



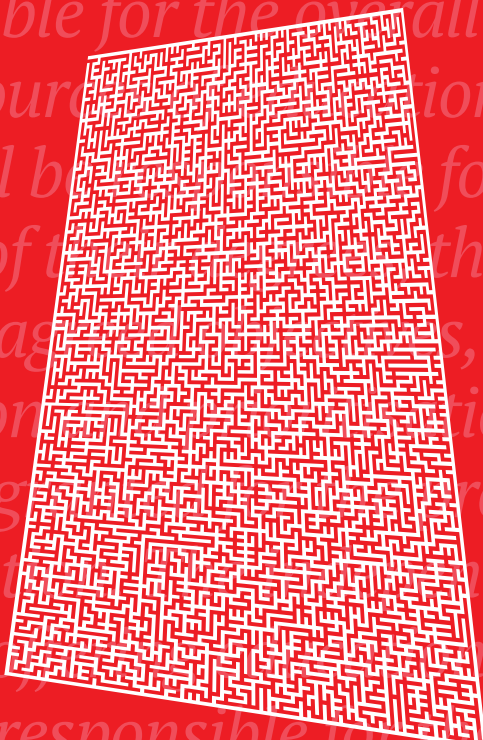
HELSINGIN  
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STUDENTKÄREN  
VID HELSINGFORS  
UNIVERSITET

STUDENT UNION  
OF THE UNIVERSITY  
OF HELSINKI

# HYY'S GUIDE ON LEGAL PROTECTION

*Section 4: The University shall be responsible for the overall quality and resources of the education. Faculties shall be responsible for the quality of the education, the attainment of agreed objectives, and the allocation of resources. The provision of education in independent institutes of higher education shall each be responsible for the quality of the education that they provide*



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**D**ear student, you are currently holding in your hands a guide on legal protection for students, produced by the Student Union of the University of Helsinki. This guide was created to support students in completing their studies smoothly and to help prevent various problem situations as well as aid in solving them. The guide introduces you to the most common problems with legal protection in studies and gives you tips on how to act in problem situations.

It is in our University's interests that students are able to complete their studies smoothly all the way from the orientation on fresher week to graduation. For this to happen, the University of Helsinki has set some common ground rules. By following these rules, you can contribute to your own studies flowing smoothly yourself. As a student, you have certain obligations related to your studies: You are expected to participate in teaching and to return assignments related to your studies within the time limit set for them. First and foremost, however, you should act honestly.

Unfortunately, you cannot always avoid problems even when you follow these ground rules. The legislation, rules and instructions concerning degrees and studies are meant to guarantee that students receive consistent and equal access to information, treatment and legal protection. Students' legal protection is covered in regulations such as the Universities Act, the Regulations on Degrees and the Protection of Students' Rights at the University of Helsinki and the University's policies concerning degrees and studies. This guide is aimed at helping you navigate the maze of these numerous regulations and instructions. Further information on students' legal protection is also available on the University of Helsinki's 'Instructions for Students' website.

Remember that help is always available. When you encounter problems, you can contact the study advisors of your subject or faculty organisation, the heads of academic affairs at the University and HYY's specialist providing guidance with legal protection. An Academic Appeals Board also operates at the University of Helsinki. Its duties include processing appeals against the grading of academic performance and making initiatives aimed at developing the legal protection of students.



*18 October 2018 • Mathilda Timmer • Member of HYY's Board in charge of legal protection in 2018*

