FSHS Advocacy Position Paper

The aim of student healthcare is to provide all higher education students with equal, easily accessible services that meet their needs. The Finnish Student Health Service (FSHS) provides primary healthcare-level health and medical services, promotion of study ability, and community health work. Preventive services and the promotion of student wellbeing are a central and visible part of FSHS operations.

In service provision, rapid access and equality are ensured regardless of location. FSHS's service network covers the whole of Finland, and active cooperation is carried out with student unions, Universities of Applied Sciences (UAS) and other stakeholders both locally and nationally. Student unions are an important part of this cooperation.

FSHS operations are assessed and developed systematically together with students, student unions and SAMOK, taking into account the specific needs of UAS students. The aim of development is to provide functional and needs-based services for students' changing life situations throughout their studies.

Support during studies must not be limited only to the beginning of studies. The Health Start (Terveysstartti) must be developed into a continuous form of support so that all students receive the support they need also in the middle and final stages of their studies. This ensures that every student is met in a timely and individual manner throughout their studies.

FSHS is publicly funded, and its resources must be secured to ensure service quality. Funding must be up to date and fair, and changes in student numbers must be taken into account accurately and in a timely manner so that resourcing corresponds to the real service need.

Goals:

- Higher education students come first in service development.
- FSHS remains part of the publicly funded healthcare system and its sufficient funding is secured. A euro-denominated cap is set for the student contribution so that a student's annual fee cannot increase by more than €10 compared to the previous year.
- FSHS must be able to receive donations or grants without the amount of donations affecting other funding.

1. FSHS service network and service points

The service network consists of FSHS's own service points and partner service points. The purpose of different types of service points is to guarantee functional, sufficient and equal access to care. A student must be able to access an assessment of the need for treatment immediately, or, if delayed,

on the same day. FSHS prepares for peaks so that queues can be reduced efficiently, and congestion is communicated to students, for example by using queue meters. FSHS must guarantee services in both national languages and, where necessary, in English. In addition to in-person appointments, nationwide digital remote and e-services must be available to students. Health Start is added to different stages of studies to also reach students who are further along in their degree. The Patient Insurance Act must be amended so that students receive the services they need also while staying outside Finland. The current situation causes breaks in continuity of care and places students in an unequal position depending on their physical location.

The functionality, availability and accessibility of FSHS's service network are actively reviewed and developed, taking into account UAS students' varying life situations and different study modes, such as online studies and blended learning. Regional autonomy must be developed, considering possible structural changes in the future of social and health services as well as the diversity of higher education institutions and student unions. Regional cooperation with campus chaplains, student services, Kela and other locally relevant actors can strengthen structures that support student wellbeing in a multidisciplinary way, targeting resources toward more equal service networks.

Goals:

- FSHS sets clear principles for when care should be provided by remote appointment and when in person. The student must have the possibility to request either, where feasible for care delivery.
- The Patient Insurance Act is amended so that FSHS's digital and remote services are available to students also when they are staying outside Finland.
- The accessibility of service points is assessed, and new service points are made accessible whenever possible. Signage and directions to service points are made clear and accessible.
- When onboarding new staff, FSHS informs them about the local student unions and cooperation with them.

1.2. Digital services

FSHS develops its digital services actively and reviews their technical functionality and actual utilisation rate.

Contact options offered to students must take into account diverse communication needs, for example those related to hearing and vision impairments. Default settings for appointment booking are developed with language needs in mind so that platform mechanisms automatically route the booking to a service provider with suitable language skills.

Digital services are developed actively, and FSHS develops a mobile application that supports student wellbeing and delivery of care, as well as the more active use of self-care programmes.

Goals:

- Appointment systems must be technically reliable and accessible to all to ensure timeliness and equality of services.

2. Cooperation

Cooperation between wellbeing services counties and FSHS is strengthened in a planned manner, drawing on FSHS's special expertise. FSHS recognises that many Universities of Applied Sciences have multiple campuses in different localities and takes all campus locations into account in its operations.

FSHS and student unions cooperate actively with a low threshold. Regular meetings are organised in the region with students, the higher education institution, FSHS and stakeholders, and FSHS maintains active interaction with student unions and a visible presence on campuses. The assessment of study environments must be developed further so that the whole better serves all higher education institutions with equal but institution-specific practices. Active cooperation enables space for discussions and the sharing of good practices.

