

# Guide for Council Members

## Introduction to the Secrets of the Council of Representatives

## Contents

Guide for Council Members.....	1
Introduction to the Secrets of the Council of Representatives .....	1
1. Introduction .....	3
2. Background.....	4
Advocacy opportunities in the Student Union .....	5
What's in it for you? .....	6
Who can become a council member? .....	7
Running in the council elections.....	8
Getting started in the council .....	9
3. Council's responsibilities .....	12
The legal principles of administration include: .....	12
4. Rules and regulations.....	14
5. Strategy .....	15
6. The Student Union's organisation structure .....	16
7. Council groups .....	18
8. Roles and work of chairpersons .....	20
9. Rules of conduct in the council.....	21
10. Meetings.....	22
10.1 Preparing for the meetings .....	22
10.2 Agenda.....	24
10.3 Meeting practices.....	25
10.4 Non-binding resolutions.....	26
11. Working between council meetings.....	26
11.1 Communication .....	26
11.2 Committees.....	27

11.3 Events.....	27
11.4 Training.....	28
12. Communicating council’s activities and decisions .....	28
13. SYL and national student advocacy.....	29
14. OLL and national student advocacy .....	31
15. Glossary.....	33

## 1. Introduction

*The purpose of this guide: This is a comprehensive guide to what it is like to work in the Student Union’s Council of Representatives. It can be used, among other things, to initiate new representatives who have joined the council in the middle of the council term. This guide does not talk about the Student Union’s current issues, which is why you will not find excerpts from the Strategy or Policy Paper. Neither does this guide contain quotations from the Student Union’s rules or terms of reference. Instead, this guide will help you understand what the council and its documents are all about and where you can find more information.*

Congratulations for being elected as a full or deputy member to the Council of Representatives of TREY, the second largest student union in Finland. Since you have been elected by the students, you probably have a strong will to show that you are worthy of their trust. No need to be nervous! In this guide,

we will introduce you to the tools and practices that ensure that you can work efficiently and productively in the council.

You can use this guide as a reference book. If you need to find out about something specific, just type CTRL + F to find what you are looking for. Our aim was to put together a comprehensive yet compact collection of council-related topics and terms. This guide is a particularly useful tool for council members and deputy members who are at the beginning of their first term, but even seasoned veterans can find helpful information.

This document was put together in cooperation by TREY's Secretary General Venla Monter and the council's chairpersons in 2020, Adam Zeidan, Eero Heikkilä, and Merve Caglayan. This guide is updated regularly.

## **2. Background**

TREY, the Student Union of Tampere University, is a large student union in Finland. TREY has approximately 19,000 higher education students as members. All degree students are members of TREY. Exchange students and post-graduate students can choose to become members.

TREY's duty is to fulfil the responsibilities defined by the society: [Universities Act, link to Finlex.](#)

Section 46: “A student union consists of the students of a university and is self-governing. The student union liaises with and on behalf of its members and promotes their societal, social and intellectual aspirations and those relating to studies and the status of students in society. The student union also participates in the implementation of the educational mission of the university, referred to in section 2, by preparing students for an active, informed and critical citizenship.

The duties of the student union are in particular to

- 1) nominate student representatives to the administrative bodies of the university referred to in Chapter 3;
- 2) contribute, where needed, to the performance of the tasks relating to students' primary healthcare referred to in section 17 of the Health Care Act (1326/2010) and Chapter 13, sections 11–14, of the Health Insurance Act (1224/2004).” (This paragraph enters into force on 1 January 2021.)

### **Advocacy opportunities in the Student Union**

Universities Act: Section 46: “The student union’s decision-making power is vested in its executive board and the student parliament. Administrative and executive power is vested in the executive board. Provisions on other bodies of the student union and the election of their members are issued by

government decree. Provisions on the administration of the student union are laid down in the rules adopted by the student parliament and confirmed by the rector of the university.”

The Council of Representatives is the highest decision-making body in the Student Union. It is responsible for guiding the Student Union’s activities, representing all members of the Student Union, acting as a link between the Student Union and the students and being the eyes and ears of students in their daily lives.

As a council member, you will have the opportunity to influence many matters that affect the daily lives of students. The council decides, for example, how the collected student union membership fees are spent. As a council member, you can contribute to decisions concerning the Student Union’s activities, advocacy policies and strategic priorities.

You will also get the chance to look after the students’ interests and build a better future for them.

### What’s in it for you?

- You can advocate matters that affect students.
- You will gain valuable experience of meeting practices, advocacy work

and cooperation.

- You can contribute to the University's development.
- You can contribute to the society as a part of the student movement.
- You will face challenges and gain great experiences.
- You will get to know new people.

