



ÅBO AKADEMIS STUDENTKÅR
THE STUDENT UNION OF ÅBO AKADEMI UNIVERSITY



**Information Guide for
International Students**
2015–2016

Welcome to Finland!

Åbo FACT SHEET

Population	183.824
Swedish-speaking	5,4%

Vasa FACT SHEET

Population	66.965
Swedish-speaking	22,7%

(december 2014)

Pietarsaari / Jakobstad

Åbo Akademi University
Vaasa / Vasa Campus

Åbo Akademi University
Turku / Åbo Campus

Helsinki / Helsingfors

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Welcome to The Student Union of Åbo Akademi University

Dear international student,
Welcome to Finland! This guide will introduce you to the Student Union and the student life at Åbo Akademi University. It tells you what a Finnish student union is and shares information about the services available for students at the Student Union of Åbo Akademi University. As our member you are entitled to a variety of benefits, which we hope will make your stay here easier.

As you might already know, Åbo Akademi University has two main campus areas, one in Åbo and one in Vasa. The two cities are situated approx. 340 km from each other. The Student Union of Åbo Akademi University operates both in Åbo and Vasa.

We hope that you will have a wonderful stay in Finland. Please, do not hesitate to contact us. We will be happy to help you with any questions you may have – that's what we're here for! Information about the Student Union of Åbo Akademi University and its services in English is also available on our website at www.studentkaren.fi.

Best wishes,

Milla Stenström
International affairs
milla-karen@abo.fi

Monika Antikainen
Specialist,
Social Affairs
se-karen@abo.fi

Eija Laitinen
Specialist,
Educational Affairs
he-karen@abo.fi

What is a student union?

In Finland, student unions are service and interest organizations defending and improving the educational, financial, and social benefits and rights of university students.

The student unions mainly work in the areas of higher education politics, social politics and international affairs. Every university in Finland has a student union and all students studying for a Master's or Bachelor's degree in Finland have a compulsory membership in it; those pursuing their doctoral studies may join their student union if they wish. Exchange students can and are warmly recommended to join the Student Union.

The Student Union of Åbo Akademi University (ÅAS) is a public corporation completely independent of Åbo Akademi University. ÅAS was founded in 1919 which makes it one of the first student unions in Finland. Today, ÅAS has around 5000 members.

ÅAS works to make sure that the conditions for your studies are as good as they can be. This is done by influencing the decision-making bodies of Åbo Akademi University at all levels. Student representatives, elected by the students, are members of all these bodies. ÅAS also influences and takes part in decision-making by delivering statements on current propositions. Another important area of work is social affairs issues such as housing, health care, student discounts, and financial aid for students.

The Student Union also offers leisure time activities for students at Åbo Akademi University by arranging e.g. subsidised cultural and sport events. Moreover, ÅAS supports the different student associations. The student associations arrange excursions, social and cultural events.

What benefits do I get from being a ÅAS member?

The membership fee at ÅAS is €116 per academic year and €58 for half a year. The fee must be paid before registration at the University. If you want to use the sports facilities and activities available at Åbo Akademi University you should pay an extra sports fee. The sports fee is €22 and covers the entire academic year.

The Student Union Card

The student identification card used at all universities in Finland is called Frank. It is your Student Union membership card and with it comes offers for all kinds of services and benefits.

Before you can order your student card you need to be registered at Åbo Akademi University and a member of the Student Union. You can pay the Student Union fee at any bank in Finland. If you pay the membership fee at a foreign bank please be sure to pay all the bank fees and service charges which may occur! Please, make also sure to save the receipt. After you have paid the fee, you can register at Åbo Akademi at the International Office. The student card can be ordered at: www.frank.fi. The price of the card is €15,10 and you will need to upload a digital photo of yourself when you order the card. It usually takes about three weeks before the card is ready to be picked up from the Student Union office. It is possible to check how the order for your card is progressing through the use of the link you're sent by Frank via e-mail when your order is received.

