



## University of Helsinki Equality Plan 2013–2016

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### 1 The objectives of the policy and practice regarding equal opportunities

The University of Helsinki is committed to promoting equality and preventing discrimination in all its operations. The University wishes to be a forerunner in the promotion of equality and the creation of an atmosphere of respect for diversity. The University recognises and eliminates practices and structures that create and sustain inequality. Equality and, as a related factor, accessibility contribute to the quality of everyday life for the diverse and multilingual University community.

Equality is one of the guiding values of the University of Helsinki. The University strives to promote a sense of community. This means that the University seeks to promote a sense of trust and mutual appreciation in all interactions. Recognition of the fact that all people are different but equal facilitates the generation of trust.

This plan includes the goals and measures to be taken for the strategic period 2013–2016. Many of the goals featured in the plan take the form of permanent practices. The plan is available on the University website at <http://www.helsinki.fi/henkos/tasa-arvo>.



### **1.1 The obligations of the Act on Equality between Women and Men and the Non-Discrimination Act**

The **Act on Equality between Women and Men** obliges the University of Helsinki to promote gender equality as an employer and an educational institution. The purpose of the Act on Equality between Women and Men is to prevent direct and indirect gender discrimination, to promote equality between women and men, and to improve the status of women, particularly in the workplace. Section 7 of the Act prohibits direct or indirect gender discrimination.

The Act also requires those who regularly employ more than 30 people to produce a gender equality plan, which must include a review of gender equality in the workplace, a description of the measures taken as a result of the assessment, and an assessment of the implementation of the previous equality plan. As part of assessing gender equality, the employer shall chart pay differences between women and men.

The Act on Equality between Women and Men requires educational institutions to draw up an equality plan to promote equality in education. Teaching, research and instructional material shall support the attainment of the Act's objectives. Education shall discourage ideas and practices that lead students to choose degree programmes and career paths based on gender stereotypes. The focus shall be on the implementation of equality in admissions, teaching and assessment as well as on the prevention and eradication of harassment. The focus area of the strategic period 2013 – 2016 is promoting equality among students. To this end, methods will be developed to gather information on the equality situation of students at the University.

**The Non-Discrimination Act** states that no person may be discriminated against based on age, ethnic or national origin, nationality, language, religion, conviction, opinion, health, disability, sexual orientation or other reason relating to a person's qualities. The Non-Discrimination Act requires an educational authority must take reasonable steps to help a person with a disability to gain access to work or training, to cope at work and to advance in their career.

The Act on Equality between Women and Men as well as the Non-Discrimination Act allow for positive special treatment of people who would otherwise be at risk for being in an unequal position. Such special treatment helps eradicate inequality and provide equal opportunities. This can mean, for example, the organisation of services for people with special needs.

### **1.2 The concepts of equality, non-discrimination and accessibility**

Equality (tasa-arvo) is typically understood to mean gender equality, but can also take a wider meaning. Non-discrimination (yhdenvertaisuus) in a legal context means non-gender based discrimination. Fundamentally equality and non-discrimination are the same. Both terms signify the equal value of all people regardless of different traits.

Accessibility means the physical, psychological and social environment must be organised so as to ensure that everyone has an equal opportunity to participate in the community, regardless of



personal characteristics. This means ensuring the accessibility of services, usability of equipment, intelligibility of information and the opportunity to participate in decision-making.

The University of Helsinki aims to promote equality as a transparent principle for all its activities. This is called **mainstreaming**. When preparing and making decisions that affect students and staff, the impact of such decisions must be assessed from the perspective of equality.

## 2 Prevention of discrimination and harassment

The Act on Equality between Women and Men forbids discrimination based on gender and gender minority status. The Non-Discrimination Act bans discrimination based on age, ethnic and national origin, nationality, language, religion, conviction, opinion, health, disability, sexual orientation and other reasons relating to the person's qualities. The types of discrimination banned by the Act include direct discrimination, indirect discrimination and harassment as well as instructions or orders to discriminate. The list of causes for discrimination described in the Constitution of Finland is incomplete, as discrimination for any reason related to a person's qualities is forbidden. For example, a person's social standing, wealth or participation in an organisation does not justify discriminatory treatment.

Encountering diversity and a broad range of opinions are a part of human interaction. Poor treatment of a person due to a personal quality, whether related to appearance, world view or other characteristic, also constitutes discrimination.

Discrimination is often the product of cultural or operational structures which may be difficult to recognise. **Covert discrimination** includes subtle forms of discrimination which can be difficult to identify, such as excluding, belittling, denying support and ignoring individuals due to their minority status. Discrimination may stem from attitudes or prejudices held by individuals or groups, or the fear of extra costs or problems at the workplace. Such attitudes do not justify discrimination, nor is discrimination acceptable when justified with reasons related to culture, religion or conviction.

