

Information for REPLAY – Aalto 2026



Photo: Unto Rautio, Aalto University 2018

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Academic information

Welcome to Aalto University, a vibrant and dynamic educational institution renowned for its excellence in both academics and innovation. With six schools serving nearly 12,000 students and employing 4,200 dedicated staff members—close to 400 of whom are professors—Aalto University is a thriving international community. Our diverse faculty includes 37% of academics from outside Finland, emphasizing our global outlook and good academic reputation.

The Aalto School of Arts, Design and Architecture (Aalto ARTS) is a Nordic leader in higher education for design, fashion, games, media, architecture, film, and art. We are committed to creating better living environments and driving global change through art. Our unique approach incorporates practical projects that equip students to become innovative global citizens capable of addressing societal challenges and expanding the role of design.

REPLAY - The European Game Design Masters is a joint degree programme between Aalto ARTS (Finland), Lusófona University (Portugal) and LUCA (Belgium).

[Read general information about REPLAY at Aalto](#)
[Aalto's International student guide](#)

Study expenses

Students are required to enroll as attending at Aalto University and pay **the AYY (Aalto University Student Union) -membership fee**. The fee in 2026 is around EUR 33 for a term and EUR 65 for an academic year. Being a part of the AYY allows you to join student associations and get student

discounts. Please find more information [here](#). You will receive instructions regarding how to enroll as attending and pay the AYY membership fee prior to the start of your semester at Aalto university.

In addition to the AYY fee, students will also need to pay the **KELA health care** fee described below in the healthcare section.

Information system for course registration and organization of studies: Sisu

[Sisu](#) is a tool that students, teachers and members of Learning Services staff in various roles can use for handling all aspects of study planning and scheduling as well as credit entry.

Functionalities of Sisu include personal study plans (HOPS), follow-up and development of studies based on personal study plan data, basic register for student information, registration for courses and examinations, and online services for students, such as requests for graduation and applications for a credit transfer for studies completed elsewhere.

Campus services

Cafeterias on campus

There are several student cafeterias around the Aalto University campus that offer affordable and nutritious meals. By presenting a student ID card, such as the Frank digital student card app (which you can download after enrolling as attending and joining the AYY), **students can enjoy lunch daily for just 3.10€**.

Other services

Aalto University has a vibrant student culture, with the student union (AYY) organizing a wide range of events, traditions, and competitions.

[Unisport - Sport services](#) provides gym and sports facilities for students, including fitness centres and group exercise classes. See [The prices for gym and sport classes](#).

Orientation and start of studies

The orientation for REPLAY students in 2026 will likely be arranged at the end of August. **Attending orientation is mandatory**, and students should ensure they arrive by the start of orientation. The orientation schedule will be sent well in advance, allowing time for preparation. Additionally, a pre-arrival online session will be organized during the spring semester 2026. You will receive information about this session by email.

Visa requirements

For EU-citizens:

1. Registration of the right of residence of a citizen of the European Union (after arriving in Finland)

You need to apply for the registration of your right of residence with this application if you are a citizen of the European Union, Liechtenstein or Switzerland and you will be staying in Finland for over three months without interruption. You can only apply for the registration when you have moved to Finland.

More information at: [Registration of right of residence | Maahanmuuttovirasto \(migri.fi\)](#)

For Non-EU-citizens:

1. Mobility Notification to Finland

If you already have a **residence permit for studies granted to you by another EU Member State**, you can study in Finland by submitting a mobility notification. Your residence permit must be valid for the whole period of your stay in Finland. Submitting a mobility notification is possible only if you hold a residence permit for studies issued by an EU Member State other than Denmark or Ireland. If you have a residence permit in Denmark or Ireland, you cannot submit a mobility notification. With a mobility notification, you can study in Finland for up to 360 days. You must submit the mobility notification before travelling to Finland.

- Expected processing time: about 1 month, please check the website below for the most accurate estimation
- Processing fee: 100 €

[Please find further instructions on how to submit a Mobility Notification \(migri.fi\).](#)

2. Residence Permit for Studies in Finland

If you do not have a residence permit for studies issued by an EU member state other than Denmark or Ireland, you must apply for Finnish a residence permit for studies.

