

SFS Principle Program

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1. Introduction

This is Sweden's National Union of Students, SFS, principle program . The program of principles is SFS's ideological platform and describes SFS's idea of the knowledge society and the principles that should permeate higher education. Based on SFS's vision, the program is an account of the organization's values. In all political advocacy work that SFS conducts, guidance can and must be taken from the program of principles. The program does not aim to present reform proposals or concrete political solutions for SFS to pursue. Instead, all positions taken on political issues and all political focus chosen by the organization must be made with an analysis and through a rhetoric that is in accordance with the principles expressed here.

In this text, student means the person who is admitted to and conducts higher education at undergraduate, advanced or postgraduate level.

1.1 The idea of the knowledge society

The idea of the knowledge society is based on the fact that the independent and democratic academy has a central role for the development of society and the common welfare. The academy's significance and special position are legitimized through high quality, broad popular support and a high degree of student influence and collegial co-determination.

The knowledge society is permeated by a conviction and insight that higher education benefits both the public and the individual. Everyone's equal opportunity for higher education is a foundation of how the university is governed and operates, and it is a given that the education is free of charge for everyone. There is also a comprehensive security system which, combined with decent social and economic conditions in general, provides good conditions for students to pursue higher education. The knowledge society is a global issue and extends across national borders.

High quality education is a right for all students. Higher education rests on a scientific or artistic basis as well as proven experience and is permeated by continuous development and improvement. The basic purpose of higher education is to provide students with a useful education.

1.2 Starting point for advocacy work

SFS' purpose is to represent and safeguard the interests of the member unions and students through advocacy work. A democratic society is a prerequisite for good student influence and for student security. SFS as an organization is based on basic democratic principles and thus safeguards an inclusive approach with respect for gender equality, diversity and the equal value of all people. SFS is based on the members and the organization is built to reflect the members we have. SFS is independent in its opinion formation and exercise of opinion. SFS is a transparent organization where outsiders

have insight and understanding of us, in the same way SFS must have an understanding of others.

SFS conducts advocacy work with external parties to promote the interests of students and student unions. SFS only collaborates with organizations that share SFS values, but conducts advocacy work for everyone. As part of the advocacy work, SFS works with the government, regardless of its composition. Success in free and general elections provides access to the institutions of democracy and outcomes must be respected. The democratic principles must be safeguarded.

2. SFS's view of the academy

2.1 The academy in the knowledge society

The academy's core occupation is to create, refine and disseminate knowledge. The academy therefore plays a crucial role in the development of the knowledge society. Higher education, research and collaboration between academia and the surrounding society are absolutely crucial issues for creating social, economic and ecological sustainability.

All aspects of sustainability are central to society. The state has a special responsibility to set clear requirements at national level for sustainability aspects within academia, especially due to the rapid climate change and its major negative impact on society. The academy should therefore actively work to reduce its own climate impact. The higher education institutions also have unique opportunities to provide education and research on sustainability that benefits the whole of society. Sustainability is not limited to any particular scientific discipline but can be included in all subject areas. It is essential that sustainability issues within the academy are addressed in an international context. It is important that mobility is not restricted, but that responsibility is required in the internationalization that is taking place.

Neither politics, the market, civil society nor the scientific community can solve the great challenges facing society on their own. The academy therefore has an important role to play as a hub between the various activities at local, regional, national and international level. Through the academy's dissemination of knowledge, solutions on how we best combat the common problems that affect, for example, the environment, health, finances, technology or social issues.

2.2 The academy's role and mission

The primary purpose of higher education is to give people the opportunity to develop into independent individuals who have the ability to critically examine, understand and relate to their surroundings. The academy must also give the individual the opportunity for personal development. In this way, education gives the individual a greater power to control his own life and realize himself.

The academy also plays an important role in maintaining and developing a democratic society. Education and research must be characterized by diversity and openness that provides space for free conversation. Conversations that in turn give rise to new thoughts and ideas.

The desire to meet the short-term needs of the labor market must never exceed the academy's mission to promote the general public and the individual's development in general. The knowledge development that individuals undergo within the academy is absolutely crucial for people's professional development and professional life.