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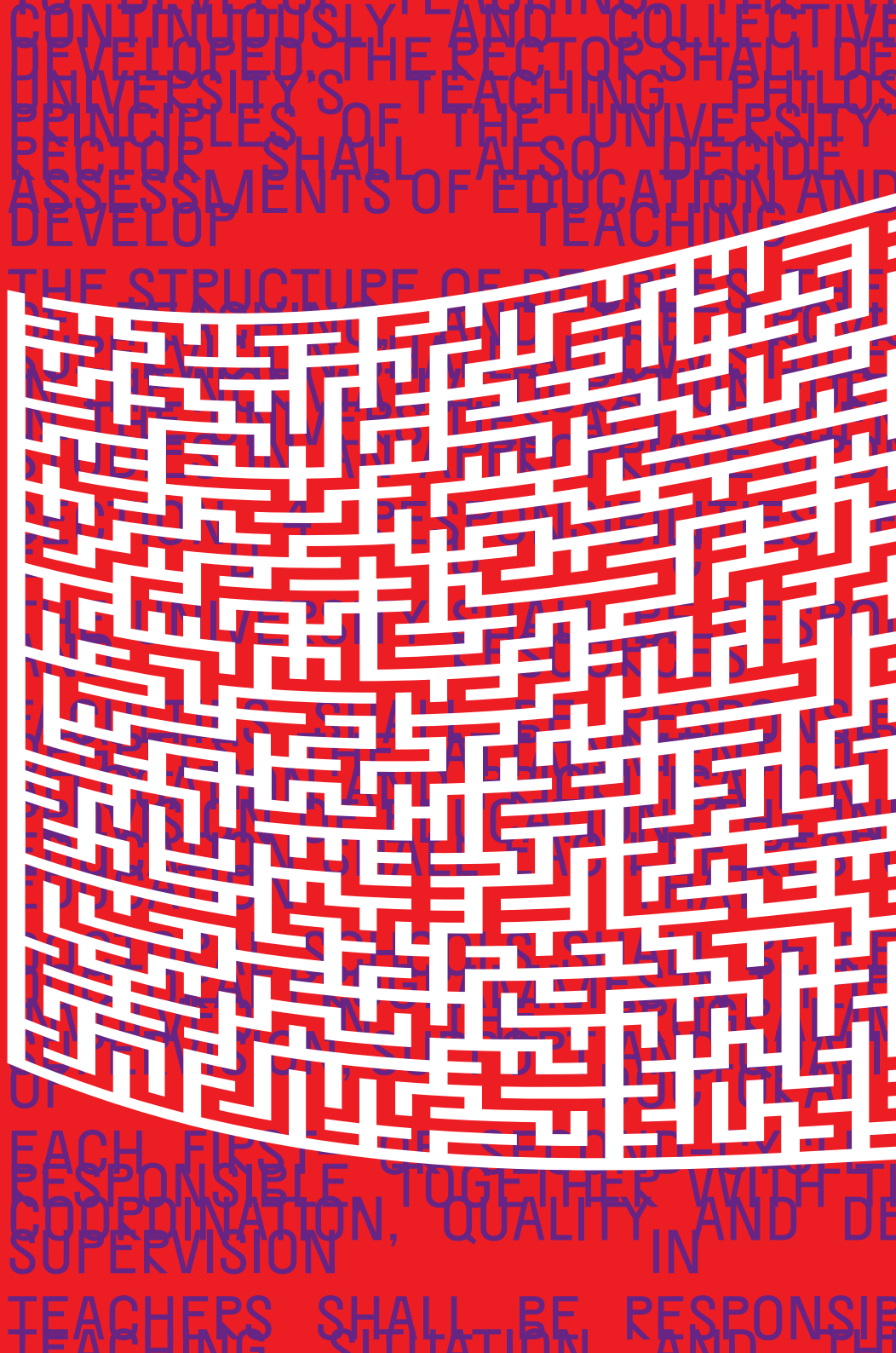
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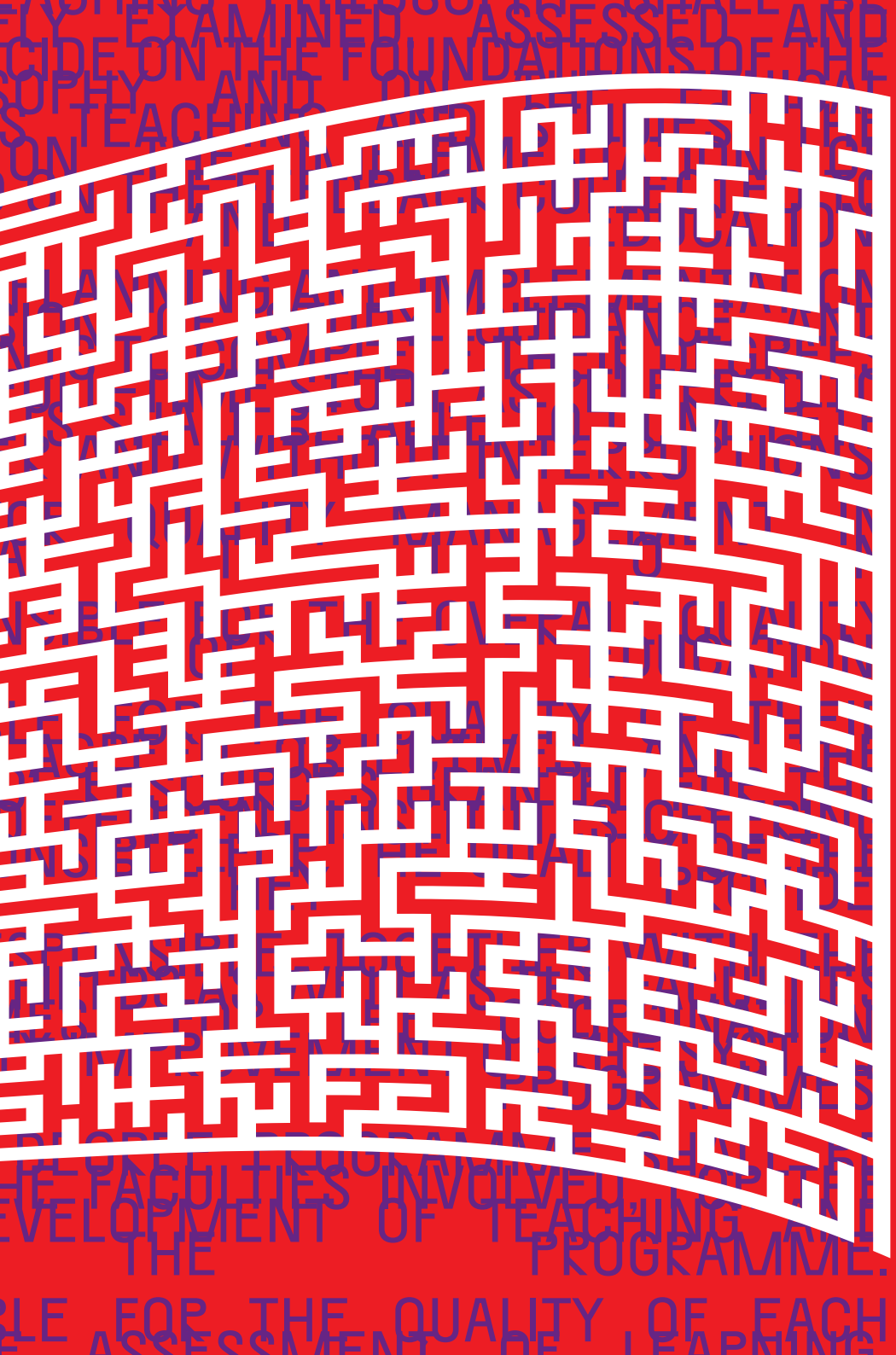
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## CONCEPTS RELATED TO YOUR RIGHT TO STUDY

In this section, we will explain certain very similar terms. This will make it easier to understand this guide, the Regulations on Degrees and the Protection of Students' Rights at the University of Helsinki and the Universities Act.

### Right to complete a degree

When you accept a student place at a university, you are given the **right to complete a degree**. Within the given **duration of the degree**, you have the right to complete courses, receive counselling and complete the degree for which your right to complete a degree was given. As a rule of thumb, students are granted the right to complete both bachelor's and master's degrees directly in student admissions.

### Duration of the degree

The duration of the degree refers to the time you have at your disposal to complete a degree at a university. Section 40 of the Universities Act defines the normative duration of studies for bachelor's and master's degrees. However, students have the right to use a longer period than the normative duration of studies to complete their studies. Students admitted to study both a bachelor's and master's degree have the right to use a maximum of two years more than the normative duration to complete their degrees. Students admitted to study only a bachelor's degree have the right to use a maximum of one year more than the normative duration of studies, while students admitted to study only a master's degree have the right to use a maximum of two years more. Students are considered to have started studying for the degree on the date they accepted their student place at the university. You can see the starting and ending dates of your own right to complete a degree in WebOodi.



## Waiver of the right to complete a degree

If you voluntarily wish to get permanently rid of your right to study, you may waive it by notifying your faculty. See also the guide's section **Waiver of the right to complete a degree** (p. 14) on the matter.

## Forfeiture of the right to complete a degree

You may lose your right to complete a degree if you do not register for attendance or non-attendance in time or if the duration of your degree ends and you have not applied for or received an extension. See also the guide's section **Readmission after losing the right to complete a degree** (p. 15) for further information on the matter.

## Revocation of the right to complete a degree

In certain rare cases, a student's right to complete a degree may be revoked altogether. In such cases, the student is considered unsuitable for the studies. In these cases, we recommend that you always contact the Student Union. See also the guide's section **Safety of studies** (p. 39) for further information on the matter.

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## RESTRICTED DURATION OF STUDIES

With a few exceptions (medicine, dentistry, veterinary medicine and psychology), you have a total of seven years to complete your bachelor's and master's degrees – the normative duration of studies defined in section 40 of the Universities Act plus two additional years. Before you start to worry about running out of time for your studies, remember the following:

- You can register for non-attendance for any reason for a maximum of four academic terms without it affecting the duration of the degree. Students who started their studies in autumn 2015 or later may register for non-attendance for two academic terms without it affecting the duration of the degree.
- Completing military service, voluntary military service or non-military service and absences caused by maternity, paternity or parental leaves do not shorten the duration of the degree.
- You can see the remaining duration of the degree in WebOodi.
- You can receive an extension for completing your studies. See also the guide's section **Applying for an extension** (p. 12) for further information on the matter.

## APPLYING FOR AN EXTENSION

The University grants students who have not completed their studies within the time period stipulated in section 41 of the Universities Act an extension to complete their studies upon application, if the student presents a goal-oriented and realistic plan for completing their studies. In the plan, the student should specify the studies they plan to complete and present a schedule for completing the degree.

