

Development of SFS opinions within artificial intelligence and distance education

Proposal 3

SFS

Covering letter

Proposal 3: Development of SFS opinions within artificial intelligence and distance education

On the account of the Board receiving two tasks by the General Assembly (SFSFUM) to develop opinions within two different matters, the Board now suggests an addition to the SFS opinion programme. The work has been continuous during the entire operational year and has been contributed by discussions in the Board, investigative work and anchoring with the student unions. The Board's ambition was to receive as much input as possible, so the anchoring with the member unions has been through the digital members meetings on the 15th of November 2023, 12th of December 2023, 16th of January 2024 and at the members meeting in Ultuna the 30-31 of January in 2024.

The Board has chosen not to suggest any other changes in the opinion programme, apart from the two areas suggested in this proposal, due to the fact that a substantial review of the opinion programme took place last operational year and was adopted during SFSFUM 2023. When the new opinion programme was adopted a principle was also added which says that the programme should be revised every three years. To avoid any type of irregularity, and to promote continuity in the opinions of SFS, the Board has chosen to limit itself to only making the changes in the opinion programme that was tasked to them by the General Assembly (SFSFUM).

Regarding artificial intelligence in higher education

During SFSFUM of 2023 there was a decision made that SFS was to form an opinion regarding the role of artificial intelligence within higher education, and that this was to be based on facts. This decision was taken due to the rapid development, and more frequent discussions, of artificial intelligence within higher education. Furthermore the assessment was made that it was important that SFS could act proactively in this matter and gain momentum in the debate. After monitoring the question during the year the Board has come up with the following proposal.

The proposal is based on a view of AI as part of a continuous technological development, and that we should relate to AI as we do a lot of different technologies: as something that entails both possibilities and also risks. Both students and the higher education institution need to be provided with knowledge in order to embrace technology, whilst preserving the academic values that SFS always cherish.

Regarding distance education

During SFSFUM of 2023 there was a decision made that SFS was to form an opinion regarding distance education. The reasoning behind this was that today one in every five students are registered on a distance-based education and, so far, the national student movement has been lacking the basis on how to deal with these matters. Since we can expect an increase in distance-based education in the near future, SFS needs a proper basis in order to support its members in these matters, and to support them in how to ensure that the quality of a distance-based education is equal to the quality of a campus-based education.

The Board has chosen to make additions to the opinion programme that are in three overall areas: 1) quality and higher education pedagogy, 2) student influence, and 3) legal certainty linked to the clarity about education that is based on campus or distance. The Board has actively chosen to try to integrate the opinions on distance-based education instead of creating a separate track where distance-based education is to be treated with other principals than the rest of education at colleges and universities.

When it comes to the quality of distance-based education and the involvement of higher education pedagogy, the Board suggests making two amendments. The first amendment is to clarify that forms of education and higher education pedagogy should be adapted to where the education is located, and that education that is either on campus or distance-based should be held to the same quality standards. The second amendment is about the fact that working on quality is something that strengthens the development of education, and this should take place no matter if the education is on campus, or if it is a distance-based education. Both amendments are mainly to clarify the opinions of SFS, despite the fact that it should be taken for granted that education should be of the same quality no matter if it is a campus-based education or a distance-based one.

When it comes to student influence the Board has suggested adding a paragraph that emphasises the importance of having students of a distance-based education be included in the different organs at the higher education institutions that include student representatives. In this proposal, the Board assumes that there is a barrier for students of a distance education to attend these meetings due to the fact that these meetings can sometimes require a physical presence. Or that despite it being a hybrid meeting, remote participation is not taken into account to a sufficient extent.

For the additions regarding legal certainty and the matter of campus versus distance, the Board proposes additions in two places in the opinion programme. The first concerns a clarification regarding the fact that an education that is advertised in one way must also be carried out in that way. An education that is advertised as a campus-based education must also be carried out as an education that is on campus. This is in order to create a clarity for prospective students that they are getting the education that they expect.

The second addition is to make the position of SFS a clearer one; a campus-based education must mainly be conducted on campus. This is also to create clarity for prospective students, and existing students, that the type of education that is advertised is also what will be conducted.

Draft decisions

The Board proposed the General Assembly

that the subheading 'Artificial intelligence in higher education' and the following text be added to the SFS opinion programme 3. A high qualitative education (En högkvalitativ utbildning):

“With the rapid development of artificial intelligence (AI) the higher education institutions must embrace a use of AI that is progressive and sustainable.

Educating university and college teachers in AI is critical, and they should be equipped with knowledge and tools to navigate this new technology in an expedient manner.

SFS must work for AI to be used in a way that improves higher education. The higher educational institutions should not shy away from streamlining operations with the help of AI, given that it does not negatively impact education or research. AI should not be used as a way to replace important human interactions and a critical approach must be protected.

SFS's vision is to see a higher education where AI serves all student and where integrity, inclusivity and innovation are cornerstones in this digital development.”

that the following text be added after the second sentence of the second paragraph in the subheading 'Widened recruitment and widening participation' in the SFS opinion programme 3.2 Prerequisites for initiating higher education:

“Among other things it is important that an education that is advertised as a campus-based education must also be carried out as one, the same goes for education that is advertised as distance-based education. This is to provide clarity for prospective students”,

that the following text be added after the first sentence in the second paragraph of SFS opinion programme 3.5 Students learning in the centre: “Types of education and higher educational pedagogy should also be adapted to whether the education is campus-based or distance-based. The education needs to maintain the same quality regardless of where the education is carried out.”

that the sentence “, regardless if the education is campus-based or distance-based” be added to the sentence “Through quality assurance procedures, a high level minimum must be guaranteed, but primarily the quality assurance procedures must strengthen the development of the content and implementation of education” in SFS opinion programme 3.6 Quality assurance.

that the following paragraph be added to the subheading 'Hindrances for students to participate in the quality assurance procedures' in SFS opinion programme 3.6 Quality assurance: “A large part of this country's students take part in distance-based learning. A barrier for participation can not be not being able to participate physically at a meeting at the higher educational institution. Therefore, students' influence at a distance should be something that the higher educational institution is not just aware of, but also is taken into consideration when planning the operations.”

that the sixth sentence in the third paragraph in SFS opinion programme 3.7 Teaching environment, be changed from ‘An education that is issued to be campus-based should therefore have the teaching on site on campus” to “A campus-based education should mainly have its teaching on campus”

that the seventh sentence in the third paragraph in SFS opinion programme 3.7 Teaching environment, be changed from “Digital features can be used as a supplement, but should not replace campus teaching” to “Digital features can be used as a supplement, but will not replace campus teaching