



**OPEN EDUCATION AND EDUCATIONAL
RESOURCES, OPEN ACCESS TO
SCHOLARLY PUBLICATIONS. NATIONAL
POLICY AND EXECUTIVE PLAN BY THE
HIGHER EDUCATION AND RESEARCH
COMMUNITY FOR 2021–2025.**

Policy component for open access to theses

RESPONSIBLE RESEARCH SERIES

The Responsible Research Series publishes declarations, policies, studies, recommendations and other documents relating to the openness, responsibility and accessibility of science and research. Publications also cover science communication and science-society interactions. The publication series is not a scientific peer-reviewed publication. The series is published by the Committee for Public Information (TJNK) and the Federation of Finnish Learned Societies (TSV).

Open education and educational resources, open access to scholarly publications. National policy and executive plan by the higher education and research community for 2021–2025: Policy component for open access to theses.

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AUTHOR: Open Science Coordination in Finland, The Federation of Finnish Learned Societies

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STRATEGIC PRINCIPLES

The policy component on open access to theses follows, where applicable, the strategic principles defined in the [National Policy for Open Access to Scholarly Publications](#) and the [National Policy on Open Education and Educational Resources](#).

POLICY COMPONENT: OPEN ACCESS TO THESES

The Declaration for Open Science and Research states that "In the research community, responsible openness is a part of everyday research throughout the research process, and research organisations have assessment practices, incentives, and services in place to support this." ([Open Science and Research Coordination in Finland 2020](#), 3) This also applies to the thesis process, and this policy component on open access to theses applies to all theses completed in higher education institutions (bachelor's and master's theses at universities and universities of applied sciences, advanced studies theses, licentiate theses, and doctoral theses).

Open science enables a broader use of research results by the research community and society, thus increasing the impact of research as well as the level of scholarship and innovation in society. Openness and the transparency of the process are also intended to support the quality of research. In the context of universities of applied sciences, a thesis is a task that requires and demonstrates expertise and takes into account aspects of the challenges of working life, thus making openness particularly useful from a professional point of view. The policy component on open access to theses has been developed to serve these basic objectives from the perspective of theses.

A thesis written in a public educational institution is, in principle, a public document ([Constitution of Finland 12.2 §](#); [Openness Act 1 §](#)). A thesis being a public document means that the metadata of the thesis are available, and the thesis is accessible directly or upon request. According to a 2019 decision by the Administrative Court of Northern Finland, copyright law does not limit the disclosure of information about a public document, and the author's consent is not required for disclosure (Dnro 01976/17/1203).

All theses are public, but in addition to publicity, efforts and skills are needed to promote openness, both in terms of [publications](#) and [education](#). Openness is a core value of science and research, and a part of responsible research and teaching. The

aim of immediate open access is to raise the quality of science and research and to increase their societal impact and visibility ([Open Science and Research Coordination in Finland 2019, 2](#)).

According to a Ministry of Education and Culture's guideline (Dnro 3/500/2004), universities and universities of applied sciences must ensure that their theses do not contain confidential material and that they are made public as soon as they are approved. If the research material of a thesis contains confidential material, it should be placed in the background/annex material rather than the publicly accessible part of the thesis. The Publicity Act defines what information should be kept secret ([§ 24, link in Finnish](#)). The National Defence University and the Police University College may, if necessary, deviate from the thesis publicity requirement on the grounds of security classification.

Open access to a thesis means making the work available online free of charge. In some subjects, there may also be parts of a thesis, such as events or artwork, which cannot be made open. In practice, it is mainly the archivable part of the thesis that can be opened.

Openness and the degree of openness are the thesis author's choice, but organisations and supervisors must ensure that every thesis author has the option to be open and to determine the degree of openness, for instance by providing the infrastructure and guidance to enable openness.

In principle, theses are not considered publications, but doctoral theses are also research publications. Similarly, articles that are included in theses are publications, to which [the policy on open access to scholarly publications applies](#). Theses and dissertations are usually made openly available in a repository (e.g. [Theseus](#), institutional repository).

