

Dear recipients

The University of Helsinki PhD student association HYVÄT has given a statement on April 30th, [2018](#) on the association's views on the inequality in the distribution of office space for PhD candidates at the University of Helsinki. As the Faculty of Arts has been chosen as a case study in the statement, the Faculty would, on its part, like to give the following response to the statement – both to show that the students' concerns have been heard, and to explain some of the reasoning behind the choices and necessities that have dictated the Faculty's current working space policies.

As acknowledged in the association's statement, the Faculty of Arts, along with the whole University, is under pressure to significantly save in square meters in the coming years to cut down facility-related costs. As a part of these efforts, the Aleksanteri Institute will move to Topelia to allow the University to relinquish the building currently occupied by the Institute. The Institute's move will necessitate changes also to the working space arrangements of the disciplines currently residing in Topelia. The Faculty has every intention to offer the current and future occupants of Topelia a genuine chance to participate in the planning of these changes. We regret that this intent has been communicated poorly in the meeting held on April 12th, 2018, referenced in the association's statement. A site has been opened in Flamma to provide up-to-date information on the changes to be made in Topelia to all interested parties, and the Faculty will continue to hold events related to the changes and to make sure that teachers and researchers are heard in the decision-making.

In the statement, the association proposes that free-of-charge working space should be offered to all doctoral candidates in need of it, independent of their source of funding or lack of any. The statement further points out that it would be crucial that the offered space would be in direct connection to the relevant discipline or research group. Setting up shared office space, such as the Socrates Centre in Metsätalo, with no connection to a specific discipline is criticized.

The Faculty of Arts agrees with the association on the many benefits such arrangements could offer to the doctoral candidates – and to the scientific community in general. However, the Faculty currently has a little over 700 doctoral students, of whom over 640 are currently registered as attending and are at least somewhat actively pursuing their doctoral degree. To put these numbers in perspective, the number of employed teaching and research staff at the Faculty of Arts is currently approximately 500. In a situation where a large portion of the faculty's square meters need to be reduced, doubling the number of researchers entitled to a working space at the same time is a mathematical impossibility – there is simply not enough space. The Faculty hopes understanding of its doctoral students to these realities.

The equal treatment of all doctoral students, both in respect to doctoral students with different backgrounds and in respect to the student body of the University in general, is a real and important issue, to which more attention should be paid throughout the University. The Faculty appreciates the candid feedback of the doctoral students and is open to all suggestions and discussions on how the situation could be improved. Not all hopes can be realized, but it's important to maintain an environment where open discussion on such matters is possible and to aim to find the best possible solutions at hand.

Further information:

Up-to-date information on the arrangements related to Topelia: <https://flamma.helsinki.fi/en/HY374438>
Socrates Centre: <https://flamma.helsinki.fi/en/HY374222>

Regards,

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