
Pre-departure orientation for exchange students AY 2024-25

Part 1
16.4.2024



Today:

How to prepare for your exchange

- Before the exchange – part I
 - Official matters
 - Travel documents
 - Stay healthy abroad (FSHS Otaniemi)
 - Insurances
 - Safety and crisis situations
 - Accommodation
 - Finance
 - Taxation

Short break

- During & At the end of your exchange
- Be proud! Representing Aalto abroad
- Country groups

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Before the exchange

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What happens after you are selected for exchange by Aalto?

**Aalto
application**

**Allocation of
exchange places**

Nomination

**Selected
students are
nominated to
the host
university by
Aalto**

**Host
application**

**Application
information is
emailed to
students /
Available also
on host
institution's
website**

Selection

**Host university
informs
student of
selection**

**Departure
preparations**

**Prepare for
departure by
arranging
practical matters
(flights, housing,
insurance etc.)
and paperwork to
Aalto (study
plans, Erasmus
documents etc.)**



Official matters I

- Let us know if you change your Aalto school (TECH)
- Keep your contact information in Sisu updated
 - Address
 - E-mail
- 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/opintotuki-ulkomaille#vaihto>
- Inform Digital and Population Data Services Agency (Digi-ja väestötietovirasto) about your move abroad <http://www.posti.fi/muuttoilmoitus/>
- Finnish citizens: [make a travel notification!](#) (matkustusilmoitus.fi)



Official matters II

- Prepare an open mandate (valtakirja) e.g. for your parents, so that they can contact authorities in Finland on your behalf, if needed.
- 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.
- Take the host university admission letter printed with you to the destination.



Visa / residence permit I

- To apply for visa/residence permit, you have to wait until you have received 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.



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**
 - 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 related health documents are still required (eg.your vaccination certificate)
- Check tips from previous exchange students' travel reports from the Destination Database.



TAKING CARE OF YOUR HEALTH WHEN GOING ABROAD

Aalto 16.4.2024



F · S · H · S

FINNISH STUDENT HEALTH SERVICE

FSHS Digital Travel Health Advice in Self-service www.yths.fi

- **Now is the best time to contact about vaccinations! At the summer the services are limited**
- Complete a pre-travel health survey on the Self online service as early as possible. Check the vaccines you have already received so you can fill in the information about them in the form. By completing the survey **at least 2 to 3 months before your trip**, you will receive any prescriptions and begin any necessary vaccination programmes in time.
- A public health nurse will review your survey and will send you travel advice related to vaccinations and malaria prophylaxis via Self or calling within 10 working days using the phone number entered in the FSHS patient register.
- **Make sure that your contact information in Self is correct.**

Vaccinations

- Check beforehand that your vaccinations are up to date.
- Basic vaccinations (MMR/measles, mumps and rubella; Polio/IPV; diphtheria, tetanus and pertussis) you can check from vaccination card, maternity clinic card, contacting the military service or local/childhood health care.
- If you have got travel vaccinations before (for example A+B-hepatitis, Typhoid fever, Japanese encephalitis, Yellow fever etc.), check them for example from local health centre, patient records archive, occupational healthcare or private medical clinic (the place where you got the vaccinations). You buy the travel vaccinations yourself.
- Remember to buy the necessary vaccines from a pharmacy when you go to the vaccination time. Please contact in time, at the summer some of the FSHS Espoo's services are limited.

FSHS Certificates and Statements

- Certificates connected to work and extracurricular activities are not issued by the FSHS. Depending on the situation such certificates and statements can be issued by vocational health care, public clinics or by the private sector.
- An exception to the aforementioned are students who are going for an obligatory exchange whose required certificates are issued by the FSHS. Obligatory exchange studies mean such studies which are an integral part of the studies that lead to a degree. An example of such a degree is a linguistic degree. [Certificates and statements issued by FSHS - FSHS \(yths.fi\)](https://www.fshs.fi/yths)

Medications part 1.

