



# Åbo Akademi University's Plan for Gender Equality, Equal Treatment and Accessibility as an Employer



2022–2024

## Åbo Akademi University's Plan for Gender Equality, Equal Treatment and Accessibility as an Employer, 2022–2024

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## 1. Introduction

**Åbo Akademi University** strives to be a university where equal treatment, equality, participation, health, career paths, flexibility and responsibility are clearly defined aspects of a dynamic study and work environment.

ÅAU promotes equal treatment and equality by identifying factors and structures that hinder or foster inequality and unfair treatment. The goal of the Plan for Gender Equality, Equal Treatment and Accessibility is to formulate goals and actions in order to remove these barriers to equality and equal treatment.

Various factors such as gender/gender identity, gender expression, nationality, ethnicity, age or functional varieties affect, interact with and, in some cases, amplify each other and can result in unequal treatment and discrimination. In assessing the gathered material and in planning the activities, this has been taken into consideration.

Participation is a fundamental prerequisite for motivation, quality, and efficiency at work, which is expressed in everything from inclusive pedagogy to the right to be heard and participate in decision-making processes that affect one's own work. Gender equality, equality, and accessibility work at ÅAU contributes to the achievement of the UN's Sustainable Development Goals, as gender equality and equal treatment are seen as prerequisites for sustainable development.



The Equality Committee regularly monitors the goals and activities stated in the Plan for Gender Equality, Equal Treatment and Accessibility and follows up on the implementation. The goal is to create an environment that is accessible to everyone and without discrimination, racism, and sexism where staff and students with a variety of backgrounds and tasks are treated equally and can safely participate in all activities different.

The *Åbo Akademi University Plan for Equality, Equal Treatment and Accessibility – Educational institution* was drafted by the Equality Committee of Åbo Akademi University. Personnel and student representatives also serve as members of the Committee. The parts on accessibility were drafted by The Education Service. The plan consists of the following themes:

- Decision-making and leadership culture
- Recruitment and personnel structure
- Terms of employment and salaries
- Balance between gainful employment and family life
- Discrimination, harassment and hate speech
- Working capacity, the need for assistance and health
- An accessible work environment

## 2. Statutory obligations

**Statutory obligations** applying to Åbo Akademi University's Equality, Equal Treatment and Accessibility Plan are based on the Act on Equality between Women and Men 609/1986, including amendments 915/2016) and the Non-discrimination Act (1325/2014).

The purpose of the Act on Equality between Women and Men is to prevent discrimination based on gender and promote equality between women and men as well as improve the status of women, particularly in working life. The Act is also intended to prevent discrimination based on gender identity or gender expression. Each and every employer is obligated to purposefully and methodically promote equality between genders in working life. In order to promote gender equality in working life, the employer must, with due regard to the resources available and any other relevant factors:

- 1) act in such a way that job vacancies attract applications from both women and men
- 2) promote the equitable recruitment of women and men in various positions and provide them with equal opportunities for career advancement
- 3) promote equality between women and men in terms of employment, especially where salary is concerned
- 4) develop working conditions to ensure they are suitable for both women and men
- 5) facilitate the reconciliation of working life and family life for women and men, particularly by giving attention to working arrangements; and
- 6) actively prevent discrimination based on gender

**The equality plan must include:**

- 1) an assessment of the equality situation in the workplace, including details of the gender distribution of women and men in different jobs, and a salary survey conducted with all personnel that specifies the classification of work performed by women and men, the salaries for that work and the differences in pay.
- 2) necessary measures planned for introduction or implementation with the purpose of promoting gender equality and achieving equality in pay
- 3) a review of the extent to which measures previously included in the gender equality plan have been implemented and of the results achieved

As stated in the Non-discrimination Act (1325/2014): "No one may be discriminated against on the basis of age, origin, nationality, language, religion, belief, opinion, political activity, trade union activity, family relationships, state of health, disability, sexual orientation or other personal characteristics." The Act also contains provisions on the promotion of equal treatment. Compliance with the Non-Discrimination Act is supervised by the Ombudsman for Non-Discrimination, the occupational safety and health authorities and the National Non-Discrimination and Equality Tribunal.

**Discrimination means:**

- 1) that a person is treated less favourably than the way another person is treated, has been treated or would be treated in a comparable situation (direct discrimination)
- 2) that an apparently neutral provision, criterion or practice puts a person at particular disadvantage compared with other persons, unless said provision, criterion or practice has an acceptable aim and the means used are appropriate and necessary for achieving this aim (indirect discrimination)
- 3) the deliberate or de facto infringement of the dignity and integrity of a person or group of people by creating an intimidating, hostile, degrading, humiliating or offensive environment (harassment)
- 4) an instruction or order to discriminate

According to the Non-discrimination Act education providers and employers shall, in everything they do, purposefully and methodically foster equality

and consolidate administrative and operational practices that will ensure the fostering of equality in preparatory work and decision-making. In particular, the authorities shall alter any circumstances that prevent the realisation of equality.

Accessibility of buildings and premises is regulated by the Land Use and Building Act (132/1999) and the Government Decree on the Accessibility of Buildings (241/2017).

The EU Accessibility Directive on the provision of digital services aims to ensure that everyone can use digital services regardless of their functions or situation. The Directive has been implemented in Finland in the Digital Services Act (306/2019). The work to develop an accessibility directive for the EU is in turn based on the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities. The EU Accessibility Directive (2016/2102) and the Digital Service Act require everyone to have equal access to digital services.

