Answers of applicants for the position of dean to the questions of the university family

1. Which specific steps will you take to mitigate the consequences of the under-financing of higher education and science?

Raul Eamets (social sciences)
There isn’t much we can do today. Creating programmes available for a fee (in English), requesting exceptions for part-time studies, implementation of new forms of study for which tuition fees can presumably be charged, such as one-year master’s programmes, in-service training modules. The target group in the case of paid studies are working people. We must do something, because we cannot wait for the state to change its mind and make the financing of higher education a priority.

Ruth Kalda (medical sciences)
First of all, we should continue actively requesting more money for science and education, and the dean of medical sciences can cooperate here with the other deans, the rector of the university and other research and development centres. This means an active presence in places where money is distributed – ministries, the Health Insurance Fund. I believe that national financing of science can be increased and we should not let the backlashes dampen our spirit.

As there is strength in numbers, then one of the solutions I see is the formation of larger consortia in order to apply for research funds. European financial mechanisms also prefer projects where hospitals, companies, family medicine centres and others who put the results of research into practice participate in applications alongside universities and research institutions.

Margus Lember (medical sciences)
Interdisciplinarity, cooperation with other areas and the base funding of science reaching the researchers at institutes are the most important factors to me. I would like to add two more topics that are at least as important: continuing work on guaranteeing quality studies to students and the development of residency. The plan for the next steps has been clarified on the basis of the feedback received from clinics, students and residents in the previous period.

Leho Ainsaar (natural and exact sciences)
The units whose funding is more diverse generally cope better with the ups and downs in financing. Therefore, a strong institute could be successful in the performance of ETAg projects as well as research and development and national programmes, both in basic and doctoral studies, both in Estonian and European funding. It seems that financiers will be favouring applied research in the future, so the institutes that haven’t used these opportunities enough should try to implement their research potential more in this direction. Of course, private funds can be included in higher education on the condition that there is a market which is prepared to pay for it. But if the bad case scenarios come true, the university should find opportunities for temporary support, which would give units extra time to adapt to the new conditions and change their strategies. The dean’s role is to coordinate and steer this process.

Varmo Vene (natural and exact sciences)
We must look for opportunities to find additional sources of financing. For example, facilitate entering into small-scale service contracts and reduce the overheads charged on them.
Anti Selart (humanities and arts)

The dean’s possibilities to do something efficient about this on his or her own are obviously very limited. In any case, it’s important to maintain the diverse scientific potential of the university despite the complicated times, and this potential lies first and foremost in our people. There is a mechanism for using the amounts of base financing for this purpose in the field of humanities and it has shown itself from the good side in the last couple of years. The university as a whole must continue explaining the problems concerning the funding of science and higher education to the public, and deans have an important role here. Inside the field, we could increase the emphasis on applying for research funds outside the university and on other options of obtaining extra money.

Riho Altnurme (humanities and arts)

A step that has already been taken at the university is the establishment of the grant centre and hiring experienced specialists to write grants – we now have a specialist for the field of humanities, who helps us with this. The scheme used to distribute base financing in the field of humanities and arts is one according which support is offered to those who have applied for a grant, but missed out because of tough competition. Continuing to motivate and support people in applying for foreign funding would certainly be a step. The diversification of sources of income still requires a lot of work.

The second step is to explain to the decision-makers at the level of state that the amounts meant for higher education and science should not be frozen in conditions where the economy is growing. A dean is a member of the rectorate who must deal with this.

Thirdly, it is certainly necessary to analyse the academic and scientific work done in the field in order to find cooperation opportunities and reorganise the work if necessary. A dean can motivate the heads of the structural units in the field to do this.

2. What do you think of the idea to establish a universal tuition fee for all students?

Raul Eamets (social sciences)

Higher education in the whole world is moving in the direction of increasing the inclusion of private money. However, we still have a long way to go before we get to a universal tuition fee, because it calls for the establishment of a system of national social guarantees. This means a national student loan system and differentiation of repayment either according to the salary earned after graduation or the acquisition of a specialty that is important to the state. The university cannot establish all of this itself, as it’s a political decision. The present legislative framework does not permit the establishment of a universal tuition fee.