When applying for the first time, a maximum of two academic years of extension is granted depending on how much time is needed to implement the graduation plan. When applying for an additional extension, a maximum of one academic year is granted, unless the degree will be completed in a shorter time according to the plan.

Generally, the maximum total length of extension granted corresponds to what is determined as the normative duration of studies in the Universities Act. In the case of the right to complete a bachelor's and master's degree, for instance, this means a maximum of five academic years.

## Applying for an extension for the first time

If the University has sent you a message stating that your right to complete a degree is ending, apply for an extension. The letter from the University will tell you what is required to apply for an extension: a goal-oriented and realistic graduation plan, which takes into account your situation in life.

The decision on granting the extension is made by the faculty to which the application for an extension is also addressed. When making the decision, the student's personal situation in life is taken into account. Grounds for granting an extension may include the student's illness or difficult situation in life, being active in society during studies, participation in international student or internship exchange and systematic training for elite sports.

When assessing the graduation plan, regulations on the expiry of studies must be taken into account. The student must be informed of the expiry of studies and the substitution practices for expired studies even when the student is registering for non-attendance as planned or suspends their studies.

The extension is meant for completing the degree, and no other studies completed during the extension than those included in the graduation plan are taken into account when seeking an additional extension.

You should apply for an extension early enough before your right to complete a degree ends to avoid losing your right to complete a degree (see p. 15). It is in the University's interests for you to complete your degree, too.

If your application for an extension is rejected, you may request rectification from the faculty in writing within 14 days of having been informed of the decision. After the rectification, you can take the matter to the Helsinki Administrative Court, if needed. Especially in the latter case, we recommend contacting the Student Union first.

Source: Rector's decision 50/2015



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## Applying for an additional extension

The graduation plan should include a report on studies completed during the previous extension. In case your studies have progressed according to the original graduation plan, no other report is needed.

The updated graduation plan is assessed according to the same principles as the original graduation plan. If your studies have not progressed according to the original graduation plan, the new application must identify the reasons for the delay in your studies. These may be related to your situation in life and require potential medical certificates.

Your chances of getting a new extension may be negatively affected if you have not completed any studies included in the previous graduation plan during the previous extension, or if you have only completed a small amount, and your situation in life does not justify the delay in your studies. Studies not included in the graduation plan that you have completed during the previous extension are not taken into account when considering a new extension.

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## WAIVER OF THE RIGHT TO COMPLETE A DEGREE

It is generally never advisable to waive your right to complete a degree voluntarily. An exception to this is a situation where you have been admitted to another bachelor's degree programme leading to the same degree title (e.g. Bachelor of Arts). The University of Helsinki has decreed that students pursuing a bachelor's degree may only hold one right to complete a degree of the same title at any one time and only one right to complete a degree in a single degree programme.

Besides the situation described above, students may choose to waive their right to complete a degree mainly in situations where they no longer intend to complete their degree due to changing majors, for instance, and do not therefore consider it necessary to apply for an extension. Sometimes reasons related to unemployment benefits may also force students to give up their studies entirely, but this guide makes no comments on such cases.

Whatever your reason for waiving the right to complete a degree, we always recommend asking for guidance from Student Services to assess your situation before waiving the right. This helps you ensure that you are not waiving the right to complete a degree in vain, as after you have waived the right, it can only be reclaimed through student admissions.

## READMISSION AFTER LOSING THE RIGHT TO COMPLETE A DEGREE

If you have lost your right to complete a degree because either you have not registered for attendance or non-attendance at the university in time or the duration of your degree has run out and you have not received or applied for an extension, you may apply for readmission to have your right to complete a degree – in practice, your student place – reinstated. Send the application to the same party that informed you that you had lost your right to complete a degree. If you have merely neglected to register for attendance, you will not have to do anything else than apply. For applying for an extension, see the guide's section **Applying for an extension** (p. 12).

If, however, you have voluntarily waived your right to complete a degree, you can only get it back through student admissions.

# E X A M S A N D O T H E R F O R M S O F A S - S E S S - M E N T



## ARE SET TEXTS NOT AVAILABLE ANYWHERE?

Generally, all set texts should be available through the course library or as electronic material.

The executive groups of degree programmes are responsible for the required books being available for students. In practice, the executive groups of degree programmes must ensure the sufficient availability of books and inform students of the books' availability. Literature and material are considered available when they have been acquired by the library or a similar unit where students are able to get them for their own use.

If a required book is not available, we recommend that you contact the educational coordinator or director of your degree programme immediately. We also recommend contacting the study advisor of your subject or faculty organisation, as it is unlikely that you are alone with your problem.

Required books must be published in the curriculum, and they must not be changed during the academic year without a cogent reason.

Source: Rector's decision 225/2018

## EXAM REGISTRATION

Students should ensure that they have the right to take the exam they are registering for. In case you do not have the right to take the exam, the teacher is not obligated to assess it.

Students are responsible for exam registration themselves. This means that you must ensure that you register for exams in time and provide correct information when registering. For all general examinations, such as faculty exams, you should register separately within the registration period. The registration period for such exams opens 20 days before the exam at the latest and closes 10 days before the exam. Weekends and national holidays are included in the registration period.

You do not need to separately register for exams connected to teaching if the exam is organised during a regular teaching session or at a time agreed upon with the teacher. In such cases, having registered for the course itself is enough. In case students must separately register for exams connected to teaching, the teacher must provide the students with instructions for it well in advance.

If students can choose the language of their exam themselves, they should inform the examiner of the language they wish to receive the exam questions in when registering for the exam at the latest. See also the guide's section **Language of study** (p. 36) for further information on the language used to complete studies.

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## PROBLEMS RELATED TO EXAMINATIONS

### Receiving the wrong questions

The person who drafted the exam is responsible for students receiving the correct questions in the exam and should be reachable during the exam. In practice, mistakes or misunderstandings related to the exam materials can be resolved by asking the invigilator about the matter. If the issue cannot be resolved otherwise, the invigilator should contact the person who drafted the exam.

### Start of the exam and being late to the exam

Generally, it is possible to arrive at the exam until the earliest time people may leave it. This is naturally because when a student who has seen the exam leaves the exam hall, the invigilator can no longer know whether they have told someone about the exam's contents after leaving. Usually, people are allowed to leave the exam after half an hour has passed from its start at the earliest.

### Disturbing behaviour in exams

Your behaviour in exams should, of course, be such that you do not disturb other people who are taking the exam. If the invigilator sees a student causing disturbance in an exam or a similar learning assessment situation, they should caution the student and, if necessary, take other appropriate action to prevent further disturbance. If the disturbance continues despite these measures, the invigilator may terminate the exam of the person causing the disturbance.

Even if you had not disturbed the exam yourself, you should be aware that if the disturbance has unreasonably disturbed the students taking the exam, the exam should be extended by the same amount of time that was lost due to the disturbance.

Students suspected of causing a disturbance in an exam must be given the opportunity to provide an explanation. When a student's exam is terminated because of causing a disturbance, the invigilator records the reason for the interruption on the exam papers or other assessment material and indicates whether the student admits to or denies having caused a disturbance in the exam.

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## What can you have with you in an exam?

