outdoor gym, covered bicycle spots, and bicycle maintenance equipment. Students have access to changing facilities.
- The University offers students facilities for physical activity on campus.

The city and regional politics

Vaasa is an attractive city for studying and working where students feel at home and can affect their environment. The city has affordable, high-quality student housing, and the area's public transportation is developed to serve students' needs better. The city invests in its vibrant culture and versatile leisure opportunities. Students get discounts to leisure activities.

Housing

Developing solutions for student housing is an integral part of the Vaasa city and regional development long-term. The City of Vaasa, the Student Housing Foundation in Vaasa (VOAS), and other instances work together to ensure that construction projects consider students' needs, especially for small and affordable apartments. Housing design takes into account the diversity of students and offers various types of housing from shared, studio, and small one-bedroom apartments to family apartments.

- Student apartments are zoned diversely to central residential areas, especially in the center, Vöyrinkaupunki, and Palosaari.
- When planning construction, The City of Vaasa, VOAS, and other instances consider students' needs for small, affordable apartments.
- In urban development, The City of Vaasa, the University of Vaasa, and other instances consider the growing number and diversity of students.
- The diversity of students is taken into consideration in the types of apartments built. There is a wide range of apartments available from shared and studio apartments to larger family apartments.
- Houses have a sufficient number of spots for locking a bicycle from the frame and ample bicycle storage.
- New construction of student housing and renovation of the current houses take into account community, sustainability, and comfort.
- Furnished apartments are reserved for exchange students.
- All student housing is supported with investment grants for special groups.

Transportation

Transportation and mobility are an integral part of student life. Good connections enable a functional daily life and expand students' view of the city. The campus should be within reach of smooth and sustainable forms of transportation, and the city invests in public transportation, pedestrian paths, and cycle paths.

- Urban planning advances forms of non-motorized transportation like biking and walking. Access to the campus and central residential areas is considered when designing the high-quality pedestrian and cycle paths.
- Getting around with public transportation in Vaasa is smooth, and the city facilitates public transportation so that students do not need their own vehicles.
- Public transportation connections to major employment centers are maintained also during the summer season.
- Student discounts on public transportation must also be available when paying with card or on the application. Bus ticket prices are kept affordable.
- The city offers good transportation opportunities to the region's culture and nature sites.
- Direct, fast connections exist between the campus, center, and major student housing areas.
- The campus has frequent connections that also drive in the evening.
- The public transportation on campus considers the start and end times of lectures.
- The timetables of public transportation consider evening, night, and weekend times. Connections are added during big events.
- The connections from Vaasa and other university centers are regular and comprehensive. They serve the students living in the area.

Employment

How students commit to Vaasa strongly depends on their smooth transfer from studies to employment. Providing internships and thesis projects in the region's companies and organizations is crucial, because it enables students to gain practical experience and establish their networks for working life.

- The region's employers use anonymous recruitment, which does not reveal the person's characteristics like age, gender, or ethnic background to the recruiter before the interview stage.
- The region's employers offer positions for internships and thesis writing, and they pay a reasonable remuneration for the work.
- Students in all fields of higher education in Vaasa have the opportunity to find an internship position in the Vaasa region.



- Work and internship positions waive the requirement to know three languages. Employers do not require knowledge in Finnish or Swedish if it is not necessary for the position.
- Student employment is supported through various services and projects.

Leisure time services

Student discounts enable students to enjoy culture and leisure activities without unreasonable cost. Collaboration with local businesses enables offering even wider and more enticing discounts, which benefits both students and the regional economy. Additionally, the accessibility and quality of early childhood education near campus is pivotal to the wellbeing of student families. Student families must receive support and flexible care solutions in order to combine studies and family life seamlessly.