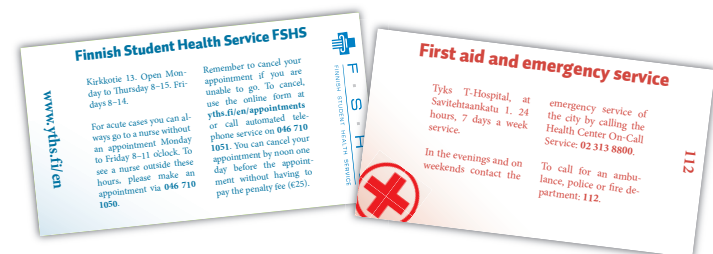
We do not recommend you to order a ISIC combination card with payment function because it requires a Finnish per-

Health Center in Åbo		Health Center in Vasa	
Address	Kyrkovägen 13	Address	Hovrättsesp. 15 C
Hours	Mon–Thu 8–15 Fri 8–14	Hours	Mon–Thu 8–15 Fri 8–14
Appointments		Appointments	
046 710 1050	General practitioners and specialists, 8–15	046 710 1097	Preventive health care and medical care
046 710 1047	Dentists, 8–14	046 710 1098	Dentists
046 710 1045	Mental health services, 9–12		

sonal identity code. Instead you can consider buying a separate international student card via Kilroy.

Finnish Student Health Service (FSHS)

€54 of your Student Union fee goes to the Student Health Care Service, which provides health care for Student Union members all over Finland. All appointments at the general health and mental health services, including appointments with specialists and physiotherapists are free of charge for students. An appointment to the dentist costs between €18–35 depending on the length of the appointment. NOTE: There is a penalty fee of €35 for all uncanceled, unused appointments! You can also go



to any FSHS centre in the entire country, should you for example become ill whilst travelling. See: www.fshs.fi.

Whom to call when the health centre is closed

When the student health centers are closed, and you are in need of urgent health care, you must turn to the municipal health care services.

For Åbo: In the evenings and at weekends contact the emergency service by calling the Health Center On-Call Service, tel. 02 313 8800. Tyks T-Hospital is located on Kiinamyllynkatu 4-8.

For Vasa: If you need urgent care contact the emergency service of the main health centre of the City of Vaasa. You will not need to make an appointment in advance. Service available from Monday to Sunday between 8 a.m. and 10 p.m., address Sepänkyläntie 14-16, phone (06) 325 1700. After 10 p.m. go to the emergency clinic of Vaasa Central Hospital, address: Hietalahdenkatu 2-4, phone (06) 323 1311.

Discounted travel

You get about 50% off rail travel and coach travel (for journeys of over 80 km), by showing your student card when you buy the ticket in advance. For more information on trains, see: www.vr.fi, and for coaches, www.pikavuoro.fi. You can also get discount travel cards for local buses in Åbo and Vasa with your student card or an official student certificate from the university.

The place to buy these cards in Åbo is the public transport office at Auragatan 5. See: www.foli.fi or in Vasa at Vasa Lokaltrafik Ab at Hovrättsplanaden 11.

Student restaurants and student lunch

At student restaurants you can eat subsidised student lunches if you show your student card. The cost for a student lunch is around €2.60. ÅAS owns five student restaurants /

cafés in Åbo. You will find weekly menus etc. at the address: www.studentlunch.fi.

There are other student restaurants located all around the university area, for example there is a student restaurant in Academill in Vasa. You will get a student priced lunch not only on your campus, but in all student restaurants in Finland.

Restaurants and café in Åbo		Restaurants and café in Vasa	
Café Arken	Fabriksgatan 2	Alexander	Academill
Café Fänriken	Fänriksgatan 3	Café Ann-Marie	Academill
Café Kären	Tavastgatan 22		
Café Gadolinia	Porthansgatan 3		
Café Hanken	Henriksgatan 7		

Note that Gadolinia also serves late lunch. More information at www.studentlunch.fi.



General discounts

With your student card you can get discounts at most youth hostels in Finland. Ask for a discount when booking. You can also get discounts on everything from takeaway pizza to haircuts by showing your student card. It's always worth asking for student discounts while shopping!

