

Statement of the Student Union of Tampere University on the preparation of the University's action plan 2022–2025 regarding the reduction of campus facilities

2 December 2021

Introduction

The Student Union of Tampere University is once again grateful for the opportunity to express the students' views on the preparation of the action plan 2022–2025 for the campus facilities of Tampere University. As we have stated before, we find it important that the discussion surrounding campus facilities take into account the University's basic tasks, the suitability and appropriate use of facilities, and the community's social and cultural integration into the campuses. We thank the University Board for sending the action plan back to the drawing board, because now the community has a genuine opportunity to contribute to the contents of the plan. From the perspective of students, we naturally hope that the facility cuts will be appropriate and that they will not make studies and student activities more difficult in our university.

As we have stated before, the facilities that are important to us students are facilities relevant for studying, such as independent study facilities, quiet study

spaces, laboratory facilities, teaching facilities, student association facilities, computer rooms, and the library. We also think that it is important to develop the facilities to serve their purpose and the community's activities better.

We, the Student Union of Tampere University, find it important that all our university campuses are treated equally and that the cuts are evenly distributed across the campuses. We find the **proposals VE6** and **VE9** particularly bad because they involve the most unevenly distributed facility cuts that fall too heavily on individual campuses. The **University Board's option** treats the campuses most fairly, even though it is not without problems, either.

Learning and teaching facilities

As a result of the Digivisio 2030 project, the increase in remote and hybrid learning, and digitalisation in general, the future needs of the users of learning and teaching facilities will be significantly different than today. Evolving teaching methods and the shift to online learning will increase the need for independent study facilities more compared to group learning facilities. It is important to take these trends into consideration in teaching. In 5 to 10 years, the current education facilities will no longer serve users at the required level. Many developments will require significant changes to facilities, devices, and fittings. Working in small learning groups will increase as multiform learning becomes more common. All this means that changes have to be made.

In the future, the need for large lecture halls will decrease. The shift from mass lectures to remote lectures and lecture recordings enables a larger number of participants and improves the flexibility of studies. The development of campus facilities should not only focus on how large facility groups we can easily close down to cut expenses but also on how closing down facilities would serve the development of education and the growth of digital pedagogy.

Although remote and hybrid learning are becoming more common, university education should also acknowledge the importance of classroom lectures. Classrooms and learning facilities must cater to students' needs more extensively and enable both contact teaching and remote/hybrid learning. Our students are already facing situations where they may first have a classroom lecture on campus, followed by a remote lecture and a face-to-face practical course, all on the same day. The campuses must have facilities that support this. Saving on resources should not be the reason for the shift to digital learning environments.

Learning situations are important for integrating into the community. Having a cup of coffee together in the breakroom is important for co-workers, and similarly, students enjoy working with their fellow students in small learning groups for a chance to discuss, connect, and build relationships. Facilities should enable different methods and applications for working in small groups. Studying in and outside the formal classroom setting, either independently or in groups, are equally important, which should be reflected in the way facilities are allocated for different purposes.

If the campus development project will move the laboratory facilities located on the Hervanta campus into the Sähköotalo building, we, the Student Union of Tampere University, emphasise that the laboratories used as teaching and research facilities should be put in appropriate locations, especially in terms of access and safety.

We are grateful that the starting point is that the facilities for studying and student activities are regarded as important and that the different proposals are not seeking to reduce their number.

Independent study facilities and quiet spaces

As stated above, there is a growing trend towards multi-form studies in our University, and many pedagogical solutions are making independent studying more common. However, the recent long period of remote studying showed that studying independently at home has serious negative effects on students. It is therefore important that the university community's facilities enable independent studying on campus. Studying on campus enables students to work in a more efficient and ergonomic manner and to further their studies in contact with their community.

Often these so-called facilities allocated for independent studying mean a seat and a small table in a hallway with a lot of commotion. Some campus buildings may not have any spaces suitable for studying, and if they do, they may be unavailable to students. Campus development efforts should pay attention to making the study

facilities genuinely available to students, regardless of what time it is. Such facilities include the campuses' independent study facilities, group learning facilities, and library facilities.

