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A longitudinal study of the Jyväskylä universities (J2 project)

1. Background

This information sheet concerns a study conducted at the University of Jyväskylä during 2026–2028, which examines the formation of the Jyväskylä Universities (consortium of JYU and JAMK) as a multi-method longitudinal study. The project follows the development of the consortium in real time and analyses the premises of the planning phase as well as the experiences and perspectives of different stakeholder groups, such as students and staff, regarding the formation of the consortium.

The study focuses on the following questions:

- How does the consortium affect the core functions of the higher education institutions (JYU, JAMK) as well as their management and service structures?
- How do different stakeholder groups—such as leadership, staff, students, and regional actors—perceive and interpret the higher education consortium?
- To what extent and in what ways have the objectives set for the formation of the consortium been achieved in relation to the experiences and everyday practices of actors such as staff and students?

This information sheet describes the study and explains what the participant observation included in it means for you. As the study progresses, it is possible that we may invite you to an interview, send you a survey, or ask you to participate in the research in some other way. In such cases, we will request your separate consent and provide you with the research background relevant to your participation. The [data protection notice](#) explains how your personal data will be processed.

2. Voluntary participation

Participation in this study is voluntary. You can refuse to participate in the study, withdraw from the study or your consent at any time, without stating a reason. This will have no negative consequences for you. Your decision not to participate in the study will not result in any negative consequences for you, nor will it place you at a disadvantage within your higher education institution or workplace/study community. In the context of participatory observation, refusal means that, during the observation situation, we will disregard those parts and perspectives in which you are involved.

If you discontinue your participation in the study or withdraw the consent you have given, the data and materials collected about you up to that point will be used as part of the research dataset when this is necessary to ensure the reliability of the research results

3. Progress of the study

The study is structured into three phases during the years 2026–2028. **In the first phase**, the project examines the anticipated effects of the planned consortium on the core functions of the higher education institutions (JYU and JAMK), as well as on their management and service structures. The analysis is based on the premises of the consortium's establishment phase and the future-oriented descriptions related to it. **In the second phase**, the project focuses on the experienced consortium, examining how different groups of actors—such as students and staff—perceive and interpret the formation of the higher education consortium. **In the third phase**, a synthesis of the planned and experienced consortium is conducted, assessing how and to what extent the objectives set for the consortium (the planned consortium) have been achieved in relation to the experiences of actors (the experienced consortium). The study applies an organisational

ethnographic approach, which includes document analysis, participant observation, and interviews. In addition, two surveys will be conducted as part of the project.

The research data consist of the following materials:

Documentary data consist of external and internal communications related to the consortium, strategy papers, and other documents provided for the study or publicly available.

Interview data include semi-structured individual and focus group interviews. Participants will be invited through targeted invitations, and interviews may involve individuals actively engaged in the consortium's planning phase—such as institutional leadership—or broader groups within the higher education community, such as students. The estimated duration of each interview is 60–90 minutes. A total of approximately 50–60 individuals will participate in the interviews.

Observation data consist of researchers' field notes, which may be self-reflective (autoethnographic material) or based on observations made during various consortium-related events, such as information sessions, workshops, or meetings (participatory observation notes). Participants will be informed about the observation in advance through the event invitation or at the beginning of the event. Participants will also have the opportunity to ask for clarification about the data-collection methods, and no information will be recorded about individuals who do not wish to be included. The premise of the observation is that the notes focus on themes and topics of discussion, practices and everyday processes related to the formation of the consortium, and not on the collection of personal data

4. Possible benefits from the study

The study supports the research-based development work of the Jyväskylän universities (the consortium) and produces new national and international insights into the development of higher education collaboration. This applies both to higher education institutions and their functions (such as services, management, and education) and to broader regional attractiveness. The study also enables the strengthening of plurality within higher education communities, as participating actors have the opportunity to express their own perspectives and experiences regarding the formation of the consortium, thereby contributing to the reflective development of collaboration practices and operational models. The longitudinal design and ethnographic approach may also diversify the methodological tradition of higher education research and highlight key international development trends in contemporary higher education.