- The city and the region's instances support student access to affordable culture and leisure activities. They can do this by offering discounts to sport services, events, and local stores.
- There is space in the city and on campus for student culture. A wide selection of affordable venues are available for student events.
- Students get support and encouragement for physical activity. Students have access to versatile discounted sports opportunities. Student organizations get a share when scheduling the city's sports facility bookings.
- A sports and culture hall will be built in Palosaari.
- The city ensures the sufficient number and quality of early childhood education places near the campus in order to acknowledge the needs of student families.
- Early childhood education times are flexible and enable a better fit between student and family life.

City participation

Students should be involved in the decision-making processes of the city, including the municipal and county elections, in order to make their perspectives and needs known. This not only promotes the development of student-friendly services, it also strengthens the community's participation. The city's strategy and budget planning benefit from students, who bring valuable information and new ideas to maintaining and developing a student-friendly city.

- The preparations for the city's strategy and annual budget widely involve students in different hearings and working groups.
- The city implements an action plan to promote the student-friendliness of the city.



- The Student Union becomes a part of the city's early-stage development by being invited to different working groups and workshops.
- The Student Union supports the city's goal of carbon neutrality with its own actions.

National student politics

The Student Union actively advocates for its members on a local and national level. We make the students' voice heard in national conversation with comments and strengthen Vaasa's position within the national student movement. Comments must serve the voice and will of the entire student movement as comprehensively as possible while also considering diverse perspectives and needs. Student unions work in close cooperation with each other on a national level, and joint comments amplify the voice of the student movement.

The higher education system

The Finnish system of higher education is based on a so-called dual model, in which degrees from universities and universities of applied sciences have clearly distinguished profiles. Both forms of higher education complement each other and produce different kinds of knowledge for the society's needs. Educational cooperation between sectors is welcome, but outsourcing degrees or modules from one sector to another should not occur.

- Degrees from universities and universities of applied sciences maintain their individual profiles according to the dual model, and closer educational cooperation does not mean outsourcing entire degrees or study modules from one sector to another.
- Only universities have the right to grant Master's and doctoral degrees.
- Fees for open universities are reasonable, and payment is not collected from degree students.
- Open universities do not have the right to grant degrees.
- All degree studies are free for citizens of the EU and ETA countries.
- Degree students from outside the EU and ETA may be subject to reasonable tuition fees. These fees should not be used to cover expenses from any other students.

The funding model

The model of funding for universities should be versatile and sustainable, so universities can continue to offer high-quality education and research. Sufficient funding ensures the long-term development of the University, the realization of innovative research projects, and the support of student wellbeing. Constantly

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evaluating and developing the funding of universities is crucial to ensure that universities can meet the changing needs and challenges of our society.

- The model of funding emphasizes the quality of education instead of quantity, for example by enhancing the qualitative criteria.
- The model of funding does not emphasize students completing their first degree.
- Universities will continue to be funded mainly by the state and not from "for consideration" private funding.
- The model of funding is predictable, and it encourages universities to promote employment, consider questions of sustainability and responsibility, strengthen the cooperation between institutions of higher education, and support internationality.

Subsistence

Student financial aid is important for the financial wellbeing of students. Ensuring its sufficiency and flexibility helps students concentrate on their studies without financial distress. Housing allowance complements student financial aid and ensures full-time studying. Developing the financial aid system improves the quality of life for students and supports graduating in target time.

- The amount of study grant is sufficient to cover the essential costs for students' daily life.
- The study grant is linked to the National Pensions Index.
- The number of months a student can receive financial aid per degree is raised. The terms for additional discretionary months are eased.
- The proportion of the student loan and the study grant is balanced, and taking out a student loan is a voluntary form of additional subsistence to a student.
- The maximum amount of student loan compensation is raised to a level that accounts for the amount of granted student loan.
- The eligibility of the student loan for tax deductions is investigated.
- Student loan compensation is divided into Bachelor's and Master's degrees.
- Military service and sick leave lengthen the period of loan compensation.
- Extending the time-limit for granting student loan compensation is evaluated.
- Students are included under the general housing allowance.
- The maintenance obligation of the general housing allowance is removed.
- Students receive year-round support regardless of the type of housing allowance.
- Students will receive a housing allowance that is independent of the rate at which the student progresses in their studies. This allowance is granted 12 months a year.
- Student benefits are flexible and adjust to changing life circumstances.
- Students are included in all projects aimed at reforming social security.

