

€1,000 - after tax!

Aalto University Student Union's policy paper on the students' subsistence

The students of today are expected to operate simultaneously and effortlessly in different areas of life. Students are required to study full time without adequate financial aid to enable their studies, to gain work experience already before graduation to secure their employment and to supplement their subsistence with earned income. This combination does not work. The student financial aid should correspond to the reality, taking into account the students' situation in life as a whole.

AYY'S FIVE THESES FOR BETTER STUDENT SUBSISTENCE

- 1) The overall level of student financial aid must be adequate - no stick without the carrot**

The most significant enabler of full-time studies is the student financial aid which covers the costs of living.

Credit requirements have to be realistic in relation to the level of student financial aid, otherwise the incentive element becomes useless when the students fall outside the scope of student financial aid. Credit requirements should not be increased without education policy reforms and raising of the overall level of student financial aid. The field-specific differences in the dimensioning of studies are considerable, and therefore even a minor increase in credit requirements may become a major problem for some student groups. The definition of minimum studies would make the combining of different life situations difficult, and should not be introduced.

Student financial aid should be indexed and the parent's increase for students with families should be added to the student financial aid. The student financial aid should also enable full-time studies for persons under the age of 18 in higher education institutions.

- 2) Student loan should reach a greater number of students, the loan level should be raised and its repayment be fair**

Taking out the student loan should be made easier and its overall level should be increased. The uncertainty related to the loan should be reduced by developing and improving reliefs for its repayment for persons with low income or limited means. Loan properties rewarding the rapid pace of studies should be clarified.

- 3) Students' housing supplement should be retained**

Student housing should be supported through the adequate housing supplement of the student financial aid around the year. The general housing allowance is not suitable for supporting the housing of higher education students as it penalises for work which supplements one's income considerably more strictly than the housing supplement. The current level of the housing supplement provides sufficient support for a small number of students but is a considerably better option for the majority of students compared with the general housing allowance.

4) The form of student housing aid should be adequate

Student housing should be supported during full-time studies with the form of housing aid which is adequate in relation to the rent level in the Helsinki region. Since many students have to work at least seasonally during their studies in order to develop their skills and to secure income, the form of housing aid should flexibly respond to varying income. The form of housing aid should allow reasonable income and be individual-based.

5) Gaining of work experience during studies should be taken into account in student financial aid

Social security provided for students should recognise the importance of work experience gained during studies. Gaining work experience in one's own field develops mental and skilled capabilities required by the working life and is linked to employment after graduation. Internship funds and scholarships should remain beyond separate means-testing and income limits should be adequately high. After the two-tier reform of student financial aid, two-tier degrees should also be genuinely implemented in studies. A student's income should not be a means to achieve education policy objectives.