

Equality Model for Universities

SAMOK's project Equality at
Universities 2021–2023

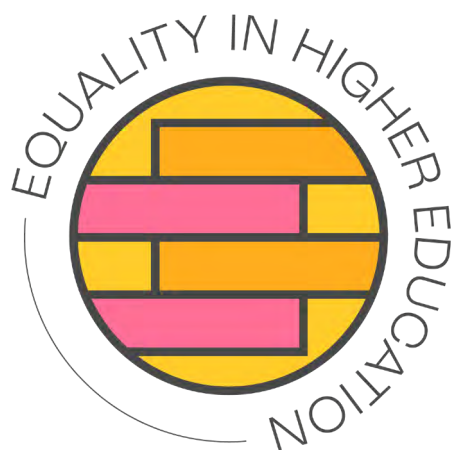


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1. Introduction

This equality model for universities has been produced as part of the Union of Students in Finnish Universities of Applied Sciences SAMOK's project Equality at Universities, which received funding from the Ministry of Education and Culture in 2021–2023. The equality model is meant to be used by the entire university community. The purpose of the model is to act as a guide to help universities implement permanent practices for promoting equality. In this model, we will explain the main concepts related to equality, talk about the importance of equality planning, and systematically go through various factors which impact equality and how these should be acknowledged in the university community. Finally, we will also discuss concrete methods and tools for promoting equality. Even though the model focuses on the student perspective, these topics apply to all members of the university community.

Equality looks different when examined from different areas of the university's activities and different perspectives. Universities must have a policy of zero tolerance for all kinds of harassment, discrimination and bullying. When shortcomings are found, they must be resolved promptly, and any issues that are reported must be taken seriously. By downplaying or disregarding a report/shortcoming, one may make oneself guilty of discrimination or passive bullying. All members of the university community must be aware of the processes for intervening in harassment. Prevention is also part of promoting equality. Raising awareness and highlighting issues stop harassment and discrimination from happening. To support the prevention of these issues, the university community must have principles for safer spaces that have been created to meet the specific needs of the community.

Equality, promoting equality and intervening in shortcomings are primarily the collective responsibility of the entire community, even though a specific member of the community is in charge of equality matters in theory. The aim is for the entire community to learn how to take more notice of equality. We all make mistakes from time to time, but the most important thing is an interest in learning to act in a more equal way. Learning, compassion towards oneself and others, and a dialogical approach are key in building a more equal university community.

2. Definitions

2.1. Equality

Equality means that all people are equal regardless of their gender, age, ethnic or national origin, nationality, language, religion and beliefs, opinions, disability, state of health, sexual orientation or other personal characteristics. In practice equality means treating all people equally.

Equality is a prerequisite for a fair society: personal characteristics, such as origin or skin colour, should not impact a person's access to education,

employment or various services. In the Constitution of Finland, the principle of equality refers to both a prohibition of all discrimination and equality between people before the law. The Non-Discrimination Act, the Criminal Code, the Act on Equality between Women and Men, and employment legislation define the prohibition of discrimination more closely as it relates to various areas of life.

2.2. Discrimination

Discrimination means treating people differently because of a personal characteristic. The Non-Discrimination Act prohibits discrimination based on age, origin, nationality, language, religion, belief, opinion, political activity, trade union activity, family relationships, state of health, disability, sexual orientation, or other personal characteristics.

Discrimination can be direct, indirect, or a refusal to make reasonable adjustments when a person is entitled to them. Direct discrimination refers to a situation where a person is treated less favourably than someone else is, has been or could be treated in the same situation. Indirect discrimination is defined as rules, grounds or practices which seem equal, but which put someone at an unfair disadvantage because of a personal characteristic. An example of indirect discrimination is when a job advert includes the requirement to speak and write Finnish perfectly, even though this is not necessary for the work itself. Refusing reasonable adjustments means that a public authority, an education provider, an employer or

a provider of good or services is guilty of discrimination if they will not carry out the appropriate reasonable adjustments required in a specific situation in order to ensure the equality of a person with a disability.

Discrimination based on assumption and discrimination by association also counts as discrimination. Discrimination by association means that a person is treated less favourably because they are closely linked to a person who is part of an ethnic minority, for example. So discrimination is prohibited regardless of whether it is based on factual or assumed information relating to the individual themselves or to another individual. Discrimination based on assumption means that the perpetrator holds a mistaken belief about a person's origin, age or sexuality, for example. In addition to discrimination, harassment or an instruction to discriminate are also treated as discrimination in the Non-Discrimination Act. Everyone has the right to be treated equally, and the prohibition of discrimination can be found in many laws and contracts.

A summary of concepts related to discrimination:

- Direct discrimination means treating a person worse than someone else in the same situation because of a personal characteristic.
- Indirect discrimination means that rules, grounds or practices that seem equal put someone at an unfair disadvantage compared to others because of a personal characteristic.
- Reasonable adjustments safeguard the equality of people with disabilities in specific situations. Authorities, education providers, employers and providers of goods and services must make reasonable adjustments for a person with a disability.
- Multiple discrimination refers to being subjected to discrimination on the basis of two or more different grounds for discrimination. The Non-Discrimination Act also applies to multiple discrimination when one of the grounds for discrimination is gender.
- Harassment refers to behaviour which constitutes deliberate or de facto infringement of the dignity of a person, and which creates a humiliating, hostile or degrading atmosphere.
- Victimization means that a person who for example contacts the Non-Discrimination Ombudsman to look into a case of discrimination is treated less favourably or subjected to negative consequences.
- Bullying refers to intentional and repeated mental or physical activity which is unpleasant to others.

2.3. Harassment

Harassment is discrimination that is prohibited under the Non-Discrimination Act. The Act defines harassment as the deliberate or de facto infringement of the dignity of a person. Harassment means that a person behaves in a way that creates an atmosphere which feels degrading, humiliating, intimidating, hostile or offensive to another person because of a protected characteristic, such as sexuality, origin or disability. Behaviour is used in a broad sense, meaning that it includes things like emails, facial expressions, gestures or sharing inappropriate material online or through other kinds of communications. Harassment can be directed towards one specific person or more widely towards a group of people.

Sexual harassment and gender-based harassment are considered discrimination under the Equality Act. Sexual harassment can mean saying degrading things about another person's gender, innuendos, unwanted touching, sexually suggestive jokes, or comments or questions relating to another person's body or private life. This means that sexual harassment can be both verbal and physical. Harassment can also take place on social media. Verbal harassment can also have a negative impact on a person's health and functional capacity.

3. Why is equality planning necessary?

Equality planning is a way to promote equality and an equal and non-discriminatory culture. It is important that equality planning is included in the work of the entire university community as an ongoing activity. If the group taking part in the equality work is as diverse as possible, then they will do a better job at taking different perspectives into account. It is important that the equality work is accessible to all so that the equality work and promotion of equality does not feel too remote to anyone. The university community can be included in the equality planning through different kinds of working groups, surveys and interviews. As the staff is often responsible for the university's equality planning, it is particularly important to include students in the planning right from the start.

Participating in the equality work right from the early planning stages makes participants committed to carrying out the plans in practice and promoting the principles that have been agreed upon together. It is important that the promotion of equality does not stop at the planning stages, and that the plans are integrated into the work of everyone inside the university community. Conti-

nuously involving the members of the university community in the equality work in many different ways improves their commitment to an equal and non-discriminatory organisational culture.

The aim of the equality planning is, among other things, to identify improvement needs, make decisions on measures to take, measure results, visualise diversity, enable experiences of inclusion, and prevent discrimination. The goal is to create a university community where everyone feels part of the community, and no one is afraid to be themselves. The equality work also brings about important skills which help to identify and intervene in the barriers to achieving equality. If the university does not have an Equality Advisor, it is a good idea to employ an external equality expert or advisor, of which there are plenty.

One of the key factors in the experience of equality within a university community is the atmosphere in the community, as well as attitudes and values. An atmosphere of acceptance has a positive impact on both the experience of equality and on the general wellbeing of the members of the community.

