1. INTRODUCTION

Operating environment

The Department of Social Sciences is a multidisciplinary unit comprising five major subjects on two campuses: Sociology on both the Joensuu and Kuopio campuses, Social and Public Policy on the Joensuu campus, and Social Psychology, Social Pedagogy and Social Work on the Kuopio campus. It is also possible to study Philosophy on the Kuopio campus.

The Department offers Master's degree programmes in all five major subjects and one international Master's degree programme, plus scientific postgraduate education in all of its major subjects. Furthermore, the Department offers specialised training for professional social workers.

The Department of Social Sciences contributes to the top-level international research area Borders, Mobilities and Cultural Encounters (BOMOCULT) defined in the 2015–2020 strategy of the University of Eastern Finland, and in the emerging research areas of Effectiveness in Healthcare and Social Services (EFFEC) and Welfare Ruptures: Recognising Uncertainties, Finding Solutions (WR). From the perspective of its research traditions, the department's key research areas are welfare; upbringing, education and work; migration; multiculturalism and borders; and questions related to social work. The department focuses its research on social questions and development challenges typical of Eastern Finland.

Mission statement

The mission statement of the Department of Social Sciences adheres to the scientific university tradition, in which teaching is based on research. The department makes use of a dialogue between different fields, looking for fresh and unique approaches to the challenges of social research. The research conducted by the department is internationally acclaimed and socially significant. The department's scientists participate analytically and critically in social dialogue.

The research conducted in the department is free, open and public, and its results are intended equally for scientists, citizens, authorities and NGOs. The department's research policy emphasises equality and scientific freedom, both as the ethical grounds for research and as starting points for research practices and recruitment.

2. FOCUS AREAS OF RESEARCH

In addition to the principles outlined above, the department's research strategy is based on two premises:

1. The research traditions of its academic subjects
2. The strategic research policies of the University of Eastern Finland
The focus areas of the department's research are 1) welfare, 2) upbringing, education and work, 3) borders, migration and multiculturalism and 4) social work. The significance of gender is examined in all of the focus areas.

Welfare

Welfare and the factors shaping it and related to it constitute a multifaceted and complex field of social research. The theoretical examination of the concept of welfare and the analysis of how welfare is manifested at different stages in life form the basis for welfare research in the department. The research is focused on the social dimension of welfare. Welfare is examined by considering the various human dimensions of the concept, and the significance of a robust living environment in its formation.

*Welfare research* is focused on the different aspects of subjective welfare and, in a resource-oriented manner, on the income of and services for families. The welfare of both the entire population and various special groups (such as the aged and people with mental disorders or other disabilities), and the inequality of the distribution of welfare inside these populations, are studied in the department. Work and the organisation of work are also studied from the perspective of welfare. The study of subjective welfare also entails examinations of the maintenance of selfhood, social identity and community relations.

*Research in welfare policy and systems* analyses the history, change factors and future options of these subjects. The department's research themes in this area include the welfare state's and civil society's capacities for functioning and renewal; the structural mechanisms of poverty, exclusion and inequality and social policy interventions targeted at these phenomena, the interaction between different political segments and levels, the structures and operation of organisations, the social economy, and the demographic revolution. The department also studies the mechanisms between education, innovation systems and the welfare state.

Welfare research is conducted in a mutually complementary and supportive manner in all academic subjects taught in the department. The department works in close cooperation with Finnish and international departments, centres and networks that carry out research in this field.

Welfare research is connected to the emerging research areas of *Welfare Ruptures: Recognising Uncertainties, Finding Solutions and Effectiveness in Healthcare and Social Services* outlined in the university's research strategy.

Upbringing, education and work

The cultural, institutional and political frameworks of upbringing, education and work, as well as the scope for action by individuals and groups is a field of research with great social significance. Gender, class, ethnicity and regional differences shape the choices, agency and education opportunities of individuals as well as the emergence of differences and hierarchies. Globalisation, migration, individualisation and the changes in social control also have their effects on both uniting and separating factors.
Research in upbringing focuses on the moral priorities of upbringing, the relationships between homes and educational institutions, and on educational forms of youth activity. The premise is to acknowledge young people as partners in the process of upbringing and as active, spontaneous actors in society. Focus areas include the living conditions of children, young people and families; parenthood; the social standing of young people; child welfare; pupil welfare in schools; civic and adolescent education and forms of civic activity spontaneously developed by young people.

