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University of Helsinki principles for examinations

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1. Terminology

The word **examination** is used in this decision as a general term that covers all types of examinations and tests for the assessment of student learning. An examination can be held on a given date and time or during a specific period of time, and can be organised physically in a venue designated by the University or remotely. Examinations can be carried out as electronic or pen-and-paper examinations, or as combinations thereof. Examinations can also be organised as oral tests or competence tests.

The curriculum of a degree programme indicates the completion methods of each course and how student learning is assessed. Self-assessment or peer assessment and peer feedback can be used in teaching and learning, but the relevant teacher always decides on the approval and grade of the completed studies. Exceptions to this rule include master's theses, licentiate theses



and doctoral theses; provisions on the approval and assessment of such theses are laid down in the Regulations on Degrees and the Protection of Students' Rights at the University of Helsinki.

Examinations can be divided into those connected to teaching and those unconnected to teaching. Examples of **examinations connected to teaching** include examinations held during or at the end of lecture-based teaching and examinations connected to online teaching. Examples of **examinations unconnected to teaching** include courses in the curriculum that students can complete by sitting an examination on the relevant literature or other learning material. In addition, the curricula of degree programmes may include examinations that are not directly connected to the teaching provided. Examples include examinations aimed at all students who began their studies in a specific year.

The session at which students can complete an examination is known as an **examination session**. Examination sessions enable the assessment of learning, but also serve as learning situations.

A **general examination session** is one way of organising an examination. At such examination sessions, students can complete both examinations connected to teaching and those unconnected to teaching, usually resit examinations.

A **digital on-site examination** is held on a specific date and time in University premises under invigilation. The students are physically present on site, but the examination is completed in an electronic learning environment. Examinations connected to teaching, examinations unconnected to teaching and, for example, examinations aimed at all students who began their studies in a specific year can be held as digital on-site examinations.

Students select the date and time of an **Examinarium examination** from a specific time period. During the examination, they are physically present in the examination facility, which has a recording invigilation system. The examination is completed in an electronic examination system.

A **digital remote examination** is held either on a specific date and time or within a specific time period and is organised in an electronic learning environment, usually in a venue selected by the student.

The term **examination task** is used in this decision as a general term that covers all types of tasks and assignments that the student must **answer** in the examination. Answers can also be given by a group of students if so decided and if the students have been instructed to do so.

The roles associated with examinations and other methods for the assessment of learning include those of **the student, the teacher, the organiser of an examination session and the invigilator**. The same person may have different roles in different situations (e.g., as a teacher and an invigilator). If necessary, the role of the teacher can be further described in accordance with the duties involved (e.g., the course coordinator, the teacher responsible for the examination, the teacher responsible for drawing up the examination tasks, and the assessor of students' answers). In addition to individual teachers, several teachers can be jointly responsible, for example, for drawing up tasks and assessing answers.

Examination sessions can be organised by Teaching and Learning Services (an administrative sector of University Services), another unit or a teacher.

Grading criteria are the grounds applied by teachers to assess student learning in an examination. Grading criteria are closely connected to the course learning outcomes determined in the curriculum.



2. Scope of application

This decision applies to studies in bachelor's, master's and doctoral programmes, including Open University studies and non-degree studies.

This decision also applies to studies in professional specialisation education, specialist training in medicine, dentistry and veterinary medicine as well as similar education, and licensing examinations, unless otherwise agreed. In the case of national examinations, for example, units can agree with each other on their organisation and related principles and can deviate from the principles set out in this decision.

This decision does not address the way in which teaching is to be provided and how student learning is to be assessed. Student learning can also be assessed through essays, written assignments, written reports completed as group projects, extensive assignments based on specific material, oral presentations, lecture journals or learning journals, or combinations thereof. This decision does not apply to such methods of skills assessment and related arrangements.

This decision does not apply to entrance examinations.

The principles for Examinarium examinations will be decided separately.

Students can apply for any individual arrangements they need at different stages of studies. The principles for individual arrangements will be decided separately.