**Multiple discrimination** means discrimination based on more than one reason. In such cases, the negative effects of discrimination can compile or combine in a way which results in a different level of discrimination than discrimination based on one reason alone. A woman can be a member of an ethnic minority, a member of an ethnic minority may have a disability, a disabled person may be a member of a sexual minority, a member of a sexual minority may be a senior citizen, to name but a few examples. One person may have all of the above qualities and face discrimination based on all of them. For example, the lack of a sign-language interpreter may pose a serious obstacle to the studies of a non-Finnish person with a disability. Different forms of discrimination are often present simultaneously. The impact of the gender system and gender equality are often also relevant when examining other types of discrimination.

**Direct discrimination** occurs when an individual or group of people is treated differently from others in the same position for no acceptable reason. Cases of direct discrimination show that an



individual or group of people has been placed in a poorer position specifically due to a personal quality which should have no impact on his or her treatment. According to the Act on Equality between Women and Men, treating women and men differently due to pregnancy or giving birth constitutes direct discrimination. At its most obvious, discrimination is open hostility and unequal treatment. For example, a teacher who refuses to instruct students of a certain religion or nationality is guilty of discrimination.

**Indirect discrimination** occurs when an ostensibly neutral rule or practice places certain people at a disadvantage compared to others. In case of indirect discrimination, the guilty party does not necessarily recognise that they are engaging in discrimination. Nevertheless, such practices are discriminatory. It is also possible to engage in indirect discrimination consciously. For example, an individual or group may know they are discriminatory, and even intend to be so, but conceal the real motivation for the discrimination behind a neutral measure. One example of such a case is a workplace which avoids hiring a non-Finnish employee and instead sets a groundless prerequisite for the task which a non-Finnish applicant cannot fulfil. According to the Act on Equality between Women and Men, treating people differently due to parenting or familial responsibilities constitutes indirect discrimination.

Indirect discrimination typically manifests in structural inequality deriving from cultural reasons, established practices or deficiencies in the physical environment. In such cases, a particular individual or authority cannot be established as the direct culprit of discriminatory behaviour.

**Structural discrimination** often entails the attitude that discriminatory practices or structures cannot be changed. The facilities are simply not appropriate for disabled people, or the work requires long hours or physical strength. However, steps can be taken to prevent structural discrimination. Facilities can be renovated, and the different life situations of employees can be considered in the division of work. Structural discrimination is also a choice. The discriminatory situation can be changed if there is sufficient impetus for change.

Every person has the right to invoke anti-discriminatory principles without suffering negative consequences. Any **retaliation** – such as a decline in work conditions because the employee has invoked anti-discriminatory principles – will be considered discrimination.

**Harassment** is also a form of discrimination. Harassment means infringing on an individual's or group's integrity or human value in a way that creates a threatening, derogatory or hostile atmosphere. Both purposeful harassment and behaviour which can result in offence are forbidden. Examples of harassment include racist jokes or calling a colleague derogatory names related to his or her sexual minority status.

**An instruction or order to discriminate** is also a form of discrimination. No person can instruct or oblige another to violate anti-discriminatory legislation. Such an instruction or order is considered discrimination when the person issuing the order has the authority to oblige others.



The legislation specifies compensations which the party infringing on the provisions of the Act must pay to the injured party. An employer is obliged to intervene in any discrimination or harassment at the workplace.

### **Objectives**

The University must be a professional and academic community which treats all of its members with respect. The University does not condone inappropriate treatment, discrimination or harassment of its staff or students. The University has drafted **instructions for the prevention of inappropriate treatment and harassment** ([http://www.helsinki.fi/henkos/tasa-arvo/prevention\\_of\\_inappropriate\\_treatment.htm](http://www.helsinki.fi/henkos/tasa-arvo/prevention_of_inappropriate_treatment.htm)). Superiors are aware of their right and responsibility to intervene in instances of discrimination and harassment and to become actively involved in all cases as early as possible. The employer can issue a reprimand or a written warning to an employee found guilty of discrimination, or terminate the employee's contract.

The University equality advisor is the contact person for staff in issues regarding discrimination. The Student Union has two harassment contact people whom students suspecting harassment can contact. The harassment contact people are bound by complete confidentiality.

The privacy of students and staff must be secured in order to prevent discrimination and harassment. A central component of privacy is that no individual is required to disclose their personal details without statutory causes. Privacy should also be considered in research and in the processing of research data. The Personal Data Act and the Act on the Protection of Privacy in Working Life regulate the processing of personal information. Legislation and University guidelines specify the types of sensitive data which should not typically be processed. Such data include information on an individual's race or ethnic origin, social, political or religious conviction, trade union membership, criminal history, punishments or other criminal sanctions, health, sickness or disability, treatment or other comparable measures targeting the individual, sexual orientation or behaviour and social welfare needs. Express consent must be requested before an individual's personal data can be published on the Internet or through another medium.

