



SUOMEN YLIOPPILASKUNTIEN LIITTO
NATIONAL UNION OF UNIVERSITY STUDENTS IN FINLAND
FINLANDS STUDENTKÄRERS FÖRBUND



MORE CONSISTENCY IN THE INTERNSHIP SUBSIDY PROCESS

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RECOMMENDATIONS FOR THE INTERNSHIP SUBSIDY PROCESS

Different universities and fields have different internship subsidy processes, which places students in an unequal position from the perspective of completing their studies and moving into working life.

In this document, we describe the current situation and required improvements in regard to the internship subsidy process, as well as the ideal situation of an equal internship subsidy process.

This document has been created to support the student unions with understanding the different internship subsidy processes at different universities and in different field, and to find relevant advocacy goals for the student union in order to improve internship subsidy processes.

The recommendations are based on previous discussions regarding internships and internship subsidies, as well as the student unions' responses on the internship subsidy processes and required improvements from spring 2020.

The focus of this document is on the internship subsidy processes and how they can be improved. General recommendations relating to internships are available for example on the websites of Akava students and SOOL.

Johanna Pohjonen
SYL's Vice President of 2020



CURRENT INTERNSHIP SUBSIDY PROCESSES

The criteria for receiving an internship subsidy varies from one university and field to the next. Most of the time all students are not guaranteed to receive a subsidy; instead, the university, faculty or subject have a specific amount in internship subsidies to hand out every year, and this is distributed in order of application, according to varying application criteria, or through a random draw.

There are many different ways of distributing internship subsidies. In some places the competition for internship subsidies is fierce, while others are unable to distribute all their subsidies as there are not enough applications.

Usually, applications for subsidies are done online, but the process and dates vary depending on university and field. The most common procedure seems to be that applications for internship subsidies are accepted once or twice a year at specified times, but the application periods vary based on both university and faculty. An exception in terms of application dates for the internship subsidies is the University of Helsinki, which has no specific application period for the internship subsidies – instead, applications can be submitted all year round.

In addition to the application dates, there is also some variation in when students can apply for a subsidy. Sometimes the subsidy application should be submitted before the student finds an internship, and sometimes after. For example, at the University of Vaasa students do not have to have been accepted for an internship when they apply for a subsidy, whereas students at the University of Helsinki can apply for an internship subsidy from the university's career services once they have secured an internship which requires a subsidy.

The wide variety in when students should apply for their subsidies places students in different positions based on when the application date is and whether they can apply before or after securing an internship.

In an ideal situation each student would have an equal opportunity to receive an internship subsidy. That is why it is desirable to have the same basic principles (see list below) for distributing internship subsidies everywhere. These basic principles can be used as a basis on which to add field-specific differences which take into account the special characteristics of that field, if necessary. The suggested basic principles are based on the idea that every student should have a genuine opportunity to receive an internship subsidy once during their studies, and that the student could plan when they will need the subsidy, or whether they will need it at all.

THE IDEAL SITUATION FOR INTERNSHIP SUBSIDIES

In an ideal situation all internships would be paid and there would be no need for subsidies.

Internship subsidies are currently granted by the universities. In these situations, the employer hires a student, and once the internship is over the employer invoices the university for the internship subsidy which has been agreed ahead of time. One exception to this rule is Hanken, which pays the subsidy directly to the student.

The internship subsidy upholds a model where all employers do not have to be solely responsible for offering paid internships.

The internship subsidy increases the variety of the available internships and

encourages employers to hire interns. Another perspective, however, is that the universities are investing in internship subsidies at the cost of something else and affects the universities' resources.

In an ideal situation all internships would be paid and there would be no need for subsidies. As this is not currently the case, however, it should be easy for students to apply for internship subsidies, and the subsidy should increase their opportunities for getting an internship, not reduce them.





In an ideal situation all students would have the opportunity to receive an internship subsidy once during their studies, and it would be up to the students themselves when to use the subsidy, or whether to use it at all.

This would be possible if the application could be made before securing an internship and at any time of year, and if all students were guaranteed to receive a subsidy. The positive aspect of a centralised distribution of internship subsidies is that all subsidies will be distributed every year, but there are also other ways of achieving this.

