



INTERNATIONAL GUIDE



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Introduction

Dear international student,

Welcome to Finland! In this guide, we will introduce you to the Student Union and student life at Åbo Akademi University. We want to tell you about the concept of a Finnish student union and inform you about the services available for students. As our member, you are entitled to a variety of benefits, which we hope will make your stay here easier and more enjoyable. This guide contains general information on the Student Union, the benefits you get as a member as well as services the Student Union offers.

The Student Union of Åbo Akademi University is found on both ÅAU campuses, in Åbo and Vasa. We want to be available to all our members and make student life as good as possible on both campuses and at all faculties. We are happy to help you with any questions you may have. We hope that you will have a wonderful stay in Finland and please, do not hesitate to contact us!

Information about the Student Union of Åbo Akademi University and its services in English are available on our website: www.studentkaren.fi/en

Best wishes and welcome to The Student Union of Åbo Akademi University,

The Board and staff of the Student Union.

What is a student union?

Every university in Finland has a student union and all students studying for a bachelor's or master's degree in Finland are automatically members of it. Doctoral students may join the Student Union if they wish. Exchange students can and are warmly recommended to join the Student Union. The student unions mainly work in the areas of higher education politics, social policy, and international affairs.

According to the Finnish University Act;

“A student union consists of the students of a university and is self-governing. The student union liaises with and on behalf of its members and promotes their societal, social and intellectual aspirations and those relating to studies and the status of students in society. The student union also participates in the implementation of the educational mission of the university, by preparing students for an active, informed and critical citizenship.”

The Student Union of Åbo Akademi University (ÅAS) is a public corporation completely independent of the university. ÅAS was founded in 1919 which makes it one of the first student unions in Finland. Today, ÅAS has around 5000 members.

ÅAS wants to make sure that the conditions for your studies are as good as they can be. This is done by influencing the decision-making bodies of Åbo Akademi University at all levels. Student representatives, elected by the students, are members of all these bodies. ÅAS also influences and takes part in decision-making by delivering statements on current propositions. Another important area of work is social affairs issues such as housing, health care, student discounts, and financial aid for students.

The Student Union also offers leisure time activities for students at Åbo Akademi University by arranging different types of events. Moreover, ÅAS supports the different student associations. The student associations arrange social and cultural events and excursions.

ÅAS - the organisation

The Student Union's highest decision-making authority is the Student Union Council, which has 25 members. The council is elected biannually at the beginning of November and the next election is in November 2025. All Student Union members have the right to vote and be nominated as candidates in the elections. The council's meetings are open to all Student Union members and the meeting dates and lists of decisions are available online at the Student Union's website.

The Council annually elects a Student Union Executive Board. The Executive Board consists of a chairperson and seven board members. They are elected for one calendar year and are responsible for executing the councils' decisions. The Board operates both in Åbo and in Vasa.

The financial sector takes care of the buildings, the student restaurants, and the student housing. The Financial Board is the decision-making body for the financial sector and is also elected by the council.

Student associations

There are about 80 student associations within the Student Union. There are different types of student associations: student nations, subject associations, political associations, and associations for hobbies. The associations come in all shapes and sizes and are as diverse as their members.

You can find a list of all current student associations at the ÅAS website <https://studentkaren.fi/en/associations/aas-student-associations/>

Do not hesitate to contact an association you are curious about. Taking part in their activities, their parties, and getting to meet students from all over Finland is a great way to get integrated into the student life at Åbo Akademi University. You can read more about the different associations in our Student Life guide.

Benefits as a member

The membership fee at ÅAS is €69 per academic year, €34,50 for the autumn semester and €34,50 for the spring semester. When you enrol at Åbo Akademi University as a bachelor's or master's degree student, you also pay the Student Union membership fee. Paying the membership fee entitles you to several benefits.

The Student Card

One of the most important benefits you get from paying the student union membership fee is the right to a student card. The student card signifies your status as a student in Finland and entitles you to various discounts.

There are a few different providers of student cards in Finland. One of the most used is called Frank, named after the company that provides the cards. Aside from Frank there is also Tuudo and Kide.

If you prefer a digital card, Frank, Tuudo and Kide are available as applications that you can download for free. The student card is available in the app when you have registered and paid the student union membership fee.

