

# Public policy positions of the Union of Estonian Student Unions

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## PREAMBLE TO THE ASSOCIATION OF ESTONIAN STUDENT COUNCILS FOR PUBLIC POLICY POSITIONS

The public policy position document of the Estonian Student Union (EÜL) maps principles and goals that provide a basis for organizing the guardianship activities of the organization. EÜL's guardianship activities are comprehensively organized at several levels. Based on public policy positions and values of the organization, EÜL speaks in public on behalf of students in the room and courageously mediates student interests to policy makers at local, national and also at the international level. Common goals are made to represent the interests of Estonian students on behalf of in solidarity cooperation nationally and in international level of everyone with student organizations. EÜL's vision is that the primary purpose of higher education is to teach skills, knowledge and values for a person. EÜL stands publicly for inalienable human rights and for democracy wherever there is a need for it and publicly condemns those who violate it the dignity of human life.

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<sup>1</sup> [Human rights](#)

# 1. ACCESS TO HIGHER EDUCATION

All motivated and capable people are guaranteed equal access to higher education. This means that higher education organization also exists to reduce structural inequality necessary measures. In addition, the state takes care of the development of the network of general education schools with a uniform level and for creating that the quality of the previous school path does not prevent any student from acquiring higher education.

- The organization of higher education must be flexible and favor lifelong learning.
- Every student must be guaranteed, if necessary, close to the educational buildings at an affordable price dormitory place.
- Higher education must be organized, study content, support systems and physically accessible and meet the needs of students with special needs.
- The state and higher education institutions must ensure that comprehensive information and advice on further learning opportunities, legislation regulating learning and supporting systems (student loan, grants, scholarships) about.

## ***1.1. International students***

International students are treated<sup>2</sup> equally with local students and are guaranteed support from the higher education institution in carrying out studies.

- International degree students must be treated as full members of the higher education institution's student body as members. Opportunities must be created for them to contribute to the design of the learning environment and to ensure it information about the possibilities of protecting your rights also through the student council.
- International students must be provided with a support system from the higher education institution to help they have to adapt to the Estonian social order. In addition to local higher education support services

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<sup>2</sup> In this document, as international students, we deal with foreign students who are graduate students as well as foreign students studying in Estonia through the mobility program.

national support services must also be guaranteed.

- The university and the student union must encourage international students involvement in the activities of the student body. The university must promote international education integration of students with local students.

- Healthcare services and information must be accessible to all international students and must be provided on the same basis as local students.

- Free Estonian language and culture must be provided to international students

learning.

- The state and higher education institutions encourage the entry of international level education students into Estonia to the labor market both during studies (language, culture study, internship opportunities) and after acquiring higher education.

- Tuition fee exemptions and scholarships must be offered for study programs in foreign languages on an equal footing for both local and international degree students.

- A student studying according to the English-language curriculum must have a verifiable level of English language skills have at least B2 upon admission.

- International students must be able to reunite with their loved ones with family members<sup>3</sup>. This means that minor children, spouses and adults with severe disabilities children must be allowed to live together during their studies automatically or in a simplified manner with a student in Estonia.

### **1.2. Study migration in higher education**

The opportunity to participate in study migration should not depend on the student's socio-economic background, but must be a general good available to the entire student body. Student mobility is important, as it allows students to acquire diverse experiences both in learning and in the form of socio-cultural experiences.

- The organization of higher education must favor the internationality of students and academic staff

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<sup>3</sup> [Council Directive 2003/86/EC](#)

mobility and ensure that study travelers can meet local students and staff

compared to at least equivalent quality education, support and social benefits.

- National legislation must encourage international students to study in Estonia

settling in and, if desired, staying here even after the end of studies, including making it possible

equally for students from outside the European Union. The residence permit application process must

to continue to be transparent and quality information material in English must be guaranteed and counselling.

- The structure of the higher education institution must support mobility and allow credit transfer

as simple a system as possible, which allows the student to apply

to end participation in the exchange program with the nominal time. In case the student completes the higher education

the requirements set for the content of the given exchange program, he must also be able to apply

nominal term extension. Credits must be transferred and counted in a reasonable manner

over time.

- When assigning scholarships, the destination of the mobility and the corresponding region must be taken into account special features, cost of living and it must be updated as needed.

### **1.3. Students with special needs**

Students with special needs are<sup>4</sup> supported by higher education institutions, taking into account their specific characteristics

at all levels of higher education in all parts of the learning process (auditory, practical, independent

in work), in the methodology of student study evaluation and at admission and graduation from higher education institutions.

- Developing the support system for students with special needs and ensuring social guarantees

their comprehensiveness must be assessed and the necessary special supports and services must be created to prevent them gaps in the general support and service system.

- A person with special needs must be provided with information about accessibility, that's how

the university campus considering the content of the curricula.

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<sup>4</sup> Students with special needs are discussed in this document [under Estonian legislation](#) as persons who have a loss or deviation of an anatomical, physiological or mental structure or function, which, in combination with various attitudinal and environmental obstacles, prevents participation in social life on an equal basis with others.