You should have writing equipment and an ID with you in the exam. The ID may be a student card (including the digital version), an official ID that has a photo, a driver's licence or a passport from which your identity can be verified. In addition to this, you may only have writing equipment, necessary medications and a small number of snacks with you. If other equipment is allowed or required in the exam, students and invigilators must be informed in advance.

Possession of a mobile phone or other similar communications device in an exam is forbidden (see also the guide's section **Cheating and plagiarism**, p. 37). In case you are demonstrating your identity with a student card, personal ID or driver's licence on your smartphone, you should leave the smartphone elsewhere in the exam room, such as against the wall of the room in your bag. You may pick up your smartphone after having finished writing your answers. After picking up the smartphone, you may only add identifying information such as your student number into the exam papers while under supervision.

## Breaks

In exams that last over two hours, the supervision must be arranged in a way that allows students to leave the exam room under supervision for a short time for compelling reasons. In practice, this usually refers to using the bathroom, but an attack of illness, for instance, may also be considered a compelling reason.

## ANNOUNCEMENT OF EXAM RESULTS

Exam results must be announced well before the next retake date or the registration date for the retake, and one month after the exam date at the latest.

Results of entrance exams and examinations organised **between 1 June and 31 August** may be announced more than one month after the exam date. You should always inform the executive group of the degree programme of exam assessments being late so that they can better take action against the matter in the future.

Exam results are announced at least on the University's intranet and, if necessary, on the notice board of the unit that organised the exam. The results must remain available for at least three weeks. The published results should include the grades according to student number as well as the distribution of grades.

If you see exam results that include students' names and grades on notice boards, please contact the examiner, the executive group of the degree programme or the study administration of the faculty. Because of personal data protection, exam results should never be published together with students' names, only with student numbers. Students' names and student numbers should never be published together.

The examiner is responsible for verifying the exam results. If the exam was graded by several examiners, the names of all examiners must be announced. In addition to this, the result list must indicate which individual questions were graded by each of the examiners.

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## RIGHT TO RETAKE EXAMS

The University is obligated to organise a sufficient number of exams and other assessments of academic performance to ensure that the degree can be completed within the normative duration of studies. Exams and other similar assessment procedures should include the opportunity to retake them unless particular reasons preclude this. The Rector may restrict the number of opportunities to retake exams or other assessment procedures.

Exams connected to teaching should always have at least one opportunity to retake them. The exam date and the number and date of retakes must be announced at the start of the teaching at the latest.

Participation in exams that are not dependent on teaching may not be limited. In practice, this concerns book exams on faculties' general exam days – you can participate in them as many times as you like. However, the number of retakes for passed exams is limited to a maximum of two times.

Sources: Regulations on Degrees and the Protection of Students' Rights at the University of Helsinki, section 35; Rector's decision 255/E018; Rector's decision 495/E017, item 11

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## ELECTRONIC EXAM ROOM

Exams at the University of Helsinki may be organised using a centrally maintained and supervised electronic exam service called the Examinarium, which is supervised via recording camera equipment. The Acceptable Use Policy for information systems is in force in electronic exams – also called Examinarium exams – and the policy also describes the sanctions for misusing the systems or user accounts. As a method of completing a course, the electronic exams are not identical with paper exams – they are their own method of completing a course. The length of an electronic exam is determined by the examiner, and its maximum length is 3 hours.

The instructions previously described in this guide generally apply to electronic exams, too. The following instructions are specifically related to exams taken in the electronic exam room.

## Making exam reservations

In electronic exam rooms, you can take exams flexibly at a time of your choice. The examiner sets a time period during which the electronic exam may be taken. The student then makes an exam reservation before the examination. You must ensure that your exam time observes the opening hours of the building. Information on buildings' opening hours is available on the University's website. If it is possible to take an exam that ends after the building has closed, the student must exit the building immediately after having finished the exam.

You may only have one reservation at a time for each exam. In case you cannot participate in the exam you have reserved, you must cancel the reservation immediately, so that the time slot becomes available to other students.

You can retake electronic exams according to the same principles as other exams. The number of students' exam reservations and their cancellations may be limited if this is necessary to ensure that the service functions properly.

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## Taking the exam and the supervision of exams

You use your University of Helsinki user account to log in to the exam. Please note that giving your own login credentials for others to use is a serious matter interpreted as a cheating attempt and may result in losing your university account altogether.

The system shows you the remaining time for the exam and automatically saves your answers at regular intervals. The exam time begins from the beginning of your exam reservation. You may also start the exam later during the reserved time slot. The exam ends when you have submitted your answers for assessment in the system or when the time slot ends at the latest.

You may not bring anything to the exam room or take anything with you from the room. This applies to all electronic communication devices and snacks; you may only bring in your student card for identification and the key to a locker. If you need snacks or other personal items during the exam for health-related reasons, for instance, or must use the toilet during the exam, you must take the electronic exam in an accessible exam room.

You may not leave the room during the exam. Leaving the room concludes the exam. The exam room is monitored with recording cameras. Live feed from the cameras is transmitted to the porters' monitors, and the recordings are stored on a separate data recorder. Only individuals assigned to the supervision have the right to view the recordings and the live feed. Be prepared to demonstrate your identity to the porter of the building or other employees when requested either during the exam or after it.

If a student is found to have violated the rules, they may have their exam failed. When cheating is suspected, the recordings made during the exam will be checked. The examiner is responsible for deciding whether to have the student's exam failed.

In case the exam is interrupted or prevented by a technical malfunction, a disturbance in the exam room, a fire alarm or a similar reason, you should report the matter to the porters according to the instructions displayed in the exam room. The report will be delivered to the examiner, who makes the decision on retaking the exam.

If you are not able to take electronic exams normally due to a disability, a learning impediment or some other acceptable reason, or if you need assistance with registering for the exam or reading or writing the exam assignments, efforts will be made to organise the exam in the most favourable manner to you as possible. However, this requires you to sort out the matter in advance through the accessibility liaison ([specialneeds@helsinki.fi](mailto:specialneeds@helsinki.fi)), for instance. Accessible exam rooms have one computer available for electronic exams that can be used to sign up to the exam according to the instructions on special exam arrangements.

## Exam assessment and the publication of results

Assessing the answers of exams taken in electronic exam rooms and the publication of their results follow the same principles as other exams. You may receive a message from the system containing unofficial preliminary information about the assessment results as well as possible feedback from the examiner by email when your exam has been assessed.

## WHEN SHOULD YOU APPEAL AGAINST EXAM ASSESSMENTS?

If the exam has been graded by several examiners, the result list must indicate which questions were graded by each examiner. Please also note that exams that require exceptional consideration in the grading process must be graded by a minimum of two examiners where possible. Such exams include at least the competence tests used in the faculties of medicine and veterinary medicine.

The grading principles of each exam must be announced in connection with the exam results at the latest, or at the very least, students must be informed of how they can have access to the grading principles. Usually, the principles can be viewed by visiting the examiner during their office hours. You also have the right to receive a copy of your exam answers, but you must pay for this yourself.

Read the grading principles of the exam and assess your own answer based on them. Do you believe that the examiner has neglected to consider something? The relevant issue here is whether everyone who has taken the exam has been assessed according to the same principles. Have the answers given to the same question been graded by the same person?

