This guide is meant for you, a doctoral student working at a university in Finland. It provides brief descriptions of the most common issues encountered by doctoral students, such as what is meant by total working time and how your pay is determined.

**Working time**

**Pay**

**Fixed-term employment**

**Working on a grant**

**Workplace representative, JUKO and the collective agreement**

**LAL’s branch activities in universities**

**Member benefits provided by the union**

Within the total working time system, the annual working time is 1,600 hours.

The regulations on total working time are applied to teaching and research staff of universities.
Total working time was introduced for university research staff in August 2010, which is why the regulations on total working time are also applied to doctoral students. Within the total working time system, the annual working time is 1,600 hours, and daily or weekly working hours are not monitored. This means that you can organise your working hours more freely than if you were required to clock in and out every day. In accordance with the collective agreement for universities, the objective of the system is to increase the flexibility of working arrangements, improve research conditions, promote artistic activities, and develop research-based instruction and new, more incentive forms of teaching and studying.

**NO DAILY WORKING HOURS**

The total working time system gives you the freedom to decide when and where to use your working hours.

You agree with the employer, on a general level, on how your working time is divided between teaching, research and other duties. The completion of certain units of teaching, research projects and administrative tasks, for example, can be agreed on in more detail.

With regard to agreed tasks, the employer can monitor that the work is performed at a specific time in a specific place (teaching, exam supervision, etc.). In other respects, employees can themselves decide when and where to work. On the other hand, matters such as the availability of research equipment can impose limitations on this freedom of choice.

Daily or weekly working hours are not specified within the total working time system, and doctoral students cannot be obliged to work specific hours on a daily basis. In principle, the timing of leave is up to each individual, but informing the department will, of course, ensure that work can be carried out smoothly. However, you do not need to ask for leave, and your supervisor does not determine its timing.

Within the total working time system, employees are responsible for their own working time and for using it to perform the tasks set out in their work plan. Employees must themselves ensure that they work the required 1,600 hours and that they complete the agreed tasks.

No annual holiday is accumulated within the system, since the annual working time is shorter than when working regular hours. In the latter case, there are 251 working days in a year. When 30 days of holiday are deducted from this, 221 working days remain. Using this information, the number of hours worked by those who have regular working time is 1,602 hours in 2013.

Employees are themselves responsible for taking the leave corresponding to the annual holiday that is included in the system. The general rule is that employees should take their periods of leave before the beginning of the next academic year. This is also a matter of occupational health and safety: the employer must ensure that employees take their leave.

Where necessary, the supervisor and employee can monitor the realisation of the work plan during the academic year and the results of the work within the total working time. Employees within the total working time system do not receive extra or overtime compensation. If it seems impossible for you to carry out the agreed tasks within the hours reserved for them, it is important that you talk to your supervisor in good time about a possible change of your work plan.

You can also contact the union and/or the workplace representative to clarify your situation. If you only work part of the year, your total working time is based on the duration of your employment. For example, if your contract is made for six months, your working time is 800 hours.

**WHAT IS A WORK PLAN?**

Employees within the total working time system are not monitored on the basis of their daily or weekly working hours, what is monitored is the completion of agreed work tasks. Doctoral students annually prepare work plans with their supervisors before the beginning of the next academic year. In the work plan, the working hours are allocated to various types of tasks. Work plans are drawn up taking account of the employee’s participation in teaching, research activities and other duties.


**NO ANNUAL HOLIDAY**

Within the total working time system, the provisions on annual holiday are only applied with regard to the payment of holiday bonuses. The holiday bonus is paid with the July salary.

Holiday compensations are not paid within the system. Before your employ-
ment ends, make sure well in advance that you have taken the leave to which you are entitled.

**WHAT IS SoleTM?**
SoleTM and similar systems are not working time monitoring systems: they are designed for the allocation of working time for cost accounting purposes. Such software is not covered by collective agreements. Each university has its own guidelines for the use of SoleTM.

**FAMILY LEAVE, SICKNESS ABSENCE AND TOTAL WORKING TIME**
No annual holiday is accumulated within the total working time system, so no holiday is accumulated during maternity leave, for example. However, work plans must be prepared taking account of longer periods of absence that may have a significant impact on their contents, such as family leave (maternity, paternity and parental leave, child-care leave). After a longer period of absence, the realisation of the work plan prior to the absence is reviewed and the required changes are made to the plan.

Within the annual holiday system, accumulated holidays are often taken right after returning from parental leave. Similarly, the total working time system allows you to plan your work so that you can take your period of leave following the family leave.

If you fall ill, you should notify your employer as soon as possible. You must present a doctor’s certificate or other account accepted by the employer to prove you are not fit for work. The impact of sickness absence must be taken into account in the work plan by reducing the planned work tasks.

