
Pre-departure orientation for exchange students AY 2026-27

Part 1
30.3.2026



Today's Programme - Finnish

How to prepare for your exchange

- Stay healthy abroad (FSHS Otaniemi)
- Before the exchange – part I
 - Official matters
 - Travel documents
 - Stay healthy abroad (FSHS Otaniemi)
 - Insurances
 - Safety and crisis situations
 - Accommodation
 - Scholarships and taxation
- Short break
- During & at the end of your exchange
- Country groups

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Today's Programme - English

How to prepare for your exchange

- Before the exchange – part I
 - Official matters
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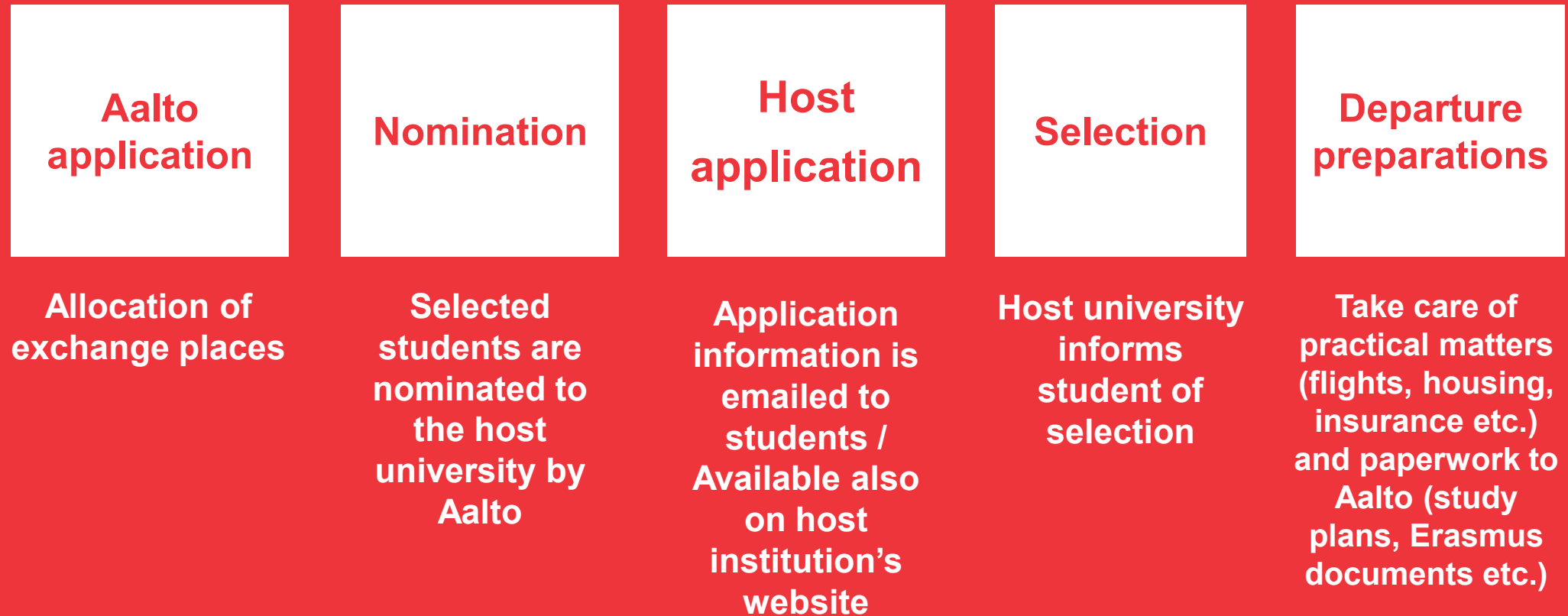
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Before the exchange

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What happens after you are selected for exchange by Aalto?



Official matters I

- Keep your contact information in Sisu updated
 - Address, e-mail & phone number
- Register as an **attending (läsnäoleva)** student at Aalto for the duration of your exchange
- Apply for the student financial aid from Kela!
 - <https://www.kela.fi/financial-aid-for-students-if-you-study-abroad>
- Inform Digital and Population Data Services Agency (Digi-ja väestötietovirasto) about your temporary move abroad
 - <https://www.posti.fi/en/moving/change-address>
- (TECH) Let us know if you change your Aalto school



Official matters II

- Check that you have all documents required your host university & some extra passport-size photos.
- Scan & save important documents (copy of passport, visa, insurance certificate, admission letter, approved study plan/learning agreement etc.) e.g. in your e-mail.
- Prepare an open mandate (valtakirja) e.g. for your parents, so that they can contact authorities in Finland on your behalf, if needed.
- Take the host university admission letter printed with you to the destination.