4. Factors impacting equality and taking these into account

In this section we will discuss various factors which impact equality and how these should be taken into account in the university community. In a university community, equality must be achieved in all activities, not just in the teaching. Equality within teaching primarily means taking the students' various needs into account when organising the teaching. Varied module formats which include options for in-person, remote and hybrid studies make it easier for students who work or who have a family to advance in their studies. As well as using different formats, the equality of the teaching is also increased by acknowledging different learning styles. It is worth offering regular training for the staff members in equality matters and how to promote them in

the teaching. The university should increase the teaching staff's knowledge of things like individual study arrangements, because students have a statutory right to reasonable adjustments in their studies.

An atmosphere of equality creates a safe space to be oneself. This is of course important for the students, but also for all other members of the community. The diversity of the members of the university community should be acknowledged in all activities. In this section we will cover the impact that individuals' personal characteristics, health and life circumstances and structural matters within the university have on equality.

4.1. Study modes

Universities should offer a variety of study modes (daytime studies, blended learning and online studies). In addition, the opportunities for cross-institutional study should be improved as this is an important part of improving the equality and accessibility of the teaching. Cross-institutional study refers to the opportunity for a student to carry out some studies at another university.

It is also important to take into account different study modes and their impact on equality. It is particularly important at the early stages of the studies that all new students receive the same information and orientation sessions, regardless of their mode of study. Any benefits (such as a free trial at a sports centre) should also be equal

for all students. It should particularly be noted that not only daytime students, but also blended learning, online or master's degree students are given the support in their studies that they need.

The support and guidance services offered to students must also acknowledge different study modes. Displaying and achieving equality is particularly important within support and guidance services, as the students who seek out these services are often more vulnerable to start with, and they need support with advancing in their studies or maintaining their wellbeing.

Many students want more opportunities for independent study, such as online courses and other

forms of remote studying. Particularly students with families, who work or who do not live locally to their university feel like independent studies make it easier for them to study. Varied study modes and methods should also be taken into ac-

count when designing university facilities. Many students would like more space for groupwork or quiet study alongside traditional lecture halls/ classrooms.

Equality checklist for study modes

- A variety of study modes are offered (daytime studies, blended learning and online studies).
- The opportunities for cross-institutional studies are increased.
- All new students are offered the same information and orientation sessions regardless of mode of study.
- All students are offered the same benefits regardless of mode of study, and information about these is shared via various channels.
- Different study modes are acknowledged in the support and guidance services offered to students.
- The opportunities for independent study are extensive (incl. online courses and other forms of remote studying).
- The university has enough spaces for groupwork and quiet study.

4.2. Life circumstances

Students are a diverse group of people in different circumstances, which is an important factor to consider in the university's equality work. A large number of university students started their studies straight after secondary school (42.8% according to the Eurostudent VII study), while the equivalent number for universities of applied sciences is approximately 30 percent. A little less than one in five university students are studying for their second degree, while this applies to 10 percent of students at universities of applied sciences. On the other, the number of students coming from the world of work is highlighted at universities of applied sciences

(approximately half), while the equivalent figure at universities is 27 percent (Eurostudent VII).

This means that it is vital that all higher education institutions acknowledged the students' diverse backgrounds. It is also expected that the need for support for students and the ability to customise studies is likely to increase, as Finland is aiming to increase the share of each age group with a university degree to at least 50 percent by 2030. The expectations, knowledge and need for support of someone who has come into higher education straight from secondary school can be very diffe-

rent than those of someone working towards their second degree. The study skills and abilities also vary a great deal among students who have come straight from secondary education. It should also be noted that a new student can also be a minor. Therefore the communications and the support and guidance services should meet the students' varied needs.

Many students also have families: approximately 25 percent of students at universities of applied sciences and around 13 percent of students at universities (Eurostudent VII). When it comes to students with families it is particularly important to offer different study modes, as these have a major impact on how students with families can plan their studies and time management. Good opportunities for remote study are important to students with families. Varied forms of study also help them advance in their studies, particularly if there are modu-

les on offer where the students can plan their own schedules. In terms of the equality of students with families, it is important to make sure to highlight the available support and guidance services. As an example, offering highchairs and communicating this to students makes life easier for many students with young children.

Other circumstances which should be considered in the university community's equality work includes partially disabled students (approximately one in five students) and international students (approximately one in ten). Many students also work alongside their studies. In terms of equal treatment of these students, universities must pay attention to offering varied study modes and modules. The equality within teaching is also improved for all students when different learning styles are taken into account.

Equality checklist for life circumstances

- All teaching takes students in different circumstances into consideration, e.g. those coming straight from secondary school, those studying for a second degree, those coming from working life, those with families, the partially disabled, international students and students who work. This could mean increased support for coursework, referencing and other study skills at the start of the studies.
- The university's communications have been planned with attention to different life circumstances so that the information will reach as many students as possible.
- The support and guidance services meet the students' varied needs.
- The university offers different study modes, which makes it possible for students to plan their studies and manage their time flexibly.
- The support and guidance services have been made very visible within the university community.
- Highchairs and other accessories for families are offered at the university, and these are highlighted in the communications.
- Different learning styles are taken into consideration in the teaching.

4.3. Socio-economic background

The socio-economic background of the students can impact both their likelihood to apply and get into higher education and their engagement in their studies. The educational and socio-economic background of the parents are connected to both university applications and university admissions, as most students come from middle class homes. More than half of students have at least one parent with a university degree. Students with a working class background are particularly underrepresented at universities, but also at universities of applied sciences (publication *Yksilölliset opintopolut ammattikorkeakoulussa*). It is vital that universities take those students into account who may not have had previous contact with university studies because of their socio-economic background.

Research has shown that the socio-economic background of the parents can also have an impact on a student's engagement in their studies. This means that students from a working class background suffer from feelings of inadequacy and of not belonging even when they do well in their studies and seem to have adjusted well to the university community on the surface (publication *Yksilölliset opintopolut ammattikorkeakoulussa*). Support and guidance for students

is particularly important in the early stages of university studies in order to promote engagement in the studies and to increase the student's self-efficacy. A successful start to the studies creates a foundation for the studies in future years and supports the student's growth into an expert in their field.

Many students suffer from financial difficulties, and this can have a significant impact on the progress of their studies. Students' financial difficulties are the second largest factor that slows down the studies for students who expect their graduation to be delayed. Many students have to work during their studies. Financial issues can have an impact on things like a student's ability to buy a computer for their studies. This is why it is important that universities have computers than students can borrow and use for example during exams. Universities must also ensure that any equipment and software which is necessary for the studies can be accessed for free. Housing usually takes up a significant share of a student's budget, and shared accommodation may not offer the best environment for studying. That is why it is important that the university offers enough varied and quiet study areas.

Equality checklist for socio-economic background

- The information and orientation sessions for new students are particularly focused on inclusivity (some students may have had no previous contact with university studies because of their socio-economic background).
- Effort is put into the guidance and support for students, particularly in the early stages of the studies.
- Students' varied financial situations are taken into account in all activities.
- Students are given the opportunity to borrow equipment that is necessary for their studies.
- Students are given the opportunity to use software that is necessary for their studies for free.
- The university offers enough varied and quiet study areas.

4.4. Disability and accessibility

Disability is not a fixed concept; instead it changes along with the surrounding society. Disability is defined by society's norms, history and attitudes. Previously disability was viewed through the diagnosis and rehabilitation, but these days we have moved away from this approach to a social model, where disability is understood as the disabled person's relationship with the society that surrounds them. Discriminatory attitudes, an inaccessible environment and obstacles to communication produce and maintain disability.

People with disabilities are a varied group, and not all disabilities are visible. A physically disabled person may need mobility aids such as a walker,

wheelchair or mobility scooter. But not all physically disabled people need these aids. There are also different levels of hearing loss. A person may be hard of hearing, which means that they can hear to some extent, or deaf/Deaf, which means that they are unable to understand speech through hearing. People who are Deaf mainly communicate by sign language. The spectrum of visual impairments is vast, and only a fraction of people who are classed as visually impaired or blind cannot see anything at all.