Research in education is focused on the changes in the requirements placed on learning, competence and cognitive, skill-related and moral qualifications. The study of these areas emphasises education policy, different educational institutions, organisations, and the new relationships between education and work. Analysis is focused on the cultural and social hierarchies that arise in education and activate the differences and possibilities for community between social groups, genders and ethnic groups. Education is examined as a historically changing phenomenon that regulates the everyday lives and life choices of individuals, while simultaneously enabling emancipatory states in them.

Research in work is increasingly focused on the provision of services and care and creation of innovations in addition to traditional manufacturing. Focus areas include new forms of work; the changing relationships between work and education; the fragmentation of careers; social inequality; well-being and emotions at work and inclusion in the workplace. The new international division of labour, new forms of work (particularly the increasing share of what is termed immaterial labour) alter the work and livelihoods of people. The ideal of free mobility, feminisation of the labour market and content of work, changes in family structures and new forms of care both reinforce and undermine gender roles. The change in the population's age structure and new arrangements in the system of public services transform the organisation of care and the nature of the care received, desired and provided by people. Care is studied as a part of global production and the global economy as well as its local and everyday arrangements, from the perspectives of both the providers and recipients of care.

The Department of Social Sciences has a tradition of successful research projects, follow-up studies and publications in upbringing, education and work research. The department has consolidated close cooperation relationships with the Philosophical Faculty and Karelian Institute of the University of Eastern Finland and with national organisations and international scientific networks beyond the university.

Migration multiculturalism and borders

Migration is one of the key processes transforming today's world. It challenges established concepts of cultural borders and ethnicity and creates new forms of inclusion and exclusion. Increased immigration has brought questions of ethnicity and multiculturalism into the spotlight of social discussion in Finland as well. The focus areas of migration research include the everyday lives of transnational families; various methods and processes of transnational attachment and integration; and the control of migration. The study of transnational phenomena and processes is itself transnational as regards its methodology and premises and frequently comparative, challenging the methodological nationalism of social sciences.

Social research in the multiculturalisation of everyday life focuses on the methods with which families, educational institutions, working life, recreational communities and the settings of civic life meet and resolve questions related to the cultural diversification of everyday life.

Migration research also studies the capabilities of Finnish welfare policy and the institutions that execute that policy to face the challenges created by multiculturalisation. Areas of interest include questions of immigration, integration, education and youth policy and citizenship. The subjects of
migration research also include issues of equality between the sexes and generations as well as between social, religious and ethnic groups, and the interweaving of questions of equality.

*Racism research* focuses on everyday conflict, institutional forms of racism, the discriminatory practices of authorities, attitudes suspicious of multiculturalism, and prejudices. The study of the significance and consequences of international mobility for everyday social relations, institutional structures and in the context of education, work and relationships between the sexes and generations is a traditional strength of the department's academic subjects.

Several borders and border regions of the European Union, Eastern Finland included, are particularly affected by the challenges related to work and welfare and service systems. These challenges are built on a complex and extensive web of underlying economic, social and regional developments, including social questions related to the environment and natural resources.

The Migration, multiculturalism and borders focus area is integrally connected to the top-level international research area of *Borders, Mobilities and Cultural Encounters* identified in the University of Eastern Finland's research strategy.

**Social work**

Research into social work focuses on the psychosocial problems of customers, methods of social work, theoretical self-awareness in the field, and on the administration, management and development of social work. The following themes in social work research are emphasised at the University of Eastern Finland:

*Research in child, youth and family social work* focuses on child welfare, the inclusion and rights of children and young people, and the tools and possibilities of social work for intervening in problems through methods of psychosocial and structural social work.

*Research into rehabilitative social work and social health care* deals with the social rehabilitation of the aged, disabled, ill, addicted and violent, social work inside health care organisations, and rehabilitative work activity as a statutory field of social work.

*Research into the methods, ethics and theory of social work* concentrates on the professional system of social work and the values, norms and ethics related to social work, along with the assessment of the effectiveness of work methods.

Social work research is connected to the department's other focus areas in research, and to the top-level international research area *Borders, Mobilities and Cultural Encounters* and emerging research areas *Effectiveness in Healthcare and Social Services* and *Welfare Ruptures: Recognising Uncertainties, Finding Solutions*.