### **Measures**

- The University is systematic in its efforts to eradicate harassment and discrimination.
- The University ensures that employees and students know whom to contact and how to handle possible cases of discrimination and harassment.
- The University will organise training for superiors and equality contact people related to the recognition and prevention of discrimination and harassment as well as how to handle harassment cases.

## **3 Organisation and resources for equality work**

The responsibility to promote equality applies to all University activities and all members of the University community, both staff and students. Promoting equality is the particular duty of University leadership as well as the heads of departments and units. University leadership



monitors the equality situation in faculties, departments and other units. The equality development of faculties and departments is reported and discussed as part of the operations management process.

The University has an equality advisor who is in charge of communications and training in equality-related matters while developing the University's equality activities together with the Equality Committee in cooperation with staff and student organisations, faculties and departments. Any person suspecting harassment at the University may contact the equality advisor in full confidentiality.

The University's Equality Committee is a body under the Vice-Rector, featuring the whole spectrum of the University community. The members of the Committee are appointed to include representatives of different genders, all staff groups of the University, students, and members of the University community of different ages as well as groups with particular insight or experience regarding equality issues.

The duties of the Equality Committee are to:

1. promote the goals of the Act on Equality between Women and Men and the Non-Discrimination Act at the University;
2. strengthen pro-equality attitudes, opinions and structures at the University;
3. prepare an Equality Plan as specified in the Act on Equality between Women and Men and the Non-Discrimination Act;
4. monitor the development of equality at the University and to report on it;
5. issue statements on basic issues pertaining to equality and discrimination.

All faculties and departments have an equality contact person tasked with promoting good equality practices in the University community and spreading information on equality matters in his or her area. Contact people can also direct a person needing advice or help to the Equality Advisor, a work safety delegate, a union representative or the Student Union harassment contact person. Some subject-specific student organisations have their own equality people whose duty is to promote equality in the student community. The University of Helsinki Student Union has drafted its own equality plan.

### **Objectives**

The University of Helsinki aims to create an equitable academic culture in which the expertise and experiences of students and are equally taken into account equally. It is the goal of the University to account for different forms of inequality and to prevent the accumulation of inequality against certain individuals or groups. The University is creating an atmosphere for studying and working in which equality issues are regarded positively, and problems related to equality are recognised and addressed.

### **Measures**

- The University allocates an annual budget for equality work



- Matters relating to equality are effectively communicated throughout the University community
- Equality issues are discussed as part of the development work conducted in departments, faculties and administration
- Faculties and departments draft equality plans and include an equality perspective into their quality assurance.
- Faculties and departments allocate resources to promote equality.
- The Equality Committee will highlight best practices for promoting equality by publicising existing equality work
- The University ensures that issues related to equality are consistently and comprehensively discussed in training for University leadership. The equality perspective will also be considered when organising other staff training.
- The Maikki Friberg Award is granted annually to an individual or unit for active work to promote equality
- Gender parity will be observed when appointing administrative bodies, committees or working groups, unless special reasons require otherwise. If gender parity is not observed, justification for this will be included in the appointment decision.

#### **4 Monitoring and compiling statistics of the equality status**

Work toward equality requires information on the concepts of equality and non-discrimination and their meaning, on legislation regarding equality and non-discrimination, on good practices to promote equality both from Finland and abroad as well as practices for recognising and preventing discrimination. Research information on equality issues as well as up-to-date statistics are key tools in the work for equality. International cooperation to promote equality in research and university education is crucial. There are currently projects related to gender equality and accessibility underway in several European countries. It is important that the University take advantage of these results in its work for equality.

Since 2002, the University has granted funding to faculties and departments for equality projects. The projects have included investigations into the faculty's or department's equality situation, the gathering of experiences regarding equality among staff and students, as well as equality training or other equality events. Such projects promoting equality are unprecedented among Finnish universities and have created a great deal of information on the University's equality situation, on staff and student experiences as well as best practices which the University Equality Committee shares through various media and seminars. Information on the projects has been compiled in the University intranet.

##### **Objectives**

The University monitors the status of equality as well as the implementation of the equality plan in its annual staff reports. The situation is examined through atmosphere surveys, equality reports and other materials.



University statistics and reports will be drafted in such a way that they enable the regular, comprehensive and long-term evaluation of the actual equality situation. This shall be considered when constructing information systems. Drawing up statistics and reports and discussing them at departments and faculties support the University's work on equality. Both quantitative and qualitative data are required on the equality situation. The Equality Committee collects information on the University's equality status as well as student and staff experiences of equality on a regular basis.

