

## **What is a university?**

### **Definition of a university**

A university is a gathering of students and teachers with the aim of creating and disseminating knowledge gained through the principle of academic freedom and scientific methods. All activities are characterized by the scientific ethos, i.e., that we always are prepared to creatively and critically reconsider the established truths, opinions and methods. Our knowledge is based on scientific methods characterised by ambition to fulfil demands of repetition, falsification and openness.

### **The independence of a university**

We acknowledge the political nature of science dependent on our opportunity to choose our research objectives. But lack of total absence of value judgement concerns only the specific research project and researcher. The university as such has no values, except those that concern the definition of the university. A university can never stand behind any political movement, except those that fulfil the aim of the university. The independence of the university is important in order to secure that the research and teaching is performed based on scientific methods and not on demands by politicians, by public opinion or by strong organisations.

### **Academic freedom characterising the activity at the university**

A universities creation of knowledge is characterised by academic freedom, i.e., the right for a teacher to independently choose the research object and the scientific method in order to create scientific knowledge and to disseminate this knowledge. It is the academic critique from the students and the teachers that in the long run will select the knowledge that will survive and the knowledge that will be doomed inferior. In this academic environment, it is only the scientific arguments that hold for knowledge selection. Political opinions and values are not legitimate basis for evaluating scientific knowledge. We acknowledge the problematic character of this aspect of academic freedom, but today we find the calculus benefiting academic freedom without political influence.

### **Collegial governance of a university**

A university is governed by the members of the university, i.e., the teachers and the students. It is a republic of scholars. While science is a matter of reason and testing and evaluation, the governance of a university is a matter of collegial power. It is the collection of teachers, with influence from students, that direct the university. No one else can govern the university, since that would put a threat to the independence of the university and the academic freedom. This implies that the power of a university is contained at the collegiums level. Prefects, deans and rectors are but service authorities with the task and duty to act when the collegium breaks down. Strategy is formed at the collegiums level, where the teachers rule and the students influence. Rector, deans and prefects are selected from and elected by the collegium. Through this governance model, the academic freedom and the independence of the university will be secured and characterizing the university, enabling it to perform its societal duty, that of producing and disseminating scientific knowledge.

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Sven-Olof Yrjö Collin