Ruth Kalda (medical sciences)

The duration of studies in the area of medicine is long, as basic studies alone take six years. In other specialties, studies take five years. Therefore, the student loan burden by the end of basic studies is larger in the field of medicine than in other fields. A residency of three to five years is added to this in medical training and in some specialties of dental medicine, during which residents usually earn the minimum wages of doctors, which means that they are often able to start repaying their student loans after 10 years have passed, which places doctors in an unfair position in comparison with others. This may increase the dropout rate and inequality among the learners, which is why I do not support the establishment of a universal tuition fee, at least not in medical training.
Margus Lember (medical sciences)

Based on the information existing at present, my position on this is a firm ‘no’.

Leho Ainsaar (natural and exact sciences)

I don’t support it. There is a number of specialties in the university, incl. the majority of natural sciences, which are necessary to the state, but are already suffering because of the lack of competition for admission. We should then constantly make exceptions and establish special grants for these fields/specialties, which may run out at some point due to lack of money etc. However, we could consider a partial tuition fee in the specialties where the readiness to pay exists, competition is high and/or the university’s training capacity is almost stretched to the limit. Therefore, not a universal fee with exceptions, but a fee charged as an exception where this is justified.

Varmo Vene (natural and exact sciences)

I am cautious about a universal tuition fee. It’s clear that higher education in Estonia is underfunded and the establishment of a universal tuition fee would be a way to raise additional funds. However, it can only be established on the condition that there is a well-functioning student loan system. If such a system can be developed, then we can also implement a tuition fee, but it would not be possible without it.

Anti Selart (humanities and arts)

Unless the situation in funding higher education becomes bad enough to make such a step unavoidable for survival, I don’t support the establishment of a universal tuition fee. The possible consequences of such a decision should certainly be carefully considered and the international competition between universities should be taken into account in addition to the competition between local ones. It’s also important to guarantee the accessibility of higher education to students from all social strata.

Riho Altnurme (humanities and arts)

This idea is a good discussion starter, but I don’t consider it right, as specialties are different and the interest of prospective students in them is also different. A universal tuition fee would probably increase the tendency of students to choose certain specialties for pragmatic considerations. Offering all specialties free of charge has already increased this tendency. It would be possible to establish tuition fees in specialties that are in high demand.

3. How can the use of EU money at the university be made transparent in order to prevent possible scheming?

Raul Eamets (social sciences)

I think that the systems are already very bureaucratic and complicated. The entire field is over-regulated rather than under-regulated. Someone using the system in their own interests – there is nothing we can do about this. Basically, if 3% of people abuse a situation (regulation etc.), then the remaining 97% should not suffer because of this. We should not presume that 97% of people are bad and 3% are good when establishing our regulations. The reality tends to be the opposite.

As for time sheets in general, the present working hours of an academic employee do not fit into the usual framework of five days a week and eight hours a day. Especially if they also perform
administrative functions or manage major research projects. Unfortunately, that’s what the real situation is like.

**Ruth Kalda (medical sciences)**

The person responsible for a specific project is also responsible for the purposeful use of EU funds and all other funds. It’s clear that the rules should be followed according to the financier’s requirements in the case of EU funds and national projects and grants alike.

There are already regulations and mechanisms in place for the prevention of malicious abuse and we must review them to see whether there is something in them that can be specified and explained further.

**Margus Lember (medical sciences)**

There is no contradiction here: a dean works in the interests of the field and the university as a whole. The management of the university cannot have interests other than those of the various fields. A dean is a member of the rectorate, where decisions are made collectively, where deans represent their fields, but where solutions acceptable to everyone are always sought when decisions are made. Sometimes, a dean has to be resolute when representing their field, even if you’re the only one with a different opinion. The cooperation with other deans so far has been very constructive, mutually understanding and supportive.

**Leho Ainsaar (natural and exact sciences)**

The use of EU funds is already the most transparent in comparison with other money. The problem is that the financier and Estonian institutions alike have made the rules and control mechanisms of using the money so formalistic and detailed that complying with them in real life is a science of its own. The principle followed in the case of other funding is usually simple and logical, also understandable to all entrepreneurs, i.e. you get paid for the results, but this is different in the case of EU projects (time sheets and other measuring systems). However, it is of course right that when you confirm with your signature that you accept the money on such conditions, then you have to comply with them (or give up the project). Still, the key to the problem is elsewhere, not in the university.