- In order to ensure equal opportunities for students with special needs, higher education institutions are important enhancing cooperation between and exchanging experiences.
- Support for students with special needs must be guaranteed in every higher education institution.
- Higher education institutions must work to ensure that existing buildings are provided physical accessibility, and to ensure that the buildings to be built (including dormitories, research centers, sports buildings, etc.) design that ensures universal access.
- Higher education institutions must gradually redesign their teaching and information materials, following principles of universal design<sup>5</sup> and taking into account the needs of students with special needs.
- The costs incurred in creating the necessary conditions for students are covered by the owner of the higher education institution.
- Universal accessibility must be available for teaching, support services and all higher education institutions the basic principle of events organized by student councils.

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<sup>5</sup> Universal design, or inclusive design, is a special approach to physical and organizational design and planning that takes into account the needs and interests of as many user groups as possible, regardless of the user's age or abilities.

## 2. ADMISSION TO HIGH SCHOOL

The university admission process is a very important part of the quality of higher education and it is related with several access, dropout and equity problems. For university studies the necessary skills are reflected in the entrance exams. Admission to the university is transparent, everyone's decisions can be checked and justified. Admission decisions must be received to dispute. The university ensures equal treatment of candidates.

- In order to ensure a well-thought-out decision when choosing a major and entering a higher education institution, it is necessary to develop study counseling in general and vocational education.
- Only objective and previously informed candidates can be used for admission criteria. The information required for applying must be available to high school graduates before making choices for the state exam. In case the admission criteria change after making exam choices, the higher education institution must be ready to replace the required exam with another one with an exam or arrange a replacement test.
- The results of state exams must not be the only selection factor for admission. In addition, there will be at the time of admission, take into account the entrant's motivation, suitability for studying the curriculum and informal experiences.
- The application process must be flexible and under conditions suitable for the applicant. Entry attempts must take place on at least two different days to allow freedom of choice for the student.
- Reception and processing of admission documents must be for Estonian speakers free of charge for study program applicants.
- The student candidate must have the opportunity to receive feedback if desired for application.
- The country must have a developed regulation for the assessment of qualifications if persons under international protection do not have or lack proof of education documents. Qualification recognition is carried out by the Academic Recognition Agency



Estonian ENIC/NARIC center.

- Universities must enable persons under international protection to prepare and/or remedial courses that ensure readiness for university entrance or studies to continue.
- The university must be able to verify the actual academic performance of the international graduate student abilities and skills to ensure equal competition for all students.

### 3. LEARNING ENVIRONMENT

The quality of the learning environment is determined by material aspects (teaching tools and infrastructure) as well as social aspects (inclusive environment and support services). It is important that the learning environment goes along with changes in the concept of learning, would guide, be accessible and promote both learning and teaching.

The campus is designed to encourage learning. To create a non-discrimination and higher education institutions provide an inclusive learning environment where every person can use their abilities high-quality and relevant advisory services and implement targeted policies.

- Appropriate physical (infrastructure: educational buildings, library, student housing, teaching aids, etc.) as well as the social environment (counseling, support groups and individuals, opportunities for free time, opportunities for active student life participate).
- The university together with the local government takes care of the student's mental and for physical safety and health protection.
- An inclusive discussion environment promotes both learning and teaching. To create it is higher education institutions need to develop and continuously develop the principles of inclusive discussion culture and apply them in teaching.
- The principles of universal design should always be present in higher education infrastructure and services priority in design. At the same time<sup>6</sup>, higher education institutions should also in the case of the physical environment take into account the diversity of the student body and ensure gender-neutral hygiene and availability of dressing rooms.
- Higher education institutions must provide all students with academic, career and the availability of psychological counseling throughout the studies, taking into account the needs cyclicity and counseling needs of different social groups.
- The university must inform students about the types and possibilities of counseling services.

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<sup>6</sup> Read more [1.3. Students with special needs](#)

### 3.1. *Discrimination and harassment*

Gender and sexual harassment can range from unwanted jokes with sexual undertones to flirting and direct proposals to exchange sexual favors for better grades or academics against advancing on the ladder. Gender and sexual harassment and discrimination can be experienced by all people regardless of gender.

- The role of the state and higher education institutions is to promote equality in society and to reduce the reproduction of social divisions in the education system. Academic and support staff of universities career models must provide equal development opportunities for all able-bodied and motivated employees and students regardless of their gender, disability, age, race, skin color, origin, religion, sexual identity, political or other beliefs, as well as property and social status.
- Universities and student councils must stand up for students (including international students) against discrimination and take responsibility for the well-being of students in higher education. Also ensure that every student can feel safe at the university. Universities must contribute to society in making it more tolerant by publicly condemning all forms of discrimination.
- Higher education institutions must take various incidents of harassment and discrimination seriously and cases of discrimination and harassment in higher education must be followed up the reaction or position of the relevant disciplinary body of the institution/university. Student welfare to ensure that the completion of studies must be supported by need-based psychological counseling.
- Based on EÜL's 2020 study "Gender and sexual harassment in higher education" must:
  - Develop comprehensive policies, from prevention victim assistance and until sanctioning. Annual online trainings contribute to this,

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<sup>7</sup> By gender harassment we mean unwanted behavior or activity related to gender, the purpose or actual effect of which is to degrade a person's dignity and create a disturbing, threatening, hostile, degrading, humiliating or offensive atmosphere

<sup>8</sup> We understand sexual harassment as unwanted verbal, non-verbal or physical behavior or activity of a sexual nature between university employees, students, lecturers and other members of the institution, the purpose or actual effect of which is to degrade a person's dignity, especially by creating a disturbing, threatening, hostile, degrading, humiliating or offensive atmosphere

<sup>9</sup> [Gender and Sexual Harassment in Higher Education \(2020\)](#)

student organizations are involved and mostly volunteers apply mutual consent trainings, promotion of non-university resources, sexual violence awareness weeks and trustees and a specific position creation, which would be responsible for sexual harassment and discrimination prevention.