Kårkalendern

Kårkalendern is the Student Union yearly calendar which you will receive free of charge. It's mainly in Swedish, but contains e.g. dates for the biggest Finnish student events.

Legal advice

As a Student Union member you are entitled to legal advice. You can turn to legal counselors in matters of inheritance, housing (e.g. tenancy agreement), taxation, employment etc. Please note that writing or making contracts doesn't belong to the counselors' work description, but they can give you useful legal advice.

The counselors are situated in Åbo. You can visit or call them Tuesdays 18-19. Address: Student Union of the University of Turku (TYU), Yo-talo, Rektorsåkersgatan 4, ground floor (045 843 3428). The counselors speak English fluently and the service is free of charge.

Ombudsman for Harassment

Harassment is any unwanted one-sided physical or verbal behavior including racist or sexist comments that have negative consequences for the person subjected to them. According to Finnish law, employers are obliged to make sure that nobody gets harassed at work. The university is also responsible for its students. If you feel that you are being bullied or harassed, sexually or otherwise, you can contact one of the Student Union's persons responsible for cases of harassment for help: Monika Antikainen (se-karen@abo.fi) or Matias Dahlbäck (is-karen@abo.fi) or simply visit them at the Student Union office during opening hours. You can also contact them via trakasserombudsman@abo.fi. All discussions with the ombudsmen for harassment are confidential.

Student priest

Mia Pusa and Tia-Maria Nord work as priests for the local congregations, and also tend to university students. If you want to talk about issues concerning religion or life in general, you can always contact Mia or Tia-Maria. Mia is at the Student Union office in Åbo (Tavastgatan 22, 3rd floor) every Tuesday 13-15. You can also call (02) 215 4655 / (040) 341 7296 or e-mail her:

mia.pusa@evl.fi. Tia-Maria works in Vasa and you can reach her at 044 480 8227 or e-mail her: tia-maria.nord@evl.fi.

Kåren's gym – Roddis

The Student Union has its own gym in Åbo, located in the basement at Kåren (Tavastgatan 22). The price for getting your key programmed to the gym is €40 for half a year and €70 for the whole year. Pay this amount to: Nordea FI49 2284 1800 1256 36, BIC: NDEAFIHH, recipient Åbo Akademis Studentkår. Include your name, matriculation number and the period of time you wish to pay for in the message.

Take the receipt to the Student Union office and we will activate your HID key the next workday. If you don't have a HID key, you can order one from the ÅAU webshop, shop.abo.fi. Before you start to use Roddis, you can come and check it out - just come to the Student Union office at Kåren. Note: you don't have to pay the ÅA sports fee to get access to Roddis.



Sports at Åbo Akademi University

The sports fee for the academic year is €22 for students in Åbo and Vasa. Information about sports at Åbo Akademi University can be found on the university's homepages: www.abo.fi/student/motion/en.

ÅA sports offers various sports alternatives. Volleyball, aerobics, spinning, bailatino dancing, and wall climbing... you name it! There are sports just for the sake of exercise, as well as competitions. There are also many courses, giving you a chance to try some new sports too. Sports at Åbo Akademi University are not supposed to be deadly serious. First and foremost it should be fun, and everybody can participate.

The sports activities in Åbo are coordinated by the Sports Secretary Carl (Calle) Myrberg, who you will find in Gadolinia (Porthansgatan 3). You may also contact him: cmyrberg@abo.fi, 02 215 4654.

The sports activities in Vasa are coordinated by the Sports Secretary Martin Norrgård who you will find in room: B211 in Academill (right upstairs of Café Ann-Mari). You may also contact him: martin.norrgard@abo.fi, 06 324 7161.

Starting packages

Åbo startingpackage@utu.fi

Vasa startingpackage@abo.fi

Fee is €20 with a €50 deposit

www.studentkaren.fi/english/starting-package

Starting Package

The student unions of the universities of Turku and the Turku University of applied science run a starting package storage where exchange students who are ÅAS members can borrow a package with household items which is then returned again before leaving Finland.

