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## Practices for the assessment of teaching skills at the University of Helsinki

The assessment of teaching skills plays a key role in the overall assessment of applicants in recruitment processes. Applicants' teaching skills are assessed if they apply for a teaching or research position or for the title of docent. Each faculty has a committee for the assessment of teaching skills, set up by the dean. The teaching skills committee conducts a reasoned overall assessment of applicants' teaching skills. A demonstration of teaching skills is a public teaching session in the field of the position or docentship applied for, and plays a key role in the overall assessment of teaching skills. The purpose of a teaching demonstration is to verify the applicant's teaching skills in practice. The areas to be assessed in addition to the teaching demonstration are defined in the relevant matrix for the assessment of teaching skills.

This rector's decision defines the level of teaching skills required for various teaching and research positions as well as the practices for the assessment of teaching skills and the validity period of statements, and provides recommendations on the composition of position-specific teaching skills committees. The objective is to ensure that the University of Helsinki employs uniform practices in the assessment of teaching skills, enabling comparisons between applicants and ensuring their equal treatment as well as clear criteria and transparent processes. The harmonisation of practices for the assessment of teaching skills has been discussed by the University of Helsinki's extended management group, the Academic Affairs Council and a cooperation meeting. The views of faculties have also been taken into account in the preparations.

## Level of teaching skills required for teaching and research positions

As specified in the Regulations of the University of Helsinki, the minimum requirements for teaching skills vary between positions. Teaching skills are assessed on the following scale: excellent, very good, good, satisfactory, passable. This decision expands on the minimum requirements for various positions concerning the overall assessment of teaching skills and teaching demonstrations, as follows:

- Full professor: teaching skills as a whole at least *good*, teaching demonstration at least *good*
- Associate professor: teaching skills as a whole at least *satisfactory*, teaching demonstration at least *satisfactory*
- Assistant professor: teaching skills as a whole at least *satisfactory*, teaching demonstration at least *satisfactory*

- Senior university lecturer and senior clinical instructor: teaching skills as a whole at least *good*, teaching demonstration at least *good*
- University lecturer: teaching skills as a whole at least *good*, teaching demonstration at least *good*
- Clinical instructor: teaching skills as a whole at least *satisfactory*, teaching demonstration at least *satisfactory*
- University instructor: teaching skills as a whole at least *good*, teaching demonstration at least *good*
- Docent: teaching skills as a whole at least *good* (Universities Act, section 89)

The overall assessment of teaching skills and the grade of the teaching demonstration must be clearly indicated in the statements of the teaching skills committee and the appointment committee. A plan for pedagogical development must be drawn up especially for assistant/associate professors and clinical instructors whose teaching skills are assessed as satisfactory, if necessary with support from senior lecturers in university pedagogy. The aim of this plan is to support pedagogical development and career advancement opportunities, and to ensure the high quality of teaching.

### **Teaching assessment practices and validity period of statements on teaching skills**

For each position advertised openly, the teaching skills committee must perform a position-specific overall assessment of all shortlisted applicants. This ensures the equal treatment of the shortlisted applicants and enables comparisons of their qualifications in competitive situations. As a rule, a teaching demonstration given at the University of Helsinki is valid for five years. However, the appointment committee may require that all applicants give a new teaching demonstration. Applicants may also give a teaching demonstration they have previously given in another application process. In the case of openly advertised positions, all applicants are provided with the same topic, and the target audience determined for the demonstrations is also the same. Applicants for the title of docent can choose the topic of their teaching demonstration.

When assessing an associate professor to determine whether they can be appointed to a full professorship on the tenure track, a statement on their teaching skills drawn up at the University of Helsinki at the recruitment stage as well as their teaching demonstration can be used if their teaching qualifications were found at the time to meet the requirements for a professor (overall assessment at least *good*, teaching demonstration at least *good*). If the associate professor's teaching qualifications are not verifiably of the level required of professors, the teaching skills committee assesses the associate professor's teaching skills in conjunction with the tenure process. Because the assessment is connected to the associate professor's progress on the tenure track, the teaching demonstration can, if necessary, be given as part of a genuine teaching situation.

### **Recommendations on the composition of a position-specific teaching skills committee**

Under the Regulations on Degrees and the Protection of Students' Rights at the University of Helsinki (section 6), if necessary, the teaching skills committee issues a statement on the teaching skills of applicants for a professorship or other teaching or research position as well as when examining the conditions for granting the title of docent. The committee includes representatives of professors, other teaching and research staff, and students.

A position-specific teaching skills committee must have at least three members, and the composition of the committee must consider the representation of different groups, as defined in the Regulations on Degrees and the Protection of Students' Rights at the University of Helsinki. This is to ensure solid and high-quality pedagogical expertise on the committee. The members of each committee preparing an appointment or assessing the teaching skills of an applicant for the title of docent should include a senior lecturer in university pedagogy, a Teachers' Academy fellow or a person who has completed extensive studies in university pedagogy (60 cr) or pedagogical studies for teachers (60 cr).

This decision will be effective immediately, but will pertain to ongoing appointment procedures only as applicable.

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