

# SFS plan of work 21/22

Adopted by SFS council 2021



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# 1. Introduction

The document was adopted by SFS's council in 2021 and forms the basis for SFS's work during the financial year 21/22 and is governing for SFS elected representatives and office. SFS is a national advocacy organization that fights for students and doctoral students. In order to influence a relatively slow political process, SFS must have a long-term and strategic approach throughout the organization.

SFS's plan of work 21/22 constitutes the council's assignment to SFS's board. The assignment is limited to focus issues, one-year operations and recurring operations. The purpose of the three parts is to clarify how SFS's operations are structured. Further specification of the business's ambitions and associated activities is produced by SFS's board, committees and secretariat based on the document.

The rotation for the focus issues has changed and due to the fact that they should overlap, a new organizational focus issue for 22/23-24/25 will be adopted at SFSFUM 2022 (in accordance with SFS Operations 20/21, Dnr: O44-23 / 2021) .

The celebration of SFS '100th anniversary continues despite the banquet being postponed to a preliminary one in March 2022 due to corona pandemic restrictions. The anniversary is an excellent opportunity to spread information about SFS and what SFS has achieved since its founding. The celebration takes place during the year by SFS arranging an anniversary seminar in various subjects and by SFS preparing an anniversary publication.

With the corona pandemic, new areas have emerged that must be monitored and managed by the student movement. Both local and national consequences need to be addressed and the effects of the pandemic can be long-lasting. In order to continue to monitor these, flexibility is required in the organization where new problems are captured and handled on an ongoing basis with good communication between SFS and the member corps.

## 2. Focus issues

The issues are based on a three-year cycle for the work to be planned long-term, which means that each focus question is intended to last over three years. Having a clear and lasting form for the focus issues is part of the work for a long-term impact and organization, as well as the fact that they run in parallel.

At SFS's council 2018, the council decided to adopt the political focus issue “Students' psychosocial health and work environment” (SFS activities 18/19 Dnr: O412-1 / 1718). This document proposes a new political focus issue for 21 / 22-23 / 24: Prerequisites for high quality education.

SFS's council 2019 decided to adopt the organizational focus issue “SFS uniform and purposeful communication” (SFS activities 19/20 Dnr: O412-1 / 1819). During the third and final year 21/22, implementation and evaluation will continue, as well as work to develop a new organizational focus issue to be adopted by Council 2022.

### 2.1 Political focus issue 21 / 22-23 / 24 Prerequisites for high quality education

Adopted by Council 2021.

High quality education is a right for all students. There are many different aspects that constitute quality of education, such as competence of teachers and supervisors, design of courses and programs, access to complete research environments and the usefulness of the education. Common to all aspects of educational quality, however, is that there needs to be good conditions for achieving a high quality. This focus issue identifies key areas where conditions need to be strengthened.

Based on this, the political ambitions are set by the council in 2021:

#### **Stop the underfunding of higher education**

Lack of resources is a major obstacle to achieving a high quality in education. In order for the education to be able to achieve and maintain a high quality, the actual costs of the education need to be covered. Current funding for education is not sufficient to create the conditions for a high quality of education and an outdated resource allocation system reinforces the effect of this underfunding. The productivity deduction means that government grants to higher education do not take sufficient account of the cost increase that inflation entails. In order for there to be a real opportunity to carry out high-quality education, the basic appropriations need to be increased, the resource allocation system adapted to the actual costs of education and the productivity deduction abolished.

#### **Better conditions for higher education pedagogical activities**

In order to achieve a high quality of education, everyone who teaches needs to have a basic higher pedagogical education as well as regularly undergo high-quality competence

development in higher education pedagogy. As with all education, a strong research base is required in higher education pedagogy. That research in higher education pedagogy as well as that higher education pedagogical courses must be based in research and must be a national priority, as well as at each higher education institution. The higher education pedagogical units at the higher education institutions have a special responsibility in developing the competence of academic staff in traditional and digital as well as any future forms of work and educational assignments. For this to be possible, resources need to be set aside and structures for a national exchange need to be formed.

In order for more people to have real access to the university, special educational initiatives should be developed. A national context should be created where issues of special educational efforts can be discussed. In this way, more equivalent special educational initiatives can exist within the higher education institutions as well as between the higher education institutions and within higher education.

## 2.2 Organizational focus issue 19 / 20-21 / 22 SFS uniform and appropriate communication

Approved by the council in 2019.

SFS is an organization that communicates with many different parties in society. Some communication is more internal, such as the exchange of information between members and elected representatives within the organization. Other communication aims to be part of the organization's advocacy work and to form opinions. There are several challenges and opportunities with SFS communication.