RESPONSIBLE OPENING OF THESES

Higher education institutions are responsible for providing thesis supervisors and authors with support and guidance in opening theses responsibly. An essential part of this support and guidance is to provide advice on the laws (e.g. [General Data Protection Regulation](#), [The Copyright Act](#)) and principles of good scientific practice to be followed when making a thesis public and possibly open access. It is also important to advise, for example, that when publishing and opening theses, one must respect the copyright of third parties, especially concerning the use of images, and that the privacy of research subjects should be respected.

Higher education institutions must ensure that thesis supervisors and authors have sufficient support and guidance to meet accessibility requirements for all theses. The minimum digital accessibility requirements are defined in the [Act on the Provision of Digital Services](#) ([link in Finnish](#)), and the accessibility of theses is also required in the third principle of [the National Policy on Open Education and Educational Resources](#). The necessary support

includes, for example, templates for the production of accessible theses.

Higher education institutions should also provide support and guidance on choosing the appropriate license if the author decides to make their thesis open access. As a general rule, Creative Commons (CC) licences should be favoured, as they are widely used and provide the reader with clear information on how to use the thesis. When opening the metadata of a thesis, it is usually best to use a CC0 licence, which allows the metadata to be easily distributed from one system to another.

It is the responsibility of the thesis supervisor to guide the author on responsible opening of the thesis with the help of the university's guidelines and support. Ultimately, it is the responsibility of the thesis author to follow the provided guidance.

MERITS AND OTHER BENEFIT OF OPENING A THESIS

An openly accessible thesis reaches a wider audience, and openness increases its impact as other students and researchers can benefit from the work already done. The merits of open science, such as making data, methods, and publications openly accessible, should be more widely recognised, and national and international recommendations do aim to reduce the weight of citations in various research and researcher evaluations ([Open Science and Research Coordination in Finland, 2020b, 7](#); [UNESCO 2021, 29](#); [CoARA 2023, 5](#).)

An open thesis will also find a readership outside the scientific and research community, and it can be used as a portfolio and demonstration of skills at the beginning of a career. Both companies and specialist organisations can use the results for practical solutions and development work. As societal impact is an important part of the academic merit system, further use of the thesis outside the research world will also benefit the author. From the perspective of higher education institutions, open theses are a reflection of the knowledge produced by the education and training institutions and the effectiveness and quality of their activities (see e.g. [Tolonen, Pudas & Marjamaa 2021, link in Finnish](#)).

The degree of openness of a thesis is always the choice of the thesis author, taking into account potential partners as well as legislation. Therefore, the thesis supervisor will not directly gain merit from making a thesis open access.

POLICY OBJECTIVE AND REQUIRED ACTIONS

Objective: All theses approved from 2025 onwards will be openly accessible.

Implementation

Higher education institutions will assess the current situation with regard to their own theses. Higher education institutions will encourage, support and enable open access in theses in their own operating environment.

Monitoring

Higher education institutions will monitor the development of open access publication of their own theses. The objective is taken into account in the monitoring of open science and research.

Actions

- A. All thesis authors have an equal opportunity to publish their thesis open access, regardless of, for example, grade, field of research, funding base or career stage.
- B. By 2025, higher education institutions provide thesis supervisors and authors with support and guidance on how to open theses responsibly. Thesis supervisors and authors will have the necessary skills to open theses responsibly.
- C. Higher education institutions recommend that the archivable part of the thesis be licensed under a Creative Commons license, taking into account copyright. Other open licences, such as open source licences, may also be used depending on discipline.
 1. Institutions of higher education develop guidelines for thesis supervisors and authors on how to open theses responsibly.
 1. Organisations offer support to the thesis supervisor and the author in choosing the appropriate open licence. Third party rights must be taken into account when licensing.
- D. The metadata of theses, excluding abstracts, will be openly published under a CC0 licence.
 1. Organisations will provide support and guidance for metadata production.
- E. By 2025, higher education institutions provide a contract template for theses conducted in cooperation with companies and other organisations (such as research institutes).

Conditions for open access will be defined as part of the contract template.

