

Political document of the learning environment

The political document of the learning environment concerns the Student Organization of Agder's (STA) policies on the five aspects of the learning environment; the physical, the psychosocial, the digital, the organizational, and the pedagogical learning environment. The university of Agder (UiA) must have an inclusive learning environment where all students experience mastering student life, is a part of a community and experience a learning environment that gives room to succeed with the studies. The campuses need to be facilitated for all, and campus development shall be based on the principle of an including learning environment for both students and employees.

Learning environment at the university shall be acknowledged as a fundamental factor for quality in higher education.

A good learning environment is defined as the collected cultural, relational, and physical ratios at the institution that is significant for the students' learning, health and wellbeing.

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1. Responsibility

UiA's learning environment committee (LMU) is responsible for working structured and systematically with the learning environment at the university. They make sure that different measures are being implemented, and that an action plan on learning environment is annually passed and sent out on a hearing to all the units at the university and STA.

The learning environment committee shall in cooperation with the committee for the working environment and the equality and inclusion committee arrange annual gatherings to discuss different issues and try to find solutions together. STA is to be included in this work.

When it comes to who is responsible for the follow-up of the learning environment, a clear responsibility must be divided in all areas from persons with course responsibility to the faculty director. All scientific employees have a responsibility for facilitating a good learning environment.

2. Physical learning environment

2.1 Universal design

UiA is to be universally designed for all students at all times. UiA shall be facilitated for all and the laws on universal design shall be the minimum.

Lecture halls, group study rooms, reading halls and the library shall be seen as public rooms where existing laws and regulations must be seen as the minimum demand on design.

The toilets at UiA shall be facilitated for all. New toilets being built shall be unisex and universally designed. The signs for baby care rooms shall be universally designed and these rooms be available to use by those who need them.

UiA must be able to offer a room for relaxation and study places with a low noise level. This is important for students who need it to be quieter to be able to go through their daily student life. These rooms must be open and visible for all.

2.2 Campus development

The development of campus shall be based on ensuring a better learning environment for students and areas for the academic community. When planning to develop campus, the students shall always be involved in the initial phase, planning work, project groups and user participation.

The development of campus shall be done according to the principles of an inclusive learning environment. This includes among other things students with visual impairments, exchange students, students with vision, hearing, and movement disabilities or with asthma and allergies.

When there is construction or renovations at campus, there must always be a statement from the interest organizations for people with disabilities. This to ensure that the perspectives of the users are safeguarded.

The students shall be shielded and noise cancelling measurements shall be implemented during construction work on campus, especially during examination periods.

2.3 Air quality and temperature

UiA shall strive towards having a good quality of air and room temperature which are in accordance with recommendations from specialists.

The university shall implement annual testing of the quality of air to ensure good quality. The same implies for the temperature in group rooms, reading halls and seminar rooms. The tests shall be carried out when there is a basis for measurement and around the lecture times to give correct results. In cases where the quality of air does not satisfy the demands, the university must implement measures to improve the quality.

The ventilation at the university shall be on for every opening day until the university's closing time. This also includes the faculty buildings.

2.4 Lecture rooms

The administration of lecture rooms, group study rooms and common areas must be structured and clear. It must be easy to book rooms at the university. Information on booking must be easily accessible, clear and updated.

The number of group study rooms must increase as the student body increases at both campuses.

2.5 The Natural History Museum and Botanical Garden

The Natural History Museum at Gimlemoen must be a clear part of UiA, and a natural meeting place for everyone at the university.

The Nature History Museum is a knowledgeable part of the institution that should be used more actively by all field of studies.

It must be considered to construct and build a gazebo which can be used as reading spaces, a place to gather for colloquiums and a meeting place affiliated to the nature museum.

The Botanical Garden must be developed to be a green lung for the students and employees, in addition to other green areas on campus.

3. Psychosocial learning environment

3.1 Action plan against bullying and harassment

The University of Agder shall have an action plan against bullying which shall be followed up by the learning environment committee. The faculties and teacher

education unit shall follow the plan and report back on initiated measures with evaluations in the annual reports on quality.

3.2 Human duties and responsibilities

All students and employees at UiA have a human responsibility to create an inclusive and safe learning environment. There is zero tolerance for bullying and harassment at UiA.

A participant with competence on areas like conflict resolution is to be hired and will work as a welfare representative at UiA. This is to ensure that the students can get counselling in conflict resolutions and/or other human problems.

3.3 Students' mental health

UiA is to ensure that the students' mental health and wellbeing is being taken seriously.

The results from the *Studiebarometeret* and *SHoT-undersøkelsen* must be used to develop relevant courses for students that focus on coping with everyday life, and mental health. The courses must build on expert assessment and research and be offered to all students. The courses shall be promoted to reach the majority of students.

