



# Course of Actions for International Affairs 2018-2021

StudentOrganisasjonen StOr

## I. Introduction

*Internationalisation is a source of solidarity, societal interest, new impulses and cultural exchange across borders. Investment in internationalisation is not a luxury, nor is it a sign of superfluous resources. Rather, it is essential in a globalised world – especially within research and education.*

NSO, 2017: 2

StudentOrganisasjonen StOr has drawn this Course of Actions for International Affairs, to ensure progress and continuity in the work related to international affairs, and to present what actions we mean must be taken in the period 2018 – 2021. Following the articles of association, StOr must be a targeted and party political independent interest organisation. According to the purpose clause, StOr will ensure the students democratic, professional and social needs and rights at the University. We believe that it is a matter of course that internationalisation of the entire educational pathway makes it possible to increase dissemination of knowledge, academic development, and innovation in a global community.

A global knowledge community can help to solve humanity's challenges and create increased prosperity in our society. By giving students necessary cultural and academic skills, they are put in a better position to deal with a globalized employment market and academic environments.

This document is inspired by a work-group with different international relations, The National Union of Students in Norway (NSO) and Norwegian Students' and Academics' International Assistance Fund (SAIH). This document will focus on various topics related to internationalisation at the University of Stavanger (UiS), these are: An including student environment, student housing, exchange, solidarity and Sustainable Development Goals.

## II. The international environment at UiS

From 2016 to 2017 the number of International students who started at the UiS has increased by 20%. The university says they are pleased with that, and that they have room for more qualified applicants in the future.<sup>1</sup> In the Strategy plan for the University of Stavanger 2017-2020, internationalisation is one of the key focus. They have stated a goal to increase the foreign student population by one percentage point per year on average in the period 2017-2020. This applies both to degree students and exchange students<sup>2</sup>. By receiving more international students you face a lot of opportunities, but also some challenges.

There are challenges related to inclusion between national and international students. In the answers from the student survey "Studiebarometeret" 2016, it appears that the contact between Norwegians and foreign students is small. This also applies to a large extent for the resident foreigners in Stavanger. This circumstance is not particularly related just to UiS, but it is a pity that the different student groups are missing out on valuable intercultural skills. Studiebarometeret also shows that the study programs with the most negative students to internationalisation are the study programs with the lowest number of international students. While those students who respond most positively to internationalisation, are at study programs with more international students.

The fall of 2017, the Department of Media and Social Sciences started a project with a focus on good integrating between the Norwegian and international students at the new master program in Energy, Environment, and Society. So far, the project shows that good integration between Norwegian and international students need to be administrated, coordinated and adjusted for, both academically and administrative. The fact that the Norwegian and international students had a collective start seems to have a positive effect on the projects so far a success.

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<sup>1</sup> <http://www.uis.no/news/welcoming-students-from-71-countries-article118438-8865.html>

<sup>2</sup> LU 34/17 ; US 98/16

# 1. An including student environment

StOr believes that diversity in the student population increases the societal advantage of internationalisation, which means that interaction with international students is of benefit to the student population as a whole. Nevertheless, StOr believes that the number of international students who are admitted must be seen in relation to how many it is possible to facilitate for.

Language is an important source of communication and inclusion. Therefore, it is important that the information given by the university, StOr and different student associations and organisations, are available in English. The university's strategy plan says that the university will work to improve internationalisation by continuing to add to their international programs and that international subject and cases will be an integral part of the course. More study programs and subjects in English create more options for the international students. In addition, it creates a larger arena for Norwegian and international students to interact.

## 1.1. Our goals

- That every international student arriving at UiS in the spring semester is welcomed by fellow students.
- To arrange more social events for both national and international students at the university.
- Create more common areas for integration between international and Norwegian students.
- Establish more arenas to include international students in the student environment at the university.
- That Norwegian and international students who study the same study program have a collective semester start.
- That the University facilitate a collective start at the semester, for both Norwegian and international students.
- Create more study programs and subjects available in English.
- Increase the number of study programs who use streaming with English subtitles.
- International students become active participants in the student democracy at UiS.