3. Principles for all examinations

3.1 Registering for and sitting examinations

Students can sit an examination only if they hold the right to study allowing them to do so.

Degree students and other students obliged to register for attendance or non-attendance at the University must have registered for attendance in connection with their right to study for the term in which the examination is held.

The answers given by students who sit an examination will not be assessed if they do not hold the right to study required for the examination, if they are degree students or other students obliged to register for attendance in connection with their right to study and have not done so, or if they have not registered for the examination as required.

3.2 Literature and other learning material

The examination literature and other learning material are determined in the curriculum and, if necessary, the teaching programme by the end of the previous academic year. Students must be informed well in advance of the literature and learning material as well as any changes to these during the academic year via an electronic information system used by the University.

The steering groups of degree programmes are responsible for ensuring that the literature and other learning material are available to students. A steering group may decide that the coordinator of each course is obliged to ensure the availability of the course literature and other learning material. The literature and other learning material are considered available once they have been acquired by a library or an equivalent unit from which they can be obtained by students. The



steering group is responsible for ensuring that the degree programme engages in effective cooperation with libraries and any other units that procure the relevant literature and other learning material. The literature and other learning material may also be made available to students in digital format.

Examination literature or other learning material that is considered supplementary reading or is separately agreed with an individual student does not need to be indicated in the curriculum or teaching programme, but must be available to students. Before registering for an examination, students must agree on such literature or other learning material with the teacher who holds the examination.

3.3 Public access to examination tasks, grading criteria and answers

As a rule, examination tasks are considered public. Examination tasks can be deemed secret only under the circumstances set out in section 24 of the Act on the Openness of Government Activities, that is, when access would compromise the achievement of the objectives of the examination or test, or prevent its future use.

If the above grounds exist for the secrecy of examination tasks, the faculty council decides on the secrecy of tasks given for the assessment of a course included in the curriculum or of learning included in the teaching programme.

Tasks to be kept secret can only be disclosed to the relevant parties, that is, the students and teachers involved in the assessment of the course or learning as well as the administrative staff who work with the course or teaching. When a student gains access to secret examination tasks for reasons of sitting the examination (parties' right of access), they are bound by the obligation of secrecy and non-disclosure with regard to the tasks under section 23 of the Act on the Openness of Government Activities. In addition, students cannot use secret information to their own benefit or to the benefit or detriment of another.

The criteria for grading examinations are public. Grading criteria are considered information on whose secrecy the faculty council may decide under section 24 of the Act on the Openness of Government Activities.

After the announcement of the results, students have the right to view their answers. Students have the right to know how grading criteria have been applied to their examination answers.

Under section 40 of the Regulations on Degrees and the Protection of Students' Rights at the University of Helsinki, student answers and related notes may not be disclosed to third parties or published without permission from the student. The answers may not be used for teaching and research purposes without permission from the student if it is possible to identify an individual student on the basis of the answers.

3.4 Language principles for examination tasks and answers

As a rule, tasks included in examinations connected to teaching are given and answered in the language of teaching. However, if teaching has been provided in more than one language, tasks can be given in the language of the relevant part of teaching.

In language disciplines, tasks can be given in the language in question, and students may be required to answer in that language.

If the language of teaching is Finnish, Swedish-speaking students may request and receive the tasks included in an examination connected to teaching in both Swedish and Finnish and answer



them in Swedish. Swedish-speaking students who wish to receive examination tasks also in Swedish must announce this in good time, but no later than 10 days before the examination session.

If the language of teaching is Swedish, the tasks included in an examination connected to teaching will be given in Swedish. Finnish-speaking students can answer the questions in Finnish or Swedish.

If the language of teaching is English in a degree programme organised in the national languages of Finland or in a multilingual degree programme, the tasks included in an examination connected to teaching will be given in English. In such cases, students can answer in Finnish, Swedish or English if they are completing a degree in the national languages of Finland, but must answer in English if they are completing a degree in English in a multilingual degree programme.