2.3 The Academy's values

The equal value of people and opportunities to influence are central to the academy. This means that diversity among students, academic staff and other staff is an important goal. Diversity brings more perspectives to research and education and at the same time contributes to understanding between people from different parts of society. In view of the academy's impact on people's lives and the central importance for the knowledge society, the academy must be made available to people to participate in regardless of their living conditions. For the academy's popular support and trust, it is important that its recruitment results in the society's population composition being reflected.

In order to open up and make the academy a real alternative for everyone, the universities' methods for broadened recruitment and participation must be constantly improved. A heterogeneous group of students entails higher demands regarding treatment and pedagogically well-thought-out educational arrangements that guarantee an inclusive study and work environment. The norms that govern who feels welcome within the academy must be continuously reviewed and questioned. There must be strategies to combat exclusionary structures throughout academia.

It is important to have a critical approach to see structures and injustices. Given the knowledge that exists about power structures within the academy, inequality and structural discrimination should not be accepted. It is important that the academy takes a stand for equality, human rights and against racism, fascism and violent extremism. The goal must be for the academy to be characterized by criticism of norms and strive to be a role model for other activities in the area of equal conditions.

3. The Academy's prerequisites

Universities and colleges must be strategically located geographically and be spread throughout the country, something that is absolutely necessary to make studies and research a real alternative for everyone and secure the supply of skills throughout the country. Within and between higher education institutions, there must be a great breadth in terms of the research and education that is conducted.

Both education and research require resources. In order for the academy to have the right conditions to shoulder its role in the knowledge society, it is necessary that both education and research are financed in such a way that academic freedom and the quality of education are not jeopardized. The majority of research conducted at higher education institutions is to be funded by the public through non-competitive public funds.

3.1 Dimensioning

The knowledge society requires a high proportion of academically educated people. National comparisons for levels of education must be made with countries comparable to Sweden with high educational policy ambitions. The size of the academy must be governed by the need for a wide range of education and the possibility of conducting research in a large number of areas. It is important that people are not deprived of the right to higher education due to too few places of education.

3.2 Students and academic staff

Within the academy, students and academic staff collaborate with each other in teaching and research. Students play an important role in the academy and can contribute to both education, research and the university's collaboration with the surrounding society. This requires the right conditions in the form of skilled and committed teachers and a management that pays attention to the students as an asset.

Academic staff in various positions may have either teaching or research as their main occupation, albeit in varying intervals and intensities. Either task must never take precedence.

Research students that are employed within the academy have a special position as both students and academic staff. As students, they undergo training and meet academic staff in various roles, while in their role as researchers at the beginning of their careers and in their meetings with students in teaching, they are also academic staff. In light of this dual capacity students that are employed within the academy are therefore covered by the rights and obligations that apply to both of these roles.

In order for the teaching staff to have the conditions to be skilled in both research and education, conscious guidance is required from a political point of view and from the university's management. Among other things, a well-functioning resource allocation

system for education and research both from the state and within the university, access to competence development for teachers, clear career paths and a functioning security system for the university's staff are needed. In order to ensure commitment and competence within the framework of education, there must be systems that merit pedagogical skills for teaching staff.

3.3 Collaboration with the surrounding society

A reciprocal connection between higher education and research is a necessity for maintaining high quality in both education and research. Through collaboration with the surrounding society, innovations and knowledge dissemination are created that contribute to the development of the knowledge society. Both the surrounding society and the academy benefit from the dissemination of knowledge that takes place through collaboration within the framework of education and research.

Since a large part of the research is funded with public funds, it is important that both results and data are available to the public. The results of all publicly funded research must therefore be made available through open archives. In order to stimulate the emergence of innovations and promote collaboration, it is also important that private funds can be allocated to research.

3.4 The Academy's freedom, structural conditions and democratic ideals

The Academy's unique role in society makes it a public interest. Higher education, research and the academy's collaboration with the surrounding society affect people, regardless of whether they themselves work within the academy or not. Through politics, the public can influence what the structural conditions and governance of the academy look like. It is also through politics that the public formulates their expectations and academic needs.

Academic freedom must always be sought after, but in constant balance with academic responsibility. Academic freedom means that students and academic staff must have the opportunity to freely seek knowledge within the academy. Academic responsibility means that higher education institutions and scholars must comply with laws, regulations, regulations and collegially made decisions and have a responsibility towards those who participate and invest in the academy - society and primarily the students.

