

CHALMERS

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Guidelines for student influence at Chalmers tekniska högskola AB

Chalmers policy document

Document's validity: The document applies from 27 September 2021 until further notice.

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1. Introduction

It is very important for Chalmers' operations to have active student influence, with students who help make the education, research, utilisation and educational administration at Chalmers world-class. With students who exert real influence and feel that their opinions are taken seriously, Chalmers is able to continue to develop.

1.1 Background to the document

This document has been produced to clarify the purpose and objectives of active student influence at Chalmers and also to show clearly where students and doctoral students are represented in Chalmers' preparatory and decision-making bodies, with influence over education-related issues. The Student Union and Chalmers jointly drew up the document *Guidelines for student influence* in autumn 2011. The guidelines must be reviewed by Chalmers and the Student Union together. The review is best performed every year in the spring semester. In addition, Chalmers and the Student Union must maintain a continuous dialogue and monitor how well student influence functions.

1.2 Purpose and objectives of active student influence

The purpose of active student influence at Chalmers is for educational activities to develop and improve constantly through the joint efforts and collaboration of the university and the students. A number of studies show clearly that there is a positive correlation between strong student influence and high educational quality¹. According to the Appointment regulation for first cycle and second cycle education (undergraduate and Master's education) at Chalmers, the students are entitled to exert influence in education-related issues.

The objective of active student influence is for the students' views to help develop Chalmers' management and design of undergraduate education, courses, programmes and the learning environment as a whole. Student influence is a natural part of Chalmers' wider task to promote democracy, fairness and equality and supports Chalmers' vision: Chalmers for a sustainable future.

¹ Including the Swedish National Audit Office's RiR 2008:19 *High quality in higher education?* and government bill 1999/2000:28 *Student influence and quality improvement in higher education institutions*

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2 Chalmers as an independent university foundation

Unlike the state-owned higher education institutions, Chalmers has a special position as an independent university foundation. As a result it has special conditions in which to operate and develop its activities. As an independent university foundation, Chalmers is not formally subject to the Higher Education Ordinance and the Higher Education Act except in certain parts, for example the appendix to the Higher Education Ordinance which establishes degree objectives for the educational programmes. This means that, as an independent university foundation, Chalmers needs to incorporate the contents of statutes such as the Higher Education Ordinance in its own regulations. These regulations have been drawn up to establish the forms and guidelines for student influence.

Chalmers' special position as an independent university foundation has also enabled it to decide that all Chalmers students must belong to Chalmers Student Union. This is different from the situation at state-owned higher education institutions and universities, where membership of the student union is not mandatory. Chalmers' Student Union is the organisation elected by the students to represent all students at Chalmers.

3. Various bodies with influence on education-related issues where there should be student influence

The students at Chalmers must be offered the opportunity to be represented in bodies/groups that are directly important to educational activities and affect the situation of students. The students must be able to identify such bodies/groups and understand their role by information about them being easily available and regularly updated on the Chalmers website. The responsibilities and members of the various bodies must be stated. When a new body that has direct influence on undergraduate education issues is set up temporarily or permanently, the Student Union must be offered the opportunity to nominate student representatives to the body in question. Temporary groups may, for example, be put together for specific events or situations.

Just like the other participants in a decision-making or preparatory body, the students are subject to the body's rules. Preparatory bodies are bodies that submit some form of decision documentation and in which draft decisions are discussed before a decision is made. It is important for students to be represented in groups that prepare issues that have a considerable impact on student's studies, for example campus development.

If important fundamental educational issues are prepared by a single employee, the Student Union or its appointed representatives must be offered the opportunity to be consulted in good time. Early influence in decision-making and preparatory processes offers students excellent opportunities to exert real influence on Chalmers' activities. The Student Union must be consulted when there was no student representation in the preparation of a draft decision or similar. When a project is being created at the university, Chalmers must always consider including student representatives in the project group if the project concerns undergraduate education issues or student social issues.

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The university needs to announce the need for student representatives in good time to facilitate the appointment process. The Student Union selects a representative for the project group after consultation with the project manager in charge. For a project started under the auspices of the Student Union, the Student Union must also keep Chalmers informed about the project via the Student Union representative on the Executive Committee for Education and, if possible, have a contact for the project at Chalmers.

Students are formally represented locally at the departments via the departmental advisory teams. Students are not normally represented in the departments' management groups or at meetings with the faculty assembly. However, students should be involved if major projects take place at departmental level with a direct link to undergraduate education. Informal contact should be encouraged between heads of department, assistant heads of department and student representatives.

Student influence in issues relating to health and safety, gender equality and equal treatment is exerted in the Work Environment and Equal Opportunity Committee ("AJK"). Operational influence is exerted via the annual physical and psychosocial working environment inspections conducted by the Deans of Education or Heads of Programme. The work on the overall action plan for health and safety work must be carried out in partnership with the President of the Social Section of Chalmers Student Union. A detailed description is contained in the document *Forms of collaboration for students in relation to health and safety and equal treatment*.

Education is under constant development at Chalmers. This development takes place in terms of the education available and at programme level and course level, and ranges from minor changes to drastic reforms. At course level, course evaluation is one of Chalmers' most important tools for identifying possible improvements, and the students' feedback via the course evaluation process is important. The university is responsible for ensuring a process for continuous course development which includes course evaluation and in which the students' feedback is made use of.

