

Political document on diversity and sustainability

The political document on diversity and sustainability concerns the Student Organization of Agder's (STA) policies on diversity and sustainability. Some of the political ideas that influence the academic culture today is academic freedom, diversity and sustainability.

The principle on having the same right to education is strong, but the access is not always equal. This can weaken the right to education for all. As a supplier of terms, the university has a societal responsibility when it comes to the societal development and through the education of students. Due to this, STA believes that the culture that is being built within the structures of the academic institutions must reflect the rich diversity among employees, leaders and students.

Diversity is defined as: "a composition of differences". The Norwegian Gender equality and Discrimination Act outlines 9 grounds of discrimination. These are: gender, religion/philosophy of life, impaired functioning, ethnicity, age, gender expression/ gender identity/ sexual orientation, union membership/political views, caregiving and pregnancies/ parental leave. But diversity also goes beyond these categories. No one shall experience discrimination.

With this in mind, STA believes that the University of Agder (UiA) has a responsibility when it comes to promoting and gaining knowledge about diversity, but also about climate and sustainability. One of the biggest challenges we are faced with today, is climate change. The University of Agder must be a lighthouse when it comes to environmental and sustainable solutions, and due to this there must be a larger focus on the environment and climate challenges in all sectors at the university.

Though this document does not present all 17 of the UN's Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) due to them being covered in STA's other political documents, statements and measures in this document will contribute to the SDGs.

Table of contents

1. Diversity and the forming of a culture

1.1 A versatile group of students

2. An inclusive university

2.1 Diversity and intersectionality

2.2 An inclusive study environment

3. Freedom to express

3.1 LGBTIQ+ in academia

3.2 Faith and philosophy of life in academia

4. Communication

4.1 The use of pictures

4.2 Dissemination

4.3 Cultural understanding

5. Language

5.1 Language skills

5.2 Accessible information

5.3 Language in curriculum and teaching

6. Recruitment and representation

6.1 Employment and promotion

6.2 Employment processes

6.3 Measures considering imbalance in the student group

6.4 Boards and committees

7. UiA

7.1 Education

7.2 Teaching

7.3 Sustainable internationalisation

8. Campus development, construction and renovation

8.1 Recycling stations

8.2 Procurement policy

8.3 Parking and charging stations

8.4 Environmental certification

9. Meetings

10. Environmentally friendly means of transport

10.1 Town cycle and walking

1. Diversity and the forming of a culture

UiA is to be a diverse university that creates room for all people. The academic community is to promote different perspectives and a diversity of participants who contribute to professional quality, a good working and learning environment, and to the development of research and education.

UiA is to be a role model for public and private participants when it comes to diversity management and forming a diverse culture.

UiA is to assist Agder with research, knowledge and concrete courses when it comes to developing a more diverse and equated region.

UiA must prioritize the work with *Senter for likestilling* and make sure that the research institutions either owned by the university or cooperated with, delivers relevant research that can contribute to bettering the challenges concerning living conditions in Agder.

1.1A versatile group of students

A versatile group of students is a benefit for the academic environment. Different backgrounds offer a broader and more varied perspective in academic discussions. Some studies do not have an equally distributed student group compared to the society's needs, and thus there should be measures taken to ensure a diverse group of students at UiA. Where measures are taken, it needs to be clear that they are both necessary and relevant, and the measures need to be evaluated regularly for efficiency.

2. An inclusive university

The human rights state that all people have an equal right to education, nevertheless, this is not always ensured. UiA needs to speak up, both nationally and internationally, to ensure that the access to education is equally important to the right to education, and that education is offered to all regardless of socioeconomical and background. Equal access to education is a prerequisite for a diverse university.

2.1 Diversity and intersectionality

An inclusive campus is created through meetings and dialogue across differences. This happens in inclusive rooms that open for interaction and is accessible for all.

All students shall meet each other with accept, respect and recognition. To manage this, everyone is responsible to acquire sufficient knowledge about diversity and intersectionality.

2.2 An inclusive study environment

UiA, STA and the Student Welfare Organization (SiA) have a collective responsibility to ensure that international students are also included in the student environment, both on and off campus. The person with course responsibility is to help ensure all students who wish to be in a study group are offered a group. This also applies to international students. The groups should be a mix of Norwegian and international students.

