

Equality plan of the Oulu University of Applied Sciences 2023–2025

– Students

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1 The starting points for equality planning

Equality means non-discrimination between women and men (Act on Equality between Women and Men 609/1986, hereinafter 'the Equality Act'). An amendment to the act (the Act Amending the Act on Equality Between Women and Men 1329/2014) extended the prohibition of discrimination to also include discrimination on grounds of gender identity or gender expression. Gender identity means an individual's own experience of their gender. Gender expression means expressing one's gender through clothing, behaviour, or by other means. (<https://tasa-arvo.fi/sukupuoli-identiteetti>, accessed on 10 August 2023.)

Non-discrimination means that no one may be discriminated against on the basis of age, origin, nationality, language, religion, belief, opinion, political activity, trade union activity, family relationships, state of health, disability, sexual orientation or other personal characteristics. Discrimination is prohibited, regardless of whether it is based on a fact or assumption concerning the person themselves or someone else. (section 8, subsection 1 of the Non-Discrimination Act 1325/2014 (hereinafter referred to as the subsection); <https://yhdenvertaisuus.fi/mita-on-yhdenvertaisuus>, 10 August 2023). When a person is discriminated against on two or more grounds, this is called *multiple discrimination*. Non-discrimination and equality are therefore not separate from each other but may be intertwined in a situation of discrimination.

This equality plan of the Oulu University of Applied Sciences (Oamk) is drawn up on the basis of the legal provisions and other national guidelines presented in this chapter, internal policies of Oamk, issues raised in student feedback, and a general survey of the equality and non-discrimination situation at Oamk. The plan takes into account the achievement of equality in student admissions, the provision of teaching, learning differences and the evaluation of study performance, as well as the prevention of discrimination. This plan has been drawn up specifically for students of Oamk and for all those working with students, and it takes into account the promotion of both equality and non-discrimination.

1.1 Universities of Applied Sciences Act

Under the Universities of Applied Sciences Act, student admission for studies leading to bachelor's and master's degrees are arranged in an admissions procedure carried out jointly between higher education institutions. The student admissions register referred to in the Act on the National Registers of Education Records, Qualifications and Degrees (884/2017) is used in the joint application procedure. Further provisions on the implementation of the joint application procedure and the related processes are issued a government decree (section 28a, subsection 1 of the Universities of Applied Sciences Act 932/2014). Universities of applied sciences decide the admissions criteria. Applicants may be divided into separate categories on the basis of their different educational backgrounds. The admissions criteria applied shall be consistent for all applicants belonging to the same category (section 28, subsection 3 of the Universities of Applied Sciences Act). Under section 28b, subsection 4 of the Universities of Applied Sciences, universities of applied sciences must also reserve reasonable opportunities for admission for those who have completed a higher education degree or accepted a student place. Universities of applied sciences must ensure that no unreasonably large discrepancies exist between the opportunities of individuals belonging to different applicant categories to gain admission in terms of equitable treatment of all applicants. The assessment of reasonability takes into account the ratio of the applicants in different applicant categories to the overall number of applicants; the opportunities to gain

admission through routes other than the joint application procedure; and other equivalent factors. Under section 28b, subsection 1 of the Universities of Applied Sciences Act, in the joint application procedure, a university of applied sciences must reserve some student places leading to a bachelor's degree for applicants who have not previously completed a higher education degree under the Finnish education system and have not accepted a student place leading to a higher education degree or have accepted a student place for studies beginning in spring term 2014 or earlier but have not completed a higher education degree. Universities of applied sciences must also reserve reasonable opportunities for admission for those who have completed a higher education degree or accepted a student place. The common student selection practices have been specified in the recommendation for admissions criteria for universities of applied sciences.

Accessibility is another key element in the realisation of equality. According to section 26, subsection 1 of the Universities of Applied Sciences Act, factors relating to the health and functional capacity of an applicant may not preclude admission. However, a person whose state of health or functional capacity makes them incapable of performing the practical tasks or practical training included in the studies in a manner consistent with the study-related safety requirements referred to in section 33 and where the impediment cannot be removed with reasonable measures may not be admitted as a student. Universities of applied sciences must inform applicants about health-related requirements and other prerequisites related to the studies.

This provision applies to the fields of social and health care and pedagogical studies. Oulu University of Applied Sciences has instructions for the application of the provision (Rector's decision 12 January 2021, section 3, Solutions to deal with unsuitability for studies (SORA). Guidelines for the application of SORA legislation.)

Under section 57, subsection 1 of the Universities of Applied Sciences Act, a person who has applied for entry to a university of applied sciences may lodge a request for an administrative review with an administrative body designated by the university of applied sciences to seek redress for a decision on admission within 14 days from the publication of the admissions results. When publishing the results of admissions, the information must be accompanied by instructions on how the applicant can obtain information about the way in which the admissions criteria were applied in their case and how to request an administrative review. In consequence of such a request for rectification, no one's admissions results may be altered detrimentally. The act also lays down provisions on other practices relating to appeals.

1.2 Equality legislation

The purpose of the Equality Act is to prevent discrimination based on gender and to promote equality between women and men, and for this purpose, to improve the position of women especially in the workplace. Furthermore, the objective of the act is to prevent discrimination based on gender identity or gender expression (section 1 of the Equality Act). It obliges universities of applied sciences to draw up a gender equality plan, which, in compliance with section 5a, subsection 1, must include:

- an assessment of the gender equality situation within the university of applied sciences
- the necessary measures to promote gender equality
- a review of the extent to which measures previously included in it have been implemented and of the results achieved

The gender equality plan is drawn up annually in cooperation with staff and students. Instead of an annual review, the plan may be drawn up for a maximum of three years at a time (section 5a, of the Equality Act).