Visa / residence permit I

- Apply for visa/residence permit, if needed, once you receive the official acceptance letter & other possible necessary documents from the host university.
- Host university usually gives instructions about residence permits/visas, follow them carefully!
- More information from host country's embassy/consulate/immigration official's website.
- Often your passport needs to be valid for 6 months *after your exchange has ended*.



Visa / residence permit II

- **Check needed documents from the host country's embassy:**
 - Registering the EU citizenship in another EU country
 - Visa (single entry / multiple entry, student visa)
 - Residence permit
- **It depends on the destination country, which appendices you need for the visa application**
 - Host university's official admission letter
 - Statement of funds: certificate of student financial aid from Kela + Aalto's scholarship letter + statement from the bank, if needed
 - Health certificate
(the host university will inform you if this is needed)
 - Passport-size photos



Travel arrangements

- We recommend to wait for the host university's admission letter before booking flights etc. (especially ARTS)
- Consider carefully the timing of making your travel arrangements & other payments. Make sure you have a sufficient cancellation cover, in order to avoid extra costs.
- Check if Covid-19 or other health related documents are required (eg. your vaccination certificate)
- Check tips from previous exchange students' travel reports from the Destination Database.



Safety

Insurances I

- Arranging the insurances is your own responsibility!
- In some insurance companies, possible to combine the travel insurance with your home insurance.
- Ask for an insurance certificate in English from your insurance company.
- Some host universities have their own mandatory insurances (especially AUS, USA) – check what they cover and what you might need in addition to the university's own insurance. These insurances may be costly.
- If your exchange is later cancelled due to a pandemic/other crisis, Aalto will not provide financial support for travelling, living costs or for costs related to organising the moving of any property.
- European Health Insurance Card (EHIC) is recommended for EU countries, but only EHIC is not enough > insurance recommended

Insurances II

- Aalto University's statutory insurance for students
https://www.aalto.fi/en/support-for-studying/statutory-insurance-for-students?check_logged_in=1
 - The study-related accident insurance covers accidents during studies or a work placement abroad, provided that the studies or work placement is part of the curriculum of the student in the Finnish educational establishment.
 - does not cover accidents sustained for instance, during lectures or otherwise on the university premises, but only those sustained during practical assignments (e.g. studios, workshops, exercises in laboratories or field practice).
- Students travelling abroad are recommended to take out personal travel insurance to complement the statutory insurance to cover illness during travel or trip interruption or cancellation!

Exchange and safety I

- Visit the **Ministry for Foreign Affairs of Finland** website for current travel information and location-specific travel bulletins (**matkustustiedote**).
- Finnish citizens and foreigners who have a residence permit in Finland: **make a travel notification! (matkustusilmoitus.fi)**. It allows the Ministry or Embassy to get in contact with you in the case of a crisis or an emergency.
- Consider getting another credit card, and possible back-up phone.

Exchange and safety II

- Before you are familiar with your exchange city, please remember to be extra cautious.
- Familiarize yourself with the city and recognize unsafe areas. Be wary when going out after dark.
- Familiarize yourself with local/ university safety guidelines for e.g. natural disasters
- Take care of your things and ID -> remember your insurance. Pickpockets are everywhere.
- Get to know the traffic rules and laws of your exchange country. Find out how they deal with public intoxication, alcohol, drugs, etc.
- Follow the political situation. Don't participate in any demonstrations.
- Knowing even some local language phrases will help you
- If you travel during your exchange, make sure someone (for example another exchange student) knows where you are and when you are coming back.
- Find out where the nearest Embassy of Finland is and follow them on social media.

