2019

Student ombudsman

All students at universities, colleges and vocational colleges have access to a student ombudsman. This is an independent assistance body that, among other things, can help guide students who have complaints. The ombuds can also contribute to solving disputes at the lowest possible level. The ombudsman provides students with independent and impartial advice and assistance in matters that concern students, e.g. in matters of student rights and obligations. Moreover, the “#Me too”-campaign has clearly demonstrated the need for a student ombudsman who can assist students who have been subjected to sexual harassment or other forms of abusive acts.

Since 1. August 2019, this has been introduced in the Act relating to universities and university colleges and the Act relating to tertiary vocational education. Before the Act imposed institutions to have an ombudsman, all universities and several university colleges already had their own ombuds. The law does not demand that all institutions have their own individual ombuds. However, all students must have access to one. This means that smaller education institutions can agree on a common ombudsman.

Action plan for prevention of radicalization and violent extremism

In February 2019 Norwegian authorities launched an action plan for prevention of radicalization and violent extremism(pdf) in the higher education sector. Goals and measures in the plan are divided into three main categories:

- resolution of controversy/confidence building and raising of ethical awareness,
- student welfare and
- learning environment and security-related measures.

The vast majority of measures qualify as preventive, while some may be said to be on the threshold of “intervention management”, i.e. initiating actions as tertiary prevention or to avoid acute incidents. Tertiary prevention (indicative prevention) is about implementing measures against clearly radicalised persons who, for example, openly advocate extremist views. Tertiary prevention (indicative prevention) is about implementing measures against clearly radicalized persons who, for example, openly advocate extremist views. The measures should to the extent possible be mainstreamed into existing structures and functions, and should be incorporated in the effort to strengthen the overall learning environment. A good, inclusive learning environment not only promotes students’ learning, but also lays the foundation for individuals to become secure, creative and critically minded. This also supports the overall objective of cultivating academic freedom.
2018

There have been no reforms to date in this area.

2017

Reform in the funding system

Based on the advices from the expert group in 2015 (see information from 20015 on the Funding system below), the Ministry of Education and Research introduced some adjustments and changes to the performance-based component in the 2017 national budget. Two new indicators were added and some of the existing indicators were adjusted. One of the new indicators, number of graduates, targets higher completion of degrees in HE institutions. The second new indicator, public and private revenue, targets increased cooperation between the institutions and external actors in the private and public sector. The rate for the student exchange indicator was increased in order to enhance international mobility.

In addition, performance agreements between the Ministry and each HE institution have been introduced for 10 pilot institutions. The aim is that the remaining institutions will have an agreement with the Ministry by 2019. Funding is so far not linked to the agreements.

Raising quality in higher education

In January 2017, the government submitted the White paper Meld. St. 16 (2016–2017) Quality Culture in Higher Education. Their aim is to raise the ambition for excellence in teaching and learning while recognizing that HEIs themselves must commit to this goal if it is to have an effect. The message is that there is much to indicate that the condition of Norway's higher education sector, on the whole, is good. Nevertheless, quality must be raised even higher to meet the demands of society and working life, and there is also undesirable variation in education quality.

More precisely, the aims of the white paper are that:

- all students should have access to demanding and engaging study programmes
- all students should be met as responsible participants in their own learning and become well integrated into the social and academic environments
- study programmes should have clear learning outcomes, be complete and cohesive
- all students should experience stimulating and varied learning and assessment methods that exploit digital opportunities
- study programmes should be developed in collaboration with working life
- all students should encounter teachers with good academic and pedagogical competence
- academia should place greater value on education and teaching

In order to reach these goals, four main approaches are outlined:

1. Reward for teaching excellence: The higher education institutions are requested to develop pedagogical merit systems to encourage more teaching initiatives, and to reward important development work.
2. Peer review of education: Peer review and peer mentoring of teaching and learning should be used more frequently. The higher education institutions are responsible for this, but the Government will encourage greater use of peer review across institutions.
3. A national competitive arena for quality in education: competitive funding schemes will be set
up to encourage knowledge, competence and innovative work in education. The rationale is that as project grants channelled to researchers and research groups on the basis of peer review seem to play an important role in the quality development in research, similar measures might have good effect in the area of education.

4. Indicator Portal: The Ministry of Education and Research will set up a quality portal to collect indicators and relevant knowledge sources in one place. Open and accessible knowledge concerning education quality has a double aim: to contribute to quality development and confidence in the education system, and to facilitate research on what works in higher education.

**Educational financial support**

In 2016 the Norwegian Parliament decided upon a plan to increase the period of educational support from ten to eleven months. The plan is to increase the support (loans and grants) gradually with one week extra each year from 2017 until 2020. The first week of extra educational support will be disbursed in June 2017. Full-time students in higher education and vocational college (post-secondary level) are entitled to the extra support. The main objectives of the reform is to increase educational support, and to make it easier for students to concentrate full-time on their studies toward the end of the academic year.

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**Links**

[1] https://www.uis.no/getfile.php/13491727/SEROS/Beredskapsr%C3%A5d/Tiltaksliste%20Beredskapsr%C3%A5det%20ENGLISH%20version%281%29.pdf