Furthermore, if you wish to study at Aalto University for the fourth semester and think that you might want to **stay in Finland after that as well** (i.e. after the REPLAY programme has ended), it is advisable to apply for a Finnish residence permit now already. This will ensure that you can then apply for an **extended Finnish residence permit** if you wish to remain in Finland.

All REPLAY students will receive further information about this during the spring semester prior to the start of their studies at Aalto.

- Expected processing time for an electronic application for a first residence permit: about 1 month, please check the website below for the most accurate estimation
- Electronic application fee for a first permit: 600 €

Please find all information about students' residence permits here: [Residence permit application for studies | Maahanmuuttovirasto](#).

If you have any questions regarding immigration procedures, please contact the Finnish Immigration Service (Migri) directly, as they are the authority in charge of immigration in Finland and will be able to give you the most accurate advice in your specific situation. Their customer guidance services can be found here: [Customer guidance services | Maahanmuuttovirasto \(migri.fi\)](#).

Finnish personal identity code

Finnish ID code = social security number = henkilötunnus

The Finnish ID code / personal identity code is a number sequence with 11 characters, formed on the basis of your date of birth and your gender. You will need to obtain a Finnish personal identity code as it is needed, for example, for FSHS student healthcare services.

Some may receive a Finnish ID code with Finnish residence permit and EU-citizens can apply for it when they register the EU-citizens right to reside in Finland. Otherwise, you will have to apply for it separately. Applying is free of charge.

When you obtain the Finnish personal identity code, please visit [the Starting Point](#) with the official documentation, so it can be recorded in SisU.

Healthcare: YTHS / FSHS

All Finnish degree students are required to pay the **KELA student healthcare fee**, which is EUR 35.35 per term (2026). The healthcare fee must be paid separately for each term. REPLAY students have to pay the fee for each semester you are enrolled at Aalto University, so both for the autumn term 2026 and the spring term 2027. Kela does not send a bill for the fee, so students must make sure to pay it on their own initiative. You will also be reminded about it. Please find the instructions here: [Healthcare fee for students in higher education | Our Services | Kela](#).

As a degree student in Finland you have access to [Finnish Student Health Services \(FSHS/YTHS\)](#). All REPLAY students have to pay the fee even though you would not use the FSHS services, and even though you have private health insurance as well.

Exception: If you have social security coverage from another EU/EEA country, Switzerland, Great Britain or Northern Ireland, you do **not** have to pay the healthcare fee. Despite not paying the fee, you can still use the FSHS's services. You will however have to send a picture of your valid European Health Insurance Card (EHIC) or Global Health Insurance Card (GHIC) to Kela. Please read the information at the end of this page thoroughly: [Kela: The student healthcare fee.](#)

Wellbeing resources for students

[The Starting Point of Wellbeing](#) offers students easy access to counselling and advice on matters of well-being and study ability. The services available to you include drop-in (no reservation) advising/counselling sessions, peer support groups, and online materials. You can also make an appointment to receive individual counselling.

The Starting Point of Wellbeing also organizes [Beat the Blues! -events for international students.](#)

[Study skills](#) offers online materials on study techniques and time-management.

Housing

Aalto University campus is situated in the city of Espoo, Otaniemi area, [see Aalto University Campus.](#) The Helsinki metropolitan area has efficient public transport connections, including metro and bus services, which make commuting from other areas convenient.

All students are responsible for arranging their own accommodation. Aalto University does not itself own any student dormitories nor has housing services to offer. The main student housing providers for Aalto University students are the [Foundation for Student Housing in the Helsinki Region Hoas](#) (hoas.fi), and [Aalto University Student Union AYY](#) (ayy.fi).

Aalto University has an agreement with HOAS for providing a number of furnished rooms for incoming exchange students. As a REPLAY student you can apply for the HOAS furnished apartments through the exchange student quota, even though you are a degree student. The HOAS housing options for exchange students can be found [here](#). The HOAS housing application period starts on 1 April 2026, and all REPLAY students will be emailed the application instructions prior to the start.

HOAS also offers housing for degree students through a separate application, but these apartments are unfurnished. Please contact HOAS directly should you have any questions regarding the application for them.

