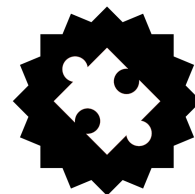


The Social Sciences Student Union's

Strategic Plan

2022–2025



**SOCIAL SCIENCES
STUDENT UNION**

Introduction

The Strategic Plan of the Social Sciences Student Union lists the goals and visions for the student union for a three-year period. Each year, the yearly Action Plan is written based on the Strategic Plan. The organisation shall strive to work on the goals in this plan **for all three years**. This will enable the organisation to secure continuity in its work and efforts.

Through further concretisation in the Action Plans, the Social Sciences Student Union will strive to achieve the strategic goals in this strategic plan by June 2025, when a new Strategic Plan will be proposed.

Consequences of the COVID-19 pandemic

As this Strategic Plan is written, the student union is experiencing remaining consequences of the COVID-19 pandemic on our operations. Students being away from campus has affected our ability to recruit active members, our outreach to students and our ability to collect the opinions of the students we represent. All gatherings moving online affected our ability to provide our active members with a rewarding community, the interest in attending our labour market and social events, and the ease with which different organs within the student union have been able to cooperate with each other. The one thing which has benefitted from these extraordinary circumstances is our digital communications, which the student union has had to invest in improving in order to maintain contact with our members.

At the point of writing this document (April 2022), the student union has experienced a year of having to re-recruit active members while being understaffed, and it is likely that the student union will experience a 'hangover' from the pandemic for several years going forward. We are hopeful that we can counter the isolation experienced by many students during the pandemic, by investing in **fun, community** and **solidarity** and thereby both serve our students and become an attractive and strong organisation. If the organisation finds itself in a position in the coming years, when it needs to prioritise between the items in this Strategic Plan, these strategic values should guide those priorities.

Strategic values for 2022-2025:

- Fun
- Community
- Solidarity

Education monitoring

The student union's primary purpose is to monitor and improve the education at the Faculty of Social Sciences, and the conditions for students. We do this primarily through appointing student representatives to the preparatory and decision-making bodies at the Faculty of Social Sciences and our 12 departments, as well as by advocating for the interests of social sciences students towards the university (through LUS) and the government (through SFS). The work we do is important, but not always visible for the students we represent.

At the department level, student representatives should become more visible so that the students they represent know how and when to reach out to their representatives. We should also strive for each department to have a strong and independent Study Council, so that elected student representatives have a context and community for their involvement. Well-functioning Study Councils can contribute to the impact of student representation, by allowing our representatives to cooperate and strategise to maximise their influence, and facilitate the student union's coordination of our many student representatives.

The student union should also continuously develop the way we organise our student representatives (studentrepresentanter) and programme and course representatives (program- och kursombud), in order to effectively collect the perspectives of and represent student groups in all corners of the faculty. Progress has been made with clarifying the role of "ombud" as informal representatives of the students, as a part of the previous Strategic Plan, and this should be followed up upon in the coming three-year period.

The student union shall also strive to develop its political communication, in order to strengthen our impact in debates concerning education and student welfare matters both internal and external to Lund University, and to make visible to our members the political stances the student union takes and promotes. Making our political work visible towards our members is a matter of transparency and accountability, but can also inspire or create incentive for students to take active

part in the internal political discussions of the student union. The student union should strive to develop its forums for political discussion, to encourage creative debate that invites the perspectives of individual members and can develop the student union's opinions.

The Social Sciences Student Union shall...

- **Strive towards having strong and independent study councils.**
- **Strive for visible student representatives.**
- **Strive to represent all corners of the faculty well by developing the way we organise student representatives, programme representatives and course representatives.**
- **Develop the student union's political communication and forums for political discussion.**

Labour market matters

The labour market area of the student union strives to improve social sciences students' connection to the labour market, through varied events that allow students to connect with potential employers, increase their understanding of their unique competencies as social scientists, and learn other things that are useful to know when you enter the labour market. For several years, the work has been centred around the labour market fair 'SAMarbete' and other established projects such as the mentorship programme Journalistklubben, and organising lectures. While the events we organise seem valuable to those in attendance, attendance numbers are often low in relation to the efforts required for their organisation. It is time for the student union to evaluate the impact, value and relevance of our established labour market projects, so that we can inform strategies for renewal and development of our work with labour market matters.

