

Action plan for the year 2025

Focus areas

We stand for all university workers

- We will work to improve the status of all researchers, including researchers in other professional positions.
- We will defend the position of scientists in precarious employment.
- We will continue to work towards the recognition of grant researchers and junior researchers as full members of the university community.

Actively involved in the university community

- We ensure that non-Finnish and non-Swedish-speaking staff can influence the university's decision-making.
- The principle of "*All teachers research and all researchers teach*" must be implemented by guaranteeing that teaching-oriented positions can allocate a sufficient proportion of working time on research and allow for periods of complete freedom from teaching.
- Hourly teachers must be paid according to the guidelines in place, and staff members must be compensated for hourly teaching undertaken outside of the work plan.

Pillar of support for our members

- Science is a team effort. We are a community-based and active professional association, and we respond to the different needs of our members by being a community of scientists at different career stages, with solidarity and accessibility.
- We involve our international members in our activities and lower the threshold for all scientists to join us.
- We will increase our visibility and impact, and increase our membership, unionisation rates and awareness of union activities and the key terms of collective agreements.
- Our slogan is "don't go alone".

Important dates and events for 2025

- The universities' collective agreement expires on 31 March 2025.
- Municipal elections, April 2025.
- Current faculty council members' terms end at the end of 2025.
- University of Helsinki board and collegium member elections, Fall 2025.

Defending university workers' rights

Improving the status of employees in precarious positions

Many researchers are employed on short, precarious contracts or work on grants. These forms of insecure employment undermine the professionalism of early career researchers in the eyes of more senior colleagues, and negatively affect the conditions for doing science. The precarity of employment renders it difficult for research staff to develop their careers in a structured way and to participate actively in the university community.

HUART calls for the University of Helsinki to flip around the ratio of permanent to fixed term contracts from the current 30%-70%. Justified fixed-term contracts should always be offered for the full duration of known projects, for example for the full four years at the beginning of doctoral studies. References to uncertainty, lack of funding, or the project driven nature of academic work are not acceptable justifications for fixed-term contracts. Staff on fixed term contracts must be considered in the human resources planning of faculties and departments and their career development must be supported.

The European Charter for Researchers and the Code for the Recruitment of Researchers oblige employers and funders to recognise all researchers in research careers as professionals. They must be treated accordingly. There should be proper conditions for doctoral research, and early career researchers must be guaranteed funding for the entire duration of their projects and high quality supervision. Furthermore, the University of Helsinki must follow the example set by the other Finnish universities and sign the charter.

HUART insists that all members of the university community, regardless of their employment or affiliation, must be treated equally. Particular attention must be paid to the integration of grant holders into the university and the working community. For example, communications from the departments to staff members must also be communicated to grant holders and not just those on an employment contract. Grant holders must be provided with appropriate conditions for carrying out research including working space, equipment, health and safety and other facilities. Practices must be uniform across all faculties. Research fellows should be involved in decisions that affect them, such as the design of facilities.

The right to annual and family leave should be recognized throughout the university, regardless of the nature of employment. HUART's key demand is that all university staff are treated equally. HUART supports the practice whereby both parental and carer's leave extend the employment contract of a fixed-term researcher by the amount of leave taken.

HUART calls for better training for scientists. Employers must pay particular attention to the induction of newly arrived workers, especially those from outside of Finland. Induction must clearly explain the pay system, employee rights, roles of staff organizations and shop stewards, as required by the collective agreement. The employer must ensure that the employee understands their contract and the role of the collective agreement in it before signing. HUART and other unions should be invited to the induction sessions. We will develop our openly available induction material and distribute it to new university staff.

Promoting a culture of cooperation and staff involvement

HUART maintains a close dialogue with the management of the University of Helsinki and promotes good practices in human resources policy at the university. These objectives are implemented through regular meetings of the Chief Stewards with the University's HR management and meetings of HUART's management with the University's management. In its activities, HUART strives to maintain good working relations with the university's personnel administration and the rectorate. Members of HUART are involved on campus in health and safety committees and faculty councils. HUART is actively involved in shop steward activities together with other staff organizations. HUART encourages and supports its members to apply for membership of university decision-making bodies.

HUART is developing transparency in the university community and calls for greater access for trustees on the information of fixed-term contracts. Salary information should also be available to the chief shop stewards. This information should be by title and statistical data by gender and background. HUART takes a critical view of the increase in local agreements unless staff representatives' access to shop stewardship is significantly improved.

Opportunities for members of the university community to participate on an equal footing in decision-making and preparation must be strengthened. The principle of equal representation must be introduced in all collegiate decision-making bodies and the university community must be genuinely involved in the planning and decision-making processes. It is not enough to hold consultation or information meetings if the views of the community are not given weight in decision-making. HUART demands that the trend of centralising power in the hands of the rectorate and the managerial staff is reversed and the balance of power is shifted back towards collegial decision making. HUART seeks to improve the opportunities for non-Finnish and non-Swedish-speaking staff in the university's decision-making.

