

Helsinki April 13, 2026
Dnro HY/6019/05.02.02/2025
Viite Letter to the University of Helsinki, December 16, 2025

Decision of the Chancellor of the University of Helsinki

University of Helsinki has received a letter on December 16, 2025, concerning the doctoral dissertation “COVID-19 Vaccine Effectiveness in Finland During Pandemics” defended by Eero Poukka in the Faculty of Medicine of the University of Helsinki on December 13, 2025. In the letter signed by MD Nina Bjelogrić, MD Rauli Mäkelä, MD Sylvi Silvennoinen-Kaasinen and MD Tamara Tuuminen some legal and scientific concerns regarding Poukka’s dissertation are raised.

The scientific concerns raised in the letter concern, inter alia, the alleged scientifically incorrect assumptions, the decision not to utilize certain data, used classification methods, the consistency of the classification adopted in the thesis, and scientific justifications the thesis contains. In the letter it is stated that these concerns “are obvious weaknesses in the methodology and reliability of the thesis”.

According to the The Finnish Code of Conduct for Research Integrity and Procedures for Handling Alleged Violations of Research Integrity in Finland published by the Finnish National Board on Research Integrity TENK (Publications of the Finnish National Board on Research Integrity TENK 4/2023, hereinafter RI Guidelines) Differences of opinion and disagreements over theories, methods or interpretations of results are part of academic discourse and generally not RI violations. The scientific concerns raised in the letter are typically the kind of differences and disagreements referred to in the RI Guidelines in this regard. The material presented in this case does not demonstrate that the concerns raised should be assessed from the perspective of research integrity.

In addition, some legal concerns are raised in the letter. The letter argues that certain disclosures of conflicts of interest included in the articles of the doctoral dissertation suggest that the research was “produced as tailor-made promotional material “to support policymaking””.

In this respect it needs to be noted that all of the research articles included in the doctoral dissertation mentioned in the letter in this regard include appropriate disclosures regarding conflicts of interest. In addition, in the thesis (p. 65) it is mentioned that “as the pandemic progressed and vaccines were rolled out, additional data on VE against different COVID-19 outcomes and subvariants in different subpopulations were needed to support policymaking”. Producing research to support societal decision-making is not problematic from the perspective of research ethics, provided that any potential conflicts of interest are properly disclosed. Like stated, research articles included in the doctoral dissertation mentioned in the letter include appropriate disclosures regarding conflicts of interest.

Based on the grounds discussed above, I find that the concerns raised in the letter are manifestly ill-founded from the perspective of research integrity and there is no need to further investigate the matter.

Chancellor

Kaarle Hämeri

Legal Secretary to the Chancellor

Sakari Melander

Appeal:

This decision is not subject to appeal (Section 5 of the Administrative Judicial Procedure Act).

If the complainant or the respondent is dissatisfied with the outcomes of the preliminary inquiry or the investigation proper, they may request a statement from The Finnish National Board on Research Integrity (TENK). This must be done within 30 days of receiving the Chancellor’s decision.

Further information:

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Tämä asiakirja on allekirjoitettu

Asian HY/6019/05.02.02/2026 asiakirja

Lista allekirjoittajista

Allekirjoittaja

Todennus