



HELSINGIN YLIOPISTO
HELSINGFORS UNIVERSITET
UNIVERSITY OF HELSINKI

**HELSINGIN YLIOPISTON
OPETUSFILOSOFIA**

**HELSINGFORS UNIVERSITETS
UNDERVISNINGSMFILOSOFI**

**THE PHILOSOPHY OF
TEACHING AT THE
UNIVERSITY OF HELSINKI**

THE PHILOSOPHY OF TEACHING AT THE UNIVERSITY OF HELSINKI

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TO THE READER,

The University of Helsinki is among the leading research universities in the world. Due to our high-quality research, we are able to provide teaching at the highest possible level while utilising and creating the latest research-based knowledge.

The University's first philosophy of teaching was published in 2014 when it was deemed necessary to define and publish the University-level teaching values and principles at the University. The result was the University's first philosophy of teaching document. The time to review it came during the academic year 2022–2023 as part of the year in celebration of teaching declared by Rector Sari Lindblom. During the year, the future of teaching was extensively analysed in the community. Based on these activities, the philosophy of teaching was updated to correspond with the changed circumstances of society and the University.

Initially, the Academic Affairs Council assigned the drawing up of the University's philosophy of teaching to the Teachers' Academy. There the philosophy of teaching workgroup was headed by Professor Jaana Hallamaa and University Lecturer Eero Salmenkivi. Other members were University Instructor Martin Björklund, University Lecturer Hanna-Riitta Kymäläinen, University Lecturer Pauliina Lankinen, Head of Academic Affairs Päivi Pakkanen and Senior Lecturer in University Pedagogy Auli Toom. At the time, the process was led by the Vice-Rector for Academic Affairs Keijo Hämäläinen. The Teachers' Academy, the Academic Affairs Council and the Student Union were all included in the 2023 review process. The process was headed by Director of Development of Teaching and Learning Services Susanna Niinistö-Sivuranta, Head of Services Päivi Pakkanen, Director of the Centre for University Teaching and Learning (HYPE) Auli Toom, Chair of the Teachers' Academy Tiina Airaksinen and the undersigned. The updated philosophy combines original and new contents without specifying their origin.

The philosophy of teaching at the University of Helsinki is to be used in the development of teaching and studying as well as the pedagogical training of teachers. Teachers and students, I urge you to utilise the philosophy of teaching in all possible ways. Be creative and open-minded. Explore, assess and develop things presented in it. Discuss, question and debate its content.

University of Helsinki, over 380 years old, lives in the moment and creates the future!

Kai Nordlund

Vice-Rector

Chair of the Academic Affairs Council Chair of the Academic Affairs Council

THE PHILOSOPHY OF TEACHING AT THE UNIVERSITY OF HELSINKI

The philosophy of teaching at the University of Helsinki encapsulates the principles to which the University as a community is committed. The philosophy of teaching is founded on the values of the University: truth, *Bildung*, freedom and inclusivity. *The philosophy of teaching at the University of Helsinki* is part of a larger framework of teaching and studies that includes the *Ethical principles of teaching and studies at the University of Helsinki* as well as the University's teaching skills evaluation criteria used, for instance, at the Teachers' Academy and in the evaluation of the teaching merits of those applying to teaching positions. Together these documents uphold the basic values of strategic planning and practical teaching at the University.

Universities came into being out of a fervent interest in learning through research. They have always been characterised by the wish to seek truth, learn from and share knowledge with others as well as collaborate with others to generate new knowledge. This has proved to be an enduring idea: the promotion of learning, teaching and *Bildung* remains the lifeline of universities.

The University of Helsinki implements the idea of the university through its philosophy of teaching, which is based on research-based teaching, the nurturing and maintenance of a high-quality learning community and environment, and a commitment to learning-focused teaching.

Graduates feel that they were cared for during their studies and that they are part of the academic community.

Teaching is based on research

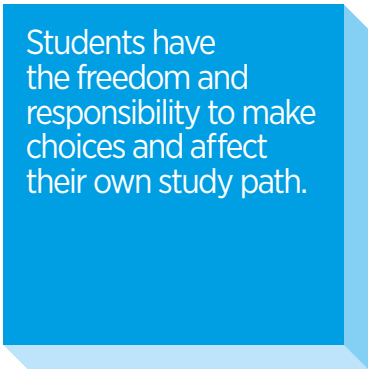
- All teachers research and all researchers teach.
- All students adopt a research-based approach and familiarise themselves with research activities throughout their studies.

The three statutory duties of universities are research, teaching and public engagement. They are not separate entities but brought together by collaborative

learning and research. Teaching and studying are based on research, which is integral to their quality. The participation of teachers in research and the utilisation of research-based knowledge in teaching characterise the high-quality teaching provided by the University of Helsinki.

In Finland, university studies are part of the educational path supported by society with the objective of guaranteeing lifelong learning. University studies differ from other forms of learning and studies in that their core consists of understanding, adopting and applying academic thinking. Assimilating the principles of in-depth academic education requires that students integrate themselves into academia by participating in its research activities and by regarding lifelong education and learning as integral part of the life of an academically educated citizen.