According to the Equality Act, special attention must be given to student selections, the organisation of teaching, learning differences and the evaluation of study performance, and to measures to ensure the prevention and elimination of sexual harassment and gender-based harassment (section 5a, subsection 3 of the Equality Act). Authorities, education providers and other bodies providing education and training as well as employers are obliged to take pre-emptive action in a purposeful and systematic manner against all discrimination based on gender identity or gender expression (section 6c, subsection 1 of the Equality Act). Education providers must also ensure that girls and boys, as well as women and men have equal opportunities for education, training and professional development, and that teaching, research and instructional material support the attainment of the objectives of the Equality Act (section 5, subsection 1 of the Equality Act).

1.3 Non-discrimination and accessibility legislation

According to section 15, subsection 1 of the Non-Discrimination Act (1325/2014), an authority, education provider, employer or provider of goods and services has to make due and appropriate adjustments necessary in each situation for a person with disabilities to be able, equally with others, to deal with the authorities and gain access to education, work and generally available goods and services, as well as to manage their work tasks and to advance their career.

The purpose of the Non-Discrimination Act is to promote equality and prevent discrimination, as well as to enhance the protection provided by law to those who have been discriminated against. Under section 8, subsection 1 of the act, *'No one may be discriminated against on the basis of age, origin, nationality, language, religion, belief, opinion, political activity, trade union activity, family relationships, state of health, disability, sexual orientation or other personal characteristics. Discrimination is prohibited, regardless of whether it is based on a fact or assumption concerning the person themselves or someone else. In addition to direct and indirect discrimination, harassment, denial of reasonable accommodation, as well as an instruction or order to discriminate constitute discrimination as referred to in the Act.'* Under section 10 of the Non-Discrimination Act, discrimination is direct if a person, on grounds of their personal characteristics, is treated less favourably than another person was treated, is treated or would be treated in a comparable situation. Under section 13 of the Non-Discrimination Act, discrimination is indirect if an apparently equal rule, criterion or practice puts a person at a disadvantage compared with others on the grounds of personal characteristics, unless the rule, criterion or practice has a legitimate aim and the means for achieving the aim are appropriate and necessary.

The education provider and the educational institution maintained by it must evaluate the impact of their operations on different population groups and how equality is realised in their activities, as well as take the necessary measures to promote the realisation of equality. These measures must be effective, expedient and proportionate, taking into account the educational institution's operating environment, resources and other circumstances. The education provider must ensure that the educational institution has a plan for the necessary measures for promotion of equality. The education provider and the educational institution it maintains must reserve an opportunity for pupils and their guardians as well as students or their representatives to be heard on the promotion measures (section 6 of the Non-Discrimination Act).

The Web Accessibility Directive (2016/2102) and the related national legislation require public authorities to make digital services accessible. The Finnish Act on the Provision of Digital Services (306/2019) entered into force on 1 April 2019. The

application of accessibility requirements began in stages on 23 September 2019. Promoting accessibility is an essential part of the digitalisation of public administration services. Accessibility means that websites and mobile applications and their content are such that anyone can use them and understand what they say. In addition to accessibility requirements, the act lays down provisions on the organisation of digital services by public authorities and obliges public administration to provide its customers with the possibility to communicate with the authorities by electronic means. The objective of accessibility legislation is to remove unnecessary barriers to the use of electronic services. The aim is to enable everyone to independently carry out study- or work-related tasks online. Accessibility is an important element of non-discrimination.

2 Report on the state of equality and non-discrimination at Oamk

2.1 Current policies on equality and non-discrimination at Oamk

Oamk participates in the 'Work does not discriminate' campaign of the Confederation of Finnish Industries (EK) (<https://eisyriji.fi/en/>, accessed on 10 August 2023). Oamk is also committed to promoting an open and non-discriminatory working culture for all. In addition, Oamk was involved in the #harassmentfree campaign of the Ministry of Justice. Oamk aspires to be a community with zero tolerance for sexual harassment and a low threshold for seeking help. Oamk has previously drawn up the document [Oulu UAS – Pleasant for Everyone](#), which specifies the good conduct guidelines applied at Oamk. New guidelines for preventing and addressing bullying and inappropriate behaviour ([KELPO](#)) took effect at the beginning of 2023. The new guidelines continue to be based on good conduct and respect for others, but they also provide clearer instructions on how to combat bullying and inappropriate behaviour and how to resolve potential conflict situations.

Oamk continues to develop policies that consider non-discrimination and anti-harassment practices and promote open discussion on these topics with staff and students. Oamk works in cooperation with the Student Union OSAKO, which means that the same themes are also considered from students' perspectives. Oamk is also further developing its anti-harassment policies, and the topic is also being discussed with students. Here too, Oamk is working in cooperation with the Student Union OSAKO, which coordinates harassment contact person activities at Oamk. Oamk will continue to pay attention to a good working climate and the development of an open culture of dialogue. The aim is to have clear and systematic procedures in place throughout the organisation. This ensures equality between staff and students, which in turn promotes the quality culture at Oamk. The involvement of the Oamk staff and students in joint development will continue. (Oamk Executive Quality Review 2022)

Oamk cannot directly influence the number of applicants of different genders or ages, but the aim is to create equal opportunities for all to study regardless of gender or age. Equal treatment of women and men and people of different ages must also be reflected in education and other activities of Oamk. Oamk offers both daytime and multiform studies, as well as alternative routes to becoming a student. Oamk aims to be flexible and to respond to a wide range of life situations. New flexible paths for becoming a student are constantly being developed. The Open University of Applied Sciences supports lifelong learning and professional growth by enabling smooth study paths and learning in different life situations. Cross-studies between

different higher education establishments and the development of joint courses enable students to study all year round (see, e.g., CampusOnline).