The University participates in both international and national university cooperation in equality issues.

### Measures

- The Equality Committee will monitor the realisation of the objectives of the Equality Plan
- The Equality Committee will develop monitoring methods for equality status which can be used in faculties and departments.
- The Equality Plan will be revised every strategic period.
- Gender-based statistics will be examined in the annual reports of the University and its faculties and will be discussed during performance negotiations.
- The following gender-based statistics will be generated annually:
  - graduates, undergraduate degrees and postgraduate degrees
  - new students
  - international students
  - staff by task group
  - fixed-term staff by task group
  - parental leave
  - wages and salaries
  - participants in staff training
- Qualitative information is generated for the purpose of monitoring the equality situation.
- Workplace wellbeing surveys include questions on the equality situation.
- The Equality Committee cooperates with organisations which promote equality
- Data protection issues will be considered in drawing up statistics and communications.

## 5 Gender studies

Demand is growing both in Finland and internationally for expertise in gender and equality issues. Gender studies plays a key role in developing such expertise and in training new experts. Gender studies is a multidisciplinary field of research which produces new knowledge about gender, women's and men's life and status, and the significance of gender as a factor that structures history, culture and society. Gender studies encompasses not only women's and men's studies, but also queer, gay and lesbian studies which examine sexuality from a critical perspective. The University of Helsinki stands out because of the strong position of gender studies at the University. The Faculty of Arts at the University of Helsinki houses the discipline of gender studies, which provides multi- and interdisciplinary teaching for all of the University community



and coordinates the teaching provided by other units. In addition, various disciplines provide teaching in gender studies as part of their own curriculum. Most gender studies scholars work in fixed-term positions at University departments and independent institutes and usually integrate gender studies topics into their disciplines.

Much work remains to be done in integrating gender studies and its results into the faculties' and departments' teaching and research. Although the field is well networked, its main problems are the high turnover of persons in charge of gender studies and the lack of permanent positions. The integration of gender studies into degree requirements and teaching has been poor and haphazard. Faculties lack knowledge about the broad scope of gender studies and its objective of dismantling gender power structures.

### **Objectives**

The University of Helsinki will ensure the resources for the continuity and versatility of research and teaching in gender studies. Faculties and departments will develop administrative solutions to ensure the continuity of expertise in gender studies. The University will put to good use the knowledge that gender studies produces about gender, sexuality, discrimination and women's and men's status, and will integrate such knowledge into all relevant teaching and research.

### **Measures**

- The University will ensure the status and continuity of gender studies.
- Faculties must consider establishing permanent research and teaching positions in fields which pursue gender studies.
- When deciding on degree requirements and the content of teaching in fields which pursue gender studies, departments will ensure that the curriculum includes special study units and literature on gender studies. Compulsory basic courses, including joint studies in the extensive Bachelor's degrees, must include gender studies as befits each field, such as through the perspective of equality.
- Departments must ensure that fields which currently do not include gender studies encourage such perspectives.

## **6 The promotion of equality and non-discrimination**

### **6.1 Recruitment, employment and career development**

The University's research and teaching staff represent women and men fairly evenly. After receiving a doctorate, however, women's career advancement becomes more difficult. The ratio of women professors is considerably smaller than the ratio of women researchers. Administrative and library staff are predominantly women, while the IT sector is dominated by men. Men hold more senior administrative positions than women.



Table 1. Staff number development by staff group in 2009-2011 and the gender division of staff by staff group in 2011

Staff groups	2009	2010	2011	% Women	% Men
<b>Teaching and research staff</b>	<b>4000</b>	<b>4845</b>	<b>4820</b>		
Level 4	614	614	638	26	74
Level 3	840	941	1197	54	46
Level 2	662	771	817	52	48
Level 1	1402	1814	1809	56	44
Other teaching and research staff	482	705	359	51	49
<b>Other staff</b>	<b>4259</b>	<b>3825</b>	<b>3770</b>		
IT staff	359	344	359	18	82
Library staff	438	427	374	70	30
Technical staff	447	427	420	56	44
Administrative staff	1703	1684	1704	80	20
Teaching and research support staff	1104	783	776	75	25
Others	208	160	137	68	32
<b>Staff overall</b>	<b>8259</b>	<b>8670</b>	<b>8590</b>	<b>59</b>	<b>41</b>

University staff report 2011

Several studies have shown that women researchers face both covert and overt gender discrimination. Women also report that the scholarly community offers them inadequate professional support even though it would be important for career advancement.