Accessibility means that all kinds of people and various levels of ability are taken into consideration when designing the physical environment. An accessible environment is necessary for disabled people, but we can all benefit from it. Accessibility often refers to the physical environment, but it can also refer to things like services, communications, online services and attitudes. The accessibility of online services ensures that the service is as easy to use and as accessible as possible for all users. Accessibility is key in order to give people with disabilities the chance to live independent lives and to participate in all areas of life.

In addition to physical accessibility, accessibility also refers to hearing accessibility and vision accessibility. When the concept of accessibility is expanded, it can also be seen to include accessibility relating to communication and comprehension. Next, we will examine what physical, hearing and vision accessibility entails on a general level, and highlight practical examples of accessibility in the university community. Accessibility is an extensive concept, and in these guidelines, we will highlight our main observations.

Physical accessibility mainly refers to the ability to move in a space with different kinds of aids. It should, however, be noted that some disabilities are invisible, and an accessible environment is also important for people who have difficulties walking, for example. Visually impaired people also benefit from an accessible environment. Physical accessibility includes things like handrails, ramps, elevators, automatic doors and threshold-free doorways.

In the university community, an accessible environment means that all entrances and routes to services, premises and activities are accessible. Classrooms have enough space between tables for a mobility aid, and there is also free access to the front of the class. There is enough knee room under tables so that those using wheelchairs can get close enough, and furniture can be moved. Corridors are wide enough (900 mm) and there is enough space to turn around with a mobility aid (1500 mm). There must also be an accessible toilet. At larger events, it may be necessary to arrange for separate wheelchair spaces with good visibility of the stage/speaker.

Hearing accessibility refers to good acoustics, sound projection, hearing aids and sufficient lighting. All rooms with a public address system must also have a sound transfer system. The most common and primary sound transfer system is the induction loop. The induction loop transfers sound from a microphone or other sound source to the hearing aid of a person with a hearing impairment at a sufficient volume, and

it also reduces background noise. Good lighting is important to make it possible to read lips. Reading lips means watching the movements of the mouth, which adds extra information to help with hearing.

A main part of the hearing accessibility in the university community is induction loops, which make it possible for people with hearing loss to hear well. It is also important to avoid rooms with echo and dim lighting. It should also be ensured that participants can see the speaker's face well and have a clear view of the stage. In terms of seating arrangements organisers should ensure that the participants can see each other well.

Vision accessibility includes even, glare free lighting, clear signage, tactile contrasts and high-contrast markings. The chain of signage should be unbroken, and the signs should be easy to spot and read. It is important that signs stand out clearly from their surroundings, and that there is sufficient contrast between the text and the background. When choosing the positioning of signage, make sure that it can be examined close up. It is also important that it is safe to move around on the premises and that routes are logical and clear. It is particularly important to clearly highlight any height differences to make it safe to move through the space. The risk of tripping must also be taken into consideration in the choice of furniture.

When considering the vision accessibility in the university community, one must also take the hearing accessibility into account to make sure that students can participate fully. The font size must be large enough and the contrast must be sufficient so that a person with impaired vision can follow the teaching. It is also a good idea to read the material out loud to make it easier to follow.

Accessibility is not only related to the built environment; it should also be taken into account in the planning of services and events, and in any meetings. Instead of thinking that accessibility is one measure or thing, we should look at it as one part of the path that the student follows through their studies. All services must be accessible to

all students. Different abilities must also be considered when planning the contents in any activity-based and inclusive sections. It is important that all those who plan and carry out the activities have at least a basic understanding of accessibility.

There are many different kinds of disabilities and illnesses, and each person's needs are unique, so treating everyone the same is not enough to ensure equality. Achieving true equality may require adjustments to be made for people with disabilities. Authorities, education providers, employers and providers of goods and services must make reasonable adjustments for a person with a disability (Non-Discrimination Act). In practice, reasonable adjustments often mean rearranging rooms, acquiring aids for temporary use, or adjusting a service. In the university community, adjustments might include necessary aids in a classroom and adapting the teaching. If there are accessibility issues in the built environment, these can often be addressed through services. This might mean rearranging the furniture in a cramped space or moving into a bigger space to make space for a mobility aid, guiding a visually impaired person from the entrance to the event space in a labyrinthine building, or communicating in writing instead of speech with a d/Deaf person.

A participant with a disability may also use the services of a personal assistant or interpreter. The personal assistant helps with the things the person needs help with because of their illness or disability. This can include help with moving, reaching things, transfers, meals and many other things. A Deaf person may work with a sign language interpreter, and a person with a speech impairment may use a speech assistant. In meetings with people with disabilities, always speak

directly to the disabled person. The assistant or interpreter follows instructions given by the disabled person.

Accessibility is also part of communications. When accessibility and diversity are a visible part of the communications, this sends out a strong message that all are welcome to participate. One central and important aspect of communicating about accessibility is producing accessibility information for the website. Accessibility information gives details on the accessibility of an event, space or service ahead of time. Accessibility information includes details on the physical accessibility of the space, as well as general accessibility practice. General accessibility practice refers to things like assistance and interpreting practices.

The accessibility information includes details on the accessibility of arrival, entrances, the space/event, and toilets. It is also good practice to include photos in the accessibility information to help people get an idea of the space. It is also important to mention any accessibility issues which

may impact participation. When the communications also directly state any accessibility issues, this gives the participant the tools to plan their visit according to their specific needs. These details allow a person coming to the event/space to prepare for their visit ahead of time. There also needs to be a way to ask questions about the accessibility if needed, so we recommend appointing a contact person for accessibility matters who can answer any additional questions.

When attendance to an event is by invitation and registration, it is a good idea to also ask about any accessibility needs during registration. This sends the message that the organisers want to cater to participants' varying needs, and it also lowers the threshold for participation. This is particularly important in situations where an event takes place outside the familiar study environment, when accessible transport or an accessible hotel room may be needed. A participant may also need the presentation slides ahead of time, or they may want to make sure that a seat has been reserved for their interpreter.

Section 4.4. Disability and accessibility was written by Riesa Consultative Oy.

Equality checklist for accessibility

- Accessibility information has been produced for the event/service, including visual guidance for the event space/service location.
- The entrance to the event space is on street level or has a ramp (a sufficiently gentle slope and with handrails on both sides), or the event space has a separate accessible entrance.
- Corridors are wide enough (min. 900 mm), have a hard surface, and are safe and free from obstructions (e.g. cables running through a corridor).
- There is enough space to turn around with a mobility aid (min. 1500 mm turning circle).
- The event space has an accessible toilet.
- All areas of the event have step-free access throughout the event, and the routes from area to area is clear and logical.
- Spaces with a public address system also have a functioning induction loop.
- Spaces that have an induction loop have been signposted with the induction loop symbol and a coverage map.
- The space has sufficient lighting to enable lipreading.
- Signage is clear and logical, and signs stand out from their surroundings.
- Height differences on the floor have been clearly marked (e.g. with high-contrast tape).

4.5. Campuses

Many universities have several campuses. In this case it is important to also make sure that all campuses are equal. The quality of the teaching and other university services (including outsourced services such as catering) must be equal on all campuses. It is particularly important to ensure that students have equal access to various study and wellbeing support services, regardless of which campus they are based on. It is problematic if some services are only available on some campuses. If this is the case, the university must also make sure that the different campuses are well connected so that it is easy for students and staff to travel from one campus to another. Travel caused by joint lectures arranged in collaboration by different campuses can be reduced by offering hybrid lectures when applicable, but then it is particularly important to ensure equality in terms of which campus the teaching staff is located at from lecture to lecture.

It is important to continuously examine the different practices at all campuses and to try to harmonise them when needed so that student and

staff are in an equal position. Universities with multiple campuses should also focus on active community building in order to create a shared community for all members of the university community in addition to smaller, campus-specific communities. It is important that the university and student organisations put on a varied programme of events and activities at all campuses. Because of the structure of some universities and the public transport options in the local area, one good option could be to organise shared transport from a smaller campus to the main campus where an event, student union meeting or workshop is taking place.

When appointing people who are responsible for different tasks, it is also recommended to make sure different campuses are well represented as it is often easier to approach someone from one's own campus when problems arise. It is also important to advertise the activities of the university and the student organisations equally to people based at all campuses.