According to 'Making Finland a global leader in gender equality: Government action plan for gender equality 2020–2023' (Publications of the Ministry of Social Affairs and Health 2021:10), the Government's goal is to take ambitious action to improve gender equality in different sectors of society and to make Finland a leading country in gender equality. We are already close to the top in global rankings, but there is still a lot to be done. Gender equality must be achieved in all areas of society at all times. If we do not actively promote gender equality, there is a danger of the favourable trend reversing. The action plan for gender equality further states that gender differences are independent of background: any and all girls and women tend to educate themselves better and to do better at their studies than boys and men. Gender segregation in education can also be detected in choices of subject and educational path and in learning outcomes but also in practical teaching, in student assessment and in the gender distribution of school employees and teaching personnel. The 2020 reform of higher education student admissions, which shifted the emphasis from entrance examinations to certificate-based admissions, aims at a more equal end result. How this affects representatives of different genders and their success in securing a right to study is being monitored at the national level.

Oamk has promoted the eradication of gender-based segregation in the ESF-funded projects You can! Girls and Technology; Potential – Promoting gender and culture sensitive career guidance; and Equal Career Paths for Women – Now! Organised jointly with student union OSAKO, the Stand together campaign aims to dismantle social and psychological barriers to equality.

2.2 Equality surveys at Oamk

The previous equality plans for 2016–2019 and 2020–2022 have given greater visibility to equality and non-discrimination at Oamk and made them part of daily operations.

No separate equality questionnaire was conducted at Oamk in 2022, but instead, equality surveys were carried out using different methods. The latest student survey included two questions focusing on equality aspects. In the autumn of 2022, Oamk also organised workshops for both students and staff, which involved thematic discussions aimed at collecting the experiences of students and staff on the realisation of equality and non-discrimination. In addition, a survey that Taloustutkimus, a market research company, conducted for Oamk highlighted equality in a positive light. In the survey, equality emerged as the second most important factor influencing the choice of Oamk as a place of study, and the students' assessment of the realisation of equality was also quite good. More than 400 Oamk students responded to the survey.

In the 2022 student survey, equality and non-discrimination were assessed with two questions (Table 1). The results indicate that most students feel they generally treat one another equally. The staff was also considered to generally treat the students equally, but regarding this question, significantly more students were of the opinion that there was room for development in the staff's activities with regard to the equal treatment of students.

	Strongly disagree 1.....	Somewhat disagree	Somewhat agree	Strongly Agree 4.....	Does not apply/has not applied to me	Average
Students treat each other equally and fairly.	34 1.1%	184 5.9%	935 30.3%	1,786 57.8%	151 4.9%	
	1.0%	5.5%	33.2%	57.6%	2.7%	3.5
The staff treats the students equally and fairly.	77 2.5%	351 11.3%	911 29.5%	1,674 54.2%	77 2.5%	
	2.6%	12.1%	34.1%	47.7%	3.5%	3.4

TABLE 1 – Experience of equal treatment

Strengths and areas for improvement highlighted in the workshops:

While the workshops did not enable all the students to be heard, they did give some insight into the situation and provided more in-depth information than surveys alone. In general, the students' views of the realisation of equality were actually more positive than the staff's. However, the staff had a clear picture of, for example, the challenges that students might face when moving from studies to working life. The challenges related to equality and non-discrimination varied considerably in different fields. One important point that arose concerned fields where either of the genders is clearly in the minority. In such fields, are small groups set up with the goal of achieving mixed-gender groups or are students divided into groups based on their gender? Differences emerged between fields, and at least in some fields, gender-based groups appeared to support students' graduation better than mixed groups. This is obviously something that must be followed.

Equality and non-discrimination were mainly felt to be successfully realised at Oamk. Oamk has a wide range of policies and practices that enable intervention in inappropriate behaviour and promote the equal treatment of students. Students feel that teaching is non-discriminatory and that most staff members treat and interact with students equally.

Unfortunately, in some workplace projects and practical training places, Oamk's students have encountered inappropriate behaviour such as sexual harassment from parties outside Oamk. It is important to ensure that distinct operating models for addressing such situations are in place to ensure that all students have equal access to positive and safe workplace experiences. It is essential for teaching staff to be able to familiarise students with how they should act if they encounter inappropriate treatment during training, for example. On the other hand, the staff itself must have straightforward operating models for handling situations appropriately. In 2022, Oamk, OSAKO and the North Ostrobothnia Hospital District drew up instructions for emergency care students on how to act if they encounter harassment during practical training.

Students brought up situations in which using the name chosen by a transgender or non-binary student has caused challenges for the staff, either because they have declined to use the new name in the first place or because they have used the student's old name in public either intentionally or accidentally. Research indicates that using one's chosen name in social settings reduces transgender and non-binary adolescents' susceptibility to depression, suicidal thoughts and suicide attempts (Russell, Pollitt, Li & Grossman, 2018), so it is important that staff commit to respecting students' autonomy in this regard.

