

Introduction: Aalto University Accessibility Implementation Plan for 2019–2021 (President’s decision)

President Ilkka Niemelä approved the Aalto University Accessibility Implementation Plan for 2019–2021. The plan is based on the Aalto University strategy and supports well-being work and the work of the Aalto University Equality Committee. The implementation plan is attached as an appendix to the Aalto University Equality Plan.

Aalto University Accessibility Implementation Plan for 2019–2021

This implementation plan is based on the Aalto University [strategy](#), the [Aalto University Equality Plan](#) and [the Code of Conduct](#) as well as the [Aalto general policy on accessible learning \(page in Finnish\)](#). The six sections of the implementation plan describe concrete measures that can be taken at unit-level to realise the agreed-upon goals in a cost-efficient manner. The measures to be taken and the monitoring of their implementation was agreed upon between the Vice President and the service unit representatives in January-February 2019.

The general implementation and possible forms of individual support (subsections 1.1 and 1.2) target primarily the built environment, services, the learning and the work environments, teaching arrangements, learning situations and community interaction. The guiding principle is to realise a non-discriminatory, equal and [enabling environment](#) for everyone in the Aalto community. [Aalto University’s Senior Advisor in Accessibility](#) and the [Acca network for collaboration](#) provides advice and support as well as training and consultation to staff and students in all matters relating to the implementation plan. The implementation will be carried out cost-effectively by: a) developing the service culture as well as staff competencies, b) defining projects in detail from the perspective of equal participation, and c) taking accessibility into account in competitive bidding.

1 Research and learning services

Parties responsible: LES, RIS and HRS

The principles of accessibility and equality will be taken into account in the work, activities and competence development of teachers and other staff. Learning Services (LES) provides consultation and training to the university community, encouraging them to take a broad look at the barriers to study and research. In addition to physical and visual barriers, the community learns to identify the learning barriers and hindrances related to different cultures and attitudes, as well as to different ways of learning and methods of teaching. LES is tasked with providing support and training to teaching staff, who will then have at least a good general knowledge of the benefits of blended learning environments and various teaching methods and be able to [refer students to the university services they need](#). The LES teams, in collaboration with various actors from the Aalto schools, take accessibility into consideration in their own activities as a factor that contributes to the wellbeing and study abilities of students.

1.1 Aalto support for students

Forms of support provided by Learning Services to all Aalto degree students:

- Each student draws up a personal study plan (HOPS), which they can update and obtain approval for as often as needed. This is a support measure provided for all students in identical form.
- Each student is designated an advising teacher (professor, lecturer, university teacher or other academic member of staff), with whom they can discuss their studies.
- Students have an opportunity to attend personal advising meetings with a planning officer or coordinator as needed, for instance, to plan exchange studies, credit transfers or other study affairs.

Enhanced support offered by Learning Services:

- opportunity for regular personal advising meetings with a coordinator or planning officer if, for instance, the student is studying at a slower pace than normally recommended.
- recommendations for individual study arrangements on the basis of an expert opinion
- support for teachers in implementing individual study arrangements.
- services offered by study and career guidance psychologists

Aalto University has a jointly agreed process and certificate template for individual study arrangements and shared practices for allowing extended exam time (+1 h).

Measures to be taken:

- Individual needs will be considered in the arrangements for student admissions and entrance examinations.
- The personal study plan process will be harmonised and developed in order to offer students optimal support.
- In the schools, each new student will be assigned an advising teacher who becomes acquainted with the student's situation and different ways of learning as well as the opportunities afforded by Aalto University's blended learning environments to support learning.
- LES will continue to maintain a databank of the various needs of those requiring individual study arrangements. The material provides students, student counsellors and advisors and the LES staff with advice on encountering and supporting students who need individual arrangements. (Cf. 4.3)
- Aalto's pedagogical experts will be trained in the individual study arrangements process and the support material available in the databank so that they will be able to share the information through teachers' pedagogical training and thus increase teachers' awareness and competence in this matter.
- The schools and LES will be in charge of incorporating accessibility matters into the students' orientation sessions, guidance and tutoring.
- The process for individual study arrangements will be harmonised and developed so as to enable fluent studying at all Aalto schools.