Finnish legislation (306/2019) promotes universal access to digital public services, sets minimum accessibility requirements and aims to improve the quality of digital services. The Act (306/2019) requires authorities to make their digital services available. Accessibility is closely linked to the Web Content Accessibility Guidelines (WCAG) i.e., guidelines for accessible web content. Under the new law, web pages and mobile apps must meet the following three requirements:

- The service and its content must meet the accessibility requirements. (WCAG has 49 criteria at A and AA level that should be met)
- The availability must be evaluated, and in an accessibility, statement should describe how accessible the service and its content are and describe the possible shortcomings that exist
- The service shall contain an electronic channel where users can provide feedback about accessibility. Feedback should be answered within 14 days

At present, the requirements apply only to public authorities and organisations subject to public law and some private firms like insurance and financial companies.

(Read more at: [Regional State Administrative Agency's accessibility page](#))

**3. Surveys, analyses and creating an action plan**

**Materials mapping** the equality and equal treatment situation at Åbo Akademi University have been collected from a number of surveys. *The Survey on Equality and Equal Treatment at Åbo Akademi University 2020 (Enkät om jämställdhet och likabehandling vid Åbo Akademi 2020)* was the most important of these. The survey was developed by the Equality Committee in co-operation with expertise from the subjects Gender Studies, Minority Research and the degree programme *Social Exclusion*. The personnel survey was open to all employees (including doctoral students) and researchers with contracts for non-employees (scholarship recipients) during the period 720 October 2020. The survey was taken by 413 respondents, 23 of whom are scholarship recipients. The invitation to participate in the survey was sent to 1,431 people, 250 of whom are scholarship recipients. The survey consisted of the following sections: background information, environment at ÅAU, how equality is realised in the workplace, discrimination and harassment in the workplace, hate speech and open-ended questions. The survey defined what is considered discrimination and harassment in the workplace and hate speech. The respondents were able to voluntarily mention whether they belonged to a minority as well as specify the minority. The survey also contained links to ÅAU's guidelines on dealing with unfair treatment, harassment, and the form for reporting unfair treatment and harassment. You can view the survey questions in Appendix 2

The survey also drew from parts of the poll *Experiences with remote work during COVID-19 in 2020 (Erfarenheter av distansarbete i samband med COVID-19 2020)*. Aimed at personnel (employees and people with contracts for non-employees), the poll was open 2-12 June 2020 and received 485 responses. The number of employees in June was 1,204. The poll included basic information on, for example, gender identification and work tasks, and it surveyed employment relationships in the distance work period during the COVID-19 pandemic. Materials from the poll concerning, among others, leadership and well-being in work were used. Parts of the Work

*Environment Survey 2019 (Arbetsklimatundersökningen 2019)* were also used in the analysis. This survey also included basic information on, for example, gender identification and employment, which made it possible to conduct more in-depth analyses of differences between various groups of employees with regards to their perceptions of the work environment. Materials, among others, taken from this survey on well-being in work among different groups were used. Internal statistics were used to provide an overview of the equality situation with regards to representation in governing bodies, employment and salaries.

We chose to identify problem areas in our analysis of the survey responses. In addition to only considering the differences between those who identify as men, women or other, between those who belong to a minority and those who do not, the respondents were also compared based on both gender and minority or non-minority status. Age was also included in the analyses. An indepth analysis was also conducted on the free-form, text-based responses in the *Survey on Equality and Equal Treatment at Åbo Akademi University 2020 (Enkät om jämställdhet och likabehandling vid Åbo Akademi 2020)*. The responses provided valuable information on the experiences behind the response rates and scales.

Based on collected survey materials and perceptions of working with equality and equal treatment issues in different units of Åbo Akademi University, the ÅAU Equality Committee compiled an overview of areas needing attention and made a rough draft of an action programme. The focus areas, objectives and measures of the action programme were presented at a workshop, which was attended by representatives of teaching staff, other staff, occupational safety, Personnel Services (HR), union representatives and international personnel as well as personnel from the subjects Gender Studies, Minority Research and the degree programme *Social Exclusion*, which had previously participated in work on the Survey on Equality and Equal Treatment. During the workshop, the action programme and its points were discussed and developed, and additional objectives and measures were introduced based on the workshop results.

Below is an overview of the equality and equal treatment situation at ÅAU as a workplace, with a

focus on problem areas<sup>1</sup> and objectives. This is followed by a summary in the form of an action matrix. The plan concludes with an overview of previous objectives and measures.

#### 4. Current situation analysis

Åbo Akademi University strives to promote and guarantee equal treatment and eliminate discrimination. Equal treatment is a right that applies to all people. Working for equality, equal opportunity and equal treatment involves creating a work environment that is free from discrimination and where diversity is respected. A good work environment plays a key role in giving students and personnel a sense of security and well-being as well as allowing them to thrive and succeed in their work.

Among the respondents to the Survey on Equality and Equal Treatment at Åbo Akademi University, a majority (84.8%) felt that the promotion of equality and equal treatment is considered important at ÅAU. However, the positive response percentage varies depending on background factors. The positive response percentage among respondents identifying as women belonging to a minority was 74.3%. The free-form text responses revealed that many felt the discussion on equality and equal treatment at ÅAU primarily revolved around the question of image, which is raised on certain occasions. Respondents expressed the desire for a more effective identification of the problems and follow-up of measures taken. ÅAU continuously deals with issues concerning equality and equal treatment. However, work on the Equality and Equal

Treatment Plan revealed that the work is not always visible enough. The survey and workshop provided valuable insight on issues that personnel feel is of central importance and therefore must be highlighted and acted upon.

##### 4.1 Decision-making and leadership culture

**Women and men** are currently almost equally represented at most levels of decision-making

<sup>1</sup>Problem areas such as those defined in the personnel surveys, which were used as the basis for work on the plan as well as based on discussions held during the workshop.

within Åbo Akademi University, but this varies depending on the body. The composition of the Board (in part) and the faculty councils is determined by election, which means that gender representation cannot be affected unless quotas are introduced.

