



Aalto University

Code of Conduct



Aalto University

A portrait of Ilkka Niemelä, a middle-aged man with short brown hair, wearing a dark blue plaid suit jacket, a white shirt, and a blue and white striped tie. He is looking slightly to the right with a gentle smile. The background is blurred, showing what appears to be an outdoor setting with trees and a building.

Introduction

Aalto University is made up of fantastic people with a wide variety of backgrounds, which is an invaluable asset. When Aalto University was formed through the merging of the Helsinki School of Economics, Helsinki University of Technology and Helsinki School of Art and Design in 2010, it was not only a fusion of science, art, technology and business, but also a fusion of several different kinds of operational cultures. In recent years, Aalto has also rapidly internationalised.

Our everyday work is made easier when each and every member of the Aalto community abides by the same rules of play. This is why the Aalto University Code of Conduct was established and approved by the University Board. It is based on Aalto's values and establishes a common operational culture. The Code of Conduct helps us to create a better work environment, protects our reputation and towards our partners, strengthens our image of being a responsible and reliable organisation.

The Code of Conduct applies to every single person at Aalto University: students, employees, members of the Board and companies in which Aalto University has a majority shareholding. Aalto also expects its suppliers and other partners to have a similar code of conduct in effect.

I would like everyone here at Aalto to read and follow the Aalto Code of Conduct, which will help us all in making the right choices. Even though the right choices are not always evident, I challenge Aalto community members to learn together, develop our organisation and engage in constructive discussion on even difficult issues.

Ilkka Niemelä

Table of Contents

Introduction1

Purpose3

Applicability4

Equality, impartiality and mutual respect5

Our Code of Conduct5

Compliance with the law is everyone's responsibility. . . .6

Promoting openness and
responsibility in communication6

Commitment to high quality education and learning7

Good scientific practice is
the foundation of our research7

Sharing research results while respecting
the intellectual property rights of others.7

Taking care of Aalto property8

Respecting privacy and information security8

Working with partners who share our ethical code8

Recognising, disclosing and
avoiding conflicts of interest9

Zero tolerance for corruption and bribery9

Maintaining accurate and
complete financial records10

Ethics and integrity guide our fundraising10

Providing a healthy and safe
environment for working and learning.11

Promoting sustainability in all our activities11

Code implementation at Aalto12

Purpose

Aalto University ("Aalto") is a multidisciplinary community of bold thinkers. Our purpose is to promote free research and academic and artistic education, provide research-based higher education and educate students to serve their countries and humanity. The Aalto community actively collaborates with wider society and with international scientific and artistic communities to advance the impact of our research and artistic activities on society.

The diversity of talent and perspectives at Aalto is one of our greatest assets. At the same time, this diversity creates a need to operate with a shared culture and ethics that enable us to remain as a community with high integrity and morals. Our community culture is based on values that guide our choices and actions.

The purpose of this Code of Conduct ("Code") is to protect and preserve the Aalto community by clarifying what these values require in terms of the way we operate. It is a set of standards that the Aalto community has agreed to adhere to in order to live up to our values, uphold Aalto as a community of high integrity and ethics, and ensure a high international standard of research, education and teaching that conforms with ethical principles and responsible research conduct.

The Code summarises the principles and policies of fair play and integrity that govern our activities and sets out guidelines for the kind of behaviour that we expect of each other.



***“Our values are:
Passion for exploration,
Courage to influence and excel,
Freedom to be creative and critical
Responsibility to accept,
care and inspire
Integrity, openness and equality”***

Applicability

The Code is applicable to all Aalto community members irrespective of their position or role in the organisation, including employees, board members and students as well as employees and directors of subsidiaries in which Aalto owns a majority share or exercises effective control of the entity. Aalto also expects its suppliers and other partners to have a similar code of conduct in effect.

