



## Department of Education Strategic Plan 2004-2006

The Department of Education Strategic Plan is based on the University of Helsinki Strategic Plans for 2000-2003 and 2004-2006, the University of Helsinki Programmes for the Development of Teaching and Studies for the same periods, and the drafting instructions for the personnel policy of 1999. The Department of Education Strategic Plan is divided into three intertwined parts: a research strategy, a teaching strategy and a human resources strategy. In addition to covering the above areas, the Strategic Plan encompasses the third mission of Finnish universities, namely, societal interaction. The Department also has a separate strategy for the use of information and communication technology in teaching.

The mission and future prospects of the University of Helsinki serve as starting points for the Department of Education Strategic Plan, which conforms to the following guidelines set in the University Strategic Plan: "The University of Helsinki is the most versatile of Finland's institutions of higher education and of mental rejuvenation. It generates innovative, scientific ways of thinking and new knowledge with the aid of high quality research, teaching, and co-operation. It also acts as a medium for transmitting new ideas to the Finnish society for the well-being of society as a whole. Research and researcher education are particularly prominent activities in the profile of the University."

## Research priorities

The objective of research at the Department of Education is to produce new knowledge which is of international interest and of relevance for Finnish society, and which focuses on human growth, development and learning, as well as on understanding and giving direction to activities related to these areas. The research conducted at the Department covers the entire human life from the point of view of individuals and communities. The Department strives to maintain high international standards in research, and this aim defines the core areas of the Department's research-based teaching.

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Research priorities for the planning period from 2004 to 2006 include (1) social research in education, (2) research on learning related to education and teaching, and (3) working life research, especially developmental work research. By highlighting a few clear priorities, the Department will be able to target its limited resources in a way that will improve its overall operations. The priorities will also enable the Department to build up a profile which comprehensively covers its mission to carry out research and teaching in the field of education. Moreover, the priorities will create a solid foundation for the Department to undertake its social mission, which involves the promotion of human and social wellbeing, social justice and democracy. As part of, and in addition to, these priorities, the Department will conduct research on educational philosophy, educational history and other topics.

(1) The strengths of social research in education at the Department of Education are its high quality, particularly in the areas of educational policy and cultural issues. Educational policy is understood in the broad sense: the topics range from education policy texts to its practical policy implementation, from policy-making figures and structures to control, assessment, financing and planning. The research emphasises the historical dimension, international comparisons and close contacts with research communities in Finland and abroad. The Department is interested in such topics as international, interdisciplinary women's studies, child and youth research, research on home and family education, and research related to multicultural education and citizenship.

(2) As a major area of emphasis at the Department of Education, research on learning related to education and teaching has concentrated on the further development of teaching in Finnish schools and the University of Helsinki. This area is currently re-establishing its position as a research priority in the Faculty of Behavioural Sciences, which was set up in 2004.

Focusing on research on learning, Life as Learning (LEARN) is an extensive Finnish research programme established in 2002. This programme is funded by the Academy of Finland and coordinated by the Department of Education.

School assessment has emerged as an important tool of educational policy. This area is being studied by the Department of Education and the Department of Applied Sciences of Education in cooperation with the Centre for Educational Assessment.

The Resource Centre for the Development of Higher Education was established in autumn 2002. The key tasks of this unit are to coordinate and foster the development of know-how in university-level teaching and learning. Important research topics include educational thinking and expertise among university teachers and the learning cultures of different fields and



disciplines. Assessment of the quality of university-level education and the development of quality assurance systems have emerged as other important areas of research in assessments made at the University of Helsinki.

Active research on the use of information and communication technology in teaching will continue during the present planning period.

(3) A profound transition is currently taking place on the labour market. This transition, which is being brought about by development of information and communication technology (ICT) and globalisation, will change the ways and conditions in which people work, manage work and learn at work. New conceptual tools and versatile research and development are required to meet the challenges brought on by this transition.

The Centre for Activity Theory and Developmental Work Research has received international recognition. Using the perspectives known as cultural-historical activity theory and expansive learning, the Centre takes a historical approach to investigating new ways of working, managing work and learning at work and to developing opportunities for the expansive development of work operations. A significant part of this research is based on development projects implemented in cooperation with organisations in the labour market and their staff. These projects not only describe the current situation, but also chart possible development challenges and implement appropriate qualitative changes in cooperation between the researchers and the representatives of the organisations. Researchers also take part in topical scientific discussions. Moreover, developmental work research is an integral part of the internationally expanding and diversifying research field based on cultural-historical activity theory and of the international community that is conducting the research.

The Department of Education provides systematic, long-term support to various research groups which are developing their own research agenda. This should not, however, prevent new research topics from being prioritised in the future.