Projects investigating the state of equality and non-discrimination in higher education institutions (such as the VARAVA and NAU development projects) have revealed that certain groups of students experience greater challenges than others in creating workplace connections during their studies and when entering working life after graduation. For example, having a surname that sounds non-Finnish or of a Roma background, as well as being female in male-dominated fields, increase the challenges of creating workplace networks during studies. The workshops highlighted the students' expectations that the teaching staff deal with problems related to equality and non-discrimination in the workplace jointly with the students and, if required, support students in a more challenging position to obtain practical training places, for example.

3 Objectives and planned measures at Oamk

The objective of equality work at Oamk is to:

- promote equal treatment of all students regardless of gender, age, origin, nationality, language, religion, belief or opinion, political or trade union activities, family relationships, health, disability, sexual orientation or other personal characteristics
- prevent discrimination based on gender identity or gender expression
- develop and implement measures to further promote equality
- monitor the implementation of Oamk's equality and non-discrimination plans
- provide guidance on the implementation of and procedures for equality work
- raise awareness of equality work

Oamk's accessibility targets are described in greater detail in the following chapter. The targets are based on the previously mentioned acts and the general state of equality at Oamk.

3.1 Accessibility and web accessibility in the study environment

Accessibility is part of equality. Oamk's accessibility plan includes accessibility policies and goals. It is based on the Non-Discrimination Act (1325/2014) and the obligations to promote the accessibility of higher education as provided for in the Universities of Applied Sciences Act (932/2014). In addition, the implementation plan complies with the objectives for promoting accessibility, inclusion and diversity laid out in the Ministry of Education and Culture's plan 'Towards more accessible higher education and higher education institutions'. (Oamk's accessibility plan 2022)

Today, the term 'accessibility' is used especially when referring to the accessibility and functionality of buildings and other built environments. The environment or a single building is considered accessible when it is functional, safe and comfortable to use by different user groups and when it is easy to access all the premises of the building. The term 'web accessibility', on the other hand, is quite well established in the context of online services. Web accessibility means accessibility in the digital world: making it easy for people to access online services and their content. Web accessibility improves equality in digital society. When web accessibility is fully taken into account, different users will be able to use online services independently. This increases the autonomy and inclusion of people with disabilities in society. (<https://www.webaccessibility.fi/>).

The objective is to create a higher education environment in which each member of the community, irrespective of their personal characteristics, is able to act and participate equally with others. The concept of accessibility includes the idea that the environment should be suitable for the widest range of people. The higher education environment can be divided into a physical, social and psychological dimension. The physical environment refers to buildings, educational materials, teaching methods, and tools. The social environment refers to the knowledge, skills and attitudes of members of the community. The psychological environment relates to valuing diversity as a resource at the level of the entire educational establishment. (Ministry of Education and Culture: Towards more accessible higher education and higher education institutions 2021.)

Accessibility is addressed as part of the work, operations and competence development of teachers and other staff. Education services and campus study counsellors advise, train and encourage members of the higher education community to detect obstacles to studies, while Campus Services, the security manager and campus safety coordinators monitor the implementation of accessibility in terms of facilities and safety. In addition to identifying physical and visible obstacles, teachers and other staff members learn to recognise ways to adapt learning and work to different forms of learning, teaching methods, culture and attitudes.

The following accessibility objectives have been formulated on the basis of a survey carried out by the Ministry of Education and Culture, as well as accessibility requirements.

3.1.1 Accessibility of the physical environment

Objectives and measures

- Promoting accessibility of the built environment
- Integration of mobility aids and equipment into accessibility planning
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Persons with reduced mobility should be taken into account by checking and increasing the number of, for example, the following: handrails and grab handles, wide passageways and accessible routes (thresholds, ramps and lift access, automatic doors, etc.). The check should also cover classrooms. Each campus must also have clear route signs. Lighting, ergonomics and the acoustic environment should also be functional (e.g., installation of audio induction loops). In early 2023, an accessibility survey was carried out at Oamk's Linnanmaa campus, and the results were used to prepare a renovation plan for the premises in the autumn of 2023. As concerns the Kontinkangas campus, accessibility will be taken into account when considering new solutions for facilities, and at the Oulainen campus, accessibility is assessed with everyday observations.

3.1.2 Accessibility of electronic communications

At Oamk, work promoting accessibility requirements began in 2019 and will continue in the period 2023–2025. Promoting accessibility is an essential part of the digitalisation of public administration services. Accessibility means that websites and mobile applications and their content are such that anyone can use them and understand what they say. In addition to accessibility requirements, legislation contains provisions on the organisation of digital services by public authorities and obliges public administration to offer customers the possibility to communicate with the authorities by electronic means.

(<https://www.webaccessibility.fi/requirements-of-the-act-on-the-provision-of-digital-services/>). Information, guides and

instructions directed at students should be clear and available through multiple channels. As communications and information increasingly move online and to digital format, it is important to ensure the accessibility of all electronic channels.

The design and implementation of accessible digital services must take into account the following three areas: technical implementation, ease of use, and clarity and comprehensibility of the content. (<https://www.webaccessibility.fi/accessibility-overview/>).

Accessibility and its achievement should be understood as a key principle that is taken into account in Oamk's everyday practices concerning online publications, from design to publication and maintenance. All new websites (published on or after 23 September 2018) have been legally required to comply with accessibility requirements since 23 September 2019. The transitional period will end on 23 September 2020, after which accessibility legislation will also apply to websites published before 23 September 2019, i.e., most pages of the Oamk website. For mobile services, the time limit is 23 June 2021. According to the legislation, no exact time limit is set for intranets (Heimo and Oiva), but the legislation will start to apply to them when they are next renewed. It should be noted, however, that the law also applies to files shared through websites. For these, the transitional period depends on the deployment time of the file sharing service.