Based on the reports and surveys conducted at the University, women also often evaluate the equality situation to be poorer than men. Unequal treatment was reported in salaries, career advancement, division of work and having the employee's voice heard. Salary reports indicate that more men are employed at the higher demands levels. The differences in demands levels are partly due to the slower career development among women. Most professors are men. There is also some gender variation in the performance-based salary component so that often women employed on the same demands level as their male colleagues receive a smaller performance-based salary.

### **Objectives**

The University will promote the equal recruitment of women and men to various positions and will ensure equal opportunities for career advancement at all levels. Obstacles to women's career advancement will be eliminated. The reform of the Finnish university system increased general employer accountability as well as the responsibility of faculty deans and department heads for recruitment. It is particularly important in the current situation that recruitment processes are transparent and fair. Clear and transparent criteria will be applied in recruitment processes to ensure that each applicant's merits are equitably assessed. An equal number of men and women will be appointed to committees and as assessors when filling vacancies. The University will strive to increase the number of women in leadership positions.

Positive action can be taken when applicants are women and men of equal or almost equal qualifications and the underrepresented gender accounts for less than 40% of the group.

In accordance with the Act on Equality between Women and Men, the University of Helsinki aims to provide the same level of pay for the same work or for work of equal value. The University compiles annual salary statistics as required by the said Act.

University staff comprise a diverse mix of ages, cultural backgrounds, languages, sexual orientations and other traits. Such differences must not impede recruitment and career progress at the University. Rather, this diversity should be viewed as a source of enrichment and strength in an expert organisation.

### **Measures**

- The University will promote the equal recruitment of women and men to various positions.
- Women in particular will be encouraged to seek leadership positions.
- Faculties and departments will appoint an equal number of men and women to committees and as assessors when filling vacancies.
- When deciding whether to fill a professorship by invitation, departments and faculties will survey potential candidates and will take into account gender equality.
- Faculties and departments must consider the use of positive action when filling positions in fields where one gender is clearly underrepresented and when the other requirements of positive action are met.



- Faculties and departments will monitor the impartiality of recruitment for research groups and projects.
- The Equality Committee will monitor the impact of the recruitment freeze on the equality situation and the staff structure.
- Transparent procedures must be employed when filling fixed-term positions and deputyships.
- Salary statistics will be developed for use in the systematic monitoring of women's and men's salary developments.
- Superiors will ensure that all professional groups have equal opportunities to participate in staff training.
- Structural roadblocks preventing international staff or persons with an immigrant background from being recruited will be removed.
- The University will ensure that age does not affect recruitment or career progress.
- Disability, illness or medical history must not unduly affect a person's employment or career progress at the University or in a research project.

## 6.2 Fixed-term employment contracts and the position of grant-funded researchers

The University has made considerable efforts to reduce the number of fixed-term employment contracts since 2005. The instructions for fixed-term contracts have been specified and particular attention has been paid to the use of such contracts. These measures have succeeded in reducing the number of fixed-term staff. Less than 52% of University staff were employed on a fixed-term basis in 2011. For 23% of them, the contracts were fixed-term due to their position on the researcher career (doctoral students and post-doctoral researchers).

Table 2. Ratio of fixed-term employees to overall staff by gender

Staff type	Women	Men	Total	% Women	% Men	Percentage of staff
Permanent	2572	1602	4174	62%	38%	48%
Fixed-term due to research career stage (doctoral students, post-doctoral researchers)	1066	893	1959	54%	46%	23%
Other fixed-term employees	1243	900	2143	58%	42%	25%
Part-time hourly paid teachers	151	163	314	48%	52%	4%
<b>Total</b>	<b>5032</b>	<b>3558</b>	<b>8590</b>	<b>59%</b>	<b>41%</b>	<b>100%</b>



University staff report 2011

Fixed-term employment is considered one of the key causes of inequality and is more common among women than men at the University. Young women in particular are often in a difficult position when the continuation of their employment contract is being determined.

Some researchers working at the University are funded by a grant or another form of external funding. The position of grant-funded researchers is different from contractual employees at the University. Grant-funded researchers at the University include researchers at different stages of their careers, doctoral students and postdoctoral researchers. Grant-funded researchers are typically a part of the University work community, but their contractual position may be a cause for discrimination. The practices applied to grant-funded researchers in faculties and departments have also varied a great deal.

### **Objectives**

The University aims to reduce the number of fixed-term employment contracts. All fixed-term contracts must be justified.

Grant providers should allocate grant funds through the University to be used for employing research personnel. This would be the only way to secure an equal status for all people conducting research at the University. As this is not a realistic prospect in the near future, the University has clarified the position of grant-funded researchers through instructions. This work must be continued with consideration for non-discrimination and equality.

