



# O'DIAKO's Political Program

## Preface

This political program represents the stance of the Student Union O'Diako at Diakonia University of Applied Sciences on student life and higher education. It lays out the principles and actions the union aims to influence nationwide.

O'Diako is a non-religious and non-political group. It advances its program goals through the Finnish Student Union SAMOK, as well as through regional partnerships and active societal dialogues. It especially highlights themes to help students become engaged members of society, whether at the university, locally, or nationally.

The program was ratified during a representative assembly meeting on November 20, 2018.





## O'Diako's Values

### **Equality and equity**

Everyone is welcome to participate in the activities of the student union. The student union opposes all forms of discrimination and has declared itself a discrimination-free zone. The student union promotes mutual respect and appreciation, even when values differ. The student union's activities are characterised by genuine care, consideration for human dignity, and respect for all.

### **Transparency**

Decision-making within the student union is transparent. Members have the right to receive timely and unbiased information to actively participate in shaping the union's decisions.

### **Freedom of Expression and Belief**

In its advocacy efforts, O'Diako considers the ideological differences among its members and activists, respects diverse viewpoints, and provides freedom of speech and conscience to all participants. O'Diako focuses its advocacy activities on promoting the position of students.

### **Sustainable development**

O'Diako is committed to eco-friendly practices, supporting sustainability by recycling, endorsing fair trade goods, and cutting down on paper waste. We integrate different aspects of sustainable development into our operations as outlined in our political program. Additionally, we promote environmental awareness through digitalization, such as investing in digital student IDs and facilitating remote meeting participation.





## As a Student in Society

### Equality

In a university of applied sciences, students are entitled to fair and equal treatment throughout selection processes, teaching, guidance, student well-being services, and assessment of academic performance. Ensuring accessibility and inclusivity in learning and study environments is a fundamental aspect of higher education. Every member of the university of applied science's community has the right to participate in community activities to the best of their abilities and opportunities. The university of applied sciences is required to have an up-to-date plan for equality and inclusivity. Moreover, O'Diako has its own equality guide. Harassment contact persons are designated and trained from among the student body and staff.

### Accessibility of Higher Education

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Degree-granting higher education should remain free for students from EU and EEA countries. For students from countries outside the EU and EEA, tuition fees should be kept reasonable, and any scholarship-granting body should include student union representation. There should be no limit on the number of degrees offered. Education should be free for students, covering material costs as well. Vocational education at the university of applied sciences level should ensure high-quality training, emphasising practical skills, and offering competitive degrees leading to employment.

A well-functioning social security system should ensure every student's right to full-time study and the chance to graduate on time. Key aspects of this system include comprehensive coverage, flexibility, sufficient support, and fairness. It should cover all life stages and situations, allowing students to pursue their education with a sense of financial security. Taking out a student loan should be a genuine choice. Meal assistance should be tied to the maximum price of a student meal, ensuring that as meal prices rise, so does the support provided. Student parents should also have the opportunity to study while receiving parental benefits.

If a student takes a break from their studies for at least a year, they should have the right to unemployment benefits. If studies are interrupted within the year, the income limits for student financial aid should be adjusted as if the student had graduated. This means that income limits should no longer apply after the interruption.

Positions at universities of applied sciences are distributed based on both industry demand





and the appeal of the programs. Positive discrimination is permitted for underrepresented groups. All applicants can apply to a university of applied sciences through entrance exams. Pursuing a second higher education degree is possible through joint applications and flexible pathways. There are no application fees in the system.

Documents related to university of applied sciences services and individual study achievements should be accessible in all official languages of the degree program. National standards should be established for the language studies of international degree students. The university should actively support the employment of international students in Finland after graduation. The student union plays a role in improving the level and availability of Finnish language instruction for international students.

### **Structural Development**

University of applied sciences education should be available nationwide, ensuring accessibility in all regions. The campus network of universities of applied sciences should be developed to support flexible and diverse learning. Additionally, resources for high-quality teaching should be enhanced. Collaboration between Higher Education Institutions should be strengthened in teaching, research, innovation, and international activities, both nationally and internationally. While maintaining sufficient face-to-face instruction, alternative teaching methods should also be developed. Education programs should maintain consistent standards regardless of location or institution. Students should have equal representation at all levels of university of applied sciences planning and decision-making processes.

The subject-specific and pedagogical expertise of university of applied sciences staff should be strengthened through investments in training and industry placements. Students and staff should gain insights into the working world through guest lectures and meetings with industry representatives. Collaboration with alumni and workplace mentoring should be enhanced and integrated into the curriculum.

### **Creating an Environment for Student Life**

All students should have access to affordable housing. The objective of constructing student accommodations should be to ensure sufficient availability for those in need. Student housing should be integrated into municipalities' regular housing plans, located near educational institutions and amenities. The government should maintain interest subsidy programs as competitive and modern financing options. Student unions should have proportional representation and influence in student housing foundations and decision-making processes, reflecting the number of university students in the area.