The important thing is not whether the subsidies are handed out by the university, the faculties, or the subject, but rather how much the criteria vary between the different subsidy distributors. A benefit of centralising the process is, however, that all students would be applying for subsidies at the same place. When a student applies for an internship subsidy, the university will assess whether the internship will be accepted as part of their degree and whether it meets the criteria for the internship subsidy.

An internship subsidy which is guaranteed for everyone might increase the costs initially, but in the long run it would simplify the administration and take away the pressure on students to apply for an internship subsidy just in case.

Like at the University of Helsinki, applications for the internship subsidy should be accepted all year round, and all students should be eligible for the subsidy so that the applications for subsidies are not postponed until the beginning of the year, but instead all students would have a genuine opportunity to receive an internship subsidy at any time of year.

If the internship subsidy is not guaranteed for all students there must be specific dates for applying for the subsidy, and there should be several application periods each year to promote the equal opportunities to apply for and be granted an internship subsidy. It should also be possible to apply for an internship subsidy before securing an internship like at the University of Eastern Finland.

GOOD AND EQUAL PRINCIPLES FOR A NATIONAL INTERNSHIP SUBSIDY PROCESS

Some of the following principles already exist, and we believe that in an ideal situation they would be followed everywhere. If the basic principles and criteria for distributing internship subsidies listed below are implemented, then that creates an ideal situation where we have achieved a good and equal internship subsidy process. Under the section Advocacy goals for achieving the ideal situation we have listed different advocacy goals, and under the list of more consistent distribution criteria we have listed recommendations for the criteria of distributing internship subsidies.

ADVOCACY GOALS FOR ACHIEVING THE IDEAL SITUATION

- 1 All students have the opportunity to receive an internship subsidy once during their studies. A student can receive an internship subsidy even if the curriculum of their degree programme does not include an internship, as long as the internship can be linked to the studies in some other way.
- 2 Students can choose their own internships.
- 3 Applications for internship subsidies can be submitted flexibly at different times during the degree. The subsidy is available to bachelor's or master's students and also international students.
- 4 Students can apply for an internship subsidy even if they have not yet secured an internship.
- 5 The criteria for receiving the internship subsidy are open and available during the application process.