If you still wish to request rectification after considering the previous questions, you must make the request to the teacher responsible for the grading within 14 days of the date you had access to the exam result. The teacher should provide a justified decision on the request for rectification within a reasonable time. If you are not satisfied with the decision given by the teacher, they should provide the decision in writing. You may make a request for rectification of this decision to the Academic Appeals Board within 14 days of having had access to the teacher's decision. The decisions made by both the teacher and the Academic Appeals Board during the rectification procedure must include justifications for the decision.

You may request rectification even if you are retaking the exam. However, in oral exams and exams that are otherwise difficult to grade, you should make the request for rectification immediately instead of only after having used your retake opportunities for the exam. If the request for rectification on a failed exam is rejected and you have used all your retake opportunities, you may have to retake the entire course.

Sources: EOA 10 October 1990 (no. 484/4/89); EOA 9 September 1988 (nos. 1205/4/87 and 1232/4/87); Regulations on Degrees and the Protection of Students' Rights at the University of Helsinki, sections 53–59 and 55; Rector's decision 225/2018



## GRADING OF THE MASTER'S THESIS

When discussing the master's thesis, grading often has more importance than with other courses. The University has common instructions for grading theses. The thesis is assessed by two examiners, as provided in detail by the faculty council in each faculty. The faculty councils approve and grade each thesis.

It is good to note that you may request in writing that the grading be discontinued before the thesis has been approved in the faculty council. This will cancel the grading process. Faculties must provide instructions on when the request to discontinue the grading must be made at the latest. If you have submitted a thesis for grading that you believe is too incomplete or that you wish to cancel the grading of for some other reason, a written request is thus enough to cancel the grading process. After this, you will have the opportunity to edit your thesis before resubmitting it.

The grading of theses must naturally be justified. The justifications for the grade are included in the statement on the thesis made by the examiners. In case you are not satisfied with the grade you have been given after the faculty council has already confirmed the grading and approved the thesis, you may make a request for rectification to the University's Academic Appeals Board within 14 days of having received the grading decision. The Academic Appeals Board cannot change the grade, but it may refer the grading back for reconsideration. If this happens, the faculty council will process the request for rectification and decide on potentially changing the grade.

S T U D Y

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## IS THERE NO SENSE IN THE AVAILABLE COURSES?

Will you have to wait a year to take a missing exam? Is compulsory teaching being organised in a way that makes it overlap with other compulsory teaching?

According to the University's own policies, students must be able to complete studies in an appropriate order, without interruptions and within the normative duration of studies. This means that the University is responsible for planning and realising the degree structure and teaching in a way that makes it possible to study in a sensible order and without unnecessary bottlenecks. It must be generally possible to retake completed studies, including exams and essays. However, it is not possible to retake a bachelor's or master's thesis. Study counselling must also be organised for students in a way that allows them to complete their studies within the normative duration of studies.

If there appear to be unnecessary bottlenecks interfering with your studies caused by the way the teaching is organised, the situation can thus be improved. You are usually not alone with your problem – we recommend that you contact the study advisor of your subject or faculty organisation and discuss the issue together with the director of the degree programme and, if necessary, the head of study affairs in your faculty. If required, you can also contact the Student Union. There may also be alternative methods of completing the course available – ask around to learn about these. We always recommend that you bring up the problems to save future students the trouble you have had to go through yourself.

The best option for everyone would be if the obstacles of study progress could be anticipated and prevented when the degree structures – the curricula and the annual teaching schedule – are prepared. The curriculum is prepared in the executive group of the degree programme and approved in the faculty council. Both these administrative bodies have student representation. The annual teaching schedule, on the other hand, is prepared and approved in the executive group of the degree programme. If you notice problems with the degree requirements or the planning of teaching, you can thus contact the executive group of your degree programme or its student members – or you could even apply to become a member of the executive group yourself and participate in the preparation process.

## MANDATORY ATTENDANCE

The basic principle in university studies is that students actively participate in teaching. Teaching can be defined as mandatory in the curriculum of the degree programme, that is, the degree structure, when it is justified either pedagogically or from the perspective of teaching arrangements, in teaching organised in seminar form, for instance. The curriculum should also mention whether participation is required for 100%, 90% or 75% of the teaching.

If participation in the teaching or part of the teaching on a course has been defined as mandatory in the curriculum, the teacher may give students assignments to compensate for their lacking attendance. The completion of such assignments is a requirement for completing the course. The curriculum and the course description should tell students the learning objectives of the course. The additional assignments given to compensate for non-attendance can be compared to these objectives: the additional assignments are meant to give students as near the same skills as possible as attendance on the course. The additional assignments should also as closely as possible correspond to the amount of work done by the students who participated in the teaching. If an additional assignment feels unreasonably large and appears to be penal in nature, the student should consequently give feedback on this to the teacher and, if necessary, contact the head of academic affairs in the faculty.

## ALTERNATIVE METHODS OF COMPLETING COURSES

If participation in mandatory lectures is difficult for you because of your situation in life, for instance, courses can often be completed by taking a book exam or writing an essay, instead. Teachers have no special obligation to offer alternative methods of completing courses, however, so you should ask about it well in advance before the course begins. The methods that must be offered for completing each course are defined in the curriculum of the degree programme. Consequently, it is possible to affect the methods of completing courses when the curricula are prepared in the executive groups of degree programmes.

## DOES THE NUMBER OF CREDITS GIVEN FOR A COURSE NOT CORRESPOND TO THE AMOUNT OF WORK REQUIRED?

One credit should correspond to around 27 hours of work. However, the amount of work on a course sometimes considerably exceeds the number of credits given. Attention should be paid to this already when the curricula are drafted in the executive groups of degree programmes. Problems related to the amount of work on courses usually concern everyone completing the course, so we recommend that you contact the study advisor of your subject or faculty organisation and take the matter forward as a group.

## DO YOU NEED SPECIAL ARRANGEMENTS IN YOUR STUDIES?

As a student, you are entitled to special arrangements in your studies, such as additional time to complete exams or various technical aids if you ‘— have, for instance, a physical disability, a sensory impairment, an impediment caused by a long-term illness, difficulties related to reading or writing or some other cognitive impairment. Special arrangements should always be based on sufficient and documented reasons as well as a genuine need for them. The applicant's or student's disability, long-term illness or impairment may be physical or mental in nature’ (Vice Rector's decision 4/2014, unofficial translation).

When the above-mentioned criteria are fulfilled, you also have the right to special arrangements based on Finland's Constitution and the Non-discrimination Act.

If you feel that you meet any of the abovementioned criteria or if you need special arrangements to complete your studies based on a similar reason, please get in touch with the University's Student Services or contact the accessibility liaison directly ([specialneeds@helsinki.fi](mailto:specialneeds@helsinki.fi)).