Equality checklist for different campuses

- The quality of the teaching is equal on all campuses.
- The quality of and access to university services is equal on all campuses.
- As well as the equality of various support services, other services such as catering are also considered.
- All campuses follow the same practices.
- Events and activities are organised equally on all campuses.
- Different campuses are also taken into account when assigning responsibilities.
- Events and activities are advertised equally to people on all campuses.

4.6. Racism and anti-racism

The anti-racist perspective should be acknowledged in the university environment because racism is also present in the world of academia. In order for people to be able to act in an anti-racist way, they must first know what racism is. Racism is based on the process of racialisation, where actual or assumed biological characteristics are given a value-based significance. In practice this means that specific characteristics of the human body are given a certain value. These characteristics are then used to place people in different hierarchical categories.

The ideology produced by the racialisation process was established through the race theories that were prevalent in the 18th and 19th centuries, where skin colour and hair type were chosen as characteristics signifying race. In these race theories, the white race was placed on the highest level in the hierarchy, and other, non-white races were placed below it. These imaginary races were thought to have different biological characteristics in terms of intelligence, for example, and they were used to justify the oppression and subjugation that white people carried out against non-whites.

Even though science has later disproved the concept of a biological race time and time again, these historical ideas of different races are still visible in our society today in the form of racism. Racism means giving a person or group of people a lower value than some other group of people by racial grounds. Racism has also been described as the sum of power and prejudice.

Racism has multiple levels and takes many forms. The different levels of racism can be examined by dividing racism into everyday racism, systemic racism and internalised racism, for example. This is only one way of dividing racism; there are also others.

Everyday racism means discriminatory behaviour which takes place in various everyday interactions between individuals or groups of people. Everyday racism is characterised by routine, re-

petition and it not being challenged, and that is why it is often seen in attitudes and familiar models of behaviour. The scale of everyday racism varies from seemingly harmless microaggressions to physical violence. Microaggressions are seemingly harmless comments or actions which nonetheless contain a racist presumption. Microaggressions have an othering impact because they strengthen and maintain racist or otherwise discriminatory stereotypes. They are typically short, unconscious and especially commonplace, which makes it difficult to notice that they constitute racism.

Systemic or institutional racism refers to racist discrimination which takes places in the structures and institutions of society. Systemic racism can be difficult to perceive directly, and often it remains hidden. This form of racism is a remnant from the racist ideology which once justified and started discriminatory practices. Even if an institution has detached itself from the racist ideology, it may still contain some racist structures which the institution is unable to identify. For example, the entire institution may have been created with the assumption that it will only be used by white people, and this can still be visible in the structures of a university. In concrete terms it can be seen for instance in the fact that the marketing material of the university only shows white people, and brown and black people are only used to represent international students. Systemic racism can also be seen in the perspectives that are chosen, for example if the information conveyed in all the teaching materials has been produced from a Western and white perspective. This could mean that the creators of the materials were primarily white and mainly focused on examining information produced in the West.

Internalised racism refers to a situation where someone in an oppressed minority starts to believe in and internalise racist thoughts about themselves and non-white people or groups. Internalised racism is a result of social oppression which the person has been subjected to for a long time. This may lead to a non-white person thinking they are less qualified to apply to university, and at worst they may not even try to apply because of it.

Anti-racism helps us dismantle racism. The starting point of anti-racism is admitting that our society is racist. It is normal that people who live within racist and white-normative structures have racist thought patterns, and the most important thing is being able to question these thought patterns and structures in order to actively dismantle them. Within anti-racism, we think that all our activities will increase, maintain or reduce inequality and discriminatory practices. Anti-racist activities are always aiming to reduce them. This is active action to dismantle racism.

It is important for universities to identify and admit that there is also racism within their walls. If an organisation only dissociates itself from racism as an ideology, it can easily dismiss the systemic racism within the organisation. This can even make the situation worse as there are no attempts to actively opposing and dismantling

racism. This is why it is important to include the anti-racist perspective in universities' non-discrimination plan. Plans often talk about equality and multiculturalism at great length, but often they do not bind or encourage the organisation to promoting anti-racism.

Universities should ideally create clear processes for dealing with cases of racism and discrimination so that they can be handled in a clear and consistent way. Creating clear guidelines for the whole organisation on how to deal with cases of racism and discrimination is also a good way to promote the creation of anti-racist operating models and get them embedded into the community. Having agreed on a joint operating model can make it easier to intervene in racist situations.

In general, it is a good idea to have principles for safer spaces set out for all premises. Principles for safer spaces refer to an attempt to create shared practices which will make everyone feel respected, welcome and safe. These are often joint ground rules for a space which have been outlined by the staff. The principles communicate that we want to make sure everyone feels safe by taking responsibility for this. Ideally, the principles should also include clear instructions for what to do if someone does not follow to them.

Checklist for an anti-racist university

- The university identifies and admits that racism exists.
- The university examines its operations with the help of an anti-racism advisor.
- The non-discrimination plan includes an anti-racist approach as one of the goals.
- The university organises regular training sessions on this topic for both staff and students.
- The university has appointed people responsible for equality, and it is their job to intervene in cases of racism.
- The university has clear processes for dealing with cases of racism and discrimination, and everyone is aware of them.
- The university has created an anonymous form which can be used to report cases of harassment.
- Principles for safer spaces are used in all premises on campus.
- Harassment contact person have been appointed for events.

Section 4.6. Racism and anti-racism was written by Alice Jäske and Priska Niemi-Sampan, Anti-Racism Advisors at Mixed Finns ry

4.7. Gender and sexual diversity

The people who study and work at universities are a diverse group of people when it comes to gender and sexuality. Gender diversity is a broad concept which covers both the fact that there are many genders, and the fact that a person's gender is a varied matter. We cannot determine a person's gender from external factors such as a person's physical characteristics, name, voice or how they dress.

Gender is one way of categorising people as well as a legal attribute. It consists of various genetic, developmental, hormonal, physiological, social and cultural characteristics. Gender identity refers to how a person experiences or defines their own gender. Gender identity is also always defined by the person themselves and should not be defined on anyone else's behalf. Cisgender refers to a person whose gender identity matches the sex they were assigned at birth. If the sex assigned at birth and the gender identity contradict each other, then a person can be transgender or part of some other gender minority.

Gender minorities are people who do not feel at home in the sex they were assigned at birth, or whose gender, gender expression and gender experience do not match the normative views on gender in any or some way. Normative views refer to the fact that for a long time, our society has divided people only into binary genders, i.e. men and women. This can be seen in toilets, dress codes and ways of speaking. This kind of division should be avoided, because it excludes nonbinary and genderless people.

Sexuality tells us who a person feels sexually, romantically and/or emotionally attracted to. The definition is based on both the person's own gender and the gender they are attracted to. Sexual minorities are people whose sexual orientation is something other than heterosexual. Sexuality is a private matter, and choosing whether or not to express it cannot influence how a person is treated or their opportunities to participate.

In the university community, we must avoid making assumptions about a person's gender, gendering people based on assumptions, and using gendered language. Work duties must not be assigned based on gender, and people of different genders must have the opportunity to apply equally to all roles or training programmes. At events there is no need to plan things like seating or performance limits based on gender. Dress codes should be the same for everyone, not separated by gender.

It is also important to make sure that there are plenty of toilets suited to all genders on university premises. There should also be gender neutral single or shared changing rooms or other spaces which are typically separate for women and men. If activities are organised in premises outside the university, organisers should make sure that these premises have gender neutral spaces and, if needed, agree to have temporary neutral signs placed over gendered toilet signs.

The most important principle in terms of taking gender and sexual diversity into consideration is that no assumptions should ever be made about anyone's gender, sexuality or relationships. Assumptions most often arise in everyday conversations or during lectures, but also on official forms, in information systems and on premises. Highlighting the issue and organising training about it is important to help the members of the university community to weed out assumptions from their own activities.

