The rights and responsibilities of a PhD representative in the university administration

Jenna Sorjonen
Specialist in Higher Education Policy at HYY

HYVÄT PhD Representative Seminar
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Agenda

• Being a PhD student representative
• University administration at UH

• Doctoral education, doctoral programmes & doctoral schools
• Meeting procedure 101

• Sources of information
• Support – don’t be left alone!
Being a PhD student representative, you:

- represent your fellow and future PhD candidates in the university’s decision making
- are an equal member of the administrative body
- prepare for and participate in meetings
- vocalize PhD students’ perspectives to issues at hand in meetings and other conversations at the university
- communicate both ways: bringing PhD students’ point of view to administration and informing PhD students about current affairs in administration
Rights and responsibilities

Responsibilities

• Being present in meetings well prepared and having read the materials

• Representing PhD students’ point of view and aim to make decisions beneficial to students

• Being a link between students and the executive group & give information both ways
  • Other students must know what is being decided so they can form an opinion about the issue – you must know what that opinion is so you can represent it!

Rights

• Be treated as an equal member of the group with regard to the teacher members

• Get materials for meetings well in advance (at least a few days)

• Take part in preparing the decisions
  • This is where you really get to make a difference!

• Get a work certificate and up to 5 credits from the university
University administration at UH

• Academic freedom vs. regulation

• Strong tradition of collegiality

• Tripartite decision making: professors, other staff & students represented in practically all decision-making
  • PhD student can be either students or "other staff" depending on their financing

• Three levels of administration...
Central management

CHANCELLOR
BOARD
RECTOR
UNIVERSITY SERVICES

FACULTIES, SSKH AND JOINT OPERATIONAL UNITS

UNIT–LEVEL
- Faculties
- Other units

INDEPENDENT INSTITUTES

HELSINKI INSTITUTE OF LIFE SCIENCE HILIFE
HELSINKI UNIVERSITY LIBRARY HUB
FINNISH MUSEUM OF NATURAL HISTORY
HELSINKI COLLEGIUM FOR ADVANCED STUDIES HCAS
HELSINKI UNIVERSITY OF SUSTAINABILITY SCIENCE HELSUS
HELSINKI INSTITUTE OF ASIAN STUDIES HELSIAS
CENTRE FOR INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY
UNISPOT
OPEN UNIVERSITY
LANGUAGE CENTRE
NATIONAL LIBRARY OF FINLAND
Hierarchy of regulation

NATIONAL LEGISLATION
  • University Act and other legislation

UNIVERSITY-LEVEL REGULATIONS & DECISIONS
  • Regulations
  • Strategic plan
  • Rector’s and the vice rectors’ decisions
  • Decisions & policies by the Scientific council and Steering group of doctoral education

FACULTY-LEVEL DECISIONS
  • Decisions of the faculty council
  • Dean’s decisions
  • Executive/steering groups’ decisions and policies

Decisions at any level can’t contradict regulation at a higher level!
Language policy

Officially, by law, the university’s *administrative language* is Finnish
• Official documents, agendas, minutes etc. in Finnish

Other languages can be used as *working languages*
• English can be used in discussion and working documents
• Normally this is quite flexible particularly in the steering groups which also have many staff members who do not speak Finnish!
Doctoral schools & doctoral programmes

UH doctoral education is administered at several different levels

• University-level
  • Vice-rector Paula Eerola responsible for research & doctoral education
    • Scientific Committee & Steering Group for Doctoral Education

• Faculty-level
  • Faculty Councils

• 4 Doctoral schools
  • 32 Doctoral programmes, belong both to a faculty and a school
Boards of doctoral schools

The board of a doctoral school

• develops doctoral education in its fields
• gives resources to doctoral programmes
• assures the quality of doctoral programmes and monitor them
• does those other tasks given by the director
Boards of doctoral programmes

The board of a doctoral program

• evaluates the applications to the program and gives a proposition to the Faculty of those students who should be admitted
• plans and develops graduate education
• decides the principles of co-operation with other doctoral educators
• does those other duties that are given by the director of the program
Meeting procedure 101

• UH presentation and meeting procedures (check it out!):
  • https://flamma.helsinki.fi/documents/3590b/0/presentation_and_meeting_procedures_at_the_university_of_helsinki_27012010.pdf/732ff61a-a59d-2e4b-25b9-23e9dace0dc14

• Presentation procedure
  • Presenting officials are persons (admin staff) responsible for preparing and presenting an item for a meeting
  • The presenting official’s name is mentioned in the agenda — this is the person to ask about issues related to the item in question
  • Most decisions are made using presentation procedure (exceptions: hearings, discussion items, dissertations)
Meeting procedure 101

Before the meeting

• The agenda (with annexes) should be sent at least 2 working days before the meeting. Get familiar with the documents!