- When travelling to [Schengen area](#), you must have a Schengen certificate if you carry certain medication that affects the central nervous system (CNS drugs) or contains psychotropic or narcotic substances. You can get the certificate from a pharmacy. Take the medication package and a passport or ID card with you when going to pharmacy to get the certificate. [Take your medications and prescriptions with you when travelling abroad - Citizens - Kanta.fi](#)
- The import practices of personal medicines and the medicinal products you can carry with you depend on the country of destination. More detailed information can be obtained, e.g. by asking from the website of the Customs of the destination country or from the embassy of the country in question.
- You can buy usually the medications for the 6-12 months from the pharmacy and take all the medications with you, but KELA covers for 3 months medications. If you buy more, you first have to pay the medicines yourself and then apply for reimbursement from Kela. [Ulkomaanmatka ja lääkekorvaus | Henkilöasiakkaat | Kela](#)
- If you do not take all the medications with you, you can visit a doctor in the destination country and get the similar medication from the pharmacy abroad.

Medications part 2.

- Bring along summary of medications/prescriptions in English and Finnish (you can get summary from pharmacy or print out from Omakanta).
- When travelling abroad, keep the medicines in their original packaging and pack them in the hand luggage.
- When travelling with insulin, there is different cool bags etc. to travel with, so that larger packs of insulin stay in the right temperature. [Kylmälaukut ja säilytyskotelot \(diabeteskauppa.fi\)](https://diabeteskauppa.fi)
- If needed, you can get a certificate concerning insulin pen-needles etc. from your doctor or nursing staff.
- If you have basic illness, that requires regular medication, ask the medication from the health care unit you have been treated in.

Common Health Problems

- The most common health problems are **travel diarrhea and the flu**. The most effective way for prevention is careful hand hygiene; wash hands with soap + disinfectant.
- **Traffic accidents** are common for tourists. Avoid unnecessary risks.
- **Sexually transmitted diseases have increased in Finland and outside Finland.** Always use a condom one-time sexual encounters, including oral sex. HIV and other STDs are more common outside Finland and therefore the risk of disease without a condom is high. Buy condoms already in Finland.
- **Intoxicants** increase the risk of accidents. Legislation varies from country to country. Insurance does not normally cover if the insured is intoxicated or under the influence of alcohol or drugs when injured.

If you fall ill during the trip

- Remember the **travel insurance and be sure to check the insurance coverage** (In the case of Covid, diving, climbing, kayaking, pregnancy, mosquito-borne diseases etc.) and validity period (duration of the trip).
- Save contact numbers of family members or close ones (who know English) on your phone as ICE (= In Case of Emergency).
- The embassies of Finland and other EU countries help. Find out the contact information in advance.
- Submit a travel notification at the website of Ministry for foreign Affairs of Finland <https://matkustusilmoitus.fi>
- Check the travel information and security situation of the destination country at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs website <https://um.fi/frontpage>
- In a bigger emergency: SOS International (owned by the Nordic insurance companies International Insurance Center) <http://www.sos.dk/en> 24h / +45 7010 5050

Questions about travel and vaccinations? Fill out the pre-travel health survey in FSHS Self-service in time. Have a safe trip!



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 is recommended for EU countries, but getting an insurance in addition to this is important

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.
- 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!
- Aalto University's insurance 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).

Special needs

- **Erittele vielä tarkemmin**
- You can receive special needs or inclusion support if your special needs create additional expenses to your exchange studies and you cannot get similar support from elsewhere.
- The grant can be awarded for e.g., accessible accommodation, assisted mobility or such study-related special arrangements as learning materials, preparatory visits and personal assistants. However, you cannot get this support for expenses you would also have in Finland.
- The Finnish National Agency for Education (EDUFI) grants special needs and inclusion support for students participating in Erasmus+ and Nordplus programs.
- In addition, Erasmus+ programme offers fixed fewer opportunities top-up for students.
- The student can be entitled to both the inclusion support and the fewer opportunities top-up for the same mobility period.