Oamk is in the process of renewing its web pages, and it will eventually be time to renew the staff and student intranets as well. Accessibility is taken into account when acquiring and deploying new systems. YuJa captioning software has been introduced at Oamk to help make videos accessible.

3.1.3 Ensuring accessibility of learning materials

The aim is to make education-related matters such as teaching, learning materials, exercises and learning environments accessible to all Oamk students. Equipment and materials should be available to all in advance or later and possibly in different formats (for listening/reading). The Oamk Library also offers audio books (CELIA Library). Oamk staff should be educated on the nature of accessible online learning materials. Such materials must be available to all students who need them.

- Ensuring good learning opportunities for all kinds of students
- Support and individual arrangements should be provided as appropriate

All kinds of students must be provided with good learning opportunities. This can be achieved, for example, by providing students with flexible access to studies, by ensuring the accessibility of learning materials, and by providing support in accordance with the needs of the student. Since the autumn of 2019, the national digital entrance exam has been used for Finnish-language degree programmes except in the field of culture and arts.

Support measures for entrance exams and course exams may include, for example, additional time, the possibility of using a personal aid and, if necessary, using a computer as a writing tool. Services of assistants, typists and interpreters should also be available where necessary. Alternative methods of performance (e.g., visual and auditory methods) should be increased, such as oral examinations. Different teaching methods should also be used, taking into account the needs of diverse learners. The provision of a peaceful learning environment should also be ensured where possible.

Information on accessibility in student admissions is available on the Oamk website and <https://www.uasinfo.fi/> website (accessed on 10 August 2023). If an applicant needs individual arrangements during the entrance exam on the basis of their state of health or disability, the applicant must complete the application for such individual arrangements. It should also be possible to notify Oamk of the need for individual arrangements in connection with the registration for course exams and during exams. Teachers should also be informed of any specific needs and opportunities to ensure individual arrangements.

The opportunities for taking exams have been expanded with the electronic examination system Exam, introduced at Oamk in 2016. The Exam system allows students to take exams flexibly within the campus opening hours and within the time limits set by teachers for the exams. The system also allows students to take personalised exams tailored to the student's special needs (e.g., due to the need for extra time). Accessibility in exam rooms is taken into account, for example, with height adjustable tables. Special needs should be indicated in connection with the registration for the exam.

3.1.4 Accessibility of the social environment

Objectives and measures

- Diverse learners (i.e., students with dyslexia or other learning difficulties) should be recognised as part of the higher education student community, and the needs for developing existing behavioural models should be identified

All students should be accepted as part of the higher education community and all should have equal opportunities to study. Identifying and paying attention to diverse learners should be a natural part of Oamk's activities. Learning difficulties must not give students a sense of exclusion or experience of discrimination.

- Teaching and counselling must be accessible to all

Teaching and counselling must be equal and accessible to all Oamk students. According to section 4 of the Universities of Applied Sciences Act, the mission of universities of applied sciences is to provide higher education for professional expert tasks and duties based on the requirements of the world of work and its development and on the premises of academic research and academic and artistic education and to support the professional growth of students. Student wellbeing covers the university of applied sciences as a whole and the various actors at Oamk. All Oamk students have the right to guidance and counselling.

At Oamk, student guidance has been implemented through the campus study counsellor (Kampusopo) concept. Study counsellors are responsible for comprehensive counselling, guidance and support services. Their specific area of responsibility is students who need special counselling. Campus study counsellors also organise dyslexia tests and other individual tests. The aim of these activities is to ensure that all students and applicants have access to consistent and high-quality study counselling services. Another aim is to promote the development of the professional skills of students and to ensure high-quality and equal learning conditions for students so that qualifications and studies can be completed within the target time. To support studies, Oamk also organises multidisciplinary study groups (e.g., Valtti) to promote the progress of studies and the wellbeing of students in accordance with the guidance plan. Oamk's campus study counsellor resources were strengthened by the addition of one new campus study counsellor role in 2022. Study counselling plan (Rector's decision 1 October 2021, section 79)

Up to 10–20 per cent of the population has some form of learning disability. This figure includes all levels of dyslexia (mild, moderate and difficult) and other learning difficulties. According to the Diverse Learners' Association, there is so far only limited research available on the use of learning aids in Finland. Assistive devices are important to diverse learners, but still a rather unknown form of support for coping with studies, working life and everyday life. IT aids include various computer programs that convert text into speech, speech synthesisers that read text aloud, scanners, audiobooks, scanning dictionary pens, photographing and recording devices for taking notes, and tablet computers with their many applications. A large number of diverse learners benefit from the use of assistive devices. (<https://www.eoliitto.fi/tietoa-oppimisvaikeuksista/> (in Finnish), accessed on 10 August 2023.)

3.1.5 Supporting teachers in the design of pedagogical solutions promoting accessibility

Teachers need to be supported in identifying special needs, in designing pedagogical solutions that promote accessibility, and in taking into account the needs of different student groups. Provision of information on learning difficulties will be expanded for both students and staff. Teacher tutors will be trained in accordance with the new counselling plan, also taking into account the needs of diverse learners. Information on accessibility and learning difficulties will be incorporated in appropriate study modules. Oamk is also considering other channels for the dissemination and development of viable practices. In addition to personal support, dissemination of information and possible training, e-databases, for example, on how to take account of students' diversity in teaching could also be developed. Support and information must be effective and reach the staff as widely as possible.