## HOW DO I GET MY PRIOR LEARNING RECOGNISED?

The University has general principles in place on the recognition of prior learning (also known by its Finnish acronym, AHOT). In addition to this, faculties may have their own, more detailed stipulations on the matter. Prior learning, whether completed studies or competences acquired in working life, may be recognised either through substitution – replacing modules that belong to the degree with prior learning – or inclusion – incorporating a certain number of credits' worth of prior learning into the degree. Inclusion is the easier option, as the competences do not need to correspond precisely to the learning objectives of a specific study module, only the broader learning objectives of the degree. In most faculties, you would generally contact the teacher in charge of the course that would be replaced directly on the matter of substitution. As for inclusion, the curriculum of the degree programme features information on the practices.

You must apply for the recognition of prior learning in writing. In the case of recognition of prior learning acquired in formal education, you must receive a decision on the recognition within one month. In case you are not satisfied with the decision you receive, you may make a request for rectification to the party that made the decision. The rectification of a decision on the recognition of prior learning follows the same procedure as rectifications of course assessments (see the guide's section **When should you appeal against exam assessments?**, p. 24, for further information).

Decisions on the recognition of prior learning must always be justified if the student's application is rejected. Stating that 'the studies in question do not correspond to studies in the University's curriculum', for instance, is not sufficient justification for rejecting an application. The decision must include the criteria set for the recognition of prior learning, whether the criteria are based on the University Statutes, faculty practices or directly on legislation. The only exception to this is a situation in which the number of credits for the courses to be recognised together with the studies the student has previously completed would exceed the minimum extent of the degree. In such cases, the application for the recognition of prior learning will not be processed at all (however, this does not concern those studying according to the old degree requirements).

Sources: Administrative Procedure Act, Section 45; KHO 4 November 2004, T27/01; Regulations on Degrees and the Protection of Students' Rights at the University of Helsinki, section 55; Rector's decision 4/16/2017

## STUDENT COUNSELLING

The University is committed to provide guidance and counselling related to both studying and writing theses. The Universities Act by itself obligates universities to provide study guidance to students so as to enable them to complete their degrees within the normative duration of studies.

The Rector decides on the principles of student counselling, including the rights and obligations of students and supervisors. The curriculum of the degree programme includes instructions on drawing up the personal study plan and on the practices for its approval and updating.

The executive groups of degree programmes are responsible for each degree student being assigned a supervising teacher or group of teachers responsible for counselling related to the student's personal study plan, a main supervisor in charge of thesis supervision and possible other supervisors. In English-language and multilingual degree programmes, a sufficient amount of counselling must be offered in English to ensure that students who do not know the official languages of Finland are able to complete their degree in two years.

In practice, the amount and quality of counselling vary. If you feel that you are not receiving enough counselling, you should first discuss the matter with your supervisor. In a problem situation, you could suggest making a supervision

agreement, for instance, so that you and your supervisor have a shared understanding of what the counselling includes. The agreement can be quite concrete in terms of the number of meetings and the method of giving feedback, for instance. If there are problems with the implementation of the supervision agreement, the teacher's supervisor and the management of the degree programme are the parties you can turn to. Changing thesis supervisors is not usually possible based on dysfunctional personal chemistry.

Students have the right to receive feedback on their thesis, including doctoral, master's and bachelor's theses, before returning it. Please remember, though, that even bad supervision is not acceptable grounds for raising the grade of your thesis based on a request for rectification – you are independently responsible for the choices and end result of your thesis. Consequently, we recommend that you attempt to solve the problems in your supervision relationship as early as possible. If your supervisor does not bring up the contents of the supervision at the start of your thesis seminar, you should ask about it so that you have a shared understanding of the matter. Usually, problems with supervision are based on the parties having different expectations for it. In addition to personal feedback in writing, supervision includes feedback given collectively during the seminar, for instance.

Sources: Universities Act, section 40; Regulations on Degrees and the Protection of Students' Rights at the University of Helsinki, sections 1 and 23; Rector's decision 301/2017; Rector's decision 495/2017, item 11

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## STUDENT SERVICES FOR STUDENTS

Students are entitled to receive guidance and services related to their studies given by Student Services ([guide.student.helsinki.fi/en/article/student-services](https://guide.student.helsinki.fi/en/article/student-services)). The guidance and counselling given by the University and described above refers primarily to general guidance that supports study planning and completion, which teachers of individual courses are not necessarily even able to provide.

### IS IT HARD TO REACH A TEACHER OR SUPERVISOR?

When you need advice from a teacher, we always recommend that you first check the existing instructions from the course description or course page (e.g. Moodle), for instance, where you might find the answer yourself. This helps prevent teachers' emails from getting filled with questions, thus delaying answers to all questions. However, if you cannot find an answer despite trying, do not hesitate to ask for help.

Teachers should be available for students on a weekly basis on **1 September–31 May**, with the exception of the Christmas vacation (the time between the second and third periods). Methods of contact between teachers and students include teachers' personal receptions and communication by phone, mail and/or electronic communication devices. Teachers should respond to messages within a reasonable time. Decisions on more detailed practices of teacher–student communication are made in faculties.

The executive groups of degree programmes are responsible for ensuring that students receive supervision for writing theses on **1 September–31 May**. Faculties decide on the supervision given in the summer period as well as other communication during the period. In some faculties, a standardised supervision agreement is made to agree on the methods and objectives of supervision. If you need to change supervisors, the faculty is responsible for investigating the situation and informing students about the changes in time.



## TERMINATION OF A SUBJECT OR CHANGE IN DEGREE STRUCTURE – TRANSITION PERIODS

If the degree structure is changed or if your degree programme is even completely terminated, the University must – despite the change – ensure that you can graduate according to the old degree structure within a reasonable time.

Degree students whose right to study has begun before **1 August 2017** and who are not moving to complete their degree according to the curricula of the new degree programmes may study according to the degree requirements of their old degree programme or major and the standing orders of the faculty until **31 July 2020**. All degree students will start studying in the new (launched on **1 August 2017**) degree programmes on **1 August 2020**.

The transition periods must be reasonable, which in practice means at least that completing the degrees following the old structure must be possible within the normative duration of studies.

## POSSIBILITY TO GRADUATE FLEXIBLY THROUGHOUT THE YEAR

In accordance with student equality and the principles of good administration, the University is obligated to ensure that matters are processed without undue delay. The University must also be able to estimate the processing times related to awarding degrees. Five months, for instance, is too long a time to wait for an official confirmation of having completed a degree, if you have already completed all studies related to the degree. To speed up graduation, the University has abandoned graduation days, and students have the opportunity to graduate at any time during the year, taking into account normal processing times. If there is a delay in the process, the University must be able to justify it.

Source: AOA 22 May 2001 (no. 1505/4/99)

O T H E R

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I S S U E S

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## INTERNSHIPS

### Compulsory internships that are part of your degree

Internships or other career studies are included in all degree programmes at the University. When an internship is included in studies, it must be genuinely related to the field of study in terms of content. Making coffee and copying documents is not enough – the internship must allow students to do work in their own field. Students must also get guidance in the internship and receive credits for it. In some fields of study, such as healthcare and teaching, the University specifies and arranges the internship placements, but in many other fields, students are responsible for getting an internship themselves. Students may be required to provide a criminal records extract in internships where they will be working with minors (see also the guide's section **Student data protection**, p. 41).