- To be aware of the priority of the problem at the management level, which would mean real ones focusing resources and attention to prevent harassment at the university management as a separate area of responsibility and the taking of clear positions by the rectors of the university by in the media and in speeches.
- Universities should discuss the topic of intimate relationships between lecturers and students broadly and inclusive of all interest groups and create clear community standards to help reduce uncertainty and provide clarity guidelines for avoiding the possibility of ethical conflict related to their roles.
- Pay special attention to foreign students as well, to introduce them through trainings Estonian culture and customs, so that they are aware of what social norms are in Estonia and in which cases you should turn to the university for help.
- Reduce barriers for students to share their experience. Incidents there must and must be multiple ways of reporting communicated to all members of the university family. The victim must be able to communicate with someone you trust, not just your immediate superior or with the personnel department/study organization specialist. The University should confirm that unreasonable burdens are not demanded from the harassed as the weaker party. It definitely should to ensure that when reporting cases, the victim is protected, communication with him is maintained and feedback would be given on the status of case processing. University employees should have basic training.

### **3.2. Mental health**

Student mental health is a well-being issue that needs more attention to ensure students have sufficient study and self-management skills, a stress-free learning environment and available psychological support.

- Mental health care is a collective responsibility of society. Therefore, no mental health when dealing with problems, the focus should be on individual solutions in detail.
- Universities have an obligation to be aware and take into account how when making decisions institutional environment and work practices shape the mental of learners and employees condition. A full-time student spends a large part of his time in the university premises. His social relations and attitude towards studies are affected by the study organization and teaching staff attitude and the higher education system in general. Therefore, the university as a whole environment, which affects the mental well-being of the student. Based on this, it is dealt with in universities with prevention work, the whole university family is informed about mental health. Also the possibilities of where to find help are highlighted and seeking help is normalized.
- Mental health must be evaluated regularly and based on science. <sup>10</sup>
- The higher education system has a learning environment that values the learner and helps prevent situations where students get into trouble with their studies due to stress and overstrain. Prolonged stress can lead to deeper mental health disorders. Student community input Based on this, higher education institutions are not sufficiently aware of the impact of the school environment on student health.
- Psychological counseling must be on an equal basis and quickly available to everyone to the student.
- Information about help is available to students and easy to find. Considered with the variation of the semester load and cooperates with other associations that provide assistance, to meet the demand for aid in more intense periods.
- When studying full-time, the student must be able to focus only on his studies regardless of his socio-economic background.<sup>11</sup>

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<sup>10</sup> Studies that address the topic: [Eurostudent 2020 and a survey of the health behavior of the Estonian adult](#)

<sup>11</sup> [population](#) [Read more 4. System of social guarantees](#)

- Working outside of school is not negative, but lack of rest and overload can lead to it excessive stress and mental health disorders. <sup>12</sup>
- As an employer, the university must continuously monitor the workload and stress level of its employees to develop a working environment so that it supports the health of employees and is also based on of individual needs. The workload of the teaching staff must be reasonable and for the staff both occupational and psychological counseling services must be provided availability.
- The university must ensure a smooth transition from the previous level of education to first-year students for participation in higher education and place it in an important place in the curriculum.
- The university must offer the opportunity to acquire new knowledge at the beginning of the studies about coping with learning, living and communicating in the environment by providing lectures, courses, tutoring or integrating it into existing students in the integration processes.
- Every student must have the opportunity to use the rooms in the university buildings free of charge suitable for studying and resting, also enable the use of different learning methods outside contact study time and support socialization. Student residences must allow students to rest and study.
- It is important for the student to be able to create and find social relationships in the study group supportive community. For this purpose, the university must create or support instances like these the formation of communities is supported by tutors, course parents, course groups or professional societies. Students are encouraged to interact with and support different people in their studies integration of minority groups.
- Involving students in higher education decision-making processes empowers students because it proves to the student that he or she is valuable to the university. Valuing the student helps create self-confident self-image and in turn improves the quality of study and mental well-being understanding.

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<sup>12</sup> The average student cannot focus only on his studies due to his economic situation and works and studies a total of 62 hours per week. He studies 34 hours a week and works 28 hours. The importance of covering living expenses as a reason for working: 46% among under-20s, 66% in the 20-24 age group, 86% among 25-29-year-olds and 90% among over-30s ([Eurostudent 2020](#)).



## 4. SOCIAL SECURITY SYSTEM

A national system of social guarantees that meets the needs of students and guarantees the opportunity to fully devote yourself to your studies is a prerequisite for obtaining a high-quality higher education. Social system of guarantees in the Estonian higher education system, where the right to study free of charge is, as a rule, only while studying full-time, must allow students to cope without being forced to work for their own support, to extend their study time or to interrupt their studies altogether. To learning the presence of social guarantees that promote commitment makes students understand that society values learning.