3.1.6 Accessibility of the psychological environment

Objectives and measures

- Promotion of the appreciation and acceptance of diversity

Oamk commits to promoting the appreciation and acceptance of diversity among students and staff. One way of doing this is to influence negative attitudes, which are often driven by ignorance. Such issues can be taken into account, for example, in training and dissemination of information. International students must also be welcomed as part of the Oamk community.

The aim is to diversify studying and make it more flexible. Students must have equal opportunities to study in different life situations. Oamk aims to offer different ways of studying and to expand the paths to becoming a student. The process of identifying and recognising acquired competencies (the HOT function) has been developed and updated by a decision of the Vice Rector (Vice Rector 023/2019). Studies have become more personalised, and the individual study path can be different for everyone.

Surveys conducted in various projects (such as NAU and VARAVA) indicate that higher education students are not equally positioned in terms of creating workplace connections and finding employment after graduation. It is necessary to determine and evaluate the situation at Oamk in this respect. For example, project funding could help identify those students who have

equality-related challenges in securing practical training positions, creating workplace networks and finding employment after graduation. The challenges may be related to gender, nationality, religion, language, ethnic background, or sexual orientation, for example. National statistics and surveys can be used to identify these students, and a more detailed survey can be carried out at Oamk. The survey results can serve as the basis for developing measures to help OAMK and its staff support students in a challenging position. In the equality and non-discrimination workshops organised in 2022, measures such as the following were proposed: Providing references for practical training to students struggling with equality problems, discussing problems concerning workplace equality with students and dismantling stereotypes related to professionals in the field during studies. The feasibility of these measures should be piloted at Oamk. Tried and tested methods could be deployed among all employees and especially in the fields of education where these challenges are most common.

3.1.7 Summary

The achievement of the objectives discussed in this plan need to be properly communicated, instructed and implemented as regards both staff and students. Equality issues must be considered in all activities. There is zero tolerance for bullying and harassment. Staff and students need to know about the equality work at Oamk and the operating models in the event of unequal treatment. The work on gender equality will be communicated and implemented through the working groups discussed in section 4.2. It is also important to identify existing practices and to improve the capacity to develop them.

4 Guidelines, working groups and points of contact on gender equality

4.1 Guidelines on equality

The Study Guide contains the key rules, instructions and guidelines related to studies. The student recruitment practices, contents of teaching and teaching arrangements required by the Equality Act as well as other operations supporting equality work are described in more detail in Oamk's Degree Regulations, assessment procedure and curricula. The Degree Regulations (Board of Oamk 2015a, Rector of Oamk 2015a) clarify the duties of Oamk and education provided therein, student selection, enrolment and study rights, organisation of teaching and studies, studying, and approval of completed degrees and certificates and additionally contains certain other regulations. According to the assessment procedure (Rector's decision 20 April 2021, section 35), assessment must be fair, reliable, constructive and encouraging. The objective of identifying and recognising competence is to create a flexible and motivating path for the student and to promote the progress of studies according to the personal study path (PSP) (Vice Rector of Oamk, 18 April 2019, section 23).

By means of personal curricula and student counselling, students are encouraged to engage in diversified and unprejudiced study and career planning. Some of the guidelines also cover the way Oamk operates, as well as public safety and the use of intoxicants. Under section 31 of the Universities of Applied Sciences Act, students have the right to a safe learning environment. The university of applied sciences may adopt its own rules or issue other regulations to promote internal order, unhindered progress in studies and a safe and pleasant university of applied sciences community. The Rules and Regulations of Oamk (Board of Oamk 2021) ensure the general safety and wellbeing of staff and students at Oamk, as well as promote equal treatment. According to the Rules and Regulations, everyone is responsible for exhibiting good behaviour at Oamk. Disturbing, offending, or threatening behaviour is prohibited in all activities. Inappropriate behaviour includes activities indicative of disturbance of general orderliness or of violence, discrimination, or bullying; physical or verbal threatening of others; and presenting the work of someone else as one's own or other forms of cheating related to studies.

The document 'Intervening is caring – Intervening in students' harmful use of intoxicants' (Rector's decision, 21 April 2021, section 36), provides guidelines for situations in which students are suspected of the harmful use of intoxicants. The document 'Solutions to deal with unsuitability for studies (SORA), Guidelines for the application of SORA legislation' (Rector's Decision 12 January 2021, section 3) provides assistance for organising a safe learning environment for students. The renewal of the SORA process will begin at Oamk in the autumn of 2023, the purpose being to make the process clearer than before.

Oamk pays attention to the realisation of equality and non-discriminatory practices in the implementation of teaching and counselling. The Study Guide's section on [accessibility in studies](#) describes various ways to receive support for different learning challenges.

The Oamk Quality Manual covers general principles concerning the quality system. The Quality Manual is available from Heimo under the heading 'Tapa toimia'. As a student, you can influence your studies and participate in the development of Oamk's activities. This is discussed in the Study Guide section on [how to influence your studies](#). The student feedback system consists of interactive course feedback, surveys concerning education and services, as well as activities of the degree programme teams and other working groups. Feedback from students is also collected through a student feedback survey at the graduation stage and through career surveys.

4.2 Working groups dealing with equality

Cases are referred to working groups as appropriate. The first channels for providing student feedback on equality issues can include, for example, degree programme teams and feedback surveys.