## 1.2. Course of action

- StOr will support ESN's buddy program and work for a bigger project.
- StOr will have a stronger cooperation with SiS in organizing events for both Norwegian and international students.
- StOr will have a stronger cooperation with ISU in organizing events for both Norwegian and international students.
- Use our cooperation meetings with the faculties to emphasize the importance of a collective start for both Norwegian and international students.
- StOr will through meetings with the UiS management, work for an increased number of courses and programs held in English, and increase the number of available streaming with English subtitles.

## 2. Student housing

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

### 2.1. Our goals

- Guaranteed housing for all international students.
- That International students can apply for student housing through The Student Welfare (SiS) on the same terms as Norwegian students.
- Establish a scheme like Boligassistenten for international students.
- That UiS terminate the contract with Sola Sjø and replace it with a more satisfying option.

### 2.2. Course of action

- StOr will have a strong cooperation with SiS and UiS to make sure that every international student is guaranteed to get student housing.
- StOr will work to expand The Welfare Council (VT) housing scheme, called Boligassistenten, for international students as well.
- Put pressure on UiS regarding Sola Sjø.

## 3. Exchange

For the development of the students learning environment and our academic community, it is important that our 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' research and development. Exchange programs are a vital measurement to facilitate this contact.

Every bachelor- and master program should have a semester that gives the students an opportunity to study abroad. It is important that UiS communicates this opportunity to all students well before any relevant deadline, and that the exchange process is easy and understandable for both students and academic employees. The university should create incentives that will make students and academic employees leave on exchange programs.

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

### 3.1. Our goal

- UiS actively push students and academic employees to leave for exchange.
- The exchange process becomes easy and understandable for students.
- The exchange opportunities are communicated well before any relevant deadline.
- UiS creates incentives that will make students and academic employees leave on exchange programs.
- The faculties are responsible for making exchange agreements of high academic standard.
- That UiS will continue to increase the number of exchange agreements with other universities.
- That UiS send as many students on exchange programs as they receive international students.

### 3.2. Course of action

- Distribute experiences of former exchange students as a promotion.
- Use feedback from students to create an easy and understandable exchange process.
- Work together with the Department of Education to create incentives.

## 4. Solidarity

Increased globalisation means that our challenges as students are more closely related to fellow students in other countries. Therefore, global solidarity among students is a decisive 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 organisations 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, and confidence in, education and research. StOr supports schemes that provide aid to oppressed researchers and students.

**Students at Risk (STAR)** is a program that gives students who due to their human rights activism are denied educational or other rights in their home country and provides them with an opportunity to complete their education in Norway. It is important that UiS takes an active part in the STAR program.

**Scholars at Risk (SAR)** is an international network of institutions and individuals whose mission it 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 a great importance to ensure this right to be 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. Our goal**

- UiS and StOr together actively supports student-run solidarity work that supports students fighting for democracy and academic freedom.
- That the Students at Risk-program becomes a permanent scheme, and UiS to remain as a host University.
- Student at Risk program expands to other Nordic countries and eventually Europe
- UiS takes an active part in the Scholars at Risk program.
- Tuition fees will not be inserted for either Norwegian and/or international students in Norway.
- UiS will take a clear stand against tuition fees in Norway.

## **4.2. Course of action**

- Work together with the Department of Education to make sure UiS remains a host university for the STAR- and SAR-program.
- StOr would like to cooperate with the local chapter SAIH Stavanger and UiS on promoting solidarity, democracy, and academic freedom through SAIH's campaigns.
- Use our meeting with the university leadership to emphasize the importance of free education.

## **5. The Sustainable Development Goals**

In 2015 the United Nations member states adopted 17 goals for sustainable development. The Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) is a shared agenda to combat poverty, inequality and climate changes within 2030. StOr believes that higher education institutions have a responsibility and role to play to achieve the SDGs.

### **5.1. Our goal**

- UiS includes the Sustainable Development Goals in their institutional plans.

### **5.2. Course of action**

- Participate in conferences where SDG's are the main topic.
- Use our meetings with the university leadership to emphasize the importance of the SDG's.