



VIA Policy for student political work and student involvement

Introduction

This policy is developed in collaboration between the students and the staff (executives and employees).

The policy is based on VIA's strategy, which contains an ambition about the students being active participants, which means that they are co-creators and have joint responsibility for learning and their education.

The purpose of the policy is to paint a united picture of why student involvement is important, and how we work to gain proper student involvement. The policy clarifies the infrastructure in the student political bodies, which VIA can use as a starting point, when the students are to be involved.

The policy also serves to describe, what we – the students and the staff – expect of each other and what the division of roles is.

The policy also has to function as a foundation for an annual dialogue (evaluation) in the Dean of Programme team and Collaboration forum for the Student Council at VIA (Samarbejdsforum for Studenterrådet i VIA) and The Executive Board about, how the student involvement is going in their part of the organisation.

1. Student Involvement at VIA

At VIA, we are completely affiliated to Danish University College's policy paper "Student involvement at the university colleges", which, amongst others, says that proper student involvement is both necessary and a target in itself.

It is necessary to involve the students, as the students have unique information, which is decisive for the quality of the decisions that are made. The students' knowledge is crucial for the continuous development of VIA's programmes, course of programmes and research- and developmental activities, and a healthy and efficient study environment.

Student involvement is a target in itself, as VIA as an organisation enroll in an attentive, open and democratic educational culture and tradition.

2. Organisation of the student political bodies at VIA

Even though student involvement can, and is organised in many different ways, we acknowledge that the student's council, composed by the elected students, is the leading way to organise student involvement and the starting point for involvement of the students.

That is why, it is a shared obligation that there are student political councils at all administrative levels at VIA at all times:

- VIA (Institutional level): "The Student Council at VIA" is the student's representatives across VIA's programmes and campuses and enter into dialogue with The Executive Board of VIA. Here, there is an emphasis on the interdisciplinary issues.

- Campus: A campus body (named Campus council/Campus-DSR or other designation) enter into dialogue with the Campus Management with emphasis on campus related issues.
- Programme/programme offers: The students' council on each programme offer, enter into dialogue with The Programme Management with emphasis on the academic, programme specific issues.

3. Matching of expectations between the students and the staff (executives and employees)

The fundamental approach is that VIA commits on an ongoing basis to create a good set of frameworks for student involvement. The students commit to completing these frameworks and to seize the opportunities of involvement there are, and to continually seek influence constructively.

3.1. Expectations to VIA's leadership

The Executive Board

- Ensures that the students continually and systematically are involved in the decisions- and developmental processes which concern all of VIA (transversal processes)
- Ensures that the Student Council at VIA is economically and administratively supported (the latter is pt. ensured with a Student Coordinator function)

Campus Management

Has to create a good set of frameworks for student involvement about campus related topics, including circumstances which are relevant across the programmes on campus, along with supporting a good study environment.

The Campus Management is obligated (as a minimum) to do the following:

- Ensure that there is a permanent resource person, e.g. a Campus Coordinator, as a contact person for Campus-DSR.
- Ensure that Campus-DSR is invited to dialogue in the campus management- and or/campus sparring group meetings.
- Ensure discussions of the student environment along with coordinating at follow-ups and implementation of campus related initiatives.
- Support Campus-DSR economically within frames which are agreed upon (preferably annually) between the council and the Campus Management.
- Be proactive and ask questions and be available for dialogue, i.a., by participating in the meetings summoned by the students.
- Make facilities available for Campus Council/Campus-DSR

The Programme Management and the employees (teachers and technical-administrative staff (TAP))

Need to set a good framework for student involvement and are obligated (as a minimum) to do the following:

- Ensure that there is always an employee who has the permanent task to be the local student council's resource person, and has an updated knowledge about the activity level.
- Support the local student council economically within the framework that is agreed upon (preferably annually) between the council and the programme management.
- Support maintenance of the local student council (where there is one), e.g. by ensuring additional support in the vulnerable periods (generational shifts).
- Seek to establish an alternative dialogue forum, where the students can be heard (if there is not a local student council).
- Ensure that representatives elected by the student's council, are represented in relevant fora in their programme.
- Ensure discussions of the study environment, along with coordinating at follow-up's and implementation of local initiatives.
- Make facilities available for the local student council.

The Deans of Programme and Vice Rector need to:

- Support the dialogue about student democracy across all programmes.
- Ensure maintenance of the focus on student involvement.
- Set a framework for a sustainable local student council in all programmes.

- Ensure that there is a continuous management focus on efficient student political bodies e.g. by having an annual theme discussion in the Deans of Programme team, where the student involvement and the organisation among the students are evaluated, with the participation of representatives from the students.

3.2. Expectations to the students

A student's council/student council is a student political body, which is organised by the students, for the students. The students have the main responsibility that the bodies are efficient. The staff's and the management's responsibility are to be supportive.

The students have to ensure that the positions, which are reserved for the students in the formal fora, which e.g. VIA's board and the individual programme committees, are occupied by students who are elected by and amongst the students through democratic processes. The student's prioritize active participation on the concerned committees.

The students contribute to that as many students as possible participate in the surveys that the organisation implements (eg. the learning questionnaire (læringsbarometerundersøgelsen), educational zoom (uddannelseszoom) evaluation of education), and in the follow-up work.

The students have the right and duty to pass on information about the experienced challenges with the programme, to the local programme management. As a starting point, the individual student cannot turn directly to the management, but via the student's council at the programme.

4. Student political work during internship

All VIA's programmes differ between theory/education and internship, and all students will therefore be in internships for periods at a time. It is an ambition at VIA that the students need to have good opportunities to participate in student political work, whether they are interning or following classes at their programme.

There cannot be established unambiguous and general rules for internships, as the conditions at VIA's programmes differ. For example, there is paid internship on some programmes. As a starting point, we believe that the individual study political active students, after dialogue with their place of intern, can arrange some practical solutions, so that he/she during internship can take care of their student political tasks. If you, as a student, experience a lack of sympathy at the place of intern, the student is encouraged to turn to the management of the programme, which hereafter is obligated to conduct a dialogue with the place of intern about the case.

5. Resources

VIA supports the student political bodies with economical and administrative resources to arrangements of meeting activities, skills development and activities of both academic and study political character.

Cf. 3.1 the student political bodies are supported on all levels (institutional level, campus and programme). The specific conditions are agreed upon continuously (preferably annually) on the different levels, and it is a clear premise that the students and the management always know about the economic framework. It is expected that the local management and the administration help the students manage the council's economy in collaboration with the council, with opportunity for expenses and cash settlement as per agreement.

To support the student's activities, there are at VIA also a full-time Student Coordinator, who the students, the teachers and the management can consult about advice and counselling.

6. Validity

This policy takes effect at the approval and is valid for about four years, until the end of 2021. It is revised at the end of 2020 and consecutively every 4 years.

Questions to the policy can be directed to Stab, Strategi og Politisk Analyse on viauc@via.dk

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Approved by The Executive Board on 17 April 2018.

Approved by the Student Council at VIA on 26 April 2018.

Revised by EM/AMBE from Stab, Strategi og Politisk Analyse on 11 June 2019