Both cycling infrastructure and public transport resources should support a functional, comprehensive, and safe transportation network in university towns. Public transport routes





and schedules should be convenient and cater to the needs of students, such as proximity to campus or flexibility in scheduling. Municipal public transport should offer student discounts accessible to all university students regardless of age or place of residence.

## **As a student in a University of Applied Sciences**

### **High-quality support and well-being services**

High-quality support and well-being services

Students can pursue studies at times that fit their life circumstances, and studying is available year-round. Exchange programs offer a diverse range of courses for both incoming and outgoing students, allowing for full-time study during the exchange period.

At university of applied sciences campuses, students have access to equitable study support services, enabling them to engage in high-quality and meaningful full-time studies. Proactive efforts towards student well-being include preventive measures, with student healthcare serving as a central component. Furthermore, student sports programs play a significant role in promoting overall study well-being.

Guidance at universities of applied sciences should foster students' personal and professional development, along with their study and work capabilities. Quality guidance ensures students complete their degrees on time and have realistic graduation prospects. It supports students in devising and executing personalised study plans.

Universities of applied sciences prioritise career and recruitment services, aiding students in their job search and career aspirations. International exchange services offer accurate information for students applying to or departing for exchange programs and provide support for international students facing challenges at the university of applied sciences.

The services of the Finnish Student Health Service (FSHS) are also available to university of applied sciences students regardless of their study or residence location. As university of applied sciences students transition to the care of FSHS, service expansion is ensured sufficiently, considering accumulated healthcare needs in hospital districts. All healthcare services are provided to both Finnish and international students.





The university of applied sciences should prioritise supporting student well-being by creating a student well-being program, regularly updating it, and forming a student well-being working group. This group should comprise representatives from the student union, university staff, support services, and student healthcare professionals. Together, they will comprehensively address the university's development efforts from the perspective of student well-being.

### **Higher Education Community**

The university of applied science is a place free from discrimination. Every student has equal opportunities to engage and study, regardless of their campus or personal attributes. Accessibility goes beyond physical spaces to encompass learning and communication. Both Finnish and English are available throughout the entire higher education community, and all essential teaching-related information is accessible in both languages. The university assesses the realization of equality and takes appropriate actions as outlined in its equality plan when deficiencies are identified.

All students at universities of applied sciences have the chance to become members of the student union. Additionally, a student enrolled full-time in an open university of applied sciences for at least one semester should also have the opportunity to join the student union and access the same membership benefits as degree students. Universities of applied sciences provide suitable facilities and resources for their student unions to carry out their responsibilities. The student union plays a significant role within the higher education community.

Universities of applied sciences and student unions remain politically and ideologically neutral. However, political and ideological associations can operate within the higher education community. Student unions have representation or are consulted in all university-related decisions, whether internal or external, that affect students. These include bodies such as Kela, student housing foundations, and the Finnish Student Health Service (YTHS).

### **Student Union**

The student union nurtures students to become actively engaged, informed, and critical citizens, while also encouraging them to explore diverse avenues for making an impact. Involvement in the student union's activities is integral to the student experience. Advocating for the interests of their university peers and fulfilling specific obligations outlined in the University of Applied Sciences Act are key responsibilities of the student union. Securing adequate funding for the student union is essential by allocating a specific portion of the university's core funding.





## Higher Education Sports

Universities of applied sciences should provide diverse, high-quality, and easily accessible sports services that both students and staff can utilize equally. Organizing sports services is a statutory obligation of universities. Higher education sports services should be accessible regardless of the student's city of study or campus.

## Quality of Education

Quality of Education

Every student is entitled to high-quality education. University of Applied Sciences institutions are accredited or audited to ensure standards. Studies and curricula at University of Applied Sciences are flexible and competency-based. Quality teaching is guaranteed by a sufficient number of skilled teachers with pedagogical expertise.

Every student can give anonymous feedback on their studies. The University of Applied Sciences improves the effectiveness of the student feedback system. Students can request an external evaluator to reassess exams. Assessments follow predefined criteria set by the university, ensuring fairness. Evaluations are promptly recorded in the system as per regulations. Students have the right to access correct exam answers for comparison with their own performance.

Information about the University of Applied Sciences' degree and other boards is openly shared with students. These boards operate with clear guidelines and consistent principles for handling matters. Studies are geared towards real-world application and international perspectives, integrating research, development, and innovation. Adequate resources are allocated to support RDI activities, ensuring their quality. Professional subject teachers participate in work placements and training to stay updated in their field. Teachers have the opportunity for international teaching exchanges to enhance their expertise. Traineeships related to studies should receive fair compensation.

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