- In ÅAU's Board of Directors 2018–2020, women accounted for 60% (2014-2015: 30%, 2016–2017 60%)
- 50 % of the regular members of university colleagues 2019-2021 were women (2014–2015: 37.5%, 2016–2018 29%)
- In the faculty councils, women currently make up an average of 50% of the ordinary members (Faculty of Humanities, Psychology and Theology 50%, Faculty of Education and Welfare Studies 60%, Faculty of Social Sciences and Economics 40%, Faculty of Science and Technology 50%)
- On average, women make up 51% in the committees, commissions, boards and working groups. However, the proportion varies from group to group
- In the Rector's Executive Group Management Council<sup>2</sup>, the proportion of women is 40%, while the Equality Committee is 75% women

While the gender balance is even, representation is in other ways skewed. During the workshop, it emerged that staff with foreign backgrounds often perceive that they are not represented in important bodies and that the work of the agencies will not be available to them. There are variations between faculties and the perception of participation is far linked to the ability to communicate in English. The issue of language courses for staff is already being raised here, which we will return to in the following focus area. There is an understanding of the importance of the Swedish language at ÅAU, but also a clear need to be given the opportunity to learn Swedish so that you can become more involved in the work.

In the Work Environment Survey 2019 and in discussions held during the workshop, it was found that personnel do not feel they have any opportunities for interacting with university management. Personnel also feel that it is difficult

<sup>2</sup>The Vice-Chancellor's Management Council includes the Vice-Chancellor, the Vice-Chancellors, the Vice-Chancellor of Vaasa, the Deans and the Director of University Services and CLL, as well as the Chief Librarian.

to influence decision-making at the university using existing channels, and that information on what the decision-making processes are like in different areas is inaccessible.

##### Objectives

- Information on the intranet about decision-making and opportunities for participation in decision-making processes
- Transparency and general communication from management

#### 4.2 Recruitment and personnel structure

In August 2020, 57.8% of the staff at Åbo Akademi University were women (in 2016 the corresponding figure was 51%). As shown in Table 1, the gender distribution varies in different areas. Of the faculties, the CEF has the most even gender distribution with 53.7% women. At FPV, 73% of staff are women, while the corresponding figure for FNT is 34.5%.

	Number of employees	Women (%)
Åbo Akademi University Library, Centre for Lifelong Learning	128	78.0%
University Services	233	62.7%
Faculty of Arts, Psychology and Theology	133	65.4%
Faculty of Education and Welfare Studies (incl. Vaasa Teacher Training School VÖS)	233	73.0%
Faculty of Social Sciences, Business and Economics	121	53.7%
Faculty of Science and Engineering	339	34.5%

The gender distribution within the groups of teaching personnel is also uneven (Table 2). The group that is notably dominated by women (72 %) is university teachers (2013: 65.8%, 2016: 69.7%), while 33.3% of professors are women (2009: approx. 26%, 2013: 24.1%, 2016: 22.4%). The gender distribution among senior lecturers and researchers is more even: the women account for 40.3% of all senior lecturers and 50.6% of all

researchers. The gender distribution among other research and teaching staff is 43.7% men and 56.3% women. The gender distribution among other staff is 38% men and 62% women.

	Men (%)	Women (%)
University teachers	28.0%	72.0%
Senior lecturer	59.7%	40.3%
Professor	66.7%	33.3%
Researcher	49.4%	50.6%
Other teaching and research staff	43.7%	56.3%
Other staff (administrative personnel, research assistants, course assistants, technical personnel)	38.0%	62.0%

The uneven gender distribution in some units and personnel groups indicates a need to reevaluate recruiting processes and career opportunities. On this point, every effort should be made to not only establish a more even gender distribution, but also greater diversity. During the workshop, it was revealed that some employees with an international background feel they have to work harder than others to, for example, maintain their employment relationship and advance in their careers. At the same time, they understand that there is currently no possibility of taking a Swedish course, arranged by the employer during working hours, in order to enjoy greater work participation and increase their chances of advancement.

The results from the Survey on Equality and Equal Treatment suggest that there is a need to reevaluate the recruiting processes. 27% of the survey respondents completely agree that equal treatment is realised in the recruitment of employees. On a scale of one (completely disagree) to five (completely agree), the average is 3.82. Those who are most confident that they will be treated equally in the recruiting process are men, who are not a minority. For them, the average is 4.07, and 38% completely agree that equal treatment is realised. Those who are least confident that they will be treated equally are women, who are a minority. For them, the average is 3.55, and 15.8% completely agree that equality is realised.

When it comes to recruiting for management positions, the lack of confidence in realising equal treatment is even greater. The average for all respondents is 3.61, and 22.1% completely agree that equal treatment is realised.

**Objectives**

- Equal treatment in recruitment cases guaranteed.
- Provide equal opportunities for all also in practice
- Better gender balance, especially among university teachers, academy lecturers and professors in the fields of science where women are under-represented
- Increased diversity among the personnel
- Improved conditions for staff with a mother tongue other than Swedish to acquire sufficient knowledge of Swedish to meet the language requirements that exist for different positions
- Broader representation in different bodies

**4.3 Terms of employment and salaries**

**Terms of employment** at a university differ from those in other workplaces in that they have a large number of fixed-term employment contracts. At universities, some of the positions are fixed-term (doctoral students and PhD researchers), while others are fixed-term positions related to a research project or other project-based work. However, among personnel with a fixed-term employment contract there are temporary employees and employees who perform work assignments during the recruiting process. In 2020, 33% of the teaching and research staff working on a fixed-term basis were doctoral students. At Åbo Akademi University, fixed-term employment relationships are regularly reviewed together with chief stewards in order to ensure that there is a formal justification for them.