- The system of social guarantees for students must be related to the organization of higher education, flexible and in line with the actual needs of students.
- The social security system must include grants, student loans and other benefits (for example, health insurance, transport discount). Scholarships should not be considered as part of social guarantees for students, as their purpose is motivation, not studies coping during. The share of non-returnable support (study grants) is difficult to be a priority for students in a socio-economic situation.
- The system of social guarantees must be sufficient to fulfill the objectives of the support system: to ensure access to higher education for everyone and enable full dedication to studies.  
The social guarantee system must ensure sufficient income to cover students' study and living expenses.
- Social guarantees must also be guaranteed for international students.
- Students' social guarantees must also be available for the exchange program for incoming students during their study abroad.
- It is important that every aspirant to a higher education institution has access to comprehensive information about support staff about systems (student loan, grants and others).
- Health insurance must be related to student status, and therefore academic coverage is also guaranteed during vacation.



- A diverse student population must be taken into account when planning and providing support services (for example adults, part-time students, working, special needs and international students) and transition to learner-centered learning and flexible forms of learning.
- Career counseling must be available to all students to be done while in higher education for example, informed choices regarding minors and continuing studies.
- It must be possible to pass at least 50 percent of subjects during the academic vacation to the extent of the nominal amount of subjects of the semester or academic year. Paying for studies while on academic leave depends on whether the student pays tuition or not.  
In doing so, additional fees must be avoided.

#### **4.1. Study grants**

Study grants (as non-refundable financial aid) help to reduce the socio-economic background barriers and provide immediate support to those who need it. They form an important and unavoidable part of the system of social guarantees.

- Grants must be available to all nationally recognized (fully or conditionally accredited) for full-time nominal duration study programs for students, regardless of the degree, type of higher education institution or legal form of ownership. Support must be available for students with special needs regardless of the study load and degree of disability.
- The amounts of subsidy payments must either be periodically updated or linked to the cost of living, to ensure that students cover their living expenses based on necessity.
- Support for first- and second-cycle students should enable poor social a student in an economic situation to cope with his studies without going to work and without taking out student loans.
- The state must guarantee all doctoral students studying full-time and nominally income corresponding to the qualification, which ensures the social guarantees accompanying the salary. 13

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<sup>13</sup> Read more [9.1 Doctoral studies](#)

- Scholarships may not be counted as part of the student's income when determining study grants, because it is an additional reward resulting from academic success.
  - In addition to the student's income, the student's income must also be taken into account when determining the amount of the study allowance objective needs for larger expenses, such as a duty of care or a special need.
- In order to alleviate regional failures, the state must provide additional support to students whose place of residence is before the start of their studies, there is no place in the city where they study or in the municipalities adjacent to it.
- The income of the student's parent(s) may be included in the student's income when determining study grants, if the student lives in the same household. When determining the study allowance, be based on the most recent data available on the student's income.

#### **4.2. Student loan**

Student loans, as refundable financial aid, offer the student an additional opportunity during the study period cover living expenses and focus on your studies.

- When developing the student loan system, it is important to take into account the needs of both students and their studies to make ends meet as well as the need for paying students to cover tuition fees.
- The maximum amount of the student loan must keep pace with changes in the cost of living.
- It must be possible to apply for the loan during the entire academic year.
- The student loan must be nationally guaranteed for all students. About granting a student loan may be denied to a person who is in arrears on a current student loan.
- The student loan interest must be 0%. A part-time student must have an animal parallel system, where the interest is close to a graduate with at least twice the nominal duration To the European average rate of 1-2% (if not lower).
- The conditions for repaying the student loan are as follows.
  - The repayment obligation can start the moment the borrower has not continued during the year studies, and his income is at least at the level of the median salary.
  - Mandatory payment in one month cannot be more than 10% of the borrower of income.

- The obligation to repay the loan and pay interest must be interrupted by job loss and in case of continuing higher education studies and until the borrower's child turns three.
- The loan repayment period must be at least five times the completed studies nominal duration.
- Repayment of the student loan can be done faster at the request of the borrower, without the loan it would lead to additional costs for the person who took it.
- The borrower of the student loan must be fully released from repaying the student loan in the following cases:
  - in case of partial or complete loss of working capacity;
  - in case of death;
  - if, after taking out a student loan, a minor child of the borrower is diagnosed with severe or profound disability.
  - in case the student completes his doctoral studies with nominal time.