**Varmo Vene (natural and exact sciences)**

The main problem with using EU funds is the multitude and complexity of rules. Making the rules simpler would be the easiest way to avoid scheming, but unfortunately this isn’t up to the university.

**Anti Selart (humanities and arts)**

The use of EU funds in the university is regulated with sufficiently detailed rules and there is obviously no need to increase bureaucracy and paperwork even further. The rules regulating the use of funds, which are increasingly more complicated and expensive to implement, seem to proceed from the assumption that scientists are all potential fraudsters. The focus should be on the assessment of the effectiveness of the work rather than on the control methods that focus on officials.

**Riho Altnurme (humanities and arts)**

The use of EU funds is checked in the university as well as from outside often enough. Grand scheming would only be possible as a result of agreements with the inspectors. The attitude of the
people who work with projects prevents scheming – EU funds are taxpayers’ money, so even if the objective of scheming is to achieve a goal that seems to be good, it’s still not acceptable.

4. It happens in the university that the minimum salary of one institute’s lecturer is as big as the minimum salary of another institute’s professor. At the same time, the requirements for a lecturer and professor are very different. Can a solution be found to this and if yes, how?

Raul Eamets (social sciences)

We’re obviously not talking about the minimum here, but the actual salary. Minimum salaries in the university are established centrally and they are the same across the university. If a lecturer in an institute earns as much as a professor, it can only mean that the lecturer participates very actively in research projects, does a lot of quality academic work or receives additional remuneration for administration, and the professor doesn’t do any of these three things. So everyone can draw their own conclusions here.

Ruth Kalda (medical sciences)

I’m speaking for the field of medicine and my goal here is to reduce the inequality in the salaries of the researchers and lecturers of different institutes. This will be one of my priorities after stepping into the office.

As for academic work, I think that the organisation of studies should be optimised. The total volume of academic work in medicine is rather large, but it is always necessary? We have to choose whether to teach as much as possible with as many teachers as possible, or only teach the necessary basic knowledge and skills required by a general practitioner who graduates from university.

Margus Lember (medical sciences)

Salaries in institutes are determined on the basis of the established minimum salary, job tasks and financial possibilities, and also the situation on the labour market. An employee who performs more tasks has to be paid more as well. The minimum salaries in the field of medicine are higher than established in the university, but the workloads are also larger, as agreed. Bigger salaries can be paid when science and higher education get more funding.

Leho Ainsaar (natural and exact sciences)

These differences have emerged as a result of the different funding options of various fields as well as the different capacities of the units. You certainly cannot find anyone who thinks that redistributing the funds earned by institutes would be a solution that can be taken seriously, as it would certainly not stimulate anyone. We should take a closer look at the underfunded unit, and try to find the reasons and the possibilities for improving the situation by earning more money. The structural reform was supposed to lead to the emergence of large and strong institutes, so maybe we should take another look at these units from this angle.

Varmo Vene (natural and exact sciences)

The minimum salaries of positions in the university are established centrally and the minimum salary of a professor is higher than a lecturer’s. However, the salary of a lecturer in an institute can be higher than the salary of a professor in another institute. The reason is the different market situation of specialties and the financial capacity of the institutes. Increasing revenues is the only way to increase salaries. We must also find alternative sources of income in addition to academic and
research funding in order to increase our revenues. Such as in-service training, consultation services, development projects, etc.

Anti Selart (humanities and arts)

The large salary differences between fields are a regrettable fact and the budgeting mechanism has its role in their emergence. As the situation on the salary market outside the university is different by specialties, then the salary gaps between institutes cannot really be avoided. However, the prevention of drastic differences should be a task of the university as a whole. This should not be done by forcing institutes to raise minimum salaries, as it would put the persons responsible for the financial status of the institutes in a difficult position. The managers of institutes are well aware of the need to raise salaries that are too low and they are working on it as much as they can.