In an English-language degree programme, the tasks included in examinations connected to teaching and unconnected to teaching will be given in English, and students must answer them in English. In a Swedish-language degree programme, the tasks included in examinations connected to teaching and unconnected to teaching will be given in Swedish, and students must answer them in Swedish.

For students pursuing a bilingual degree (Finnish/Swedish or Swedish/Finnish), tasks will be given and must be answered, as a rule, in the language of teaching.

3.5 Examination sessions

The organiser of an examination session must announce the date, time and place(s) of the session well in advance. Information on examination sessions is given in the appropriate languages, in Finnish, Swedish and/or English.

Students must be informed in the curriculum or teaching programme or during a teaching session of the equipment and software, if any, required for the examination. In addition, students must be informed of the material and its format that they can take with them to the examination session or use during the examination.

Equipment necessary for examinations

Students must have the necessary equipment, such as writing implements, with them at the examination.

If the examination is held in an electronic learning environment, students must have at their disposal a device with which they can complete the examination. It is each student's responsibility to download on their device, well in advance of the examination session, any software required to complete the examination. Students must also test the functioning of the software before the examination begins.

Students found to be in possession of forbidden equipment or material or to be using forbidden software at an examination session may be failed in the examination.

Verification of identity

Students must prove their identity at examination sessions by presenting their student card, an official photo ID, a passport or a driving licence.

Students cannot be in possession of a smartwatch, mobile phone or similar communications device at an examination session held on site. Students who prove their identity with a student card, ID card or driving licence downloaded onto their mobile phone cannot be in possession of



the mobile phone during the examination while writing their answers. The mobile phone must be placed elsewhere in the examination room, for example, in the student's bag to one side of the examination room. Students can collect their mobile phone after writing their answers or returning their answers in accordance with the instructions of the examination organiser. Having collected their mobile phone, students can, under supervision, supplement their answers with their identifying information (e.g., student number) only.

Other provisions concerning examination sessions

Teachers are responsible for ensuring that students receive the appropriate tasks at examination sessions.

If the examination is held on site, a sufficient number of invigilators must be present at the session. The organiser of an examination session must ensure that invigilators have sufficient knowledge and skills for the examination session as well as the language skills required for the invigilation duties. An invigilator cannot be appointed if they are disqualified. The invigilators must know the University regulations on disturbances and cheating in examinations and, if necessary, must follow the appropriate procedure at the examination session.

At an on-site examination, students can bring with them a small amount of snacks and any necessary medications. If an examination lasts more than two hours, students can leave the examination room for a short time with an invigilator to use the toilet or for similar compelling reasons.

If an examination is interrupted due to a fire alarm or a similar disturbance, the time of the examination will be extended by the amount of time lost, if the invigilator believes the examination can be continued.

Once the time allotted for the examination ends, students must stop writing their answers.

Students are responsible for ensuring that each answer on a sheet of paper bears information identifying them, which may be their student number or their student number and name or other identifying information. If the identifying information is not provided, this part of the examination does not need to be assessed.

3.6 Assessment of answers and results of examinations

If an examination includes compulsory components or components that must be passed for the other examination components to be assessed, this must be announced to students no later than when they register for the examination or, if registration is not required, no later than 10 days before the examination session.

If completed studies are assessed in accordance with the curriculum on a scale of 0–5, the grade recorded in the student information system is 0 if the student has arrived at the examination session or sat the examination, but has not submitted any answers or has submitted answers and receives a failing grade from the teacher. A fail grade is recorded in the student information system when a pass/fail scale is used or, in the case of the second national language of Finland, the scale used is good/satisfactory/fail.

No information is recorded in the student information system if the student does not show up at the examination session or does not sit the examination for which they have registered.

The examination results must be announced in accordance with section 39 of the Regulations on Degrees and the Protection of Students' Rights at the University of Helsinki. The teacher confirms the assessment of completed studies in the student information system. In the case of several



assessors, the names of all of them must be indicated, and it must also be indicated which assessor is responsible for assessing which examination answer.