The type of information that should reach which parties, how the communication should be designed and when the information should go out are trade-offs that often have to be made from case to case. As a member-borne organization, it is also important that the two-way communication with the student unions works in the best way. The organization has always communicated in different ways and developmental work is constantly taking place to reach out and collect information in the best possible way. SFS needs to take a holistic approach in order for communication to take place in a uniform manner and for there to be a clear purpose and goal with all communication.

During the 2018/2019 financial year, SFS has begun work on updating SFS's IT environment. The work will continue during the financial year 2019/2020 and is an important part of the work with SFS communication. The ambition is that the change of the IT environment will provide conditions and create opportunities to make SFS communication more efficient and effective. After the implementation of the IT environment itself, there is work left to fill the website and intranet with relevant content that must be accessible to the target group to the greatest extent possible.

It is not only the website and intranet that are used in SFS communication, which primarily concerns internal communication, but also social media is used to a large extent by the organization. Different channels, especially Facebook, Instagram and Twitter, are

used in different ways with different purposes. SFS needs to investigate which channels are best used for which purpose.

Content for all communication surfaces is created in different ways and with different purposes. SFS needs to produce materials that can be reused, such as information pages, training materials and pictures. Other communication needs to be situation-adapted but then needs a good foundation to stand on, such as templates, graphic profiles and the planned communication strategy.

SFS's operations are broad and are aimed at different parties and individuals. SFS's different committees have different purposes and therefore the goals of the communication and the material produced will need to be adapted based on each committee. In the development of SFS communication, the work with student representatives will also need to be taken into account.

Part of the work with SFS communication is to increase knowledge about the organization among the member unions. At present, there is a lack of good introductory material about SFS as an organization and the national work with student and educational issues. As different student unions in Sweden have different conditions to take part in the national work, there is a need for a guide to SFS.

Part of SFS's internal communication takes place via digital and physical meetings. The work with SFS communication will thus also involve the development of activities such as member meetings and how the two-way communication between the student unions and SFS works.

The work of developing a more appropriate communication will require close cooperation with the member corps in order for the result to be as good as possible. A large part of the communication takes place to and together with the member corps, as they are closest to the students and know what they are asking for. Good anchoring is time consuming for both parties and it is therefore important that we give the entire organization time to work with the issues.

Due to this, the organizational ambitions have been determined by the council in 2019:

### **SFS's communication strategy**

SFS must have a strategy for how SFS communicates on various issues. It must contain what is to be communicated, which channels are used and which is the target audience in each issue. Based on needs and strategy, SFS will produce materials that can be used long-term in communication.

### **Meeting places within SFS**

Based on the communication strategy that is developed and the needs that exist in the organization, SFS must produce proposals of solutions for the inclusion of, among others, international students and students with accessibility variations at member activities and meetings. This is part of the work to ensure that SFS has as good conditions as

possible to work and strengthen the student movement in a representative and inclusive way.

## **A guide to SFS**

In order to strengthen the national and local student influence, SFS will produce a guide that aims to describe SFS as an organization and the issues that SFS works with. The guide must also contain information that can help the member corps in their work with educational issues, the national work and the work together with SFS. The guide must be developed so that it is adapted to accessibility as far as possible for the target audience.

## **3. One-year activities**

The one-year activities are structured in three areas: conditions for the academy, conditions for studies and conditions for SFS. Each part has a background text and then the ambition states what SFS will work for.

### **3.1 Prerequisites for the academy**

#### **3.1.1 Dimensioning of education at undergraduate and advanced level**

Dimensioning is about planning the size and focus of the range of education. The higher education institutions have great freedom to decide for themselves on the dimensioning of their educational range and the content of the education. According to their regulation letter, however, the range of education at universities and colleges at the undergraduate and advanced level must correspond to students' demand and the needs of the labor market. The balance between these two aspects is not always even and there are several examples where the government has allocated more training positions solely with regard to the needs of the labor market. SFS believes that such measures have no point if they are not of interest to prospective students and may even be detrimental to quality. SFS needs to counteract this worrying development.

#### **Ambitions**

SFS shall work to ensure that it is the students' demand and conditions for high quality in education that govern the issue of dimensioning education at the undergraduate and advanced level.

#### **3.1.2 Design of the examination program**

An examination program determines what constitutes a university degree, for example on the basis of subjects and credits. The degree regulations, which are appendix 2 to the Higher Education Ordinance, contain provisions on which degrees may be taken at the undergraduate and advanced level and the doctoral level, and which requirements must be met for each degree, so-called degree description. It is the government that decides on this. Furthermore, each higher education institution has access to the local degree

regulations and decides on local rules. A degree may only be issued if the education meets the requirements set out in the Higher Education Act and the Higher Education Ordinance, as well as in the university or university's own governing documents for the degree. This means that degree objectives can vary between higher education institutions, even if the education is said to be the same.

