

Administrator: The Board

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Reg. no.: O412-1/2122

Operational plan:

Proposition 1

Draft decision

The Board proposes to the General Assembly

that SFS operational plan for 2022/23 is adopted.

Covering letter

SFS operational plan 2022/23 is an overall strategic document that sets out the priority areas for the financial year. The document specifies the most important issues based on the current situation for the students and the student unions, as well as in relation to the world at large. The document does not include everything that SFS will do during the financial year.

The proposal was compiled by the Board following proposals and comments from the committees as well as discussions at meetings with the member unions. SFS operational plan does not indicate any new political opinions, but is rather based on existing opinions adopted by SFSFUM.

The operational plan includes focus issues and priority issues. Certain issues come up every year, for example, housing and and SFS's accommodation report. There are also other types of issues that can be relevant in certain years. One such issue which remains relevant is SFS's anniversary. The anniversary publication will be launched in the 2022/23 financial year.

Work on diversity and sustainable engagement has been a priority area during the 2021/22 financial year. The work has been based on formulating which problems exist in SFS regarding sustainable engagement in order to engage with the problems in more depth and then find solutions to them. The overall assessment is that SFS needs to work on sustainable engagement in the long-term. Processes, organisational structures and objectives should be reviewed with the aim of making better use of the engagement. The task does not involve having individual activities to highlight the issue, but rather systematically strengthening and developing processes in order to create an environment where everyone can participate and grow.

A report on the current situation

At the time of writing this operational plan, all restrictions due to the coronavirus pandemic have just been lifted. Hopefully the last wave has passed and society is moving towards a more open future. The return may raise various questions about the "new normal", for example, what it means for students and higher education institutions that have been teaching online for a long period. Will the programmes fully return to face-to-face teaching, or will there still be digital elements? There is also a challenge in getting students to return to the same level of socialising as before, and creating a sense of community for students who have been studying remotely for two years.

The general election marks the start of the 2022/23 financial year and will take place in September 2022. Formation of the government after the last election went down as the longest in Swedish history, and it remains to be seen how long the next one will take and which parties will form a government. SFS should be alert and cultivate the government that is formed.

International issues will be important during the financial year. Sweden will hold the presidency of the Council of the European Union in spring 2023, which means that Sweden will lead the Council's work. SFS will host the European Student Convention, ESC, the Nordic Presidential Meeting, NOM, and the Eurodoc Conference in 2022/23. As a result of the war in Ukraine, SFS has offered to host the Eurodoc Conference that was originally planned for Ukraine.



Verksamhetsplan 2022/23
Sveriges förenade studentkårer

SFS

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Introduction

The Swedish National Union of Students (SFS) is the national lobbying organisation for student unions and students. SFS works nationally and internationally on issues in relation to high-quality higher education and better studying conditions. SFS will make the voices of students and postgraduates heard in contexts where higher education is addressed or subject to decisions. SFS appoints student representatives to national bodies, responds to referrals, publishes reports and keeps up to date with the world at large. The political lobbying work must be supported by the organisation in which member activities are held. These organisations will also promote discussion and exchange of experience between member unions.

The operational plan is adopted by the highest decision-making body, the General Assembly, and constitutes the basis for the work during the 2022/23 financial year. It is then the responsibility of the Board, committees and Secretariat to formulate and implement the General Assembly's decisions based on the ambitions of the operational plan. The assignment is limited to two focus issues that run over three years, as well as four one-year priorities. The activities require solid preparation, implementation and supplementary work. SFS's bodies and departments must therefore receive operational support and structure in order to carry out their activities. SFS's Board will also designate a city that works to promote students' and postgraduate students' situation and living conditions as "Student City of the Year". The plan is to hold SFS General Assembly for the following financial year in the designated city.

Focus issues

SFS has two political focus issues that run over three years. The political and organisational focus issue is adopted by the General Assembly in subsequent years. Work is initiated during the first year, with most of the activities carried out in the second year, and the third year planned for further work, implementation and follow-up. A clear and definite form for the focus issues contributes to strengthening SFS's lobbying work and organisation.

Political focus issue 21/22–23/24

Conditions for high educational quality

Adopted by the General Assembly in 2021

High educational quality is a right for all students. There are many different aspects that constitute educational quality, for example, the competence of teachers and supervisors, design of courses and programmes, access to complete research environments and the education's usefulness. However, what all aspects of educational quality have in common

is that favourable conditions need to be in place to achieve high quality. This focus issue identifies central areas where the conditions need to be strengthened.