A photograph of two women at what appears to be a conference or event. The woman on the left is looking towards the camera, while the woman on the right is looking down at a tablet device. Both are wearing lanyards with badges. The background is slightly blurred, showing other people and a modern interior setting.

“The Code is applicable to all Aalto community members irrespective of their position or role in the organisation”

Our Code of Conduct

Equality, impartiality and mutual respect

We believe that it is the people who make Aalto: they study to become game changers, they conduct world-class research, provide pioneering education, create trend-setting art, empower collaboration that renews society and they enable academic activities by providing first class support service.

Every member of the Aalto community has the right to be treated with respect regardless of their gender, gender identity or expression thereof, age, ethnic or national origin, nationality, language, religion, beliefs, opinion, political or trade union engagement, family relations, health, disability, sexual orientation, or other personal characteristics.

Our commitment to equality, impartiality and respect for others also means that we behave in a responsible manner and respect the rights of the other members of our community to enjoy a safe and pleasant university environment that allows unhindered progress in study and work. Harassment of any kind will not be tolerated.

In our learning and research environment, within the legislative framework, teachers have the freedom to teach, researchers have the freedom to research and students have the freedom to learn. In our working environment, employees are recruited and promoted solely according to the qualifications and abilities required for the work to be performed. Everyone in the Aalto community is encouraged to develop and enhance their individual skills and capabilities.



“We behave in a responsible manner and respect the rights of the other members of our community”

In activities related to learning or working at Aalto or representing Aalto, the members of the Aalto community agree to:

act honestly and with integrity

respect others regardless of their background

foster open discourse and free exchange of ideas

build mutual trust, and

actively care for the safety and well-being of themselves and others.



“We comply with applicable laws and regulations as well as this Code and other Aalto policies in all of our activities”

Compliance with the law is everyone’s responsibility

As stated in our values, all our activities are guided by integrity and we therefore comply with applicable laws and regulations as well as this Code and other Aalto policies in all of our activities. Aalto offers information and guidance to community members regarding applicable laws, rules and Aalto policies. Each community member is responsible for learning and abiding by these laws, rules and policies as well as any specific rules and policies applicable to their own field of science or work.

Promoting openness and responsibility in communication

We promote openness and foster open academic discourse in our learning and working environment as well as in interactions with our partners, stakeholders and the media.

Our values encourage us to be critical and creative. We have the freedom to think independently and to take the initiative, as this is the cornerstone of academic thinking and civilization as a whole. We recognise and understand that openness and freedom go hand in hand with responsibility.

As employees of Aalto, we also recognise our responsibility to lead at all levels by setting a good example and to uphold the outstanding reputation of Aalto. We exercise good and ethical judgement in any public comment or activity (including on social media), taking into account our commitment to be loyal to Aalto. We understand our duty to be clear about whether we are acting in a personal or professional capacity in all our public activities.



“Aalto is committed to high academic standards, intellectual freedom to teach and learn and a high quality education”

Commitment to high quality education and learning

Aalto reaches towards a culture that encourages continuous learning and creativity and where teaching is pioneering and challenges traditional boundaries. At Aalto, we believe in the power of curiosity and encourage our students to explore the unknown as well as to learn and do things in a whole new way.

Aalto is committed to high academic standards, intellectual freedom to teach and learn and a high quality education. Aalto and its teachers treat students, both academically and personally, in a fair manner. All students, in return, take responsibility for their own learning and development and are committed to act consistently with the requirements set down in this Code and other Aalto policies and rules related to education and learning.

Good scientific practice is the foundation of our research

Research and innovation are fundamental to our success and form the core of our strategy. Our passion for the exploration of scientific breakthroughs and artistic manifestations also comes with responsibility – not only regarding the results, but also the conduct of research and artistic practices.

Compliance with commonly agreed best practices for the responsible conduct of research are non-negotiable and a key foundation for our activities.

