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**Abstract**

Analysing foundation charters, this article explores the various purposes universities have been said to serve at different periods of time, how the distinction between universities and other educational establishments has been made, and how the actions of the academic community have been justified. The data consist of 225 charters of foundation from the year 1224 to 1999. Granted by rulers, the charters depict universities as being suited to serve widely differing purposes, such as furthering the material and spiritual prosperity of the nation and the local community, strengthening the right faith and training public servants. Charters granted universities privileges such as the status of studium generale and ius ubique docendi, a universal teaching licence. These privileges created a foundation for all later principles generally applicable to the academic world. The universities originating in academic guilds founded for the protection of scholars have always been answerable to societal demands. A certain degree of loyalty by academic people to those in power has, in turn, secured the

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universities and the academic community their vital integrity and freedom of opinion, publication and research. (HRK / Abstract übernommen), Kivinen, Osmo, E-Mail: osmo.kivinen@utu.fi