One challenge for the student union's work with labour market matters is that the student population at the Faculty of Social Sciences is a diverse and heterogeneous group, with many different career paths ahead of them. Labour market activities organised by programme associations and sections are often able to better cater to the specific needs of their student group, and working closely with and supporting programme associations and sections in their work with labour market matters can be a fruitful and effective way for the student union to serve the students of our faculty.

Through their work, the Labour market coordinator gains expertise concerning the conditions for social sciences students on the labour market which could be employed by the student union in its political work, informing our advocacy towards both the university and governmental bodies. As part of moving the labour market matters area closer to the education monitoring area, opportunities for the Labour market coordinator to hold a more political role within the student union should be explored.

The Social Sciences Student Union shall...

- **Evaluate the impact, value and relevance of the student union's established labour market projects, such as SAMarbete.**
- **Work closely with and support the programme associations and sections in their work with labour market matters.**
- **Explore opportunities for the Labour Market Coordinator to hold a more political role within the student union.**

Community & Recruitment

In 2022, when this document is being written, the Social Sciences Student Union is experiencing remaining consequences of the COVID-19 pandemic, which has greatly affected our successes recruiting active members and providing them with a rewarding community. In order to become an attractive organisation to be active in, the student union must strive to create a deep sense of community, that stretches beyond the work that our active members do together and results in real friendships. To achieve this, the student union shall organise regular social activities for subgroups of active members – such as project groups, committees and study councils – and for the community of active members as a whole.

A strength of many other student associations in Lund, which compete with us for active members, is the low threshold for entering their community. A common route to becoming active in nations and programme associations is to first enter the community and build relationships, and then become active as a means of maintaining those relationships. In contrast, the first step to entering the Social Sciences Student Union is today, in most cases, to sign up for a position of trust or project group. The student union could improve its recruitment by

organising regular social events open for all members, that foster a low-threshold community that can be a stepping stone towards becoming active.

Moreover, the student union needs to improve its routines for how we communicate about our opportunities for involvement, in order to effectively reach students at all departments. Our most important periods for recruitment are at the beginning of each semester, and leading up to Representative Assembly meetings. During these periods, the student union should strive to organise effective recruitment campaigns.

The Social Sciences Student Union shall...

- **Organise regular social activities for the community of active members as a whole, as well as for subgroups of active members.**
- **Organise regular social events open for all members, and create a community of members that can be a stepping stone towards becoming active.**
- **Organise effective recruitment campaigns at the beginning of each semester, and leading up to Representative Assembly meetings.**

Internal organisation

Our active members are the student union's most important asset. We are an organisation by and for students, and our missions could not be achieved any other way. Most of our active members need to balance their involvement in the student union with their studies, jobs and/or other engagements. It should be fun and rewarding to be active, and negative stress must be avoided. While active, our members develop both general competencies and expertise specific to the work of the student union, which are valuable for the student union to retain. It is important that we ensure sustainable conditions for our active members, so that they are able to continue being active for a long time.

In 2018, the Representative Assembly format changed from convening every 6 weeks to convening once per semester, with elections of the voting RA members being held each term. While an evaluation of the new format has concluded that there are benefits compared to what was done before, a negative consequence has been that with fewer occasions to take initiatives for change and make important decisions, it is difficult to carry out important changes within an operational year. This inhibits the student union's ability to adapt quickly to changes in its

circumstances, and also inhibits desirable flexibility within an operational year. In the coming years, the student union shall strive to improve the speed of the student union's decision-making processes.