Checklist for gender and sexual diversity

- There are plenty of gender neutral toilets, changing rooms and other typically gendered spaces on campuses. All individual toilets will be made gender neutral.
- Finnish uses the gender neutral pronoun hän, but ensure that the correct pronouns are used when communicating in English or Swedish.
- Primarily use neutral language in all situations, e.g. by referring to the audience rather than ladies and gentlemen.
- Check whether gender is a relevant piece of information for example on forms. If it is, add the options “other” and “I prefer not to say”.
- Acknowledge the diversity of families and couples on forms.
- University staff are given gender and sexual diversity training.
- At events, participants are not gendered, and the dress code is the same for everyone.
- The non-discrimination plan takes gender diversity into account in all measures and in the language that is used.
- Use terms chosen by the minorities themselves and ensure that the terminology is correct.
- Respect the right to self-identification, make it possible to specify which name to use or choose one’s own name.
- Make it possible to correct or delete sensitive personal data. Make it easier to change details relating to name or gender. Also take this into account in terms of the details on exam certificates. Make it free to change personal data.
- Acknowledge the minority stress caused by things like assumptions and misgendering and its impact on the daily lives of the students and university staff.

4.8. Loneliness and belonging

Many students suffer from loneliness. One in four students experience prolonged loneliness, and more than half experience occasional loneliness. One in three students also do not feel part of any group related to their studies (The Finnish Student Health and Wellbeing Survey 2022). When Covid-19 restrictions were reversed in Finland, this did not reduce the amount of loneliness people experience; loneliness is still a significant issue, and young people and young adults (15–34-year-olds) suffer from it the most (Loneliness Barometer; 2023). Any student may experience loneliness, but it is particularly prevalent among students who are under mental stress, young female students (18–21-year-olds), those who are part of a minority group, and students who live alone (Parikka et al. 2022; Diehl et al. 2018; Hysing et al. 2020).

Loneliness has a significant impact on the student's physical, mental and social wellbeing, as well as their general coping and ability to study. Loneliness is also connected to things like reduced motivation to study, coping with the studies, challenges with processing information, improving one's expertise, and an increased risk of dropping out. Loneliness is a bigger health risk than obesity or smoking, for example (e.g. Baarck 2021; Cacioppo et al. 2002; Hawkley & Cacioppo, 2010; Holt-Lunstad et al. 2015; Kraav et al. 2020; Kraav et al. 2021; Bu et al. 2020; Ybarra et al. 2008; Stadtfeld et al. 2019; Lähteenoja 2010; Tinto 1996).

There is nothing unusual or wrong about feeling lonely. It is part of being human, the same as other emotions and experiences. Feelings of loneliness come from needs related to belonging, feelings of meaning and personal relationships which are not being met in the way that the individual needs. Everyone feels loneliness at some point in their lives. Just like with any other needs, when it comes to loneliness it is important to act in a way which helps to get closer to meeting the need.

Loneliness cannot be seen on the outside; it is the student's own, personal experience. People can still feel lonely even though they are in a relationship, have friends or are in the middle of a group of people. Being alone is not the same as feeling lonely. No one chooses to be lonely, but everyone wants and needs to be alone from time to time. Even if a student spends a lot of time on their own, this does not necessarily mean that they are lonely. On the other hand the most extroverted, chatty or active student in the group can also be the loneliest.

As you can never know which student or member of the community feels lonely, it is best to discuss the issue publicly as a phenomenon which affect all students or the whole community, rather than individually. Talk about loneliness, explain how common it is and all the things it can impact. Emphasise that being lonely does not mean that the person is a failure, faulty or wrong in some way. Encourage people to treat others with kindness and consideration. Act as an example and ask others how they are, look them in the eye, smile and say hello – small actions can have a large impact.

Teaching staff can also try to organise experiences of belonging for the students as part of the existing structures of university life: random small groups, using pair and small group work in a suitable way, agreeing on joint ground rules, practising social skills in a group, and encouraging students to invite students they do not know so well along for lunch, for coffee or to study groups. Acknowledge students' varied needs and circum-

stances as well as possible. Ensure equal opportunities to participate for all students.

Many people experience loneliness at university, and not talking about the issue can make these students feel even more detached from others. Many think they are the only ones experiencing loneliness. Even just validating the feelings of loneliness as a significant issue that impacts the ability to study can have a big impact.

The matter can be raised in many different ways: by posting information about loneliness and support services on the organisation's website or social media channels, speaking about the issue at various functions and events, and offering

low-threshold ways for students to highlight their own feelings of loneliness. Training should be offered to those who work with students on themes related to dealing with loneliness so that as many as possible of the student-facing staff know how to take loneliness into account in an appropriate way in their own work.

Encourage students to seek out the wellbeing staff at their own university, organisations (such as Nyyti ry and HelsinkiMissio) or student healthcare for support with loneliness. It is important to get help with loneliness at an early stage to avoid the spiral of loneliness from getting worse. University can be the place to stop the vicious cycle of loneliness.

Section 4.8 Loneliness and belonging was written by Annina Lindberg, Project Manager at Nyyti ry (Yksinäisyystyö korkeakouluissa, a project on loneliness at universities)

Checklist for reducing loneliness and promoting belonging

- Reduce the stigma and shame related to loneliness through correct information, which will make the student feel less guilty about their loneliness.
- Show the student that there are people who are interested in them and care about them. It can be enough to just ask "How are you?".
- Increase compassion in the student community by influencing the prevailing attitude climate: talk to the students about why every single one of us should treat others with kindness and respect at university, and why these things matter to all of us.
- Offer opportunities for feeling belonging throughout everyday university structures.
- Ensure the equal treatment of students and take into account their different life circumstances, backgrounds and needs.
- Increase the information available and make sure the topic is spoken about more in different ways, e.g. through websites, social media, or functions and events.
- Increase the university community's skills in dealing with loneliness as part of their work, and encourage others to increase their own ability to take on the issue.
- Encourage students to seek out the wellbeing staff at their own university, organisations (Nyyti ry, HelsinkiMissio) or student healthcare for support with loneliness with a low threshold.

4.9. Food and drink

The most typical meal taking place at university is lunch. It is important that those who follow a special diet or cultural dietary requirements also get food of equal quality. Those with allergies and restrictions must be catered for in a way that still allows for nutritious and high-quality meals. Meals at campus should also be available for those who study in the evenings. For many students, access to a microwave and/or fridge would increase the equality of mealtimes.

Food and drink are also present at many kinds of events. Alcohol is something that often needs to be considered at informal events. If alcoholic bev-

erages are served or sold at an event, then there must also be non-alcoholic drinks available as an equal alternative. If sparkling wine is served, for example, then the non-alcoholic option should be a similar fizzy drink without alcohol. Among student events apropos, sitz parties and annual balls in particular are often seen as events with a strong focus on alcohol. At these events, organisers must make sure that equal non-alcoholic options are available, and also actively encourage people to participate with less or no alcohol. No one should assume or question the reasons behind someone's choice not to drink alcohol.

Equality checklist for food and drink

- The lunches served at university are nutritious and of an even, high quality. This also applies to special diets.
- Eating on campus is also possible for those who have classes in the evenings.
- When alcohol is served or sold, there are equal non-alcoholic options available.
- In the communications for events, participants are encouraged to participate with less or no alcohol.
- Alcohol-free events are also available.
- It has been made easy for participants to inform the organisers that they do not drink alcohol, e.g. by buying a ticket with an alcohol-free menu or by mentioning this on the registration form.
- No one assumes or questions the reasons behind anyone's dietary requirements or choice not to drink alcohol.

4.10. Mental health and coping

Equality is inseparably linked to mental health, and both of these things will impact each other directly and indirectly. Equality and mental health interact in complex ways: equality in society and communities protects mental health, while inequality is a risk factor for mental health problems. On the other hand mental health problems can increase discrimination and inequality in society and communities.

Mental health is also an integral part of a person's general health, and a cornerstone of our wellbeing. Good mental health is a resource which helps us to enjoy life and feel like life has meaning. It helps us establish and maintain relationships, function as active and creative members of society, and feel like we are accepted in our communities. Good mental health can be seen as a basic right which all should have an equal right to.