The University grants discretionary funding for internships that students may apply for. The internship funding is meant to supplement the salary paid by the provider of the internship placement. Students completing an internship negotiate their salary with the employer themselves. The recommended minimum salary for interns is a salary that equals or exceeds the minimum wage defined by Kela (the Social Insurance Institution of Finland) as the annual work requirement. We do not recommend that you accept unpaid internships. Further information on internship salary is available in the University's instructions: [guide.student.helsinki.fi/en/article/traineeship-funding-and-salary](https://guide.student.helsinki.fi/en/article/traineeship-funding-and-salary)

You also have the right to statutory insurance during your internship. If you encounter harassment or inappropriate treatment during your internship, you have the right to contact the University and receive support for the situation (see also the guide's section **Safety of studies**, p. 39).

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## LANGUAGE OF LEARNING

According to the Universities Act, the languages of instruction and degrees at the University of Helsinki are Finnish and Swedish. In addition to this, the University may decide to use other languages as languages of instruction, degrees and study. The most common examples of this are English-language and multilingual degree programmes in which the language of degrees and instruction is generally English. Instruction in the field of languages may also be conducted in some other language than Finnish, Swedish or English.

In other than English-language degrees, the University must guarantee the possibility of completing the degree in Finnish or Swedish. This means that students must be able to complete each compulsory course in Finnish or Swedish regardless of the language of instruction, unless the nature of the subject in question or the nature of instruction requires otherwise. Students may also ask to receive exam questions and other instructions for assignments in Finnish or Swedish. In both cases, we advise you to agree on the matter with the teacher or examiner well in advance but no later than when the course begins or, in the case of a book exam, when signing up. However, in English-language degrees, students must complete at least 75% of their studies (including the thesis) in English. The study register will always indicate one language for each course you have completed.

The University is also responsible for informing students about the possibility to complete studies in Finnish and Swedish. If students have not been informed about the matter, you should point it out. As for students who are completing an English-language degree and do not speak the national languages of Finland, the University must ensure that a sufficient amount of communication occurs in English.

Sources: Constitution of Finland, sections 16–17; Universities Act, section 11; AOK 25 November 2010 (no. OKV/1001/1/2009); Regulations on Degrees and the Protection of Students' Rights at the University of Helsinki, sections 51–52; Rector's decision 495/2017

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## CHEATING AND PLAGIARISM

Students are responsible for following good scientific and academic practice in their studies. In practice, this means that students must complete courses honestly. All kinds of cheating and plagiarism is forbidden, and the University has collective rules for processing cases of plagiarism and cheating. In case the suspicion concerns highest-level theses such as the master's thesis, instructions of the Finnish National Board on Research Integrity will be followed when processing the suspicion.

Cheating in studies covers all the different forms in which scientific misconduct manifests itself. Copying other people's work and claiming it as your own, for instance, clearly constitutes cheating. Additionally, all other methods used by a student to intentionally misrepresent their competence are included in cheating in studies. The following forms of cheating, for example, are forbidden at the University:

- Cheating in exams (e.g. using forbidden methods or tools)
- Falsifying attendance records (e.g. giving a false impression of your own or someone else's attendance on a course)
- Forbidden cooperation (e.g. jointly completing an assignment intended as independent work, using a 'ghost writer')

It is easy to get caught for cheating and plagiarism, especially thanks to the Urkund plagiarism detection system currently used at the University (see the guide's section **Urkund plagiarism detection system**, page 38, for further information on using Urkund). The easiest way to avoid problems is thus to learn how to properly cite your sources. If, however, you have tried your luck and were caught for cheating, confess, apologise and face your punishment. And do not plagiarise again. If you are being accused unjustly, however, you have the right to state your own version of the events and to make a request for rectification of the decision, in the exact same way as with other decisions made by the University. You can ask for advice from the Student Union.

The University's website has good instructions for avoiding accidental cheating as well as information on the consequences of cheating: [blogs.helsinki.fi/alakopsaa/?lang=en](https://blogs.helsinki.fi/alakopsaa/?lang=en). We recommend that you read these instructions when writing your thesis at the latest.

Sources: Regulations on Degrees and the Protection of Students' Rights at the University of Helsinki, sections 45–47; Rector's decision 172/2011; Rector's decision 11/2018; Rector's decision 79/2018

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## URKUND PLAGIARISM DETECTION SYSTEM

The University of Helsinki uses the Urkund plagiarism detection system to check all theses returned through E-thesis. Teachers may also decide to use Urkund to check coursework. In such cases, teachers should provide instructions for using the system.

Using Urkund means that your work is automatically compared to texts in the database and on the internet to ensure that the work has not been plagiarised. The system indicates the parts of the student's work that correspond to a text found in the database or on the internet and presents the share of such parts in the entire work. The percentage alone does not reveal whether the work is plagiarised – the examiner of the work must go through each part separately to check whether the sources have been appropriately cited.

Students will only be contacted in case the process reveals parts where adherence to good scientific practice is under question and that thus require an explanation from the student. In such cases, the University's instructions on processing suspected cases of plagiarism and cheating are used.

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## SAFETY OF STUDIES

Students have the right to be safe during studies. The University has instructions for emergency situations. These instructions have been collected onto the 'Instructions for students' website:

***[guide.student.helsinki.fi/en/article/instructions-emergency-situations](https://guide.student.helsinki.fi/en/article/instructions-emergency-situations)***

The University also has instructions on the prevention of inappropriate treatment and harassment. Instructions for such situations are available here: ***[flamma.helsinki.fi/content/res/pri/HY356073](https://flamma.helsinki.fi/content/res/pri/HY356073)***

### Drug testing and other safety issues related to individual students

In all cases where you are suspected of being unsuitable for studies in your subject or someone wants you to undergo drug testing, for instance, please contact the Student Union immediately. HYY's specialist in educational policy in charge of advice on legal protection will help you with these issues. The contact details of the specialist are available at ***[hyy.helsinki.fi/en/contact-information-and-faq/personnel](https://hyy.helsinki.fi/en/contact-information-and-faq/personnel)***. You may take a support person with you to all meetings, and this support person can be a representative of the Student Union, for instance.

## DISQUALIFICATION

Generally, the personnel of University administration and teachers are not disqualified in measures concerning students unless the student in question is close to them in the manner stipulated in Administration Act, section 28. In practice, this refers primarily to situations in which the examiner is your relative or otherwise close to you, such as your mother or mother-in-law. Teaching can also be given to close relatives or other individuals close to the teacher, but exam assessment is covered by regulations on disqualification. In addition to this, it is worth noting that the teacher who assesses your thesis cannot be involved in the decision concerning a request for rectification of the assessment of the same thesis.

## MISTAKES WITH THE REGISTRATION OF COURSES

If your study register includes incorrect information, it can usually be fixed by messaging the teacher responsible for the matter. If you are not sure which teacher is responsible for it, contact Student Services. The University is obligated to fix incorrect information without undue delay. If the mistake is a simple typo, it may also be fixed to your disadvantage, unless this has unreasonable consequences.