### Who can become a council member?

All student members of the Student Union who are personally present and passionate about advocating student matters can get involved in the council's work. The council is elected in the council elections. All members of the Student Union have the right to vote in these elections. All those eligible to vote are also eligible to stand as candidates in the elections to become members of the council.

Council members are not required to have prior experience of advocacy work. All kinds of people are needed in the council to represent our diverse community of 19,000 students. New council members can get information and support from the Student Union's staff and previous council members. The Student Union organises orientation sessions for new council members, which you should attend regularly. You can learn by doing and asking questions: having an active attitude and showing initiative will be worth it!

## Running in the council elections

The council elections are organised every other year. The elections take place in October and November. The advance voting is held in late October, and the official polling days take place at the beginning of November.

All TREY's members are eligible to stand in the council elections. More detailed information on becoming a council candidate is always published prior to the election in the election announcement. All election-related information and documents can be found at [www.trey.fi/en/council-elections](http://www.trey.fi/en/council-elections) before the election.

You can run for the council either by yourself as a non-partisan candidate or together with other candidates as a member of an electoral alliance. An electoral alliance can also form an electoral circle with other electoral alliances.

Contact the council group whose electoral list you want to join. To get an idea about what electoral alliances and circles there are, take a look at the list of current council groups at [www.trey.fi/en/student-union/organisation/council-of-representatives](http://www.trey.fi/en/student-union/organisation/council-of-representatives). If necessary, you can contact the Student Union's Secretary General for the contact information of the council groups' chairpersons.



All members of the Student Union who wish to run for the council should announce their candidacy using the Student Union's official candidacy announcement form. Paper forms are available at the Student Union's service offices. You can also use the electronic candidacy announcement form. The deadline for nominating candidates is at the end of September. Exact dates will be stated in the election announcement, which will be available on the council elections website.

### Getting started in the council

Once the council elections are over, you will know who the other members of your council group are. Since the 2020 council elections, three times the number of elected full council members have been elected as deputy members from each electoral list. It is a good idea to create a group chat in WhatsApp, Telegram or some other platform to allow both full members and deputy members of your council group to communicate during the council term. Each council group must choose a chairperson whose duties include keeping in touch with other groups. The chair of the council group must be a full member of the council. Each council group must also choose a member to represent it in the Administrative Committee, a body within the council in charge of drafting and preparing for the council's meetings. If the council group's chair and member of the Administrative Committee are not the

same person, they should keep in touch regularly to keep on top of things. Members of the Administrative Committee must be full members of the council.

After the elections are over and the council term starts, the new council members are offered training. Working in the council can, however, seem very unfamiliar and strange to new council members in the beginning. It is a good idea to learn the secrets of council work in the beginning as it can be more difficult to get the hang of it later on. You can, of course, still learn things over the course of the council term. Two years is, however, a short time for doing advocacy work, so it is useful to learn the ins and outs of council work already in the beginning. If something is unclear, just ask the more experienced members of your council group or electoral circle. If all members of your council group are beginners, you can always go to other council groups for advice.

The number of votes your council group has in a meeting is equal to the number of its full members. If all of the council group's full council members are present in the meeting, the deputy members attending the meeting are there as non-voting observers. If any of the full members leave or fail to attend the meeting, they will be replaced by a deputy member from the same council group or, as a secondary option, by a deputy member from another group belonging to the same circle. What this means in practice is

that the deputy members' right to vote depends on whether the full members are able to attend the meeting. If any of the full members is unable to attend the meeting, the Secretary General should be notified. The council group should decide which deputy member will fill in for the absent member. It is important that the deputy members know how the council works so that they are capable of representing their council group in meetings as necessary.

Different kinds of subject associations and the many sides of the political spectrum are represented in the council and the council elections. TREY is a student union with a great deal of diversity, which means that the council groups sometimes have opposing views on matters. During its brief history, TREY's council has been a forum for factual, appropriate and polite discussion. Although you should never be afraid of expressing disagreement, it is important to focus on the issue at hand without attacking your fellow council members personally. Respectful behaviour and good relations with fellow council members are vital not only for maintaining a peaceful working environment but also for getting others to support your group's initiatives and proposals. It has been a tradition to have a more relaxed get-together after the council meeting to allow all council members to get to know each other better outside the meetings.

### 3. Council's responsibilities

The Council of Representatives carries both political and administrative responsibility for its actions. It is the council's duty to carry out its tasks as appropriately as possible and serve the interests of the Student Union's members. The members' confidence in the council is measured in the council elections. However, all responsible council members understand that the true ability to carry responsibility is weighed during the council term – in every single council meeting.