Table 2 lists the working groups that plan, implement, monitor, assess and develop equality among students at Oamk. The working groups also have one or more student representatives. OSAKO appoints student representatives to the Oamk Board and to the bodies referred to in chapter 4 of the Universities of Applied Sciences Act. The student representatives may bring, for example, equality matters for discussion at the meetings of working groups dealing with equality.

Working group	Task
Degree programme teams	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Pedagogical development of curricula and teaching, counselling and learning • Monitoring of the quality and performance of degree programmes • Handling of student feedback and arrangements for feedback sessions • Participation in other pedagogical development • Information and reporting
Student wellbeing teams	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Developing the wellbeing of students and the student community through multi-professional cooperation • Promoting physical, psychological and social accessibility of studies in order to achieve equality • Coordinating and planning preventive wellbeing activities on campus • Addressing the concerns of students and student groups and proposing measures to resolve them • Discussing practical instructions to take into account the diversity of students and agreeing on individual arrangements • Informing and, if necessary, organising training on issues concerning student wellbeing • Cooperating with the study psychologist and student health care, campus safety and crisis preparedness teams and student associations • Contributing to the preparation of surveys on student wellbeing, processing the results and preparing possible follow-up measures
Study counsellors' working group	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Developing equality issues, including accessibility
Co-operation working group	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Acts as the statutory equality committee Promotes equality at Oamk

TABLE 2 – Working groups dealing with equality

4.3 Student points of contact in equality matters

Table 3 presents the points of contact in the order in which matters can proceed, as appropriate. However, matters always proceed on a case-by-case basis, and you may contact any of the points of contact below on any matter pertaining to equality. The table below lists the points of contact for Oamk students in matters concerning equality. In addition, the working groups presented above can also serve as a contact point in matters concerning gender equality.

Contact point	Influence on equality issues
Student union OSAKO	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • OSAKO student representatives 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Student representatives appointed by OSAKO ensure that the students' perspective is taken into account in decision-making and handling of equality matters in the working groups
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • OSAKO harassment contact persons 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A student who experiences harassment and/or discrimination can contact a harassment contact person trained by OSAKO

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Student tutors 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Student tutors act as peer tutors for other students and those in need of special support, as well as work with staff responsible for student counselling, thus ensuring that the students' perspective is taken into account in the organisation of studies
Competence area director/head of unit, head of degree programme, teacher, teacher tutor	<p>Student feedback system</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Student feedback for all study modules • Annual student survey <p>Personal or group discussions concerning, for example, prevention, handling and elimination of unequal treatment</p>
<p>Oamk counselling services</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Campus study counsellor/study counsellor • Teacher tutor 	
<p>Academic Affairs (University of Oulu)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • International Services / representatives of international partner universities • Study psychologists • Academic Sports Services • Head of Academic Affairs and other local services team staff 	<p>Personal or group discussions concerning, for example, prevention, handling and elimination of unequal treatment</p>
<p>Services external to Oamk</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Student health care • Educational institution services of parishes 	<p>Personal or group discussions concerning, for example, prevention, handling and elimination of unequal treatment</p>
Board of Examiners	<p>Processing of requests for the rectification of study attainments, including requests for the rectification decisions concerning the recognition of prior studies or knowledge. (Sections 15, 19 and 57 of the University of Applied Sciences Act)</p>
Rector	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Responsible for the implementation, steering and performance guidance of the key tasks set out in the Oamk strategy • Processes any requests for rectification submitted by applicants and requests for rectification concerning a decision revoking the right to study • If required, decides on any warning given to the student.
Board of Directors of the University of Applied Sciences	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Decides on the key targets, strategy and principles of governance regarding the operations and finances of the university of applied sciences • Adopts the Rules of Procedure and other relevant provisions on general organisation and operation of the university of applied sciences, and determines the operating structure of the university of applied sciences • Decides on the number of students to be selected for the university of applied sciences • If required, decides on the temporary expulsion of the student,

Table 3 – Students' points of contact in equality matters.

5 Monitoring and assessment of equality work at Oamk

The measures set out in the previous equality plan have been well implemented and are still partially applied. Equality work is communicated through multiple channels. The equality plan will also be translated into English, as will any bulletins, materials and documents concerning equality work. The implementation of equality work will be monitored and evaluated annually in the working groups presented above. Any equality issues raised will be dealt with on a case-by-case basis in the relevant working group and according to the rules of procedure of that working group. Issues can be passed on, for example, through degree programme teams or other working groups and points of contact. Any development needs will be reported to the education steering group. Where necessary, it will take matters forward to the Executive Team of Oamk and updates the equality plan on the basis of identified development needs once every three years. The preparatory work for the updating of the plan is carried out in cooperation with students and staff.

The implementation of equality is also monitored and evaluated through student surveys and student feedback. Oamk organises a student survey for Oamk degree students annually. In order to maintain a good response rate, questions concerning a specific theme are kept short. The feedback given by students is discussed, for example, in the degree programme teams and in the Oamk Executive Team. Students are provided with information on the feedback received and on any measures to be taken on the basis of it, using multiple channels. The implementation of the agreed measures is also monitored.