Students must receive information on their grade from the student information system. If completed studies are not registered in the student information system, it is recommended that information on each student's grade is given only to the student. If this is challenging due, for example, to the large number of students, information on grades may be announced on a student number-specific basis through an electronic learning environment so that the information is available only to the students who took the relevant course or attended the relevant teaching sessions. The names of students or other identifying information may not be disclosed in this context.

Students must be informed of the distribution of grades if at least five students completed the same course or examination at the same time. Student numbers, student names or other identifying information may not appear in connection with the grade distribution.

In accordance with section 44 of the Universities Act, students' answers must be retained for at least six months from the announcement of the results.

4. Principles for examinations connected to teaching

In addition to the principles for all examinations referred to in section 3 above, the following principles apply to examinations connected to teaching.

Teachers are responsible for holding examinations connected to their teaching and for organising the necessary invigilation. Exceptions to this can only be made by a separate agreement between the director of development at Teaching and Learning Services and the relevant faculty, as well as in connection with examinations associated with Open University studies. When Teaching and Learning Services organises such examinations, students must register for them in the same way as for general examination sessions. However, teachers can always choose to organise the examinations connected to their teaching themselves.

If an examination connected to teaching can be resat at a general examination session, Teaching and Learning Services is responsible for organising the resit. In such cases, students must register for the examination in the same way as for general examination sessions.

The times and dates of examinations connected to teaching as well as the number, times and dates of resit examinations must be announced to students no later than when teaching begins. Students must be offered at least one opportunity to resit examinations connected to teaching.

If an examination connected to teaching takes place during a teaching session or at a date and time agreed with the teacher, students do not need to separately register for the examination. In such cases, it is sufficient that the students have registered for the teaching. If students must also separately register for examinations connected to teaching, they must be provided with instructions on how to do so.

Students must notify the teacher well in advance, at least 10 days before the examination session, about the language in which they wish to receive the examination tasks if it is not the language of teaching and if the students are entitled to select the language of the examination tasks.



Teachers must provide students with sufficient instructions for examinations and ensure that examination sessions proceed appropriately.

Students must also return the examination task sheets provided to them at examination sessions, if required by the teacher.

5. Principles for general examination sessions

In addition to the principles for all examinations referred to in section 3 above, the following principles apply to general examination sessions.

Teaching and Learning Services is responsible for holding general examination sessions, organising the necessary invigilation and ensuring that the sessions proceed appropriately.

The dates, times and locations of general examination sessions must be announced in advance for at least one term at a time via an electronic information system used by the University.

Studies in bachelor's, master's and doctoral programmes, including Open University studies and non-degree studies, may be completed at general examination sessions organised by Teaching and Learning Services.

Teaching and Learning Services does not organise the examinations of other institutions of higher education or persons from outside the University. However, such examinations can be organised as chargeable service activity on separately announced dates as part of the examinations for Open University studies.

Students can attend general examination sessions only in the facilities indicated for this purpose by Teaching and Learning Services. The only exceptions are the examinations connected to Open University studies.

5.1 Registration

The registration period for a general examination session must begin at least 20 days before the examination and end 10 days before the examination. The registration period applies to all general examination sessions and includes weekends and public holidays.

The registration period for general examination sessions held in June, July and August ends on 31 May. This deadline does not apply to examinations connected to Open University studies. However, if a June examination session is held between 1 and 10 June, the registration period ends 10 days before the examination.

Teachers cannot give students permission to attend a general examination session if they have not registered for it in the required manner.

Students can cancel their registration during the registration period.

Students who fail to register for a general examination session during the registration period cannot attend the examination session or receive the examination tasks at the session.

Students must register for general examination sessions using an electronic information system. When registering, students must provide all required information and any necessary additional information. When registering, students must also indicate the language in which they wish to



receive the examination tasks. Students are responsible for registering for general examination sessions and verifying the validity of the information provided when registering. If a student fails to provide the required details and additional information when registering for a general examination session, the examination organiser is not obliged to acquire such details and information.

Students must complete each course in full at a general examination session if the curriculum does not allow the course to be completed in components.