Exchange and safety III - ICE

- If something serious happens in your exchange destination:
 - Follow the instructions of local officials and your host university.
 - Contact the Finnish embassy or consulate.
 - Contact your Aalto School exchange coordinator as soon as possible. You can also ask your friend or family member to inform us.
- Save your loved ones' phone number on your phone to your **In case of emergency (ICE) information**.
A person assisting you in case of an emergency will have access to it even when your phone is locked. <https://yle.fi/aihe/a/20-10004939> (In Finnish)
- Aalto will contact you if there is a crisis in your exchange destination.
- Find out the emergency number (112 in whole Europe)

IT security

Information Security training for students in MyCourses:
<https://www.aalto.fi/en/information-security-management-systems/students-information-security-training>

- Check that all your programmes (including anti-malware, apps etc) are up to date
- Make backups from important files before you travel (to e.g. an external drive that you will not take with you)
- Take only necessary devices with you
- Be careful where you keep your devices, do not leave them unattended in public spaces
- Encrypt the device's hard disk/mass storage in case the device is stolen
- Remember that you can use the Aalto VPN <https://www.aalto.fi/en/services/establishing-a-remote-connection-vpn-to-an-aalto-network>
 - In certain countries the authorities can block, monitor and record data traffic
- You can also use the Virtual Desktop (VDI): <https://www.aalto.fi/en/services/vdiaaltofi-how-to-use-aalto-virtual-desktop-infrastructure>

Area-specific safety notes

North America and Oceania

USA

- Updated travel information: A valid ESTA or visa does not necessarily entitle you to enter the United States
- Safety around town and on campus. Be aware of gun laws and sheer amount of guns
- Campus safety issues such as sex crimes on campus party nights; know your alcohol limits
- Note that abortions and sexual health care may not be available
- Social and drug related problems, large amount of homeless people, low vaccination coverage in some states
- Public transport limited or non-existent
- Without proper insurance, one night in hospital e.g. \$10 000

Canada

- Despite similarities with Finland, there might still be issues of city and campus safety

Australia and New Zealand

- Be mindful of exotic fauna and extreme weather: heatwaves, forest fires, flash floods

Area-specific safety notes

Latin America

- Be aware of unsafe areas
- Learn basic local language skills. It is very helpful if you encounter a challenging situation.
- In some destinations public transportation might not be safe - take a taxi or an uber if it is recommended by locals
- Violent robberies do happen

Area-specific safety notes

Asia

China, Hong Kong, India, Indonesia, Japan, Singapore, South Korea, Taiwan, Thailand

- Natural disasters - Under normal circumstances, the greatest risk is associated with these
- Penalties for violating public order, drunken behavior or anything related to drugs can be more severe than in Finland, also no vape in Singapore.
- Also littering and spitting are prohibited and can be fined in some countries.
- Traffic: use extreme caution and care when walking, driving, or riding a motorcycle
- Air quality is at times remarkably poor in certain areas
- Be wary of anti-espionage laws concerning exchange students in China; your data footprint may be followed, and your data may be collected. (Aalto University staff are prohibited from bringing their personal work computers to China due to security concerns) > Make sure also your employer is aware of your destination country

Accomodation and Funding

Accommodation in Finland

- You can sublet your apartment e.g. to an incoming exchange student.
- Students living in AYY & HOAS can easily sublet their rooms/apartments. Instructions available at:
 - AYY: <https://ayyasunnot.fi/en/for-residents/changes-during-tenancy/>
 - HOAS: <https://www.hoas.fi/en/tenants/living-in-hoas-housing/subleasing/subleasing/>
- Aalto Marketplace / Housing: <https://aalto.sharetribe.com/?category=tila>
- Make sure the person who rents your apartment has a valid insurance!



Accommodation in the host country

- Some universities offer help in finding an accommodation. However, it is always up to the student to find/apply for housing.
- Challenging housing situations in many destinations
→ Check instructions from your host institution, apply as soon as possible
- Pay the deposit in time
- You may need to pay your rent in advance for the whole semester
- You may be asked to sign a fixed-term agreement, find out what your rights as a renter are
- Always ask for a written rental agreement
- Don't sign any agreements before you receive an acceptance letter from your host university!
- **Be aware of housing fraud!**
<https://studentlife.utoronto.ca/task/housing-scams-and-how-to-spot-them/>