“All teachers research and all researchers teach”

HUART's aim is to limit the number of teaching hours for university lecturers and university teachers so that everyone has a realistic chance to do research. The University of Helsinki's stated principle is that "all teachers research and all researchers teach". This principle must not remain a dead letter and those working in teaching-oriented jobs must be given a genuine opportunity to carry out research. The opportunity to undertake research is not realised if the employee is required to undertake the maximum of 394 contact teaching hours per year, as referred to in the safeguard clause of the collective agreement.

HUART insists that teaching resources should increase following any increase in student numbers to ensure that the teaching loads are manageable. Right to annual leave must be safeguarded, even if summer teaching at the University is expanded. HUART believes that teachers have the right to choose the content, methods, and times of their teaching.

The collective agreement recommends that no more than 5% of the total working time of doctoral researchers should be devoted to teaching. The 5% recommendation should be considered a strict maximum and not a target. Furthermore, the 5% must account for preparation of teaching materials and grading. HUART demands that this interpretation is included in university documents and work plan guidelines. Additionally, the teaching duties of doctoral researchers should ideally support the completion of their dissertation.

Supporting our members by being an effective union

More impact through more visibility

The weight of a professional association follows the growth in membership and organization rates. HUART is working to increase its membership and organization rate at the university. This will allow us to better defend the interests and rights of all scientists and to improve working life at the university. To achieve this, HUART will improve its visibility and communication on union activities and advocacy at the university. We will do this through effective local advocacy and by responding to the diverse support needs of our members. HUART also lowers the threshold to get involved and learn about trade union activities through working groups and discussion and recreational events. All events organized by HUART consider membership recruitment and distribute the association's brochures and other information about HUART and the Union of Scientists.

HUART aims to be an accessible and supportive community of scientists. We consider the different backgrounds and career stages of our members and aim to meet their diverse support needs. HUART organizes advocacy and recreational events. HUART maintains a science, education, and university policy debate, including by organizing events where members can discuss issues with the university's management.

Increasing the unionization rate at our workplace

HUART's long-term goal is to increase the unionization rate at the University of Helsinki by becoming a visible and effective local chapter that is the union of choice for new employees. We will increase our visibility by being proactive in discussion regarding local matters and by maintaining an active presence on all campuses. Major recruiting opportunities for HUART in 2025 are the collective agreement negotiations and the possibility of a strike if the current collective agreement expires before a new one is signed. In the event of industrial action we favour actions that create visibility and a sense of solidarity. We also recognise the role of shop stewards as key personnel in recruitment and member relations.

Involving the international community

The international working group at HUART continues to reach out the non-Finnish and non-Swedish speaking employees at the University by organising the academic self defence events. The next event will be held in April 2025 and we will consider organising a second event in Fall 2025 to meet possible demand. HUART will explore events in both virtual and live formats. The international staff at the University of Helsinki are often in vulnerable positions and form a keystone of our recruitment goals.

Developing effective communication strategies

HUART disseminates and produces information for advocacy purposes and publicizes the reports, guidelines and recommendations of the union and its working groups. HUART's communication team will continue to be active in line with the communication strategy. It will develop and produce content for the association's website and blog and will come up with new ways to communicate and keep in touch with members. The scientific work and further scientific training of members will be supported, for example by providing grants for research, travel, or other similar expenses.

HUART aims to be an accessible community. For example, HUART organizes events for international staff and aims to raise their awareness of issues such as trade union activities and unemployment benefits. The association's board has appointed an international affairs officer and an international affairs team. Events for international members are organized around once a semester, following the model started in 2016. Information is provided in Swedish and English for non-Finnish speaking members. International members will be offered opportunities to get involved by communicating meetings and events in English.

Strengthening HUART's organizational capacity

In order to be better equipped to accomplish the focus areas and objectives described above, the HUART office will expand from one to two part-time employees in the coming year. Although recruiting a second employee increases the costs for the organisation, HUART believes this would be a responsible use of the association's funds for the benefit of our members.

In addition to the existing Organizational Secretary position, we will hire a Membership and Communications Specialist who will be responsible for maintaining the membership directory and communications (communications plan, member communications, external communications, social media, newsletter). The two staff will share advocacy and coordination responsibilities, with the following focus:

- The Organizational Secretary will be primarily responsible for ad hoc advocacy needs, including proactively raising timely advocacy issues. They will also be responsible for coordinating with university leadership. This includes organizing regular meetings with university leadership.
- The Membership and Communications Specialist will be responsible for planning annual advocacy issues in collaboration with the Board. In terms of coordination, they will be responsible for coordinating with relevant local stakeholders, FUURT, and HUART working groups and board.

Strengthening HUART's strategic orientation and planning

In the beginning of next year, HUART will draft a strategy to guide its activities. This will articulate the strategic goals for the association in the coming years, which will provide the framework for developing the yearly action plans. In addition, clarification on the operational aspects of the association and an annual clock will be created to complement our planning.

Towards better and more responsible management of assets

HUART currently has significant assets saved in the association's savings account. Given that these assets multiply the association's annual budget and that the interest rate on the savings account is 0%, there is a need to manage these funds more efficiently and responsibly. Better management of our assets will also strengthen HUART's economy and diversify its sources of income. In the coming year, HUART will prepare an investment plan for 250,000 euros in consultation with the bank's investment specialist. These assets will be allocated to various low-risk investment funds with different investment perspectives. In the budget for 2025, the income from these assets is estimated at a modest 4%.