## 5. QUALITY OF HIGHER EDUCATION

High-quality higher education provides students with knowledge, attitudes, skills and core competencies that are needed for success after graduation- high-quality higher education trains students into informed citizens and future work, supports their personal development, creates an extensive a high-level knowledge base and boosts research activities and innovation. 14

- Higher education institutions must have formulated and implemented quality management principles and a clear quality assurance system that would include the cooperation of all parties (incl between student representatives), feedback and development of study subjects and curricula.
- Higher education institutions must be managed with high quality. This means that the governing bodies of higher education institutions - the rectorate and the Senate, as well as other decision-making bodies, must base their work on quality management principles.
- In the management of higher education institutions, students are involved in the work of all decision-making bodies of the higher education institution. At least 1/5 of all members of decision-making bodies must be students. Universities when choosing rectors, besides academic competence, more attention must be paid than before also good management skills, including the ability to involve different interest groups.
- A modern approach to learning has been implemented in higher education, with each learner at the center supporting individual and social development. Strong subject knowledge comes equally also value learning and cooperation skills and the development of self-management. In addition to being progressive the subjective well-being of the person is also valued in the studies, which means better physical and mental health, the ability to resolve disagreements and overcome crises. The above assumes <sup>15</sup> in addition to developing the competence of academic staff from higher education institutions improvement of support structures.
- The employees at universities are motivated, competitively paid, competent and employees with the necessary language skills to perform their duties. This assumes that the higher education institution as

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<sup>14</sup> Check out [the quality assurance standards and guidelines of the European Higher Education Area.](#)

<sup>15</sup> [Study concept](#)

the employer guarantees a competitive wage, designs the collective based on its needs working environment, and on its part requires expertise from employees, academic employees in this case also a high level of teaching skills.

- The university must ensure that the education to be acquired is nationally and internationally recognized competitive and the curricula and educational institution would be in accordance with the requirements accredited.
- Students must be involved in the quality assurance processes of higher education consistently and at all levels.
- Content and structure of curricula (correspondence of subjects to the purpose of the curriculum, modernity) are reviewed and analyzed regularly, involving student representatives to verify the up-to-dateness of curricula to ensure their quality.
- Curricula are internationally competitive, ensuring students an opportunity become responsible and proactive citizens who are capable of social activities understand the processes and participate in them.
- Each curriculum has a clearly formulated goal and described achievable learning outcomes. The curriculum is comprehensive, avoids unnecessary duplication and is on target justified for completion, to ensure that the curriculum is output-based.
- Evaluation of academic work is fair and transparent, and the syllabus, including evaluation criteria, dates of compulsory contact education, etc., are known before the subject begins.
- The university provides students with opportunities for academic counseling and informs them of the corresponding possibilities.
- The study organization enables the student to have an even study load during the entire study period.
- Every student can contest his grade and study process: the corresponding opportunity and the process is transparent and public.

## **5.1. Feedback on teaching**

Student feedback on teaching (including organization, materials, tasks, teacher pedagogical skills) is an important input for the development of teaching both for teaching staff, curriculum for leaders as higher education institutions. Feedback is an opportunity for students to contribute students' important input to the development of the university's educational quality as well as to the student representatives to represent. Students are involved in all stages of feedback implementation. Students the feedback of other members of the university family is equally valued in terms of learning processes and learning support mechanisms.

- The student has the right to give feedback to make his opinion heard, the obligation to help to the development of the university and the responsibility to base feedback on good practice and ethics.
- All stakeholders must be involved in the development of feedback mechanisms parties - students, lecturers, alumni, entrepreneurs and representatives of the liberal community.
- The university must have solid principles for collecting feedback. data collection, the processes of analysis, disclosure and use are transparent.
- The collection of feedback must be consistent and systematic, because it is a matter of higher education as a basis for the sustainability of quality assurance.
- Higher education institutions must systematically use the collected feedback on subjects and strengths to monitor and improve quality.<sup>16</sup>
- Feedback must be anonymous to avoid the influence of student-faculty positions of power and versatile, allowing feedback on all important parts of the learning process, incl the organization of the study, the learner's own contribution to the learning process, various support services, evaluation methodology and criteria.
- The feedback system must also allow for written comments. Quantitative only feedback is not sufficient for the development of learning, because the collected information is limited to the given information with questions and statements.

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<sup>16</sup> For example, through regular reports and use in internal evaluation.

## ***5.2. Continuing education of teachers and development of teaching skills***

In Estonia, the development of the professional skills of teaching staff of higher education institutions has been organized in a way that allows teaching staff to develop continuously and higher education institutions and the state to guide this development. Teaching staff supporting professional development is systematic and aimed at mutual cooperation, where an important place is cooperation between higher education institutions, feedback between colleagues and teaching staff consideration of own teaching experience.

The areas of improving skills depend on the teacher's self-analysis, student feedback and forward-looking country-wide monitoring of the need for further education. It helps in grad school to direct lecturers to upgrade themselves in the areas in which they would need it the most, and at the same time avoids situations where lecturers who are already competent in the field are referred to continuing education. Short-term projects, training projects and other programs generally do not lead to actual implementation and to a long-term change, and does not guarantee an even distribution of continuing education by field, university or higher education institution considering the age groups of the teaching staff. That is why there is continuing education for teaching staff and teaching skills development as a whole is part of a long-term and sustainable strategy.

- The professional development of teaching staff must be a systematic and continuous process, and it must be treated as a priority area.
- A nationwide understanding and framework of the nature of continuing education for teaching staff needs to be created, which leaves the opportunity for higher education institutions to implement the continuing education system flexibly and to take into account in doing so peculiarities of higher education. At the same time, this framework must ensure quality in sufficiently specific ways with goals and indicators. Such a nationwide understanding of the in-service training of teaching staff must be regulated by the higher education standard in which lecturers have been established so far concerning academic requirements.
- It is necessary to involve all lecturers in continuing education and encourage consideration of continuing education as an important part of the attestation of teaching staff.
- We see the continuity of professional development of teaching staff and lifelong learning in mind the need for a national professional standard for teachers. The purpose of the professional standard is to support the teacher continuous professional development. We find that the professional standard can be similar in its form with the professional standards of teachers and andragogues that already exist. The professional standard must

consider the involvement of practitioners in teaching.