Student financial aid for studies abroad

- Students entitled to KELA's student financial aid should be eligible for it also during the exchange.
- Criteria for full-time studying applies also to exchange!
- Fill in the application in Kela's e-service OmaKela for the exchange period once you are accepted by host university
- Aalto exchange grant does not affect income limits.
- If you need a certificate of the financial aid, contact Kela.
- More information: <https://www.kela.fi/financial-aid-for-students-if-you-study-abroad>

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Aalto scholarship for exchange studies

- Has been granted to you already, just submit the 2nd phase/grant form.
- Your school will provide instructions (documentation requirements vary between exchange programmes)
- You must return required documents and your banking information through the online form.
- In general, 1st installment will be paid in August - September (autumn term), in December - January (spring term)
 - Paid only if the student has submitted the needed documents etc. by the deadline.
 - Your school will inform you when approximately the 1st installment will be paid
- Check your e-mails regularly to get all the important information! Follow the instructions you receive from your school (by e-mail)!



Erasmus+ Green Travel Support

- Erasmus+ students can apply for extra support for 'green travel'. I.e. traveling to exchange destination in a more environmentally friendly way (by train, shared ride, bike or bus).
- Paid if majority of the trip is made environmentally friendly.
- More information: <https://www.aalto.fi/en/other-studies/erasmus-scholarships>
- Paid after the exchange
- **Note! Travelling by ferry is not considered green travelling**



Special needs grants

- Available in Erasmus & Nordplus exchange programmes
 - Erasmus Special Needs or Inclusion support
 - Erasmus Fewer Opportunities support
 - Possible to be entitled to both
 - Granted by Finnish National Agency for Education (EDUFI)
- Available if your special needs create additional expenses for your exchange, and you cannot get similar support from elsewhere.
- Available for e.g.,
 - accessible accommodation, assisted mobility
 - study-related special arrangements as learning materials, preparatory visits and personal assistants.
 - Not available for expenses you would also have in Finland.



More info: <https://www.aalto.fi/en/other-studies/accessible-exchange-studies>
& contact your School's Coordinator for exchange

Other grants

- Start applying as soon as possible. Some organisations issue grants also during the exchange, but usually not afterwards.
- The application can usually be supplemented by sending the admission letter afterwards (check this when you apply for the grants)
- Tips:
 - Keep an open mind. It's a good idea also to apply for grants from other organisations than those related to your study field.
 - SYL grants database
 - Study-related organisations
 - AYY
 - Foundations, etc. Tekniikan edistämissäätiö.
 - More information: <https://www.aalto.fi/en/other-studies/funding-for-exchange-studies>
 - Google will help you 😊



Taxation

- www.vero.fi > Individuals > Tax card and tax return > Income > Earned income > Grants
- Taxation of grants: you will have to pay tax, if the total grant income you received from public and private sources in 2025 is more than 26 671.92€ after the deduction of expenses.
- See vero.fi for up-to-date information



During exchange

Course planning

- Erasmus+ Online Learning Agreement (OLA)
 - Concerns only students participating in Erasmus+ exchange
 - Read carefully the OLA instructions sent to you by your school
 - Update your OLA & get all changes approved by Aalto immediately when changes occur!
 - Studies should be of the host institution (not Aalto courses)
- If you have problems in getting the required amount of credits (30 ECTS / 24 ECTS per semester), contact your Aalto Exchange Coordinator immediately
- Keep your Sisu study plan up-to-date
- **The aim is to concentrate on exchange. On the host university studies. On the experience.** So do not study remotely to Aalto at the same time.



New ways to study and learn

- Be prepared that while studying abroad you will face different ways of learning/studying, e.g.
 - memorizing details vs. learning more comprehensive picture
 - different ways for group working
 - oral exams
 - obligatory participation, more school-type
- Retaking exams may not be possible during your exchange period
- One is expected to stay at the host destination until the exams

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As a student of Aalto, you represent the university when abroad

Why is your role important?

- Exchange agreements are based on reciprocity – you were able to go to your destination because someone came to Aalto from that institution.
- Prospective applicants appreciate peer-to-peer conversations – our marketing campaigns can only do so much.

What to say?

- We don't expect you to know everything about Aalto's programmes and application processes.
- Share **your experience!** Talk about your school and programme, about Finland as a study destination, about the vibrant student culture in Otaniemi.
- International cafés, fairs and other presentation opportunities your host university organizes are great places to share your Aalto experience and to connect with local students at the same time.
- If you need help with promotional materials, just ask your exchange coordinator.