Since the council exercises public power, it is governed by the Administrative Procedure Act ([link to Finlex](#)). The Administrative Procedure Act includes provisions on the foundations of good administration and the administrative procedure.

The foundations of good administration lay down the general requirements for the consideration of matters, such as flexibility and openness of consideration. According to the Act, people have the right to demand their case to be considered appropriately and without undue delay. Appropriate language must also be used.

#### The legal principles of administration include:

- Principle of equality

- Principle of objectivity
- Principle of proportionality
- Principle of purpose
- Principle of the protection of legitimate expectations

What these principles mean in a nutshell is that all decisions should be made according to the equality principle so that similar cases are decided in the same way.

Decision-making should aim for impartiality, and all actions should be justifiable. All actions should also be proportionate to the objective. Authorities can only exercise their competence for purposes that are acceptable under the law.

What this means in practice is that the Student Union can make decisions on matters that fall within its competence. The Student Union's actions must be consistent, and the council must enjoy the confidence of the Student Union's members.

The requirements of administrative procedure are fulfilled if the decision is made by a body with the proper composition. The proper composition of the council means that a quorum is present and that the council members are

competent. The requirements concerning the case, the party concerned and the filing of the case must also be in order.

## 4. Rules and regulations

The administration and activities of the Student Union are bound by formal requirements, regulations and legislation. TREY's responsibility is to fulfil the duties defined by the society in the Universities Act ([link to the Universities Act in Finlex](#)).

TREY's activities are governed by a set of guiding documents. [All current steering documents and their translations can be found on TREY's website.](#)

The most fundamental guiding documents are the Strategy, Policy Paper and the Main Rule. Each of these documents looks at TREY's activities from a different angle. The strategy sets the direction for the Student Union's activities and describes what the Student Union will be like at the end of the strategy term. The Policy Paper describes the Student Union's stance on different themes of student politics or university development. TREY's advocacy efforts and statements are always based on the policies defined in the Policy Paper. The Main Rule describes the Student Union's organisational structure.

All council members should familiarise themselves at least with the following documents:

- Main Rule
- Strategy
- Policy Paper
- Equality Plan
- Terms of Reference for the Council of Representatives and the Executive Board
- Standing Order on the Election of Student Representatives
- Election Rule
- Council's Principles for Safer Spaces

## 5. Strategy

The strategy is TREY's most fundamental guiding document, which lays down broad outlines for the Student Union's activities. The document also encapsulates TREY's brand: what we are like as a student union, how we operate and how we want to present ourselves to others. The strategy is a long-term document that is set for four years at a time. The strategy is not just a piece of paper that is only reviewed after the strategy term is over: TREY's board delivers regular strategy reports to the council to assess the execution of the strategy.

The strategy consists of the core message, values, mission and vision. The core message is “we students”. We students promote the interests of students, organise diverse association activities, produce and use member services and form a community. TREY’s values put the student at the centre of everything. TREY’s mission is to stand for and promote matters that are important to students. TREY’s vision is a local student community to which everyone wants to belong and where everyone feels like they belong – from first-year students to alumni.

[You can find TREY’s current strategy online on page Steering Documents.](#)

## **6. The Student Union’s organisation structure**

The Council of Representatives is the highest decision-making body in the Student Union. Its 49 members are elected by the Student Union’s members during the council elections, which are held every other year in November. The council term is two years and starts at the beginning of the year following the council elections. In addition to full members, the council also has deputy members. From each electoral list, three times the number of full members are appointed as deputy members in an order determined by their comparative indices. At the beginning of the council term, the council holds a constitutive meeting to elect the chair and two vice-chairs from among its



full members. The chairpersons are in charge of meeting arrangements, such as conducting the meetings and taking care of room reservations, meeting snacks and coordination with the Student Union's Executive Board. There are three committees within the council: the Administrative Committee, the Committee for Financial Affairs and the Honorary Committee, all of which have their own chairpersons.

The council meets around once a month to define broad outlines for the Student Union's policies, the most important matters being the budget, Action Plan and Strategy. Decisions are also made on individual matters that need to be attended to during the council term. The meetings are usually held in the University's teaching facilities either on the Hervanta campus, city centre campus or Kauppi campus. Each council meeting is preceded by an evening session where council members prepare for the meeting and discuss the documents.

The Executive Board is an administrative body within the Student Union. It is appointed by the council in autumn for one calendar year at a time. The council appoints the chair of the board and 5 to 11 board members. The board then appoints one of its members as a vice-chair in the constitutive meeting. The board usually meets once a week. The board members work full-time in paid positions of trust, and they have their own office in the main building of the Hervanta campus.