Acts of plagiarism, misrepresentation or falsification of data are not acceptable at Aalto. All research at Aalto must be conducted in strict compliance with the applicable policies and procedures of good scientific practice as described in ‘Responsible conduct of research and procedures for handling allegations of misconduct in Finland’, published by the Finnish Advisory Board on Research Integrity.

We also recognise that responsible artistic practice involves many of the same elements as responsible research conduct.

Sharing research results while respecting the intellectual property rights of others

Our vision carries a strong commitment to creating breakthrough discoveries that are deeply integrated with design and business thinking, enabling systemic solutions and accelerating innovation.

We seek to generate and promote new and innovative ideas and concepts, and our community members are encouraged to highlight and promote innovation. Our policy is to publish research results and to advance the use of innovations and other results of our work in order to maximize our societal impact. At the same time, we respect the intellectual property rights of others and the confidentiality of information they own.

We take appropriate action to protect intellectual property in accordance with Aalto procedures and guidelines. Our researchers’ rights to their innovations are safeguarded according to applicable legislation.



“We seek to ensure that we procure goods and services from socially responsible suppliers who are committed to complying with international standards on human rights, labour conditions, anti-corruption and the environment”

Taking care of Aalto property

We respect Aalto property including physical property, financial assets, intellectual property and other protected information.

Aalto assets are primarily intended for teaching, learning, research and artistic activities, as well as for related support functions. The use of assets for any other purposes is subject to separate agreements or instructions. Aalto assets must be appropriately safeguarded against damage and unauthorised use or removal.

Respecting privacy and information security

Information technology systems are an essential component of our operations. Aalto information security rules are designed to protect these systems for the benefit of all users.

As users, we maintain data security in all activities when handling or managing classified information and data, regardless of format, storage method or location.

We use Aalto information technology resources, systems, networks and applications (such as email) for Aalto activities, although Aalto also allows limited use of systems for private purposes.

We respect privacy and are committed to following good personal data processing methods and data protection practices as well as applicable legislation.

Any processing of personal data shall be based on a legitimate purpose and relevant to such purpose, and shall be fair, accurate, transparent and in no way excessive. We follow Aalto policies, rules and guidelines in information security and privacy.

Working with partners who share our ethical code

Our key duty is to understand and anticipate the needs of society. We want to be an active influencer in society and contribute to well-being and quality of life. This requires networking and wide-ranging collaboration.

We partner with third parties in many of our operations – for example, with other universities on student exchange programmes and research activities, with business partners that support our operations or work with us on research programs, or with our suppliers.

We deal with reliable partners who comply with applicable laws and conduct their operations according to principles that are similar to this Code.

We seek to ensure that we procure goods and services from socially responsible suppliers who are committed to complying with international standards on human rights, labour conditions, anti-corruption and the environment. We follow applicable rules on public procurement and carry out all purchases in accordance with Aalto purchasing procedures and policies.



“We will not accept bribery of any form and we refrain from any activity or behaviour that could give rise to the appearance or suspicion of such conduct or the attempt thereof”

Recognising, disclosing and avoiding conflicts of interest

Our community members are encouraged to engage in a wide variety of external activities. Sometimes, however, a conflict of interest may occur when the personal interests of an employee or the interests of a third party compete with the interests of Aalto. A conflict of interest may be financial, non-financial or both. Questions about conflicts of interest may arise from a variety of sources – for example from external professional activities or from opportunities to influence Aalto’s relationship with third parties in ways that would lead to personal financial gain, or in situations where decisions may be affected by relationships with persons or entities who are beneficiaries or otherwise related to these decisions.

In such a situation, each of us is committed to recognising, disclosing and avoiding financial and non-financial conflicts of interest, whether perceived or actual, that could compromise or conflict with our responsibilities towards Aalto, or which could impair our ability to perform our duties and responsibilities towards Aalto objectively.

Aalto personnel also have a special duty to comply with rules related to disqualification. An individual is disqualified if they are related to a matter or a party, or to those that will be affected by a decision, in a manner that may compromise their impartiality in the matter. Every employee of Aalto shall ensure that he or she is not present and does not participate in handling matters when disqualified.

