

Open letter to the Minister of Education of Iceland:



Norsk studentorganisasjon
National Union of Students in Norway

Dear Illugi Gunnarsson

We in The National Union of Students in Norway (NUS-Norway) are deeply concerned with the changes to the Icelandic loan guarantee scheme for students. The tightening of demands for being eligible to receive the loan guarantee from 18 ECTS to 22 ECTS per semester is more likely to hurt the completion rate of Icelandic students rather than to enhance it. We therefore support the Icelandic student unions' demand for reversal of this proposal.

The tighter demands that have been proposed, removes the flexibility for students following courses of higher ECTS-value, e.g. 10 ECTS. This removal of flexibility worsens Icelandic students' ability to adapt to their current life situation. Unexpected events do happen, also to students. Nobody plans when they will be sick, or that their courses taken abroad are not recognised by their home institution. Removing the flexibility of Icelandic students will only make them more vulnerable to such events. In addition, this increase makes it near impossible for part-time students to make use of the loan guarantee scheme. This is unfortunate, as lifelong learning is essential for Iceland's continued competitiveness.

In Norway the State Educational Loan Fund lets students trail up to 60 ECTS behind normal progression, in addition to turning loans into grants if the student prevented from studying due to illness. Part-time students are also entitled to some support depending on their study load with a lower bound of 15 ECTS per semester. As an incentive for progression, up to 40% of the given loan is turned into a grant (read: the debt is written off) depending on how many ECTS the student passes per semester, where 30 ECTS corresponds to a write-off of 40%. We generally believe a system that rewards desired behaviour is preferred to a system that punishes people for events outside of their control.

We therefore appeal to the Icelandic Minister of Education, the Icelandic government and the board of the Icelandic Loan Fund to reverse this decision on the increased requirement for the loan guarantee scheme for students up to 22 ECTS per semester. Icelandic students require more flexibility, not less.

Best regards

Ola Magnussen Rydje

President of the National Union of Students in Norway

Axel Hvistendahl Nerdrum

Officer of International Affairs for the National Union of Students in Norway