

National Union of Students in Finnish Universities of Applied Sciences SAMOK – The SAMOK Non-Discrimination and Equality Plan

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At SAMOK, equality is the foundation of everything we do.

This document will help to make SAMOK even more inclusive, transparent, and accessible.

We expect every member of staff as well as all elected officials to follow the plan, and the principles set out in the plan will be incorporated into all events, representative positions, and communications of SAMOK.

The SAMOK Non-Discrimination and Equality Plan defines the principles, objectives, and measures by which equality is promoted in the union. The aim of the plan is to strengthen policies and processes for the promotion of equality and to prevent and address discrimination in the SAMOK working community and at events. The purpose is to create an equal and respectful atmosphere that enables the continuous development of said matters. If any discrimination, harassment, or bullying occurs within SAMOK, the person's own experience of inappropriate treatment will suffice for the matter to be reviewed.

In this document, internal SAMOK communications refer to discussions, information transmission, and interactions taking place between union employees, trustees, and the member unions. Levels of internal SAMOK communications include communications taking place within a working community and communications taking place between SAMOK and the member unions.

This document is supported by currently valid Finnish legislation and other SAMOK documentation. By law, non-discrimination and equality are regulated by the Constitution of Finland (11.06.1999/731), the Non-discrimination Act (1325/2014), the Act on Equality between Women and Men (609/1986), and the Employment Contracts Act (55/2001) and the Occupational Safety and Health Act (23.08.2002/738). SAMOK also relies on other documents relating to non-discrimination, such as the SAMOK Code of Conduct, principles of safe spaces, communications strategy, service pledge, strategy, and annual action plan.

Non-discrimination, Equality, and Accessibility

Equality is promoted broadly in SAMOK operations.

The definition given for 'equality' in the Finnish Non-discrimination Act is that all people are equal regardless of their gender, age, ethnic or national origin, nationality, language, religion or beliefs, opinion, disability, state of health, sexual orientation or other personal characteristic.

Promoting equality is a responsibility shared by all members of our organisation, and vital for a healthy atmosphere and well-being at work. The objective of the equality plan is to make sure that everyone feels confident enough to act in an equal manner, to bring out grievances, and to further an equitable culture.

Gender sensitivity means the creation of equal opportunities and the critical identification and evaluation of gender perceptions and hierarchies. Gender-sensitive thinking does not want to emphasise gender or to make it disappear. Some people also do not want to make their gender known. All people are treated as individuals, not as representatives of their gender. Gender is not seen as binary only, but there is recognition of gender diversity. The gender perspective is considered in all activities if possible. The objective of the promotion of equality at SAMOK is to make SAMOK appear as a potential place of employment for people of different genders and ages who will then apply for jobs and run for the board. Work tasks are shared evenly, the tasks are

61 diverse, and the working conditions are suitable for all. Representatives of all genders have equal
62 opportunities for education and career development.

63 'Accessibility' refers to ensuring that our physical (built environment, mobility, safety, sensory
64 accessibility), psychological (experience of being valued, integrity of identity), and social
65 (atmosphere, attitudes) operating environment accommodates everyone. The concept of
66 accessibility also covers other barriers such as access to information. The planning for SAMOK
67 activities and events takes into account geographical representation and accessibility as far as
68 resources permit.

69 SAMOK has its own Code of Conduct and Principles of Safe Spaces in use at the office and
70 events, which are acknowledged by all event participants. Every event starts with a review of our
71 Code of Conduct and A Safer Space at SAMOK.

72 Discrimination and Harassment

73 'Discrimination' means treating a person less favourably than another person due to some
74 personal attribute of theirs. Discrimination is prohibited under the Finnish Act on Equality between
75 Women and Men and under the Finnish Non-Discrimination Act. The definition given for
76 discrimination in these laws covers both direct and indirect discrimination. 'Direct discrimination'
77 refers to treating a person less favourably than another person. 'Indirect discrimination' refers to
78 putting a person at a disadvantage compared with others for an apparently legitimate reason.

79 'Harassment' refers to inappropriate behaviour towards a person or a group of people.
80 Harassment is discrimination and prohibited by the Non-discrimination Act. By law, harassment is
81 defined as behaviour that violates the dignity of a person, whether intentionally or actually. A
82 harassing person creates by their behaviour an atmosphere that is demeaning, humiliating,
83 threatening, hostile, or aggressive towards another person on the basis of an unlawful cause for
84 discrimination, such as sexual orientation, origin, or disability. Harassment can be directed either at
85 a particular person or at a broader group of people.