- Attestation of teaching staff and filling of new positions requires research capacity

in addition to the share of the teaching work of the position, also take into account the teaching skills that one has

can be assessed through the lecturer's self-analysis, reflection and portfolio, to which it belongs

also an overview of previous feedback given to the lecturer.

- In order to create a sustainable system, continuous monitoring is necessary, which would reflect developments and the future needs of teachers' continuing education.

- Acquiring the basics of teaching skills and supporting the improvement of didactic skills

completion of the courses must be mandatory in the doctoral program, if the doctoral student is exposed

teaching or supervising students (including seminars-practicums

guidance).

- Accreditation of academic staff teaching according to the international curriculum of the university

mastery of the language of study at level C1 must be assumed. In the case of being appointed a professor,

establish a mandatory requirement for candidates to give a public contact education lesson in English,

for example, like ***Venia legendi***.<sup>17</sup>

- The English language of the support staff involved in advising international foreign students at the university skill level must be at least B2.

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<sup>17</sup> Sample work (lecture, seminar, practicum, e-learning) to demonstrate teaching skills when applying for a teaching position.



## 6. ORGANIZATION OF PRACTICE

Acquiring higher education creates all prerequisites for the student to be on the labor market competitive. The labor market itself develops in cooperation with higher education institutions, all the more among others through the multilateral development of the field of practice. There is also one internship during studies ways of acquiring professional experience and its presence in the curriculum allows the student to acquire knowledge and skills that will be useful to him when competing on the labor market. It is also through practice it is possible for higher education institutions and employers to shape their image and provides a good opportunity to increase knowledge exchange between higher education institutions and employers.

- The university values practice and ensures its quality by integrating it into the curricula and developing a flexible practice arrangement that sets out the content, purpose and evaluation criteria across different practice models.
- The internship must be designed in such a way that the student can apply what he has learned in higher education and thereby consolidate the acquired knowledge.
- The placement management system of higher education institutions also takes into account international and special needs students' interests. Substantial practice and well-coordinated, flexible and systematic internship organization is useful for both the student, the employer and the university and to society at large.
- Internships are accompanied by an internship organization agreement and a relevant internship report existence of forms. The contract is concluded between the student, the higher education institution and the employer, and it determines the rights and obligations of all parties. The practice organization must correspond to the provisions of the contract, be meaningful, transparent and developmental for the student.
- The state must encourage the development of internships and provide employers with interns also certain benefits and benefits for training.
- Completion of the internship must not lag behind economic problems. Therefore, practices have participation needs to support at least the students' travel and living expenses based on need with covering.
- The internship supervisor appointed by the internship institution must find the trainee specialist

tasks, supervise their execution and give feedback to both the intern and the intern  
to higher education.

- The training institution can only impose such high demands on the training of the trainee  
apply to the employees of the training institution. At the same time, the demands must not burden the student financially  
to burden.
- The most important part of the internship report must be the student's self-analysis.

## 7. PREVIOUS STUDY AND WORK EXPERIENCE (GET) ACCOUNTING

Taking into account previous study and work experience means that it is counted as part of the studies formal education as well as non-formal and informal education, competence acquired during previous work or skills and various trainings. The consideration of work experience means everything that concerns transfer of knowledge, skills and competence acquired during work to the student's curriculum. In addition everything that concerns the transfer of completed subjects or modules and accumulated credit points from one higher education institution to another or from one curriculum to another falls under the scope of VÕTA. TAKE the main one the goal is to increase the availability of higher education in society and change the continuation of studies more flexible for learners with different backgrounds, experiences and educational levels. With the help of VÕTA, it is guaranteed the possibility of admission to higher education for those who do not have the required level of education, but who have obtained required competence through work or research experience.

- The VÕTA system must be transparent, easy to understand and have a consistent operating logic in different higher education institutions. There must be an information system for submitting VÕTA applications user friendly.
- There must be no volume limitation when considering previous study and work experience. The evaluation of VÕTA applications must be transparent, comprehensive and case-based. When calculating the study load, credits transferred with VÕTA are included in the student's study load in the current semester (also when applying for scholarships).
- The student's previous education and work experience must be evaluated by a student-centered competent and an impartial evaluation committee, which is guaranteed a systematic foundation and continuing education. If necessary, involving partners and experts from outside the university.
- Asking for money for consideration of previous study and work experience must be at the national level level regulated. Transfer of studies within Estonia must be free of charge.
- Credits acquired during previous studies will not expire, as this would conflict with the principles of lifelong learning and modern higher education. The college has, if necessary

the right to assess a person's skills and knowledge.

- Studies and work experience transferred with VØTA must be on the academic transcript reflected clearly and unambiguously.
- Everyone has the right to receive adequate counseling before the transfer procedure begins and also during this. Information materials and counselors must be freely available in higher education institutions, to inform students about the nature, principles and possibilities of VØTA. College organizes student counseling and information in cooperation with the student body.
- The student must have the right to challenge the committee's decision. The exact procedure of the appeal must be known to the student before the start of the assessment procedure.