The fact that the degree objectives are decided at national level by the government is problematic, the examination system becomes a way of implementing political measures that risk undermining the quality of education. When the number of degree objectives is increased without the higher education institutions being given proper support, the higher education institutions receive an impossible assignment in practice. SFS therefore believes that the responsibility for deciding on the examination schedule should lie with an authority that can anchor them with both the sector and stakeholders in a good way.

### **Ambitions**

SFS shall work to ensure that a national authority acquires ownership of the degree objectives and that the authority is given the task of anchoring and continuously revising them.

## **3.2 Prerequisites for studies**

### **3.2.1 Mental health**

SFS concludes the focus question "Students' psychosocial health and work environment" in the financial year 20/21. However, the issue of students' mental health is far from solved, and the government announced in July 2020 that a number of authorities will submit documentation for a forthcoming national strategy regarding mental health and suicide prevention. The authorities' individual analyzes must be reported no later than the autumn of 2021 and the assignment must be reported in the following year. The assignment is a good opportunity for SFS to continue working with the students' mental health and work to improve it.

In the spring of 2020, the University Chancellor's Office, UKÄ, presented the government assignment "Student health care at Swedish universities and colleges" which aimed to map student health care. SFS believes that the collaboration within student health care needs to be further strengthened and, due to the survey, has fertile ground for working further with the issue. SFS shares UKÄ's assessment and proposal.

SFS has together with the ST trade union developed the survey "How is the doctoral student" regarding doctoral students' mental health. The study shows that doctoral students to a worrying extent suffer from sleep difficulties and due to work overload can not take the vacation they are entitled to. The survey also shows that very many doctoral students are exposed to harassment. There is widespread confusion about who the doctoral student should turn to for support in these matters and what rights and what rules there are regarding their education. With the support of the survey, SFS must continue the work and push for change.



### **Ambitions**

SFS shall work to ensure that the government in its work for mental health and suicide prevention includes students in a clear and prominent manner.

SFS shall work to ensure that recommendations from surveys on mental health and work environment for students and doctoral students are carried through and implemented.

### 3.2.2 Disciplinary cases

The number of disciplinary cases has increased drastically, the reason for this is unclear. At present, there are large differences between the higher education institutions' handling of cases, not least in terms of the outcome for different typical cases. The procedure at the higher education institutions may differ, but the assessment and sanction should, as far as possible, be equivalent regardless of which higher education institution the student works at. Among other things, it is of great importance that cases of sexual harassment are handled urgently. Provisions on disciplinary measures against students who, for example, cheat on exams, break rules of procedure or harass others are stated in Chapter 10 of the Higher Education Ordinance. Thereafter, the universities have local routines.

### **Ambitions**

SFS must work for disciplinary matters to be handled and assessed in an equal and legally secure manner.

### 3.2.3 More flexible study grants

Students' finances are a recurring issue. Being a student at undergraduate or advanced level means, for the majority, a supply of study funds. This study grant must cover all living costs and be adapted to different individuals who, for various reasons, apply for higher education. The student financial aid system that exists today is good in that supply can be secured during the study period and the student financial aid system becomes a basic prerequisite for an open and equal university. However, there are parts that need to be developed that primarily concern lifelong learning.

The Bologna process made the programs at the advanced level one year longer with the transition from 4-year master's to a 5-year master's degree. This has contributed to reduced opportunities to start more programs and courses than a bachelor's and a master's degree. The opportunities to study summer courses with study grants are available, but the eligibility to start another program or course during or after completing the degree is reduced. Since the student financial aid system has not followed developments in higher education, a general increase in the number of searchable student financial aid weeks is needed.

### **Ambitions**

SFS will work for a more flexible study grant.

## 3.3 Prerequisites for SFS

### 3.3.1 Diversity and sustainable commitment within the student movement

The organization must be easy to understand in order for SFS to be able to represent all of Sweden's students, SFS should also reflect the student population. The student population is a heterogeneous group, while we can see that SFS is in several respects a fairly homogeneous organization. As SFS reflects on its membership, the work will be carried out in consultation with, but also through support for, the membership.

A special challenge for SFS is to engage doctoral students. Doctoral students often have insufficient knowledge of what rights they have and that they are represented at all by their student union and in the long run SFS. In order for doctoral students to have a real opportunity to get involved, SFS needs to strengthen the conditions for doctoral students to have access to information about both their rights and how they are represented.

To lower the thresholds and facilitate the work of recruitment to. This work has come a long way through the "Guide to SFS" and the continued work should focus on all positions of trust within SFS in order to create a better understanding of what these roles entail and what their mission entails.

