



Course of Actions for International Affairs 2022-2025

StudentOrganisasjonenStOr

I. Introduction

The Student Organization StOr has drawn this Course of Action for International Affairs in order to ensure progress and continuity in the work related to international affairs, as well as presenting the actions StOr must take. The focus of this document is not only in regards of what StOr thinks is important for the University to do when it comes to their international profile, and with students that leave to go abroad for an exchange. But also what StOr sees as important when it comes to the international environment here at UiS. According to the articles of association, StOr is a targeted and party political independent interest organization for all students at the University of Stavanger. The purpose clause states that StOr will ensure the students' democratic, professional and social needs and rights at UiS. This document outlines six main topics; An Inclusive Student Environment, Information, Exchange, Solidarity, Student Housing, and The Sustainable Development Goals, which StOr is going to focus on. It states claims for what StOr will work on an institutional level as well as on a national level.

A global knowledge community can help solve humanity's challenges and create increased prosperity in our society. By giving students the necessary academic and cultural skills, they are better equipped to deal with globalized employment marked and academic environment.

II. The International Environment at the University of Stavanger

In the years 2016 and 2017 the "Studiebarometer" showed that contact between Norwegian and foreign students was small. The same survey has previously showed that in the students attending study programs with the lowest number of international students has been most negative towards internationalization. Even though these surveys are old StOr thinks it is important to keep it in mind, and work towards a better tendency.

Every year there is new students arriving at the University, both exchange students and students coming to take a whole degree. For the period of 2021/2022 there are a total of 300 new students from around the world that has decided to come and take their degree here. In the fall semester of 2021, a total of 201 new exchange students came to the university as well. That means that we have had 501 new international students at UiS in the fall of 2021. It is highly important that these students are meet and included in the environment at UiS in a positive way.

Several organizations take extra responsibility when it comes to including and making sure that the international students' needs are met. It is important that StOr works closely with these organizations so that all students at UiS are included and taken care of. An important part of the student experience is the people you meet inside and outside of the classroom, that you learn from in ways you will never be able to from a text book or a lecturer.

1. An Inclusive Student Environment

StOr believes that diversity in the student population increases the societal advantage of internationalization, which in terms means that interaction between international and national students is of benefit to the student population as a whole.

The students coming to UiS from other countries, both degree students and exchange students must be welcomed and included in the society that is already at UiS. Life as a student is not only revolved around getting a degree but evolving as individuals and what is better than learning from students from across the globe.

In order to make UiS attractive, it is important that there are enough programs and courses thought in English, as well as an environment where international and national students go hand in hand, instead of being split up into groups.

1.1. Goals

- Have more arenas and events where national and international students can meet and better be included in a common student environment.
- Have more study programs and subjects available in English.
- Ensure that the international students continue to stay active in the student democracy.

Maintain that there will be a collective semester start for both Norwegian and international students.

1.2. Course of Action

- StOr will work closely with SiS to ensure that there will be more events that include both international and national students.
- StOr will encourage student associations and organizations to host events that include both international and national students.
- StOr will look at opportunities where UiS can be responsible for the recovery of the Buddy Program (previously owned by ESN).
- Actively work with SiS to secure an international lounge or designated area for international students.
- StOr will work with UiS to ensure that there will be a higher number of courses and programs held in English.

2. Communication, Information and Language

A crucial part of integrating international students into the environment and studies at the University is making sure that information is easily accessible and understandable.

Language is an important source of communication and inclusion. Therefore, it is important that information given by UiS, StOr, and the different organizations, associations, and lists are available in English. It is also vital that international students coming to Norway for a longer period of time gets the opportunity to learn the Norwegian language, this will also make it easier for them to be integrated into the environment. When that is said, there is also a responsibility to make everyday life for all students easier, and that includes giving information in a language the students can understand. Exchange students are here for a short period of time and the use of easily accessible English information is important.

2.1. Goals

- Easy access to information for international students.
- Increase the number of study programs that use streaming with English subtitles.
- Easier access to language courses for international students.

2.2. Course of Action

- StOr will work to make sure that information is easily accessible in English. Both information from StOr to the students, but also information from the University.
- StOr will work to make sure that UiS also includes English information on their social media.
- StOr will encourage both student associations, organizations and the lists in the parliament to have a focus on also spreading their information in English.
- StOr will look at the possibility to have a message board for only English posters. So international students know where to look for relevant information.
- StOr will make sure that information given in the «Engasjertmøter» will be accessible in English.
- StOr will work to make sure a guide for international students, with relevant information for how to use services such as Canvas, and other relevant information when the students start their studies at UiS.

- StOr will work to make sure that streaming from lectures will contain English subtitles.
- StOr will work for an opportunity where students can register their interest in language courses when receiving a letter of acceptance/enrollment to UiS. Furthermore, StOr will work towards the university offering language courses based on the given demand expressed by incoming students.

3. Exchange

For the development of the students learning environment and our academic community, it is important that students and academic employees engage in exchange programs. Contact between different cultures and international environments is important for the student's educational journey and UiS's research and development. Exchange programs are a vital measurement to facilitate this contact.