International students must be seen as a part of the student group at UiA as a whole, and thus should be presented with the same rights and opportunities as other students. The university should facilitate activities and groups that work to promote diversity.

Student activities and study associations at UiA needs to work to include international students. Events under the auspices of student volunteers should normally be open for everyone and must thus be accessible in both Norwegian and English.

SiA's offers should contribute to the cultural diversity. SiA should work to promote more cultural exchange between Norwegian and international students.

3. Freedom to express

All students and employees have the right to express themselves as individuals at the university. This includes the right to be who one is. It has to be safe to express oneself and therefore, UiA must work to secure this safety at the whole institution.

3.1 LGBTIQ+ in academia

UiA shall actively contribute to the safety and affiliation for all genders, gender identities and sexual orientations.

UiA shall facilitate for all genders, also those that today are not acknowledged by law. When doing surveys and registrations at the university, it must be ensured that there is a possibility to register as something other than the heteronormative gender.

The university shall be a part of the LGBTIQ+ movement and mark this on campus. UiA shall arrange *Javel! Mangfoldsuka* and participate in *Skeive Sørlandsdager*, as well as other relevant events. The university shall show support by flagging the rainbow flag on events connected to LGBTIQ+.

UiA has a responsibility to provide competence on LGBTIQ+ in professional study programmes where the student will be working with people.

3.2 Faith and philosophy of life in academia

UiA shall be a philosophically neutral university that acknowledges different faiths and philosophies of life.

UiA shall not hire premises that are owned by religious, or philosophy determined organisations where it is not a condition for the students' learning outcome. UiA shall not contribute to the financing of religious or philosophy determined organisations.

UiA shall have a therapist with the competence as a spiritual adviser who is neutral when it comes to the philosophical ways of life. When necessary, religious leaders may be invited to gatherings for students and employees.

UiA shall facilitate a room for faith and philosophy of life for students and employees. This room shall be open for all give room for prayers, afterthoughts and meetings across religions and philosophies of life.

Academic freedom is a fundamental right that ensures all people the equal right and access to education. Due to this, STA does not support a ban on facial clothing. UiA must actively work towards this ban being ceased.

When it comes to the educations where there is an active user participation or follow-up of patients, it should be possible for the institutions to introduce restrictions on the use of facial clothing.

UiA has a responsibility to provide competence on faith and philosophy of life in professional study programmes where the student will be working with people so that the student can meet people with recognition and respect.

4. Communication

It is important that both future and present students and employees feel a sense of belonging and are included at UiA. It is therefore important that the communication is in compliance with the vision of a diverse university. To reach this vision at UiA, it is necessary to find a mutual understanding of differences, and the importance of this. This awareness and understanding can also help to reduce minority stress.

4.1 The use of pictures

UiA's usage of pictures must represent the diversity by including and promoting diversity without addressing the differences. Therefore, UiA shall not reproduce or accentuate stereotypical pictures of people. UiA shall not block or change people's expressions, but instead give the students and employees more freedom of action when it comes to forming their lives and expressions without being forced into biased categories and stereotypes.

4.2 Dissemination

UiA shall not exploit people's disability, minority, sexual orientation or gender to promote diversity at UiA. Individuals and groups that are particularly vulnerable for discrimination must be treated and promoted at the same basis as other students when it comes to material for promotion.

4.3 Cultural understanding

Students and employees that are travelling from the university, both domestically and internationally, must acquire knowledge about the areas they travel to. The university must facilitate courses for students and employees that ensure a necessary level of competence and cultural understanding before travelling. This is especially important when it comes to presentation of the local people on pictures and in social media.

There must be courses for international employees and students that provides an understanding of Norwegian culture, in addition to conveying what values and attitudes the university stands for.

5. Language

UiA shall encourage employees and students to write in their preferred language form. Lecturers shall facilitate for students who use *nynorsk* so they can continue to use their language form throughout their education.

Exams is always to be available in both *bokmål* and *nynorsk*.

Students should also be able to choose to answer exam questions in any other Scandinavian language or English unless otherwise stated in the course description or exam papers.