Together with the student union of Novia University of Applied Sciences, ÅAS also runs a starting package storage in Academill, room C224. Please visit ÅAS' website for information on how to obtain your starting package.

Please note: the starting package service is only available to exchange students, not international degree students.



The ÅAS staff

ÅAS has an employed Secretariat and a coordinator for the student house Havtornen to assist the Student Union Board and to give advice to students in different questions. You can always talk to the secretaries and ask for advice in confidence.

The Secretary General Ann-Katrin Bender is the chief of the staff. She prepares proposals by the Board and the Student Union Parliament, participates in interest group activities and is responsible for financial affairs.

| gs-karen@abo.fi | +358 (0)2 215 4652 | 050 521 7140

The Academic Affairs Specialist Eija Laitinen is responsible for educational affairs, higher education policy and the protection of students' rights. If you have any questions or problems concerning courses, exams or teaching you can contact Eija.

| he-karen@abo.fi | +358 (0)2 215 4139 |

The Social Affairs Specialist Monika Antikainen works with issues related to student housing, health care, equality, students' general well-being and exchange students. She is also the contact person for disabled students and for students subjected to different kinds of harassment. Monika can give you advice in case of disabilities or special needs, e.g. contacting your teacher about dyslexia and help you get assistance.

| se-karen@abo.fi | +358 (0)2 215 4653 |

The Communications officer Matias Dahlbäck is in charge of the website and the Student Union's presence in various social media. He is also responsible for the weekly newsletters. Additionally he works as ombudsman in the event of harassments together with Monika.

| is-karen@abo.fi | +358 (0)2 215 4656 |

The Secretary of Administrative Affairs Markus Heikkilä takes care of most of the administration at the Student Union Office and is hence the one you will meet first when you come to our office in Åbo.

| ks-karen@abo.fi | +358 (0)2 215 4650 |

We also have a person working as the coordinator in the student house Havtornen in Vasa. S/he takes care of most of the administration of the Student Union Office in Vasa.

| vl-havtornen@abo.fi | +358 (0)6 324 7225 |

The Student Union Board

The Student Union Board consists of a chairman and five to six board members. They are elected by the Student Union Parliament for one calendar year. The Board operates both in Åbo and in Vasa. Each board member has a specific main area of responsibility and the Board is responsible for executing the Student Parliament's decisions.

President:

Alexander Lång, so-karen@abo.fi

Vice president:

Amy Rönnberg, vo-karen@abo.fi

Board Members:

Anna Nylund

Alexander Skog

Ken Snellman

The Student Union Houses

Kåren in Åbo

Kåren is not only the shorter Swedish name for the Student Union of Åbo Akademi University, it is also the name of the Student Union's own building that is located at Tavastgatan 22.

Many student parties are organised in the Kåren building, mainly in the great hall.

If you have any questions concerning your stay in Finland, you can always turn to the Student Union offices. The Student Union office in Åbo is located in the Student Union's own building Kåren on the second floor.

Havtornen in Vasa

The students at Åbo Akademi Vasa have a unique Student Union house, Havtornen, "The towers at the Sea". Havtornen was officially inaugurated in 2007.

Havtornen is a lively meeting point where you can find conference rooms, general facilities, a sauna, a kitchen and even a large terrace facing the sea. All students and associations at Åbo Akademi University have the right to use Havtornen, and this possibility is often used by our active student associations who use the building for all kinds of parties and get-togethers. The Student Union Office is located in Havtornen.

Exchange students in Åbo and in Vasa have the possibility to visit Kåren and Havtornen with their tutor for a cup of coffee and a guided tour of the buildings. This is a great opportunity to learn more of the history and the usage of the buildings.



Finland-Swedish student life and traditions

Like every country, Finland has its own cultural traditions that vary regionally. In addition, student life brings its own traditions to Finnish culture, which you will see during your stay here.

Student caps and overalls

In Finland, when you pass your matriculation exam and graduate from high school, you can wear the white student cap, *studentmössa*. This is something to be proud of, and the graduation ceremony, where the cap is worn for the first time, is an important occasion. At university, students wear the student cap on a number of occasions.

