

# Recommended principles of student meal programmes in higher education.

## Food for health

### Abstract

Meal programmes for students attending a university or a university of applied sciences are subsidised by the Government in the form of a meal subsidy paid by the Social Insurance Institution. As specified in the relevant Government Decree, student meals must meet general health and nutritional criteria. The purpose of this recommendation is to give more detail to the Decree and to promote positive health and nutritional trends among students. It can be used by student cafeterias in planning and implementing meal programmes that fulfil the criteria for government meal subsidies. It is intended as a tool for meal service staff and as a source of information for students and anyone providing health services for them.

A student meal should meet about a third of students' daily energy needs and comply with nutritional guidelines. Particular attention should be paid to the quality of fats and carbohydrates and the amount of salt consumed. The nutritional quality of the meals served should be taken into account when evaluating competing bids from student cafeteria operators.

Made from recommended ingredients, a student meal should consist of a main dish accompanied by a beverage, salad and bread with spread. Students must have at least two low-cost meal options to choose from. Additionally, they can be offered a main dish made from more expensive ingredients. The planning and preparation of meals for students with vegetarian or special diets is guided by general guidelines applicable to all meals.

Students should be referred to a food guide in the form of a recommended model plate, and they must be offered guidance with nutritional choices. The implementation of the recommendation is monitored by the Social Insurance Institution.

It is left to the students themselves to make sure that the rest of their daily meals and snacks are healthy and helpful in weight control while promoting a physical and mental state conducive to learning. It is important to pay attention not only to fats, carbohydrates and salt but also to the spacing of meals, portion size, choice of beverage, the adequate intake of vitamin D, folic acid and iodine, and to dental health.

This recommendation supersedes the recommendation given in 2011. Student meal providers must adjust their operations in line with the new recommendation by 1 August 2016.

The full text of the recommendation is published in Finnish and Swedish.

Recommendation published by: The Social Insurance Institution and the National Nutrition Council.