- F. By 2025, higher education institutions provide a contract template for collaborative work on theses, defining the conditions for open access.
- G. From 2025 onwards, higher education institutions support and train thesis supervisors and authors in data management. The thesis author will write a data management plan to the extent required by the thesis level, if the thesis involves research data.
 - 1. Both the supervisor and the thesis author have knowledge of and skills to apply the FAIR principles. The organisation provides support for FAIR management, e.g. in the form of guidelines. If research data included in the thesis is opened, it will be handled in accordance with [the policy for open research data and methods](#).
- H. Accessibility requirements apply to all theses. Higher education institutions will provide thesis authors with an accessible template for the textual material as well as guidance and support for its use. Support will also be provided for other thesis formats to ensure the thesis author can make them accessible.
- I. For articles included in theses, [the policy component for open access to journal articles and conference publications](#) is applied.
 - 1. Higher education institutions provide support and templates for obtaining permission to republish articles included in theses.
 - 2. For article-based theses, the use of delayed publication (embargoes) should be avoided.
 - 3. Authors' awareness of predatory publishers and their practices will be increased.
- J. Higher education institutions aim to cover reasonable costs of open access publication of theses (e.g. article processing charges, Teosto fees).
 - 1. Thesis authors are informed about open access article publication channels without author fees.
- K. Higher education institutions provide a publication repository for the archivable parts of theses (e.g. institutional repositories, [Theseus](#)).
- L. Portfolios and theses containing prior learning outputs may be subject to [the policy on open education and educational resources](#). Where appropriate, prior learning or theses will be identified and recognised.

GLOSSARY

Accessibility: Digital accessibility means supporting equality and inclusion, i.e. 'that as many people as possible can use online services as easily as possible. It also means that accessibility has been taken into account in the planning and implementation of the services' ([Open Science and Research Coordination in Finland 2021, 9](#)). Accessibility is mandatory for public documents such as theses and open educational resources, among others. Accessibility involves good technical implementation, ease of use, and comprehensibility of content ([Open Science and Research Coordination in Finland 2021, 9–10](#)). The accessibility requirement is based on the Act on the Provision of Digital Services ([306/2019](#), link in Finnish) and the European Parliament's Accessibility Directive ([European Accessibility Act, 2019/882](#)), which implements the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities. Accessibility benefits a large number of users of a material or service.

Accompanying material, background material: Information or materials related to the thesis assignment that should be kept confidential.

Archivability: The archivable part of a thesis includes any part of the thesis where the publication format allows for long-term preservation. In some disciplines, there may also be parts of a thesis, such as events or artistic works, which are not archivable.

Article processing charge: A fee that may be charged by the publisher of an open access journal to the author or their organisation. Article processing charges may be charged by fully open access journals (so-called "gold standard" journals) or by "hybrid" journals, where only part of the content is open access. ([The Helsinki Term Bank For the Arts and Sciences, link in Finnish](#))

Availability refers to the accessibility of information in, for example, a public document. This means that the information in the document can be used at the desired time and in the required manner. An accessible document may, for example, be openly accessible or available on request.

Business cooperation: cooperation between businesses and research organisations refers to organised, active collaboration, as well as other forms of knowledge transfer, collaboration, and purposeful interaction and communication. Cooperation may be funded by a public or private organisation ([Open Science and Research Coordination in Finland Societies 2022](#), see also [Statistics Finland 2020](#))

Creative Commons, the world's most common open licensing system, was created in 2001. It is the preferred licence for open source material in many countries. [Creative Commons](#) licences are designed to be easy to use and understand. It is up to the author to decide on the licence according to their own objectives. In principle, a CC licence includes an irrevocable worldwide right to redistribute the material. By choosing the appropriate additional conditions from a list of four, the author can limit these rights as they see fit. No additional restrictions or conditions may ever be attached to the CC licence. The conditions of CC licences are:

- Attribution (BY, ByAttribution): the name of the author, the licence and the original place of publication must be mentioned.
- ShareAlike (SA, ShareAlike): any changes made must be published under the same licence.
- NoDerivatives (CC ND, NoDerivatives): the licence does not include the right to modify the work.
- NoCommercial (NC, NonCommercial): the licence does not cover commercial uses, i.e. uses "primarily for commercial advantage or financial reward".

