

European Students' Union (ESU)

Fighting for students' rights since 1982

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Student Rights Charter

Preamble

We, the students of Europe, hold these universal rights to be unconcealed, self-evident and inalienable.

We believe that education is a human right, not a privilege and indispensable for the advancement of other human rights, that students are equal partners in education, and that education has a societal, personal, cultural and economic objective as well as a purpose in and of itself. Every student is entitled to all the rights and freedoms set forth in this Charter, free from any form of discrimination, including, but not limited to discrimination on the basis of political conviction, religion, race, ethnic or cultural origin, sex, gender identity, gender expression, sexual orientation, age, socio-economic standing or any disability they may have. Every student is entitled to all the rights and freedoms set forth in this Charter without regard to their field, mode or level of study or methods of programme delivery.

The rights laid down in this Charter stem from the fundamental human right to education. These rights apply for all domains and ought to be implemented at all levels of student involvement within Higher Education, included within permanent and structured alliances of Higher Education Institutions with decision and policy making powers.

In this document, “students” refers to all those enrolled in Higher Education, and “access” in Higher Education refers to both physical and digital access that should be guaranteed independently of each other.

§ 1 - Social Dimension of Higher Education

1. Everyone has the right to enroll in Higher Education.
2. All students have the right to full and equal participation in Higher Education, free from discrimination.
3. All students have the right to equal usage of Higher Education facilities.
4. All students have the right to conduct their studies with sufficient public financial support.
5. Everyone has the right to apply to any Higher Education institution without any form of financial or bureaucratic restrictions.
6. All students have the right to affordable quality and suitable housing.
7. All students have the right to affordable, nutritious and sustainable food.
8. All students have the right to access affordable and quality living necessities (including but not limited to transportation, technical support and essential goods such as hygiene products).
9. All students have the right to free and adequate mechanisms in place to support their physical and mental wellbeing.
10. All students have the right to have access to quality healthcare and psychological counselling free of charge.
11. All students have the right to physically and digitally access Higher Education and social spaces regardless of physical and mental disposition and any disability they may have.
12. All students have the right to have their physical and/or mental disabilities taken into account and to receive sufficient support when attending classes or being evaluated.
13. All students have the right to free access to all relevant educational resources.
14. All students have the right to attend social, cultural and recreational events, void of socio-economic barriers.

15. All students have the right to equal participation in Higher Education that does not interfere with their religious practices (including but not limited to lecture, seminar and exam timetabling).
16. All students with refugee and minority backgrounds have the right to full access, academic inclusion, participation and completion of Higher Education. For those students with minoritised native languages, this includes having no barriers to participate in Higher Education in their native language.
17. All students have the right to self-express as an individual or as a group void of administrative and/or bureaucratic barriers, censorship or discrimination.
18. All students have the right to participate in Higher Education spaces with institutional staff who have undergone necessary training pertaining to non-discrimination and mental health wellbeing.
19. All students have the right to a free and fair appeal to an independent representative body against any act which they consider to be discriminatory.
20. All students have the right to independent and impartial advice regarding their access and participation in Higher Education through institutional, regional and/or national Student Ombud or similar solutions.

§ 2 - Public responsibility, Institutional Autonomy and Academic Freedom

1. Everyone has the right to inclusive quality education free of charge¹
2. All students have the right to study at Higher Education Institutions that are fully funded.
3. All students have the right to pursue their study programs regardless of financial burdens created for the Higher Education Institution or government.
4. All the students have the right to Higher Education free of commodification and independent from the labour market.
5. All students have the right to structural assurance to begin, progress through and complete their educational programme.

¹ as affirmed in the *Universal Declaration of Human Rights* and *International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights*

6. All students have the right to protection of their academic freedom², students' rights and academic integrity.
7. All students have the right to express their thoughts about their Higher Education process, Higher Education Institutions or any matter of students' interest, without fear of persecution.
8. All students have the right to partake autonomously as full members with all responsibilities and privileges, in Higher Education governing structures, decision making, implementation, and assessment processes for learning, teaching and research as well as for support services.
9. All students have the right to pursue their research, teaching, and learning autonomously and use their Higher Education Institutions facilities accordingly.
10. All students have the right to free access to relevant information and sources in accordance with the stipulations laid out by the Open Science Movement.³
11. All students have the right to transparent Higher Education and study programs, both in the national and international context.
12. All students have the right to the proper protection of their personal data and information.⁴
13. All students have the right to connected/coherent prior and Higher Education.
14. All students have the right to a healthy living, studying and working environment supporting physical and mental wellbeing.
15. All students have the right to mobilise peacefully regarding issues inside or outside of the academic institutions without fear of any form of repercussions pertaining to their education.
16. All students have the right to participate in the sustainability movement, climate change mitigation and environmental defence.
17. All students have the right to gain education on the climate and ecological crises.