One of these is 30 April, when Åbo Akademi students gather to celebrate the start of Wappen, the first of May. Another is Finland's Independence Day, 6 December, during a procession to the graves of war heroes.

During your stay in Finland, you will also surely see students dressed in overalls in different colours. Overalls are particularly used at special events and parties by students in Finland and Sweden. The student associations offer the students the chance to buy an overall during the freshman year, and the colours vary according to faculty and field of study. It is customary to personalize the overalls, and they are almost invariably decorated with various badges, souvenirs and inexpensive gadgets. There's also a practice of swapping a part of the overall with another person, typically with a partner. Also badges are

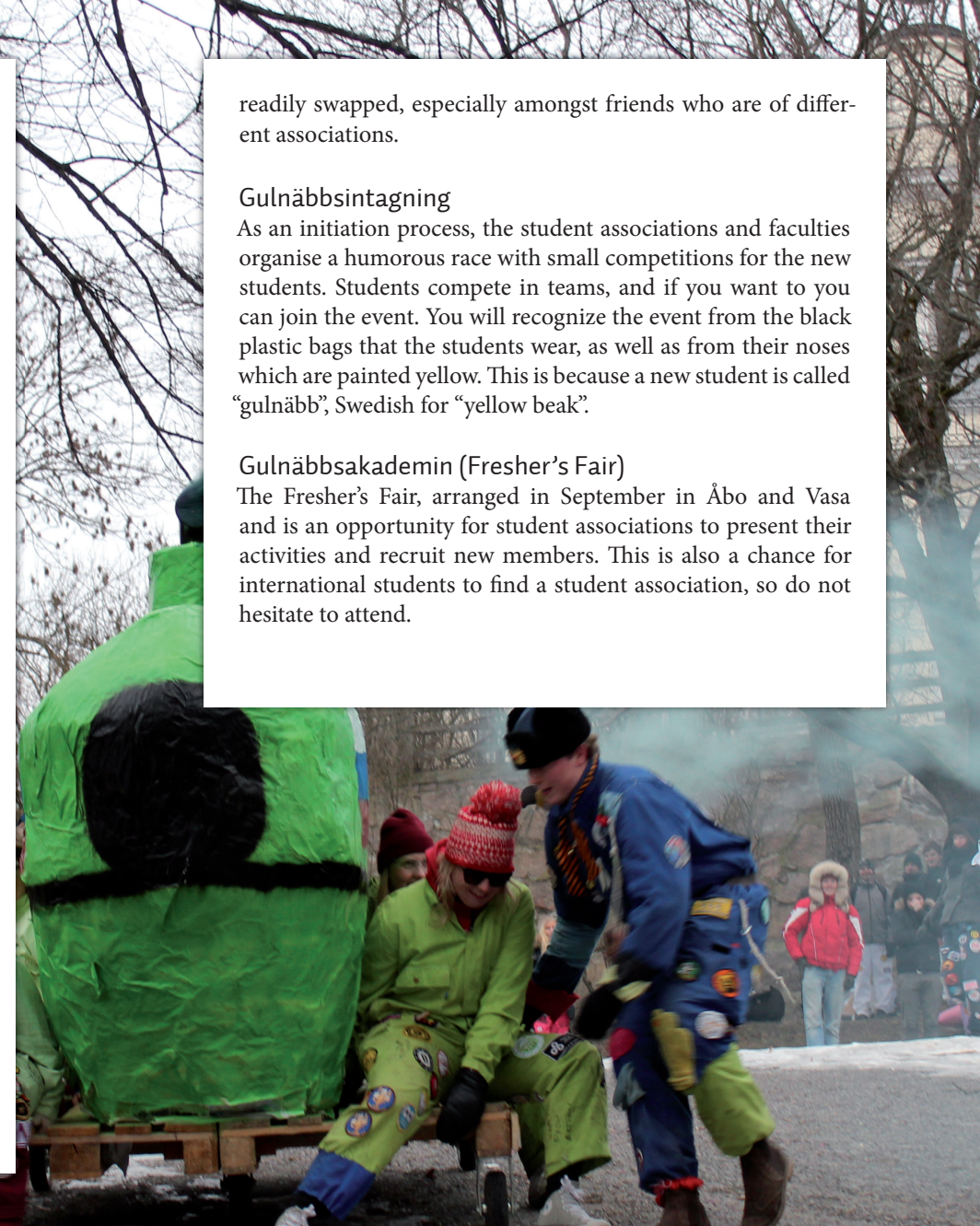
readily swapped, especially amongst friends who are of different associations.