If you prefer a physical card, you can order it through Frank, www.frank.fi/en. Please note that there is a small fee to order the physical card. For the card to be valid it needs a validation sticker that you can get from the Student Union offices in Åbo and in Vasa.

Travel discounts

As a student with a student card, you get about 50 % off train travel and bus travel (for journeys of over 80 km), when you buy the ticket in advance. For more information on trains, see www.vr.fi, and for buses see www.matkahuolto.fi. You can also get discount on travel cards for local buses in Åbo and Vasa with your student card or an official student certificate from the university. The place to buy these cards in Åbo is the public transport office at Auragatan 5 (see www.foli.fi). In Vasa you can find information at Citizen Services at Biblioteksgatan 13 or on the website <https://www.vaasa.fi/en/living/traffic-and-streets/public-transport/>.

General discounts

With your student card you can get discounts to almost everything. You can get a student discount at most museums, theaters and movie theaters, as well as at many stores and restaurants. It is always worth asking for student discounts! Through the Frank app you can find discounts on anything from insurance to clothing.

Kårkalendern

Kårkalendern is the Student Union's yearly calendar which you can get free of charge from our service points in Åbo and Vasa. The calendar is in both Swedish and English, however, mainly in Swedish. Many of the larger events organized by the Student Union as well as the different associations are listed in the calendar.

Legal advice

As a Student Union member, you are entitled to legal advice. You can turn to legal counsellors in matters of inheritance, housing (for example, tenancy agreement), taxation, employment etc. Please note that writing or making contracts is not included in the counsellors' work description, but they can give you useful legal advice.

The counsellors are situated in Åbo. You can visit or call them Tuesdays from 6 to 7 p.m. Address: Student Union of the University of Turku (TYU), Yo-talo A, Rektorsåkersgatan 4, first floor (045 843 3428 tyy-oikeusapu@utu.fi). The counsellors speak English fluently and the service is free of charge.

Student restaurants and student lunch

At student restaurants you can eat subsidised student lunches if you show your student card. ÅAS owns four student restaurants in Åbo, and you find weekly menus at the address: <https://www.karkafeerna.fi/en/lunch>

There are other student restaurants located all around the university area, for example there is a student restaurant in Academill in Vasa. You will get a student priced lunch not only on your campus, but in all student restaurants in Finland when you show your student card.

Harassment Contact Persons

The Student Union has two Harassment Contact Persons that all Student Union members are welcome to contact if they experience any disturbing or unwelcome behaviours or situations involving other students, University staff or anyone else.

The role of a Harassment Contact Person is to give support and advice and help get to a solution for your problems if you have experienced bullying, discrimination, sexual harassment, or violence. You do not need to have a definition in place for what you have experienced; just contact us if there is anything you wish to discuss. Anything you tell us is confidential, and no action is taken unless you wish. It is always the member of the Student Union that decides what the process is, what kind of support we can help you get and if the matter is taken further with your name or anonymously. In short; anything from talking for a while to helping with filing a report with the police or booking a doctors' appointment.

You can reach our Harassment Contact Persons via the address trakasseriombud@studentkaren.fi but you can also contact them individually. You can meet them at the Student Union Office or on Zoom, and they can come and meet you wherever and whenever is best for you, in Åbo or Vasa.

[Harassment contact persons - Åbo Akademis Studentkår \(studentkaren.fi\)](#)

University Chaplains

Mia Pusa and Hanna Jern work as priests for the local congregations and tend to university students. If you want to talk about issues concerning religion or life in general, you can always contact them.

Mia (040 341 7296, mia.pusa@evl.fi) visits the Student Union office in Åbo (Tavastgatan 22, 3rd floor) most weeks and you can meet her there usually on Wednesdays between 1 – 2 p.m. You can also call or email her.

Hanna works in Vasa, and you can reach her at 044 480 8327 or e-mail her on hanna.jern@evl.fi.

Starting Package

A starting package is a box of household items you can borrow for a small fee. The box is returned before leaving Finland. The starting packages are only available for exchange students who are Student Union members. Please note: the starting package service is only available to exchange students, not international degree students.