At ÅAU, the percentage of women in fixed-term employment relationships has increased. According to statistics for 2020, 45% of all personnel at ÅAU are on fixed-term employments.

Women hold 58.6% of the fixed-term employment contracts, as compared to 50.8% in 2017. Temporary employees account for an average of 7.70% of all employments and 15% of the fixed-term employments. Of all temporary employees, 23.8% are men. The corresponding figure for 2017 is

29.4%, so the percentage of women has also increased here. Part-time work is more common among women than men. On average, 14.2% of all personnel work on a part-time basis. Of these, 23.8% are men. The corresponding figure for 2017 is 33.3% and, consequently, the difference between genders has also increased in this regard<sup>3</sup>.

According to the Equality Act, salary determination is one of the areas that should be given particular attention in an equality plan. In 2020, women’s salaries were on average 11.5% lower than those of men. The corresponding figure for 2017 is 11.2%. Even though there was a slight increase, the difference in salary has clearly shrunk over a longer period. Women earned 11.5% less than men in 2013, 14% less in 2010 and 15% less in 2006 and 2008. With regard to salaries, it is notable that the average salary for women at ÅAU in August 2020 was EUR 3,811, while the corresponding figure for men was EUR 4,082. In October 2017, the average salary was, respectively, EUR 3,520 and EUR 3,963, and in April 2013, respectively, EUR 2,880 and EUR 3,352.

Women employees still have lower salaries than men in most age and personnel groups. According to a statistical analysis conducted in 2013, the biggest reason for the salary differences between men and women is that they have different work assignments and work in positions with different requirements. Differences in the employment relationship also have an impact.

<sup>3</sup> The figures on part-time employees include staff who are on partial leave due to care leave.

**Table 3** on the right, shows that women often have lower salaries even when they are working in the same position group, where the work assignments are ostensibly the same. This can be construed as differences being based on gender.

<b>Table 3. Salaries in August 2020</b>			
<b>Final average salaries for women and men in some groups</b>			
<b>Appointment</b>	<b>Women</b>	<b>Men</b>	<b>Women’s salary as % of men’s (%)</b>
<b>Research and teaching personnel</b>			
Professor	6692	6982	95.85
Senior lecturer	4907	4964	98.85
PhD researcher	3622	3875	93.47
University teacher	3745	3940	95.05
Researcher	3785	3829	98.85
Doctoral student	2552	2595	98.34
<b>Other staff</b>			
Assistant personnel	2673	2884	92.68
Library personnel	3298	3076	107.22
IT personnel	3587	3588	99.97
Administrative personnel (excl. management, directors, Rector)	3366	3532	95.3
Administrative personnel (management, directors, Rector)		7613	
Facilities management		2948	

Table 3 shows that the salaries of women PhD researchers are approximately 93% that of men’s salaries. Project researchers and researchers, senior lecturers and doctoral students have almost equal salaries, but women earn slightly less. In the category Other staff, the difference in pay is most pronounced among Assistant personnel, where the average salaries for women are approximately 93% that of men’s salaries. However, women’s salaries in the groups Library personnel are higher than that of men’s salaries (approx. 107%). Salaries for IT personnel are nearly equal.

Since 2010 there has been a major change in the distribution of salary supplements. Women currently receive more than half the supplements. They only received 37% of the job requirement bonuses in 2010, 61.8% in October 2017 and 63.6% in 2020. With regards to performance bonuses, in 2020 women received more than 50% in categories 1-3 (64.4%, 56.4% and 54.9%), but 44.4% in category 4.

Some uncertainty concerning how equal treatment is realised in setting salaries can be seen among the Survey on Equality and Equal Treatment respondents. On a scale of 1-5, the average is 3.51. The highest amount of confidence in the system among minority men was on average 3.96. Minority women had the least amount of confi-

dence in the system, with an average of 3.24. During the workshop, international personnel expressed mistrust in the salary system and the extent to which equal treatment is realised. Even though there are clearly defined directives for setting salaries, there is still some degree of uncertainty regarding how requirement levels and personal salary element percentages are set. The fact that different faculties seem to have different incentive systems in addition to the normal salary is also considered problematic.

**Objectives**

- Understand why women’s share of fixed-term and part-time jobs is higher than men
- Fair pay in all staff groups regardless of gender or other background in accordance to the Non-discrimination Act
- Clear and accessible information on the intranet there on how the salary is calculated
- Common principles of reward systems

**4.4 Balance between gainful employment and family life**

**The balance** between work and private life plays a key role in equality between genders. According to the Equality Act, indirect gender-based discrimination in the form of treating someone differently

on the basis of parenthood or family responsibilities is prohibited. For example, women take more parental leave than men (table 4), which can have a negative impact on their career.

difficult for some employees. Age and finances are also introduced as possible factors in this regard. In the open-ended answers on the survey, it was pointed out that those who have a home office and

	Number	Duration: average no. of days	
		Men	Women
Paternity leaves	22	22	32.6
Maternity/parental leaves	32	4	86
Childcare leaves	21	6	50.7
Partial family leaves	26	3	127.3

Women also choose to work part-time more than men as a result of parental leave (Table 5). Men only account for 37.5% of employees with an employment relationship of indefinite duration who choose to work part-time as a result of parental leave. This can be compared with fixed-term employees, where the corresponding figure is 0%.