There is a natural conflict between the academy's freedom and the academy's responsibility, which results in demand and the need for transparency and influence between the academy's stakeholders. For the academy to be able to take on its responsibility, however, the academy's freedom is a basic precondition. Thus, from a long-term perspective, it is important that neither politics nor the market encroach on academic freedom. It is also important that the academy understands society's and students' expectations and needs, but that it is the academy itself that controls its

activities so that they may be met. It is the responsibility of both the state and the higher education institutions to ensure academic freedom for students and academic staff. The higher education institutions have a special responsibility for the academic freedom of postgraduate student.

To support the academy's freedom and responsibility, the greatest possible long-term perspective, clarity, predictability and trust from politics are required, as well as adequate funding of the academy's activities. Furthermore, politics must have a realistic and solution-oriented approach to the academy's activities and assignments. The surrounding society must cooperate with the academy and the students, but its special interests must never take precedence over the academy's mission. Academic freedom must be ensured so that the academy is not reduced to just one labor market policy instrument. Under strong academic freedom in balance with academic responsibility, the academy will contribute to and stimulate the development of society and individuals.

For the public to perceive the academy as legitimate, fee exemption, admission to equal competition at all levels, transparency, legal certainty, consistent popular and democratic representativeness, accessibility and high quality in education and research are crucial. In order to live up to those expectations, the academy must have a relationship with politics that is characterized by mutual trust and confidence.

The academy must also be governed internally according to democratic principles. It is not least important that there is a broad representation of students, academic staff and other staff on boards and other decision-making and preparatory bodies. Higher education institutions must have the opportunity to include external representatives in decision-making bodies in order to promote multifaceted perspectives on the activities. However, the external representatives must never be the largest group. For the academy to function effectively at all levels, the internal leadership, and the well-established collegial decision-making on which this is based, must include a comprehensive, strong and independent student influence. The internal management of the higher education institutions largely consists of four fundamental systems: resource allocation, quality, employment and management. These shall strive to be transparent, easy to understand, fair, flexible, nationally compatible and quality-promoting.

3.5 Student influence

Students must, unlike customers in a market, be co-actors within the academy. They play a crucial role in the planning, management and development of the academy at all levels. Students have both the right and the obligation to influence the academy's activities through active student influence. Students must have the conditions and opportunity to influence issues that lie outside the academy's activities that particularly affect the students' education or everyday life. All students must have the opportunity to pursue student influence without it having a negative impact on the student or their education.

In order for student influence to function well, democratically controlled student unions are required that are organisationally independent of higher education institutions, government and society in general. The student unions must also, as far as possible, be guaranteed financial independence. There must be clear laws, ordinances and rules that regulate the granting of union status that guarantee the student unions a legally secure, clear and transparent process.

The university must clearly, accessibly and with good foresight inform its students at all levels about the current union status process. In order for student unions to be independent of the higher education institution, the higher education institution may not set other requirements for union status than those regulated by laws, ordinances or regulations. There must thus be clear letters for what is required to be granted union status as well as opportunities for appeal within the process.

Since a well-functioning student influence is an important matter for the whole of society as a co-actor within the academy, it is of particular importance that all student unions are given the opportunity for knowledge development, regardless of the individual conditions each individual student union has. This should be done at both local and national level.

Quality development, the legal security of education and the well-being of students are important core issues for the student unions. Students' right to organize and their conditions for influence through student unions shall be regulated in mandatory legislation.

3.6 Internationalization

The academy's function in the knowledge society means that it takes part in a very globalized world to a very high degree. Students as well as research and teaching staff must be given the opportunity and encouraged to exchange and international collaboration. It is therefore important that national regulations are adapted to promote mobility for students, academic staff and other staff. It is also important that students as research and teaching staff are given the opportunity to develop their intercultural competence, in order to enable effective and appropriate communication with other cultures. Internationalization does not only mean being physically active in another

country but also, for example, making international contacts as a student or academic staff.

