

Good practices in communality

in the faculties of the University of Helsinki



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THANK YOU FOR YOUR DECISION TO PROMOTE COMMUNALITY

Communality is a major resource for the University community. It promotes wellbeing, the quality of research and education, and the defence of values important to a civilised community in our post-truth era.

HYY considers itself the cooperation and sparring partner of the University. We want to help the University in promoting communality. For this reason, we have collected ways in which each faculty at the University of Helsinki as well as the Swedish School of Social Science have promoted the participation and communality of the University community. Each faculty had some excellent measures for this. Now we only need to spread these good practices from each faculty to all the others – thus conducting quality management at the University at the same time.

Communality is ultimately about very simple things. It comes down to the way we encounter other people in our community each day and care about the people around us. Small, simple actions become significant when they are done sincerely, listening to the other person and caring about them. On the other hand, even great efforts do not carry us far if they are not backed by genuine care for our community. Whatever is done to increase communality, let us do it while caring for our community and each other.

LET'S INTRODUCE AT LEAST THESE!

We have listed the good practices on the participation and communality of the University community thematically below. We hope that at least the following practices will be spread to every faculty:

- An orientation event is organised for the members of the faculty council for their position before the start of their term. Issues discussed at the event include at least the annual schedule of the faculty, the University Statutes in relation to the tasks of the faculty council and the procedure for getting matters included on the agenda.
- Teaching development days that are open to all members of the University community are organised in the faculty to discuss feedback from students and consider developmental measures based on the feedback.
- Attention is paid in the faculty to the way its members are referred to. The ‘we are the University’ spirit is actively cherished.
- The faculty communicates about how other members of the community should be treated. The faculty may, for instance, make its own code of conduct.

PARTICIPATORY DECISION-MAKING

Participatory decision-making also promotes communality. All groups within the University community have representation in the faculties’ decision-making bodies at the University of Helsinki, which is excellent. Representation from the different groups guarantees the quality of decision-making and the flow of information as well as provides an experience of participation. People in the faculties felt that the new University Statutes have also increased communality as they have returned some power to the faculty level.

- ‘Training for members of administrative bodies is planned at the faculty at the beginning of the members’ term. The training makes it easier for the members to participate in collective decision-making.’
- ‘The faculty has a faculty meeting that is open to everyone a couple of times a year. The entire faculty community is invited to the meeting to discuss current issues.’
- ‘The dean of the faculty regularly hosts the dean’s Q&A session, which is open to everyone. Vice deans may also host their own Q&A sessions in relation to their own areas of responsibility.’
- ‘The faculty’s committees have changed their working language to English as soon as a person who does not speak Finnish or Swedish as their native tongue has taken part in their activities. This promotes foreign-language speakers’ participation and integration into the University community.’
- ‘The faculty’s strategy seminar in the spring is organised as a cruise to Tallinn. Key people from the students’ faculty organisation are also invited to the cruise.’
- ‘A workshop on the future, open to everyone in the faculty, was organised in the faculty to prepare for the upcoming strategy period. The faculty’s future strategic policies were envisioned in the workshop,

which was led by a couple of researchers of futures studies from the University of Turku. A shared meal was available for the participants after the workshop.'

- 'A functional planning day, open to everyone in the faculty, is organised in the faculty to consider, through group discussion, how to concretise the implementation plan of the faculty's strategy.'
- 'Student representatives are invited to participate in the faculty's development days and the meetings of the degree programmes' directors.'
- 'A personnel meeting is organised before faculty council meetings to discuss current issues.'
- 'Students and representatives of University Services are also invited to participate in the faculty's development days.'