	All	Men (%)	Women (%)
Part-time employment	14.2%	28.4	71.6
Fixed-term part-time employment	64.0%	28.4	71.6
of which the cause is parental leave (fixed-term)	3.7%	0.0	100.0
Part-time employment of indefinite duration	36.0%	28.3	71.7
of which the cause is parental leave (indefinite duration)	13.3%	37.5	62.5

According to the work environment survey, women report having a poorer balance between work and private life. The Corona poll shows that women in managerial positions have the most difficult time getting all their work done during the workday and feel that it is difficult to maintain a balance between work and private life to a greater extent than men in managerial positions. On a scale of 1 (completely disagree) to 5 (completely agree), female personnel in managerial positions have an average response of 2.88 and male personnel in managerial positions 3.44. The situation during the pandemic also made things more

children capable of taking care of themselves can be seen as dealing with distance work better than those living in smaller residences with small children.

The perception among international personnel that they had to work harder than other employees also have a direct impact on the balance between work and family life. Ideas on what ÅAU can do to better support rainbow families while making ÅAU a more attractive workplace were also discussed during the workshop. Proposals on exploring the possibility of coming up with individual rules for, among others, parental leave, rules that differ from the principles set forth by Kela (The Social Insurance Institution of Finland) were made.

**Objectives**

- Conditions for greater work-life balance
- Make it more attractive for men to take parental leave
- Increased support for female managers

**4.5 Discrimination, harassment and hate speech**

**Perceptions of the environment at Åbo Akademi University and thoughts about to what extent one might express various minority positions vary depending on who is being asked. Those who identify as non-minority men have the most positive perceptions regarding the environment, and they also report the fewest cases of discrimination. Those who identify as minority women have the most negative perceptions regarding the environment. Minority women also most frequently report being subjected to hate speech.**

Even though experiences with discrimination are not common at ÅAU, some people have experienced discrimination, and these experiences occur more frequently within certain groups. Among the respondents to the Survey on Equality and Equal Treatment, 23.7% witnessed cases of discrimination and harassment. The most common forms of discrimination involve age (17.2% have experienced discrimination to some extent), gender (13%), language (9.3%) and state of health (9.1%). Age-based discrimination is an experience shared by all groups to some extent. It is also something all age groups have in common. In other words, both younger and older people feel discriminated against based on their age. Minority women experience gender-based discrimination more than non-minority men. Minorities also report origin, nationality and, to a lesser degree, religion, union affiliation and family relationships as reasons for discrimination.

With regards to those who one perceives as discriminating against others, co-workers and, to a lesser degree, personnel in managerial positions or supervisory personnel are mentioned. It is also commonly reported that there are discriminating structures. On one hand, this is partially addressed in the free-form responses on the Survey on Equality and Equal Treatment. On the other, it seems that this involves norms that are not questioned and a work culture which requires certain persons to perform certain tasks based on, for example, gender and age. It also involves indirect forms of discrimination and structures that make it more difficult for certain groups to advance. The feeling of not being treated as a person, but as a representative of a group also seems to be linked to the issue of discriminating structures. Likewise, a lack of flexibility in internal systems can lead to extensive processes linked to private concerns.

The Survey on Equality and Equal Treatment also reveals that there are problems with information on how to report cases of discrimination and harassment. Of those who have experienced discrimination and harassment and filed a report, 46.7% say that action was taken, 13.3% say that no action was taken, and 40% say that they do not know if any action was taken. The corresponding figures for those witnessing cases of discrimination or harassment and filing a report are 36.8%, 21.1% and 42.1%. The free-form responses also touch on problems with lack

of information as well as a fear of filing a report, because one is not sure what the consequences will be. The interpretation here is that there is a lack of knowledge among personnel in managerial positions regarding how this type of issue should be handled. More support is therefore needed to those subjected to discrimination, harassment or unfair treatment.

**Objectives**

- A study and work environment that is free from discrimination where differences are respected, and diversity is appreciated
- Clear and easily accessible information about the notification of inappropriate treatment, discrimination, and harassment
- An update of the model on the notification of inappropriate treatment, discrimination, and harassment so that online hate speech is included
- Pay attention to the situation of minority personnel
- The work for equality and equal treatment are made more visible in the organization

**4.6 Working capacity, the need for assistance and health**

**One's state of health** Åbo Akademi University endeavours to ensure that every person is given the same rights and opportunities in their work and studies, regardless of any disability, illness or state of health. When recruiting personnel for positions, the decision to hire a person must only be made on justified grounds, not based on their state of health, illness or appearance. If changes in a person's health impacts their work performance, this must first be discussed in private with the person concerned. Everyone is also entitled to choose whether to share about an illness or reason for taking sick leave or not.

The state of health or medical history must therefore not lead to discrimination. However, some Survey on Equality and Equal Treatment respondents revealed that they had experienced discrimination based on their state of health. This is particularly noticeable among minorities. Among women, 13.2% report that they have experienced discrimination or harassment to some extent. Among men, the corresponding figure is 20.8%. The work environment survey also shows differ-

ences concerning gender or gender identification with regards to well-being at work. Those who identify as someone other than a man or woman suffer the most, while those who identify as a man feel the best.

In 2020, the number of sick days taken per person was 5.5 days/year for women and 2.6 days/year for men. In a branch-specific comparison, ÅAU has a low rate of sick leaves, which may be partly attributable to the fact that existing sick leave statistics do not include all sick leaves. The sick days registered in the system mostly consist of sick leaves taken by administrative personnel, which suggests that sick leaves within the group Teaching personnel are not reported in the same way. The difference in the number of sick days by gender is however significant, that it provides grounds for further investigation.

The wide range in the ages of personnel at ÅAU is considered an advantage. The median age of personnel first dropped and then climbed since 2010. The median age was 41.5 years old in 2009, 40.9 years old in 2012, 44.5 years old in 2016 and 45 years old in 2020. Table 6 provides an overview of age distribution among personnel from 2010–2022.