- LES will provide teachers and advisors with the necessary training to advise students during the 2019–21 academic years.
- *Starting Point of Wellbeing* pilot in 2018–20: advising without appointment booking (FSHS, university chaplains, study psychologists' service, study advisors, AYY, UniSport)

1.2 Support from external partners

The support provided by external partners to students may take various forms such as:

- [interpreter services](#) (speech, speech-to-text, audio description and sign language)
- [personal assistants](#)
- [guide and assistance dogs](#)

Measures to be taken:

- We will ensure that interpreters and personal assistants have the possibility to conduct their work smoothly in the teaching and research facilities.
- As necessary, training can be offered on using service dogs on campus.

2 Accessibility of infrastructure

Parties responsible: CAS/ACRE (2.1) and ITS (2.2)

2.1 Barrier-free study and research facilities and work spaces

Achieving a built environment that is barrier-free is an objective of the Aalto strategy. When shortcomings or barriers are noted on campus facilities or routes, the situation is rectified using special arrangements when needed. [ACRE \(Aalto University Campus & Real Estate\)](#) is responsible for charting the barriers of the university's built environment and planning and executing their removal. Particular weight is put on how diverse users of the campus experience the campus as a safe work and study environment. In addition to the requirements of the [Building Code of Finland](#) Aalto strives to adhere to the following principles:

- Good acoustics: this serves everyone — especially hearing or visually impaired persons and persons who do not speak Finnish.
- The colour scheme and material world of the buildings support prompt and safe indoor navigation by diverse users.
- Sufficiently large and clear fonts, which are consistent with the ACRE signage manual, are used in the signs, and general information is formatted for prompt perception of the layout of spaces and operations.
- Service design is included in the planning processes as needed.
- Reserving enough storage space for student and staff equipment and work so that the defined access ways and emergency exit routes are barrier-free at all times.
- Ramps, if they fit in naturally with other planning, are used in addition to lifts in elevation differences between building levels.

- Assisting personnel, devices, transportation and other services are smoothly combined with a building's own functions and resources (speech-to-text and sign-language interpreters, personal assistants, guide and assistance dogs).
- Hearing, seeing and mobility devices (various microphone systems, special computers, mobile assistive devices and applications, wheelchairs etc.) are used according to the BYOD ('bring your own device') principle.

Measures to be taken:

- Accessibility inspections will be included in the campus planning and development process.
- New buildings will be designed to be barrier-free.
- Accessibility inspections will be carried out by external experts when buildings are renovated and outdoor areas designed.
- Workable assisted commuter traffic (wheelchair accessible taxis etc.) will be planned for new buildings and renovation sites.
- To enhance safety, emergency instructions must be made available in multiple languages ([University Language Guidelines](#)) and [emergency plans](#) must be kept up-to-date.
- We will ensure annually that bicycle parking or similar activities near the entrances do not obstruct any routes.
- Delivery vehicles will be directed to entrances in a manner that does not obstruct assisted or other commuter traffic.
- It will be ensured that barrier-free and accessible routes are maintained in working order throughout the year and any maintenance is done without delay.
- It will be ensured that power sockets are easy to use, suitable and sufficiently available for various devices.
- We will start planning accessible routes to Dipoli, and implement them gradually in the coming years.
- The accessibility information on the buildings used by Aalto are communicated with the help of the [service map](#)

2.2 Accessibility of information systems in university facilities

Advance planning of teaching and meetings lightens the workload of staff during actual events. Therefore, university's [space booking system](#) is developed to improve the accessibility of the teaching and research environment. Persons booking facilities should have the opportunity to assess how barrier-free a facility is when booking it. To this end, the booking system will be complemented with information on the bookable space's size in square meters, accessibility and floor plan and furniture. Other information systems to be developed and integrated include [MyCourses](#), [Oodi](#), the contract management system, the accounting system, the student information system, the research information system and the HR information system.

Measures to be taken:

- The possibilities will be looked into for upgrading the system with an option whereby all users of facilities may give feedback and thus ensure the accessibility of the facility in a cost-effective way.
- IT Services will collect data on the utilisation rates for all IT classrooms, and the data will be used to support decision-making.
- Accessibility viewpoints will be taken to consideration in the interfaces of the visual aids used in presentations.