Gulnäbbsintagning

As an initiation process, the student associations and faculties organise a humorous race with small competitions for the new students. Students compete in teams, and if you want to you can join the event. You will recognize the event from the black plastic bags that the students wear, as well as from their noses which are painted yellow. This is because a new student is called "gulnäbb", Swedish for "yellow beak".

Gulnäbbsakademin (Fresher's Fair)

The Fresher's Fair, arranged in September in Åbo and Vasa and is an opportunity for student associations to present their activities and recruit new members. This is also a chance for international students to find a student association, so do not hesitate to attend.



Lilla Wappen

Lilla Wappen marks the end of the summer. Back in the day, when being a student was highly reputed in society, students used to wear their student caps all summer and only put them away for the winter. Lilla Wappen is a reminder of that time. Traditionally, there is a party at the end of September, and at midnight the students take off their caps and turn them inside out.

December 6th – Independence Day

Finland's Independence Day is a quiet festivity compared to many other countries. Usually people stay at home with family and eat dinner, and watch the President's annual independence ball.

The student unions of Turku also have a procession to the cemetery in order to honor the memory of those who died in the wars.

Fastlagstisdag/ Fastlaskiainen - Shrove Tuesday

Fastlaskiainen is the common celebration among the Finnish and Swedish Universities in Åbo and Vasa, and the name of the event is a combination of the Finnish word Laskiainen and the Swedish word Fastlag. This winter day in February is celebrated through sledge competitions at the hill called Vårdberget in Åbo and at Fiskarstranden in Vasa. Shrove Tuesday buns are also a must for this day.

Pampas Nationaldag (The national day of Pampas)

The nickname Pampas is used for the flatlands of Österbotten, the area surrounding Vasa. The National day of Pampas is a day to celebrate it. The day starts with competitions between different teams from the Swedish-speaking universities and continues all day until the olympic finals in the afternoon. The festivities carry on all night until dawn when breakfast is served. This

is the biggest party of the year among the Swedish-speaking students in Vasa.

Wappen

Wappen, also known as Vappu or Valborg, is one of the most important student festivities. In Åbo there is a picnic by the river on the last day of April, and in the evening all the Swedish speakers of Åbo gather at Vårdberget to hear the televised speech of the president of the Student Union board, as well as spring songs by the choir Brahe Djäkmar. Afterwards there is a dinner at Kären, and on the First of May, Vårdberget is filled with picnickers – both students and families.

In Vasa the students gather at the church square in front of the old Lyceum to listen to the songs of the university choir Pedavoces. A speech is given for the students and the statue of Zacharias Topelius receives its student cap. After this the students arrange picnicks in the park around the Court House, or meet at the restaurant Strampen.