### **Measures**

- The annual staff report will be used to monitor the number of fixed-term employment contracts according to gender, professional group and the duration of each contract.
- The Equality Committee will monitor the development of the position of grant-funded researchers from the perspective of equality.

## **6.3 Reconciliation of work, studies and family life**

The need to reconcile work, studies and family life has traditionally affected women more than men. Although more fathers have begun to take parental leave in recent years, women still take most of the available parental leave. This may indirectly weaken their status at work. Not all families have two parents of different gender; there are also single-parent families, same-sex parents, multi-parent families and stepfamilies. This diversity gives rise to a wide range of issues involving the reconciliation of work, studying and family life.

### **Objectives**

The reconciliation of work and family will be supported regardless of gender and the type of family. The University will endorse flexible work arrangements when such arrangements are necessary for the provision of care. This must not result in employees being placed in an unequal



position in the distribution of duties, rewards for services or career advancement. Care responsibilities may include not only childcare but also, for example, care given to elderly parents. Men will be encouraged to use their right to parental leave.

The availability of childcare services to students also benefits the University: they help students to reconcile studies and family life and thus ensure fewer delays in graduation. The Student Union operates a drop-in childcare service in University facilities, intended for students with children.

#### **Measures**

- Superiors will ensure that employees can work flexible hours because of various care responsibilities, regardless of family type.
- The University will also endorse flexible arrangements required for the reconciliation of work and family life when the employee or student cares for his or her elderly parents.
- Students will be clearly informed of the provisions regarding the expiration of studies, the target graduation times and the application procedure for extending their study right.

#### **6.4 Teaching and studies**

The ratio of women students and graduates has increased steadily. Fields of study remain separated according to gender. Certain faculties encourage prospective students of the underrepresented gender to apply.

Based on surveys conducted at the University, most students feel that they are treated equally. In some fields, women are less satisfied than men with the supervision of their theses, career guidance and general support provided to them, especially in postgraduate studies. Women are more likely than men to experience discrimination in teaching situations, assessment and supervision. On the other hand, some students do not recognise the phenomena that relate to gender equality. There have also been some thesis grade reports conducted at the University during the past years. Such reports must be conducted and further developed in the future, because currently no comprehensive data on the gender division in grades exists.

The further development of teaching and study material from a gender perspective has progressed only erratically at the University. The gender sensitivity of teaching means that the possible impact of gender on the lives of girls and boys and women and men is consciously examined, and gender differences that often seem self-evident are made visible so as to address the inequality associated with them. In some fields, teaching does not provide students with the necessary knowledge and skills to examine phenomena from the perspective of gender.

#### **Objectives**

The University of Helsinki will further develop teaching and studying so that equality becomes an all-embracing principle in teaching. Students will be treated equally in admissions, teaching, supervision and assessment.



### Measures

- Units responsible for admissions will provide information to applicants of all genders to encourage them to apply for fields in which their own gender is underrepresented.
- Entrance examination books, questions or criteria must not favour or discriminate against either gender, and if possible, should take into account the perspectives of all genders.
- Student feedback on equality in teaching is regularly collected.
- Grades and other study results are monitored by gender.
- Departments and research groups will address the gender distribution of students recruited to research groups. The University will ensure that both men and women students are recruited and encouraged to apply for research groups.
- Departments and research groups ensure that sufficient guidance is available and that it is equally distributed.
- The gender perspective will be considered when evaluating teaching and research.
- Student organisations will be encouraged to engage in equality work.

### 6.5 Promotion of accessibility

In an accessible environment everyone is able to function equally irrespective of their personal characteristics related to sight, hearing, movement, age, learning difficulties or any other such factors.

Teaching is accessible when the student is able to fully participate in instruction, has easy access to the classroom, and can easily use the IT services employed in instruction and in communication about it. Accessibility of teaching entails particularly the idea of the different forms of instruction. Sometimes accessible teaching requires special arrangements or equipment.

Accessibility of the built environment concerns all movement at the University, from students, employees and applicants to visitors. Correctly designed facilities are important not only for people with physical and other disabilities, but also for people with visual and hearing impairments. Accessibility of the built environment entails observing the need for fixed aids such as induction loops and ramps, installing and maintaining them as well as ensuring that information about them is efficiently disseminated.

According to the Non-Discrimination Act, persons commissioning work or arranging training shall take steps to help a person with disabilities to gain access to work or training.

In the same way that the borderline between disability and ability is culture bound and unsteady, so is the borderline between sickness and health. A sick person may be fully able and healthy, but disabled in some situations. The state of one's health or one's medical history do not justify discrimination. Some illnesses, such as HIV and mental illnesses, may raise fear and prejudice that lead to discrimination. Everyone has the right to tell or not to tell about their sickness or disability to their colleagues or fellow students.