86 Sexual harassment and gender-based harassment also constitute discrimination within the
87 meaning of the Act on Equality between Women and Men. 'Sexual harassment' refers to conduct
88 such as derogatory comments about another person's gender, insinuations, unwanted physical
89 contact, dirty jokes or comments or questions about a person's body or private life. Sexual
90 harassment can therefore be both verbal and physical. Harassment can also occur on social media.
91 The Finnish Occupational Safety and Health Act obligates employers to intervene in harassment
92 that endangers or harms the health of employees. Even verbal harassment can affect a person's
93 health and functional and occupational capabilities.

94 To prevent discrimination and harassment, SAMOK's activities are reviewed through various
95 discrimination criteria. SAMOK believes in a sensitive approach to gender diversity. It is important
96 to see everyone as an individual and not only as a representative of their gender. The impact of

gender on social status is recognised. SAMOK also incorporates anti-racism into its activities, meaning that any discriminatory or racist practices will be changed to become more equitable and that SAMOK views its actions through an anti-racist lens. Racist attitudes can manifest themselves in many mundane ways, such as through the choice of words, slander, innocent-sounding jokes, facial expressions, small gestures, and social exclusion. SAMOK condemns such actions and intervenes in them.

All members of our organisation have a duty to intervene if they witness discrimination, harassment, or bullying. Incidents can be reported to the Occupational Safety and Health Manager, the Occupational Safety and Health Delegate, or an Anti-harassment Liaison Officer. The first two of these roles are laid down by law. Anti-harassment Liaison Officers are non-official volunteers chosen from among SAMOK's operatives each year. If discrimination or harassment meets the criteria of a crime, the matter is escalated through the police.

Anti-harassment Liaison Officers are trained individuals whose role is to provide a confidential way to report and deal with harassment at events and in the context of other SAMOK activities. SAMOK Anti-harassment Liaison Officers are appointed at the start of each year. The appointees are chosen ensuring that different genders as well as the SAMOK Board and staff are represented equally. Anti-harassment Liaison Officers may also be selected separately on an event-specific basis. Event-specific Anti-harassment Liaison Officers may also be selected from among the student union membership. Whenever an incident is reported to an Anti-harassment Liaison Officer, they will discuss the incident with the victim or the person witnessing the incident and agree on possible follow-up measures mutually. It is also possible to talk to an Anti-harassment Liaison Officer if one feels that one has acted wrongly or harassed or disturbed another person. All such discussions are confidential, and no action is taken without the victim's consent.

SAMOK will be offering anti-harassment liaison office training to student union and association activists early in the year. Further training is offered to Anti-harassment Liaison Officers in the autumn of every year.

Positive Action

'Positive action' is a concept that has its roots in the distinction between formal equality and substantive equality. 'Formal equality' requires that all persons who are in the same situation be accorded the same treatment. 'Substantive equality' focuses on the actual treatment of different groups in society and recognises that unfairness exists. Achieving an outcome based on substantive equality sometimes requires compromising on formal equality, which is called positive action.

Positive action can mean, for example, that where an employer has a choice between two equally competent job applicants, they pick the one who belongs to a minority. SAMOK shall however not make assumptions about such characteristics of individuals that would justify the use of positive or affirmative action.

134 SAMOK for instance makes efforts to select working group participants in a way that creates
135 groups reflecting the diversity of the member unions and students in terms of e.g. language,
136 gender, and geographical location. SAMOK also actively encourages people from diverse
137 backgrounds to apply to different positions available at SAMOK.

138 SAMOK can observe the principles of positive action in for example the following contexts:

- 139 ● Choice of personnel (SAMOK's internal working groups, employee recruitment)
- 140 ● Election of officials to the General Assembly

141 Actions to Promote Equality

142 Activities of the SAMOK Staff and Board

143 **Training, Orientation, and Recruitment**

- 144 ● The SAMOK Board and new employees will attend at least one equality training during the
145 first half year. The training includes a section on equal language use. Staff members are
146 given the opportunity to deepen their expertise in equality as needed.
- 147 ● The ability of the SAMOK Board and staff to review the equality of their own actions is
148 reinforced. This ability is reinforced e.g. by means of orientation and training.
- 149 ● SAMOK encourages union and student union activists to complete the Equality for
150 universities online course.
- 151 ● SAMOK orientations cover the equality and non-discrimination plan, Code of Conduct, and
152 principles of safer spaces. This review is part of the orientation of every new elected
153 official and employee of SAMOK.
- 154 ● Progressing through recruitment processes will not be affected by the age, gender, or
155 other personal characteristics of the applicants. SAMOK may however act within the
156 framework of positive action in situations where the choice is made equally between
157 equally qualified applicants.