Exchange and safety I

– Before the exchange

- Visit the **Ministry for Foreign Affairs of Finland** website for current travel information and location-specific travel bulletins.
- **Remember to make a travel notification.** It allows the Ministry or Embassy to get in contact with you in the case of a crisis or an emergency.
- Take care of your travel documents. Before you travel, check that your travel documents are in order. You can check the passport and visa regulations at the consulate of the destination country.
- Please make sure that your **passport is valid also for 6 months** after your exchange.

Exchange and safety II

– During the exchange

- 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
- Do not carry more cash with you than you might need
- 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. Stay away from unsafe areas and be wary of demonstrations etc.
- Knowing even some local language phrases will help you
- If you travel within your destination country, 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 mission 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 **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.

Country-specific safety notes

North America and Oceania

USA

- 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
- Social and drug related problems, large amount of homeless people, some typically Republican states may be poorly vaccinated
- Public transport limited or non-existent
- Without proper insurance, one night in hospital e.g. \$10 000

Canada

- Despite similarities with Finland, it's still a North American country with issues of city and campus safety

Australia and New Zealand

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

Country-specific safety notes

Latin America

- Listen to what locals/your tutor tell you about unsafe areas and avoid them especially at night
- In some destinations public transportation might not be safe to use at night- take a taxi or an uber if it is recommended by locals
- Don't carry your valuables openly – pickpockets and even violent robberies do happen
- Don't participate in any demonstrations – they can easily turn violent and in some countries your visa can end up being cancelled
- Make sure that you have all the necessary vaccinations and note that neighboring country or even certain areas in your exchange country (rain forests, countryside) might have different recommendations – so if you plan to travel around check the recommendations of all planned destinations

Country-specific safety notes

Asia

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

- In general, Asia is a safe and stable destination. However, the situation may change rapidly and unpredictably:
- Natural disasters - Under normal circumstances, the greatest risk is associated with these
- Political situation - Avoid demonstrations and crowds
- Penalties for violating public order, drunken behavior or anything related to drugs are more severe than in Finland
- 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 foot prints may be followed and your data may be collected
- Make sure your employer is aware of your destination country

Country-specific safety notes

Europe

- European destinations are generally very safe destinations; however, similar safety notes apply as in other destinations.
- The European emergency number is 112, the same as in Finland.
- If you wish to travel to neighboring countries during your exchange, please remember to let someone, for example your exchange tutor or another exchange student, know where you are going and for how long.
- Be wary that the student housing situation in European destinations may be difficult, so be aware scammers.
- Be wary of political demonstrations and keep your eyes open in big crowds.

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://www.ayy.fi/en/changes-in-living/subletting-an-apartment>
 - HOAS: <https://www.hoas.fi/en/tenants/living-in-hoas-housing/subleasing/subleasing/>
- Aalto Sharetribe:
<https://aalto.sharetribe.com/?category=tilat>
- 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
- Don't sign any agreements before you receive an acceptance letter from your host university!
- Always ask for a written rental agreement
- **Be aware of fraud!** <https://studentlife.utoronto.ca/task/housing-scams-and-how-to-spot-them/>



Student financial aid for studies abroad

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



Aalto scholarship for exchange studies

- Has been granted to you already, no need to apply for it separately
- Instructions from your own school (documentation requirements vary between exchange programmes)
- You must return required documents and your banking information through the online form.
- First installment of the scholarship will be paid after you have submitted the online form and returned the required documents
- In general, first installment of the scholarship will be paid in August-September (autumn term), in December - January (spring term)
 - Scholarships will be 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, once the student has submitted the After Exchange form with a Declaration for Green Travel form (and a receipt or similar evidence if needed) confirming the travel arrangements.
- **Note! Travelling by ferry is not considered green travelling**



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 edistämissätiö.
 - More information: <https://www.aalto.fi/en/other-studies/funding-for-exchange-studies>
 - Google will help you 😊



Taxation

- www.vero.fi > Detailed Guidance > Guidance > Taxation of grants, scholarships, awards for merits and other awards
- Taxation of grants: you will have to pay tax, if the total grant income you received from public and private sources in 2024 is more than 26 269,46 € after the deduction of expenses.
- See vero.fi for up-to-date information



Studies abroad

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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 immediatly when changes occur!
 - Studies should be of the host institution (not Aalto courses)
- If you have problems in getting the required amount of credits, contact your Aalto Exchange Coordinator immediatly
- 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.
 - memorising details vs. learning more comprehensive picture
 - different ways for group working (roles)
 - more extensive courses
 - 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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Goals for exchange at Aalto University

The goals for exchange studies at Aalto

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

To develop greater function fluency of foreign language?