3.3.1 World mental health day

World mental health day (10th October) is to be marked by UiA/SiA every year. Students and STA must be invited to participate in the marking on both campuses.

4. Digital learning environment

UiA must be a leading university when it comes to the use of digitalisation for the quality of education. Digitalisation shall strengthen academic quality and usability where this is appropriate.

The university must make sure the digital competence for students and employees is sufficient and offer courses when necessary. The choice and usage of digital tools in education should be based on what is being used in the workplaces and help students develop their digital skills.

4.1 Digital lectures

Digital lectures shall be used if it is suitable for the students' learning. Students shall achieve the learning outcome when using digital lectures. Lecturers must be brought up to date on digital teaching methods.

Digital lectures must not replace lectures on campus. Digital teaching tools is to be a supplement for ordinary teaching.

It is important that digital lectures are focused on student active learning, innovation, and variation in the lectures. This can be the usage of a mentimeter, break out rooms and quiz. Student assistants can be given tasks helps activate the students.

4.2 Available equipment

UiA shall make sure that there is available digital equipment on loan for the students. It shall be possible to loan equipment on a short term at the library where all students shall be able to loan equipment from.

4.3 Digital learning platforms

UiA shall ensure that the digital learning platforms are easy to use, provides clear information and cooperates with other technical solutions offered at the university.

The digital learning platforms must be predictable. UiA must ensure that the lecturers are trained well when it comes to how to use the digital platforms.

The students shall receive clear information on how the digital platforms are being used in their study programme and in the different subjects.

5. Organizational learning environment

5.1 Reports on the learning environment

UiA shall ensure that the university, faculties, teacher education unit and administrative units has the possibility to report on how they work with the learning environment.

The university shall implement a local survey on the learning environment every other year. This shall give a foundation for the continuing work with concrete measures to better the learning environment. The survey shall be made in cooperation with the student ombudsman and STA.

Studiebarometeret can be used as an indicator of the university's quality on the work with study programmes, study offers and other academic offers.

UiA shall market the survey in their channels to reach out to as many students as possible.

5.2 Team for the learning environment

UiA shall hire a team for the learning environment, with paid posts. The purpose of the team is to be in and around the student body, therefore students shall be a part of the team. The team shall work preventive and in cooperation with the student activities and STA.

The team shall have a coordinator for the learning environment, who also will follow-up the learning environment committee. In addition to this, the team shall have a coordinator the study environment with the responsibility for facilitating meeting places for the students.

The team shall be tied to UiA's division of student and academic affairs, with a cooperation with the resource centre and SiA- health team.

5.3 Student participation

It is important that student participation is being facilitated at the university. It shall be facilitated, through the Quality Ensurance System, for class representatives to be involved in processes where it is appropriate. This is due to the fact that the students know best how they prefer the study day to be.

5.4 System of student representatives (class representatives)

The student representatives are to represent all students in their modules and study programmes in the quality work. Student representatives must be included in preparations and work with improving quality of modules and study programmes.

5.4.1 Election of student representatives

UiA shall, in cooperation with STA, make sure that the faculties/teacher education unit conducts elections of class representatives. The students shall receive good information on elections beforehand. All students affiliated with the study/subject shall be able to stand for election.

The lecturer must arrange the election of a student representative so that this role is more visible and easily accessible for the majority of students. The lecturer shall promote the position as something desirable, not as a pure necessity.

The digital portal for student representatives shall be updated all times.

5.4.2 Contacts and communication

The faculties/teacher education unit shall have a contact person for their student representatives. These persons shall follow up the student representatives and answer questions, in addition to having an organizational responsibility when it comes to the student representatives at the faculties/teacher education unit.

A person employed centrally at UiA shall follow up the contact persons and actively follow up and contribute to the development of the system for student representatives.

When the student representative give feedback that calls for change, the faculty or unit must implement measures and make sure necessary information are being brought back to the students. The faculty and unit must ensure a two-way communication.

The person responsible for the course shall invite the student representative to a dialogue in the beginning of each semester. The dialogue shall help clarify expectations between the course responsible and the student when it comes to teaching and guidance. This dialogue should also include the decision making on what form the course evaluation should take.

5.4.3 Training of student representatives

The University of Agder shall, in cooperation with STA, ensure a good training of the student representatives. This training should consist of a greeting from the rector, an introduction on the quality ensurance system and student participation, resources for the role as a student representative and an introduction to evaluation processes, how give constructive feedback and other relevant processes.

UiA must make sure international students can participate in the quality work at the university. It must be facilitated for international students to be student representatives in modules and take part in study councils.

It is important that the training is being marketed in relevant channels.

5.4.4 Study councils and dialogue meetings

The study counsels shall actively discuss the learning environment in the study programs and at the institutes. A function for giving feedback to the class representatives on what measures that has been implemented for ensure a better learning environment shall be facilitated.