The Find-a-Friend Ice Skating

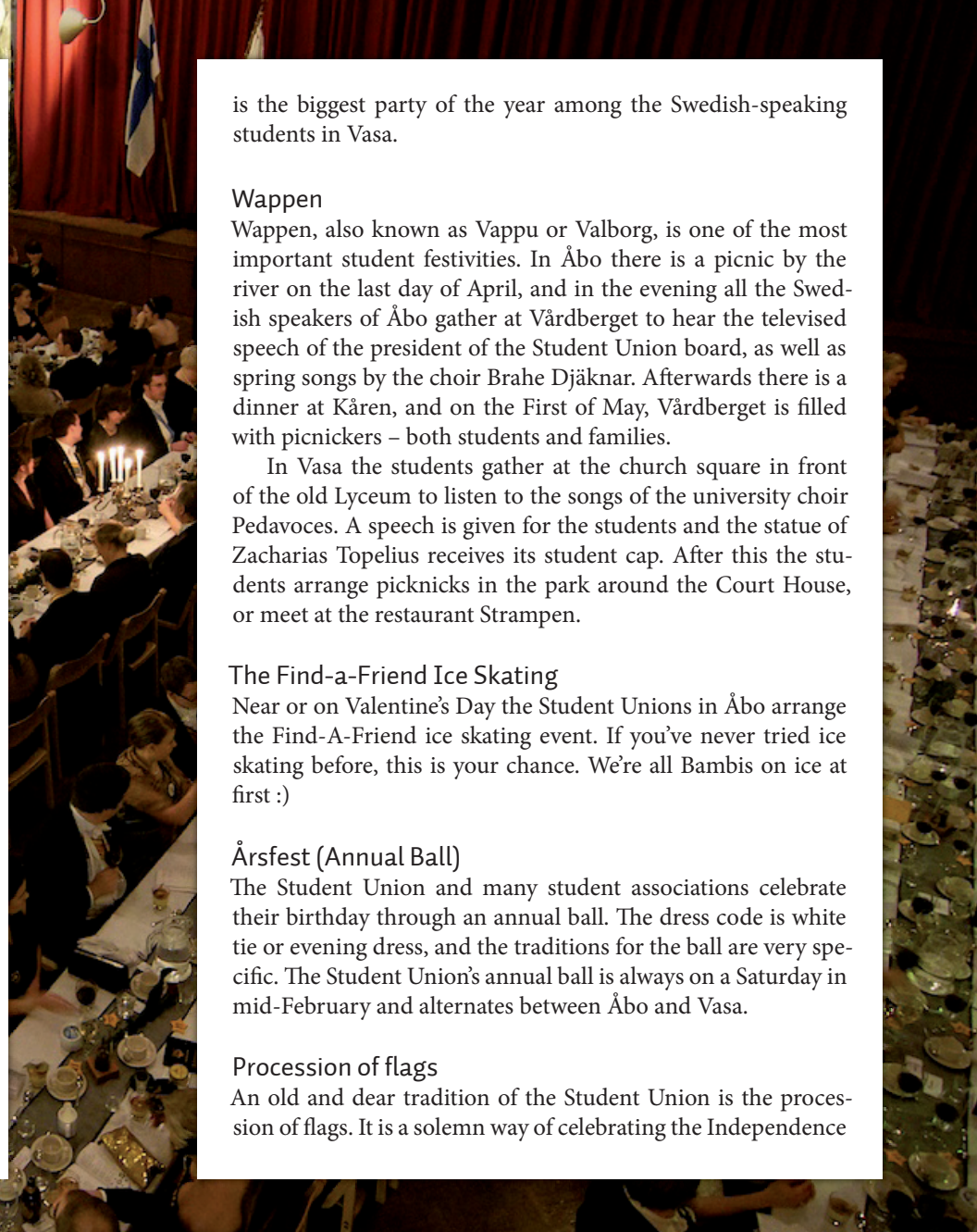
Near or on Valentine's Day the Student Unions in Åbo arrange the Find-A-Friend ice skating event. If you've never tried ice skating before, this is your chance. We're all Bambis on ice at first :)

Årsfest (Annual Ball)

The Student Union and many student associations celebrate their birthday through an annual ball. The dress code is white tie or evening dress, and the traditions for the ball are very specific. The Student Union's annual ball is always on a Saturday in mid-February and alternates between Åbo and Vasa.

Procession of flags

An old and dear tradition of the Student Union is the procession of flags. It is a solemn way of celebrating the Independence



Day, and it also gives colour to the First of May and Annual Ball festivities. The Finnish flag always leads the procession, and it is followed by the flag of the Student Union as well as the flags of the student associations. The procession is formal and the people walking in it should wear dark clothes and the student cap.