At the moment, a regrettably large number of students are struggling to cope. According to the Finnish Student Health and Wellbeing Survey KOTT (2021), 56 percent of students in higher education are under mental pressure, and more than a third are suffering from clinically significant mental pressure. In addition, 13 percent of students in higher education have been diagnosed with depression in the last year, and the same number also suffer from an anxiety disorder. Nearly one in five are at a heightened risk of developing an eating disorder. 42 percent stated that they had experienced study-related burn-out in the last month. The mental health issues experienced by students are strongly gendered: women report significantly more issues than men (KOTT 2021).

The causes of the mental ill health among students are varied: individual characteristics, resources and personal history, the environment for social interactions, study conditions, as well as social and global factors, culture and atmosphere.

It is often said that anyone can develop a mental health disorder. This is true in the sense that

mental health disorders are so common that one in two will develop one during their lives. However, it is also known that all people do not have the same risk factors in their lives, and for some these factors pile up.

Risk factors that apply to many students are low incomes and financial insecurity. Not all students are the same in this area either; many are able to compensate by working alongside their studies, but not all have the capacity to do that. The most financial difficulties are experienced by the students who suffer from health problems which affect the studies, and the main health problems which affects the studies are mental health issues (Eurostudent VII 2021).

We know that students who are part of minority groups seem to accumulate the most mental illnesses and the least positive mental health (e.g. Student Barometer 2021). Minority stress, discrimination, bullying and experiences of racism have a negative impact on mental health.

Experiencing loneliness is known to have a dual impact on mental health; on the one hand, loneliness is a risk factor for mental health issues, and on the other hand, mental health issues make people more likely to be lonely. In terms of students' mental health, it is important for students to feel part of their student community and groups, have relationships with their peers, social support and confidence. Therefore strengthening these should be a top priority for universities, particularly in these post-Covid times with a weakened sense of community.

Even though there is now less stigma and more openness related to mental health issues, people who suffer from them are still to this day having to deal with prejudice, shame and feeling like an outsider. The attitude climate and social norms at universities impact how safe people feel talking about their mental health challenges in the student community; worries about whether talking about the challenges will impact their role in the community, whether friends will disappear, whether it will lead to discrimination or impact the access to and quality of guidance.

Mental health problems are the most common of all the health issues that students face. Of all limiting health issues, mental health problems are felt to have the most impact on the studies (Eurostudent VII 2021). Mental health issues often have a negative impact on the ability to function and cognitive abilities, which may lead to issues with learning and memory. The cognitive difficulties are relieved when the person gets better.

If the studies have been on hold because of mental health issues, then the university must make sure to both support the student's engagement in the community and groups, and offer individual study arrangements when the student returns to their studies. The university should consider what accessibility means for students who are facing mental health issues.

The existing sufficient and suitable services supporting mental health are key in promoting mental health. Currently students do not feel confident in getting help and support when they need it. 78 percent of students facing mental health issues feel that society and their university have not helped them overcome their issues (Eurostudent VII 2021), and 65 percent of students state that they have not received enough mental health services to meet their needs (KOTT 2021).

Section 4.10 Mental health and coping was written by Tommi Yläkangas and Minna Savolainen from Nyyti ry

Checklist for mental health support and promotion

- Universities promote all students' right to good mental health by:
 - teaching mental health skills
 - strengthening the sense of community and helping students to join groups and establish relationships with their peers
 - creating guidelines for preventing discrimination, harassment and bullying
 - identifying the impact that minority stress has on mental health, and supporting the inclusion of minority groups in the student community
 - ensuring accessible and sufficient support for studying as well as psychosocial support
 - having more open discussions about mental health.
- Universities support students who are suffering from mental health issues by:
 - ensuring sufficient support and guidance for the studies
 - creating an individual study plan with the student and following up the student's progress
 - communicating clearly about the support services that are available
 - guaranteeing the necessary special study arrangements and alternative approaches
 - increasing the mental health competence of the staff.

4.11. Language and communications

Language equality must be ensured in the work of the university. It is important that parallel modules which are offered in different languages are of the same quality and follow the same practices. The materials used must be equally extensive in both languages. The teachers' language skills must be of a sufficient standard, and the teaching must genuinely be given in the language of the module. There are currently some equality issues particularly in modules with the same learning objectives, but where there are significant differences in the Finnish and English implementation. As a result, learning objectives are not reached in the same way.

There should also be equal communications in the different languages. The university's online network must offer all relevant information regardless of which language is used, messages containing information must be available in full in all the languages of the university, and the communications of the student organisations should also be multilingual.

In addition to communications, it should also be possible to participate in activities without speaking the main language of the university. In practice, this often requires some effort and balancing in order to achieve truly multilingual activities instead of carrying out the activities only in English, for example, as this could exclude some people who lack sufficient English skills. In some situations, such as tutor training, parallel events in different languages are a natural option.

In the services of the university it is important to ensure that there is equal access to different support services, regardless of the student's language skills.

Language equality is also increased by signage which includes Braille, and descriptors (known as alt text) used with images. Those who are in charge of communications and creating different kinds of materials must ensure that they are also accessible for example with a screen reader,

and that any text in the images is also available in text format, even when the image is only used as an illustration. Colours and contrasts must be accessible. Accessibility is also improved through subtitling videos and transcribing audio into written text.

Regardless of which language is used, the quality of the language is also important. In all communications, you should aim to use language that is as clear and easy to understand as possible, explain terminology that is unusual in standard language, and pay particular attention to headings and sub-headings in longer texts.

The quality of different language versions can be maintained and improved for instance by creating a glossary of established translations and by saving previous communications in a way that makes them easy to reuse. In addition to different languages and language accessibility and quality, language equality also means paying attention to equality on a wider scale: diversity and equality need to be visible in all the language that is used and in examples used in the teaching, for instance.

Checklist for language equality

- The quality of the teaching does not depend on the language used.
- University communications are published in all the languages of the university. Study materials and important notices are available in different languages.
- University services are available in all the languages of the university.
- The communications and activities of the student union are multilingual.
- Alt text is used for any pictures in the communications.
- All language versions use high-quality language which is clear and easy to understand.
- All colours and contrasts are accessible.
- The diversity of the university community is visible in the communications (e.g. imagery).
- Videos are subtitled.
- Transcriptions are produced of audio material.
- Information and signage have been produced in Braille.
- Diversity and equality can be seen in the language that is used and any examples used in the teaching.

4.12. Highly sensitive persons

There are also people in the university community who are highly sensitive persons (HSP). High sensitivity usually refers to sensory or neural oversensitivity.

Sensory oversensitivity can refer to one or more heightened senses. HSPs can be any age. For some HSPs, their sensations are heightened so that they can hear sounds at higher frequencies than the average person, for example. For others, the oversensitivity is caused by the lack of a numbing mechanism, which means that the person's nervous system does not stop signalling about ongoing sensory stimulus.

An overstimulated or sensitive nervous system can lead to internal or external sensitivity. External sensitivity refers to a state where the body reacts to nearly all sensations in a stronger way and processes them more deeply because the nervous system is overstimulated. Internal sensitivity, on the other hand, can refer to stronger or very physical emotional reactions.

The sensory overload is increased by things like bright or blinking lights, loud or continuous noises, extreme temperatures (hot or cold), or strong perfumes. Some HSPs may also struggle with different sensations on their skin, such as touch, fabrics and materials, or the texture of food, for example. This kind of strain applies to all people to some extent, but HSPs may find the effects to be stronger than others.

What HSPs often share is that the high sensitivity increases the stress on the brain, which makes the person feel more tired. Sensory and neural strain can cause things like irritation, tiredness and concentration difficulties. This impacts the person's ability to work and study. This is why the university community should examine options for reducing the sensory overload and offer the support that HSPs need. This can mean things like offering a quiet space to work.

Checklist for sensory processing sensitivity

- Examining sensory overload on the premises: lights, soundproofing, temperature, access to privacy and quiet.
- Collect (anonymously) experiences and wishes from students and staff about taking high sensitivity into account for example when updating the equality and non-discrimination plan.
- Advise members of the community to avoid using strong perfume.
- Offer spaces for quiet and relaxation.
- Take enough breaks in the teaching and also make sure the staff can take enough breaks.

