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NO LIMITS.

# STUDENTS OF BUSINESS AND TECHNOLOGY.

## Education policy program 2023

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# EDUCATION NETWORK AND NUMBER OF DEGREES

## Network of higher education units must be narrowed down

Universities of applied sciences must be profiled more strongly than at present. This means giving up complete fields of study and focusing on the schools' individual strengths. Accessible higher education does not require a network of units as large as it currently is.

In 2022, BBA studies are offered at 21 universities of applied sciences on over 40 campuses. This wide network causes unnecessary movement between the different higher education units and greatly influences the resources available to faculty.

The secondary units of universities of applied sciences are not attractive enough, and students gravitate towards the main units. The reasons for this include experiences of poorer quality in studies and less attractive study environments.

Company relations must be taken into account in the location of universities of applied sciences and their campuses, and the goal must be to create even more effective regional skills centres. The reduction of units must be assessed in relation to quality employment, employment in the region, attractiveness as an application option and the average cost of education.

## Number of BBA degrees must be reduced and proportioned to regional working life needs

In most regions, the amount of BBA students is way too large compared to the regional population. In these regions, there are not enough practical training opportunities that support their studies, or job descriptions fit for their degrees after graduation.

The number of degrees must be reduced nationally, based on regional needs. These needs must be monitored regularly to ensure that the number of degrees supports good-quality employment of BBA graduates locally. Universities of applied sciences must communicate openly about the investigations that have led to changes in the number of degrees.

## Dual model must be maintained

The Finnish higher education system works. Both working life oriented degrees produced by universities of applied sciences and academic degrees produced by science oriented universities will be needed going forward. The education system must enable smooth transition from universities of applied sciences to universities and vice versa. Consistent and transparent practices must be created for these transitions.

# QUALITY OF EDUCATION

## Feedback systems of Universities of Applied Sciences must be improved

Not enough course feedback is given and it might not get enough of a reaction, which leads to weakening quality in studies. The collection and utilization of feedback must be developed. Giving feedback must be made a mandatory part of courses. Feedback must be reciprocal and the processing of and reacting to it must be transparent.

## Universities of Applied Sciences must invest in high quality distance learning

The development of digitalization enables developing larger campus clusters instead of maintaining a wide network of units. The resources saved in property upkeep can be used to increase the effectiveness of online studies and their quality. Online platforms can also be made use of in joint courses between universities, to ensure more variety in study opportunities. Digitalization also enables closer collaboration with upper secondary education.

Distance learning must not be the primary way of completing a degree. Distance learning must offer extra opportunities alongside versatile contact learning, taking advantage of the digital leap made during the pandemic.

## Special characteristics of students must be taken into consideration in the planning and implementation of studies

Students are an extremely heterogenic group of people which means that one way of teaching does not necessarily work for everyone. Because of this, special needs related to education must receive more attention and students must be offered a wider variety of learning methods. Special needs include for example different attention or concentration disorders.

## Education of BBA students must better meet the needs of working life

The teaching methods of universities of applied sciences don't equally meet the future needs of working life nationwide. The opportunities of digitalization are not exploited enough in contact learning and teachers' knowledge of modern technologies and their usage is too inconsistent.

Teachers must be required to complete pedagogical studies and to maintain their knowledge to ensure the quality of teaching. The introduction of new educational technologies and methods requires additional education for teachers as well. It is the responsibility of the universities of applied sciences to ensure that the teachers' competence is up to date.

The contents of courses must be consistent regardless of the implementation or the university of applied sciences. Overlapping work of the teaching faculty and the universities of applied sciences can be avoided for example by strengthening collaboration between universities, offering courses together and making use of the opportunities provided by digitalization.

## WORKING LIFE RELEVANCE

### Projects done in Universities of Applied Sciences must be working life oriented

All students do not currently have similar opportunities during their studies to develop the working skills they need in the future. The working life relevance of a degree varies significantly, even between different units of a single university of applied sciences.

Development of company relations must continue so that companies are able to effectively offer good quality working life opportunities and to support BBA students' professional growth. Special needs of local industry must be taken into consideration in the planning of education.

Universities of applied sciences must ensure their faculty's working life skills through different working life cycles, and thus contribute to the working life orientation of the degree. Every teacher and student must have an opportunity to participate in RDI activities. Up-to-date working life experience must be valued when recruiting teachers.

### The Finnish UAS master's degree title ("YAMK") must be changed into "maisteri (AMK)"

The Finnish master's degree title in universities of applied sciences (YAMK) must be changed into maisteri (AMK), to better describe the degree's content and its level, as already recognized in the Finnish education system.