### **Objectives**

The University of Helsinki strives to enhance its services, facilities and operations so that they will be suitable for all. The University complies with the principles of equality, non-discrimination and inclusion. Inclusion means accommodating all, as a matter of course, so that everyone can participate equally in any activity. The various needs of people with disabilities must be considered in all planning as part of the diversity of humanity. This entails the removal of all barriers, whether physical obstacles, prejudiced attitudes or hindrances to communication.

The University of Helsinki offers support for disabled students and employees in integrating into the academic community and in acquiring the necessary aids and learning materials. An employee may, together with the head of the unit, explore possibilities for special arrangements and for their implementation. Student Services provides assistance in study-related matters, including advice regarding special examination arrangements or substitution of studies. Guidance and advising is also available to the teaching staff and the non-academic staff. The University intranet compiles information on these services in its section for students.

### **Measures**

- The accessibility of the University's operating environment will be further improved.
- The special needs of employees and students with sensory and physical disabilities will be considered when designing new buildings and renovating old ones. Passageways will be clearly marked, and the opening mechanisms of doors will be designed so that they can be used by people with sensory and physical disabilities.
- The accessibility of new websites and learning environments will be tested in the appropriate methods. The accessibility instructions for online materials must be considered in their design, as well as the interpretation of the contents for different senses and assisting devices.
- When designing their curriculum and booking teaching facilities, departments will ensure that teaching is offered in facilities accessible to all students. Compulsory courses will always be offered in accessible premises.
- Information about the University will be produced in a form which is accessible to all. This will be given particular attention when designing webpages.
- When necessary, course catalogues and other information will be offered to visually impaired students in an electronic format suitable for screen readers and magnifiers.
- More attention will be paid to pedagogical flexibility in teaching and to the accessibility of the teaching materials.
- Information about accessibility and support services will be particularly directed at new students.
- Disabled applicants may require special arrangements for the entrance examination, such as extra time, a special classroom and technical aids. The faculties must ensure that applicants are informed of such possibilities.
- Should an illness or disability require adjustments in an employee's duties or a student's studies, these must be agreed upon together with the person concerned.
- Information about accessibility will be integrated into staff training and pedagogical studies.



## 6.6 Promoting internationality, ethnic equality and multilingualism

According to its strategy, the University of Helsinki is an international and multilingual work and study community. The University actively advocates cultural awareness and opposes racism. Cultural awareness means consciousness of both one's own cultural background and an understanding of other cultures. Such awareness provides a foundation for interaction and mutual respect between people from different cultures. The University's language principles promote the active use of both national languages, Finnish and Swedish, as well as English.

The University hosts a number of employees and students from abroad or of international descent. Finland also has indigenous ethnic minorities, such as the Roma and Sami peoples. Ethnic minorities and people of non-Finnish descent are underrepresented among higher education. Their opportunities for seeking higher education must be improved.

### Objectives

Full membership in the academic community must not be impeded by differences related to ethnicity, nationality, cultural background or language. The University promotes a community spirit and encourages its members to learn together. The University supports the increase of cultural awareness in society through its teaching and research. In order to facilitate such community, the University must be a genuinely multilingual environment. The University supports students and staff in their efforts to improve their language skills and, consequently, their cultural knowledge.

Courses offered in languages other than Finnish and Swedish are available in all faculties of the University of Helsinki. The intention is to develop both the quantity and quality of such teaching.

In addition, international students and staff members are offered services aiding them in integrating into the academic community and Finnish society at large.

### Measures

- Staff and students are encouraged to engage in multilingual communication and to improve their language skills.
- Ample information in Finnish, Swedish and English is offered in order to reach the academic community as widely as possible.
- The engagement of international staff and students in University activities will be supported.
- The needs of international staff will be considered when creating induction practices.
- The needs of international students will be considered in tutoring programmes.
- The University will ensure the maintenance and development of Finnish, Swedish and English proficiency of its staff and will take this into account in the provision of staff training.
- The integration of students and staff members with international or immigrant backgrounds into Finnish society will be furthered by offering them guidance and consultation on Finnish language, society, culture and labour market practices.
- Joint study activities for international and native Finnish students will be promoted.



- Attention will also be paid to ensuring that the content, learning materials and the atmosphere of the class are not discriminatory, offensive or hostile.

### **6.7 Promotion of equality of religion and belief**

The Constitution of Finland guarantees everyone the freedom of religion and conscience. The freedom of religion and conscience entails the right to profess and practice a religion, the right to express one's convictions and the right to be a member of or decline to be a member of a religious community. No one is under the obligation, against his or her conscience, to participate in the practice of a religion. All members of the University community have the right to profess their religion and express their conviction. This conviction may manifest itself in lifestyle, diet or dress.