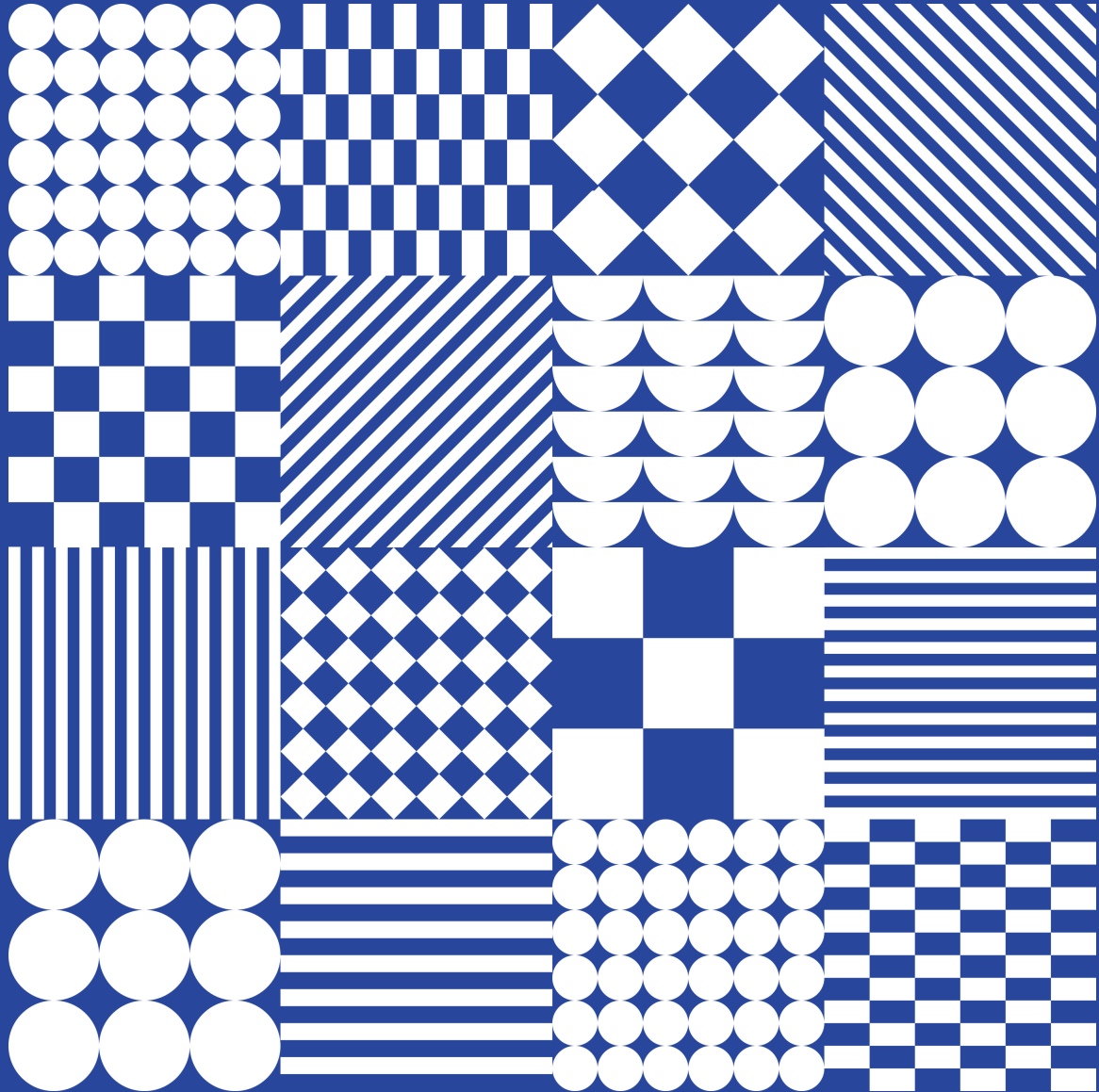
EXAMPLES OF CRITERIA FOR DISTRIBUTING INTERNSHIP SUBSIDIES

- The student has not previously been granted an internship subsidy or they have not used previously granted subsidies. An Erasmus grant does not prohibit a student from receiving the subsidy.
- The student is registered as attending throughout the internship.
- The student has not yet completed their internship when applying for the subsidy. Subsidies cannot be granted retroactively.
- The internship lasts at least 2 months. If the internship is part-time, then it fulfils the requirements set in the degree programme.
- The internship is linked to the student's studies as part of the compulsory studies or is accepted as part of the elective studies.
- The internship fulfils the criteria for the module or is in an expert role where the student is using relevant skills. The tasks of the intern do not include writing a master's thesis or other dissertation.
- The intern is employed by a public sector, private sector, or civil society employer in Finland or abroad. The employer can only be a university or a private individual under very exceptional circumstances.
- During the internship, the intern has a temporary contract with their employer and is offered sufficient support during the internship.
- The employer pays the student a salary that is no less than Kela's work requirement minimum wage. The internship subsidy is paid to the employer.



MORE INFORMATION ABOUT INTERNSHIPS AND THE INTERNSHIP SUBSIDY PROCESS

- Akava students' internship recommendations with checklists for students, universities, and employers
<https://akava.fi/harjoittelusuositukset/>
- SOOL's recommendations for guided teaching internships for the benefit of teaching trainees and internship mentors
<https://www.sool.fi/vaikuttaminen/harjoittelut/>
- [Aarresaari](#)
- Akava students' internship barometer 2019
<https://www.otus.fi/wp/wp-content/uploads/2019/11/Akava-Works-Akavan-opiskelijoiden-harjoittelubarometri-2019.pdf>
- Work requirement as defined by Kela
<https://www.kela.fi/web/en/what-is-the-work-requirement-?>
- The Aarresaari network's article on the universities' internship subsidy processes
<https://www.aarresaari.net/university-internship-subsidy/?lang=en>



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