For each general examination session, students can register for up to two courses or their components in accordance with the curriculum. If a student registers to complete more than two courses or their components, the first two registrations will be valid. Students who wish to complete several examinations at a general examination session due to reasons of progress in studies must contact the teachers responsible for the examinations, indicating the reasons for completing more than two examinations. Teachers must notify the organiser of the general examination session if they accept the students' reasons for sitting more than two examinations. If the examination is connected to the teachers' own teaching, the teachers can also organise a separate examination for the students.

If the curriculum changes on 1 August, students can sit examinations at the general examination session in August in accordance with both the old and the new curriculum.

5.2 Organisation of examination sessions

General examination sessions can be organised as on-site examinations only during the opening hours of the relevant building when a porter or another person responsible for public order and security in the building is present.

At general examination sessions, students can sit examinations unconnected to teaching that last up to four hours, as decided by the faculty. Exceptionally, the Faculty of Law can decide that examinations in the degree programmes in law last up to five hours, in which case the related general examination sessions also last five hours. The director of the Language Centre decides on the duration of the Centre's general examination sessions. If an examination connected to teaching is organised at a general examination session, the teacher decides on its duration. Students must be informed of the duration of the session in advance.

If those attending a general examination session include one or more students who have been granted the right to individual arrangements in the form of additional time to complete examinations, the organiser of the examination session can decide whether the additional time is offered before or after the session.

The organisers of general examination sessions must contact the teachers who set the tasks for the sessions. The organisers must inform the teachers of the timetable and method of delivering the tasks as well as provide any other information necessary for organising the session.

Teachers must submit the examination tasks to the organiser in the format to be distributed to students. The tasks must be submitted no later than three working days before the general examination session. Correspondingly, the tasks included in a digital on-site examination must be completed and available on the examination platform no later than three working days before the general examination session.

In addition, teachers must inform the organiser of the examination session of the material and its format that students can take with them to the examination session or use during the examination. If students are found in possession of other material during the examination session, they may be failed in the examination. In addition, teachers must provide the organiser of the



examination session with the basic course details as well as the same instructions for completing the examination that they have given to students.

If the examination is held on site, the organiser of the general examination must keep a reserve of devices and other equipment required during the examination session in case the devices or other equipment at the students' disposal do not function.

If a student has registered appropriately for a general examination and arrives on time, but the teacher has not submitted some or all of the tasks, the tasks concern the wrong material or the student does not receive the tasks in the requested language, the teacher must duly provide the student with a new opportunity to complete the examination. In the case of examinations connected to Open University studies, the organiser of the examination session is responsible for providing another examination opportunity. In such cases, the students will be offered the opportunity to complete the examination at the next examination session.

If a student has registered appropriately for a general examination session and arrives on time, but the organiser of the session has not received information about the registration, the organiser must duly provide the student with a new opportunity to complete the examination.

5.3 Procedures at examination sessions

Students can sit an examination if they arrive at the general examination session when no more than 30 minutes has elapsed from the declared start time of the session. Students can leave the examination facility no earlier than 30 minutes from the declared beginning of the general examination session. If the additional time granted to students who are entitled to individual arrangements is offered before the general examination session, such students cannot leave the examination facility until 30 minutes has passed from the declared beginning of the actual general examination session.

During the examination, students cannot borrow equipment or material from other students or talk to the other examination participants.

At general examination sessions, only the task, answer and notepaper sheets distributed by the organiser of the examination session can be used.

Students must return all answer sheets when leaving a general examination session even if they have not answered all of the tasks given. In addition, students must return all other sheets of paper provided to them, including any sheets used for making notes. The task sheets must be returned if so instructed by the teacher. Students are responsible for returning the task sheets.

6. Entry into force

This decision will enter into force on 1 August 2022, superseding the rector's decision of 23 February 2018 (HY/225/00.00.06.00/2018), including its subsequent amendments, on the general principles of examinations.



Specialist

Mervi Pyyhtiä

APPENDIX

Memorandum: University of Helsinki principles for examinations

The Finnish-language document has been digitally signed in the records and document management system of the University of Helsinki.