Equal interactions do not always guarantee equal treatment, because the needs and opportunities of people are determined based on their starting points and life situations, which may depend on age. A person's age, on the other hand, must not have an adverse impact on how a person is treated, but the Survey on Equality and Equal Treat-

ment revealed that people still experience discrimination and harassment on this front. As mentioned earlier, this is an experience that personnel share to some degree and with which both older and younger persons are familiar.

The idea that all personnel should be given an opportunity to fully utilise their resources, despite any impediments, was brought up at the workshop. Practical types of support are required to ensure this happens.

**Objectives**

- A workplace where consideration of work ability, support needs and health are in focus and where there is clear information about aids available
- To find out the difference in the number of reported sick days by gender

**4.7 An accessible work environment**

**Physical environment**

Åbo Akademi University strives to make the physical environment work for everyone. According to the real estate strategy, ÅAU will "create campuses and properties that are accessible, open, inclusive and inviting." Physical availability has improved over the years. Properties have been equipped with e.g., automatic door openers, obstacle-free toilets, ramps and intercoms, suitable lifts and hearing loops.

The most recent systematic survey of the physical environment was carried out in 2011. The infor-

mation about physical accessibility in the properties needs to be developed, systematized, and accounted for on both external and internal web.

**Objectives**

- Better information on the accessibility of buildings
- Accessible rest rooms, children's care rooms, laundry and changing rooms and prayer rooms
- Accessibility is considered when procuring goods and services

**Digital environment**

Åbo Akademi University works to create accessible digital environments in several ways. Primarily by reviewing and testing different applications and applications, it is checked that the web, as far as possible, complies with the principles of web accessibility. Accessibility statements are available for most applications and sites. If there are deficiencies in accessibility, this is noted in the statement and a justification is entered. There are instructions on how to produce available material for the web.

With the digitalization of public services, the need for these to be accessible has grown. The law, which came into force in 2019, has been gradually implemented. ÅAU's websites and timedependent media (e.g. audio files and videos) will be available as of.m 23.9.2020 and from summer 2021 also mobile applications. Videos used in teaching more than one academic year should be subtitled. When certain services are challenging to make available due to technical shortcomings, an accessibility statement is written stating what does not meet the legal requirements on e.g. the website, intranet and Moodle. Accessibility feedback from students, staff and customers is directed to the address: [tillgangligt@abo.fi](mailto:tillgangligt@abo.fi) / [accessible@abo.fi](mailto:accessible@abo.fi).

**Objectives**

- All Åbo Akademi University's digital environments are accessible
- All Åbo Akademi University's digital environments have accessibility statements in Swedish and English

**5. Action plan**

**The purpose** of the action plan is to strengthen the development of equality, equity and accessibility. [You can follow the process on the intranet](#)

The secretary of the Equality Committee follows up, informs and reports on the work in progress. The secretary is also to see to it that an assessment of how the objectives concerning equality, equity and accessibility set up in the plan have been realised.

Follow-ups are done at meetings between responsible and contact persons as well as the secretary of the Equality Committee. Meetings are booked by the secretary of the Equality Committee and held at least two times a year or until a planned measure has been carried out, after which the measure is assessed in the same body.

Table 6. Development of age distribution among personnel				
Age group	Percentage of personnel 2020	Percentage of personnel 2017	Percentage of personnel 2013	Percentage of personnel 2010
-24	1.4	1.4	1.2	0.1
25-29	9.9	9.8	13.9	6.4
30-34	11.5	12.6	13.4	17.1
35-39	11.1	11.5	14.1	15
40-44	15.6	15.1	11.5	11.8
45-49	12.4	12	12.4	11.7
50-54	14.5	15.2	9.7	9.6
55-59	12	10.1	10.3	10.4
60-	11.6	12.3	13.5	18.1



4.1 Decision-making and leadership culture			
Current situation	Objectives	Actions	Responsible
The staff perceives that it is difficult to influence decisionmaking at universities through the channels available and that information about how the decisionmaking processes in different cases look is difficult to access.	Clear information on the intranet about decision-making and about opportunities for participation in decisionmaking processes.	Clarifying how different decision-making processes are done and information about it in several different forums in both Swedish and English.	The Management Office in consultation with Communication.
The staff perceives that they do not have the opportunity to interact with the university's management.	Transparency and general communication from management.	At least one news item on the intranet, every two weeks about decisions made or at what stage in the decision-making process longer cases are in both Swedish and English. Frequent informative discussions arranged concerning work- and decision processes both in Swedish and English.	The Management Office in consultation with Communication.

4.2 Recruitment and personnel structure			
Current situation	Objectives	Actions	Responsible
The unequal gender balance within certain units and staff groups shows a need to review both recruitment processes and career opportunities.	Ensure equal treatment in recruitment matters. Gender balance, especially among university teachers, academy lecturers and professors in the fields of science where women are under-represented. Increased diversity of staff.	Training of staff who handle and influence recruitment cases in, among other things, writing more inclusive ads as well as competence-based and inclusive interview techniques. Necessary, objective, positive discrimination that is in the right proportion to the objectives pursued is introduced. A project/experiment with an "anonymized" recruitment process for other staff (not applicable to research staff). Review existing and develop new material about ÅAU so that you attract applicants from different backgrounds.	Personnel Services.
	Equal opportunities for all also in practice.	Support for career development for different groups: Language courses in Swedish and Finnish, during working hours for staff with a mother tongue other than Swedish. Mentoring as support for career development.	Personnel Services.

During the workshop <sup>4</sup> , it emerged that staff with foreign backgrounds of-ten perceive that they are not represented in important bodies and that the work of the bodies will not be available to them.	Wider representation in different bodies.	Clear information on the intranet (both in Swedish and English) about which working groups, commissions, and committees there are, and about their work and how to show interest in joining them.	The Management Office in consultation with Communication.
		Information on the importance of equal treatment and broad representation for those who elect representatives.	Personnel Services.
		The creation of models for how to lead and participate in meetings that are in both Swedish and English. Explore possible tools that can be used to facilitate the translation of text and speech live during meetings.	Communications in consultation with Personnel Services.

