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HELSINGIN YLIOPISTON TIETEENKIJÄT
FORSKARFÖRENINGEN VID HELSINGFORS UNIVERSITET
THE HELSINKI UNIVERSITY ASSOCIATION OF RESEARCHERS AND TEACHERS

Action Plan 2021

Key areas of activity

- **Improving the situation of fixed-term employees, early-stage researchers, and grant-funded researchers**

HUART works actively to improve the pay and working conditions of researchers in a precarious labour market situation. Grant-funded researchers and early-stage researchers must be recognized as full members of the academic community. In 2021 HUART participates in a working group at the University of Helsinki aiming at improving the working conditions of grant-funded researchers. Grant-funded researchers must not be required to pay fees for working at university premises.
- **Developing and consolidating a good culture of cooperation**

HUART participates in developing cooperation between the employer and employees at the University of Helsinki. Units must be governed according to democratic principles. Everyone working at the University must be able to be heard in matters relating to their own working conditions.
- **Monitoring the quality and quantity of teaching duties**

All teaching staff must be able to allocate working time for research and to be relieved from teaching duties during some teaching periods. As remote teaching has increased during the Covid-19 pandemic, the effort and resources needed must be taken into account by the employer. Teaching staff must receive clear and consistent guidelines. Increases in the number of students should be considered to secure resources for teaching and administration. Part-time teaching must always be remunerated.
- **Serving international staff**

HUART seeks to improve the possibilities of staff not fluent in Finnish or Swedish to participate in decision-making at the University. HUART organizes events for international staff and disseminates information on trade unions and unemployment benefits in Finland. HUART requires that support services for international staff must be organized in a sensible and accessible form.

1. Improving the status of fixed-term contractual researchers, grant researchers, and early-stage researchers

The Helsinki University Association of Researchers and Teachers [HUART] works to ensure better integration of project and grant researchers within the university community, so that continued career advancement becomes a real possibility for them. HUART demands that (1) all grant researchers should be treated equally during daily interaction with members of their departments, (2) researchers working on temporary contracts and grants also be recognized as full members of the community, and (3) they should be thoroughly briefed on working conditions at the university. These practices must be common to all university faculties. Grant researchers should be included in all decision-making that affects them, for example, in the planning and attribution of workspace.

HUART demands that all university staff members, whether employees or grant researchers, be provided with suitable workspaces. With the Coronavirus pandemic upon us, our employer needs to pay special attention to ergonomics and equipment. All grant researchers should be eligible for workspace at the university and be accepted as full members of the research community. HUART opposes charging grant researchers fees for the use of university infrastructures/facilities.

For researchers without permanent contracts, the right to family leave has varied from faculty to faculty within the university. All researchers working at the University should enjoy the same leave rights, regardless of the kind of research they carry out. HUART's central concern is that all employees of the university be treated equally. HUART supports the principle that both parental leave and care leave should prolong a fixed-term researcher's contract by the duration of the leave they have taken.

HUART works to promote the transformation of temporary contracts into permanent ones, on behalf of its all members and all employee categories. It aims to decrease unjustified temporary employment, and ensure that fixed-term contracts last at least as long as the actual projects do. In the case of so-called "natural" fixed-term contracts (e.g. replacement positions, fixed-term teaching gigs or doctoral research), positions must be filled for the entire period in question. Vague references to uncertainty about funding or to the lack thereof are not legitimate justification for offering temporary contracts, if work is still there to be done.

The *European Charter for Researchers and Code of Conduct for the Recruitment of Researchers* requires employers and funders to recognize as professionals all researchers pursuing a career in research, and to treat them as such. This means that appropriate conditions must be present for dissertation research to take place. Early-stage researchers just starting their work must have funding for four years at a

time (either via a place in a doctoral program, grant funding, or work on a project) and receive supervision of a sufficiently high standard.

HUART publicize FUURT's Instructions on the rights and obligations of dissertation supervision. HUART suggests for example that instead of the title "doctoral student" (tohtorikoulutettava), either the term "Early-stage researcher" (nuorempi tutkija, yngre forskare), recommended by the EU and FUURT, or "doctoral candidate" (väitöskirjatutkija, doktorand) should be adopted.