## STUDY PATH

### The flexibility of study paths and awareness of them must be improved

Universities do not recognize the competence gained in universities of applied sciences well enough and because of this there are unnecessary overlaps in education. Master's degree from university of applied sciences is underrated and awareness of it is low.

Universities of applied sciences must offer BBA and MBA studies of an even higher quality to ensure the possibility of continuing one's studies without overlap. Collaboration between universities must be increased. The profile of BBA and MBA studies must be raised higher so the degrees are seen as more competitive on the job market. Universities of applied sciences must improve communication about postgraduate studies to students.

# FUNDING OF EDUCATION

## The funding model of Universities of Applied Sciences must better support quality employment

The current funding model of universities of applied sciences is built mainly on completed degrees. This leads to deteriorating quality in courses and inconsistency in assessment criteria.

The funding model must be developed in a direction that guides universities of applied sciences to raise the quality of education and other activities. The quality of education is indicated for example by graduates finding employment that corresponds to their degrees.

## Education policy decisions must be proportional to the funding of Universities of Applied Sciences

The number of BBA students should not be raised but if it does happen, the amount of funding must match that development.

The current job market must be considered proactively when choices are made about raising the number of study places. The amount of responsibilities and duties of universities of applied sciences must not be increased without a matching increase in resources and funding.

## The performance-orientedness of studies must be lightened

The current funding model negatively influences the wellbeing of students by pushing them to graduate as fast as possible. Reducing the performance-orientedness and being more flexible with the duration of studies would ensure students' mental and physical working capacity when transitioning into working life.

### Education must be free of charge

Free education has been the basis for equal society in Finland, and it should not be torn down by putting students into unequal positions. Tuition fees are a deterrent especially for economically disadvantaged people who already have to fight for their livelihood. Youth must be encouraged to pursue higher education instead of scaring them away, no matter their background.

Tuition fees for higher education must not be introduced. Postgraduate and extension studies in universities must also be free of charge.

### Students must receive enough support during their studies

Dropping out and social exclusion of students have been on the rise in recent years. Students must be supported by offering sufficient opportunities to make use of the services of a study counsellor, school social worker or study psychologist. Good quality and easily accessible services support students' wellbeing and their timely graduation.

## PRACTICAL TRAINING

### Practical training procedures of BBA students must be nationally consistent

Practical training requirements differ between different universities of applied sciences. Not all practical training periods further the goal of BBA students graduating as specialists, therefore the quality of employment of students after graduation varies.

Universities of applied sciences must create a nationwide criteria that defines minimum requirements for the difficulty level of the practical training. It must be defined how and in what way the student is guided and oriented during the practical training. The fulfillment of these criteria must be followed. It must be ensured that students all over the country have the chance for practical training that furthers their prospects of quality employment.

### BBA students must get paid for practical training

A significant part of the practical trainings offered to BBA students by the universities of applied sciences are unpaid. In the student survey done by Professionals of Business and Technology in 2021, 73% reported having been paid for their practical training.

Universities of applied sciences must support paid practical trainings by providing only remunerative practical trainings for their students. The remuneration should depend on the demandingness of the job description and be related to the general salary level in the target sector.

## THESIS

### Assessment of theses must be based on a nationally defined criteria

The assessment criteria and implementation methods of theses vary greatly between universities of applied sciences. This variety weakens the comparability of theses nationwide and makes it possible for the personal chemistry between student and assessor to influence the assessment process.

All theses by BBA students must be assessed by the same nationwide criteria. The thesis assessment process of universities of applied sciences must be monitored and it must remain transparent.

### Theses must primarily be produced based on commissions

A thesis must show genuine evidence of a student's professional competence. A thesis should primarily have a client, for example a company, association or a public administrative organization, for whom the professional competence is proven.

Theses done as commissions primarily enable self reflection and professional growth for the author of the thesis. In addition, the thesis must provide added value to the client.

## RECOGNITION OF PRIOR LEARNING AND EXPERIENCE

### Process for recognizing prior learning and experience must be consistent nationwide

Universities of applied sciences do not have established practices for recognizing prior learning and experience. The process for this varies nationally based on the teacher and the knowledge of it amongst students is weak. This may cause unnecessary overlap in studies, while also demanding additional resources from the university.

The process for recognizing prior learning and experience must be nationally unambiguous and it must be based on a clear criteria to the extent that it is possible in national course packages. Awareness of the process must be raised among students.