Today, there is a higher threshold for students outside the Stockholm region to apply for, for example, SFS's presidency. This is because it means a major adjustment and relocation for these students. The biggest problem is mainly the housing issue. SFS should therefore work to ensure that the obstacles that exist for applying for full-time assignments within SFS's organization are minimized.

The commitment within SFS must also be at a reasonable and sustainable level for everyone within SFS. Therefore, SFS should work to balance the workload within the organization so that everyone who gets involved can find joy, grow as a person and have energy within their commitment.

#### **Ambitions**

SFS shall work for SFS to be a more representative organization of the student population in general.

SFS shall work to reduce the obstacles that exist for students to apply for full-time assignments within the organization.

SFS shall work to ensure that doctoral students have access to the information they need to be able to engage in SFS's activities.

SFS shall strive to achieve a balanced and proportionate workload for all positions within SFS.

### 3.3.2 SFS Opinion structure

During the financial years 19/20 and 20/21, SFSs board worked to develop SFS's opinions and to review the existing positions in order to, among other things, achieve greater uniformity. One problem is that many who come in as new to SFS and also people who have been involved for a long time within SFS find it difficult to understand SFS opinions. Why do we have a position if we already have a program of principles with our opinions? Should we be precisely principled and not include concrete proposals for reforms / changes? Why do we have a position in certain areas but not others? What weighs heaviest? Where do we delimit ourselves as an organization, should we have opinions about other things that do not necessarily concern students directly? These are some of the questions and challenges that have come up for the board on 20/21 during the work on the opinion structure.

Therefore, a thorough work will need to be done to simplify SFS opinions, both for those who both want to influence the issue and those who work with them on a daily basis. This is so that year after year it should always be clear what opinions SFS stands for and to avoid discussions being drawn to their edge on opinions.

#### **Ambitions**

SFS will complete a proposal for a new, clearer opinion structure and present it at SFSFUM 2022.

### 3.3.3 Support the long-term development of the higher education sector

SFS's activities can be seen as a resource for the higher education sector and others in Sweden as the organization has knowledge and expertise in current issues. Unfortunately, several players in and outside the sector lack these competencies. There are also organizations that are not obvious players in the higher education sector but which in the short or long term will affect the higher education sector and SFS's work. Examples of current actors are political youth unions, trade unions and the business community. SFS could strengthen the conversation about higher education policy with these if they were better acquainted. Educational opportunities could create both commitment and greater competence in higher education policy. In the work with this, SFS will need to create an organization and structures for the work to be implemented in the organization's recurring activities.

#### **Ambitions**

SFS shall develop a structure for, and arrange training opportunities on SFS and higher education policy for relevant actors that affect SFS in the short or long term.

## 4. Recurring activities

A large and important part of the recurring activities is the communication of SFS's position on political issues and the results that the ongoing activities give rise to, both internally and externally. SFS's activities can be divided into two processes: democratic processes and influencing processes. In addition, there are also support processes that will enable the work in the main processes. Many of these are recurring and ongoing activities that are continuously evaluated and developed within the office and board.

### 4.1 Democratic processes

In order to ensure that SFS's advocacy work is anchored in the organization, SFS shall arrange member activities with a focus on current issues and which enable discussions between member unions. In addition to this, an introductory event is arranged at the beginning of the financial year with the aim of introducing the members to SFS. The democratic processes also aim to make students 'and doctoral students' voices heard in the contexts in which higher education is dealt with or decided upon. This is ensured by appointing student representatives to national bodies.

### 4.2 Influence processes

It is of great importance that the advocacy work is characterized by stability, which can take place through recurring activities. Relationships and recognition need to be maintained and strengthened with relevant parties. The ongoing political advocacy work must be fulfilled, among other things, through participations and debates in current topics. SFS shall respond to referrals and publish reports when relevant as part of the advocacy work. SFS must also stay up to date on its surroundings, nationally and internationally.

#### 4.2.1 Student city of the year

SFS shall annually appoint a city that works to promote the overall wellbeing and living situation of students and doctoral students to "Student city of the year". SFS's council is planned to be arranged in the winning city in the following financial year.

#### 4.2.2 SFS Committees

The SFS Doctoral Student Committee, the SFS Quality Committee and the SFS International Committee shall work on issues that are part of their respective areas of activity.

## 4.3 Support processes

The statutory activities require solid work in preparation, implementation and follow-up work. A good structure and proper work around the statutory activities is of particular importance because it is fundamental to the organization's democracy. SFS 'statutory bodies and functions must therefore receive operational support and structure to conduct their operations.

In addition to the work performed by bodies prescribed in the charter, SFS's administrative work must be performed by a staff. The secretariat will, among other things, work continuously with finances, case management and external monitoring. SFS shall work for a good working environment for both staff and the organization's elected representatives.