

Quality of Study vs. Efficiency?

Quality of Study

The quality of your study is defined as the combination of the quality you experience as a student at UiS and the results you are left with when you go out to work. Therefore, it is important to have high quality in both lecturers, rooms where lectures are held, research, curriculum, and the social aspect during your study path.

StOr is of the opinion that even though the experience of the quality of the study is subjective, it can be measured objectively. There are several ways to measure the quality, for example through grades. Some would say that the low failure rates are an indication of the high quality of the study, but in our opinion, this is not necessarily always the case. The grades can also be an indicator that the bar is set too low to prevent students from failing, which in turn turns out to be detrimental to the institution's finances. StOr believes that, to the contrary, it is not necessarily negative that there is a certain failure rate, up to ten percent, since this could be an indication that there are set requirements for students to fulfill. The grades given are also a way to compare institutions. StOr is not for a normal distribution of grades, with a predetermined percentage distribution of results, as these points then fall away. Another important indicator of the quality of study is how many people get a job, and especially a job relevant to their field of study, after completing their studies.

One of many factors that significantly affects the quality of the study is the large number of students admitted. Not because large universities cannot have a high quality of study, but this requires that all the prerequisites that exist for a high quality of study are taken into account in advance of growth, not afterwards when the need arises. It is sometimes said that the academic foundation that the students have when first admitted to UiS determines much of the quality of study. StOr believes that it should not be a goal to recruit the best students, but to educate the best students.

An important prerequisite for the quality of study is our ability to focus on our studies. Often, the full-time student, a full-time student without a job next to the studies, is highlighted as the political ideal. In StOr's opinion, this ideal is very unrealistic, and also unrepresentative for many students. Most students do not have trouble combining a part-time job with their studies, and often secure relevant experience and network through such part-time jobs. StOr believes that the full-time student should therefore be placed as an ideal for all students. For some student groups, however, the opportunity to study full-time is a necessity to be able to complete study, for example in PHD programs, medical education and some master's programs.

The most important contributors to the quality of study are the lecturers. Some lecturers are very good at communicating, but there has also been a tradition in academia to set few requirements for pedagogy, so naturally many lecturers are less good at this. StOr believes that UiS must address this, both to ensure the students a better quality of study, and to ensure the lecturers greater security as intermediaries. StOr therefore believes that there should be compulsory university pedagogy courses, for all lecturers, for three years cycles. Possibly an elaborate college guidance model.

Efficiency

Efficiency is also important. There are several ways to look at efficiency. For the state, it is an advantage that the quality of education is the best it can possibly be, without tying up large portions of tax revenue that can otherwise be used for other purposes. For the students it may be a point to get the best education possible, but that the study time is used effectively, so that you have time to gain both income and work experience alongside the studies.

For a lecturer, it may be advantageous for the education to be effective so as to obtain a good distribution between research and teaching. From such a perspective, efficiency can in itself be a way and achieve study quality.

At the same time, efficiency can also come at the expense of quality. For example, great emphasis has been placed on the flow of students since the introduction of the Quality Reform in 2004. For the institution, too, large parts, about 40% of the state transfer, are based on student credits production,

and research results. Unfortunately, there is reason to believe, and it has also been shown, that this system has been exploited, by lowering the requirements of the students, to ensure a better flow, or plagiarism of research results. These incentive arrangements also do not take into account quality, the grant to the institution, for a student who produces sixty credits during a year, is the same, regardless of how well the student is doing, whether study is relevant to society around him and whether the student achieves good professional results. Such a system therefore requires a very conscious attitude to the study quality work.

Internationalization

StOr believes that internationalization in itself enhances the quality of the university. Partly by getting motivated students with perhaps some perspective other than the students who grew up in Norway. On the other hand, the opportunity to take one or two semesters abroad will provide students with similar experiences and networks, and help increase the prestige of UiS.

Today, there are challenges associated with internationalization. For a number of reasons, international students have some challenges that students born in Norway do not have, including the language barrier and finances. It is therefore important to have a realistic admission of international students so that one is sure to give them the best follow-up possible.

Another challenge is that many people find it difficult to take a semester abroad, and this is probably the most important reason why there are currently relatively few students taking an exchange semester. The reasons why many people experience this as difficult are the combination of courses where a semester of elective courses is not part of the education plan, and the very process of getting abroad or approved subjects taken abroad is complicated. At the same time, StOr is aware of the financial challenges that the institution faces in internationalizing.

Specific objectives

- 11.000 students of which: 15% are master's students, 10% are international students, 250 are PhD students
- Qualification studies for international students with an education from abroad. (Engineers/ physicians / nurses, eventually professions for which there is a great need to qualify.
- An increase of teachings held in English for all students
- A semester in the education plan that contains only electives, so that it is easier to take a semester abroad.
- Increase the competence for lecturers' through compulsory courses at UniPed every three years

Abstract goals

StOr believes that the concrete goals are as important as the abstract goals. Higher education is not just about passing the exams and getting a degree, but creating good social citizens who are capable of critical and independent thinking. The extent to which UiS succeeds in this is perhaps the most important quality goal of a university and at the same time the most difficult to measure.

Some indicators of whether these goals are successful may be the extent to which students and staff at UiS participate in social debates, take initiatives in politics and culture, or contribute to economic development through knowledge and innovation. In short, the degree to which UiS contributes to the educational process of the individual student.