4.3 Terms of employment and salary			
Current situation	Objectives	Actions	Responsible
Part-time and fixed-term employment are more common among women than among men.	We need to know why women's share of part-time and fixed-term employment is greater than that of men.	An investigation of the reasons for part-time employment and analysis of gender and age structures among part-time employees and an investigation into whether there are differences between UP and ÖP.	Personnel Services.
In most age and staff groups, women continue to be slightly lower than male employees.	Fair pay in all staff groups regardless of gender or other background in accordance to the Non-discrimination Act.	The pay gap within the organization is reviewed and unfair differences are addressed.	Personnel Services.
The survey and during the workshop expressed uncertainty as to whether equal treatment is realised in the case of wage setting. There is also an ignorance of how the salary is determined.	On the intranet there is clear and accessible information about how the salary is calculated.	Information sessions on salary setting are arranged for the employees. Training for managers in the principles of fair pay.	Personnel Services.
There are various informal reward systems at ÅAU's faculties, which creates envy and suspicion of unequal treatment.	Common principles of reward systems.	The reward systems at different faculties are reviewed and common principles are developed.	Faculties in consultation with Personnel Services.

<sup>4</sup> The focus areas, objectives and measures of the action programme were presented at a workshop, which was attended by representatives of teaching staff, other staff, occupational safety, Personnel Services (HR), union representatives and international personnel as well as personnel from the subjects Gender Studies, Minority Research and the degree programme. *Social Exclusion*.

**4.4 Balance between gainful employment and family life**

Current situation	Objectives	Actions	Responsible
Women (especially female leaders) report poorer work-life balance in the surveys on which the plan is based.	Conditions for greater work-life balance. Make parental leave more attractive to men.	Models, education and coaching in support of a more balanced relationship between work-life and private life. Through positively formulated information make it more attractive for men to take parental leave.	Education Services in consultation with faculties.

**4.5 Discrimination, harassment and hate speech**

Current situation	Objectives	Actions	Responsible
Women and those who identify as belonging to a minority feel more often than others that they have been discriminated against based on gender or gender. A sense of not being treated as an individual, but as a representative of a group also seems to be linked to the issue of discriminatory structures.	A study and working environment that is free from discrimination and where diversity is respected. Pay attention to the situation of minority personnel.	Thematic workshops for all staff: Diversity, equity, and inclusion. A survey on how minorities experience the treatment they are receiving.	Personnel services.
There is uncertainty about reporting inappropriate treatment or discrimination because it is not known what the consequences will be. Only half of those who have reported inappropriate treatment or discrimination know that the notification has been rectified.	There is clear and easily accessible information about the process of reporting and investigating inappropriate treatment, discrimination, and harassment.	The information for the notification of inappropriate treatment, discrimination and harassment is reviewed and made available to all.	Executive Administrative Office in consultation with Personnel Services.
There are currently no instructions on how to handle online harassment.	Instructions on how to handle online harassment are available.	An update of the model on the notification of inappropriate treatment, discrimination, and harassment so that online hate speech is included	Executive Administrative Office in consultation with Personnel Services.
The work for gender equality, equal treatment and accessibility lacks visibility.	The work for equality, equal treatment and accessibility is clearly visible in the organization.	Activities that support gender equality, equal treatment and accessibility are made visible through the channels used for communication.	Equality Committee in cooperation with Communications.

**4.6 Ability to work, support needs and health**

Current situation	Objectives	Actions	Responsible
According to the Gender Equality and Equity Survey, some feel that they are discriminated against because of their state of health. This is especially evident in those who identify as belonging to a minority. A workplace where consideration of work ability, support needs and health are in focus and where there is clear information about aids available.	A workplace where consideration of work ability, support needs and health are in focus and where there is clear information about aids available.	Review and supplementation of information about assistive devices. Information on support for staff with reading and writing difficulties. Focus on the implementation of the early support plan.	Personnel Services together with Occupational safety.
Men have almost half fewer registered sick leave days per year.	To find out the difference in the number of reported sick days by gender.	An investigation into the reasons behind the difference in the number of sick leave days by gender.	

**4.7 An accessible work environment**

Current situation	Objectives	Actions	Responsible
Information on the physical accessibility of buildings and teaching spaces is inadequate.	Better information on the accessibility of buildings.	Systematic mapping of the physical environment.	Facilities management services and Procurement support.
	Accessible rest rooms, children's care rooms, shower and changing rooms and prayer rooms.	Information about where rest rooms, children's care rooms, shower and changing rooms and prayer rooms are situated is made available for all.	Facilities management services and Procurement support in consultation with Occupational safety
	Accessibility is considered when procuring goods and services.	A check-list for procuring is created.	Facilities management services and Procurement support in consultation with the Equality Committee.
ÅAU's digital environments have accessibility statements in Swedish and English. At present, ÅAU's digital environments in their entirety do not meet the accessibility criteria.	All digital environments are accessible.	Accessibility is considered when procuring digital goods and services.	ICT services and Procurement support in consultation with the Equality Committee.
	All digital environments have accessibility statements in Swedish and English.	When introducing new digital environments and tools accessibility statements are written in Swedish and English.	System manager and accessibility advisor.

## 6. References

Non-Discrimination Act 1325/2014  
Act on Equality between Women and Men 609/1986  
Act on the Provision of Digital Services 306/2019  
Universities Act 558/2009  
Land Use and Building Act 132/1999  
Government Decree on Building Accessibility 241/2017

## Appendix 1

### Assessment of previous action plans

Setting the right objectives and formulating clearly defined measures for achieving the desired outcomes is a real art. When analysing the action plan used in the previous equality plan, we found that a number of the objectives and measures specified were ambiguous, vague, unmeasurable or too broad to really grasp. Personnel in positions of responsibility were not always able to understand what they were expected to achieve or do.