You can also apply for unfurnished apartments owned by Aalto's Student Union, AYY. You need your official Acceptance Letter from Aalto before applying for housing through AYY. You will receive it during the spring semester 2026.

Please note that due to high demand in autumn, HOAS/AYY cannot provide rooms for everyone. Therefore, we highly recommend all students to look for accommodation early in the private sector as well. Please find more information [here](#).

The average rental levels on private market:

- 20–30m² studio apartment near campuses: starting from €600/month
- room in a shared apartment: €400–700/month (private rentals)
- 40–50m² two-room apartment near campuses: €750–1300/month

In addition to the monthly rent, there are other monthly costs that you might have to pay (e.g. electricity, water, home insurance, internet connection). Note that you are also often required to pay 1-3 months' rent as a deposit.

In case you need to buy furniture, kitchenware and other household items, see: [Living in Finland](#). Please find thorough information regarding international students' housing and tips for looking for accommodation: [Housing for students](#).

Living costs

General living costs

Below is an example of typical monthly expenses. For more information on living expenses, see [Moving to Finland and financial matters](#) and [Cost of living in Finland](#).

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Accommodation	€350 - 550	The rate is for a room in a shared apartment through student housing. Renting from the private market is likely to cost from €600 upwards per month.
Transportation	€45 - 75	The lowest rate is for 30 days of travel for students on public transport. For more information, see Local transportation and travelling in Finland .
Food	€180 - 330	Estimate includes one average priced student meal per weekday (€3,10 per meal in campus restaurants at the lowest) and groceries/other food at €40–60/week.
Phone	€20 - 40	This is an estimated monthly price for a postpaid mobile phone subscription for local calling, texting and data transfer. A pre-paid phone card is often the easiest option.
Internet	€0 - 30	Contracts with the student housing organisations HOAS/MOAS and the student union AYY include an internet connection (covered by the rent).
Sports	€30	This is an average monthly price for UniSport facilities. For further information on sport and exercise, see Support for Studying .
Entertainment	€50+	Going out, eating out and socialising will influence your finances even though many places offer student discounts.
Clothing	€30 - 50	You may need to buy warm clothes, winter shoes etc. for the cold months if you are not used to winter at home.

Travel	€50+	Exploring the regional attractions and other cities is of course voluntary but still worth budgeting for, as it is relatively cheap with student discounts.
Miscellaneous costs	€50 - 100	Your budget should also include funds for spontaneous activities, one-off payments and regular costs like haircuts.
Total	€700 - 1200+	Monthly expenses

Other possible expenses

You might have to purchase furniture, kitchenware and other household items. You can look for second-hand items for example in [Fida](#), [SPR Kontti](#) and [Kierrätyskeskus](#). Popular peer-to-peer online marketplaces include Facebook Marketplace and [Tori.fi](#).

Public transportation

Students can purchase season tickets for Helsinki region public transport (HSL) at a 40% discount. To obtain these discounted tickets, you will receive a personal HSL card application signed by your coordinator at Aalto University upon arrival. You will receive this form during orientation.

The public transportation system in the Helsinki region is divided into four zones: A, B, C, and D. For example, a 30-day student ticket for the AB zone costs approximately EUR 45. Depending on where you live, the cost for a 30-day ticket can be up to EUR 72 per month. Please note that student discounts are not available for single tickets.

For more information, see [Local transportation and travelling in Finland](#) and [HSL.fi-website](#).

From April until the end of October, there is also a comprehensive system of [city bikes](#) (shared-use bicycles that can be borrowed for a fee by anyone). Helsinki and Espoo share the same city-bike system, but Vantaa has its own system, and one cannot mix bikes between the two systems. [HSL](#) provides the registration for city bikes.

For your safety, remember to wear a helmet when riding a bicycle! Also note that a bike must be equipped with white or light-yellow front light and a red rear light when cycling during dark or at dusk or when visibility is otherwise poor. You can find more instructions and traffic rules for cycling on the [Finnish Transport and Communications Agency's website](#).

Living in Finland

From this section, you can find general information about living in Finland. You will be introduced to a few phrases in the Finnish language as well as some recommendations on how to get started with your life here.