**TEACHING DUTIES OF DOCTORAL STUDENTS**
For doctoral students, participation in teaching work and other duties specified in the work plan must be dimensioned to enable the completion of the thesis within the planned timetable.

No more than five per cent of the annual working time is recommended to be used for teaching, and the teaching should, as far as possible, be related to the field of research of the person in question. On an annual level, this translates into a maximum of 80 hours of teaching. The union’s view is that this also includes the time used for preparing instruction.

**Pay**
The salary of university employees consists of two components: a job-specific component based on the job requirement level and a personal component based on personal performance.
With regard to new jobs, the employer conducts a preliminary evaluation of the job requirement level. The level must be assessed within six months of the beginning of employment. The job requirement level is reviewed if the supervisor feels that the job has changed so much that reassessment is needed to find out whether the requirement level should be altered. Evaluation groups discuss the job requirement evaluations of new and changed jobs and define their view on them.

Many universities have criteria specified by evaluation groups for what is expected when working at a specific requirement level, i.e., how far the writing of the thesis should have progressed in order for the doctoral student to move to the next level. Evaluation groups have both employer and employee representatives. The progression from one requirement level to the next of people whose principal task is writing a thesis can be implemented without performing evaluations required by the salary system and discussion by the evaluation group if the university has defined how this progression takes place. However, doctoral students always have the right to demand evaluation of the job requirement level by the evaluation group.

For people whose principal task is writing a doctoral thesis, it is recommended that their job be placed on requirement level 2 when they are employed for the first time. The progress of the thesis should be taken into account when assessing the requirement level. As the postgraduate studies and writing of the thesis progress, the salary should also increase.

**Levels 1–4**

If a doctoral student has considerable teaching or project responsibilities, the job requirement level may be higher than that indicated by the stage of his or her postgraduate studies.

- **Level 4**
  - Doctoral student
  - experimental work (if included in the discipline) almost complete
  - public defence within about a year
  - doctoral studies almost complete
  - title: doctoral student

The doctoral student will move to level 5 after completion of the doctoral degree; title: post-doctoral researcher.

- **Level 3**
  - Doctoral student
  - experimental work (if included in the discipline) about halfway through and/or
  - accepted publications or text accounting for about half of the planned amount
  - more than half of the doctoral studies corresponding to the confirmed study requirements completed
  - title: doctoral student

- **Level 2**
  - Doctoral student
  - approved plan for post-graduate studies (UniOGS)
  - doctoral studies started
  - title: doctoral student

- **Level 1**
  - Research assistant, teaching assistant or doctoral student
  - people studying for a basic degree
  - recent graduates with master’s degrees who have just started their post-graduate studies and have yet to obtain approval for their study plan

For those basic degree students who have not yet completed the required master’s degree, the share of the job-specific component of pay must be at least 75 per cent of the salary for the requirement level in question.

Personal performance and the level of performance are evaluated in reviews between the employer and his or her supervisor. Performance reviews are conducted every two years for all university staff.
### SALARY SCALES:

www.luonnontieteilijat.fi/tyosuhdeasiat/yliopistosektori

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Under the Finnish Employment Contracts Act, an employment contract is valid indefinitely unless it has, for a justified reason, been made for a fixed term. Such justified reasons include working as a substitute and reasons having to do with the nature of the work.

An example of the latter is the writing of a doctoral thesis. Doctoral students may often have several consecutive fixed-term contracts, and possibly even periods of working on a grant in between the contracts. The Employment Contracts Act does not contain a provision similar to the one in the Act on civil servants, which provides that unless otherwise decided for a special reason, a civil servant must be appointed for the entire period on the basis of which a fixed-term employment contract can be made. However, it would be good practice to avoid concluding several short-term contracts when a single slightly longer contract could also be made.

Temporary employees normally have the same rights as permanent employees, such as the right to use occupational health services. In some universities, a doctoral student may extend her fixed-term employment contract for a period corresponding to the duration of her maternity leave, for example. The Academy of Finland’s guidelines for funding decisions also mention the opportunity to extend the funding period for specific reasons, such as maternity, parental or child-care leave, military or non-military service, or long-term illness of a researcher working on a project with funding from the Academy. The precondition for such extension is that no substitute has been hired for the researcher and that he or she will return to work on the project.

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www.luonnontieteilijat.fi/tyosuhdeasiat/yliopistosektori/maaraikaistyoryhma
Working on a grant is not an employment contract. Consequently, he or she is not entitled to the same employee benefits as employees who have employment contracts with the university.

The position of researchers working on a grant has improved over the years in terms of social security regulations. Nevertheless, many flaws still exist that make their position weaker than that of employees with contracts.

The pension and occupational accident insurance of grant recipients is handled by the Farmers’ Social Insurance Institution (Mela). Those working on a grant are not entitled to benefits such as sick pay, occupational health services, maternity leave pay or any other employee benefits to which employees are entitled according to their employment contracts and collective agreements. In addition, some universities have begun to collect rent from these researchers for their offices.