More dialogue and co-ordination between the Equality Committee and actors within the organisation appointed to positions of responsibility for various measures would have been needed. In the future, in connection with the following up of measures taken, responsible persons must be given an opportunity to, if necessary, present adapted measures within their areas of responsibility in order to achieve the common objectives.

Clearly defined routines are required for the continuous follow-up of development work by the Equality Committee. Follow-ups are done at meetings between responsible and contact persons as well as the secretary of the Equality Committee. Meetings are booked by the secretary of the Equality Committee and held at least two times a year or until a planned measure has been carried out, after which the measure is assessed in the same body.

Below is a description of the measures taken based on the previous action plan.

### Equality in recruitment

The objective set for the Faculty of Science and Engineering (FNT) is to increase the number of women professors from 8 to 12 before the end of 2024.

### Terms of employment and salaries

Fixed-term employment relationships will continue to be followed up regularly and any ambiguities will be investigated. Furthermore, terms of employment should, as a rule, be the same for both men and women. This principle was emphasised particularly in the introduction of the new salary system at the University.

ÅAU has taken out insurance for scholarship recipients and guest researchers with contracts for non-employees. This insurance provides basic coverage for the insured and applies to unpaid work. The insurance currently covers:

- Medical costs in the event of an accident, with coverage up to 5,000€ and a deductible of 0€;
- Coverage in the event of death, with coverage up to 5,000€; and
- Coverage for permanent disability in the event of an accident, with coverage up to 20,000€.

The insurance provides basic coverage and does not replace, for example, the obligation of scholarship recipients to purchase their own insurance with MELA in cases where the requirements for this are met.

In particular, the salary differences between women and men in the category of Professors have been followed up. The result of this was a smaller difference in salaries (In 2016, the average salary for men was 6,710€/month and for women 6,153€/month. In August 2020, the average salary for men was 6,982€/month and for women 6,692€/month).

### Reconciliation of gainful employment and family life

The principle of extending the employment of doctoral students based on the taking of parental leave was also introduced for Tenure Track employment relationships.

### Prevention of gender-based discrimination

Åbo Akademi University has used several methods for assessing the realisation of equal treatment in the workplace. These methods include utilising the results of the work environment survey, occupational safety and occupational health care workplace evaluations, surveys for researchers (on ethical principles and professional responsibility, recruitment, terms of employment and continuing education), conferences with stakeholders

and other forms of personnel co-ordination concerning the work environment and equal treatment. The assessment is also based on observations made during the management of conflicts and difficult situations addressed within the organisation.

A more extensive analysis of the realisation of equal treatment was conducted in 2020. The analysis, which was conducted using a survey for both personnel and students, forms the basis for the new Equality and Equal Treatment Plan for 2021-2023.

To increase awareness and develop personnel skills and capabilities, a seminar was arranged and a number of courses dealing with equality, sexual harassment, harassment and workplace discrimination were held. The following seminars/courses have been held:

### Seminar

Hur kan vi på ÅA jobba mot trakasserier? – ett seminarium om teori och praktik för förändring för både studerande och personal (How can ÅAU combat harassment? A seminar on the theories and practices of change for both students and personnel) 19 September 2018.

### Courses

Förbättra din arbetsmiljö och orka bättre – att känna igen, förebygga och hantera psykosociala belastningsfaktorer (Improve your work environment and cope more effectively – Recognising, preventing and managing psychosocial strain) 21 November 2018, 6 February, 13 February, 4 March and 6 June 2019.

Personalutbildning i hur hantera sexuella- och andra trakasserier för trakasseriombud, kontaktpersoner och utredare (Personnel training in how to manage sexual and other forms of harassment for harassment contact persons, contact persons and investigators) 7 November 2018.

### Workshops on diversity, justice and inclusion

A series of workshops was planned, and a description of the workshop content is found on the intranet. One workshop was held before the pandemic prevented the holding of additional workshops.

Diversity, equity and inclusion – training and education for administrative and academic staff 2020–2022.

### #metoo at ÅAU

The #övistoo call to action at the Vaasa Teacher Training School upper secondary school (Övnings-skolans gymnasium i Vasa) revealed that bullying based on gender was also a problem at ÅAU. Discussions and training for personnel and students were held at the Vaasa Teacher Training School.

In connection with the MeToo movement, a form for making an anonymous report was introduced for a limited time. After this, guidelines on how to deal with unfair treatment and harassment (in 2018) as well as an online form for reporting incidents (not anonymous) were drafted.

An example of how to deal with unfair treatment and harassment has been made and can be found on the intranet.

A form for reporting unfair treatment and harassment has been opened and a link for it can be found on the intranet.

The intranet has information on which personnel can be contacted in cases of harassment as well as who are the harassment contact persons for students at ÅAU and the Student Union.

After an earlier Equality Plan entered into force in 2011, the Equality Committee attempted to lower the threshold for reporting cases of discrimination by allowing people to submit anonymous reports using an online form. A process description and organisation plan has been developed to make the examination process more transparent. These tools will be updated continuously.

"When the Åbo Akademi University Examination and Assessment Instructions were last updated, the entire examination process at ÅAU was clarified and concretised, including specifications for all different types of examinations. The Åbo Akademi University Examination and Assessment Instructions will be updated in 2021 according to the process that was developed for ÅAU's regulatory documents."

The Åbo Akademi University Examination and Assessment Instructions can be found here

Information on equal treatment and diversity at Åbo Akademi University should be included in management and leadership training and other suitable courses.