Åbo

The student unions of the universities of Turku and the Turku University of Applied Science run a starting package storage. For more information, please check the following website: <https://www.tyy.fi/en/students/starting-package-storage> or contact: startingpackage@utu.fi

Vasa

Together with the student union of Novia University of Applied Sciences, ÅAS runs a starting package storage in Academill, Vasa. Please visit ÅAS' website for information on how to obtain your starting package. Note that you need to book an appointment for getting the package and for returning it before leaving Finland.

havtornen@studentkaren.fi

www.studentkaren.fi/en/starting-package/

Students' Rights at ÅAU and in Finland

Our Students' Rights Expert Ms. Petra Lindblad looks after your interests and makes sure that ÅAU follows the correct procedure and regulation in all matters concerning students and education. If you have any questions or feel like you have been mistreated in an academic matter, you can be in contact with her.

Petra is also our contact person regarding questions or problems concerning most matters of everyday life outside academia, such as health care, student accommodations, sports and other services for wellbeing.

The Student Union Buildings

All students and associations at Åbo Akademi University have the right to use the Student Union's buildings. The active student associations often use the buildings for meetings, sauna evenings and small parties.

Service points

When you come to the Student Union Office either in Åbo or Vasa, you will be met by our service experts at the service counters. They take care of everything from validating your student card, selling merchandise, and answering questions. The opening hours can be found on our website, studentkaren.fi/en, and if there are any irregularities we inform through our Instagram account.



Kåren in Åbo

Kåren is not only the shorter Swedish name for the Student Union of Åbo Akademi University, but also the name of the Student Union's own building that is located at Tavastgatan 22. Many student events are organised in the Kåren building, mainly in the ball room. There is also a lunch restaurant called Kårkafé Kåren.

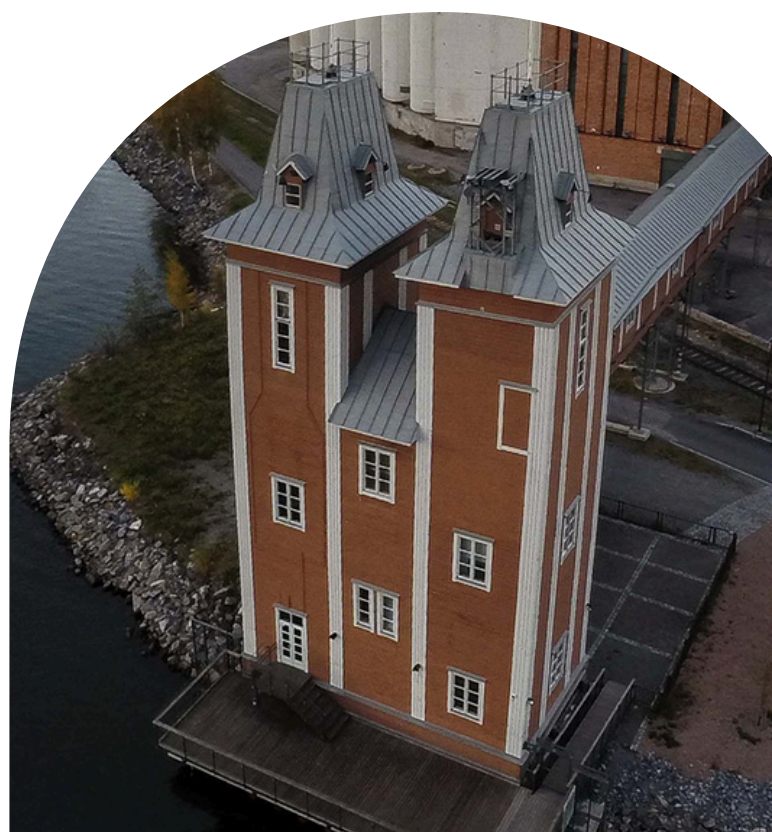
There are different facilities available for students to rent and use, both for larger events and for smaller meetings. The rooms available are the Ball room, Argentinasalen (the Argentina hall), Frimärksrummet (the stamp room), Von Knorringska kabinettet (the Von Knorring room), the dining hall and the pub. Frimärksrummet and Von Knorringska kabinettet are both equipped with modern meeting technology; screens, microphones and speakers. In Von Knorringska there is also a pool table.