Riho Altnurme (humanities and arts)

Unfortunately, the possibilities of our specialties are different, salary levels depend on several factors: what is the salary level of the representatives of the specialty outside the university – which also requires payment of competitive salaries to the representatives of this specialty in the university, what are the possibilities of getting large grants or earning with studies that must be paid for, so that additional funds can be raised for the payment of salaries. The establishment of minimum salaries by job titles has been used to regulate the situation in the university, but it hasn’t solved it fully. Attempts should also be made to find additional sources of revenue in specialties where the average salary level is low.

5. The dean receives a mandate from his or her employees, who have certain expectations. On the other hand, the dean is subordinate to the management of the university that may have different goals. How do you mitigate this potential conflict?

Raul Eamets (social sciences)

This is a complicated topic. It has often happened that I as a dean have had to record my dissenting opinion in the rectorate, because it seems to me that the interests of the field are being damaged. On the other hand, there have also been situations where I’ve proceeded from the interests of the university as a whole and the field has suffered somewhat because of that. It’s a difficult optimisation exercise: how do we find the point where the interests of the university as a whole and the interests of the fields are nicely balanced? Sometimes we manage it, sometimes we don’t. I’ve discussed some of these topics with the other deans, which means that finding compromises will be easier later on. But a certain conflict of interests has been programmed into this job. The members of the Senate have the same problem.

Ruth Kalda (medical sciences)

If we proceed from the present election system where a dean is elected democratically by voters in the field, then the dean clearly represents the field and their voters. The rector represents the entire university and is responsible for the development of the university as a whole.

If red flags appear in goals and interests, then the nature of the problem must be discussed in order to prevent conflicts and find solutions that suit the interests of the field and the university alike. We should also assess the impact one or another step will have on the society (Estonia). For example, what will it mean in the context of the society if we close a curriculum in a field or reduce its funding.
Personally, I also think that a dean must be open to ideas and cooperation, ready to compromise and a skilled negotiator. They must be able to explain their decisions and justify their backgrounds.

**Margus Lember (medical sciences)**

This calls for good cooperation with other deans and relying on common interests in joint activities. I have done and will do everything I can to develop joint work in the best possible manner. I mean the lines of research and grant opportunities that remain in the sidelines of specialties as well as the activities that complement each other, amplify each other’s strengths. This can also be extended to doctoral studies. Our role in undergraduate studies is to guarantee that students get the best education by drawing on the best competency of the university. I still believe that university education must be more than a specialty, we have to aim for people who are educated and open-minded.

**Leho Ainsaar (natural and exact sciences)**

In the University of Tartu, the management receives its mandate from the very same employees, so that a conflict like this shouldn’t even emerge. The reality is that the university consists of units that are very different and these interests meet at different levels in different ways. Decisions must be made by way of constructive dialogue and by convincing each other.

**Varmo Vene (natural and exact sciences)**

I believe that a conflict like this cannot emerge. If the employees have very clear and common interests in a certain issue, expectations that have been discussed, then the management of the university will certainly take them on board when setting goals. Deans are a part of the university’s management and participate directly in the development of these goals.

**Anti Selart (humanities and arts)**

The rector also receives his mandate from the university staff. The democratic structure of the University of Tartu is one of its significant strengths. If an ostensible or real conflict appears between the interests of the university and a field, the task of the dean is to find a smart compromise. The university is not a legal entity, trademark or the management, but it’s the entire family of the university. Ideas and initiatives cannot just move from the top to the bottom.

**Riho Altnurme (humanities and arts)**

We much create a situation where everyone in the university family has similar goals! This requires constant discussions, talks, explanations. The management must explain its vision. This is the only way to mitigate potential conflict. The dean certainly represents the interests of their field and tries to develop the field in the best possible manner.

6. **Name the three most important issues that you think should be solved first if you were the dean.**

**Raul Eamets (social sciences)**

1. People must like working in the university, which means that they want to work, they feel needed when they are at work and understand that what they do is important, and they leave the university in a dignified manner.
2. An optimal structure and number of curricula that would highlight this synergy that appears at the contact points of different fields. We should not optimise and increase efficiency for the sake of it, but our goal should be to pay higher salaries to the people we have.

3. The budgeting principles of the university must support these thoughts, which means that these principles must be changed. The present funding model of the university says that we’ll get more money if we have more students and give out more credit points.