² as described in the Annex 1 to the Rome Communiqué
https://ehea.info/Upload/Rome_Ministerial_Communique_Annex_I.pdf

³http://www.unesco.org/new/en/communication-and-information/portals-and-platforms/goap/open-science-movement/?fbclid=IwAR3mOvus-9EtcI2ZVv1V0UeKJhOuUX_Q_RoTCVKZC4jNV3xT7eb67RACr7M

⁴ In line with “the Regulation in EU law in Data Protection and Privacy in the EU & EEA” (Council of Europe Convention 108 +)
<https://rm.coe.int/convention-108-convention-for-the-protection-of-individuals-with-regar/16808b36f1>

18. All students have the right to environmentally friendly and sustainable education and education institutions.

§ 3 - Internationalisation and Mobility

1. All students have the right to partake in a physical mobility period regardless of their socio-economical background.
2. Every student has the right to full funding of their international mobility period.
3. All students have the right to have one's cultural background recognised and respected.
4. All students have the right to move freely outside their host university
5. All students have the right to gain intercultural competencies as part of their education during their course of studies.
6. All students have the right to a fair, costless, easy, non-bureaucratic and timely assessment and recognition process of the qualifications (formal, non-formal and informal) earned in another country.
7. All students have the right to the recognition of competencies acquired abroad for continuing education or entering the labour market in a timely and transparent way.
8. All international students have the right to a supportive environment enhancing quality internationalised education on all levels.
9. International and mobile students have the right to participate in student representation and student activities to the same extent as local students.
10. All students have the right to participate in all of the activities, local, national and international, at the HE institution/s they are attending abroad.
11. International Students have the right to organise autonomously and represent themselves and receive sufficient support for these objectives.
12. Democratic student organisations have the right to collaborate with their counterparts in other campuses, countries, and continents.

§ 4 - Quality Education

1. All students have the right to be evaluated or graded solely on their academic performance as part of their academic programme.
2. All students have the right to learning, teaching and internship environments that support and encourage the development of autonomous learning, critical thinking and personal growth.
3. All students have the right to receive constructive feedback on their academic activities and performance.
4. All students have the right to participate, as equal partners, in the continuous assessment and improvement of their study programmes and institutions.
5. All students have the right to a flexible and customisable study program.
6. All students have the right to diverse teaching and evaluation methods aligned with their learning objectives.
7. All students have the right to have access to adequately paid and compensated curricular and extracurricular traineeship and internship without any type of discrimination. These traineeship and internship opportunities must also provide all students with a positive work environment.
8. All students have the right to continuously reviewed, assessed, updated and developed programmes.
9. All students have the right to free access to comprehensive and objective information on the quality of the programme and institution in which they wish to study or are already studying.
10. All students have the right to transparent and well-communicated Quality Assurance processes and institutions.
11. All students have the right to the protection of their intellectual property.
12. All students have the right to quality didactic and pedagogical teaching.
13. All students have the right to fair recognition of comparable qualifications as well as to free and fair recognition of informal and prior learning.

14. All students have the right to fair and free recognition of their academic work.
15. All students have the right to free and timely access to their academic situation and to the release of their diplomas and other documents regarding their status.
16. All students have the right to have the grading of their academic work re-evaluated by an external examiner.
17. All students have the right to a free and fair appeal against any decision related to their studies to an independent body.
18. All students have the right to gain practical knowledge directly related to the labour market; this includes the right to vocational counselling.
19. All students have the right to quality extracurricular opportunities that allow for learning beyond the confines of the curriculum.
20. All students have the right to have their prior learning, including formal, non-formal and informal competencies recognised through Diploma Supplement free of charge by their Higher Education Institution and under national legislation.

§ 5 - Student Involvement

1. All students have the right to organise autonomously.
2. All students have the right (directly or through democratic representation) to co-governance in all decision preparatory commissions and decision-making bodies relevant to their education. Students must not suffer academic, financial or politically motivated legal consequences stemming from such involvement.
3. All students have the right to run and be elected as student's representatives to participate in the work, policy-making, and decision-making process of different Higher Education institutions or other relevant stakeholders in Higher Education. Student representatives should be elected, replaced, and dismissed only by students.
4. All students have the right to have their opinion considered as that of all stakeholders on equal footing in Higher Education.

5. All student organizations have the right to freely express themselves and this should not be limited to academic matters.
6. Students have the right to be informed about all Higher Education affairs in a transparent manner.
7. All organisations representing students have the right to be recognised, financially supported, provided dedicated spaces by their Higher Education Institutions.
8. All students have the right to be represented themselves by democratically elected representatives at all levels of governance.