Conditions must also be created for international students at all levels of education within the academy to remain in the country after completing their studies, as this is absolutely necessary for society's development and supply of skills. Processes for residence permits both before and after studies must work seamlessly and legally - residence permits must not be the limiting factor for being able to study at a Swedish university.

There must be opportunities for students as well as research and teaching staff who do not know Swedish to learn the language effectively. Higher education institutions must be organizationally inclusive even for non-Swedish speakers, regardless of any requirements for official language, this includes that all students must be able to be student representatives at all levels. All students who study at a Swedish university must be considered students at the university they study and have the same rights and obligations.

SFS believes that education should be free of charge for everyone. However, in cases where a fee is charged from the student, these fees may never cover more than the costs that are directly linked to the education that the student completes. The higher education institutions should also clearly state how these costs are calculated.

The admission system is built on a meritocratic basis, and is intended so that the most merited students are the first to have access to education. This applies to both Swedish and international students. It is therefore important that all students are admitted based on the same requirements and in the same admission process.

3.7 The Academy's premises

The Academy's premises must be dimensioned and designed in such a way that they are appropriate and promote a good working environment. The management and ownership of the premises shall take place in such a way that it benefits the business. This means that claims for profit or other costs that exceed the actual operating and investment costs for the premises may not be charged to the academy. This presupposes that the academy, in the form of scientific staff and students, is involved and represented in decisions concerning the academy's premises.

4. Prerequisites for initiating, undergoing and completing higher education

4.1 Everyone's right to higher education

The starting point for the knowledge society is that education is a human right. In order for people to be able to take part in higher education, potential obstacles must be overcome. This requires both that a number of concrete conditions are met, and that there is a mutually good attitude between the public and the academy.

A socially and financially secure existence during the study period is crucial for students' well-being and opportunities to take on, undergo and complete their studies. The opportunity to study must be equal for all people. Therefore, financial barriers to study must be minimized and students must be covered by comprehensive security systems.

Students should not be expected to endure worse living conditions than what is considered reasonable for other citizens. The same applies to students' physical and psychosocial study environment compared with the rights to a good working environment for professionals. Students should not be expected to have to work to a greater extent than full-time in order to live a decent life.

4.2 Social security

A prerequisite for students to be able to live a decent life is access to a reasonable standard of living. For higher education to be a real opportunity for everyone, it is necessary that there is a varied range of housing adapted to a student group with different needs. Politicians at all levels must take overall responsibility for addressing the housing shortage and, if necessary, create solutions specially adapted for students. Some form of government financial stimulus is necessary to meet the great need for housing for students. The housing situation in a place of study should not be a decisive factor in students' educational choices. Housing costs must also be adapted to students' financial conditions.

A state-funded student financial aid system is absolutely necessary for all people to have equal opportunities to apply for higher education. In order for the study grant to serve its purpose, it must be adapted to society's cost levels. The study grant must be able to cover basic costs and expenses related to recreation and leisure. Most of the study grant shall consist of grants from the state. Working alongside your studies should be an opportunity and not a necessity to be able to finance your study time. Furthermore, the study grant must be designed in such a way that people's socio-economic background or family situation does not constitute an obstacle to taking part in the study grant or higher education. The study grant system must enable studies throughout life.

Research student employees within the academy have a dual role in the academy as both students and academic staff. Like other staff, postgraduate students must have good, predictable working conditions from day one. A doctoral student representative or similar function must be available to ensure the research student's right to support and advice in both study and employment situations.

Students who become ill or unemployed should never be forced into poverty or have to leave their education due to injustice and dysfunctional security systems. All students shall have the right to social security to the same extent as employees and are covered by a full security system adapted to students' needs. The system for study grants must, just like other parts of the security system, be adapted to a heterogeneous group of students to ensure that everyone, regardless of background, dares to take the step into higher education.

4.3 Equal conditions for studies

Prioritizing accessibility and adaptation to meet needs is a prerequisite for all students, regardless of background and needs, to be able to take part in higher education with equal study conditions. Legally secure admission and examination are crucial to ensure equal study conditions.

It is also important that there is a varied range of education throughout the country and good study information for prospective students that includes more than just quantitative measures per education. Together, it creates opportunities for students to choose education according to need and interest. Education must also be accessible to everyone and adapted to the fact that students have different conditions and needs.

