



ÅBO AKADEMIS STUDENTKÅR
THE STUDENT UNION OF ÅBO AKADEMI UNIVERSITY

INFORMATION GUIDE
for International Students



Your student life starts at
Gulnåbbsakademien
The Fresher's Fair

Get to know your student associations.
Buy overall patches.
Take your first steps into the student life.

Wednesday 9 September

VASA: 11 a.m. – 1 p.m. at Academill's foajé

ÅBO: 4 – 6 p.m. at Kåren

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Dear international student,

Welcome to Finland! In this guide, we will introduce you to the Student Union and student life at Åbo Akademi University. We want to tell you about the concept of a Finnish student union, and inform you 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 and more pleasant.

The Student Union of Åbo Akademi University operates on both ÅAU campuses, in Åbo and Vasa. We want to be available to all our members and make student life as good as possible on both campuses and at all faculties. We will be happy to help you with any questions you may have. We hope that you will have a wonderful stay in Finland and please, do not hesitate to contact us!

Best wishes,

And welcome to The Student Union of Åbo Akademi University,



Julia Kortelainen

julia@studentkaren.fi

International affairs, Åbo



Tobias Ahlbäck

tobias@studentkaren.fi

International affairs, Vasa



Petra Lindblad

petra@studentkaren.fi

Students' Rights Expert

Information about the Student Union of Åbo Akademi University and its services in English are available on our website:

www.studentkaren.fi

Welcome to The Student Union of Åbo Akademi University

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

According to the Finnish University Act;

“A student union consists of the students of a university and is self-governing. The student union liaises with and on behalf of its members and promotes their societal, social and intellectual aspirations and those relating to studies and the status of students in society. The student union also participates in the implementation of the educational mission of the university, by preparing students for an active, informed and critical citizenship.”

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

ÅAS wants 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 events. Moreover, ÅAS supports the different student associations. The student associations arrange excursions, social and cultural events.

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. In short the Student Unions works to make everyday student life as good as possible.



Benefits as a member

The membership fee at ÅAS is €92.50 per academic year, €60.50 for the autumn and €32 for the spring. The fee must be paid before registration at the University.

The Student Card

The student card is called Frank because the company that makes the cards 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 be a member of the Student Union. You should've received information about how to register from ÅAU. The student card can be ordered via www.frank.fi/en. In order for the card to be valid it needs a validation sticker that you can get from the Student Union office.

Frank offers different options for the student card - you need to decide for yourself which kind of card you want. There's also the option of an electronic student card. The app and service is provided by Frank, so please refer to them for more information.

Travel discounts

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.matkahuolto.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). In Vasa you can find information at Lokaltrafik Ab at Hovrättsesplanaden 11 or on the website www.vaasanpaikallisliikenne.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 from 6 to 7 p.m. Address: Student Union of the University of Turku (TYY), Yo-talo A, Rektorsåkersgatan 4, first floor (**045 843 3428** tyy-oikeusapu@utu.fi). The counselors speak English fluently and the service is free of charge.

Student restaurants and student lunch

At student restaurants you can eat subsidised student lunches if you show your student card. ÅAS owns four student restaurants in Åbo and you find weekly menus at the address: www.karkafeerna.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 when you show your student card.

Street Festival

Karkaféerna and ÅAU arrange a Street Festival in Åbo where we all have the chance to celebrate the beginning of the academic year. This year the Street Festival will be held online 3 September.

Harassment Contact Persons

The Student Union has two Harassment Contact Persons (one woman and one man) that all Student Union members are welcome to contact if they experience any sort of disturbing or unwelcome behaviors or situations involving other students, University staff or anyone else.

The role of a Harassment Contact Person is to give support and advice and help get to a solution for your problems if you've experienced bullying, discrimination, sexual harassment or violence. You don't need to have a definition in place for what you've experienced; just contact us if there's anything you wish to discuss. Anything you tell us is confidential, and no action is taken unless you say so. It's always the Student Union member that decides what the process is, what kind of support one can refer to, if the matter is taken further with name or anonymously. In short; anything from talking for a while to helping out with filing a report with the police or booking a doctors appointment.

You can reach our Harassment Contact Persons via the address trakaseri@studentkaren.fi but you can also contact them individually. You can usually find them at the Student Union Office at Kåren in Åbo on weekdays between noon and 3 p.m., but they can come and meet you wherever and whenever is best for you, in Åbo or Vasa.

Student priests

Mia Pusa, Tiina Hallikainen and Hanna Jern 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 them.

Mia (040 341 7296, mia.pusa@evl.fi) or Tiina (040 341 7308, tiina.hallikainen@evl.fi) is at the Student Union office in Åbo (Tavastgatan 22, 3rd floor) every Tuesday 1–2 p.m. You can also call or email them.

Hanna works in Vasa and you can reach her at 044 480 8327 or e-mail her on hanna.jern@evl.fi.

Sports at Åbo Akademi University

In Åbo the sports activities are organized via Campus Sports, a collaboration with other higher educational institutions in the city. For more information you can check the website: www.campussport.fi/en

In Vasa the sport activities are arranged by the University of Åbo Akademi and information is collected on the Åbo Akademi Sports blog: <http://blogs2.abo.fi/aausportsvasaenglish/>



Starting Package

A starting package is a box of household items you can borrow for a small fee. The box is returned before leaving Finland. The starting packages are only available for exchange students who are Student Union members. Please note: The starting package service is only available to exchange students, not international degree students.