## 8. DIGITAL LEARNING

The use and development of digital learning tools contributes to lifelong learning, learning quality and to the development<sup>18</sup> of digital competence. Estonia has set itself the goal of organizing a digital revolution in lifelong learning, which aims to apply modern digital technology in learning and teaching more expediently and effectively, improve the digital skills of the entire population and ensure access to the new generation digital infrastructure. Although in the digital world learning tools often evolve<sup>19</sup> faster than their use and integration into contact learning can be described in the regulations and in the documents regulating the organization of education, it is important to establish the principles, to ensure student-friendliness and consideration of important aspects when directing development into the future.

- The goal of using digital learning tools is to make the learning process more efficient and improving quality.
- Estonian higher education institutions must participate in the development of digital learning tools and integrate them them in their curricula and subject courses. It is also important that Estonian higher education institutions for diversifying the learning process, internationalization and lifelong learning to encourage them, they would achieve the ability to organize online courses.
- The direction for the development of digital competence and culture must be integrated into the learning process at all levels of education and in all curricula at national level. It also ensures development at all levels of digital competence, from finding information to digital content to creation.<sup>20</sup>
- When developing and using digital learning tools, the teaching staff must also be taken into account and the development of students' digital competence. Development of digital competence of academic staff the higher education institution is responsible for.
- When applying digital learning tools to teaching, students must be guaranteed access to learning the necessary digital infrastructure, i.e. hardware, internet connection and software.

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<sup>18</sup> Digital competence is the readiness to use digital technology to cope in a rapidly changing knowledge society in the workplace, in education, in acting as a citizen, as in interacting in communities.

<sup>19</sup> Digital learning tool or learning material or e-learning material: in digital form (e.g. online, databases or digital educational materials published on data carriers), including e-textbooks, educational online videos and mobile applications, learning games, e-teacher books, e-worksheets, online tests, learning objects.

<sup>20</sup> Read more about [the DigComp framework](#)

- Publicly funded knowledge must be publicly available. So it is important that digital learning tools created by higher education institutions are widely and easily available.
- Digital learning provides an additional alternative to contact learning in curricula, if necessary.
- Digital learning tools created in Estonia must have a universal design, that is, as much as possible handy for a student with special needs.
- There must be clear communication between higher education institutions about the programs used for digital learning and regarding the use of environments. If possible, it can be agreed within one institute/faculty common ways and methods for conducting digital learning, so that digital learning is as possible for students comfortable, high-quality and available.
- The copyrights of digital learning tools, both property and personal, must be assigned and licensed to an extent that ensures the interests of both authors and users of digital learning tools protection.
  - The creator of a digital learning tool must take into account what he uses when creating the learning tool with the copyright of the creator of the material, among other things to ensure the existence and correctness of references.
  - The user of the digital learning tool must take into account that the digital learning tool is a work whose content is protected by copyright. Among them, it is important to consider that when using this content it must be cited as a source.

## 9. HIGHER EDUCATION AND SCIENCE, DEVELOPMENT AND FUNDING OF CREATIVE ACTIVITIES (TAL).

In Estonia, it is important to maintain a strong national higher education and research system, because the accompanying knowledge-based economy, solving big challenges, good living environment and cultural development ensure people's higher income and general social well-being. There is TAL in Estonia the biggest problem of funding is fragmentation, which prevents top-performing focus areas formation and focusing on topics important from the point of view of the comprehensive development of society. Funding means any direct or indirect contribution to higher education and research, financial contribution aimed at development and creative activities.

- Publicly funded science is treated as a public good and its results are guaranteed public access, unless they are related to national defense, industrial patent or with sensitive personal data.
- Higher education institutions ensure free access to students and, if possible, to the public to scientific databases and journals to contribute to knowledge-based governance. In the case of decisions made in the state sector, they are based on the largest possible extent of the results of analyzes and research.
- The funding system for higher education and TAL must be transparent and support educational and scientific policy decisions. Its financing must be a permanent state budget priority and financing decisions must be planned for the long term and sustainably. Also, all stakeholders must be involved in setting funding priorities so that their views would be taken into account.
- The amount of state budget funding for the organization of high-quality higher education level education and for development and to support the fulfillment of the higher education institution's mission should be at least 1.5 percent of gross domestic product.
- To ensure fair and equal access, the main funder of higher education must be the state.
- Tuition fees in any form increase social inequality by preventing equality

access to higher education and thereby making it more difficult to acquire higher education. Higher education funding must not increase at the expense of increasing the financial burden on students.

- The state and higher education institutions must ensure that free education does not exist hidden tuition fees. The student must be guaranteed free access to all necessary facilities educational materials and tools.
- The amount of state budget funding for research, development and creative activities should be at least 1 percent of the gross domestic product.
- In the case of state research funding, the amount must be stable increase to help ensure TAL's quality, research infrastructure maintenance and academic aftergrowth.
- Competition-based funding must be preserved as a complement to sectoral funding and private sector funding in research and development must increase. the small size of Estonian companies because of this, the volume of their TAL is also small, therefore the cooperation of companies in TAL must be encouraged in the order.
- The reporting system must be made simpler and less time-consuming for researchers than it is now. In the case of research projects financed from the stimulus funds and framework programs of the European Union the norms for the organization and reporting of procurement must be between the European Union and Estonia harmonized. The demands and criteria that Estonia additionally submits must be justified and coordinated with related interest groups (including researchers). Procurement of tenders the assessment must be based on the price-quality ratio.

