

Student Influence at ELLS universities

Student influence is organised in different ways at the ELLS universities. This document gives a brief overview of the student influence at a central level at the different universities.

Generally

- ✓ In all the universities student unions or councils have influence at the highest authority, either by advisory roles or by student positions in boards/senates
- ✓ In so far as faculties exist, there is student influence at faculty level
- ✓ There is student influence at department and/or programme levels concerning the educational programme.

WUR – The Netherlands

The ELSA members from Wageningen University are members of the Student Council. The Student Council is representing student interests at the highest level and is the spokesperson for students towards the Executive Board (including the rector). The role of the student council is to keep an eye on university policy and student affairs. The members of the student council are elected every year and they work full-time, they receive a financial compensation for their work.

Right below the executive board the Educational Institute is situated. This institute consists of 4 students and 4 professors and is chaired by the rector. They take decisions on educational programmes and decide upon their budget. Every programme has a programme committee which consists of 50% students and 50% staff. They check the quality of the programme and can give recommendations to the Educational Institute about the programme. Also the students involved in the Educational Institute as well as the students in the programme committees are financially compensated by the university.

SLU - Sweden

The ELSA members are found among the board of the central student union, SLUSS. The SLUSS board consists of members from the eight student unions at SLU and represents the students in the university board and towards the rector. The big decisions are made by representatives from all eight student unions and these decisions are executed by the SLUSS board. The chair of the SLUSS board works full-time and is paid by SLU.

On the central level there are councils that make suggestions to the board. Those councils are for education (PhD, MSc and BSc education), international work and students well-being issues. All student representation on central level is handled by SLUSS. SLUSS has also got an employee who is working as a PhD student advisor. There are four faculties and each faculty has its own faculty council. Below the faculty councils there are programme councils, and the local student unions are represented in both of these councils.

KVL - Denmark

The ELSA members from KVL are elected at the general assembly of the central student union, DSR. The general assembly can be attended by all members of student unions at KVL. DSR has a main council of DSR (hovedbestyrelsen), which consists of members from the student unions for the subject areas at KVL and of the student members of the university board, academic council and so on. The main council decides on general issues and policy directions of DSR. From the main council a smaller group makes up the business committee (forretningsudvalget), which consists of the chair of the main council, the vice chair and a few others. The business committee is responsible for the daily business of DSR and communication with the rector and prorectors.

Students at KVL are members of DSR through student unions at a subject area level, like the student union for veterinary students, or for students in agriculture. These student unions are represented in study committees in the departments and in examination boards.

BOKU - Austria

The ELSA members are chosen by the student union. The members of the student union are found by an election every two years. The students also have seats in the university senate and other university bodies.

The main body of student's influence in Austria is the „Austrian National Student's Union“ (ÖH - Österreichische HochschülerInnenschaft). Its rights and responsibilities are defined by national law and representatives are elected every 2 years. Student's union in Austria basically operates on 3 levels. On the national level (Bundesvertretung) it is responsible for representing all students in Austria towards the government. The university level (Universitätsvertretung) deals with all issues concerning all the students from one of Austria's 21 universities and their main decision making bodies are the student's parliaments. The main task on the third level (Studienvertretung) is dealing with study-related topics e.g. curricula. Political influence is one of the main tasks of the student's union on all operative levels. The other one is providing students with advice concerning all study-related issues like financing, housing, exchange programmes, etc...

The student's union at BOKU is called ÖH-BOKU and has offices on both of BOKU's campuses. It consists of the board (Vorsitz), the student's parliament and departments dealing with various topics. The parliament are 9 students from different parties. The parliament is a political body within the student's union which meets at least twice every semester. At their first meeting after elections they elect the board and the representative for the national student's parliament. The board consists of 3 chairpersons who have to represent BOKU's students towards the university.

The departments (Referate) have special topics within which they are active. These topics are e.g. gender related issues, culture, alternative way of teaching/learning/living...They also issue a news magazine three times a semester. By national law the local student's parliaments send representatives to all decision making bodies. At BOKU the most important ones are the senate, the curricula commission and the boards deciding on the employment of new professors (Berufungskommissionen and Habilitationskommissionen). The student's parliament also decides on the ELSA representatives.

UHOH – Germany

The ELSA members are found by the former ELSA members and not chosen from any official student union. The senate is the highest decision-making body of the university. Student influence is executed via elected members to the senate as well as the faculty councils, examination boards, and study commissions. Although student representatives have a full vote in these committees, they are always the minority. All elected student representatives become automatically members of the student union (Allgemeiner Studierendenausschuss, AStA). The student union is run by elected students as well as few professional staff and it offers support around student and campus life (e.g. housing, lecture note sale, event management etc.). The student bodies (Fachschaften) of the different departments send volunteers to the student council (Gemeinsamer Fachschaftsrat, GeFa) which has an advisory function to the student union. Ideally, elected student union's representatives check with student council activists what opinion should be submitted to the senate. All student representatives work on a volunteer basis besides their studies and do not get financial compensation.

CUA – Czech Republic

The membership of ELSA is new, so there is not yet a fixed procedure for finding ELSA members. CUA has a student union that is elected by the students. Students are also represented in the university senate and the faculty senates.

CUA students have certain rights as well as obligations. Their rights and privileges are about the same at any faculty of CUA. There is the whole university student organization- Student Union. Representatives are elected by students. However, there also exist some student's organizations at each faculty. Usually these are helping students in the matter of grades, used book distribution, cultural events, temporary job service etc. Basically, they are keeping an eye on the students' life and conditions and cultural activities at the CUA.

Students also have members at the senate (council) of each faculty. There are two representatives of Bachelor and Master Programs, and representatives of Ph.D. students. They have a voice during taking of any decision at the faculty level. There are also nominated students representatives to the whole university senate.

Students who need to solve any problem are supposed to ask their representatives or they can contact any authority at the university. There are some examples of students influence. They may require the changes in study plans, time schedule and quality of the lectures. They can also comment food quality at the canteen or restaurant, etc. All of the student representatives are not paid for their duty.

SGGW – Poland

The membership of ELSA is new, so there is not yet a fixed procedure for finding ELSA members, but at the moment they are found within the Erasmus Student Network (ESN). The students are organised in student self-government at the university level and at the faculty/interdisciplinary studies levels. Students are also represented in the university senate and in the faculty council (the same role as the university senate). These councils can be counted as the programme councils, as particular programmes are attached to certain faculties.

Currently, the statute of SGGW is under revision and information given below is presenting the old situation. The situation will change in some points. All students of each faculty/interdisciplinary studies are members of students' self-governments of faculty/interdisciplinary study and of students' self-government. At faculty level students choose every year the board of students' self-government. Students are choosing also two representatives at their faculty/interdisciplinary study for the council of university students' self-government. The 6 members of the board are elected from this council. Recently, self-government of PhD students is under development. The role of students of self governments is the representation of students at every day activities and organising some social events for students.

Nowadays, 6 students (mixed BSc and MSc) and 2 PhD students are representing student rights at the senate of the university. They are elected every 3 years. Representatives of students and PhD students are also members of the councils at faculties/interdisciplinary studies. The number of students varies on different faculties and depends on total number of council members. The power of student is not strong as at least 10 % of voices belong to students in the senate and these councils. All these students' activities are voluntary work. There is only one person fully employed at university students' self government. Her duties are mainly administration and accounting.