The Academy of the knowledge society is characterized by a high degree of internationalization in various ways. Therefore, it is important that higher education at all levels is planned and implemented on a scientifically grounded pedagogical basis, with good information in several languages and taking into account students' different educational cultural backgrounds.

5. The purpose of higher education and its special nature

5.1 A useful education

The purpose of higher education is that it should be useful to the student. The education provided must be based on man's overall need for knowledge and intellectual development in working life and society in the long term. A useful education gives the student the conditions to meet a society in change and trains subject-specific knowledge, general abilities and a critical approach to the outside world. A distinctive feature of higher education is that students are equipped to understand and analyze their own life

situation and the society in which they operate. In order for this to be possible, students must learn to reflect on the knowledge acquired and the learning process itself.

For the doctoral program, usefulness means that the doctoral student must become an independent researcher with the ability to manage, expand and convey the scope of knowledge within the field of science for the benefit of both society and the individual.

In order to meet society's and the individual's need for employment, an important part of higher education is the task of preparing students for their working lives, but also of creating independent individuals who have the ability to critically examine, understand and relate to their surroundings. Different educations have different conditions within the two assignments and it is important to create a balance to ensure that the students get both parts. Some education responds to a greater extent to well-known needs in the labor market, while others instead create the conditions for creating new jobs. For those educations where there is a well-known and clear connection to working life, there must be collaborations between higher education institutions, students and working life representatives in order to maximize the usefulness of the education. However, it is important that the higher education institution provides information regarding what overall job opportunities there are for the student in order to counteract the special interests of parties in working life.

The ability for students and academic staff to contribute to new industries as well as to identify opportunities and create resources to take advantage of these opportunities is something that should be supported within the academy.

5.2 The student's learning in the center

The responsibility for the student's learning process is shared between the student and the person who teaches or supervises. The role as an academic teacher entails special requirements linked to the purpose of higher education. In order for a student to receive the best possible education, it is important that the knowledge is imparted by scientifically or artistically competent teachers. It is just as important that those who teach or supervise have solid university pedagogical competence. Everything that is taught within the framework of higher education must rest on a scientific basis, artistic basis or proven experience. Nevertheless, all learning activities and the teaching and supervision that takes place must be rooted in science and proven experience of learning. In order to ensure the necessary competence, higher education pedagogical training must be compulsory and recurring for teaching and supervising staff. All education leading to a degree must also be planned and carried out with clear anchoring in the national degree objectives.

It is important that the teaching methods used are relevant to the education and varied so that the student can absorb the knowledge in the best possible way. Self-study without sufficient supervision should never occur, as this gives students less opportunities to develop the analytical and critical thinking that higher education

requires. For education at the undergraduate and advanced level, except for independent work, self-study may never constitute the main part of the education.

5.3 Quality assurance

The purpose of quality assurance is to secure and strengthen the opportunity for students to attain high-quality education within all levels of higher education. Through quality assurance, a high minimum level must be guaranteed, but above all the quality assurance must strengthen the development of the education's content and implementation. As the academic activities are conducted in an international context, it follows that the quality work also does so.

The university is responsible for the implementation of quality assurance. The higher education institution is responsible for independently developing quality assurance based on the scientific nature that is to characterize all parts of the academic activity. The higher education institutions are responsible for developing their own definition of quality based on the higher education institution's conditions and distinctiveness. This definition of quality must be based on the students' perspectives and interests. Students play a central role in all parts of the quality work and especially in its planning, implementation, analysis and follow-up.

5.4 Examination

In order for students to be able to achieve the learning objectives, it is important that the education and examination are designed in a clear manner in relation to the objectives. The examinations must be designed so that it is possible for the student to report that the goals have been achieved. Higher education institutions must strive for a variety of examination forms. The student's learning must always be the primary starting point when designing examination plans, however, legal certainty must always be ensured. It must always be possible to re-examine examinations and grades. At and before the examination, transparency, predictability and anonymity are important issues of legal certainty for the student. The grading system applied must be appropriate for the education in question and facilitate mobility. When designing educational programs, knowledge and skills that are crucial for progression must be ensured through examination. Research students must never bear the responsibility to finance or quality assure their dissertation.