Quick facts and fundamentals

1. Finland is a parliamentary republic with a multi-party system. The President (Alexander Stubb in 2026) is the head of state, and the Prime Minister (Petteri Orpo in 2026) is the head of government.
2. Finland has two official languages: Finnish and Swedish.
3. The population of Finland is approximately 5,6 million.
4. Finland declared its independence in 6th of December 1917. The Independence Day is celebrated each year in the Presidential Independence Day reception hosted for approximately 2000 guests at the Presidential Palace. The event is broadcasted in national television, and it is a popular event for Finns to watch.
5. Finland is often incorrectly thought to be part of the Scandinavian Peninsula. Although not geographically part of Scandinavia, Finland is a Nordic country with strong cultural and historical links to Sweden, Norway, Denmark, and Iceland.
6. Finland has been ranked the happiest country in the world for multiple times in a row!

Climate

Finland has four seasons: spring, summer, autumn, and winter. While July is usually the warmest month, with temperatures reaching around 20°C, January can be the coldest, with temperatures dropping occasionally to as low as -20°C.

Layered clothing is customary and practical for Finns, as it effectively retains heat and allows flexibility to adapt to rapidly changing weather conditions. In the winter, it is also essential to cover exposed areas to stay warm. A beanie protects the ears, while a neck warmer shields the neck from cold winds. Gloves are crucial to keep hands from freezing, and appropriate footwear ensures feet stay dry and warm.

Beyond temperatures, daylight varies considerably over the year, which is a unique aspect of Finnish climate. In summer, especially in June and July, the sun hardly sets. In contrast, winter months bring shorter days with much less sunlight. [Here](#) you can find some tips to cope with the darkest time of the year.

The Northern Lights (or *Aurora Borealis*) are a natural phenomenon many hope to witness. While they can sometimes be seen in Southern Finland, they are far more frequent in the northern regions, such as Lapland. The best time to see auroras is between August and April. To improve your chances of seeing Northern Lights, follow the aurora forecast, find a location away from bright lights and ensure the sky is clear.

Cuisine

Typical Finnish dishes

Finnish cuisine embraces simplicity and natural flavors. Filter coffee is available in most supermarkets, kiosks, and cafes and is commonly offered to guests during house visits. Finns are among the highest coffee consumers globally.

Traditional dishes vary from region to region, but some are popular nationwide. You will most likely encounter, and should try, the following foods!

Rye bread (*ruisleipä*): A national treasure available in many varieties. It is typically enjoyed with toppings such as margarine, cheese, ham, and cucumber.

Mämmi: A traditional Easter dessert made from rye flour and malt. Usually served with cream, milk or vanilla sauce.

Karelian pie (*karjalanpiirakka*): Beloved Finnish snack pastries with a thin rye crust filled with creamy rice porridge, often served with egg butter.

Salmon soup (*lohikeitto*): A popular soup made with salmon, potatoes, and dill.

Salt liquorice (*salmiakki*): The black salty candy loved by many Finns. Often also used in ice cream, chocolates, and other treats.

Restaurants, cafes and bars

You may want to enjoy dinner with your friends at a restaurant, study at a cafe, or grab a drink from the local bar. Here are some recommendations for those!

Restaurants

[Restaurant Kuukuu](#) - Museokatu 17, 00100 Helsinki

[Green Hippo](#) – Multiple locations

[Café Bar No 9](#) – Uudenmaankatu 9, 00120 Helsinki

Cafes

[Cafe Regatta](#) - Merikannontie 8, 00260 Helsinki

[Café Engel](#) - Aleksanterinkatu 26, 00170 Helsinki

[Café Ekberg](#) - Bulevardi 9, 00120 Helsinki

Bars

[Siltanen](#) – Hämeentie 13 B, 00530 Helsinki

[Rymy-Eetu](#) – Erottajankatu 15, 00130 Helsinki

[Ateljee Bar](#) – Yrjönkatu 26, 00100 Helsinki

Fun fact: Karaoke is a bit hit in Finland! Do you dare to try?