- ❑ Continue improving your English/host language proficiency, why not learn some Italian or Estonian from your fellow exchange students?
- ❑ Listen to the local podcasts and local music, follow interesting local people on Instagram..



To grow academically, personally and ethically?

- Establish academic goals
- Take the advantage of possible new resources available at your host university
- Be curious for locally related study topics, that gives you valuable insight to your host country.



To develop higher level of global and intercultural competence?

To become better prepared for any career?

- ❑ **Go for walks/bike rides.** Being on foot helps you to notice the little details. Explore: in your own culture, you take for granted how the trash is picked up, how the mail is delivered, the colors that the houses are painted, etc.
- ❑ **Explain your own culture.** The biggest learning experience during the exchange may be to learn about your own culture and personality. When having to explain and rationalize the things you normally take for granted, makes you look the familiar things with new eyes.
- ❑ **Walk a mile in local shoes.** When trying to live like the locals, you can learn to understand and empathize with their perspectives, opinions or point of views.



During the exchange

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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.**

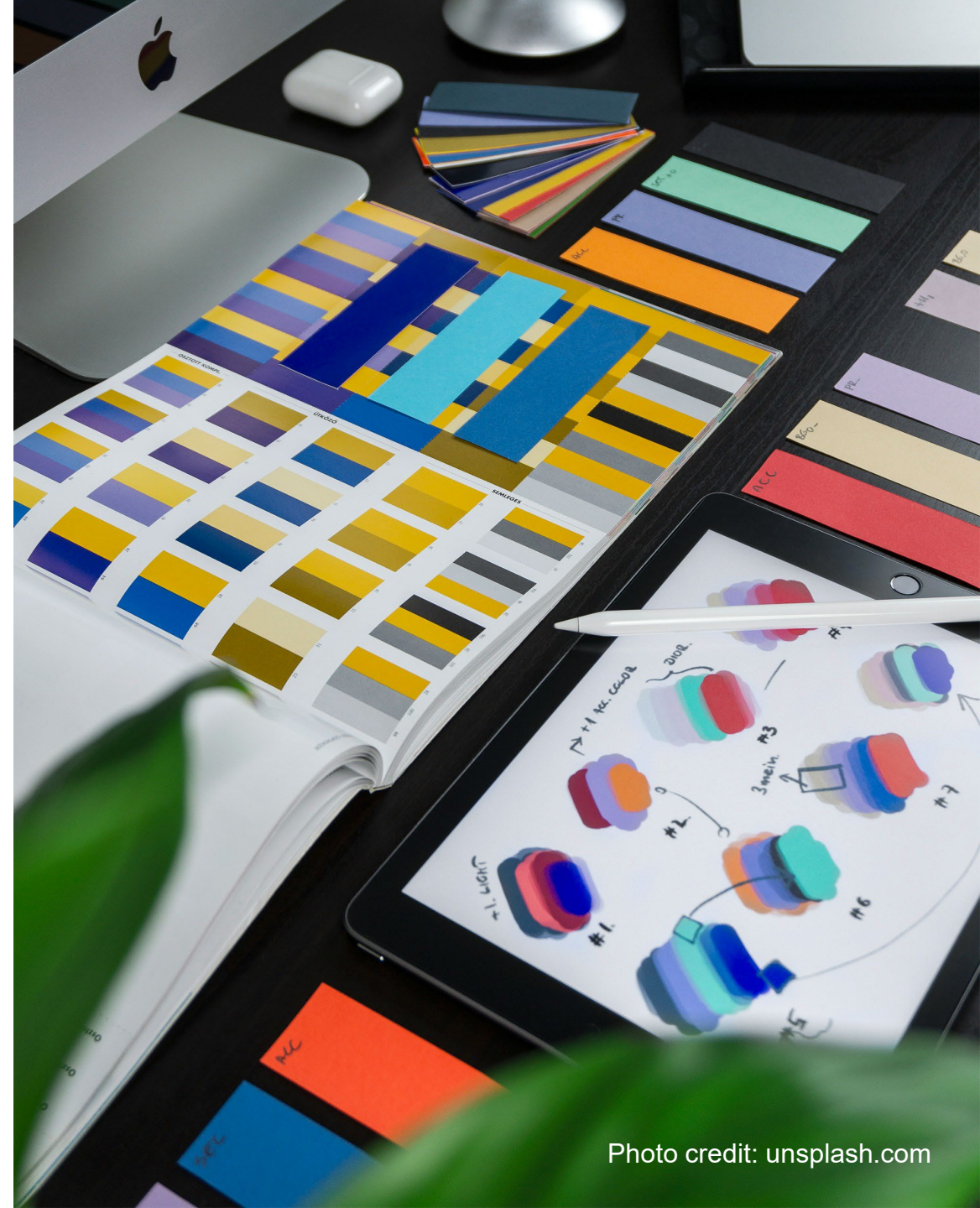


After the exchange

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Internship abroad after exchange

- If you're interested in completing an internship abroad visit: <https://www.aalto.fi/en/other-studies/international-internships> for more information
 - Internship reports about internships abroad
 - Information on how to find a placement
- **Internship grants available**



All the good things come to an end...

- Prepare yourself for the end of the semester!
- Check what is needed to close your local rental agreement, mobile connection and bank account.
- Gather all the required information from your exchange (eg. the course syllabus etc. for the credit transfer).
- Get the required certificates and signatures well in advance before your departure.
- Erasmus exchange students should note that certain Erasmus documents (LoC, LA or OLA) must be signed by the host university.



After the exchange (1/3)

*(Only for TECH and ARTS students,
BIZ students information is given at own separate session May 7th)*

Take care of the credit transfer as soon as possible.