The department primarily allocates resources to research in the focus areas defined in the research strategy. Where possible, scientists and post-graduate students will also be supported in high-quality research conducted in other fields if this will open new territory. The focus areas are not hermetic, and the department supports new and innovative research frames born where focus areas intersect.
The strengths of the Department of Social Sciences include its multidisciplinary nature and the possibility for the creative combination of micro- and macro-level studies. The department is networked with multidisciplinary research networks inside the University of Eastern Finland, in Finland and internationally. The department also engages in research cooperation with the research institutes and centres of the University of Eastern Finland, particularly Karelia Institute and Kuopio Welfare Research Center.

The ethical questions raised by social research cannot always be resolved by simple reliance on the rules, and activities such as data collection and research reporting require ethical consideration on a case-by-case basis. The department fosters skills of recognising and resolving potential ethical problems in its scientists. Research ethics is taught at all levels of methodology, and research plans are always considered from the perspective of research ethics.

3. INTERNATIONALITY

The research personnel of the Department of Social Sciences participate in several international research and postgraduate studies networks.

Within the financial resources available, the department supports international activities (publication, participation in conferences, proofreading of presentations and articles, etc.) connected to the focus areas and the networking of scientists. International publishing is supported and encouraged in all academic subjects. The department also supports participation in international conferences and mobility based on international faculty exchange agreements.

In other respects, the University of Eastern Finland conforms to the University of Eastern Finland's strategic guidelines related to internationalisation.

4. POSTGRADUATE EDUCATION

In the Department of Social Sciences, postgraduate education is centred on the focus areas of research. Graduate studies build a foundation for orientation to these focus areas, and the suitability of the research subject for the department's research profile is given particular emphasis in the selection of postgraduate students.

The guidance and training related to postgraduate education is systematically targeted at the focus areas of research. However, since some postgraduate students are recruited from working life, students presenting particularly significant and robust research plans can be selected from outside the focus areas if supervision can be arranged for their theses in the department. Recruitment emphasises the goal of achieving a doctorate.

The department participates in the following internal doctoral degree programmes of the University of Eastern Finland:
- Doctoral Programme in Social and Health Management (all major subjects)
- Doctoral Programme in Social and Cultural Encounters (all major subjects)
- Past, Space and Environment in Society Doctoral Programme (social pedagogy)

In addition to education leading to a doctorate, postgraduate education in social work also includes social work specialisation studies implemented in cooperation with the national Sosnet network. This education leads to a vocational licentiate degree.
Applicants able to work on at least some stretch of their postgraduate studies full-time, for example by virtue of project funding, grants or a place in the Doctoral School, are given priority in the selection of postgraduate students. Efforts will be made to provide full-time postgraduate students the opportunity to work in the facilities of the department and to arrange teaching and thesis supervision opportunities for them. The department supports the networking of its postgraduate students, both within and without the department.

The department contributes to the teaching of the UEF Doctoral School and doctoral programmes in important questions of scientific postgraduate education (methodology, writing skills, publishing, research ethics, etc.). The Department of Social Sciences belongs to various scientist and cooperation networks and supports the participation of its postgraduate students in training offered by these networks.

The department seeks to develop international cooperation in doctoral training and the mobility of doctoral students.

5. CAREER SCIENTISTS

The Department of Social Sciences conforms to the University of Eastern Finland's policies regarding the model for promoting the careers of scientists. The department supports the efforts of its doctoral graduates in pursuing a scientific career, for example by supporting post doc scientists in drawing up applications for grants and where possible obtaining project funding for them. The department seeks to facilitate the progress of scientists' careers according to the three-step career model.

Efforts are made to create opportunities for research and progress for all teaching and research personnel. Research is included in the work plans of all employees, and the department seeks to provide everyone with regular opportunities for research periods free of other duties.

6. RESEARCH INFRASTRUCTURE

The principal resource in the work environment for social research is a high-quality library. The department also invests in the hardware and software required for the collection and processing of both quantitative and qualitative data.

7. RESEARCH FUNDING

In addition to the funding channels specified in the research strategy of the University of Eastern Finland, the Department of Social Sciences emphasises funding cooperation with companies and the third sector.

The department seeks to secure sufficient possibilities for formulating the theoretical and conceptual premises of research conducted with external funding, and for drawing up scientifically exacting publications of such research.
8. SOCIAL RELEVANCE OF RESEARCH

The relevance of social research primarily arises from four factors. These are 1) the participation of faculty in social debate within their area of expertise and publications on popular forums; 2) training experts and professionals for the diverse tasks in working life; 3) introducing new models of thought and action to professional practices such as the educational institution, working life, multiculturalism work, social work and welfare services; and 4) participation in the planning, decision-making and implementation related to reforms and in international discussion in these areas.