## **Research-based teaching and its further development**

A formal evaluation of the quality of education and the degree programmes at the University of Helsinki was conducted in 2001-2002. The evaluation panel reported that teaching given by the Department of Education is genuinely based on research and that students obtain the skills needed in the working life. The principle of student-centredness is implemented in teaching on many levels and in a wide variety of ways. However, the panel noted that the lack of a clear professional orientation in the degree programmes and the wide scope of the disciplines make it difficult for students to establish a clear professional identity. The panel cited the following as areas in the Department's operations that should be further developed: students should be supported in establishing a professional identity in the field of education, they should be familiarised with departmental research, and experiences of practical training should be put to good use in the studies. When the new curriculum is drawn up, these three themes will be given special attention.

At present, the Department is engaging in a broad discussion of the new degree structure, academic core curriculum analysis, the philosophy underlying the education, and areas of teaching that need to be further developed. Departmental research groups have given their views of the degree structure and have reflected on the status of their field within that structure. Several related training and planning sessions have also been arranged, and the staff have participated actively.

All teachers should conduct research as part of their work duties, and all researchers have a duty to teach. The latter resource will be used more than before during the present planning period. First-year students will become acquainted with the research conducted at the Department by attending a compulsory course included in basic studies which introduces ongoing research projects in the Faculty and the Department. Student opportunities to work in research projects will be increased. Moreover, research ideas based on student interests will continue to be supported and students will be encouraged to scientifically examine various issues arising from these ideas. The departmental research groups will participate in the planning and implementation of teaching, which will reinforce the principle of research-based teaching. Specifically, the Department will follow the principles outlined in the University of Helsinki Programme for the Development of Teaching and Studies 2004-2006, in which the link between research and teaching is understood in a wide sense: "Teachers also teach topics that are not among their own research interests and are responsible for transmitting to their students wide-ranging information based on state-of-the-art research."



Simultaneously with the transition to the two-cycle degree system, a separate Master's programme will be established in educational research into adult and continuing education, with a focus on working life research. The Bachelor's programme will be a joint programme both for students of educational research on adult and continuing education and for students of education. Field-specific Bachelor's and Master's level studies will be planned in keeping with the departmental research priorities. These studies will thus concentrate on the following three themes: (1) education, society and culture, (2) teaching and learning at different stages of life and (3) processes of change in work and work-related activities.

During the present planning period, the key duties of the Faculty will be to determine common core competencies on which Master's programmes will be based and to perform field-specific academic core curriculum analyses.

The Department of Education offers both Finnish- and Swedish-language courses. The profile of bilingualism will be raised at the Department, which will also expand Swedish-language course offerings to Finnish-speaking students by promoting cooperation with bilingual teachers and Nordic partners. The principle of bilingualism will create opportunities for interaction between the two language groups within the Department, and it will also help the Department to establish Nordic contacts and promote the international dimension in general.

The Department of Education will further develop its postgraduate education, for example by introducing orientation studies for prospective postgraduate students in order to determine which students will be granted the right to pursue postgraduate studies. The Department will support postgraduate students by appointing them as assistants, giving them grants, providing financial aid for the printing of doctoral dissertations and, when possible, by establishing vacancies in doctoral programmes and awarding travel grants. Researcher education will produce doctoral degree-holders who are able to conduct independent, cutting-edge research and to apply their expertise in industry and commerce and generally in society. The Department will also establish post-doctoral assistantships to support graduates after they have completed their doctoral dissertations.

The Resource Centre for the Development of Higher Education is an important part of the Department's operations. The Centre is responsible for the 15- and 35-credit study modules in university-level teaching and learning tailored for University staff, and its objective is to promote research and training in these fields. The research conducted by the Centre produces both theoretical and applied knowledge that may be used to further develop higher education. The



main focus is on the further development of teaching that is based on the general principles of scientific thinking and on current research.

The Department has a separate knowledge strategy for 2001-2004 which is focused on the use of information and communication technology in teaching. This strategy will be elaborated during the present planning period. An especially important part of the new strategy will be the implementation of basic studies included in the new degree requirements as online teaching given together with the Open University.

## **Department of Education Personnel Policy 2004-2006**

The first personnel policy of the Department of Education was drawn up in the spring of 2000 for the years 2001–2003. This plan followed the Strategy of the University of Helsinki (Strategic Plan for 2001–2003), which urged the departments to devise their personnel policies to support the strategic choices of teaching and research. The first personnel policy also took into account the objectives of the reform of the structure of teaching and research posts, which included the improvement of the quality of teaching, simplification of post structures and the promotion of teaching and research careers. The writing of the present Personnel Policy has been guided by the University of Helsinki Strategic Plan 2004–2006 and, especially, the Department of Education Strategic Plan and the research priorities outlined in it.