Based on this, the political aims established by the General Assembly in 2021 were as follows:

Stop the underfunding of higher education

Lack of resources is a major obstacle to achieving high quality education. In order for educational programmes to achieve and maintain a high level of quality, the actual costs of the education need to be covered. Current funding for education is not sufficient to create the conditions for high educational quality and an outdated system of allocating resources reinforces the impact of this underfunding. The productivity deduction means that the funds granted by the state for universities do not take sufficient account of the cost increase that inflation entails. For there to be a real opportunity to implement high-quality education, the basic grant needs to be increased, the resource allocation system adapted to the actual costs of the education and the productivity deduction abolished.

Better conditions for teaching methods in higher education

In order to achieve a high quality of education, everyone who teaches needs to have a basic training in teaching methods for higher education, as well as regularly undergo high-quality skills development in higher education teaching methods. As with all education, a strong research base is required in higher education teaching methods. It should be a priority nationally, as well as at each higher education institution, that research is conducted into higher education teaching methods, as well as that courses in higher education teaching methods should be based on research. The pedagogical units at the institutions have a specific responsibility to develop the skills of academic staff within traditional and digital forms, as well as in any future forms of work and educational assignments. For this to be possible, resources need to be allocated and structures put in place for a national exchange.

For more people to have a meaningful access to higher education, special pedagogical initiatives should be developed. A national context should be created where questions about special pedagogical initiatives can be discussed. This could enable more equivalent special pedagogical initiatives to exist within the higher education institutions, as well as between the higher education institutions and in higher education.

Organisational focus issue 22/23-24/25

Importance and value of engagement

It is important that SFS is an organisation that safeguards and strengthens those who choose to get involved and that that engagement does not risk leading to unfavourable consequences for the individual. SFS has been working for several years to strengthen

students' well-being and mental health, however, what has not been as prominent is the work in relation to well-being among elected representatives within the organisation. SFS is not immune from the problems that are also reflected in society, and further focus is therefore required to create a sustainable organisation that safeguards its elected officers and their engagement.

The organisational focus issue consists of four areas that include aspects of how SFS can formulate the activities in order for sustainable engagement to be in focus. It concerns SFS having an inclusive and sustainable leadership and beneficial conditions for engagement, systematic and accessible training within the organisation, and appreciation and value placed on engagement in SFS.

Sustainable leadership

All elements of SFS's organisation shall be characterised by long-term, inclusive and sustainable leadership. There should be a clear responsibility on the part of the leader in relation to ensuring equality of knowledge, development and understanding of individuals' conditions and tasks. SFS should have a culture where leadership is imbued with openness and participation. SFS must inspire future leaders in the student movement and ensure SFS's survival and stability in the education sector.

Forms of engagement

SFS shall endeavour to ensure that engagement continues to grow and that elected representatives within the organisation are provided with beneficial conditions to fulfil their commitments. If engagement is to continue to grow, it requires continuity and recruitment. Recruitment of elected representatives needs to be improved, which is achieved partly through development of the activities and partly through developing the work of the Election Committee. Continuity within the organisation should also be valued and maintained as it is important in ensuring the organisation's survival.

In addition to this, SFS needs to put work into strengthening the conditions for taking on and executing an elected post. Conditions vary and can be affected by practical obstacles as well as the elected representative's life situation, which means that the organisation needs to work actively to lower thresholds for engagement in SFS. In order for the varied conditions of elected representatives not to play a significant role, it is of great importance that there is clarity in how assignments are formulated and that they are designed systematically.

Live learning

Learning from and within SFS is important to ensure the organisation's survival and development. The handover between old and new is needed to ensure that relevant information and different established ways of working are not lost. For volunteers, it is crucial for the assignment that an appropriate introduction is available regardless of which assignment they will perform within SFS. Major opportunities for training in a range of relevant areas should also be available for elected officers in the organisation. To ensure that handover, introduction and training are accessible and appropriate,

standardised processes should be developed for these areas. Working methods and opportunities for learning must be systematic to ensure that knowledge and engagement are not lost between terms of office.