**Ruth Kalda (medical sciences)**

The quality of studies, including in medical training and residency, is very important to me. This means reviewing and modernising the content and volume of curricula as well as the systematic development of the teaching skills of teachers and instructors. This also means valuing the time dedicated to instruction. The salaries of teachers should not be lower than the minimum salaries of physicians.

Secondly, we must apply actively for research funding. We must work actively at the level of the Ministry of Social Affairs, because they are obliged by law to develop and support the developments of an evidence-based health system in Estonia. I also think it’s necessary to establish a so-called research fund for young scientists in the field, which could give research grants every year. The principles of distributing base money must also be reviewed.

Thirdly, the field of medical sciences must be an active and visible participant in discussions of the health problems faced by the society. This means public speaking, participation in the ministry and its working groups, the Health Insurance Fund, the Health Board and elsewhere. It also means giving added value to the public debate.

**Margus Lember (medical sciences)**

On the one hand, we must be resolute towards these phenomena, both from the side of the learners and the teachers. On the other hand, ethics are also important here. It’s elementary in our field that ethics are a part of the curriculum. The ethics of learning, and of research, should be more specifically covered in the university’s curricula.

**Leho Ainsaar (natural and exact sciences)**

In higher education – coping with the disproportion of the development of different specialties in the field (the expansion of IT and the decrease in natural sciences).

In terms of structure – integration of the Institute of Genomics in the faculty, which will give rise to questions about the division of work in the field.

**Varmo Vene (natural and exact sciences)**

Finding a balance between IT and NS is the most important to me. Admissions have increased rapidly in IT curricula in recent years and admissions to the other curricula of natural and exact sciences have decreased significantly at the same time. The main reason of this is the high demand for IT specialists. Acquiring IT skills in other specialties is also becoming increasingly more important. In the last academic year, we started developing a strategy in our field, which would be the basis for the development of curricula in a manner that would make them correspond better to labour market requirements. The final development of the strategy and its implementation are our main goal for the next four years.
**Anti Selart (humanities and arts)**

Sustainable financing of the field is important, as is the preservation and development of the diversity of its specialties and guaranteeing that academic work remains science-based.

**Riho Altnurme (humanities and arts)**

In general, the most important issue to a dean could be worded as follows: securing the position of humanities and arts in the University of Tartu, the Estonian society and the world’s science.

The first two depend on the third. Because of this, the second important question would be the development of international research cooperation and the third, without a doubt, is the issue of paying respectable salaries to the staff.

**7. What should the social responsibility of the fields of the University of Tartu be like (e.g. providing added value to debate)?**

**Raul Eamets (social sciences)**

Each field must be take responsibility in the fields where it’s active. In the case of social sciences, this responsibility covers all of the topics in our area: the goals include better and science-based policy-making, higher quality of legislative drafting, analysis of the society to provide a background for making smarter decisions, a broader ground for economic analysis and enterprise, motivated and highly educated teachers, psychologists and speech therapists. We must contribute to all of these fields and in my opinion, a lot is being contributed already.

I like numbers. When we look at research contracts and grants in Estonia, their number has increased by 36% in the field in three years (2016-2018). The results for 2019 haven’t come in yet. Our people have spoken rather actively in media. When we look at the summary of media work in 2018, we can see that we were just as good as the people of humanities. There were 76 people in both fields who had a say in the press and there were 29 people in both fields who have written two or more pieces – that’s not bad at all! I’m not even going to try to list all of the committees, councils and panels of experts in which our people are active. The most recent example of cooperation at the level of experts are the groups of experts that created vision papers within the scope of the Estonian Education Strategy 2035. Social scientists from the UT lead two of the three groups. People from almost all walks of life were included.

I think that the academic footprint of the University of Tartu in the field of social sciences is rather big.

**Ruth Kalda (medical sciences)**

The only field of medicine in Estonia is located in the University of Tartu and we have the sole responsibility for sharing the medical knowledge created between the walls of the university more broadly and openly. The spread of para-knowledge and the belief in magical solutions is a growing problem, as people are increasingly more helpless in synthesising health information and assessing it critically. Secondly, there is also a shortage of scientific approach and evidence-basis in the Estonian health policy.