The objective of the 2022 annual student survey was to determine students' views on how the sense of togetherness, equality and workplace orientation are realised at Oamk, and how students perceive the progress of their studies and how satisfied they are with the provision of their studies. Each spring, the degree programme teams review the survey results, and the areas for development are selected. The implementation of the previous year's development targets is also reviewed in this connection. An Oamk-wide compilation of the degree programmes' development targets is prepared for the education management team. The survey results have also been used, where applicable, for peer learning in the degree programmes. The survey indicated that students were satisfied with their studies, with a rating of 3.2/4 for first-year students, 3.0/4 for students in later years and 3.1/4 for master's students. As concerns later-year students, the differences among degree programmes noted in different areas of satisfaction (teaching, study guidance, practical competence, internationality, employment guidance, competence development and overall studies) were statistically significant. Proposals for development measures related to the provision of teaching (distance, in-person and hybrid teaching) were made in more than half the degree programmes. This area is clearly a focus of attention. Measures focused on study guidance were the second largest group.

Student feedback is collected from all courses with the Spark system, which is integrated into Peppi. The feedback form enables students to assess the development of their competence and provides teachers with feedback on the course content and implementation. The feedback is also used in the development of the study modules. Teachers discuss the feedback together with students, and feedback is also discussed in development discussions with the supervisors. Course feedback is also used in peer learning in the degree programmes.

The possibilities for students to influence their personal studies are quite good at Oamk, but not all students have sufficient knowledge about the feedback channels available. The topic has been promoted in several ways in recent years; for example,

concrete examples of development activities carried out on the basis of student feedback have been broadcasted on the campus info screens and published on the student intranet Oiva, as well as in the TUUDO mobile application. Communicating about the effectiveness of feedback motivates students to respond to surveys.

At the Hurmos event related to the opening of the academic year, the Quality and Sustainability working group presented students' influencing opportunities and collected feedback from students

For the past three years, a stand informing students about their opportunities to influence matters has been set up in connection with the opening of the academic year. In 2022, the stand was set up in connection with Hurmos, the opening event. There, students were asked how they thought they could best influence studies (Figure 1). Similar surveys will be conducted annually in connection with various events.

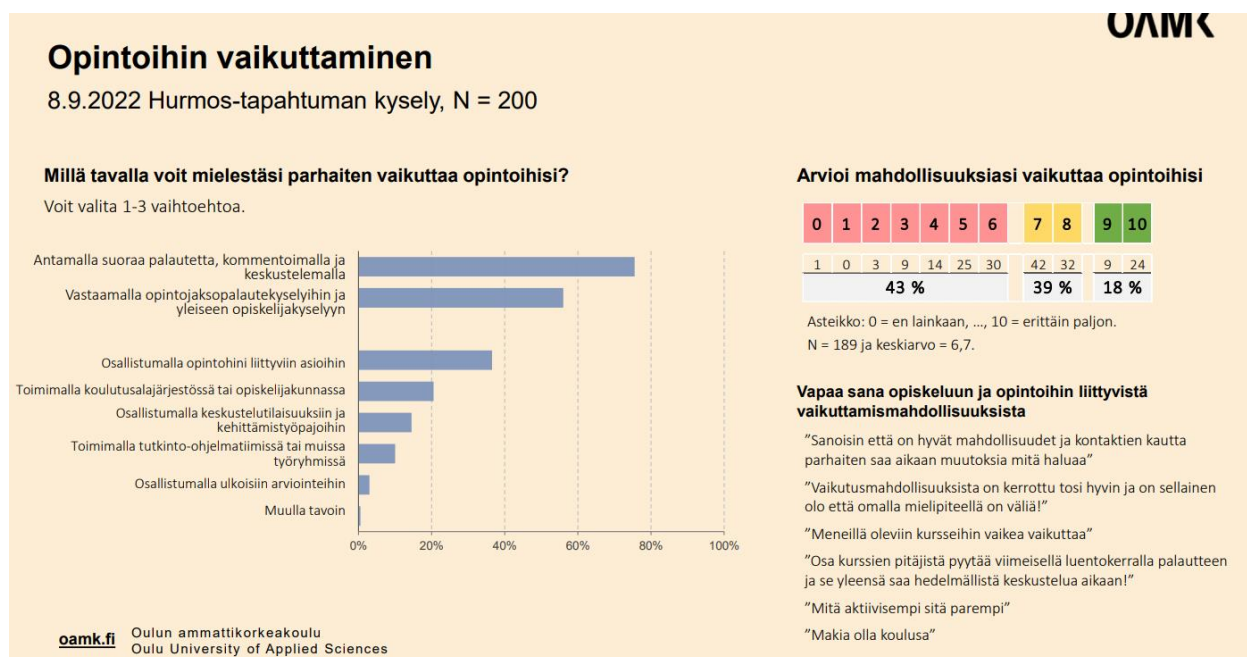


Figure 1 – Influencing studies

This plan has been prepared in cooperation with Student Services, the Student Union OSAKO and study counsellors during the academic year 2022–2023. The above parties have been asked to comment on the plan at the various stages of drafting. The plan has also been discussed in bilateral meetings, in the study counsellors' working group, in the Student Services management team, and in the OSAKO working groups. The plan aims to raise awareness, for example, of the prohibition of discrimination and of the points of contact in the event of discrimination. It also presents new perspectives, objectives and development targets for the promotion of equality. The next plan will discuss the achievement of the objectives set here.

References

Legislation:

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Act on the Provision of Digital Services (306/2019)
Act on Equality between Women and Men (609/1986)
Act amending the Act on Equality between Women and Men (1329/2014)
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Web Accessibility Directive. Directive (EU) 2016/2102 of the European Parliament and of the Council on the accessibility of the websites and mobile applications of public sector bodies.
Non-discrimination Act (1325/2014)

Oamk's own documents:

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