5. Tools and methods

5.1. Non-discrimination plan and monitoring

The Non-Discrimination Act obliges all educational institutions to make a non-discrimination plan. The plan can be a stand-alone plan, or it can be included in the equality plan or some other programme. The authorities recommend combining the equality and non-discrimination plans. The non-discrimination plan is a useful tool which supports and ensures systematic work to promote equality and prevent discrimination.

The non-discrimination plan should always be specific for each university and campus, because what the community and its members need from the equality work varies. When drawing up the plan, it is a good idea to use an equality working group instead of making it a one- or two-person project. If the university does not have an Equality Advisor, it is a good idea to employ an external equality expert or advisor, of which there are plenty.

The university community's non-discrimination plan must be a document which takes the entire community into account, leads and supports the equality work, and is created in collaboration with the university, the student union and other members of the community. Including everyone in creating the equality plan improves its usability and increases its use in the daily work. Inclusion also helps people understand the equality themes and strengthens their vision of the equality planning as a shared matter. Therefore it is important to include the entire community in creating the plan. Members of the community can be included in the planning e.g. through different kinds of working groups, surveys and interviews.

It is important that the equality plan is based on data collected by the organisation so that it truly meets the needs that have been observed in the organisation in regard to achieving equality. The work on creating the plan begins with an assessment where the work of the organisation and its operational environment is examined through an equality perspective. One of the criteria for the non-discrimination plan is that it must contain an assessment of the current situation. The purpose of this assessment is to find out how well members of the community feel that equality has been achieved.

The organisation's existing data can be used when assessing the starting point. It is also essential to collect new and up to date information to support the existing data. Ways to collect information include:

- surveys
- themed interviews
- assessment meetings and workshops
- hearings and discussions
- accessibility assessments (instructions from the Finnish Association of People with Physical Disabilities and the Finnish Federation of the Visually Impaired)
- assessments of the accessibility of teaching materials and communications
- email feedback
- assessments of equality in admissions
- teaching quality assessment procedures
- self-evaluation tools
- atmosphere indicators and
- statistics relating to the staff and students (diversity perspective).

A survey-based assessment can be carried out as part of wellbeing surveys and wellbeing at work surveys. It is a particularly good idea to organise hearings and discussions with groups who are verifiably at risk of discrimination. One good way is to circulate proposals for comment or organise discussions with organisations who represent different groups (e.g. MTKK, a work, training and cultural organisation for immigrants). It is also important to have discussions and use other research data which is specific to the university. In matters relating to the assessment of the current situation it is important to consider the following areas, among others:

- student and staff diversity (see checklists in earlier sections of this Equality model)
- the experiences and views of those who have experienced discrimination
- the social, financial and geographical dimension
- physical premises (see checklist in an earlier section of this Equality model)
- ethnic background, age, gender (especially in gendered fields), minorities, disabilities and other limitations
- existing modes of operation when issues are discovered
- attitudes and atmosphere
- various events (organised by the student union, student organisations, student tutors, the university, projects, student groups)
- study situations: being heard equally, atmosphere, intervening in equality issues, assessment, taking different learning styles into account
- guidance situations: acknowledging different types of learners pedagogically, taking educational background into account, attitude towards those struggling to cope/with mental health issues
- the whole path taken by the student from admissions to internships and graduation (equality should be assessed all the way from the entrance exam to graduation)
- giving equal attention to all campuses and fields.

The data collected during the assessment of the current situation should be stored and used for long-term monitoring of the measures that are carried out. For monitoring purposes it is a good idea to carry out surveys regularly and with more or less the same questions. The plan should include an assessment of how well equality has been achieved, as well as required and planned measures to promote equality. Based on the equality assessments it is a good idea to create indicators that are as concrete as possible, and which can be used to monitor how the equality is improved. The indicators should be focused on identified challenges and goals based on these. The goals should be included in the non-discrimination plan, because concrete goals make it easier to monitor the plan and its effectiveness. The equality indicators should ideally measure the community's experiences of things like psychological safety, inclusive leadership, fairness and equal opportunities, harassment and discrimination, recruitment, taking different factors which affect equality into account, as well as the organisation's commitment to the values of diversity, equality and inclusion.

Because equality is a wide concept it is difficult to cover everything at once. Measurability can be improved for example by including annual priorities in the non-discrimination plan. The priorities could all be different grounds for discrimination. This makes it easier to include concrete measures in the plan, and to measure the progress in one area.

It is a good idea to appoint one or two people to be in charge of the non-discrimination plan, who are not only in charge of preparing the plan, but also of including other people in the process. The planning group should be diverse, includ-

ing people of different ages and genders, who have different roles in the community and represent different minorities. Parties from outside the community can also be invited to join, such as NGOs representing minority groups. It is vital to inform the entire university community about the non-discrimination plan so that all members of the community know that it exists and are able to read it. The goal should be to make everyone in the community familiar with the plan on some level. The communications should emphasise the purpose of the non-discrimination plan, its concrete nature, and the opportunities to participate in the equality planning.

Equality communications do not just entail telling people about the non-discrimination plan and the harassment contact persons. Other forms of important communications include informing the community of the results of equality surveys and problems that they have brought to light; no community is perfect, but identifying and admitting problems is an important first step towards resolving any issues. Equality can also be improved through visible communications about equality on campuses and through different channels: why it is important, how every member of the community can promote it, and what the current equality situation is at the university or society in general. Another important form of communications is easy access to accessibility information. If the accessibility information for the campus is easily available, then it is more likely that those who are putting on activities on campus will use it as part of their own communications.

When a good non-discrimination plan is in place, there is still some way to go before achieving an equal university community. If the non-discrimination plan is written on a very general level, a separate plan of action may be needed. It is important to monitor the implementation of the plan and evaluate its effectiveness. Evaluation is part of the practical implementation of the plan because it spreads awareness of equality and the need to improve it. Monitoring and evaluation can be carried out on three different levels: 1) evaluating the plan, 2) evaluating the implementation of the measures included in the plan, and 3) eval-

uating the effectiveness of the non-discrimination plan. Monitoring the implementation of the measures is easier if the aims, responsibilities and timetables for the measures are included in the plan. If a separate working group has been appointed to implement the plan, the group should report to the party named in the non-discrimination plan on the activities that have been carried out. The effectiveness of the plan can be evaluated for example by carrying out assessments on how well equality has been achieved. As an example, the student organisations at the University of Helsinki have carried out reviews and reports which have then been used to improve the non-discrimination plan.

With the implementation of the accessibility plan for higher education and universities (2021), which was created by the Ministry of Education and Culture, all universities will draw up their own accessibility plans by the end of 2022 according to the national accessibility guidelines and goals for higher education. These plans are fundamentally linked with the equality work, and the purpose of the plans is to promote diversity in the recruitment of staff and strengthen access to higher education particularly for students from population groups that are underrepresented in higher education, as well as to support their progress in their studies and employment.

5.2. Student organisations

Student organisations have a significant role in encouragement, creating a sense of community and leading by example within the university. Student organisations often have the opportunity to learn from fellow organisations at other universities and bring back good practices to their own university. The ambition in student organisations' own activities and goals also has a significant impact on the ambition of the university's equality work. The training carried out by student organisations is also an important part of improving equality.

It is important to ensure that student diversity is noted in the organisations' communications and activities, but in addition, student organisations could also build a culture where no one is treated inappropriately, mocked or pressured.

For example when organising different kinds of checkpoint challenges, the organisers must make sure that there is an easy way not to participate at all checkpoints, and that the tasks are not based on humiliating or ridiculing participants. This requires systematic communications and training for both the checkpoint organisers and the participants.

Student organisations usually organise a lot of events. When assessing how varied the activities are, the following things could be kept in mind:

are all events parties taking place in bars, or are there also activities organised for smaller groups? How many of the events are alcohol free, and how easy has it been made not to drink at events where some participants are drinking alcohol? Is it explained clearly who the event is aimed at, and that it is easy to just come along for a little while? Or is it an event where a student could also bring their child?

It is important to highlight that activities are open to all, regardless of background, in all communications. It must be emphasised to those in charge how important it is to engage with everyone, and particularly new members, so that the activities are not cliquey.

A specific characteristic of the student organisations compared to the rest of the university is different kinds of elected positions, such as boards and delegations.