The Student Union also has paid employees. The most important staff member for the Council is the Secretary General, who acts as a secretary in the meetings of both the Executive Board and the Council of Representatives. The Secretary General supervises other employees, supports the Executive Board's work to ensure decision-making and maintains communication between the board and the council. In addition to the Secretary General, the Student Union's staff includes the financial and administrative manager, service office staff, financial secretary, specialists in different fields, sales and marketing coordinator, the student magazine's editor-in-chief and fixed-term project staff, such as the Wappu directors.

## 7. Council groups

The council groups are determined in the constitutive meeting of the Council of Representatives. A council group is usually formed by the group of elected candidates from a specific electoral list, but sometimes people from different electoral lists can come together to form a bigger group.

The work of council groups revolves around the Administrative Committee, evening sessions and council meetings. The Administrative Committee does preparations for evening sessions and council meetings. The matters discussed in council meetings are announced well in advance. This ensures that the council groups have enough time to read and discuss the relevant

documents and to prepare proposals. It is good practice to let others know about your proposal in advance (during an Administrative Committee meeting, for example) so that they can prepare for discussing it. Council groups and council members may also present initiatives to the council.

Only degree students may act as full members or deputy members in the Council of Representatives. Council members who graduate during the two-year council term must hand in their notice of resignation for the next council meeting. The council group will then find a replacement in an order determined by the comparative indices of the council group's members. Persons elected to the Student Union's Executive Board are not qualified to work in the council during their time in the board, so they have to hand over their seat to the person "next in line" in their council group. What this means is that a person who began their council term as a deputy member may eventually have the chance of becoming a full member.

Apart from the above rules, the council groups can mostly choose how they want to work. Many matters can be discussed informally using instant messaging services. If your group belongs to a circle, it is a good idea to create a joint discussion forum for the circle and engage in a close cooperation with the other groups in that circle. Not all council groups belong to a circle. This can be the case if the group did not belong to an electoral circle during the elections or if no one was elected from the other groups of

the electoral circle. These groups cannot get deputy members from another groups of the circle to fill in for absent members.

## **8. Roles and work of chairpersons**

The Council of Representatives has a chair and two vice-chairs. The council elects the chairpersons from among its members. The chairpersons must be full members of the council. The chairpersons are an important link between the Student Union's office and the council. The chair works in close cooperation with the Secretary General and the chair of the Executive Board.

The chairpersons have the right to attend the Executive Board's meetings and morning sessions. It is advisable to attend these meetings regularly to keep in touch with the board. The chairpersons may also attend the office's weekly meetings and other events. The purpose of the office meetings is to let the office staff discuss weekly themes together. Each week, the chairperson of the board gives a run-through of the meeting's topics for the council.

The most important task of the chairpersons is to prepare for and organise council meetings together with the Student Union's main sector. The chairpersons deliver the meeting agenda to the council members and summon the meeting. A more informal evening session (*iltakoulu* in Finnish,

meaning 'night school') is often held before the actual council meeting to discuss the topics of the meeting. The meeting is led by the chair of the council or, if the chair is absent, by one of the vice-chairs. The secretary of the meeting is usually the Secretary General.

The chair and the vice-chairs can decide how they want to divide their roles and responsibilities. Usually, the chair has overseen the matters on the agenda, whereas the vice-chairs have taken care of meeting room reservations and snacks. However, everyone has had the chance to do a bit of everything.

## **9. Rules of conduct in the council**

Mutual respect between fellow council members is one of the cornerstones of the Council of Representatives. Each council member is there as a volunteer to promote their own idea of the best possible student union. There is a well-known Finnish principle that also applies to council work: it's the opinions that are at odds, not the people. Even if the council discussion had been a bit heated, it is still nice to go some place after the meeting to continue the discussion in a more informal tone.

In 2019, the council adopted the Principles for Safer Spaces, a document containing guidelines on how to treat and interact with others better. All

council members will be introduced to these guidelines, and reading this document is a must for everyone who works in the council. To sum up: treat others as you would like to be treated! [The Council's Principles for Safer Spaces](#) is available on TREY's website!

## 10. Meetings

This chapter provides an introduction to what the council's meetings are like. Although the council's meetings involve many details, we wanted to keep this chapter concise. All details of the council's meeting practices can be found in the Terms of Reference for the Council of Representatives.