3 Accessible online information systems**Parties responsible: ITS and LES**

The EU Directive on the Accessibility of the Websites and Mobile Applications of Public Sector Bodies ('the Web Accessibility Directive') and the compliant national legislation require authorities to make digital services accessible. The Finnish Parliament adopted the Act on Provision of Digital Services on 12 February 2019 ([306/2019](#)) and the act on amending the Act on Electronic Services and Communication in the Public Sector ([307/2019](#)). Both acts entered into force on 1 April 2019. The accessibility obligations will be put into action gradually as of 23 September 2019.

Aalto University's information network provides staff and students with opportunities for secure and reliable collaboration. Members of the Aalto community have the opportunity to use such accessible devices and programs in their studying and research as best meet their needs (the BYOD principle). ITS ensures that websites are compliant with the EU Web Accessibility Directive (i.e. the AA level of the Web Accessibility Initiative WAI, <http://www.w3.org/WAI/>) of the World Wide Web Consortium (W3C)). In a key position are those who use of web tools, e.g. the content producers of websites, who are required to have a good command of and compliance with the WAI initiative and the Stivi (<http://www.esok.fi/stivi>) recommendations. The introduction of new web-tool software is carried out on the scale and timetable that university resources permit as a part of the overall development of ITS.

Measures to be taken:

- Organising, together with the accessibility team of the Regional Administrative Agency (AVI) of Southern Finland, a workshop on 10 June 2019 on the accessibility of web-based services in higher education institutions with a goal of ensuring compliance with the Web Accessibility Directive.
- Publishing an [Accessibility Statement](#) in September 2019.
- Continuing with the accessibility survey of university IT systems and carrying out an assessment of the needs for changing current pages and establishing projects to implement the changes.
- ITS will offer technical support in using the tool software.
- ITS will ensure accessibility in the development and acquisition of information systems and network communications.

- ITS will distribute information on accessible web publishing and on related training to content producers from the schools and departments.
- ITS will ensure sufficient resources to ensure the accessibility of information systems and guidance on barrier-free workstations.

4 Network materials and publication in teaching and research

Parties responsible: LES, RIS and ITS

Applying the principle of [open access](#) as widely as possible as part of Aalto's strategic objective of sharing teaching and study materials openly. Usability and accessibility is ensured in the development of virtual learning environments.

4.1 Online study materials for the Aalto University bachelor's and master's degrees

Measures to be taken:

- In cooperation with departmental teachers, LES will train teaching staff on the open access publishing of study materials.
- Teachers can publish degree programmes' course materials in the open-access study-material portal.
- Supported by the ITS audio-visual team, Aalto members may arrange for network broadcasts of events such as guest lectures and seminars.
- ITS will ensure that a list of approved publishing platforms and their support services is available on the new Aalto website.
- The audio-visual team will provide instructions on how to add subtitling to video recordings. Subtitling complies with the requirements of the Web Accessibility Directive.
- With LES and RIS support, the owners of the materials may define what access rights and copyrights are needed for their materials, in accordance with [Creative Commons](#) licensing principles, for instance.

4.2 Aalto University scientific publications

Measures to be taken:

- The [research publications and works in the Aalto University publication series](#) will be published primarily through [open access](#) (Decision by president, reg. no. 0/246/00.01.06.06/2014). Any restrictions will be agreed upon separately.
- LES [library and information services](#) will train and support students and researchers in practices consistent with Aalto's Open Access principles and in using the [publication archive](#) it maintains.

4.3 Material for teaching and developing accessibility

Material supporting [accessible teaching and learning](#) will be collected on the aalto.fi website (cf. 1.1). We will concentrate the cumulative expertise of the community members into a single place that is easy to find and to distribute, thus making searches for accessibility information more effective. The site will publish information on diverse learners and on procedures related to entrance exams, evaluations, examination and teaching arrangements, supporting persons with activity limitations, implementing individual study arrangements, and conducting accessibility assessments of work and study spaces. The material will be expanded and updated as experience and feedback accumulate.