Both Chalmers and the Student Union need to work actively to ensure that students become involved in course evaluation and their views are made use of and that they jointly create a culture in which all students and teachers see it as a matter of course to contribute to course and programme development. The university is also responsible for students being involved in major projects and activities with the aim of developing education at Chalmers. The university is also responsible for ensuring that all programme students are given the opportunity to relate their experience of the programme both during and after their time as a student.

4. Student influence in practice

The university and the Student Union have a joint responsibility for ensuring effective student influence in the shared work on educational issues, based on mutual respect, and both parties must encourage students to become actively involved in the development of educational programmes and the activities of the university in general. It is a matter of course for students to be respectfully included in preparatory bodies at all levels. This is also essential if Chalmers is to be able to create world-class education and an excellent working climate. Consequently, the university should offer

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students multiple opportunities to work in the Student Union during their education, either in parallel with their studies or via study leave.

Effective communication between Chalmers employees and students on issues relating to education and the situation of students is crucial to ensure real student influence. Students must be asked for their views and suggestions and these must be taken on board. The application of policies must be followed up and documented.

The university and the Student Union must jointly uphold student influence at Chalmers, promote active student involvement in their education and encourage students to use the opportunities to develop educational programmes and the social environment at the university. Where possible, Chalmers must also make it possible for student representatives involved in university bodies to catch up on any lost teaching. This needs to be communicated to student representatives by conveners. For its part, the Student Union is responsible for maintaining a dialogue with Chalmers about adapting times for positions of trust to make it easier for student representatives to take part in timetabled teaching.

The Student Union is responsible for promoting responsible, representative student influence and for appointing student representatives to relevant bodies. Chalmers must notify the Student Union if representatives are required by contacting the Chair of the Student Union. In its rules of procedure, the Student Union has established procedures for the appointment of student representatives. Pending the appointment of new student representatives, the university invites the former representatives to meetings unless the Student Union states otherwise. The Student Union must strive for continuity in student representation on issues that last for an extended period of time. The Student Union and the university have a joint responsibility for inviting each other to internal training, for example introductory days for Heads of Programme, training of chairs of student educational committees in technology sections, etc. It is also important that invitations, documents and minutes relating to meetings in which students are involved are sent to them in good time.

It is essential that information about student influence and university regulations is available to all students. Chalmers is responsible for introducing new students to how Chalmers functions, their rights and obligations and in particular their opportunities to exert influence over their studies and the study environment. This is done in part at a 'nollsamtal', an initial meeting offered to all students in year one. Chalmers and the Student Union must jointly inform new students about the meaning of and the opportunities for student influence. The Student Union is responsible for offering information to the university's staff about the activities and organisation of the Student Union and offering the university the opportunity to participate in the activities of the Student Union. The university is also responsible for rules and policies concerning education or the situation of students being easily accessible for all students.

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5. List of student representation at Chalmers

<i>Meeting forum</i>	<i>Student representation</i>	<i>Appointed by</i>
Board of the Chalmers University of Technology Foundation	1 person (a student or another person elected by the Student Union Council)	Student Union Council
Board of Chalmers Tekniska Högskola AB	3 students, of whom 2 ordinary members and 1 deputy member, and a coopted doctoral student	Student Union Council and the Board of the Doctoral Student Section
Chalmers University Management Group	1 student	Student Union Board
President's executive meeting	1 student	Student Union Board
Executive Committee for Education	1 student	Student Union Board
Faculty Senate	1 student, 1 doctoral student	Student Union Board and the Board of the Doctoral Student Section
Doctoral Programmes Committee	1 student, 2 doctoral students	Student Union Board and the Board of the Doctoral Student Section
Research Advisory Committee	1 doctoral student	Board of the Doctoral Student Section
Disciplinary Committee	4 students, of whom 2 ordinary members and 2 deputy members	Student Union Board
Employment Committee	1 ordinary student member, 3 deputy members	Student Union Board
Committee for Working Environment and Equality	3 students, of whom 2 ordinary members (student and doctoral student) and one deputy member	Student Union Board and the Board of the Doctoral Student Section
Board of Chalmersfastigheter AB	2 students, of whom one member and one deputy member	Proposed by the Student Union Board

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Meeting forum	Student representation	Appointed by
Welcome weeks group	2 students	Student Union Board
Physical health and safety inspections of teaching and student premises at departments/within the undergraduate education organisation	1 student	Student Union Board
Chalmers' Ethics and Misconduct Committee	1 doctoral student	Board of the Doctoral Student Section
Collaboration meetings between educational areas	At least 2 students per educational area	Student Union Board
Departmental Advisory Teams <i>The Student Union must be offered the opportunity to have a representative on the Departmental Advisory Teams. Alternatively, they can be offered the opportunity to be part of a different appropriate group in the department</i>	2 students, one ordinary member, one deputy member, and one doctoral student	Nominated by the Board of the Technology Section and elected by the Student Union Board and the Board of the Doctoral Student Section
Health and safety inspections of student premises (physical and psychosocial)	At least one student per technology section concerned	Board of the Technology Section
Programme Advisory Team	At least 2 students	Board of the Technology Section
Course Committee meetings	Course representatives and Student Educational Committee representatives	Prepared by the Unit for Educational Support, examiner or Technology Section