### 10.1 Preparing for the meetings

When a matter is handed over to the council to consider, the process is usually as follows:

1. TREY's Executive Board prepares the matter. Council groups can ask board members questions about the matter which is under preparation.
2. The matter is presented to the council in the council's evening session and in the meeting of the Administrative Committee.
3. Each council group holds a meeting to discuss the matter and form

their opinion. Council groups may also have discussions with other council groups.

Some matters (such as updating documents) are given to the council groups for commenting during the preparatory stage. The board then makes its final proposal on the basis of the council groups' comments.

1. The matter is considered in a meeting of the preparatory committee. The preparatory committee may make changes to the basic proposals.
2. The council groups meet before the council meeting to decide on the roles and responsibilities for the meeting.
3. The matter is discussed in the meeting of the council.

To make your voice heard, participate actively in the discussion within your own council group in all stages of the process. Cooperating with other groups also yields results and improves your group's chances of getting your proposal approved in a council meeting.

Council members prepare for the meetings by familiarising themselves with the matters that are on the agenda by themselves and together with their council groups. The agenda and other relevant documents are sent to the council members well in advance to ensure that members will have enough

time to take a look at the documents and go through the agenda with their council group. It is good practice to use the council's email list for communicating during the preparatory stage to allow the meetings to go as smoothly as possible.

Advance preparation is necessary to ensure that the council members are well acquainted with the matter before making decisions. The goal is that the council can make good, justified and sustainable decisions.

## 10.2 Agenda

All matters that will be discussed during the council meeting are put on the agenda. The agenda is prepared in cooperation between the Secretary General and the council's chairpersons. Other relevant documents will be appended to the agenda and sent to the council members to support their decision-making. The council members should go through the agenda and the relevant background documents thoroughly to make sure that the meeting goes as smoothly as possible.

When the meeting starts, the agenda is adopted as the order of business of the meeting. The council can still decide to make changes to the agenda at this point.



### 10.3 Meeting practices

The meeting is led by the chair of the council or, if the chair is absent, by one of the vice-chairs. The secretary of the meeting is the Secretary General or other appointed person. There are some electronic forms available that can be filled out before the meeting if necessary. Council members should notify the council beforehand if they cannot attend a meeting using an online form. Proposals for amendments and changes can also be made using an electronic form.

During the council meeting, the chair will give the floor in the order it has been requested while still keeping to the schedule of the meeting. If you need to answer to or comment on what someone else said, you can ask for a permission to give a brief comment in between turns. You may not use your permission to comment to jump the queue. The recommended length for a comment is one sentence. Comments should mostly be used for giving clarifications or answers to questions, not for bringing up new views or matters. If a participant has a question about whether the correct meeting rules are being followed, they may raise a point of order.

For more detailed information on the council's meeting practices, please read the Terms of Reference for the Council of Representatives.

## 10.4 Non-binding resolutions

The council may choose to approve a supported petitionary resolution. All non-binding resolutions are discussed under item “Other business” on the agenda, unless the resolution is directly relevant to a matter on the agenda, in which case it will be taken up for consideration after the item has been discussed. These types of resolutions are non-binding. Approved non-binding resolutions will be responded to. All non-binding resolutions should be submitted online using the council’s form for proposals. The council votes whether the non-binding resolution will be passed or not.

## 11. Working between council meetings

### 11.1 Communication

Most of the council’s communication happens via email. The council has its own mailing list: [trey-edustajisto@lists.tuni.fi](mailto:trey-edustajisto@lists.tuni.fi). The email list is used for official business, such as meeting notices and relevant documents, but also for communication between TREY’s office and the council. The email list is moderated by the Secretary General and you can contact them, if you are missing from the list.

The council also has a Telegram group. For those who are not familiar with Telegram: it is a messaging app that works just like WhatsApp but you only need to know the other person's Telegram handle to communicate. Telegram also works better on computer. For these reasons it is so widely used in student organisations. Meeting-related matters are mainly shared and discussed in Telegram.

## 11.2 Committees

There are three committees within the Council of Representatives. They give statements and make preparations and drafts for the council's meetings. These committees are the Administrative Committee, the Committee for Financial Affairs and the Honorary Committee. The Central Election Committee and the editorial board of student magazine Visiiri also work under the council.

For more information on the responsibilities of committees, see Chapter 3 of the Terms of Reference for the Council of Representatives.

## 11.3 Events

In addition to the most essential events (evening sessions and council meetings), council members also attend and organise other types of events.

These events include the board interview sessions, in which council groups get to ask questions from board member candidates.

Sometimes the council also organises informal get-togethers, such as Christmas parties. Traditionally, council members have gone some place for a more relaxed discussion after the council meeting.

## 11.4 Training

The council receives training at least at the beginning of the council term. Other trainings are organised during the term as needed.

