Code of Conduct in the University Environment (in force until 31 July 2020)

Decision of the Aalto University Academic Affairs Committee 19 May 2015

1. INTRODUCTION

Aalto University works towards a better world through top-quality research, interdisciplinary collaboration, pioneering education, surpassing traditional boundaries, and enabling renewal. Aalto University values are: a passion for exploration, the freedom to be creative and critical, the courage to influence and excel, the responsibility to accept, care and inspire, and integrity, openness and equality. Aalto University offers a safe and pleasant university environment which fosters the implementation of the Aalto University strategy and the success of the Aalto community. At Aalto University the student is in focus.

Members of the university community have rights and responsibilities the fulfilment of which is supported by this Code of Conduct. All community members commit to following the Code.

Establishing a code of conduct is necessary in an increasingly diverse university community bringing together teaching and research staff as well as other staff and students from various cultures. Although the members of the community have a shared view of responsible conduct, the university leadership has identified a need for a more clearly defined code of conduct to positively guide the community and provide support in problematic situations.

This code defines responsible conduct at Aalto University.

2. DEFINITIONS

This code concerns members of the Aalto community acting in the university environment or representing Aalto University.

Member of the Aalto University community

Aalto University community members comprise teaching and research staff, other staff, and students.

Stakeholders of Aalto University

The term ‘member of the Aalto University community’ may also refer to other people when they are acting in the Aalto university community as providers of a service either free-of-charge or for a charge, as applicants to a job position or student place or as alumni, or when taking part in an event organised by the university.

University environment

The physical and technical workspaces and platforms and services offered by the university. The university environment consists of the teaching and learning environment and the environments for research and artistic activities; the teaching and learning environment as well as the environments for research and artistic activities overlap to some extent: in the course of their studies, students may also operate in the environments for research and artistic activities.

Teaching and learning environment

The physical facilities for teaching and learning and for related support services, such as common areas, lecture halls, student service desks and libraries as well as virtual learning platforms and learning spaces.

3. RIGHTS AND RESPONSIBILITIES

In addition to the laws of Finland, the members of the Aalto University community are bound by university regulations. The rights and responsibilities of the staff are set forth in employment legislation and agreements as well as in the regulations issued by the university, while matters involving students are processed in compliance with the provisions of the Universities Act (Yliopistolaki 558/2009) and the Administrative Procedure Act (Hallintolaki 434/2003), as well as with the principles of good administration. The rights and responsibilities of students are primarily regulated by the Universities Act (Yliopistolaki 558/2009) and the regulations and decisions issued under it (e.g. the curriculum and degree regulations).

Members of the Aalto University community are expected to behave responsibly and to respect the rights of the other members to a safe and pleasant university environment allowing unhindered progress in study and work. Each member of the Aalto University community has a right to be treated with respect regardless of their gender, gender identity or expression thereof, age, ethnic or national origin, nationality, language, religion, beliefs, opinion, political or trade union engagement, family relations, health, disability, sexual orientation, or other personal characteristics.

Teachers have the freedom to teach and students have the freedom to learn. In a teaching situation, everyone present is responsible for ensuring a safe and pleasant environment. As members of the university community, students also have a right to participate in academic debate. In addition, students have a right to attend not only the classes associated with their courses but also other public classes like anyone else. A student’s right to attend classes may only be restricted on grounds referred to in the Universities Act (Yliopistolaki 558/2009).

The members of the Aalto University community shall respect university property and use university physical facilities for their intended purposes in compliance with facility-specific terms of use. The physical facilities of the university are primarily intended for teaching, learning, research, artistic activities, and for the support functions related to all of them; use for other purposes is subject to separate agreements or instructions.
4 MISCONDUCT DISRUPTING UNIVERSITY ACTIVITIES

Conflict situations and allegations of misconduct are handled according to established procedures, first by the parties directly involved, and if needed, with the support of university service units.

Misconduct by teaching or other staff is addressed by the university in accordance with the Occupational Health and Safety Act (Työturvallisuuslaki 738/2002) and the Employment Contracts Act (Työsopimuslaki 55/2001) if it constitutes a breach of obligations arising from the employment contract. Misconduct by students is addressed by the university in accordance with the Universities Act (Yliopistolaki 558/2009). Misconduct by students includes disruption of teaching, violent or threatening behaviour, dishonesty, or other disruption of university activities. The university may also address misconduct by others than members of the Aalto community when they are acting in the university environment.

At Aalto University, any violent, threatening or discriminatory behaviour, as well as dishonesty, bullying, or sexual or gender-based or other harassment always constitutes a disruption of university activities. Disruption of university activities at Aalto University also includes interfering with the university environment or activities in a way that compromises the right of other members to a safe and pleasant university environment, as well as unhindered progress in study or work. In addition, damage to or unauthorised use of Aalto University property or facilities constitutes disruption of university activities.

The teacher of a course – such as a lecturer or assistant – is obligated to report any misconduct in the classroom or in the immediate teaching and learning environment to the teacher-in-charge of the course while addressing the misconduct in a manner that complies with the university safety instructions. The teacher-in-charge of a course is obligated to address any misconduct reported to him or her in compliance with the safety instructions and to report any incidents to the investigator of the school. The same obligation to address and as necessary, to report to the investigator, also applies to the thesis advisor and the director of the degree programme of the student concerned as well as to any other employee handling the matters of the student. Students who experience or otherwise observe misconduct by another member of the university community may report the issue to the school investigator.

Allegations of misconduct by members of staff shall be handled in accordance with relevant processes. As appropriate, allegations of misconduct by students are handled similarly to violations of academic integrity. If the person suspected of misconduct is both a student and an employee, the investigation process and consequences will be determined depending on the case.

Each school shall have one or more investigator to handle disruptions and conflict situations involving students; if necessary, the school shall offer an opportunity for mediation proceedings in these cases.

As necessary, further provisions on the implementation of the code of conduct and on the procedures for solving conflicts or dealing with disruptions of university activities will be issued by the president or a delegated university official.

Instructions for investigating suspected cases of misconduct and disruptions of student learning (decision of the vice president on 3 November 2015)

5. COMMITMENTS IN A NUTSHELL

When operating in the university environment and representing the university, the members of the Aalto University community agree to:

- act honestly and with integrity
- respect others regardless of their background
- foster open discourse and the free exchange of ideas
- build mutual trust
- actively care for the safety and well-being of others
- respect private, shared and university property
- use the physical facilities of the university for their intended purposes
- react to any violations in a manner appropriate to their position and duties.