We also have available a sauna and "Marlirummet", which is a kitchen and a meeting room for 25 people.

Information on all our different spaces can be found on <https://www.karen.fi/sv/utrymmen/>

Havtornen in Vasa

The students at Åbo Akademi Vasa have a unique Student Union house, Havtornen, "The Sea Towers". Havtornen was officially inaugurated in 2007. Havtornen is a lively meeting point where you can find a meeting room, a living room, a sauna, a kitchen and even a large terrace facing the sea. You can rent Havtornen via <https://www.havtornen.fi/>



Health care

Finnish Student Health Service (FSHS)

The Student Health Care Service (FSHS) provides healthcare for degree students (bachelor's or master's degree) all over Finland. Most appointments are free of charge as you pay a health care fee. Read more about the health care fee here: <https://www.kela.fi/web/en/faq-about-the-healthcare-fee-in-higher-education>.

FSHS provides general health care, dental health care and mental health care. Read more about the services and booking appointments here; <https://www.yths.fi/en/frontpage/>.

Note: There is a penalty fee for uncanceled, unused appointments! If you have comments about the FSHS, always use their feedback form: <https://www.yths.fi/en/feedback/>.

To check and cancel your appointments you can use the Self student online service. Please also see the FSHS website for up-to-date information about the local health centre's contact information and opening hours. You can use any FSHS centre in Finland, should you for example become ill whilst travelling. See: www.fshs.fi.

In emergencies and when FSHS is closed you should contact the municipal health care.

ÅBO: In the evening, nights and weekends contact the joint emergency service, <https://www.vsshp.fi/en/paivystys/Pages/default.aspx>, phone 02 313 8800. Tyks T-Hospital is located on Keramikfabriksgatan 1.

VASA: During evenings, nights and weekends contact Vaasa Central Hospital, Sandviksgatan 2-4 Y-building, phone 06 213 1001. More info at <https://www.vaasa.fi/en/living/health-and-wellbeing/first-aid-and-emergencies/>.

If you have problems getting the right appointment or information, please feel free to contact the Student Union for help.



Health care for exchange students

Exchange students are eligible for municipal health care in Finland. Since a reform a few years ago, exchange students are no longer eligible to use the services of FSHS.

Here you find information for Åbo regarding health care, including dental health and mental health: <https://www.turku.fi/en/healthstations>

In the evening, nights and weekends contact the joint emergency service, <https://www.vsshp.fi/en/paivystys/Pages/default.aspx>, phone 02 313 8800. Tyks T-Hospital is located on Keramikfabriksgatan 1.

Here you find information for Vasa regarding health care, including dental health and mental health: <https://www.vaasa.fi/en/living/health-and-wellbeing/>

During evenings, nights and weekends contact Vaasa Central Hospital, Sandviksgatan 2–4 Y-building, phone 06 213 1001. More info at <https://www.vaasa.fi/en/living/health-and-wellbeing/first-aid-and-emergencies/>

If you have problems getting the right appointment or information, please feel free to contact the Student Union for help!



Let's stay in touch!

We hope you will have a great stay here in Finland. Remember to read the newsletter we at the Student Union send to your @abo.fi-address every week. The newsletter is filled with information about current events and consists mostly of information from the Student Union, the student associations and organisations providing services for students.

You can find information about events on Instagram or Facebook, and our webpage contains lots of information about our services and the student life at ÅAU. Feel free to contact us on social media, phone or email if you want to! You can find all the contact information on our webpage.

On Instagram our account is @AASstudentkar

On Facebook our account is Åbo Akademis Studentkar – ÅAS

Contact us

The Secretary General
gs@studentkaren.fi 02 215 4652

The Service Expert in Åbo
kansli@studentkaren.fi 02 215 4650

The Service Expert in Vasa
havtornen@studentkaren.fi 06 324 7225

The Students' Rights Expert
petra@studentkaren.fi 02 215 4655

The Communications Specialist
kommunikation@studentkaren.fi 02 215 4656

Harassment Contact Persons
trakasseriombud@studentkaren.fi

Chair of the Student Union Council
fo@studentkaren.fi

Chair of the Board
so@studentkaren.fi

Chief Executive Office
vd@studentkaren.fi 045 167 2426