At the beginning of the council term, the council gets together for a two-day training. This training offers information on how the council works, what rules and guidelines TREY has and what the topical political themes are. The purpose of the training is also to introduce the council members and TREY's office staff to each other.

## 12. Communicating council's activities and decisions

Matters related to the council's activities are communicated on TREY's website and official notice boards, located in TREY's service offices.

All council-related information is available on TREY's website. This page provides information on the current council groups and a list of the full members of the council. You can also find other important information for council members there.

The council's decisions are announced on TREY's website. This page contains a list of the decisions made by TREY's board and council.

### **13. SYL and national student advocacy**

The National Union of University Students in Finland (SYL) is a student organisation representing around 140,000 university students. SYL is a registered organisation. All Finnish student unions are members of SYL. SYL's central advocacy areas are educational affairs, social affairs and international affairs.

SYL defends students' interests on a national level and offers communication services and guidance to its member organisations. SYL's most important cooperation partners are its member organisations, political student organisations and other student organisations, universities and university rectors, Ministry of Education and Culture, Ministry of the Environment, Finnish Government and various NGOs. In addition to its most essential advocacy

areas (educational, social and international affairs), SYL also focuses on equality, environmental issues and development cooperation.

In SYL, the highest decision-making power is exercised by the General Assembly, a two-day session held every year in November. SYL's member organisations send their representatives to the General Assembly to make decisions on SYL's operations, finances, policies and board appointment. The board of SYL is elected for one year at a time. The board consists of a chairperson and six board members. The board is in charge of choosing the union's employees. The employees usually have fixed-term employment contracts. TREY's board and employees actively keep in touch with other student unions.

TREY's council decides the persons who will represent TREY in SYL's General Assembly. Student unions are given a vote for every 1,000 student members. This means that TREY has had 19-20 representatives, also called delegates, in the General Assembly. The Student Union also sends deputy delegates and non-voting observers to the General Assembly. TREY has usually sent council and board members as voting representatives. Non-voting observers have usually been the Secretary General and the Specialist in Communications and Advocacy, who are in charge of training the delegates during the General Assembly process. TREY's first council made a decision in principle to allow TREY's delegates to join groups outside TREY, such as political or

sectoral groups for delegates from different student unions. People at TREY have felt that the increased networking has improved TREY's potential to influence things in the General Assembly.

TREY is also a member of the SEKSMYY network together with the student unions of Aalto University, University of Helsinki, University of Turku, University of Jyväskylä and the University of the Arts. (The acronym SEKSMYY comes from the Finnish words Suurten Etelä- ja KeskiSuomalaisten MonialaYliopistojen Ylioppilaskunnat.) Smaller student unions have their own Periferia network.

To learn more about SYL's work and the history of Finnish student unions, go to the website of the National Union of University Students at [www.syl.fi/en](http://www.syl.fi/en).

## **14. OLL and national student advocacy**

Founded in 1924, the Finnish Student Sports Federation (OLL) is a national advocacy and service organisation that promotes health and sports in higher education. OLL represents students from both universities and universities of applied sciences. Student unions are full members of OLL. Providers of academic sports services can join the organisation as cooperation members.

During its long existence, OLL has shifted its focus from sports events to sport politics and advocacy. OLL represents students in the sports sector on a national level, working in close cooperation with such organisations as the Finnish Olympic Committee. OLL lobbies our nation's decision-makers for the promotion of sports in higher education. One example of the results of OLL's advocacy efforts is the responsibility of higher education institutions to organise sports services according to the standards defined in the Recommendations for University Sports, published in 2018.

OLL's focus is on low-threshold and health-enhancing physical activity. Since 2020, OLL has been coordinating the Higher Education on the Move project with the aim to increase physical activity and reduce prolonged sitting in higher education. On a local level, OLL also offers training to sports coordinators and tutors in student unions and provides support for local advocacy work.

The highest decision-making power is exercised by representatives of OLL's member organisations in the annual General Assembly, which is held towards the end of the year. OLL's General Assembly makes decisions regarding its plan of action, budget, board composition and other relevant matters. The board of OLL is appointed for one year at a time. The board is in charge of choosing the union's employees. The employees usually have fixed-term employment contracts.



TREY's council picks the persons who will represent TREY in the General Assembly in autumn. TREY has 10 votes in OLL's General Assembly. Since one delegate can use no more than three votes, TREY usually sends four delegates to use all of its votes. The General Assembly's programme usually includes physical activities as well.

TREY's staff and the board member in charge of sports actively keep in touch with OLL. Each year, OLL organises two meetings for the sports sectors of students unions and two networking meetings for academic sports service providers. These meetings are a great way of networking and sharing good practices.