• Quorum (päätösvaltaisuus):
  • At least half of members must be present — when handling dissertations enough members with the correspondent level of degree (others can’t participate, i.e. speak or vote)
  • It is important to coordinate between PhD student members that enough students are represented!
Meeting procedure 101

Deputy members

• Present at meetings when actual members cannot make it
  • A member is responsible for informing her deputy member well in advance if she is unable to come to a meeting!
  • Taking turns in participating meetings is a good way of sharing responsibility and making sure both are informed of current affairs!

• Most often deputy members have been granted the right to attend also when the actual member is present. Then, however, the deputy member cannot speak or vote.
  • This can be decided by each administrative body and should be brought up in the first meetings!
  • There are rarely good grounds for denying deputy members the right to attend.
  • There are varying practices on the deputy member’s right to speak when the actual member is present – bring this up too!
Meeting procedure 101

Decision-making

• Unanimous
  • If no other decision proposals to the one made by the presenting official are made during discussion.
  • If all members support an amendment.

• Voting
  • If a more than one proposal is made and members are not unanimous.
  • Proposed decisions must be formulated so that participants can vote yes or no.
  • In most cases a single majority wins the vote.
Meeting procedure 101

Shelving a matter (pöytääminen)

- Means that the decision on the matter will be moved to a future meeting
  - It should be decided in which meeting the decision will be made, often in the next scheduled meeting
- Can be done by
  - Chair of presenting official, if preparation is ongoing or deficient, or if decision is prevented by "other circumstances"
  - One third of members, when the matter is addressed the first time
  - A majority of members, if the decision has been shelved before
Meeting procedure 101

Disqualification (estiellisyys)

• If a member is on some grounds disqualified, he or she must not be involved in the preparation, the discussion or the decision making in the matter
• A person to be disqualified shall announce the reasons by himself/herself, the body will vote on the case if unclear
• A member will be disqualified, if she
  • is involved
  • a close relative is involved
  • is assisting someone involved
  • is in a responsible position in a organization involved
  • has joint papers from the last three years
  • is members of the same research group
  • is the supervisor, superior or work for the applicant
Meeting procedure 101

What’s public? What can I report to other PhD students?

• Meetings are not public, but agendas and other documents are.
  • Agendas and minutes are publish in Flamma (with some delay!)

• Rule of thumb: You can summarize the discussion on a general level, but not quote anyone or say who has said what.
  • OK: ”Opinions X and Y were brought up in the discussion.”
  • NOT OK: ”Professor X was against our proposal.”

• If you are unsure about how public a specific matter is, discuss your doubts with other PhD members or ask the secretary of the administrative organ. Few things are strictly confidential, but it’s better to be sure!
Sources of information


Meeting procedures: https://flamma.helsinki.fi/documents/b590b/0/presentation_and_meeting_procedures_at_the_university_of_helsinki_77e72010.pdf/7322f61a-ae59d-4e4b-7e57-7e4dad0dc14

Regulations on Degrees and the Protection of Students’ Rights at the University of Helsinki: https://flamma.helsinki.fi/documents/b590b/0/2018_41_Tutkinto_oikeusturvajohtosaanto_2018_en.pdf/9591dde-cde8-dc8b-0a1a-72dccc7788f

Teaching related legislation and decisions (incl. doctoral education), unfortunately mostly in Finnish: https://flamma.helsinki.fi/en/group/yliopisto/opetuksen-paatokset
Student representatives

Find out who represents you and other students in the various decision making bodies all around the university: https://www.halloped.fi/en/helsinki/organs

Apply to be a student representative yourself: https://www.halloped.fi/en/helsinki/calls

More information about applying: hyy.fi/representative

Support for student representatives: https://hyy.fi/en/guides/student-representatives
Support

• HYY is there for you, too!

• HYY’s guide for student representatives: https://hyy.fi/en/guides/student-representatives

• HYY’s guide in students’ legal protection: https://hyy.fi/en/guides/students-legal-protection-in-studies


• Specialists
  • Jenna Sorjonen, jenna.sorjonen@hyy.fi, 05032552020, is responsible for supporting student representatives!
  • Also responsible for questions of students’ legal protection and students’ influencing possibilities in university administration more generally
Keep up: follow our social media!

Facebook: https://www.facebook.com/HYY.HUS/

Twitter: @ylioppilaskunta

Instagram: hyy_hus