When working on a grant, weeks of work required for earnings-related unemployment allowance are not accumulated for the employee. However, with respect to unemployment security, working on a grant is regarded as a period that can be ‘ignored’ for up to seven years. In other words, the grant recipient’s entitlement to earnings-related unemployment allowance remains if the employment condition has been met in full outside the grant period and the membership of the unemployment fund continues unbroken.

The employment condition is met when, during your membership of the unemployment fund, you have worked for at least 26 calendar weeks in a job that fulfils the salary conditions and where the working time has been at least 18 hours per week within a period of 28 months preceding unemployment.

Ordinary members of the Finnish Union of Experts in Science are covered by unemployment insurance from the Unemployment Fund for Higher Educated Employees (Erko, www.erko.fi). Ordinary members automatically join the unemployment fund when joining the union, if they have a valid employment contract.

The pension and occupational accident insurance of grant recipients is handled by the Farmers’ Social Insurance Institution (Mela). A grant recipient living in Finland is obliged to take out insurance if he or she works on a grant for an uninterrupted period of at least four months (www.mela.fi).

All in all, the position of researchers working on a grant has improved over the years in terms of social security regulations. Nevertheless, many flaws still exist that make their position weaker than that of employees with contracts.
It’s easy to succeed if we all work towards a common goal!

Workplace representative, JUKO and the collective agreement

In the university sector, the collective agreement for LAL members is negotiated by JUKO, the Public Sector Negotiating Commission, which represents Akava members.

As the main national negotiation organisation, JUKO negotiates the collective agreements for Akava members working in the public sector. The agreements set out salaries and other conditions of employment. LAL is a member of the JUKO University Sector Advisory Committee, which decides on the collective agreement for the university sector and its comments, and submits a proposal to the board of JUKO for the approval or rejection of the collective agreement.

In the working world, things do not always go as planned. When this happens, you should contact the union and the local workplace representative of JUKO, even if he or she were not an LAL member. A workplace representative is a person elected by the employees to represent them in the workplace in case of disputes, for example. JUKO workplace representatives represent all members of Akava’s affiliates.

The Finnish Union of Experts in Science currently has 26 branches: seven professional branches, 12 workplace branches, one regional branch and six student branches. More than 60 per cent of LAL members belong to one of these branches.

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The LAL branches actively watch over the interests of our members and serve as a contact and training network. They play a key role in safeguarding employees’ interests and supporting local workplace representatives.

Workplace branches can be found at the following universities:
- Helsinki (Helsinki University’s Scientists’ Branch, HYLA)
- Tampere (Tampere University’s and Tampere Technical University’s Scientists’ Branch, LATTE)
- Turku (Turku University’s Scientists’ Branch, TYLA)
- Oulu (Oulu University’s Scientists’ Branch, OLA)
- Joensuu (LAL - Joensuu)

When you join the union, you automatically become a member of a workplace branch because of your work at university. LAL also has a regional branch in Northern Savo.
Member benefits provided by the union

As an LAL member, you receive a range of valuable benefits, in addition to the union protecting your interests.

- The union provides assistance in issues related to employment.
- Ordinary members of the union are covered by unemployment insurance from the Unemployment Fund for Higher Educated Employees (Erko).
- You are also entitled to numerous insurance benefits, such as professional liability and legal expenses insurance and leisure-time traveller’s insurance. The annual value of the latter, for example, is approximately €60.
- In addition, you have access to free private legal advice over the phone, provided by Attorneys-at-Law Juridia Bützow. You can ask for advice on matters such as inheritance, prenuptial agreements and buying or selling a home. The usual fee for private legal advice in law firms is about €200 per hour.
- Leisure benefits, such as the union’s holiday cabin Koljonhelma in Nummi-Pusula and SMKJ’s holiday apartments in Levi, Tahko, Ruka, Ylläs and Meri-Teijo.
- Your membership fee is tax-deductible, and the union will inform the Tax Administration of the fee paid by you. In other words, you will get part of the membership fee back.

Reduction of membership fee

Members’ varying life situations are taken into account in LAL’s membership fees.

You can apply for a fee reduction if, for example, you are going to be on child-care leave or work on a grant for at least four months. In this case, the membership fee is €5 per month. For detailed and up-to-date information on our membership fees, please visit our website.

Want to know more?

If you have any questions about the protection of interests and the terms of employment in the university sector, please contact Anna Hellén, agreements and bargaining officer The Finnish Union of Experts in Science, LAL Pohjoinen Makasiinikatu 6 A, 00130 Helsinki Tel. +358 9 2511 1669 or mobile +358 41 433 1671 anna.hellen@luonnontieteilijat.fi Read more about the protection of interests in the university sector, our branch activities and the member benefits provided by the union on our website at www.luonnontieteilijat.fi