Nature and outdoor activities

Ice fishing, skating and long weekend walks

Ice activities don't require tons of gear, just the right timing, the right clothing, and the right drinks in hand. Finland is surrounded by thousands of lakes (and the sea) so it's only natural to want to hang out on top of them when they freeze. Ice fishing, skating and long winter walks are 3 classic experiences and with the sea so close to campus, they're easy to execute. Step 1: pick your favourite over-ice activity. Step 2: drink hot beverages while sitting, fishing, skating or walking. It's more about getting out, absorbing nature and shaking off that cabin fever than anything else. Prepare to hit the sauna later to defrost.

Sledding, skiing and cross-country skiing

Other popular winter activities include sledding, skiing, and cross-country skiing. Sledding can be enjoyed anywhere with a hill among friends and is particularly popular during Laskiainen, a pre-Easter celebration known for intense sledding, symbolizing the arrival of spring. This event has also turned into a major student gathering. If you don't have a sled, any object that slides downhill over snow is a Finnish-approved substitute. Cross-country skiing is a fun way to explore Finland's snowy landscapes, offering exercise and a chance to connect with nature. If you prefer downhill skiing, there are a few ski resorts near the university where you can enjoy the beautiful winter scenery.

Cold-water plunge + sauna

This might sound counterintuitive in a country so cold, but this hot/cold combination is strangely refreshing! While the cold-water plunge gains global popularity, it has its roots in Finland - a country surrounded by water. Recent studies have shown that cold exposure can help with muscle soreness and energy levels. Maybe even your research focus, too! A sauna is a wooden structure where you sit on benches and throw water onto hot rocks. Steam and heat surround you while melting your worries away. There are approximately 3.3 million saunas in Finland, so there's almost no excuse to not hit the steam! Student housing is a good place to start the sauna search.

Starter series: first, sauna. Second, cold-water plunge. Repeat. Nothing comes with more bragging rights than swimming in icy water. Finnish-approved substitutes: rolling in snow or a very cold shower.

Lakes and cabin (*mökki*) culture

Lakes and cabin (mökki) culture are essential parts of Finnish life, underscoring the importance of connecting with nature. Finland has thousands of lakes, which makes it a popular destination for lake-centered activities such as swimming, fishing, and rowing during the warmer months. The Finnish mökki (cabin/cottage) represents a retreat from the hustle of everyday life. There are over half a million summer cabins in Finland and many families escape to their cabins during weekends and holidays to enjoy simple pleasures like sauna, barbecuing, and spending time outdoors. Cabins are typically situated by lakes, which provide idyllic settings for relaxation and reflection. Embracing the cabin culture means embracing slow living, where unwinding and connecting with nature is central. It's a perfect way to experience the Finnish appreciation for quiet solitude and the beauty of the natural environment.

National parks and outdoor areas

Finland is home to numerous national parks, offering perfect spots for outdoor activities. These parks are free to access, allowing everyone to enjoy the natural beauty. Near Helsinki, you can visit Nuuksio National Park in Espoo, which provides trails and beautiful scenery ideal for hiking. The capital area also includes Keskuspuisto, the largest forest in Helsinki, and Mustikkamaa, offering beautiful settings for walks, relaxation and swimming. These are just a few examples, as there are many more outdoor spaces to explore. In the summer, you can visit the beautiful islands in Helsinki, such as Vallisaari and Pihlajasaari, among many others. Most ferries depart from Market Square or Merisatama and sometimes offer student discounts for tickets. Don't also forget to explore the idyllic surroundings of Aalto University, where you can enjoy the natural landscape right on campus. Whether you're hiking, picnicking, or simply enjoying fresh air, Finland's outdoor areas are a wonderful way to connect with nature.

Finnish culture in short

Traditions and events

Apart from the sauna culture, which is central to Finnish way of living, Finns celebrate a few events that are not so well-known elsewhere.

Vappu (First of May) is a lively day that marks spring's arrival. It's important for students, who wear their high school graduate caps and go outside to celebrate. During vappu, the streets are full of parades, outdoor parties, and joyful crowds.

In June, **Juhannus** (Midsummer) is celebrated enjoying bonfires, barbeques, and the endless summer daylight with family and friends. Typically, people leave from the cities to their summer cabins (mökki) to enjoy juhannus in the nature.

Also, in Finland, Valentine's Day is celebrated as **Friend's Day**, when not only romantic partners are honored but also friends, family, and colleagues.