158 **SAMOK as a Working Community**

- 159 ● Equality plans and guidelines are located in an accessible place.
- 160 ● Interaction is equal and respectful of others regardless of gender, age, ethnic or national
161 origin, nationality, language, religion or conviction, opinion, disability, health condition,
162 sexual orientation, or other personal characteristic.
- 163 ● The creation of a safer working space is improved by mutual planning meetings and regular
164 groupings.
- 165 ● Cooperative occupational safety and health measures are undertaken to prevent
166 harassment and discrimination.
- 167 ● Work supervision is offered to the SAMOK Board and staff on a regular basis.

- The SAMOK Board and staff commit to complying with the Code of Conduct and principles of safer spaces.
- The Executive Director and Chair of the Board ensure that turns to speak at meetings and other work tasks around the office (such as kitchen duty, writing memos, looking after schedules etc.) are not allocated in a gendered or otherwise unequal way.
- Gender is not a factor in determining a person's pay at SAMOK.
- The environment is made safe for everyone regardless of their ethnic background and characteristics by having rules in place with regard to e.g. language use for internal purposes. These rules regulate language use relating to for instance ethnic background, gender, and disabilities.
- Anti-harassment activities are undertaken systematically, and all Anti-harassment Liaison Officers are properly trained. At least two Anti-harassment Liaison Officers are chosen every year in January for the rest of the year with consideration of diversity.
- SAMOK creates policies on which third party a harassed SAMOK staff or Board member can contact as necessary.
- At least two equality observers are designated for the General Assembly, who can also act as Anti-harassment Liaison Officers at the event. These two individuals must represent different genders.
- Our office staff are able to communicate in English and Swedish in addition to Finnish, or they can use plain Finnish to make documents and verbal communication easier to understand.

Services for Student Unions and Events

- The equality of the services, events, and communications provided by SAMOK is assessed and developed continuously.
- Linguistic minorities are included in SAMOK events by making it possible to take part at least in Swedish, as well as in English if possible.
- SAMOK communicates about event accessibility information as extensively as possible and seeks to consider the special needs of participants. Accessibility to mobility aids is guaranteed when selecting venues if possible. A disabled toilet that conforms to the relevant regulations is always provided. Lecture rooms are equipped with sound systems, which are also used.
- Sensory sensitivities are taken into account at SAMOK events by for example avoiding strong fragrances and flashing lights. Event participants are reminded to be mindful of those with increased sensory sensitivity.
- SAMOK aims to enable quiet rooms at events.
- When asked for the gender of participants to events and training for statistical purposes, the options "I'd rather not say" and "other" are always available.
- The possibility to add desired self-determined personal pronouns to name badges, websites, and other places where SAMOK activists or event participants are introduced is ensured.

- 208 ● The SAMOK office has gender-neutral toilets. It is ensured at events that a gender-neutral
209 toilet is available if at all possible.
- 210 ● The allocation of accommodations and other facilities is done with consideration of the
211 wishes and needs of participants.
- 212 ● The programme at SAMOK events always includes breaks at regular intervals to
213 accommodate for individuals' differing needs.
- 214 ● SAMOK uses the event registration process as an opportunity to ask about attendees'
215 special needs and requirements ahead of events.
- 216 ● Diversity is considered in the selection of trainers and speakers.
- 217 ● The contents of presented materials are reviewed in advance, especially when it comes to
218 visiting speakers, and content warnings are added as necessary.
- 219 ● The environment is made safe for everyone regardless of their ethnic background and
220 characteristics by having rules in place with regard to e.g. language use for internal
221 purposes. These rules regulate language use relating to for instance ethnic background,
222 gender, and disabilities.
- 223 ● The linguistic, cultural, ethnic, and ideological diversity of SAMOK member organisations is
224 taken into account in everything that we do.
- 225 ● SAMOK provides annual equality training to student unions and associations.
- 226 ● SAMOK has prepared an information pack and training courses focusing on the duties of
227 Anti-harassment Liaison Officers for student unions.
- 228 ● Colour combinations that are as easy to read as possible are used in documents and other
229 materials (such as ballot papers).
- 230 ● The Code of Conduct and principles of safer spaces are reviewed at events. Each
231 participant also agrees to these policies when registering for an event.