Sitzes

A sitz party is a traditional student party with its specific rules and style. In short, it is a two-course dinner with a lot of singing, eating and drinking. The singing is led by one or more toastmasters. It is important to respect the toastmasters, who have a big task in setting the style and pace of the evening.

Usually people drink schnapps at the sitz, but there is always a non-alcoholic alternative available. Before each schnapps, there is a song. Sitzes are usually arranged by the student associations, and their traditions differ quite a lot from each other. There is often also a specific theme for a sitz, for example Halloween, Super Heroes or Beach Party.

NB! You never have to drink alcohol if you do not want to, it is always your own choice whether to drink and how much. At sitzes, there are usually people who take a nonalcoholic alternative. Getting blind drunk is not an obligatory part of the sitz culture.

And much much more...

While there are traditions that are upheld, every year at ÅAU and ÅAS is different. Ideas are formed, events are planned and memories are made. Keep your eyes and mind open (and remember to read the newsletters) and you're sure to find something interesting out there.

The Annual Balls usually require formal wear, but customs vary between different Student Unions and Student associations.



How to stay updated

The main source of information about what is going on is e-mail. In Åbo international students receive information through the Nuntii e-mail list. 'Nuntii' is the Latin word for 'news'. On this list you will find information both about courses and social events, as well as other things that are important to know.

The International Office, ESN and the Student Union all use this e-mail list for sending information. In Vasa international students receive information through the e-mail list novajoj@abo.fi. 'Novajoj' is Esperanto for 'news'. Exchange students will automatically subscribe to these mailing lists.

In Åbo the international degree students have their own e-mail list called degreestudents@abo.fi. On this list you will find information about social events, as well as other things that are important to know. You can e-mail he-karen@abo.fi if you want to be added to this list.

It is also a good idea to check out notice boards around campus for information about events in the near future. Information is also available through the Student Union's Facebook page.

 www.studentkaren.fi

 www.facebook.com/AAStudentkar

 @AAStudentkar

 @AAStudentkar

ÅAS - the organisation

ÅAS is led by its highest decision-making body, a 25-member Student Union Parliament. The parliament is elected by the students of Åbo Akademi University for a two-year term.

All ÅAS members have the right to both vote in the Student Union elections and run as a candidate. As a member of the student union you can influence ÅAS' decisions by voting in the student union elections, held every other year in November.

The **Student Union Parliament** decides what the Student Union will focus on during the year and determines how much money will be used and for which purposes. The Parliament also appoints e.g. the Student Union Board which is responsible for executing the Student Parliament's decisions.

On November 4th and 5th 2015 the next parliamentary elections will be held. Keep your eyes open for posters urging you to vote.

The **Student Union Board** operates both in Åbo and in Vasa. The Student Union Parliament also selects student representatives for various bodies in the university.

Student associations

There are over 80 student associations within the Student Union. Traditionally the student associations are grouped into Nations, Faculty associations, by subject etc. They come in all shapes and sizes, and are as diverse as their members.

You can find a list of all current student associations on this webpage: www.studentkaren.fi/english/student-associations/

Do not hesitate to contact an association you're curious about. Taking part in their activities, their parties, and getting to meet students from all over Finland is a great way to get integrated into the student life at Åbo Akademi University.

Hur vill du sköta dina bankärenden?

I vår nya mobilbank kan du enkelt betala en faktura eller kontrollera ditt saldo precis när det passar dig. Om du behöver personlig rådgivning kan du lätt kontakta oss även om kvällarna. Vi sköter ditt ärende per telefon eller bokar en tid till dig till kontoret.

Ta del av Nordeas nya mobilbank på nordea.fi/mobil eller ring 0200 5000 (Ina/msa) mån-fre 8-20.

Gör det möjligt

0200 5000
nordea.fi

Nordea 





N
NOVIUM



*The Student Unions
of Turku invite you
to the grand*

WELCOME PARTY 2015

Sep 2nd, 10pm

**ENTRANCE 3 €
+ CLOAK ROOM FEE**

VEGAS
NIGHT CLUB

www.clubvegas.fi



FORTE