Measures to be taken:

- We will continue to publish teaching materials on accessibility, barrier-free design and equality on the Aalto University websites.
- We will look into opportunities for efficient publishing.

5 Information and communication

Parties responsible: COS and Aalto schools' departments

Accessibility is taken into account in the general development of web publishing. Communications Services provides support for communicating to students as well as to staff information on the progress and assessed results of the accessibility implementation plan. In addition, Communications Services supports all persons who publish and update information on the web channels used by the university concerning barrier-free interaction and achieving accessible publishing. New online materials will comply with both the Web Accessibility Directive and the criteria of the [W3C/WAI initiative](#). Different language versions in compliance with the university Language Guidelines as well as the standardisation of document formats and content are taken into account as far as possible and on a needs-based priority. In addition, Communications Services is, when necessary, engaged in prioritising the measures meant to achieve accessibility and a barrier-free environment and also in prioritising the target groups for such measures. The schools will comply with the Web Accessibility Directive and monitor the accessibility of the websites administered by their departments and other units (research groups etc.).

Measures to be taken:

- The quality goal for digital communications will be for Aalto University websites to meet the AA-level criteria of the W3C/WAI initiative.
- All new materials will comply with the EU Web Accessibility Directive as of 23 September 2019.
- Old sites will comply with the Directive as of 23 September 2020 excluding the archived pages.
- The [Stivi recommendations](#) will be applied to Aalto's digital communications guidelines.

6 Competence development

Parties responsible: HRS, COS and LES

Competence development and auxiliary policies for its implementation take into account Aalto's principles of diversity, internationality and equality. Staff training recognises the importance of attitudes, puts much emphasis on customer service, organisational behaviour, marketing to various kinds of target groups, and the different forms of discrimination. In addition, the Aalto University Equality Committee ([EQU](#)), the LES teams and the Accessible Aalto Network for collaboration ([AccaNet](#)) brainstorm, plan and develop accessibility training. The adoption of accessibility practices as well as their development and impact monitoring will be incorporated into staff competence development beginning in the 2019–2020 academic year:

- Accessibility is taken into consideration in competence development as a whole and in the practical arrangements for training sessions.
- The university Language Guidelines, multilingualism and international staff is considered in training courses (e.g. by offering courses in basic Finnish, publishing curriculum information in English and conducting various preparatory training courses in English).
- LES concentrates particularly on developing the competencies of teaching staff, while taking into account accessibility issues involving the learning environment.
- HRS focuses on developing competencies that are shared by everyone and takes accessibility into account in its training sessions in practical arrangements, venue choices and training materials.

Measures to be taken:

- [The Aalto University Code of Conduct](#) is incorporated into all training.
- Orientations for new employees are accessible and go over what accessibility means at Aalto University.
- LES and HRS disseminate information to Aalto employees and students and their network partners on the ESOK seminar in spring 2019 on the Otaniemi campus and enable community members to take part in the seminar.
- We will organise the annual Aalto Goes Accessible symposium in 2020 and 2021.
- A survey will be conducted by Human Resource Services, Learning Services and Leadership Support Services at Aalto of the existing expertise in different areas of accessibility (e.g. acoustics, usability, barrier-free design, visual design, typography, service design) in order to find suitable trainers within the Aalto community (professors, researchers, study psychologists, visiting researchers etc.).
- The accessibility specialist and expert network will support in competence development.

Service units and abbreviations (Finnish, English, Abbreviation, Director)

- Tutkimus- ja innovaatiopalvelut, Research and Innovation Services, RIS, Ossi Naukkarinen
- Tekniset palvelut, Technical Support Services, TSS, (coordinated from RIS)
- Kampuspalvelut, Campus Services, CAS, Antti Tuomela (ACRE)

- Oppimispalvelut, Learning Services, LES, Petri Suomala
- Viestintäpalvelut, Communications Services, COS, Jaakko Salavuo
- Tietotekniikkapalvelut, IT Services, ITS, Kati Hagros
- Talouspalvelut, Financial Services, FIS, Marianna Bom
- Henkilöstöpalvelut, HR Services, HRS, Tiia Tuomi
- Johtamisen tukipalvelut, Leadership Support Services, LSS, Sirkku Linna