We, the Student Union of Tampere University, hope that the decisions made now acknowledge how important the campus library is for studies and community building, keeping in mind the second stage of the decision-making process. The decisions made at this stage should not be held as a justification for reducing or undermining the library facilities at the second stage of the process.

The facility type classification of the **University Board's proposal** indicates that the number of study and library facilities would increase compared to the present situation. We consider this a good thing. The numbers do not, however, specify whether this means independent study facilities, teaching facilities, or some other types of facilities. Out of the given options, we find proposal **VE6** the weakest since it would decrease the number of study facilities compared to the current situation.

Computer rooms

The facility closures and the IT management's planned public computer room cuts would mean that students would have to purchase expensive tools themselves to further their studies. These are often very specific tools required to participate in a course. In our opinion, these tools should be generally offered to students by the University.

In many fields, studying requires the use of technology, more powerful devices, and expensive software. In order to be able to further their studies, it is important that students have access to these devices and software on campus, because there is software that the University does not offer for use at home or that can be unreasonably slow to use on the student's home computer. What's more, purchasing software licenses for private use is often very expensive.

When campus facilities are developed, the faculty-maintained computer rooms should be given the facilities they need, and students should also have access to these rooms. The development of technology, devices and software should be taken into consideration in both education and research. The University's computer rooms enable equal access to services for all students and put everyone on an equal footing to pursue their studies.

Association facilities

We want to further emphasise the crucial importance of association facilities in our student community. Association facilities enable the activities of a wide range of associations, which contributes to integrating students into our university community. In the context of the development project of campus facilities, we students have been promised that the facilities will be replaced with new ones, and we are glad about that. When finding new association facilities, attention should be paid to what the associations' needs are and how suitable the facilities are for their purpose. The facilities should serve their users in the best possible way. Most

associations need a space for organising meetings, storing equipment, and having coffee and spending time together. Some associations have activities that require room for special equipment, mechanical ventilation, or direct access from the outside. These diverse needs should be taken into consideration when looking into potential substitute facilities.

All proposals suggest closing down Pinni A, which would imply the loss of a significant number of association facilities at the centre campus. The Konetalo building is home to many associations that have special facility needs. This should be taken into consideration, especially when assessing proposal **VE7**. However, we see this debate as a source of many opportunities for the further development of association facilities. On the centre campus, for example, the current association facilities do not offer enough support for the associations' activities. One way of developing the association facilities would be to offer the unoccupied rooms on the Main building's ground floor to associations.

Summary

We, the Student Union of Tampere University, find the **proposal VE6** poor because it would distribute the facility cuts unevenly across campuses and reduce the number of study facilities. In proposal **VE6**, facility cuts would affect the Hervanta campus the most. Neither do we support **proposal VE9**, which would also distribute the facility cuts unevenly across campuses, unfairly making the centre campus the main target of cutbacks. While **proposal VE7** distributes the facility cuts more evenly

across campuses, it involves more cuts on association facilities. We do not support this option either.

Based on the information provided, it is impossible to evaluate the long-term effects of the **University Board's proposal**. Supporting this proposal would be like buying a pig in a poke. The good thing about the University Board's proposal is that its effects are the most evenly distributed across the campuses. In our opinion, the University Board's proposal is the least bad of the options given.

We find it challenging to understand the whole because during this round of comments, it is not possible to assess what impact the decisions made now will have on the second decision-making stage. It is our concern that the statements given during this round of comments and the facility reduction option chosen by the University Board in December will be used to justify decisions made at the second stage of the process, which are not linked to the decision at hand. We hope that the following spring's discussions and the action plan for 2026–2030 will be openly treated as a separate entity, so that we are not unknowingly endorsing any decisions made next spring during this round of comments.

Signatures:

Iiris Taubert

Chair of the Board

Artturi Lindeman

Vice Chair

For more information regarding this statement, please contact:

Lassi Halminen

Board member in charge of campus development matters

lassi.halminen@trey.fi

040 713 0088