

Publisher

Finnish Education Evaluation Centre

Name of publication

The evaluation of higher education in humanities

Authors

Riitta Pyykkö, Mikko Tolonen, Kimmo Levä, Seija Mahlamäki-Kultanen,
Marko Pantermöller, Torsten Pettersson, Sini Saarinen & Mira Huusko

The evaluation of higher education in humanities was conducted in 2019 and it focused on analysing the development of educational provision and profiling in the field of humanities in universities and universities of applied sciences. The central topics covered in the evaluation were the competence base and working-life relevance of degrees. The evaluation questions were:

1. What is the current state of the educational provision in the field of humanities?
2. What knowledge base is the development of the educational provision built on?
3. What processes and networks are found in the field of humanities in relation to the development of educational provision?

A wide range of data was used in the evaluation: feedback surveys (Bachelor's graduate survey, AVOP graduate feedback questionnaire [bachelor's, master's], Master's degree career monitoring survey), Statistics Finland's data, field-specific and degree-level self-assessment surveys, focus group interviews (both joint interviews for the four evaluations of educational fields and specific to the field of humanities), and case studies. In addition, the preliminary conclusions and development recommendations were discussed at the field-specific stakeholder seminar. The results of the seminar also served as evaluation material.

Based on the evaluation, **the key strengths** of higher education in humanities are:

- **Graduates from the field of humanities have strong subject knowledge** and their ability to grasp complexities and think critically is at a good level. Education in humanities provides diverse and wide-ranging competence, giving flexibility required in constantly changing circumstances in working-life.
- **The dual model of Finnish higher education system is clear in humanities** as degree programmes are already specialised into two higher education sectors. Most of the higher education in humanities is provided by universities. Universities of applied sciences offer community educator and interpreter degree programmes. From the perspective of the two higher education sectors, there are hardly any degrees with overlaps or challenges in terms of harmonisation.

- **Higher education institutions' strong interest in pedagogical development** can be seen in the staff development. Versatile pedagogical training is offered: training in higher education pedagogy is offered in the form of extensive study entities, shorter modules, various seminars as well as development events and projects. Most of these staff development activities are carried out by individual higher education institutions. However, the ongoing Government key projects have brought as well national co-operation in this area.
- There are **plenty of opportunities to plan and implement continuous learning in the field of humanities**. Competences required in today's working-life, such as languages, knowledge about different cultures, multicultural competence and insight into history and social changes, is offered extensively in humanities.

The key recommendations for higher education in humanities are:

- **The working-life relevance of degrees should be considered more extensively in the planning of education and the guidance and counselling of students.** Traineeship opportunities as well as co-operation with the alumni should be increased in the bachelor's and master's stages. There should be a systematic focus on the development of working-life skills in education. In humanities, 78 per cent of graduates from universities and 79 per cent of graduates from universities of applied sciences were employed. The rate of graduates finding employment is approximately 10 per cent lower among graduates in humanities than among graduates in technology and business, for instance. Consequently, employment opportunities should be planned already during the studies.
- **There should be a more systematic approach from the beginning of the studies in making learning outcomes more visible and creating opportunities for students to recognise and describe their own competences.** The students should get a clear perception of their own competences at different stages of their studies which would also help them when seeking entry into working life. Practice in verbalising one's own competences would also help students in planning their studies, assessing the development of their competences and describing their competences when entering the labour market. In each higher education institution, time and resources should be reserved for making learning outcomes visible.
- **The integration of digital competences in the degrees in humanities should be defined, planned and realised** at the national level in order to find, develop and implement best practices. Currently, digitalisation-related competences are gained mainly from sources other than degree education in humanities. The digitalisation-related continuing education for subject teachers should be fixed.
- **Internationalisation should permeate the degrees in humanities more profoundly and extensively.** Students' periods of internationalisation should be integrated in their personal study plans. Then international relevance of the learning outcomes should be ensured in all degrees in humanities by supporting language and cultural competence, strengthening language and culturally aware teaching and promoting multiculturalism in higher education institutions' practices.

Keywords: competence base, continuous learning, educational profiles, educational provision, evaluation, higher education, higher education institutions, humanities, internationalisation, steering of higher education, universities, universities of applied sciences, working-life relevance.