By using the [CC0](#) licence option, the author declares that they waive all rights which may be waived by law. CC0 allows the material to be copied, modified, distributed, and reproduced in any medium or format without conditions ([Open Science and Research Coordination in Finland 2020, 2; link in Finnish.](#))

Data Management Plan (DMP) is a formal and dynamic document that specifies how resources are managed across the life cycle of a thesis, covering, for instance, research data, analysis steps (e.g. protocols, algorithms, procedures), devices and tools (e.g. information on lab equipment and manufacturers, reagents, infrastructure, software), other relevant documentation, versioning, preservation, services, terms and conditions, and open development and sharing of research data, methods and infrastructures. ([Open Science and Research Coordination in Finland, Federation of Finnish Learned Societies 2023, 34](#))

Embargo or delayed access: Where appropriate, the thesis is initially in a restricted access collection, but is available on request within the framework of the Public Access Act.

FAIR principles are a set of guidelines to make research data Findable, Accessible, Interoperable and Reusable. This facilitates scientific discovery and access to knowledge. ([Open Science and Research Coordination in Finland 2023, 34.](#))

Institutional repository: a technical system for the storage and open online publication of scientific publications and the

services built around it. (**The Helsinki Term Bank For the Arts and Sciences, link in Finnish.**)

Metadata: Metadata refers to data that describes and summarizes the context, content and structure, management and/or processing, and compilation of research data ([Open Science and Research Coordination in Finland 2023, 36.](#))

Open access: The publication in its entirety is available on the Internet free of charge and without restrictions to read, print and copy at least for non-commercial use. ([Open Science and Research Coordination in Finland 2019, 14.](#))

Open licence: A pre-formatted licence, the terms of which must be respected before the material can be used. Openly published material is available to all. If material is to be used publicly, the terms of the licence must be respected. Thus, anyone who uses the work further can comply with the terms of the open licence, which include, for example, attribution of the author and source in a way formulated by the author. The user obtains the rights granted by the licence (such as redistribution and modification rights) by complying with the terms of the licence. ([Open Science and Research Coordination in Finland 2020, 2; link in Finnish.](#))

Opening a thesis means that the archivable part of the thesis is made available online free of charge. Making the thesis public means that the metadata of the thesis are available, and the thesis is accessible directly or on request. A public thesis is therefore not necessarily open.

Predatory publication: A journal or other publication that presents itself as scientific but neglects the responsibility of a scientific publisher, for example for peer review, and relies on aggressive marketing and charging fees to authors (**The Helsinki Term Bank For the Arts and Sciences, link in Finnish.**)

Public thesis, see Opening a thesis

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APPENDIX 1: POLICY WORKING GROUP

Minna Fred, Haaga-Helia University of Applied Sciences
Markus Hatakka, Turku University of Applied Sciences
Tommi Harju, The University of the Arts
Anne Holappa, HUMAK
Jyrki Ilva, the National Library of Finland
Ilmari Jauhiainen, Federation of Finnish Learned Societies
Tiina Jounio, University of Oulu (library)
Marja-Leena Juntunen, The University of the Arts
Eija Kalliala (secretary), Open Knowledge Finland
Merja Kallio, Tritonia Academic Library
Tapani Lehtilä, Tampere University (library)
Erkki Lähderanta, LUT University
Pia Keiski, Tampere University of Applied Sciences
Helena Kangastie, Lapland University of Applied Sciences
Eetu Kejonen, Åbo Akademi University
Tekla Kosonen, National Union of Students in Finnish Universities
of Applied Sciences
Anne Kärki, Satakunta University of Applied Sciences
Hanna Lahdenperä, Federation of Finnish Learned Societies
Jari Linden, Savonia University of Applied Sciences
Minna Marjamaa, Laurea University of Applied Sciences
Teemu Makkonen, Jyväskylä University of Applied Sciences
Mikko Niemi, University of Helsinki
Anna Nyberg, University of Oulu
Pekka Nygren, The Finnish Society of Forest Science
Heli Palomäki, LUT Universities/LUT Academic Library
Jussi Piipponen, University of Helsinki
Matti Raatikainen, Aalto University
Terhi Reima, Metropolia University of Applied Sciences
Tomi Rosti, University of Eastern Finland (chair)
Taina Sahlman, University of Eastern Finland
Mathilda Timmer, The Student Union of the University of Helsinki
Marjo Vallittu, University of Jyväskylä (chair)
Tanja Vienonen, University of Turku



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