232 Communications and Advocacy

- 233 ● Communication and advocacy work is developed continuously. Human diversity is made
234 visible and attention is paid to representation in communications.
- 235 ● All official SAMOK documents are prepared at least in the regular languages of the Union,
236 i.e. Finnish and Swedish. Attempts are made to also prepare documents, communications,
237 and campaign materials in English in addition to the official languages.
- 238 ● SAMOK's website is accessible and usable by everyone, and we try our best to ensure the
239 accessibility of our social media channels as well.
- 240 ● The diversity of the student body is brought forward in all SAMOK advocacy and
241 representation efforts.
- 242 ● SAMOK's representative positions are filled so as to include members who represent the
243 diversity of the student unions and the student body as comprehensively as possible.
244 When proposing members to representative positions, the equitable distribution of seats
245 to representatives of different genders is considered. When multiple members are
246 proposed to one work group, representatives of different genders are appointed.

- 247 • Heteronormative language (e.g. stereotypes about gender, sexuality, or other personal
248 attributes) is avoided in all activities.

249 Dealing with Incidents Involving Harassment or Other Inappropriate 250 Conduct

251 **The goal when dealing with incidents involving harassment is to genuinely stop the harassment.**

252 Written harassment reports should record what has happened, when, and where, as well as who is
253 aware of the situation. In order to resolve the issue as quickly as possible, the alleged harasser
254 should also be named. The Anti-harassment Liaison Officer will then notify the victim in writing of
255 having received the report, agree on follow-up measures, and undertake the mutually agreed
256 measures.

257 After the notification has been issued, the case will be investigated. The investigation must be
258 carried out impartially and without finger-pointing. All parties to the incident must be heard
259 objectively and given an opportunity to express their views on the matter. Both the alleged
260 harasser and the victim have the right to engage a support person.

261 Discussions can also be had with both parties and their possible support persons being present at
262 the same time. The Occupational Safety and Health Delegate and trade union representative will
263 usually also attend if the incident involves an employee. The aim is to settle the matter internally
264 to the satisfaction of all the parties involved.

265 The parties will be given instructions and advice. This can involve explaining to the harasser about
266 appropriate, respectful conduct and about disciplinary measures that may be taken if they do not
267 correct their behaviour. If the harasser is an employee and the instructions and advice given
268 appear to have no effect or to not lead to the desired outcome, the employer can discipline the
269 harasser by for example giving them a warning. In particularly serious cases, the employer has a
270 duty to report the matter to the authorities. The parties always have the right to report the matter
271 to occupational safety and health authorities or the police.

272 Following up on incidents is also important. This can involve, for example, agreeing to meet up at
273 regular intervals to review whether everyone is doing what they promised. Another possible
274 resolution is that the incident is deemed to not have amounted to harassment. In such cases no
275 further action need be taken except to draw up a report as evidence that the incident has been
276 duly investigated and resolved.

277 Harassment and inappropriate conduct can take many forms, which is why there can be no
278 universal approach to dealing with incidents. The following list includes examples of steps that
279 usually help to restore normalcy after an incident involving harassment or inappropriate conduct.
280 The chosen approach depends on the seriousness and scale of the incident.

- 281 • Verbal warning by the Executive Director or the Chair of the SAMOK Board

- 282 • Conversation with an Anti-harassment Liaison Officer
- 283 • Discussions between the parties involved in the incident
- 284 • Supervision
- 285 • Team talk (with occupational health care)
- 286 • Refresher course on non-discrimination
- 287 • Review of the Code of Conduct and principles of safer spaces
- 288 • Legally mandated actions will be undertaken in serious cases.

289 Responsibilities

290 **All SAMOK employees and elected officials** are expected to follow this plan and to intervene if
291 they see any kind of harassment. Everyone is legally responsible for ensuring that no one is
292 discriminated against during SAMOK operations. **The Chair of the SAMOK Board** is in charge of
293 incorporating the principles set out in this Non-Discrimination and Equality Plan into the workings
294 of the Board.

295 **The Executive Director** is responsible for ensuring that all staff members are familiar with the
296 Non-Discrimination and Equality Plan and committed to complying with it. The Executive Director
297 also oversees the incorporation of the plan into office routines.