## 15. Glossary

This glossary explains some terms that are used in the council on a daily basis.

### A

**Agenda:** If a matter is to be discussed in a meeting of a multi-member administrative body, it is put on the agenda. In the Student Union, the agenda is often referred to as *esli* in Finnish. The agenda states the persons who participated in decision-making and each decision made. The agenda will

form the minutes of the council meeting, which will be signed by the chair, the secretary and the scrutinisers of the minutes.

**Allocate:** Distribute funds for a specific purpose.

**Appeal:** A request submitted to a court, special court or authority for a decision to be changed.

## B

**Basic proposal:** A proposal on which the discussion is based or another proposal stated by the chair or the presenter. The proposed decisions come either from the Executive Board or the council's committees. All council members are allowed to propose a decision that differs from the basic proposal. In such cases, the council will vote on the decision.

**Board report:** In each council meeting, the Executive Board presents a report on what has happened since the previous meeting.

**Budget:** The Student Union's revenue consists of membership fees. The Student Union's largest expenses are personnel and property costs and advocacy and association costs. The council confirms the following year's budget in an autumn meeting held in November.

## C

**Counterproposal:** Any other proposal than the basic proposal stated in the agenda.

## D

**Delegate:** Entrust a responsibility or task to another body or person. The Council of Representatives may delegate matters that fall within its competence to the Executive Board or the Secretary General.

**Dissenting opinion:** Council members and the person presenting the matter or motion have the right to present a dissenting opinion. The essential elements of the dissenting opinion must be stated during the consideration of the matter in question. The chair must confirm the dissenting opinion as expressed in the meeting. Expressing your dissenting opinion relieves you of responsibility in the decision in question.

## E

**Elections:** The Student Union organises the council elections every other year. The Student Union's Executive Board is also elected every year.

**Executive Board:** A decision-making body exercising executive power in the Student Union. The board has a chairperson and five to ten other members who are elected each year. The members of the Executive Board work full-time and hold weekly meetings during the academic year. The board members and the chair are paid a monthly remuneration according to the budget approved by the council.

## F

**Finlex:** Database of Finnish legislation, [www.finlex.fi](http://www.finlex.fi). The Universities Act and the Administrative Procedure Act are particularly worth looking into.

## H

**Halloped:** Student representative in university administration.

## I

**Incompetence due to the likelihood of bias:** A person cannot participate in decision-making if this could lead to financial gain or loss for the person in

question or the person's close relative. More detailed provisions on the grounds for incompetence are laid down in the Administrative Procedure Act (see Finlex) and in the regulations of the Student Union (Terms of Reference for the Council of Representatives, Section 6, Incompetence due to a likelihood of bias).

## L

**List of decisions:** After the meeting is over, the secretary draws up a list of decisions on the basis of the agenda. The lists of decisions made by the council must be displayed in the service offices of the Student Union within seven (7) days of the council meeting.

**List vote:** Voting procedure for electing members to the Student Union's Council of Representatives. Before the vote takes place, members of the council submit lists of candidates to the chair of the council in writing.

## M

**Minutes:** Minutes are kept of each meeting to record the decisions. The minutes are signed by the chair, the secretary and the scrutinisers of the minutes. The minutes must state the details defined in section 10 of the Terms

of Reference for the Council of Representatives. The minutes are stored in the Student Union's service office in the centre campus.

## N

**Non-binding resolution:** The council may approve supported petitionary resolutions. All petitionary resolutions are discussed under item "Other business" on the agenda, unless it is directly related to a matter on the agenda, in which case it will be taken up for consideration right after the matter has been discussed. The council must vote on proposed non-binding resolutions which have been proposed by a council group or which are otherwise supported. All non-binding resolutions should be submitted using the council's online form for proposals.

**Notice of a council meeting:** The Student Union's rules define the timeframe and manner of summoning a meeting. (See Main Rule, Section 18, The notice of a council meeting). The notice must state the matters that are on the agenda.

## O

**OLL:** The Finnish Student Sports Federation

**Opiskelijan Tampere ry:** Organisation founded by Tamko and TREY's predecessors, Tamy and TTY, to negotiate student discounts in the Tampere region.

**Order of voting:** Manner of voting in council meetings. The council can use either a brief or a detailed order of voting (see Terms of Reference for the Council of Representatives, section 13, Order of voting). The chair of the council decides the order of voting after hearing the council.