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Problem situations

- Don't make haste decisions to interrupt your exchange without contacting your Aalto Exchange Coordinator first
 - Unless you are seriously ill or face other similar situations.
- Keep in mind that your exchange scholarship depends on the duration of your exchange and the required amount of credit points must be completed.
 - If duration & credit points gained are not according to the rules, you might have to return a part or the full scholarship.
- If you think you might not be able to reach the requirements, contact your Aalto exchange coordinator immediately, so that we can help you to solve the situation.
- Starting Point of Wellbeing: self-study/-help material, e.g. for stress management
<https://www.aalto.fi/en/study-at-aalto/starting-point-of-wellbeing>



After the exchange

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All the good things come to an end...

- Close your local rental agreement, mobile connection, and bank account.
- Gather eg. the course syllabus for the credit transfer if needed.
- Get the required certificates and signatures well in advance before your departure.
 - Erasmus exchange students should note that LoC, LA or OLA must be signed by the host university.
- Complete credit transfer as soon as you get the transcript!
- You will get more information from your school, or check Student Guide.



Credits and scholarship

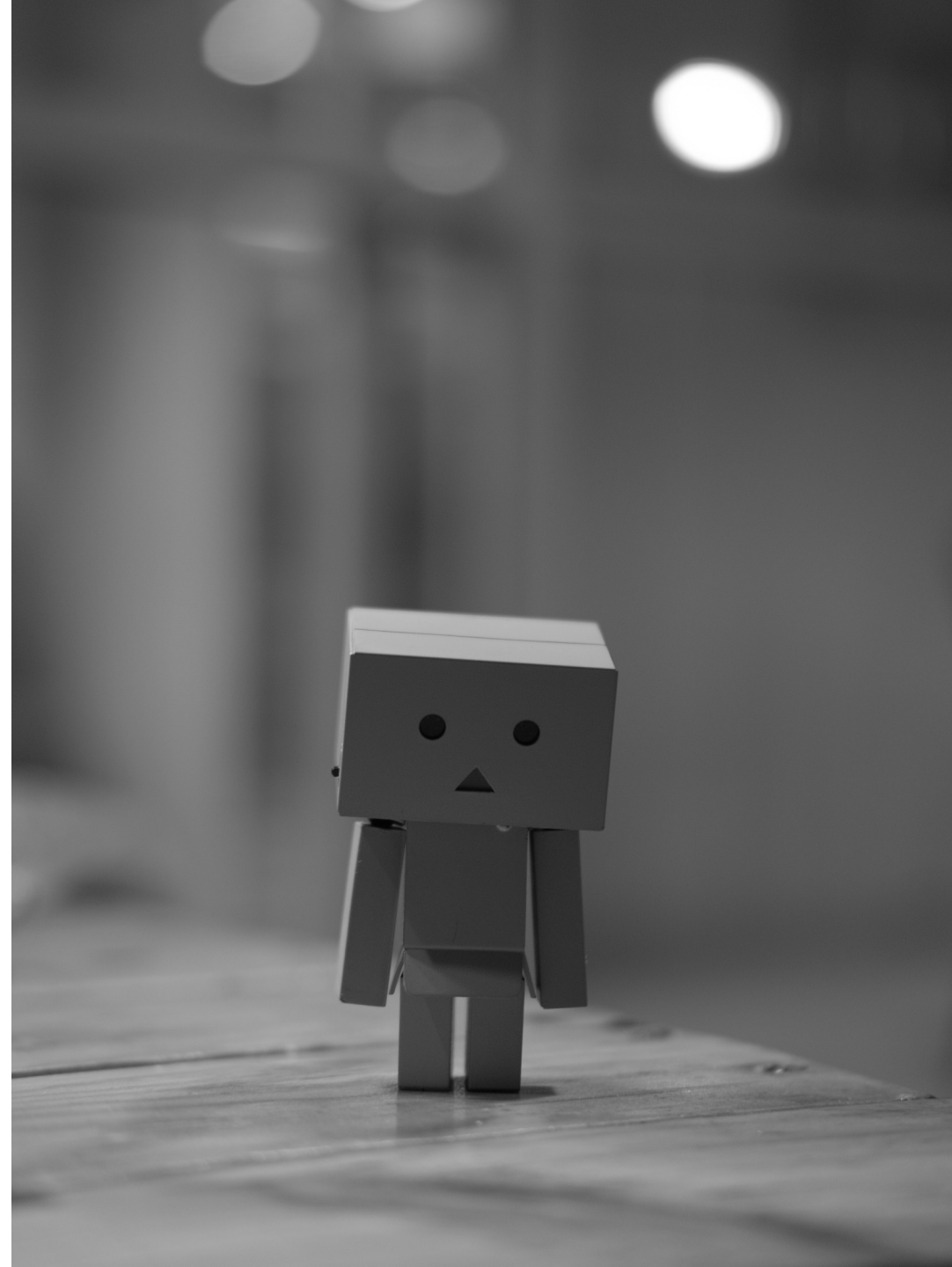
- The aim for studies is 30 ECTS (bachelor's) or 24 ECTS (master's).
- If you do not reach the minimum requirement:
 - the second part of your scholarship is not paid
 - or if you fall significantly below the goal, you may even need to pay back a part of/ the entire scholarship.
- Scholarships are paid twice a month (middle & end of the month) (documents must be returned at least 2-3 weeks prior to the date when you would like to receive the payment).
- **BIZ:** If you will need to supplement the international study minor with Aalto courses, the Aalto courses must be first approved before the second part of your scholarship can be paid.
 - supplementing may slow down the scholarship payment process.