Everyone has a duty to comply with Aalto policies and guidelines for reporting and reviewing actual and potential conflicts of interest and disqualification, and this includes a responsibility to accurately disclose all relevant information to Aalto’s outside professional activities register and related party register.

Zero tolerance for corruption and bribery

All our relationships with external stakeholders must reflect our commitment to performing all our activities with integrity and promoting fair and honest practices. We will not accept bribery of any form and we refrain from any activity or behaviour that could give rise to the appearance or suspicion of such conduct or the attempt thereof.

Offering or accepting hospitality should occur sparingly and always be legitimate and proportionate in the context of Aalto’s activities, in accordance with applicable Aalto policies and guidelines.



“We ensure that every transaction is properly authorised and recorded promptly, truthfully and accurately”

Maintaining accurate and complete financial records

We maintain financial records that are accurate and complete, and prepared in accordance with applicable laws, regulations and standards. We comply with financial regulation and other supplementary financial policies and guidelines, and ensure that every transaction is properly authorised and recorded promptly, truthfully and accurately. External and internal auditors regularly monitor our activities.

Ethics and integrity guide our fundraising

Aalto accepts donations that contribute to the fulfilment of the community's purpose.

Our fundraising principles are based on respect for the dignity of the donor's will, ethics and integrity,

and we are committed to the Statement of Ethical Principles in Fundraising of Association of Fundraising Professionals (AFP) and Vastuullinen Lahjoittaminen ry (VaLa). Aalto makes a clear distinction between gratuitous donation and compensable cooperation in all its activities.



“We are committed to carrying out our activities in a sustainable manner and we promote sustainability in our teaching, research contents and results, as well as in our research processes and practices”

Providing a healthy and safe environment for working and learning

We are committed to providing healthy and safe working and learning conditions. Aalto complies with all applicable legislation and regulations, and provides information and training about health and safety matters.

Aalto community members must adhere to health and safety practices.

Our passion for the exploration of scientific breakthroughs may lead us to work with unknown materials and working methods, and it is therefore the responsibility of each individual to recognise any potential dangers and take necessary mitigating actions..

Promoting sustainability in all our activities

Sustainability is an integral part of all activities at Aalto. Sustainability is understood through all its dimensions: ecologic, social, economic and cultural.

We are committed to carrying out our activities in a sustainable manner and we promote sustainability in our teaching, research contents and results, as well as in our research processes and practices.

The artistic activities at Aalto also have a strong connection to responsibility and societal impact.

We operate and develop our campuses in line with the principles of sustainable development. We work actively to develop the energy efficiency of our existing property portfolio and to reduce energy consumption. We aim to minimise any adverse effects of our activities on the environment.

Code implementation at Aalto

This Code has been created and exists for the benefit of the entire Aalto community. It exists in addition to the specific policies, procedures and rules enacted by Aalto and each of its schools and is not intended to limit them.

It is the responsibility of each Aalto community member to act in accordance with this Code and to report suspected violations of law, unethical activities or non-conformity with the Code either to his or her supervisor or to Aalto's Head of Legal. Management, teachers and supervisors have a special duty to adhere to the principles of the Code, to encourage their subordinates, professors and students to do so, and to recognise and report suspected violations.

No retaliatory action will be taken for reporting actual or possible violations of the Code.

The Code is enforced and conflict situations and allegations of misconduct are handled according to established procedures, firstly by the parties directly involved and then, if necessary, investigated with the support of authorised personnel under the supervision of Aalto's Head of Legal.

If it is determined that a violation has occurred, corrective and disciplinary action may be taken against any person who was involved in the violation or who allowed it to occur or persist due to a failure to exercise reasonable diligence. Disciplinary actions will be determined on a case-by-case basis and in accordance with the applicable laws and rules.



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#madeinaalto



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