Goals:

- FSHS and students cooperate especially on healthcare issues that concern students.
- Students are involved in developing FSHS operations so that FSHS has sufficient information on the students for whom it is responsible and on the specifics of their fields of study, also regionally.
- Universities of Applied Sciences engage in active cooperation with FSHS and communicate regularly and in diverse ways to students about current FSHS matters. UAS must designate responsible persons for cooperation and communication with FSHS.
- Cooperation between FSHS and other health services, as well as functional and rapid care pathways, are secured by clarifying cooperation and service tasks.
- FSHS participates in events and campaigns organised by student unions and student organisations.

2.1 Student representatives

Student representatives are seen as an important part of the organisation, and regular investments are made in their induction and training throughout the term of office. Student representatives recognise their role and acknowledge its significance as part of developing FSHS.

Students are represented at all organisational levels of FSHS: in the national student council, regional boards and the delegation. Student representatives bring to the organisation expertise in being a student and thereby of FSHS's client groups.

The National Union of Students in Finnish Universities of Applied Sciences – SAMOK nominates a representative to the FSHS Board. Every two years, SAMOK nominates seven student union representatives to the Delegation. The representation opportunity coordinated by SAMOK ensures

equal hearing of student unions, and FSHS enables communication among student representatives involved in its activities as well as interaction with student unions.

In the selection of student representatives and the distribution of seats, both regionality and the diversity of representatives and higher education institutions are taken into account. FSHS provides student unions with up-to-date information on potential changes transparently and proactively, so that representation from different regions can be secured also in possible structural changes.

Goals:

- To ensure effective cooperation, students have sufficient representation in all regional bodies.
- Student representation is developed to be possible also for students whose first language is not Finnish.
- SAMOK, student unions and FSHS develop an induction and training model for student representatives that supports their commitment and understanding of the significance of their role throughout the term.

3. Communication and advocacy

FSHS communicates in an impactful and planned way. Communication is implemented clearly and across multiple channels, in line with FSHS's communications plan. Communication is carried out in both national languages and in English. The communications plan is reviewed constructively at regular intervals to ensure timeliness, accessibility and appropriateness. Openness of communication is emphasised. The foundation communicates changes flexibly and in a timely manner. When communicating about FSHS services, a wide variety of formats and channels are used, such as different video-form service introductions.

FSHS's expertise and significance are made more visible by strengthening communications, cooperation and awareness-raising among decision-makers, other stakeholders and the public. FSHS recognises its responsibility as an information provider to student unions and develops clearer, easier-to-use communications tools. Students are, for example, informed of the possibility to apply to Kela for travel reimbursements for costs incurred when travelling to service points.
FSHS's stable position in the multichannel model is secured through strong advocacy work that fully takes into account the current global situation, especially from the perspective of social and health services.

Goals:

- FSHS enhances and develops its advocacy communication models to be an active and impactful part of the overall advocacy work carried out by SAMOK and student unions.
- Communication responsibilities are clearly defined between FSHS, student unions and Universities of Applied Sciences.

- FSHS develops a materials bank for student unions. Its implementation takes into account visual materials also without text to enable broader awareness-raising in student unions' own channels.
- Student unions and student representatives receive timely information on FSHS's upcoming events, campaigns, surveys, studies and other matters affecting students.

4. Society and FSHS

The task of FSHS is to secure student healthcare services as part of the overall social and health sector, particularly in the development of the wellbeing services counties. FSHS's expertise must be more visible so that the quality and availability of student health services are secured also in the future. In resourcing and planning services, the care debt that students may bring with them when entering higher education must be taken into account so that higher education students can be offered timely and sufficient support across the entire study path.

The transformation of the social and healthcare sector is still ongoing, and wellbeing services counties are still finding their place in the service system. In this changing field, it is particularly important to ensure that FSHS remains a strong part of the whole and that student care pathways remain clear.

Student healthcare must continue to be developed as an independent whole that is an integral part of the healthcare service system. The specific characteristics of student healthcare must be taken into account without jeopardising the functionality of care pathways and the status of student healthcare as a permanent part of the healthcare service system.