Therefore, we must contribute more to a health policy that proceeds from evidence. Our knowledge cannot stay in the labs and scientific articles, but must reach everyday life in a simple and understandable language. We know what is right and what isn’t, and our duty is to make this
message understandable to everyone. The mission worded by the field of medicine, that the field participates in the development of the Estonian health policy as a leader, should also be more than just words.

It should become a tradition in ministries and authorities that the dean, vice deans and opinion leaders in the field of medicine get together and discuss things. The field of medicine must be a well-known and recognised participant in all aspects concerning health and healthcare. In order to achieve such authority, we must work hard ourselves and cooperate with various target groups and institutions.

**Margus Lember (medical sciences)**

My principle is and will be that one of the constant duties of a dean is to explain, justify, apply for and organise resources for academic work, and not only in the Ministry of Education and Research. Offering help and support to grant applicants by the field in addition to the help provided by the university’s grant centre. Encouraging people to participate more in applying for international grants. It’s important to the field to continue with temporary bridging at times when there are no research funds, also to offer budget assistance in terms of activity support if a sub-unit is in a crisis. All of these mechanisms are working in our field, which is why we will certainly cope with short-term problems without losing valuable competence or good colleagues. However, on a larger scale this is a joint concern of the university as whole and all institutions of higher education and research.

**Leho Ainsaar (natural and exact sciences)**

Each area and each institute should be the leader in its field in Estonia. This also determines their role and responsibility in the society, which lies in offering applications of the results of research, advising state authorities, popularising science, offering hobby education and so on. No one else can do it better in our specialties and we must find time for this.

**Varmo Vene (natural and exact sciences)**

I think that the most important thing to do is to promote an evidence-based view of the world in the society, whether by educating the society via formal studies or in-service training programmes or via the participation of the university’s employees in the public debate.

**Anti Selart (humanities and arts)**

The university is also a part of the society. The participation of the University of Tartu and its fields in the public debate and its contribution to society consists of the contribution made by each single employee. The value of the university to society cannot be understood mechanically, as people often tend to do – it’s more than the provider of results that are simple and/or directly measurable in money. The university’s duty is to be prepared to answer the questions that arise unexpectedly and are unforeseeable. This means that the responsibility of the university lies largely in standing up for the freedom and diversity of science and education.

**Riho Altnurme (humanities and arts)**

The main contribution of the University of Tartu for the society is the provision of quality science and education. It’s certainly excellent when scientists and teachers participate in public debates, especially to share their professional competence. Scientists have not been afraid to express their thoughts about various sensitive topics. It must be said that this also represents the popularisation of one’s field, helps to introduce the work of scientists and demonstrate the necessity of science on a broader scale.
8. What are your ideas or suggestions for the promotion of cooperation between fields (both in research, education and on a broader scale in the discussion of social issues)?

Raul Eamets (social sciences)

We have the sectoral Development Fund, which offers financial support to various forms of cooperation, e.g. when people from different institutes (fields) apply for funding for larger research projects, organise international conferences (the last one was the conference about Japan in cooperation with the people of the humanities). There are also various consortia that we support, such as the Centre of Ethics, Pedagogicum, High Performance Computing Center or the Asian Centre. Major joint research projects are very important, I’m not going to list all of them, it should be enough that I only mention RITA 1 in terms of funding schemes, where the scientists of natural sciences and humanities are cooperating closely. We can also highlight our joint curricula and joint tuition, and I already mentioned the joint expert committees. This is a rather long list, and it’s certainly not final.

Ruth Kalda (medical sciences)

I really value the cooperation in fields and between fields. The role of the dean is to promote such cooperation, as there is strength in numbers. A good example of this is the cooperation of the Institute of Genomics with the Institute of Biomedicine and Translational Medicine and clinical medicine, i.e. with the University Hospital and family doctors. We should also be more open to the competence of other fields, so we can bring additional knowledge and energy to ours.

Examples of scientific cooperation arise from a practical approach that focuses on people. There are various factors that influence health - social, psychological, environmental, economic, biological and so on. It is increasingly more obvious that what we study in base sciences also requires applied research in the actual environment.

We could consider introducing cross-sectoral subjects to teaching and in the field of medicine, these could be chemistry, biology, etc. Business and economy would be the subjects where we could use the competence of other fields. And we could offer everything related to health - epidemiology, health statistic, health promotion, etc.