2. Developing and consolidating a good culture of cooperation

HUART engages in close, ongoing dialog with the leadership of the University of Helsinki, promoting best practices in personnel policy within the university. These goals are achieved both via regular meetings of the chief shop steward and the heads of personnel, and meetings of HUART's board and the management of the University of Helsinki. A long-term personnel policy is the right path to a healthy personnel structure. In its activities, HUART concentrates on maintaining a good, cooperative relationship with the University's human resources administration and with the Rector's office. On the campuses, members of HUART have been involved in occupational health and safety committees and in faculty councils. HUART takes part in shop stewardship activities together with other personnel organizations.

HUART regularly informs members about the activities of the shop stewards on its homepage, in its blog and via other social media. HUART is working to improve openness within the university community and is demanding broader rights for shop stewards to access information about fixed-term employment contracts. Salary information should also be available to shop stewards. The information should be reported according to job title and gender. HUART is critical of the movement to increase the prevalence of local contract negotiations, unless the chances of local personnel representatives acceding to positions as shop stewards improve significantly.

HUART demands that the personnel be included in decision-making about changes at work, for example, concerning the use of space and planning. The personnel should also receive information about new plans at a sufficiently early stage and should have the opportunity to assess their effects and to present alternatives. The nature of the employees' work and different work tasks should be taken into account in planned changes.

HUART asks that workers be better informed. In briefing new employees, employers should pay particular attention to workers who have just moved to the country. The salary system, workers' rights as well as relations with employee organizations and the role of shop stewards should be clearly explained.

3. The nature and amount of teaching duties

HUART's goal is to limit the number of university lecturers' and university teachers' teaching hours such that each of them has a realistic chance of doing research. University lecturers and university teachers should not be used as "teaching machines"; rather, they should be able to set aside time for conducting research. This will not happen, if workers are asked to work the intended maximum number of 394 contact teaching hours per year indicated in the safeguard clause of the collective agreement.

Those working in positions weighted toward teaching should be guaranteed they can devote at least 30 percent of their 1612 working hours to research. Their research periods should be sufficiently long, and their periods without teaching frequent enough, to ensure that each teacher really does have time for research. Teachers must be guaranteed the right to take a holiday, even if summer school is expanded. HUART opposes instituting a 455 hours-per-year teaching responsibility for university teachers. The university's permanent teaching staff should be treated equally, and the salary criteria must be the same for those with the same title.

In designing the university's career model the principle of "everyone does research and everyone teaches" should be followed. HUART is monitoring the implementation of the university lecturers' career model. The criteria for career advancement should be such that it is possible to meet them.

HUART sees to it that the rights and benefits of teachers are not weakened, nor the amount of teaching increased. HUART continues to insist that teachers be able to decide on the timing and content of their teaching. The increased burden brought on by the expansion of online teaching during the pandemic must be taken into account and if necessary, reevaluated in realizing work plans. The amount of teaching must remain reasonable, and all teaching staff must have access to the equipment needed to provide the instruction.

In accordance with the recommendations in the collective agreement, doctoral students may devote a maximum of 5 percent of their overall working hours to teaching tasks: that is, 81 hours per year. This includes time spent on preparation and evaluation in addition to the actual teaching. HUART demands that this interpretation also be recorded in university documents and the work plan guidelines. Teaching provided by a doctoral researcher must support the completion of the dissertation and relate to the themes of their research, as well as contributing to the early-stage researcher's preparation for an academic career.

4. Communication with members

HUART's Communications group will continue to be active in accordance with the communication strategy. The group creates content for the association's website and blog, and devises new ways to inform and keep in touch with members. HUART compiles information on its website to guide members to the services they need. HUART also posts the guidelines and recommendations prepared by the union (FUURT) and its working groups.

HUART shares information on its website and via social media. For members who prefer to receive information in Swedish and/or English, parts of this information are presented in these languages as well. International members are offered opportunities to get involved, for example by including notices about meetings and events in English as well.

HUART organizes advocacy-related events as well as recreational events. The organization promotes debate on science, education and university policy, for example by organizing Agora events where members have the opportunity to discuss these issues with the university management. The current pandemic restrictions are enforced when organizing the events.

HUART's Board has now appointed an International Affairs officer and created an International Affairs working group. Events organized for international members are held approximately once a semester in accordance with the model started in 2016. Speakers from outside the association may also be invited to speak about employee rights and advocacy at the events. The Organization is also working to encourage international members to participate by arranging informal interpretation at HUART's meetings, if necessary.

All events organized by HUART offer the opportunity to join the association, obtain copies of the association's brochures and get additional information about HUART and the Finnish Union of University Researchers and Teachers [FUURT].