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## STUDENT DATA PROTECTION

The University may process your personal data within the conditions set by the General Data Protection Regulation. Information on the personal data processed by the University, the grounds for processing the data and the rights you have in relation to data protection is available in the University's data protection statement: [\*guide.student.helsinki.fi/en/article/data-protection-statement\*](https://guide.student.helsinki.fi/en/article/data-protection-statement)

## STUDENTS' COPYRIGHT

Students own the copyright to their coursework and thesis. Further information on this right is available here, for instance (in Finnish): [\*operight.fi/artikkeli/omat-tyot/opintosuorituksen-suoja\*](https://operight.fi/artikkeli/omat-tyot/opintosuorituksen-suoja).

Please note that students are obligated to respect other students' copyright as well as teachers' copyright to the teaching materials they have created. Photographing or filming instruction without permission, for instance, may violate the copyright of both the teacher and your fellow students as well as possibly the privacy protection of those present. It is also not advisable to publish teaching material created by the teacher on your own.

## ADMINISTRATIVE COMPLAINT

If you feel that the University has acted unjustly and against its own instructions and rules in a specific case, but normal rectification channels have not brought you justice, you may make an administrative complaint on the matter. An administrative complaint cannot result in a change to a decision concerning yourself, but you may make University management aware of an erroneous procedure in place in your faculty. However, an administrative complaint is a long and arduous process, and we recommend only making one as a last resort.

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R I G H T S

**In this guide, we have described the most common situations related to students' legal protection that you might encounter during your studies. Below, we have summed up the instructions on how you can usually appeal against decisions that have been made.**

## **OFFICIAL MEANS OF RECTIFICATION**

You can request rectification of the assessment of an exam or thesis, for instance, through official means. You must generally request rectification within 14 days of having been informed of the decision. Students are considered to have been informed of the assessment on the date the exam results were published or the grade of the master's thesis was decided in the faculty council. Requests for rectification are made in writing. You should store all email exchanges on the matter to later be able to prove what kind of discussion you have had on the matter.

When you are requesting rectification in any matter, the first party to contact is usually the teacher responsible for the matter. However, when requesting rectification of the assessment of your thesis, the request for rectification is made directly to the University's Academic Appeals Board. You can generally request rectification of the decision made by the first person in charge – the teacher responsible for the

matter – from the University's Academic Appeals Board. In connection with each decision, students must be informed of how they can request rectification of the decision, the deadline for delivering the request and how the request is drafted.

During all stages, the University's decisions must always be justified to you, and the decisions must be given in writing when you request it at the latest. If you receive a decision without justifications, you have the right to request justifications for it.

Particularly in cases concerning several students, we recommend that you contact your subject or faculty organisation, too. You may take a friend with you even to the reception of your professor. If you feel like you cannot do it by yourself, you can also ask for advice and support from the Student Union. Informing the executive groups of degree programmes, faculties and the Student Union of problems helps us prevent them from repeating in the future.

## **WHAT IF THE APPEAL DOES NOT HELP?**

Decisions can often not be appealed, but this does not mean that they cannot be changed. For instance, if you did not fit on a course that would be crucial for your studies, we recommend that you contact the teacher of the course, an educational coordinator or, if necessary, the director of the degree programme. The study advisors of your subject or faculty organisation and the specialists of the Student Union are also there to support you so that you will not have to fight for your study progress alone.

Sources: Regulations on Degrees and the Protection of Students' Rights at the University of Helsinki; sections 55–60 Universities Act; Chapter 10: AOK 50 November 2004 on appeal instructions (no. 5/11/105)

# S O U R C E S

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The main sources used in this guide include the Regulations on Degrees and the Protection of Students' Rights at the University of Helsinki as well as various decisions by the academic administration and the Rector on students' legal protection. We have also used *Opiskelijoiden oikeusturvaopas* (2012) by the Student Union of the University of Lapland and the *Opiskelijan oikeudet* guide by the Student Union of the University of Jyväskylä as examples as well as borrowed some good formulations from them with permission. As fact sources and support for our source-of-law references, we have used LicSc (Ad-

min) **Miia Laukkanen's** report *Opiskelijan oikeusturva: näkökohtia opiskelijoiden ennakkolliseen ja jälkikäteeseen oikeusturvaan opinnoissa ja opiskelijavalinnoissa* (2008) and Professor of Administrative Law **Tarmo Miettinen's** article *Opiskeluoikeuden saaminen ja lakkaaminen yliopistoissa* (Edita 2013/28). The instructions for applying for an extension are largely borrowed from the instructions of the Faculty of Educational Sciences, which are quite clear and universally applicable. The legislation and the University of Helsinki's own regulations on which the guide is based are listed below.

## LEGAL PRACTICE AND LEGALITY CONTROL PRACTICE

### Legislation

- Act on the compensation for injuries or illness occurring in conditions that are comparable to work and related to studies (460/2015)
- Administrative Procedure Act (434/2003)
- Personal Data Act (523/1999)
- Constitution of Finland (731/1999)
- Non-discrimination Act (1325/2014)
- Universities Act (558/2009)

### Legality Control

- AOA, Deputy Ombudsman's decision, 29 May 2002 (no. 2649/4/00)
- AOA, Deputy Ombudsman's decision, 11 June 2001 (no. 852/4/00)
- AOA, Deputy Ombudsman's decision, 22 May 2001 (no. 1503/4/99)
- AOK, Deputy Chancellor of Justice's decision, 25 November 2010 (no. OKV/1001/1/2009)
- AOK, Deputy Chancellor of Justice's decision, 30 November 2004 (no. 611/1/03)
- EOA, Ombudsman's decision, 9 June 1992 (no. 301/4/91)
- EOA, Ombudsman's decision, 10 October 1990 (no. 484/4/89)
- EOA, Ombudsman's decision, 9 September 1988 (nos. 1205/4/87 and 1238/4/87)
- KHO, Supreme Administrative Court's decision, 4 November 2004, T 2799

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## UNIVERSITY'S POLICIES

### Regulations

- Regulations on Degrees and the Protection of Students' Rights at the University of Helsinki

### Rector's decisions (unofficial translations of the titles)

- 265/2007: Practices for teacher's reception hours at the University of Helsinki
- 172/2011: Rector's instructions on procedure in cases of cheating and plagiarism among students
- 11/2013: User guidelines for the plagiarism detection system at the University of Helsinki
- 79/2013: Specification to Rector's decision 11/2013: User guidelines for the plagiarism detection system at the University of Helsinki
- 50/2015: Principles for processing applications for an extension following the Universities Act at the University of Helsinki
- 495/2017: Policies concerning degrees and studies at the University of Helsinki
- 496/2017: Principles for the recognition and validation of prior learning
- 801/2017: Policies concerning student counselling and the monitoring of study progress at the University of Helsinki
- 225/2018: Principles related to examinations
- 850/2018: Principles related to examinations: change to the Rector's decision

### Vice Rector's decisions (unofficial translations of the titles)

- 4/2014: Policies concerning special arrangements
- 9/2016: Instructions on taking exams in the electronic exam room, the Examinarium

## CONTACT INFORMATION

In the Student Union of the University of Helsinki, guidance on issues of legal protection related to studies is given by the specialist in educational policy, whose contact details are available at [hyy.helsinki.fi/en/contact-information-and-faq/personnel](http://hyy.helsinki.fi/en/contact-information-and-faq/personnel).