#### **Objectives**

All members of the University community are expected to respect diversity and other people's opinions and viewpoints. Differences of religion, belief or political conviction must not affect the way an employee or a student is treated or how they treat the other members of their community. The practice of a religion or belief may not, however, unreasonably affect work or the operation of the work community. Discrimination is forbidden, even if an attempt is made to justify it with reasons related to religion or conviction.

#### **Measures**

- The University will encourage dialogue between different convictions.
- Attention will be paid to ensuring that no one's religion or conviction is offended in teaching and communication. For example, alternative non-religious ceremonies may be organised.

### **6.8 Promotion of the equality of sexual and gender minorities**

People of diverse sexual orientations work and study at the University. Their gender identities and roles may also vary greatly. Stereotypical conceptions of the supposed appearance or behaviour of particular genders restrict all our lives and may be offensive to some. The discrimination faced by sexual and gender minorities may be the result of inconsiderate behaviour. However, it may also include hostile or degrading comments and malicious jokes. According to the Non-Discrimination Act, this kind of behaviour is harassment, which is forbidden.

#### **Objectives**

The University advocates a culture of openness. Everyone has the right to talk or not to talk about their private life. Openness can be achieved only when it does not lead to discrimination, bullying or exclusion. Openness cannot be forced upon people, but it can be encouraged and supported. Advocating openness increases wellbeing in the work community, for it offers everyone the opportunity to function as a full member of the work community. Teaching and work communities will avoid the heterosexual assumption, in other words, the assumption that all are heterosexual unless otherwise stated. Neither may heterosexuality be used as a cause for discrimination.



Gender minorities are often in a particularly vulnerable position in our society, and any discrimination targeting them in the University community must be addressed immediately.

### Measures

- Equality contact persons and superiors will increasingly be offered specialised information concerning sexual and gender minorities and the relevant legislation.
- Teachers will also pay attention to ensuring that the content, learning materials and the atmosphere of the class are not discriminatory, offensive or hostile.
- Department heads and immediate superiors are responsible for ensuring that the atmosphere of the work community is not discriminatory.
- Students and employees who are interested in writing their theses or conducting research on sexual and gender minorities should be encouraged and supported.
- Non-binary gender will be considered when drafting surveys at the University.

#### Promotion of age equality

In the next few years when the baby boom generation retires, the University will be faced with the great challenge of systematically passing on know-how to the younger generations as well as directing resources for coping at work and age management.

A special characteristic of the University of Helsinki is that young and ageing employees work together. Most often this is seen as an enriching feature, but it may also cause problems because of different work cultures, for example. Besides ageing employees, mature students may be subjected to discrimination due to their age. Their learning ability may be doubted and they may experience social exclusion. Age discrimination may also be directed at young or youngish employees: their efforts may be belittled and their working conditions may be worse than those of their older colleagues.

Both men and women may be subjected to age discrimination, but typically women are more often affected. Hence we talk about gender-related age discrimination, which means that ageing men and women are treated differently.

The University has collected its employees' opinions on age equality, age discrimination and best practices for promoting age equality. The results have been listed in the age equality checklist.

### Objectives

The University of Helsinki is making various efforts to promote wellbeing and coping at work. The coping of aging employees is furthered by appreciating their strengths and experience, and enhancing their expertise and job satisfaction. The employees' ability to cope with work is also promoted by a management that takes age-related issues into consideration. Age sensitive management means good management which considers the particular needs and life situations associated with employees of different ages.

Mature employees often have irreplaceably valuable experience that should be conveyed to the next generation of employees. Support for the transfer of this experience is a central component of age management. Employees with extensive careers should be seen as a resource, and their



job descriptions should be adjusted so as to leave time for conveying their experience to their younger colleagues. On the other hand, support should also be provided for the transfer of the special expertise of younger employees to their older colleagues. Such considerations will be taken into account in the development of the University's human resources policy.

At the University of Helsinki, the expertise of employees of all ages must be equally appreciated, and the development of professional competence must be promoted at all stages of the working career. Students of all ages must be treated equally.

### **Measures**

- Department heads and immediate superiors will be provided with training in age management.
- Staff training will be enhanced to include training and advice for learners of different ages.
- The reorganisation of work, for example, in connection with an employee's transition into part-time retirement, must be discussed with the employee in question and with the entire work community, so that all are aware of the new division of work. The aim of the reorganisation of work is to ensure that the operations of the work community will continue smoothly and that the workload of the employee on part-time retirement is adjusted to his or her working hours.
- Superiors must ensure that employees on part-time retirement are not subjected to inappropriate treatment.
- Best practices for transferring tacit knowledge will be developed.