Social norms

Finnish society values equality and operates with a flat hierarchy. This is also noticeable in the higher education environment, where open dialogue is encouraged and it's common for students to address teachers by their first name.

Punctuality is valued, and being on time is common and respected. This is reflected also in public transportation, which is often reliable and timely.

Privacy is important to Finns, who might come off as reserved. Direct and straightforward communication is often preferred over small talk.

Environmentally friendly practices are deeply rooted in Finland. Recycling is common, and it's typical to recycle bottles that hold a deposit, which can be returned to supermarket recycling points.

Traveling in Finland

Finland has a nationwide network of train and bus services. The trains and buses are clean and modern. Most of the service providers offer student discounts of up to 50 %, but there are also special offers for early bookers, which can be even cheaper than the student price.

Bus

The long-distance bus network in Finland is one of the most extensive in Europe and the buses are modern and comfortable. With a valid student card, you can get a student discount for bus tickets. When purchasing and using student tickets, you must show your valid student card (the receipt of a paid student union fee is not accepted).

[Onnibus](#), [Matkahuolto](#) and more recently, [Flixbus](#), are three of the biggest long-distance bus companies in Finland. Onnibus is a cheap option for specific routes.

Train

[Finland's railway service](#) (commonly called 'VR') grants discounts on train tickets for students who have an official student card. This applies to doctoral students as well. When purchasing and using the ticket, you must always be prepared to show your official student card (the receipt of a paid student union fee is not accepted).

For timetables, route information and bookings, see the [VR website](#).

Travelling to neighbouring countries

Finland's northern location next to Sweden, Norway and Estonia offers excellent and exciting travel opportunities. There are good flight connections to all these neighbouring countries, and daily ferry connections to Sweden and Estonia.

Remember to check about travel visas and other possible permit requirements before travelling.

Travelling to Russia from Finland is not possible at the moment.

Driving

For information on the validity of foreign driving licences in Finland, please see Finnish Transport and Communications Agency Traficom's website [Ajokortti-info.fi](#).

In Finland, you drive on the right side and overtake (pass) on the left. The main roads are in good condition throughout the year and they are free of charge (no tolls). Headlights are used even during the day. Wearing seatbelts is compulsory, both in the front and back seat.

Drinking and driving: Note that driving under the influence of alcohol is strictly forbidden. The maximum permitted blood alcohol level is 0.05%. Breaking this law nearly always results in a penalty in the form of a fine or imprisonment.

Mobile phones and driving: If a mobile phone is used when driving, the use of a hands-free device is obligatory.

Destinations

Lapland is a top tourist region in Finland that captivates international visitors and is definitely worth visiting. Many travelers visit the Santa Claus Village, meet reindeer, enjoy dog sledding adventures, and ski in the breathtaking northern landscapes. While trips to Lapland can be costly, consider checking out group travel options organized by [ESN](#), the associations of [Aalto University Student Union](#) or gather a group to reduce expenses.

Closer to the capital region, there are also numerous beautiful destinations for visiting without extensive travel. Porvoo is an idyllic town known for its charming historic wooden architecture and charming streets. Hanko is a beloved summer retreat for many Finns, with beautiful beaches and vibrant seaside life. Turku, Finland's former capital, is rich with history and offers a lively cultural scene with its mix of medieval landmarks and modern attractions.

Useful Finnish phrases

Although many Finns, especially in the capital area, speak English well, knowing a few Finnish phrases is beneficial for daily interactions. Let's get started!

Hello – Moi/Hei

How are you? – Mitä kuuluu?

Nice to meet you – Kiva tavata

Bye – Moi moi/ Hei hei

I don't speak Finnish – En puhu suomea

Do you speak English? – Puhutko englantia?

I'm a student – Olen opiskelija

Thank you – Kiitos

You're welcome – Ole hyvä

Excuse me/Sorry – Anteeksi

Yes – Kyllä

No – Ei

One, two, three... – Yksi, kaksi, kolme..

Other useful links:

More information about Finnish climate, customs and life at: [Living in Finland](#) and [Settling in Finland](#).

Other sites that might be useful:

[Welcome to Aalto University](#)

[International House Helsinki](#)

[Your Guide to Helsinki](#)

[City of Espoo](#)

[This is Finland](#)