- You will require an electronically signed or officially stamped transcript of records from the host university
- A clarification of the course content and scope (unless the course was graded with the ECTS points which are used also in Finland)
- You might also need for instance a description of the course content. The required documents might vary depending on your school at Aalto.
- Instructions here
 - Apply for credit transfer in Sisu, each course separately
 - The credit transfer will be done in your own study programme. (TECH)
 - All courses transferred into your degree will be marked as passed.
 - All completed courses will be transferred into your Aalto degree.
 - Transferred courses should not overlap too much with the courses already included in your degree.



After the exchange (2/3)

- Second part of the study abroad scholarship is paid after exchange
- For payment deliver the following documents to your Aalto exchange coordinator:
 - Exchange report
 - Official transcript of records from your host university
 - Credit transfer has to be completed and visible in Sisu (ARTS & TECH)
 - Aalto transcript of records, on which the transferred courses can be seen (only TECH)
 - Online feedback questionnaire (BIZ and ARTS)
- Erasmus-students have also the following parts to be completed:
 - 1) Letter of Confirmation
 - 2) Online Learning Agreement signed by you & Aalto & host university
 - 3) Erasmus+ participant report (EU survey)



After the exchange (3/3)

- 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.



Feelings after the exchange

- **Reverse culture shock:** While we often hear about culture shock when being in a new place, however, 'reverse culture shock' is also something that can occur when you return to your home after a period abroad.
- It can be worse than the culture shock in the beginning.
- Readjustment to your own culture can take time because of new experiences and possible changes in your self image
- Return orientation to be organized in spring term 2025



Contact information

ARTS: out-exchange-arts@aalto.fi

BIZ: outgoing-biz@aalto.fi

CHEM: international-chem@aalto.fi

ELEC: outgoing-elec@aalto.fi

ENG: exchanges-eng@aalto.fi

SCI: exchanges-sci@aalto.fi

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Part 2

- **Time: Tuesday 23 April, 2024 at 15:00 - 16:00**
Place: Zoom <https://aalto.zoom.us/j/63022314035>

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

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!

