



News from the Danish Parliamentary Ombudsman

Unjustified to suspend students for nine months due to invitation to ‘Slutty Fall Break’ party

1 March 2022

Copenhagen Business School's (CBS) reaction was too severe when the university suspended six students for almost nine months as a sanction for having sent out a party invitation with sexual references and references to consumption of alcohol on Facebook. The invitation was to a so-called *Slutty Fall Break* party in a nightclub in Copenhagen, and, among others, it was directed at students for whom the six had just been intro guides.

‘I understand that the management at CBS found it necessary to react to the invitation. But public authorities must act in proportion. Suspension for two exam periods has very extensive consequences for the students, and in my opinion, it was not justified in this case,’ says Parliamentary Ombudsman Niels Fenger.

The six students had been intro guides for the new students at the European Business bachelor programme at CBS.

In the invitation to the ‘Slutty Fall Break’ party on Facebook, they encouraged the girls to find the ‘lowest-cut tops, shortest skirts or tightest-fitting dresses so you can play with all the boys in the club’. And they wrote that there was an open bar, so the boys could ‘hide away your cards and instead pour loads of (free) alcohol into the girls you’re hoping to drag home with you (or to the toilet if that’s what you’re into...)’. The invitation was signed ‘The Intro Guide Team’ and addressed to ‘EB’s’, meaning students in the European Business bachelor programme at CBS.

The daily newspaper Berlingske Tidende shortly thereafter brought an article about the invitation with the heading ‘Do cuddle parties (puttefester) continue at CBS?’ The media coverage prompted the students to change the text on Facebook so that it was clear that ‘This event is neither in cooperation with nor in any other way associated with CBS’.

However, CBS believed that the party invitation was worded in a way that could give the reader the impression that the party was linked to the just finished intro programme at CBS and thus linked to CBS. CBS further deemed that the post's references to 'sexual activities, including of a sexist nature, and encouragement to uninhibited drinking' violated the university's rules and regulations.

The students complained about the suspension to the Danish Agency for Science and Higher Education, which found no grounds to disregard CBS' sanction.

The Ombudsman does not find that he can set aside that the invitation could give the impression of being linked to CBS, and he cannot criticise that the authorities found that the university's rules and regulations had been violated. However, CBS' reaction should have given more consideration to the fact that the invitation was a private event, that there was no reason to believe the students intended to give the impression of the event being a CBS event, and that the students subsequently specified this themselves. It should also have been taken into account that a temporary suspension had great consequences for the students, and that the students had not previously been sanctioned.

The Ombudsman has asked the Danish Agency for Higher Education and Science to inform him what actions his statement gives the authorities cause to take.

Read the Ombudsman's statement in Danish [here](#).

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FACTS

- According to *Section 14(9) of the University Act*, the rector lays down rules on disciplinary measures for students. The disciplinary measures can be warnings, temporary and permanent suspension.
- *The proportionality principle of administrative law* sets boundaries for the authorities' choice of sanctions. The administration must not choose a

sanction that is more extensive than necessary in order to produce the effect aimed at by the sanction. In any event, there must be a reasonable proportion between the sanction's consequences for the students and the intended goal of the sanction.