COLLECTIVE DEVELOPMENT WORK ON TEACHING & COMMUNAL TEACHING

- 'The faculty organises teaching development days/evenings that are open to everyone together with the students' faculty organisation.'
- 'The faculty utilises HowULearn results systematically and holistically. Students are involved in reviewing the results of the questionnaire and planning the developmental measures that are taken based on the results.'
- 'Shared coffee breaks for teachers and students are organised regularly in the faculty. During the coffee breaks, students can give feedback on courses to the teachers while the teachers can give feedback to students.'
- 'All study advisors in the faculty are invited to participate in the faculty's teaching days once every academic term. During the event, the student representatives have, for instance, described the qualities of a good teacher.'
- 'At its best, teaching in the faculty has elements that support the formation of communality. Working in small groups and project work, for instance, help students get to know each other.'
- 'Students are included in research and teaching work in the faculty as research and teaching assistants. This strongly integrates them into the community.'
- 'The faculty organises 'the night of the rotten tomatoes' once every year after the new students have got a grip on their studies. The evening gathers the members of the faculty community together to give feedback to one another.'
- 'University Services and student representatives are also invited to participate in the faculties' development days. Participation in administration compensates for absences from mandatory teaching!'

COMMUNICATION

- 'Student representatives in the faculty council are on the staff email lists. This way, information on current issues in the faculty gets forwarded to the students, too.'

- ‘Attention is paid in the faculty to the way its members are referred to. The ‘we are the University’ spirit is actively cherished.
- ‘The deans have planned to have matching overalls made for all deans in the faculty. This would make them easy to recognise in faculty events. The overalls would make the deans not only easily recognisable but also approachable.’
- ‘The dean actively communicates to students and other members of the faculty community that their doors are always open.’
- ‘The dean of the faculty relates news from the faculty council to the University Services personnel separately after each meeting.’
- ‘The faculty communicates about how other members of the community should be treated; the faculty’s own code of conduct is being prepared.’
- ‘A four-day training session is organised for teacher tutors in early autumn. Written instructions have also been made on the division of responsibility between teacher tutors and student tutors.’

FUN ACTIVITIES TOGETHER

- ‘The faculty has a collective Christmas party for everyone.’
- ‘Faculty sauna evenings are organised in the faculty on the students’ initiative, with the deans of the faculty also participating.’
- ‘Christmas cruise in which the students have also participated on a representational basis.’
- ‘Students in the faculty invite the management and staff of the faculty to their events, such as the freshers’ party.’
- ‘After-work meetings for staff.’
- ‘The faculty has its own May Day celebration organised by students, with the staff also invited.’
- ‘The faculty organises May Day preparties for students. Students who have completed 55 credits are rewarded with overall badges at the preparty. The idea of the event is also to remind teachers that enabling study progress is important.’
- ‘The faculty has successfully benchmarked HYY and the University management’s dinners: it organises dinners for the faculty management and key student actors, with both the management and students holding speeches.’
- ‘The staff and students are invited to the faculty’s graduation party.’
- ‘In the future, the faculty plans to organise an opening party for the autumn term aimed at the entire community.’
- ‘The enthusiastic vice dean responsible for societal influencing organises football matches for the faculty community.’
- ‘The faculty has a collective spring celebration for everyone.’
- ‘The faculty organises ‘wine and whine’ evenings that are open to everyone.’
- ‘The faculty organises movie nights that are open to everyone.’
- ‘The faculty plans to organise an event aimed at increasing communality at the Think Corner, with students, staff and alumni all invited.’

MEETINGS & ENCOUNTERS

Based on meetings with the faculties, drinking coffee connects the University community. The following coffee-based events are organised in the faculties:

- Professors' morning coffee hours
- The dean's coffee hours for the staff, with students invited in the future, too
- Morning coffee hours between the deans and representatives of student organisations
- Departmental coffee hours, with both students and staff invited
- Teachers' morning coffee hours, with students invited, too
- Coffee and buns, with the director of a study orientation meeting active members of student organisations
- Rector's coffee hours, separately for the staff and students
- Researchers' coffee hours

In addition to the above, the following are organised in faculties:

- Thursday workout sessions that are open to everyone in the faculty
- Lunches or meetings between the representatives of student organisations and the dean of the faculty
- The deans on call on the campus (the idea came from the rectors' campus tours). This makes it easy for the faculty community to come and chat with the dean.
- The staff's reception times promote communality. In several meetings in the faculties, discussion included the idea that practices regarding reception times should be confirmed and their use marketed to students. Instead of times made by appointment, established reception times should be used. Campaigns along the lines of 'meet your teacher!' should be developed.