Margus Lember (medical sciences)

The heads of research groups and sub-units worry about and are responsible for guaranteeing funding, but following the established rules is important. Control and conditions are often strict and expensive, and everyone understands that. Rules must be followed.

Leho Ainsaar (natural and exact sciences)

National programmes, which call for the establishment of consortia between research institutions that would solve certain application issues (e.g. RITA and others), have been rather efficient in generating interdisciplinary cooperation. The role of the fields in the university should start from giving advice to ministries on which research the state should order from scientists. The cross-unit centres of the university have also promoted cooperation, as they gather scientists around certain focus topics and assist in acquiring funding and diversifying education. There could be more of such centres (such as the Earth Resources Centre) and the continuing support from the development fund of the university could stimulate this.
Varmo Vene (natural and exact sciences)

I think that first of all, we should analyse the cooperation that is currently ongoing and the obstacles to cooperation that exist at present. The budget principles of the university don’t support cross-sectoral cooperation. For example, when activity support is distributed, student places are allocated to fields with a resolution of the university’s council and their distribution within the field is flexible, but in the case of cross-sectoral joint curricula, finding student places is a duty of the coordinating field.

Anti Selart (humanities and arts)

Experience has shown that if an opportunity for actual cooperation that is useful and interesting to everyone becomes available, it is usually taken. Difficulties often emerge when a format of interdisciplinary cooperation is created first of all and then cannot be furnished with the kind of content that would be equally interesting to all parties. It’s important to be informed about the things that the neighbours are doing. A good example of a success story is the cooperation of archaeologists, linguists and historians with gene researchers, which has produced important scientific results.

Riho Altnurme (humanities and arts)

Cooperation between fields really is a sore point in the university. The development of cooperation and sharing of responsibility always calls for longer negotiations and trust. I was personally involved in the launch of the Asian Centre and before that in a centre of excellence, so I know how complicated this process is, and the reason for this is that different fields stick rather religiously to their territories, as resources are divided between fields. In general, cooperation can be promoted by resource distribution mechanisms that require cooperation. We could still try to create measures in the university that would promote cooperation or more specifically – forced people to cooperate.

9. Is the ‘duplication’ of specialties between Tartu and Tallinn necessary?

Raul Eamets (social sciences)

Looking at this on a broader scale, my personal opinion is that we have too many institutions of higher education (there are 19 in total). But there isn’t enough political will to make changes. Speaking of duplication, then it’s unavoidable to certain extent, at least for as long as the Ministry of Education and Research hasn’t started to force universities to do certain things. There haven’t been many voluntary changes – I think the closure of the specialty of painting in Tartu is the only exception. If the state clearly needs this (there is a shortage of specialties), then maybe we must teach at different places, as we may not be able to educate enough people otherwise. Teacher training is a good example here. Looking at this from the economic aspect, the less duplication there is in education the better, because we are competing for the same resources starting with teachers and potential students and ending with money. Estonia is small.

Ruth Kalda (medical sciences)

The short answer is that there should be minimal duplication, especially as the state doesn’t have enough money for funding education. As a dean, I would challenge the University of Tartu to establish itself with quality, so that we could credibly demonstrate why we’re the best and why a future student should prefer us.
Margus Lember (medical sciences)

This is the same question that is often asked in the organisation of medicine as well: on the one hand, competition is a driving force, but on the other hand – how much competition can we fit in a country as small as Estonia? Creating/maintaining competition in Estonia whatever the cost may mean that neither of the centres will have enough resources. I’m convinced that duplication will become a thing of the past if we replace it with strong Estonian competence that includes the best from Tartu and Tallinn.

Leho Ainsaar (natural and exact sciences)

Everything depends on the level of duplication and the expectations of the society in the specific fields. It would probably not be reasonable to criticise duplication at the level of such big categories like ‘natural sciences’ or ‘technology’. There should certainly be some concentration, cooperation or specialisation in narrower specialties. If I give you an example from my specialty, then teaching geology in small groups in both cities certainly isn’t reasonable, but specialisation (e.g. mining engineers in Tallinn, geologists in Tartu) could make sense.