5.1 Language skills

Employees who are to have contact with students must have basic language skills in Norwegian and English. Lecturers at UiA must also have a high level of academic language competence in the course language. This competence must be able to be documented when hiring or when assigning subjects the teacher is to teach.

5.1.1 Language courses

UiA shall ensure good offers to students who want to improve their language skills in Norwegian and English. Students and employees must have access to language courses to read, write and speak good academic Norwegian and English.

UiA must provide a variety of language courses. Beginner courses in the biggest foreign languages must be created, and the possibilities of establishing a course certification on completion of a language course must be explored.

There must be arranged more non-credit courses in English and Norwegian for exchange students with different levels of difficulty.

5.2 Accessible information

All students and employees at UiA must have access to the same information. Necessary and correct information must be available at all times to all students at the university. All information aimed at users of the university must be made available in both Norwegian and English.

It has to be ensured that information is written in a way that it can be understood by everyone, including those without experience and knowledge about UiA and Norwegian culture and society.

Screens and signs should be used to spread information for students.

5.3 Language in curriculum and teaching

When introducing new subject terminology, the lecturer should provide the correct term in both language forms. Subject terminology presented in English should also be presented in Norwegian.

Students should be expected to know how to use professional literature in both Norwegian and English, or other languages where this is relevant.

In modules taught in Norwegian, one should use Norwegian curriculum where it is available instead of other Scandinavian languages and English.

5.3.1 International study offers

UiA shall strengthen and further develop courses that are adapted to international students and ensure that more bachelor's programmes are offered in English. UiA is

to continue working on developing English programmes on a master's degree level, as well as facilitating for international research fellows.

There should be a requirement that at least 20 study points are being taught in English during a bachelor's programme.

Modules given in English shall be carried out in English with English curriculum.

6. Recruitment and representation

It is important that UiA and STA represent diversity, and thus it is important with an understanding of the versatile group one is representing. To achieve and represent the diversity at the university, the composition of boards and committees are important.

UiA must work purposefully to reach out to potential students both nationally and internationally. All students and employees shall be invited into the academic community, regardless of background and life situation, to ensure diversity in the student body and staff. Recruitment takes place mainly in Norwegian and English, but the university should also use other languages where appropriate.

6.1 Employment and promotion

UiA shall ensure diversity of the management and staff where different job categories are being filled with people who together reflects the diversity in our society. The recruitment processes shall be open and always assume the Norwegian Gender equality and Discrimination Act.

Leaders in academia shall have diversity and equality competence and reflect the diversity amongst the students and employees they represent. This competence will contribute to create a more inclusive university.

UiA must facilitate to support the underrepresented gender to apply for positions or promotions to ensure gender balance and a versatile competence in the academic community.

6.1.1 Employee mobility

Employee mobility will increase the level of competence and strengthen the international learning and research environment at the university.

UiA shall strive to ensure that all professional employees have international experience. UiA must help employees who do not have international experience to be given the opportunity to acquire such experience.

Employees who have been on an exchange stay should share their experiences with students and other employees.

Employees and research fellows with international background who are at UiA as part of an exchange programme must be given a good onboarding process to secure inclusion in the academic environment at the university in the best way possible.

6.2 Employment processes

At UiA's committees for employment processes, the minimum demand of gender representation must be fulfilled. The university shall facilitate participants in employment processes so that they gain competence on diversity and equality.

6.3 Measures considering imbalance in the student group

The university shall actively market and campaign to attract applicants with different backgrounds.

Where one gender represents more than 80 % of the total student body at the study programme, the introduction of gender points should be considered. If gender points do not work and the representation of one gender is over 90 %, gender quotas can be used.

Introduction of gender points and gender quotas can only be done when other measures have been tried, and when the share of the underrepresented gender has reached the goal that is necessary for introducing the measure.

The measures only last until the wanted gender representation has been reached.

6.4 Boards and committees

In UiA's and STA's boards and committees where composition is not regulated by law, an equal and versatile group of representatives shall be strived for.

STA shall strive for gender diversity and actively facilitate diversity of gender and gender expressions. UiA must be an active promoter of legislative changes when the existing system comes in conflict with people and is not adequately adapted to people.