### *Management and cooperation*

The duties and responsibilities of the head of the Department have increased with the expansion of the activities of the Department. The present leadership model requires both management and leadership skills from the head of the Department. As the continuous growth of administrative duties demands almost fulltime attention from the head, the Department has employed a university lecturer on a fixed-term basis until the end of this electoral period. According to the Department's rules of procedure, the tasks of the Department include the preparation, presentation, implementation and communication of matters that fall under the authority of the departmental steering board and the head of the Department. As the duties of the administrative staff have increased, some of the above-mentioned tasks, especially the preparation of administrative matters requiring a decision, have been transferred to the head.

During the previous planning period, the Department adopted the system of review discussions, which has proved to be a convenient tool in the organisation of a fair and equal distribution of



work. The introduction of a new salaries system will, in all likelihood, change the nature of the review discussions and will oblige immediate superiors to conduct review discussions with their subordinates as well.

Cooperation at the Department is best realised in the form of staff meetings. Participation in these meetings is part of the staff members' duties. The problem with formal cooperation meetings is that because of tight schedules, they normally cannot be organised at a sufficiently early stage during the preparation of matters.

#### *Planning of human resources and recruitment*

The Department of Education has steered its post structure towards research, as recommended by the University's strategic plan and the Department's own strategic plan. The Department has obtained a professorship in educational sociology as well as three post-doctoral assistantships, and all four of the Department's assistantships have been changed into postgraduate positions. The majority of lectureships are university lectureships. As the duties of all posts include both teaching and research, the operations of the Department are guided by the principle of high-quality teaching based on research. Between 2004 and 2006, following the recommendations of the Academy of Finland, the Department will strongly encourage researchers to participate in teaching.

In recent years, a number of changes have taken place among the holders of professorships at the Department. While some of the changes have been foreseeable because of retirement, others have come as a surprise because of transfers to other duties. During 2004–2006 at least three professorships will have to be filled. In order to secure that there will be a sufficient number of researchers/teachers in each of the Department's areas of emphasis, it may be necessary to define the duties of one of the university lectureships more specifically to a certain field.

A new area of responsibility for the Department is the research and teaching of the development of know-how in university-level teaching and learning. The Department obtained an extension to the fixed-term post of lecturer in teaching and learning in higher education (1999–2004), now designated as a university lecturer (fixed-term post for 2004–2009). The Department will attempt to obtain funding for the research and teaching of the development of higher education during the performance negotiations to be conducted with the Rector in the autumn of 2004. If this funding is not obtained, the Department will secure the funding for the professorship



(professorship in university-level teaching and learning???) by making adjustments in post structures during the planning period in question.

In connection with the recruitment of holders of fixed-term teaching and research posts, the Department has since 2001 attempted to make these appointments for as long a period as possible. As the University is also attempting to decrease the number of short-term appointments, the Department has adopted the following principle: at the end of fixed-term appointments, the holders of those posts who have been found qualified in an open competition for the post in question will be appointed without a new application process, provided that they have attended to the duties of these posts in a flawless manner. Long-term appointments will also help the transfer of knowledge from senior employees to the future holders of their posts.

In filling posts, teaching qualifications will be taken into account in a manner appropriate to the profile of the post. In future, the process of applying for most posts will include an interview to complement the academic portfolio. Issues of equality will be taken into consideration in the filling of posts (see the University Senate's recommendations and the Faculty's equality plan currently under preparation).

#### *Terms of employment*

As the Department of Education has made efforts to observe the University's general salary policy, salaries have been determined on the basis of the demands and qualification requirements of posts, as well as skills and performance. The salaries of some professors and university lecturers have been raised on the basis of an assessment of academic qualifications. Performance and personal increments have been applied to both teaching and administrative staff. The introduction of the reformed salaries system in 2005 is likely to cause some confusion in the beginning.

On the whole, the staff have found the present 1,600-hour annual workload more appropriate than the previous system of calculating workloads. The inclusion of all duties in the workload furthers a fair distribution of labour. What has proved problematic is the difficulty of estimating the time taken up by certain duties and the insufficiency of 1,600 hours for completing all the basic tasks of university-level work (research, teaching and societal activities) in a high standard manner.



Teleworking has been possible in a manner agreed upon with the head of the Department. Due to the shortage of space plaguing the Department and the whole Faculty, teleworking may become increasingly common, especially among project researchers and doctoral students.

Time allotted for research is essential for a university teacher. A worrisome trend is that administrative duties extend until the end of June and some tasks are scheduled for July. The Department will make efforts to ensure that with the University-wide transition to four teaching periods all teachers will have the opportunity to devote one period during the academic year mainly to research.