Meetings with information and cooperation for the student representatives shall be arranged on all faculties and teacher education unit. The meetings shall be used as meeting places between the student representatives, the faculty management and STA.

Meetings between student representatives and the faculties shall be an arena where the students can provide input on the university strategy and the development of guidelines. The student representatives shall also be given the opportunity to provide the student voice outside the regular meeting places.

UiA shall take the initiative and be responsible for facilitating this, and together with STA make sure that it happens on the students' premises.

5.5 Evaluation of modules and study programmes

Every module shall have an evaluation of the module either mid-way or at the end of the course. Students will be given the information about time for the evaluation in the beginning of the semester. The time shall be decided by the student representative and course responsible. There will be time set aside to do the evaluation during the lecture times.

The student representative and the course responsible are to make a report of the module, using the evaluation as a basis. This can be based on a summary of the analogical evaluation. The report must be made available for students in both Norwegian and English.

The evaluation shall present clear goals for improvements in the module. The study council shall make an action plan based on the report. This will be made available for students. The action plan is to be followed up by the student representative, together with the course responsible and head of the study programme.

An evaluation of exams is to be carried out every three years in all modules of a study programme to ensure that all exam papers are of good quality.

5.6 Student participation and the student democracy

Students must be represented in all bodies that influence their interests, both locally, nationally and globally.

The student democracy at UiA has a central role in facilitating students' participation. The student democracy shall also function as a support network for student representatives so that they can carry out their work in a satisfactory manner. The university shall facilitate that all students who wish to participate in student democracy have the opportunity to do so. The student democracy must have room to work purposefully with the university's central management and other relevant actors. UiA shall facilitate for students so that they can actively participate in the work of promoting increased quality in the educations provided at the university. Through representation, students get the opportunity to help design educations at UiA.

5.6.1 Representation

All students shall have the opportunity to represent the students. Students who represent others are obliged to use their right and opportunity for participation.

UiA and STA must work to find good solutions that ensure that the international student voice is heard and represented equally as the Norwegian student voice.

Students shall be represented in all boards and committees with decision-making authority at the various institutional levels at the university. The student representatives shall take an active part in the management of the institution at all levels. The university shall, together with STA, ensure that the student representatives receive sufficient training to carry out their tasks in a good manner.

5.6.2 Faculty/unit level

Students shall be represented in faculty boards, the teacher education unit board, gatherings for student representatives and other relevant councils, boards and committees at faculty/unit level. The student representatives shall actively partake in the running of the faculties and unit.

5.6.3 Institutional level

The students shall be represented in study councils and other relevant councils, boards and committees. The student representatives shall actively partake in the development of the institute.

5.7 First semester measures

All first-year students shall be offered to take part in a mentor programme through their first study year. The mentor programme shall strengthen the academic and social environment for the students.

A mentor shall have a higher level of education than the students they are helping. All student mentors are to get sufficient training. The training should include courses in guidance competence, competence in human relations/meetings and an introduction to the academic traditions they are guiding in.

The student mentors shall be offered a course certificate or certificate for a completed course. The mentor meetings should include guidance on topics such as study techniques, academic writing in a relevant academic tradition, and exam preparation. Other topics may be included if they are academically relevant to the students.

If the mentor programme is introduced with mandatory attendance, this time must be included in the total workload for the study programme.

5.8 Speak up system

The university shall, at any given time, have systems for reporting conditions that are not optimal or justifiable.

The speak up system shall be a low-threshold system for speaking up about unwanted conditions. UiA shall always follow up inquiries from the Speak-up system. Students that report cases shall be taken seriously and be given feedback on how the case will be treated.

The Speak up system shall be made accessible on the university's home page and be fronted during the start of semester as a tool for preventing escalating cases.

A report on repeating cases should be made for UiA's Learning Environment Committee.

6. Pedagogical learning environment

6.1 Teaching

Student active learning shall be the focus for the lecturers. By having the students' learning in focus it is easier to engage the students into participation. It shall also be room for every single student to master the subject.

UiA shall actively work on using varied teaching methods that stimulate the desire to work and motivate all students.

6.2 Inclusive teaching

All lecturers at UiA shall be trained in inclusive teaching.

In cases where one divides the students into groups, the lecturer must make sure that all students have a group and take responsibility for those without a group.

6.1.3 Teaching hours

The days with teaching shall not be longer than 8 hours a day, or 40 hours per week. If the day has more than 5 hours with teaching, there must be at least a half hour continuous break.

There shall not be any mandatory teaching after 16:00. There must be set aside time for voluntary student activities and participation in the student democracy.

6.2 Management at the study programmes

All managers of a study programme shall hold a formal competence when it comes to dealing with bullying and harassment. The managers have a duty to make sure that the learning environment is safe and shall get involved and report cases concerning bullying or harassment.

Where necessary, the managers are responsible for implementing measures that better the learning environment.

