Well-being

Staying well is a top priority when you arrive in a new environment, adjust to life at Aalto University, and begin your studies. Both mental well-being and physical health are significant for academic success. Transitioning to a new university community can be stressful and you may have feelings and worries that you do not normally experience. It is important to be aware of your feelings and reactions, as you begin your life in Finland and at Aalto and reach out for support early on if you feel that you are having difficulties with coping. Below you can find more information on things related to well-being and safety. Also take a look at “Where to find help” for services outside the university.

Aalto University provides study and career counselling psychologist services for all bachelor, master, PhD and exchange students. You can contact a study psychologist for example when you are looking for help with time management, you procrastinate, you are lacking motivation, you are looking for a study method that suits you or you are experiencing study related stress, anxiety or burnout. A career counselling psychologist specializes in career management issues and supports you in career and life planning and transition to work. Career counselling psychologist supports you in self-knowledge, building a meaningful career, identifying opportunities and making decisions. More information https://into.aalto.fi/display/enopisk/Study+-+and+career+planning+psychologists

Starting Point of Wellbeing at Aalto University offers students advice and guidance on services related to wellbeing.

Adapting to your new life at Aalto may take some adjustment. Many students go through a period of being frustrated or disenchanted with their new environment, sometimes called cultural transition or culture shock. This is a normal part of adjusting to a new place. If you feel “lost in translation,” just remember that you are not alone – many other international students have similar experiences. Although each person’s experience will be different and will depend on the individual, the following are typical stages of cultural transition:

Honeymoon stage

When you first arrive, you may experience exhilaration, anticipation, nervousness, and excitement. Remember that settling in takes a significant amount of time and energy. This stage can last from a few days or weeks to several months, depending on your circumstances.

Hostility stage

In the second or third month, you may begin to notice annoying details about your new environment. It may seem as if people in Finland do not understand you, or you may have difficulty understanding them. You may feel frustrated or depressed, angry, or powerless when you have trouble communicating or getting things done, or seemingly for no reason at all. You might wish things could be as they are at home – or you might wish you were at home! Don’t despair. These feelings usually fade as you gain persistence in getting to know your new environment.

Acceptance stage

After some weeks or months, you may start appreciating the differences between your home country and your new environment. You may regain a sense of humour and feel more balanced. The mistakes and misunderstandings that would have frustrated you before may now just make you laugh.

Adaptation stage

Eventually, you may begin to feel at home in your new environment and find greater satisfaction, both personally and academically.

Tips for managing cultural transitions

- Give yourself time to adjust to your new environment.
- Attend a club or activity that meets regularly so that you meet people and make friends faster. Try to introduce yourself to at least one person each time you go. Keep in touch with friends and family back home. These relationships can help keep you grounded.
- Manage your stress by staying healthy: eat well, get enough sleep, and stay physically active.
- Talk with other students about your cultural transition – you will be surprised by how many of them have or have had similar experiences.
- If you are having difficulty with the transition, talk to the Finnish Student Health Service (FSHS or YTHS in Finnish) or the Psychology Service at the university. In Finland, talking to professionals is an accepted way of dealing with problems.

Aalto students can take part in many different sports activities. UniSport is a joint venture between Aalto University and the University of Helsinki offering sports and exercise services. The goal of UniSport is to promote well-being in the academic community and society by increasing awareness of personal wellbeing, providing sports and exercise opportunities as well as fostering an environment conducive to exercise.

There are lots of possibilities to find the sport or type of exercise that best suits your study rhythm. Challenge a friend to a salsa class or take a break from the books on a climbing wall! UniSport offers exercise services at the two universities’ six campuses (Otaniemi, Töölö, Helsinki City Centre, Meilahti, Kumpula and Viikki). A UniSport training card gives you access to all gyms from morning to evening on all the campuses.

Club activities

Are you a team player or would you rather exercise on your own but need other enthusiasts to share experiences with? Check out if you can find your own sports club or association from the wide selection of Student Union sporting activities.
Aalto University is committed to operating ethically, equally and transparently. The aim is to ensure an equal working and study environment in which students and employees regardless of gender, position and background are treated equally. Students are offered equal opportunities to participate in teaching, project work and research activities, and their study performance is evaluated fairly, based on clearly defined learning outcomes declared in advance.

The responsibility to promote equality applies to all members of the university community and all members of the community are expected to conduct themselves in accordance with the Aalto University Equality Plan. The Equality Plan is based on the strategy and values of the university. It is intended to support everyone studying and working at Aalto. Furthermore, the plan is regulated by statutory obligations (Act on Equality between Women and Men and Non-Discrimination Act). Legislation obligates universities to actively promote equality in student admission and the selection of other persons, as well as in study and work arrangements. Aalto University requires good conduct and respect for equality from its personnel and students.

More information:

- Equality, diversity and inclusion
- Code of conduct
- Support in cases of harassment

Aalto University understands the importance of fostering the well-being and academic progress of all its students through accessible services and support throughout the studies. The diversity of the Aalto community is apparent in all the six Aalto schools and their campuses, classes, student organisations and residential life. Appreciation of diversity at all levels not only is a general resource for the entire university community, but more importantly, empowers all our students to reach their full potential.

Physical and psychological disabilities can limit the student’s ability to pursue studies. Disabilities affect the abilities to study in varying and individual ways. In order to facilitate studying, it is possible to apply to receive personal study arrangements.

More information:

- Individual study arrangements
- Diversity and accessibility for Students
- Diverse learners

Nyyti students’ support centre (independent association) offers information and peer-experiences on mental well-being. Nyyti also offers open chat sessions during the academic terms.

Contact information in case of emergency

The emergency number is 112.

It is generally advised to add the abbreviation ICE (In Case of Emergency) on your phone in the contact information of the persons, who you want to be contacted for example in case you get into an accident (for example ICE Jack or ICE Mum). This is also very important if you have severe allergies or some medication.

Health care and medication

Information about health care and medication.

Crimes and security

In general, Finland is a safe country, but you should still stay aware of what is happening around you. In Finland, it is typical that laws and regulations are followed. Laws concerning for example narcotics are strict, as also are the punishments and fines. You can read more information about Finnish legislation and rights.

Traffic

Whether you are planning to drive a car in Finland or not, you should acknowledge the effects of the climate and the different seasons in Finland. During winter the streets and the roads can be very slippery, which affects the stopping distances of cars.

If you are to drive in Finland, keep in mind that wearing a seatbelt and keeping the lights on is obligatory. It is also obligatory to have winter tyres during the winter. More information about traffic and road safety can be found from the Liikenneturva website.