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- Social security reform ensures sufficient subsistence for students.

The FSHS

The Finnish Student Health Service (FSHS) plays a central role in promoting student health and wellbeing. By securing adequate core funding, we can ensure that services remain high in quality and accessible to all students in higher education all around Finland.

- The core funding for the FSHS is raised to meet service demand. Core funding covers all expenses in student healthcare.
- Students have access to 24-hour, year-round healthcare, which is accomplished through seamless cooperation between the FSHS and the wellbeing services county.
- Students must get access to treatment in student healthcare within 14 days.
- All services of the FSHS are available in three languages, and service is high-quality regardless of language.
- Students receive a bill for the student healthcare fee.
- The direct deduction of the student healthcare fee from the study grant is evaluated.
- The care path to mental health services for students must be clear, and treatment should not be needlessly prolonged.
- The FSHS offers several brief therapy treatments, and the process is simultaneously made easier and streamlined.
- The FSHS provides free birth control to higher education students who do not receive it from their wellbeing services county.
- Exchange students may pay the student healthcare fee and get access to the FSHS services.
- Finnish exchange students have access to remote and phone appointments during their exchange abroad.

Student mobility and the European Higher Education Area

The Student Union supports student mobility by promoting easy access to exchange and internship opportunities abroad. Exchange studies develop language skills, cultural awareness, and professional skills, which promote students' readiness to enter the workforce. Student exchange must be accessible to everyone. Studies completed during the exchange must be recognized into the degree without delaying graduation. Internationalization at home is promoted with multicultural learning environments and courses that support internationality. European university alliances, such as EUNICE, offer free opportunities for digital education.

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Internationality and European cooperation

Exchange studies support the understanding of languages and cultures. We must dismantle obstacles preventing students from going on exchange, and the different stages of the exchange process must be as smooth as possible. Studies completed during the exchange support students' professional development and promote graduation.

- Information about going on exchange, the exchange process, target universities, and available support and grants are easily and extensively available on the University's website or student intranet.
- The University encourages internationality and offers all students the opportunity to go abroad for exchange studies or an internship during their studies.
- Degree structures enable going on exchange, and an exchange period does not delay progressing in degree studies.
- Studies completed during the exchange are included in the degree, and the process for recognizing acquired competence is easy and understandable.
- Student exchanges receive financial support through scholarships and grants.
- Student exchange destinations are versatile in terms of study fields and locations, and the target universities' education is high in quality.
- The University offers the opportunity to internationalize at home through supporting both studying and the community. Internationalization at home is supported by curriculum design.
- The University's European university alliance offers opportunities for internationalization, support for going on summer or short exchanges, and occasions for internship and research exchange in other universities in the alliance.
- The digital education platform provided by the EUNICE university alliance is versatile and accessible. All courses on the platform are free to students in the alliance universities regardless of university.

International students

International degree students must be supported adequately both during and after their studies, including the opportunity to develop skills in one of our national languages. International students diversify the university community and promote the region's vitality, so improving their wellbeing and employment prospects is a central goal.

- International students receive support for arriving and integrating into Finland.



- International students receive a residence permit for the entire duration of their studies. People who have completed their higher education degree are offered a permanent residence permit automatically after graduation.
- Permit processes are eased, and the annual income limit is decreased.
- International students receive support for learning our national languages during and after their studies. International students get the opportunity to participate in an intensive course for a national language before beginning their studies.
- Residence permit procedures allow for a smooth transition between studies, employment, and entrepreneurship. If they so wish, students have the opportunity to work without limits during their studies.