Varmo Vene (natural and exact sciences)

Depends on the specialties. One extreme is medicine, where the costs incurred to teach the specialty are very high and duplicating this is in now way justified. At the other end is IT, where Tartu or Tallinn alone cannot meet the need of the labour market for specialists in this field.

Anti Selart (humanities and arts)

The ‘duplication’ of specialties between Tartu and Tallinn in the present financial and demographic situation is not necessarily smart. The exception – at least in terms of research – are the sciences that study Estonia, in the case of which the preservation of several centres contributes to the development of diversity and discussion.

Riho Altnurme (humanities and arts)

In the case of sciences that study the Estonian language, culture and history, we need to maintain the option for a second opinion and a certain competition. This does not mean that national sciences should not be international. Duplication of internationally oriented science in Estonia is not reasonable, especially considering the difficulties in financing.

10. Which measures could be taken to reduce academic fraud (cheating, plagiarism, etc.)?

Raul Eamets (social sciences)

I’ll start with plagiarism. The meaning of plagiarism and its possible consequences must be explained to students. Secondly, the existing programmes and measures for identification of plagiarism must be introduced to the academic staff until they finally start using them. It will probably work after a while.

Cheating is more difficult. We cannot get rid of it for as long as other students tolerate cheating or unfair competition. Technological devices keep developing all the time. Cheating will disappear when it is publicly condemned and whistleblowing becomes acceptable.
Ruth Kalda (medical sciences)

The Estonian Academy of Sciences, the Estonian Research Council and the Ministry of Education and Research prepared a document in 2017, which is called the Estonian Code of Conduct for Research Integrity and was signed by many research institutions, universities and institutions of higher education. This document should be introduced and its principles should be explained to all young researchers. I think that this is done in the mandatory Bioethics course of doctoral studies. The principles of the code of ethics are learnt quicker by discussing values and analysing problems together rather than just by reading them.

Honesty and the quality of research and education have been important principles in the field of medical sciences and not a lot of plagiarism and fraud have been found in our field. The good work done by tutors and referees is the foundation of this. I would like to emphasise here that tutoring as well as the work of referees are tasks of high responsibility and must therefore be valued. However, when fraud is found, the response to it must be resolute.

Margus Lember (medical sciences)

One of the roles of the university is to serve the society, which fields can do through their professional competence. Having a say must be based on knowledge, not opinion. Giving practical advice, which doesn’t often catch the attention of the public, is even more important than arguing in media channels. Being a professional adviser is a tradition in all clinical specialties in our field and as for other topics, institutes have their spokespersons who communicate with the media. The representatives of state institutions know our scientists well in their specialties. However, we must be prepared to offer more advice ourselves, as requests for it are becoming scarce.

Leho Ainsaar (natural and exact sciences)

In terms of control, the efficient use of technological options is the best solution (works in the case of texts). The only real solution though is influencing the attitudes of students. If there is zero tolerance of cheating among students themselves, then it is unlikely to occur. Cheating is already relatively impossible in experimental natural sciences, as practical lab work should be rather transparent if the tutors do their work responsibly.

Varmo Vene (natural and exact sciences)

Academic fraud is a serious problem that must be dealt with comprehensively. It would certainly have an effect if the possible fraudster considered is likely that they will be found out and was afraid of the punishment imposed for this. The university has invested in technical solutions that work to a certain extent, but do not guarantee fully that fraud will be detected. On the other hand, we must raise the awareness of students of academic fraud and its consequences. Changing the attitudes of students would also be rather effective if it makes them regard fraud as something that’s wrong and make them critical about fellow students who cheat or resort to other forms of fraud. Using more methods for checking learning outcomes that rule out or strongly decrease the opportunities for fraud (e.g. oral exams) also helps reduce fraud.

Anti Selart (humanities and arts)
The only efficient solution is fastidiousness – teachers must be demanding, and even more so, students themselves must be demanding towards themselves and their fellow students. The rules for solving cases of plagiarism exist, they must simply be more courageously implemented.

Riho Altnurme (humanities and arts)

Changes in the attitude towards learning would help more than measures. However, we must also develop software that helps us discover plagiarism and use such software consistently. As for cheating, a teacher can be demanding and give exercises in written exams that cannot be solved by just cheating.