5. Possible risks, harm, and inconvenience caused by the study as well as preparing for these

Participation in the study is not expected to involve significant risks, harms, or discomfort for participants, work communities, or organisations. The study addresses the objectives set for the consortium as well as participants' personal experiences and views regarding higher education collaboration and the formation of the consortium. Any potential burden relates primarily to the time required and to the reflection of one's own actions and experiences.

However, it is possible that certain questions or themes may cause mild discomfort or prompt critical reflection about one's work, organisation, or collaboration practices. It is also possible that the participatory observation included in the ethnographic method may cause discomfort among those present in the observation situation. Efforts are made to minimise this by providing sufficient information about the implementation of the observation and the observation method. Researchers also encourage participants to raise any concerns with a low threshold.

Participation in interviews, surveys, and observation situations is voluntary, and participants have the right to discontinue their participation at any time without consequences. Participants may also choose not to answer individual questions.

The study does not collect sensitive personal data, nor does it process special categories of personal data. The data are handled confidentially and in a pseudonymised form, which reduces risks related to participant identifiability.

6. Insurance coverage for research participants

The University of Jyväskylä has insurance for its activities and research participants. The participants are covered for accidents, damages and injuries inflicted due to an external cause. The accident insurance is valid during measurements, measurement visits and trips directly related to them.

If research is conducted remotely, the insurance of the University of Jyväskylä covers only damage directly related to the research task which has occurred during the guided research task. The insurance does not cover accidents that occur during breaks. The insurance of the University of Jyväskylä is not valid in the case of research conducted remotely if a participant's municipality of residence is not in Finland.

7. Compensation for participation and reimbursement of study-related costs

Participants receive no payment or compensation for possible travel costs for this study.

8. Funding of the study

The study has no funding from outside the University of Jyväskylä.

9. Conflicts of Interests

The study and the researchers have no conflicts of interest that could affect the study's independence.

10. Informing about research results and research outcomes

Individual result reports will not be produced for participants regarding their own 'results'. The data are primarily qualitative and focus on organisational- and group-level phenomena. However, information about the progress of the study and key observations may be communicated, for example, in project seminars, workshops, or other interactive events.

The study will result in scientific publications, conference and seminar presentations, potential theses, and materials suitable for teaching purposes. In addition, the project may produce published descriptions of the research data and other open research materials that support transparency and future reuse of the study. The results of the research may also be used in practical development work and potentially in broader societal discussions.

Participants cannot be identified from the publications or published results. All data are analysed and reported in such a way that individual persons are not directly identifiable. Personal data are anonymised or pseudonymised before analysis and publication, and the results are presented in an aggregated form

If, due to the research context, small sample size, or organisation-specific focus, there is a risk of indirect identifiability, this will be addressed with particular care in the reporting of results. In such cases, details will be limited or modified so that individual persons cannot be inferred from the publications.

Overall, identifying participants in publications is not an objective of the research. If the study includes individuals with a public role (e.g., experts, leaders, or other key organizational actors), their identifiability will be considered on a case-by-case basis in accordance with research-ethical principles. Participants may have the opportunity to provide separate consent to being identifiable in specific research publications or materials, if this is scientifically justified. Such identifiability is always based on voluntary and informed consent, which is requested separately. Participants will be clearly informed of any potential risks associated with identifiability in research publications.

11. The use of research data after the study is finished

After the study has been completed and the time required to verify the results has passed, the research data will be anonymised, meaning that all direct and indirect identifiers enabling identification will be removed. Anonymisation is carried out in such a way that individual persons cannot be identified from the published or archived material. Materials containing direct identifiers, such as interview recordings, will be destroyed.

The anonymised research data will remain in the possession of the research team and may be used for other scientific purposes—such as further research, comparative analyses, and teaching—provided that this is permissible under research-ethical principles and data-protection legislation.

In addition, the anonymised research data may be deposited in the JYX Publication Archive of the University of Jyväskylä or another comparable research-data repository, from which it may be accessed for research and teaching purposes upon request or in accordance with the service's terms of use. The conditions of access to the data will be specified in the accompanying metadata and in the data protection notice.

12. Contact person for further information

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