The Social Sciences Student Union currently has three sections – Agora (the Helsingborg section), Socionomsektionen (the School of Social Work section), and Pluto (the section for the Department of Human Geography), to whom the student union has delegated responsibility for monitoring the education at their respective departments. A weakness in the section structure is that the formal expectations on what relationship and cooperation should exist between the sections and the central student union are unclear. The student union should strive to strengthen its bonds with the sections, and clarify the formal relationship between us. In clarifying the section relationship, we can also gain a clearer idea of what the relationship with potential future sections should look like. When discussing the idea of potential future section memberships with programme associations who may be interested in such a relationship, the current board has found that it is unclear what the process of admitting a new section would look like. It is a strategic imperative for the student union to clarify the process for new section memberships, in order to serve our vision of having more sections in the future.

In the coming years, the student union has been promised expanded premises (lokaler) to house its operations. At our current premises, Samvetet (Gamla tapetserarverkstaden), a new office will be freed up for us on the top floor, along with the basement floor, within a few years. A student union office for three is also included in the plans for Cesam – Centrum för samhällsvetenskap (Centre for Social Sciences), which is to be constructed in the northern part of the Paradise area and is set to be finished by 2027. With larger premises comes larger costs in terms of rent, and the student union needs to create a long-term strategy for our office premises, considering how much space we need and can afford.

The Social Sciences Student Union shall...

- **Ensure sustainable conditions for active members.**
- **Improve the speed of the student union's decision-making processes, to increase the student union's flexibility and ability to adapt to its circumstances.**
- **Clarify the section relationship and the process for new section memberships, and strengthen the bonds with current sections.**
- **Create a long-term strategy for the student union's office premises.**

External communication

During the pandemic, the student union has greatly improved its external communication with regards to our social media channels. A new graphical profile was developed, and a new committee was created, with responsibility for executing our external communications in line with the brand guide. In the time following the Communications Committee's creation, a conclusion has been drawn that a closer relationship between the board, who are responsible for carrying out the student union's operations, and the Communications Committee, who are responsible for communicating about them, must be established. We shall also continue to oversee the way we organise our external communications, in order to enable an overall strategic and creative grip of communications to be taken.

Other than social media, the student union makes use of many different channels for visibility: our website, on campus, word of mouth, etc. In the coming years, the student union should follow up on the efficacy of different communication channels for different purposes, and develop how we utilise different channels for visibility. We should also continue strengthening the student union's brand, especially in terms of merchandise and messaging.

The Social Sciences Student Union shall...

- **Establish a closer relationship between the Board and the Communications Committee.**
- **Develop the way we organise our external communications, to enable an overall strategic and creative grip of communications.**
- **Evaluate and develop the channels for visibility utilised by the student union.**
- **Continue strengthening the student union's brand.**

External relations

The Faculty of Social Sciences is uniquely rich in student associations. This has for a long time posed challenges for the student union, as other associations compete with us for students' attention and involvement. This zero-sum game could, however, be turned into a positive-sum game through increased cooperation: double-work could be avoided, we could draw leverage from each other's unique positions and competencies, and act in solidarity with each other.

During the operational year 2021/2022, such a vision of a strong community of student associations became clear, in conversation between the board of the student union and boards of several programme associations – and the project was given the name #tillSAMmans. In the coming years, the student union shall strive to create this community and develop our cooperation with programme associations, on many different fronts.

A lesson we can learn from other student associations at our faculty, other student unions, and the labour market matters area of the Social Sciences Student Union, is how to work with sponsorships in order to improve the student union's finances. In the coming years, the student union should explore opportunities for sponsorship relations that can benefit more segments of the student union's operations.

The Social Sciences Student Union shall...

- **Create a strong community of student associations at the Faculty of Social Sciences.**
- **Develop our cooperation with the programme associations.**
- **Explore opportunities for more sponsorship relations.**