298 The Executive Director acts as SAMOK's **Occupational Safety and Health Manager**. The
299 Occupational Safety and Health Manager represents the employer in the context of occupational
300 safety and health cooperation at the workplace. The Occupational Safety and Health Manager
301 must be familiar with the conditions of the workplace and have the necessary qualifications and
302 prerequisites to carry out their duties on that basis. They must also be familiar with the relevant
303 occupational safety and health laws. The Occupational Safety and Health Manager must have the
304 prerequisites to make practical arrangements relating to occupational safety and health
305 cooperation.

306 'Occupational safety and health cooperation' refers to a process where the Occupational Safety
307 and Health Manager and the **Occupational Safety and Health Delegate** review the organisation's
308 guidelines and documents to ensure that they comply with the law and guarantee a safe working
309 environment. Occupational safety and health cooperation also gives the Occupational Safety and
310 Health Delegate an opportunity to communicate staff views on occupational safety and health to
311 the Occupational Safety and Health Manager.

312 The Occupational Safety and Health Manager is responsible for coordinating and promoting
313 occupational safety and health cooperation at the workplace. Their duties include helping the
314 employer to secure the occupational safety and health competence that the organisation needs,
315 setting up, facilitating, and continuously improving occupational safety and health cooperation at
316 the workplace and liaising with occupational safety and health authorities.

317 Staff are advised to report any incidents involving discrimination or harassment to their line
318 manager first. The Occupational Safety and Health Delegate acts as the employees' representative
319 in the context of occupational safety and health as needed and facilitates the adoption of
320 procedures that promote safety and health in the workplace.

321 Employees can also contact a shop steward. The shop steward can provide support to the person
322 dealing with the equality issue or harassment situation and advise on further action.

323 Board members who encounter discrimination or harassment are advised to report the incident to
324 the Chair of the SAMOK Board first. **Anti-harassment Liaison Officers** are available to the Board
325 and staff members as well. Anti-harassment Liaison Officers provide confidential advice and can
326 be engaged to assist harassment victims, witnesses, or perpetrators to process their cases. They
327 cannot, however, take action without the victim's consent.

328 Other elected SAMOK officials can report incidents to the Executive Director or the Anti-
329 harassment Liaison Officers.

330 The responsibility for monitoring and updating the Non-Discrimination and Equality Plan lies with
331 the SAMOK Executive Director.

332 Progress Tracking

333 The execution of the National Union of Students in Finnish Universities of Applied Sciences
334 SAMOK Non-Discrimination and Equality Plan is monitored quarterly. The plan is reviewed
335 annually and updated as necessary by decision of the SAMOK Board. In connection with the
336 updates, we will review the state of implementation of gender equality and ensure that the
337 documents contain adequate measures to promote gender equality. SAMOK will get rid of any
338 discriminatory practices observed as a result of these reviews.

339 The achievement of equality is monitored annually with an equality survey. OSS Services of
340 Organisations usually conduct annual equality surveys, which SAMOK staff members and trustees
341 are also encouraged to take. The results of the equality surveys are compared to those of previous
342 years, allowing the tracking of the impact of the measures. The results of the equality survey are
343 reviewed by a team in charge of equality across the entire organisation, and any corrective action
344 that is deemed necessary will be taken later during the year. SAMOK keeps records of its office
345 staff's attendance at non-discrimination courses.

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- The equality of operations provided by SAMOK to student unions is evaluated and its
347 progress tracked with the annual member survey.
 - At the start of the year, the SAMOK Executive Director and the new Chairs of the Board
348 review the results of the previous year's equality survey and discuss them with reflection
349 of the decided measures.
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- 351 • The Executive Director, the Chairs of the Board, an Anti-harassment Liaison Officer, a
352 shop steward, and the Occupational Safety and Health Delegate meet before the end of
353 May and again before the end of November to review the progress of the plan in terms of
354 equality and non-discrimination.
- 355 • An equality report will be drafted for the General Assembly, reviewing the distribution of
356 speaking turns, Assembly-related tasks, and representation by gender and background
357 organisation in accordance with the equality and non-discrimination indicators. Harassment
358 situations, the length of speaking turns, and the accessibility and availability of the event
359 are also assessed.
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- 367 This document was approved at the SAMOK Board meeting on 3 October 2024 and will be
368 communicated to the student unions at the Union's 29th General Assembly on 31 October to 1
369 November 2024. In the future, the SAMOK Board shall decide on updating the document.