Your whole scholarship is dependent on you fulfilling ALL the requirements – you need to return mandatory documents!



Feelings after the exchange

- **Reverse culture shock**
- can be worse than the culture shock in the beginning.
- Re-entry orientation every autumn/spring



Goals for exchange at Aalto University

Goals of exchange studies at Aalto

- ✓ **Personal growth** – including academic and ethical growth
- ✓ **Developing** intercultural and international **competencies**
- ✓ Being **ready for a career** in the increasingly international working life
- ✓ **Fluency** in a foreign language.



Make it YOUR exchange experience.

It can be completely different but just as good as those of your friends or what you read from exchange reports.

Don't waste time on unnecessary comparisons.

Your exchange, your life, no one else's.

Contact information

ARTS: outgoing-arts@aalto.fi

BIZ: outgoing-biz@aalto.fi

CHEM: outgoing-chem@aalto.fi

ELEC: outgoing-elec@aalto.fi

ENG: outgoing-eng@aalto.fi

SCI: outgoing-sci@aalto.fi

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Departure Orientation Part 2

Time: Wednesday 8 April 2026

at 16:00 - 17:30

Place: <https://aalto.zoom.us/j/65959375402>

**Make the most
out of the exchange
– how to become a master of
intercultural communication
through exchange**



AMERICAN SINGING DINOSAURS



FINNISH SINGING DINOSAURS

— The material of pre-departure orientation will be
— available at

<https://www.aalto.fi/en/other-studies/before-the-exchange>

after the events.



Enjoy
your
exchange!



**NO country
groups for
these today**

***(3 or less
than 3
students for
2026-27)***

Country	Students
Colombia	2
Estonia	1
Greece	1
Hungary	3
Iceland	1
India	1
Indonesia	3
Latvia	1
Lithuania	1
Morocco	1
Slovenia	2
South Africa	1
Türkiye	1

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Country groups today 30.3.

Country	Students
Argentina	14
Australia	20
Austria	50
Belgium	10
Brazil	8
Canada	29
Chile	8
China	59
Czech Republic	14
Denmark	18
France	49
Germany	34
Ireland	9
Italy	60
Japan	53

Country	Students
Korea, Republic of	31
Mexico	18
Netherlands	19
New Zealand	3
Norway	21
Peru	5
Poland	10
Portugal	52
Singapore	94
Spain	46
Sweden	23
Switzerland	38
Taiwan	24
United Kingdom	7
United States	38

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Country / destination groups in Telegram

- During the TECH Exchange Kick off event we collected tips from incoming exchange students regarding their home countries/universities and telegram groups that students have created.
- Groups are available in Presemo:
<https://presemo.aalto.fi/exchanging/>
- You can join the groups even though you weren't able to participate in the event.
- **If you have a Telegram group to share, that is not listed, add it in Presemo.**



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