At the core of academic competence and education is the assimilation of a research-oriented mindset and the understanding of scientific methodology. This provides the ability to critically evaluate information from a variety of



Students have the freedom and responsibility to make choices and affect their own study path.

sources and to have the capacity for evidence-based argumentation and the ability to use these skills in expert duties. These can be achieved first and foremost through university studies.

Research-based teaching entails the utilisation of research-based multidisciplinary knowledge concerning university-level teaching, studies and learning; the training of teachers in university pedagogy; as well as the development of both one's own and the community's activities from the perspective of teaching. In addition to

scholarly merits, the University appreciates pedagogical prowess when recruiting staff as well as at all stages of the academic career. The principles of assessing teaching skills and their application are discussed in faculties and between various University units.

University studies are a key channel to publicise the research results of the academic community and to promote their comprehensive adoption in society. The social impact of academic publications manifests itself especially through university-educated citizens: university studies cultivate individuals to recognise the practical potential of research results and to communicate their content and significance in a form that the public can understand.

The University is a high-quality learning community and environment

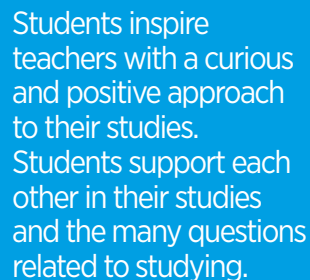
- Students are active and responsible members of the academic community who are taken into consideration as individuals, and their contribution is valued in all University operations.
- Teaching develops inclusivity at the University and promotes wellbeing.

The academic community consists of diverse members. Even though these members have different duties, they share the same aim: to promote high-quality scholarly research and research-based teaching and learning. Awareness of this common aim helps develop and rectify practices so as to advance its achievement.

The wellbeing of the academic community is a key resource for learning, teaching and research. The wellbeing of diverse members serving in different positions is improved by advancing the development of the University towards an inspiring and rewarding learning, study and work environment. Each unit is responsible for making all those who participate in its activities feel that they are part of the academic community that takes care of and bears responsibility for its members. Teachers support each other and students in coping with their studies and life.

Universities are the most essential social institutions conducting scientific research, but they also constitute socially important learning environments. In order to be able to serve this purpose, their operations must be transparent and the learning environment interactively developed continuously on the basis of internal and external feedback.

The University of Helsinki belongs to an international research and teaching community without national, linguistic or disciplinary boundaries. University teaching is available for the world in its entirety. Participation in international, multicultural and multidisciplinary communities is part of learning and teaching. Nordic and European university networks are important partners in the development and sharing of teaching, and cooperation is active – taking into account the University’s values – with universities all over the world. Interaction across boundaries deepens the un-



Students inspire teachers with a curious and positive approach to their studies. Students support each other in their studies and the many questions related to studying.

derstanding of the participants in questions related to their own disciplines and develops readiness to communicate in various languages and operate under various circumstances. An international and culturally rich learning environment guides us to become increasingly aware of the significance of languages and cultures as parts of academic education and enhances the ability to serve in different multicultural and international duties.

Teaching is aimed at learning

- The aim of studying is to gain in-depth and appropriate knowledge and skills. The criteria for successful teaching are based on the quality and meaningfulness of learning as well as on high-quality learning outcomes.
- Teaching is implemented in a blended manner to allow teaching methods to support the achievement of important learning outcomes and the meaningfulness of studies.

Learning materials and assessment methods are selected to support learning and the meaningfulness of studying.

Universities are research communities. Academic research is innovative and inventive; it creates new knowledge, investigates matters and gets to the bottom of things. The premise of university studies is to gain an in-depth understanding of issues and learning based on critical thinking. It changes learners' ways of perceiving reality and operating within it in a sustainable manner. Our research-based teaching inspires researchers towards new research ideas, while teaching in itself

as a subject of study may create new knowledge.

Constructively aligned, learning-focused teaching means that factors influencing teaching and studying are designed and implemented to support learning and competence, aiming at deep understanding. The planning of teaching also takes into account its accessibility of teaching for diverse learners. Teaching principles stand the test of time.

Learning and teaching are communal processes that entail setting meaningful learning outcomes and human encounters and interaction. Study and learning environments are suitable and innovative. Teaching combines physical and virtual teaching methods and environments. Artificial intelligence

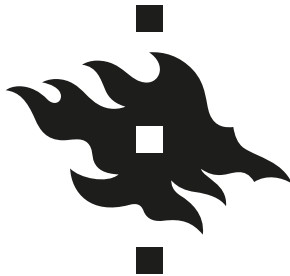
solutions provide new opportunities while challenging people to create increasingly advanced and genuinely innovative operating models.

Diverse forms of feedback are collected and utilised in the development of teaching. Feedback culture at the University is dialogic and enhances the interaction between teachers and students. Feedback providers understand how it affects the development of teaching.

The philosophy of teaching at the University of Helsinki is used to enhance consensus in the development of teaching. It provides our community with an opportunity to discuss the meanings related to university teaching now and in the future.

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This publication is available on the [University's website](#)



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