In order to achieve equality between different elected officials it is important to focus on careful orientation and using clear language throughout the term of office. During meetings, it is also particularly important that those leading the meeting have prepared carefully.

This way they will always know what is supposed to happen at different points on the agenda, and they are also able to communicate this clearly to the participants. It is also important to always be able to explain terminology related to the work, so that understanding does not rely on participants daring to ask about things that are unclear.

It is also important to communicate to office bearers ahead of time what is expected of them and what will happen at the next meeting so that they are able to prepare equally.

5.3. Student tutoring

Student tutoring has an important role in building equality within the university. In this work, it is important to consider both the equality in the selection process and the training from the perspective of the applicants/trainees, and the training on equality matters.

In terms of the selection process, it is important to ensure that the selection criteria are clear and consistent for different degrees/fields/campuses, and that the criteria are equal for different kinds of applicants and do not emphasise factors that are irrelevant for the position.

In terms of training, it must be ensured that it is easy for all trainees to participate in the training session. Equality is also increased by access to the training materials after the sessions, and clear and easy practices for compensating for absences. If everyone does not participate in the same training, then it is also important that the different training sessions are of equal quality. The trainers must know their topic well and be well-prepared. It is also important to ensure con-

tinuity in order to achieve equality between trainees receiving training in different years, so that there is no major difference in the quality of the training from year to year.

Regarding the contents of the training, it is important that the training teaches participants to promote equality when carrying out their role. As part of the training, there is an opportunity to give information about equality, models on how to carry out team building with a diverse group of students, what to do in case of emergency, and the trainee's responsibility in terms of these themes.

5.4. Harassment contact persons

Why are they needed?

The existence of harassment contact persons lowers the threshold to report harassment and other inappropriate behaviour, offers a way to support those who have been submitted to harassment, and also communicates the community's anti-harassment values. This also promotes equality and a safer space.

What should harassment contact persons take into account?

The harassment contact person role follows a clear structure in order to allow the contact persons to fulfil their role successfully. Clearly out-

lined responsibilities and tasks help them resolve harassment situations, but they also ensure the contact persons' legal protection.

The harassment contact person role can usually be divided into two parts: permanent harassment contact persons and event-specific harassment contact persons.

When launching and developing these activities, the following questions should be considered and practices written down.

Selecting and replacing harassment contact persons

How, when and by whom are harassment contact persons selected?

The most natural way depends on the university/student union. The selection method might be different for permanent and event-specific harassment contact persons.

What are the requirements for carrying out this role, is the role linked to a specific job title or elected position, or can anyone apply?

The harassment contact persons are often chosen among the staff and board members of the student union, but others can carry out this role too. The most important thing is that they have been trained for the role.

How many harassment contact persons are selected?

Two is a typical number, but more may be better depending on the size of the university/event and how many people tend to reach out to the contact persons.

Diversity among harassment contact persons and their ability to focus on the task

When selecting people for this role, it is important to pay attention to both diversity and continuity. For practical reasons it may make sense to get in new contact persons every year, for example when the organisation gets a new board and between events, but in this case careful attention must be paid to orientation and training.

From a diversity perspective it is important to consider things like the people's genders and other roles in the community. Ideally all harassment contact persons would not be replaced at the same time, and they should be as diverse a group as possible. This improves the continuity of the activities and lowers the threshold for different kinds of people to reach out,

as for some people the gender of the harassment contact persons might be key when they consider whether or not to get in touch.

It does not make sense to select a person as harassment contact persons who has other significant leadership roles or responsibilities in the organisation or during the event. It is also important that the event-specific harassment contact persons are present at the event.

Looking after the harassment contact persons' skills and ability to cope

Training harassment contact persons

The harassment contact persons must receive training. Suitable training is offered by various organisations, but there is no general standard. The training should at the very least go over the role of the harassment contact person, how to treat a person who reaches out, different options for how to approach the situation, as well as the more detailed practice of their own organisation either as part of the training or separately. It is particularly important to highlight the importance of and practices related to confidentiality and secrecy. Those who have held this role for a while must also regularly get the opportunity to talk about the work and go over the basic principles. The community could for example establish a harassment contact person pool, where those who are willing and motivated to act as harassment contact persons can sign up. This would create a structure where the harassment contact persons

can also encourage and support each other, for example by sharing best practices and strengthen their own and their collective skills.

The harassment contact persons' ability to cope

Acting as harassment contact person can be stressful, and it is easy to dwell on the harassment cases. That is why it is important that the organisation has worked out clear routes to access conversational therapy, and those in charge must remind the harassment contact persons regularly to use this opportunity. In some cases, the person who reaches out needs a kind of support or help which is beyond the scope of the harassment contact persons' work. In these cases the organisation must ensure that the harassment contact persons are aware of the correct services inside and outside the university that they can refer the person to.

To ensure that the harassment contact persons are coping well, the organisation must also keep an eye on their stress levels and ensure that no one has to carry out this task if it becomes too taxing for them. Even if one of the permanent harassment contact persons is taking part in an event as a participant and organiser, this does not automatically mean that they also have to act as harassment contact person for the event. The role must also be clearly defined. At events, it is good practice to agree that after a certain time at the afterparty, the harassment contact persons no longer have to keep an eye on incoming messages, and that these will be dealt with or escalated the following day.

Reaching out to a harassment contact person

It is important to consider which channels to offer as ways to contact the harassment contact persons. It is difficult to commit to monitoring all potential channels, especially during events, so it is a good idea to choose a few clear channels. The variety and accessibility of the contact channels makes it easier to reach out, which makes it more tempting from the participants' point of view.

Ideally one contact method should be an online form, as this makes it possible to contact the harassment contact persons anonymously. The option to be anonymous is often seen to lower the threshold for getting in touch about sensitive matters. Anonymity may mean that it is more difficult to resolve the issue, but it may still be useful for the organisers to hear about these situations to help them prevent them in future. On the other hand, the form can also be used for example to express that a comment made in front of an audience bothered someone, in which case this can be verified and possibly brought up with the person who made the comment.

Communications

A natural frequency for communications about the permanent harassment contact persons could be at the start of each term, and a few times during each term. It is also important to update names and contact details on the website when a new person is selected, and also spread the word about the new appointment on social media. When sending out communications about the harassment contact persons it is also a good idea to explain why they exist and the basic principles of their work. It is also important to spread information about their work to relevant parties within the university who may encounter people who need to reach out to the harassment contact persons.

The information about who the event-specific harassment contact persons are and how they can be contacted should be shared several times before and event, during the event if possible, and also after the event. The harassment contact persons can wear some kind of badge or similar to help people identify them if this is appropriate for the event. For example during checkpoint challenges, the harassment contact persons could also circulate at the event to make it easier for people to reach out and to make their work more visible.

Reporting on the work

There are various challenges involved with reporting on the work of the harassment contact persons, and that is why reporting practices should be considered carefully. The way the work is documented depends on things like the practices of the organisation and various data protection regulations.

It would be a good idea to document harassment reports and cases for example by type and occurrence. Monitoring these will help with carrying out the measures required to prevent harassment and discrimination, as well as to train harassment contact persons and university staff on the types of cases that come up most often.

Discrimination and harassment cases are sensitive and personal matters. Therefore any documentation must be generic and straightforward. Only the things that are useful for highlighting harassment and promoting a safer space should be written down. When making notes, one should avoid including names and any other details which make it possible to identify a person. This will enable the organisation to monitor the safety of the community while also protecting the privacy of those who have reported harassment.

It is also important to consider where the potential data will be stored, for how long, and who can access it. In practice, this could mean whether

new harassment contact persons can access old data, whether those who leave the role can still access the data, and whether the data can only be accessed with the organisation's login details or some other logins. These points should be considered for both internal documentation and any data from contact forms. When transferring data to new harassment contact persons, the organisation should consider which things are relevant and how far back the data should go. Regarding the people involved in the work, the organisation should also consider whether the contact details of those who are trained to be harassment contact persons should be collected and stored.

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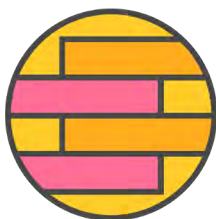
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