Holders of posts are expected to be committed to the activities of the Department. Sometimes the interests of the Department may preclude granting a leave of absence for the purpose of taking up another position somewhere else. Moreover, the Department may have to consider restricting the number of ancillary positions.

#### *Working environment and conditions*

The operations of the Department are being hampered by relocations and by the fact that its personnel are currently working in two separate units in two different parts of the city. Those currently located at Bulevardi will be transferring in March-April 2005 to a new building presently under construction at Siltavuorenpenger. In September 2004 the Centre for Activity Theory and Developmental Work Research plus a number of researchers were moved from Hämeentie to Teollisuuskatu. According to the original plan, the entire Department should be relocated in the former Anatomy Building (at Siltavuorenpenger ) after its renovation is finished in 2010.

In its Personnel Policy, the University makes the commitment to use available resources to provide the staff with adequate and appropriate working facilities. The University's Technical Department and the Department of Education do not always agree on the definition of appropriate working facilities. At the moment, project researchers and doctoral students who presently share offices suffer the most from this state of affairs.

As the Department's operations are changing and improving, jointly conducted critical evaluation and development of practices have emerged as a vital precondition for wellbeing at work. The Department will strive to implement the principle of equality between the sexes and between the different personnel and student groups. Individual needs may be reconciled with collective needs by ensuring fair and, when necessary, adequate flexibility in workloads. The Department will avoid short-term appointments. The feeling of collegiality will be encouraged by



joint training sessions and recreation activities. Any problems within the work community will be addressed at an early stage, efforts will be made to intensify communication, and the working environment and any changes in it will be regularly monitored. All this, however, will not be enough if the staff continuously feel overburdened with work.

Job satisfaction is being eroded at numerous departments at the University. The central administration continuously assigns new tasks to the Faculty and the departments. The advantages of synergy at the Faculty of Behavioural Sciences were much trumpeted, but so far, no tasks have been transferred from the departments to be handled centrally. Instead, some tasks previously handled by the Faculty have been transferred to the departments. As the University's indirect costs (facilities and administration especially) continue to grow, allocations to the faculties are decreasing, and, respectively, the growing indirect costs of faculties are resulting in cutbacks in the allocations distributed to the departments.

Besides the economic threat brought about by the expanding administration, the growing facilities expenses and the possibility that the responsibility for these expenses will be transferred to the departments may seriously jeopardise the economic stability of the Department of Education following from its efficient operations. In recent years, the Department has had adequate resources to fill all vacancies and even hire some ancillary personnel. However, in the current unstable and uncertain situation it has not been possible to establish new posts. At the moment, the salaries expenses of the permanent staff account for about 90 per cent of the departmental budget. It is hoped that the ongoing evaluation of administration, and launching and development of campus services will simplify administrative service chains and remove overlapping.

The Appendix lists the posts of the Department of Education, the changes made in accordance with the previous personnel policy, posts as of 1 September 2004, and the changes laid out for the coming planning period. The tasks of the administrative staff are defined in greater detail in the Department's rules of procedure.

## **Societal interaction**

The University of Helsinki is the leading multidisciplinary university in Finland, and the Department of Education, as part of this University, has a significant role as a national trend-setter. The Department's publications in the Finnish language serve to fulfil this societal mission. Success in the University's basic duties, namely research and teaching, is a prerequisite for fruitful interaction with the Finnish society, business and industry, and the larger



international community. According to the Universities Act, it is the mission of the universities to "educate students to serve their country and humanity". This entails a great responsibility for general education in the information society.

1. The Department employs and trains professionals who act as experts in societal decision-making bodies, take part in public debate, disseminate scientific information and further the sustainable development of a just and affluent society. The Departments' staff and graduates add a dimension emphasising critical creativity, human growth and personal edification to the development of society.
2. The Department conducts research on employment and the working life and it promotes commissioned research which is related or based on these areas to their benefit.
3. The education offered by the Department provides a solid basis for finding employment and facing the changing challenges of the labour market. Those parts of the curriculum that integrate studies with working life, such as practical training, will be developed further. The status of the Professional Licentiate degree will be clarified and the degree will be developed further in the context of postgraduate education.
4. The organisation of the compulsory practical training belonging to the education provided by the Department has led to the creation of an extensive, well-functioning network of educational institutions. Through its connections with these institutions, the Department is able to disseminate information about its activities. In return, it obtains through students and their supervisors new ideas for the development of education.
5. The Open University serves the principle of lifelong learning and offers opportunities for university studies for those who have not completed upper secondary education. The Department has a long history of providing exceptionally extensive study opportunities through the Open University. In order to ensure the high standard of its courses offered at the Open University, the Department will somewhat decrease the number of courses offered during this planning period. The Department is not engaged in continuing education, but the staff may offer their expertise to organisations providing continuing education at their own discretion and upon agreement with the Department.