### **9.1 Doctoral studies**

In the field of research, one important part is doctoral students, who in the future will be both potential lecturers, researchers as well as highly qualified specialists in their fields in the private and public sectors.

High-quality doctoral study allows the doctoral student to focus on writing the doctoral thesis and encourages completion of doctoral studies in nominal time.

- The doctoral student must be guaranteed the Estonian average salary for the duration of the doctoral studies. Employment contract



working on the basis guarantees opportunities for doctoral students, for example, to take a loan and for parental allowance, which is not provided by doctoral student grants and scholarships. Estonian average salary allows the doctoral student to focus on the doctoral course

- When converting doctoral students to junior researchers, their student status must be maintained.
- Estonian universities must develop a uniform set of rules for the attestation of doctoral students and quality requirements and follow them.
- More emphasis than before must be placed on the quality of instruction. Must be set in assessment of tutoring competence, their attestation and training. Supervisors the number of active doctoral students must be monitored to avoid overloading. Every Ph.D there must be at least two supervisors. In addition, previous guidance must be taken into account performance.
- The subjects of doctoral study programs must support the writing of a doctoral thesis, which is doctoral studies main output. It is also necessary to simplify the transfer of subjects between different universities, which also promotes joint teaching of doctoral students and helps avoid a situation where the subject is not read, because there are not enough doctoral students in the university.
- The selection and promotion of academic staff must be based on clear criteria.  
It is also necessary to create opportunities for the growth of young top scientists, which is currently one a bigger problem for doctoral students in continuing their academic career. 21
- The possession of a doctoral degree must be valued more than before in the labor market, which is one possibility state-imposed bonus for public sector officials. Higher education is also a good idea connect with the private sector through an entrepreneurial or industrial doctorate.

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<sup>21</sup> [Estonian Science. Estonian Science Agency. \(2019\). page 30](#)

## 10. POSITIONS OF THE ENVIRONMENTAL FIELD

### 10.1 *State responsibility*

- The financing model of higher education (including financing of higher education institutions) and of the state and universities administrative agreements between of development and be based on the principles of sustainable development of the United Nations.
- The state, as a financier of the higher education system, should ensure that the established higher education institutions procurement procedures are also based on the principles of sustainable development, including assignments and when ordering event procurements.
- Institutional accreditation must take into account the principles of sustainable development implementation in higher education institutions.
- The state must support and encourage education and research in the knowledge of sustainable development in the areas necessary to ensure
- Increasing the energy efficiency of university buildings (including dormitories) must be a priority and the renovation of the existing infrastructure must aim for the highest possible energy efficiency be supported by the state if the resource consumption does not bring additional environmental benefits or other negative effects.

### *10.2 Responsibility of higher education institutions*

- Higher education institutions must constantly strive towards more sustainable functioning. waste management, negative environmental impact must be reduced in the areas of energy and water use, based on the latest scientific knowledge.
- Higher education institutions must assess the scope of their environmental impacts and mitigate and prevent negative environmental impacts (including when constructing new buildings).
- In waste management, the role of higher education institutions must be to minimize the generation of waste and in the case of unavoidable waste, their sorting must be convenient for the user and logical.
- Universities must create suitable conditions for walking, cycling and for public transport users, while keeping the focus on an active dialogue with the local with the municipality, so that similar conditions are enabled in other parts of the city.
- The greenery surrounding the buildings of higher education institutions must have natural diversity encouraging.
- Addressing the principles of sustainable development must be a natural part of the learning process, during which students and employees are motivated to find solutions themselves.
- The topics of sustainable development must be integrated into the curricula in an interdisciplinary manner and guide research.
- Higher education institutions must support progressive student initiatives that increase environmentalism in the higher education institution and society in general.
- The aforementioned goals are included in the development plans of higher education institutions and are measured by the higher education institution their fulfillment.

### **10.3 Responsibility of the student body**

- Student councils should set an example for student bodies with their environmentally sustainable activities. Student councils are the initiators of environmental issues in higher education institutions and leaders.
- Sustainability must be embedded in the strategic documents of student councils.  
Student representatives and other student organizations speak evidence-based and actively involved in the implementation of sustainability principles in higher education.
- Student councils try to be guided by the green office when organizing events of the principles<sup>22</sup>. The main goal must be to reduce overall consumption.  
If possible, products made in Estonia are purchased and consumed and/or as much as possible ecologically produced, packaged and delivered products.

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<sup>22</sup> According to the Estonian Environmental Management Association, "***The goal of an environmentally friendly or green office [is] continuous monitoring and reduction of the organization's environmental impact, which is accompanied by cost savings, sustainable use of natural resources, reduction of waste generation and a healthier working environment.***", last viewed 05.01.21 [ekja.ee/et/roheline-office](http://ekja.ee/et/roheline-office)