Every bachelor- and master program should provide the students with the opportunity to spend a semester studying abroad. UiS must communicate this opportunity to all students effectively and clearly before any relevant deadline. It is also vital that the exchange process is easy and understandable for both students and academic employees. The conditions around the exchange must make the process as easy as possible and that students feel safe and assured when leaving to take a semester abroad. In 2019 262 students "left" UiS to do their exchange abroad.

It is the faculty's responsibility to make sure that the exchange agreements with other universities have a high academic standard.

3.1. Goals

- UiS should encourage students and academic employees to leave for exchange.
- The exchange process should be easy and understandable for students.
- The opportunity of exchange should be communicated and promoted in good time before the deadline to apply.
- Information regarding exchange opportunities shall be easily accessible.
- UiS should have better information regarding exchange to universities where there is no exchange agreement.
- UiS should make it easier for students taking professional studies to exchange.
- The logistics around going on an exchange should be as easy as possible for students.

3.2. Course of Action

- StOr should work closer with International Section at UiS to make sure that the exchange process is understandable for students.
- Ensure that there is a focus on giving students information in due time before deadlines.
- Keep focusing on promoting exchange through students that have done their exchange

semester previously.

- Look into storage opportunities for students leaving for their exchange.
- Look into the opportunity of reserving student housing for when students arrive back after a semester, by leasing their apartments to students that come to UiS as exchange students.

4. Solidarity

Increased globalization means that our challenges as students are more closely related to fellow students in other countries. Therefore, global solidarity among students is an important factor. UiS must assist in building-up conventions that protect equal access to higher education, fight against discrimination, and promote democratic participation, the right to join a union, freedom of expression, the protection of culture, and social and economic rights for students and researchers.

StOr supports the student-run solidarity work of organizations and initiatives that direct focus onto students who are fighting for peace, democracy, and human rights. The right to academic freedom and the freedom to participate in public debate must be safeguarded, for both academics and students. Political oppression and attacks on academic freedom damage the quality of as well as the confidence in education and research. StOr supports schemes that provide aid to oppressed researchers and students.

Students at Risk (StAR) is a program initiated by SAIH and NSO that provides students who due to their human rights activism have experienced threats, persecution, or expulsion from their education institution, an opportunity to finish their education in Norway. For several years, the focus has been on the importance of providing StAR stable framework and a secure future. This has not been the case, and StOr sees it as highly important that we continue to work towards StAR as a permanent scheme.

Scholars at Risk (SAR) is an international network of institutions and individuals whose mission is to protect threatened and persecuted scholars and promote academic freedom. By arranging temporary academic positions at member universities, SAR offers safety to scholars facing grave threats. It is important that UiS takes an active part in the SAR program.

The right to education is acknowledged as a universal human right. Free education is of great importance to ensure that this right becomes more than a formality. Therefore, StOr is firmly against tuition fees for anyone, including international students. To protect this principle in Norway, it is important to support other countries' and student unions' battle against tuition fees, through participation in global campaigns. No country should charge tuition fees or application fees, regardless of students' nationalities or backgrounds.

4.1. Goals

- UiS and StOr should actively support student-run solidarity work that supports students fighting for democracy and academic freedom.

- Students at Risk should become a permanent scheme with a stable framework.
- UiS should remain a host University for Students at Risk.
- UiS should take an active part in the Scholars at Risk program, through supporting it as well as taking in scholars from the program.
- Tuition fees shall not be inserted for either national or international students, and UiS shall take a stance against tuition fees in Norway.

4.2. Course of Action

- Ensure that UiS continues to be host universities both when it comes to StAR and SAR.
- Work together with UiS in standing up for the importance of free education and working against tuition fees in Norway.
- StOr should work together with SAIH, as well as the local chapter SAIH Stavanger and promote solidarity, democracy, and academic freedom.

5. Student Housing

To make international students experience a safe and predictable living situation during the period they study at UiS, there needs to be a safe environment. Access to student housing is an important framework in order to achieve this. Therefore, international students must have the same access to information as Norwegian students. Applying for student housing should be at the same terms for both national and international students.

5.1. Goals

- Guaranteed housing for all international students.
- International students shall be able to apply for student housing through SiS on the same terms as Norwegian students.
- Students should get the opportunity to better integrate themselves by seeing the ratio of international students versus national students at the building they apply for student housing at.

5.2. Course of Action

- StOr will have a strong cooperating with both SiS and UiS to make sure that every international student is guaranteed to get student housing.
- StOr will with SiS to ensure that there will be built more student housing.
- StOr will work with SiS and UiS to make sure that international students get the information they need in order to apply for student housing.
- StOr will encourage SiS to publish statistics on the amount of international and national students per building.

6. The Sustainable Development Goals

The Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) adopted by the member states of the United Nations is a shared agenda to combat poverty, inequality, and climate changes within 2030. StOr believes that higher education institutions such as UiS have a responsibility and role in helping achieve the SDGs. The new UiS Strategy for 2030 has its own chapter on Green Conversion, but StOr still thinks it is important to keep up the focus on the SDGs as a whole.

6.1. Goals

- Accessible information for students on how UiS contributes to achieving the SDGs.

6.2. Course of Action

- Make sure that UiS monitors, evaluates, and communicates their actions regarding the SDGs.
- Participate in conferences where SDGs are the main topic.
- Make sure that the green scholarship from Erasmus+ is better communicated to and used by the students leaving for their exchange.