## P

**Plan of Action:** A steering document that provides guidelines for the Student Union's activities on a yearly basis. The Plan of Action includes projects that promote strategic objectives and states the persons in charge of these projects. The Executive Board writes a report every six months to assess the execution of the Plan of Action. When the Plan of Action is drafted, all persons and associations belonging to the Student Union are allowed to submit proposals for the document. The council confirms the following year's plan of action in an autumn meeting held in November.

**Policy Paper:** A document approved by the council which lays down broad outlines for TREY's policies, political objectives and opinions. The Policy Paper can be amended during the council term as necessary. The document is also available online on page Steering documents. All council members should read it.

**Presentation:** In the meetings of the council and administrative bodies, decisions are usually made after the matter has been presented. What this means in practice is that a board member or an employee of the Student Union presents the proposed decision and if no counterproposals are expressed, the decision will be made as presented.

**Prevented:** Members of the Council of Representatives may be prevented from attending a council meeting. If this is the case, the council member must notify the Secretary General two days before the council meeting. The council group's chair may submit the notification on behalf of the member who is prevented from attending the meeting.

## R

**Recruitment:** TREY recruits both employees and volunteers. Most of the recruitments are handled by TREY's office personnel but the most important



ones (such as the secretary general or editor-in-chief) are made by the council.

**Return to drafting:** A matter can be returned to drafting by the decision of the Council of Representatives. The matter should be taken up for consideration again in the following meeting, unless something that prevents this has come up during further drafting. The council decides how the matter will be processed further. If a matter is returned to drafting, the proposal may be changed before the next council meeting.

**Right to be present:** All members of the Student Union have the right to be present in the meetings of the Council of Representatives, unless otherwise ruled by the council. All deputy council members and employees of the Student Union have the right to speak and be present in the council's meetings. The chair of the meeting may, at their discretion, give the right to speak and be present to other persons as well. The right to speak and be present in meetings does not constitute a right to vote or put forward motions.

**Right to speak:** All deputy council members and employees of the Student Union have the right to speak and be present in the council's meetings. The chair of the meeting may, at their discretion, give the right to speak and be

present to other persons as well. The right to speak and be present in meetings does not constitute a right to vote or put forward motions.

## S

**Scrutinisers of minutes:** When the council meeting begins, the council appoints two scrutinisers of the minutes and their deputy scrutinisers. The scrutinisers of the minutes must inspect the minutes of the meeting and sign them before the next council meeting.

**Shelving:** A matter may be shelved by a majority decision. It is good meeting practice, however, that a matter can be shelved in other cases as well if it is justified. A matter that has been shelved should be taken up for consideration again in the next meeting, unless something that prevents this has come up. If a matter has been shelved, no changes will be made to the presentation before the next meeting.

**Simple majority:** A manner of counting votes in a matter with two opposing proposals. The proposal that gets more votes wins.

**Strategy:** TREY's most fundamental steering document. The strategy defines the objectives for the Student Union's council and personnel for the strategy term in question. The strategy covers four years.

**Student magazine:** The Student Union decided to launch Visiiri, a local student publication, in autumn 2019.

**SYL:** The National Union of University Students in Finland. TREY is the second largest member organisation of SYL.

## T

**Tamy:** Student Union of the University of Tampere. One of TREY's predecessors, disbanded at the end of 2018 when the new Tampere University and TREY were founded.

**Temporary absence:** The Council of Representatives may grant a temporary right to be absent from the council's meetings upon request for a maximum of one year (for exchange studies, for example). A written request and justifications must be submitted to the Secretary General before the period of temporary absence starts. If a council member is granted a temporary right of absence or elected to the Student Union's board, their deputy member will

be summoned to the council until the right of absence or board membership ends.

**TTY:** Student Union of Tampere University of Technology. One of TREY's predecessors, disbanded at the end of 2018 when the new Tampere University and TREY were founded.

## U

**Universities Act:** Act defining the roles and responsibilities of universities. The latest amendments to the Universities Act entered into force on 1 January 2010. See section 46 for provisions on the responsibilities and activities of student unions.

## V

**Visiiri:** TREY's new student publication.

**Voting:** Each council member has one personal vote in the meeting of the council. Everyone except the voting council members and the Secretary General must leave the room for the duration of the vote. Vote by proxy is not

allowed. All matters are resolved by a single majority vote, unless the Student Union's rules state otherwise. If both motions receive the same number of votes, the winning proposal is the one supported by the Executive Board. If the matter was not considered by the Executive Board, the vote of the chair will be decisive.

The council's meetings use an open voting system. A secret ballot may be held if at least half of the council members who are present are in favour of it. The open vote is held in a manner proposed by the chair. The ballots used in the secret ballot must be verified by the secretary of the meeting by their signature or the Student Union's stamp.