UiA shall work to facilitate that non-binary students can also stand for election where gender representation must be fulfilled.

Sustainability and environment

7. UiA

UiA has a responsibility to show the way for the society, both as a large institution in the region, but also as an educational institution. This shall be done through research and education but also through own practice. The University of Agder must work goal oriented and systematic to contribute to reaching UN's sustainability goals within 2030.

The sustainability goals must be a clear part of UiA's strategies and plans. The result of climate and environmental measurements shall be reported evenly and made clear for the institution.

7.1 Education

The university must actively facilitate for research and education that contribute towards the students receiving an education and competence that meets the environmental and climate challenges in the future.

As a university, one is the manager of education and knowledge. This contributes to even out inequality. Therefore, UiA shall be free and accessible for all.

7.2 Teaching

The sustainability goals shall be a part of the curriculum in all study programs at UiA. As a student one shall know how one's study and a future job can contribute to reaching the sustainability goals.

The library services must be developed into a more flexible and sustainable service where area and technology are utilised efficiently to a greater extent.

7.3 Sustainable internationalisation

UiA shall promote and prioritise sustainable internationalisation. This includes facilitating for more digital solutions and exchange deals of geographical proximity. Sustainable travels should be subsidised.

8. Campus development, construction and renovation

When it comes to the development of campus this shall be done based on renewable resources and with as little as possible climate footprint.

When UiA construct and build, the buildings must be made as plus buildings, and the existing buildings must be made into buildings with zero emission. The university's roofs must be utilized in a better way with solar panels.

One shall always take into consideration whether renovation is better for the climate footprint than to build something new. If renovation gives the same award but is greener, this shall be prioritized.

UiA shall arrange a yearly energy campaign on the campuses where the goal is to raise awareness among students and employees on how their habits can contribute to lessen the energy consumption on campus.

Access to green lungs shall be facilitated.

8.1 Recycling stations

UiA must keep using the recycling stations on both campuses where one can sort plastic, food, liquid, paper, residual waste, container deposit for bottles, and electric waste. The recycling stations shall be made available for all students and in all buildings.

UiA and SiA must create a cooperation concerning garbage disposal on campus. One must strive for the least possible waste and the positive consequences of correct recycling and other environmentally measurements must be made visible.

8.2 Procurement policy

When it comes to procurement, the university must emphasize suppliers, goods and services that are environmentally certified. All units are responsible for ensure environmental awareness.

This includes, among other things, to lessen the consumption of prints and procurement and the usage of disposable items. If it is necessary to purchase disposable, they must only consist of degradable materials.

The university must enroll in Ethical Trade Norway to ensure that purchases and procurements are made in accordance with Ethical Trade Norway's guidelines.

8.3 Parking and charging stations

Parking at UiA shall be taxed for employees and visitors. The dividend from the parking taxes shall be used on environmentally measurements for students and employees.

A sufficient number of charging stations for electrical cars must be offered on the parking places affiliated with UiA.

8.4 Environmental certification

It must be a goal for UiA to be environmentally certified in the nearby future. This certification shall contribute to measurements with a larger effect and of higher quality than local measurements do today.

9. Meetings

UiA shall use green transport to and from meetings, events, etc. where this is appropriate. Digital meetings should be prioritised where this is appropriate, but the human aspect must not be lost.

10. Environmentally friendly means of transport

Public transport is an important area of focus for a sustainable society. The offer must be customised when it comes to cost, geographical location, time, traffic flow and good communication, so that all groups can benefit from the services.

The public transport offer in Agder must be improved. There must be a good offer when it comes to buses, both in the cities and between them, with frequent departures and prices that reflect students' financial situation. There shall be a free bus service between UiA's two campuses to promote proximity and activity in and between the university cities.

Train departure and routes must be of high quality and frequently rectified. The prices must reflect the student's financial situation and lifestyle. Trains must be one of Agders main areas of focus when it comes to public transport.

10.1 Town cycle and walking

There must be a scheme for town cycles in both of the university towns. The town cycles shall be placed where they are easily accessible around the towns and on campus. There must be a student subscription that reflects the student's financial situation. The town cycles shall be easily accessible for alle. Furthermore, the paths for walking and cycling must be improved to stimulate further use.