The value of engagement

Everyone who participates in SFS is involved in strengthening the organisation and the student movement. The majority of the assignments within SFS take place on a voluntary basis and it is therefore important that the organisation works to make the individual feel valuable. In order to show appreciation to those who get involved, SFS should work with different forms of appreciation symbols. Appreciation for elected representatives within SFS should be prioritised so that there is a culture within SFS where engagement is appreciated. The engagement itself, as well as the assignments that exist within SFS, are enriching in terms of, for example, experience, networking and skills, which should be further strengthened.

Priority issues

Health

Students suffer from mental illness to a significantly higher extent than professionals of the same age. Time for recovery as well as material factors such as finances and housing are strongly linked to mental well-being. A number of measures must be implemented immediately to reduce the mental ill-health of students.

As a result of the pandemic, a clear majority of students are experiencing greater stress and anxiety than before, and almost half report increased difficulties sleeping. For some students, their entire period of study has been characterised by the pandemic. The Swedish Higher Education Authority's reports clearly show how students' work environment and well-being have deteriorated during the pandemic and how many students feel an increased concern about the future.

Postgraduate students have also been adversely affected by the pandemic. Even before the pandemic, surveys showed that postgraduate students were suffering from ill-health to a worrying extent and overloading meant that they were not able to take the holiday to which they are entitled. There is widespread confusion surrounding who postgraduate students should turn to for support in these issues and also which rights and rules there are concerning their education.

Aims

- SFS will work to ensure that students and postgraduates have a good psychosocial study environment.
- SFS will work to ensure that higher education institutions fulfil their responsibilities in relation to students' and postgraduates' work environment.

- SFS will work to ensure that practical structures are in place to enable sick leave for students and postgraduates.
- SFS will work to ensure that practical structures are in place to enable recovery for students and postgraduates.

Housing

All students should have access to secure forms of housing during their period of study. The majority of the country's students are located in places that suffer from a shortage of student accommodation. The overall shortage of accommodation affects the groups that are already the most economically vulnerable, including students. Not having access to a secure home contributes to anxiety and inferior study outcomes. SFS believes that housing should be adapted for accessibility so that all students, regardless of any disability, can have somewhere to live.

In the autumn of 2021, the Riksdag decided to phase out the state investment support for rental housing and housing for students. This marks a shift in focus: from wanting to facilitate the construction of student housing to making it more difficult. SFS has long been in favour of investment support as smaller rental apartments play an important role in society and should be prioritised. The phasing out of investment support makes it more expensive to build, leading to both less and more expensive student housing. This national deprioritisation makes housing an important issue for SFS to prioritise. "The inquiry into housing allowance and maintenance support – reduced indebtedness and increased accuracy" was also presented in spring 2022, there is thus reason to continue to work for a reformed housing allowance.

Aims

- SFS will work to improve the conditions for building student housing without compromising accessibility.
- SFS will work to reform and make available the housing allowance so that more people can benefit from it.

Status and funding of the Student Union

It is in the interest of both students and higher education institutions that student influence functions properly. The fact that the government grant does not cover the full costs of the student unions' activities makes it more difficult for the student unions to perform their assignment. Guaranteeing functional student influence requires continued work to improve the financial conditions of the student unions.

The requirements for organisations that wish to have the status of student union are regulated by law. In addition, there is freedom for the higher education institutions to design their own guidelines and procedures for the union status process. This creates uncertainty as the law may be applied differently between higher education institutions.

A national function could potentially contribute to a more equal application and create greater autonomy for the student union in relation to its higher education institution.

Aims

- SFS will work to increase student union funding.
- SFS will work to ensure a national application process for student union status.

SFS's finances

SFS's capital has increased and SFS now has approximately its annual turnover in equity. This is mainly because SFS has previously chosen to budget with caution, which means that each item of expenditure has had a buffer to manage unpredictable costs. This is so that SFS does not end up in financial difficulty. To address this, SFS has changed the way it budgets to better meet the needs and governance of the organisation.

The challenge that SFS faces is to find a financial balance between not being a profit-making organisation and being able to have a certain security linked to the organisation's ability to survive in the event of changes in revenue. SFS's capital is currently deposited in bank accounts. This means that the value of SFS's capital is gradually decreasing, and as SFS has not utilised a large proportion of its capital for a lengthy period, SFS should review how this money can be redeployed. This leads to questions such as how much liquidity SFS should have, versus how much can be invested in other forms of savings.

Aims

- SFS will work to ensure that the organisation has a more sustainable and long-term financial situation.
- SFS will produce a structure that specifies how SFS's capital is invested and used.