ÅBO

The student unions of the universities of Turku and the Turku University of Applied Science run a starting package storage.

startingpackage@utu.fi

www.tyy.fi/en/students/starting-package-storage

VASA

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

havtornen@studentkaren.fi

www.studentkaren.fi/en/starting-package/

Students' Rights at ÅAU and in Finland

Our Students' Rights Expert Ms. Petra Lindblad looks after your interests and makes sure that ÅAU follows the correct procedure and regulation in all matters concerning students and education. If you have any questions or feel like you have been mistreated in an academic matter you can be in contact with her.

Petra is also our contact person regarding questions or problems

concerning most matters of everyday life outside academia, such as health care, student accommodations, sports and other services for wellbeing.

Who do you meet at the ÅAS offices?

When you come to the Student Union Office either in Åbo or Vasa, you will be met by our service experts at the service counters. They take care of everything from validating your student card, selling merchandise and giving out keys to the saunas and rooms we lend out.

The Student Union Board

The Student Union Board consists of a chairperson and five to six board members. They are elected by the Student Union Parliament for one calendar year and are responsible for executing the parliament's decisions. The Board operates both in Åbo and in Vasa.

The Student Union Buildings

Come and visit us! If you have any questions concerning your stay in Finland, or you want to ask us anything else, you can always come to our office in the Student Union Buildings. The office in Åbo is located in Kåren on the third floor and is open Monday to Friday from noon to 3 p.m. In Vasa, the office in Havtornen is open Monday, Wednesday and Thursday from noon to 3 p.m.

All students and associations at Åbo Akademi University have the right to use the Student Unions Buildings. The active student associations often use the buildings for meetings, sauna evenings and small parties.



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 events are organised in the Kåren building, mainly in the great hall. There's also a lunch restaurant called Café Kåren.

We also rent a sauna and the so-called "Marlirummet" which is a kitchen and a meeting room for 20 people. You can hire Marlirummet via the Student Union online shop.

Havtornen in Vasa

The students at Åbo Akademi Vasa have a unique Student Union house, Havtornen, "The Sea Towers". Havtornen was officially inaugurated in 2007. It's pictured to the right. Havtornen is a lively meeting point where you can find meeting Rooms, a living room, a sauna, a kitchen and even a large terrace facing the sea. You can hire Havtornen via the Student Union online shop.



ÅAS - the organisation

The Student Union's highest decision-making authority is the Student Union Council, which has 25 members. The council is elected biennially at the beginning of November, the last election was November 5th 2019. All Student Union members have the right to vote and be nominated as candidates in the elections. The council's meetings are open to all Student Union members and the dates and lists of decisions are available online on the Student Union's website.

The council annually elects a Student Union Board. The board consists of students who work full time for the Student Union and it operates both in Åbo and Vasa.

The financial sector e.g. the buildings, the student restaurants and the student housing, are taken care of by the Financial Board which is also chosen by the council.

Ordinary students who want to work for the benefit of all students at ÅAU are members of the Student Union Council, the Student Union Board and the Financial Board.

Student associations

There are about 80 student associations within the Student Union. There are student associations of different types; student nations, subject associations, political associations or associations for hobbies. The associations come in all shapes and sizes, and are as diverse as their members.

You can find a list of all current student associations on the ÅAS website www.studentkaren.fi.

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.

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. At university, students wear the student cap on a number of occasions.



Finnish students often wear overalls to parties or other special events. 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 patches, souvenirs and inexpensive gadgets. There's also a practice of swapping a part of the overall with another person, typically with a partner. Also patches 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 in teams. You will recognize the event from the black plastic bags that the students wear, as well as from their noses which usually 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, is an opportunity for student associations to present their activities and recruit new members. You can also buy ÅAS' patches and meet the Board and staff at the Fair, welcome!



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, the Lilla Wappen-party is at the end of September, and at midnight the students take off their caps and turn them inside out and wear them like that.

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 Åbo also have a procession to the cemetery in order to honor the memory of those who died in the second world war.

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 or March is celebrated through sleigh competitions. Shrove Tuesday buns are also a must for this day. The sweet buns are filled with whipped cream and jam or almond paste.

Pampas Nationaldag – The national day of Pampas

The nickname Pampas is used for the flatlands of Österbotten, the area surrounding Vasa. (Pampas nationaldag is a day for celebration.) 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 one of the biggest parties of the year among the Swedish-speaking students in Finland, in Vasa.

Wappen and May Day celebrations

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 choirs Brahe Djäknar and Florakören.

Afterwards there is usually an event at Kåren, most often a dinner. The day after, on the First of May, Vårdberget is filled with picnickers – both students and families. The students usually wear their overalls and caps during the picnic.

In Vasa on Wappen, 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 picnics in the park around the Court House, or meet at the restaurant Strampen.

Annual Ball

The Student Union and many student associations celebrate their birthday through an annual ball. The Student Union's annual ball is always on a Saturday in mid-February and alternates between Åbo and Vasa. In 2021 the annual ball will take place February 20th in Kåren, Åbo.

The dress code is white tie or evening dress, and the traditions for the ball are very specific. Usually the dress code and more specific information is shared before the event.

Procession of flags

An old and dear tradition of the Student Union is the procession of flags. It is a solemn way of celebrating 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 snaps at the sitz, but there is always a non-alcoholic alternative available. Before each snaps, 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, such as 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 drunk is not an obligatory part of the sitz culture.

And much much more...

Check out the Student Union's and the student associations' social media and you surely will find many interesting events. Ideas are formed, events are planned and memories are made all the time!

Health care

Finnish Student Health Service (FSHS)

A large part of your Student Union fee goes to the Student Health Care Service (FSHS), which provides healthcare for students all over Finland. Most appointments are free of charge.

Note: There is a penalty fee for uncancelled, unused appointments! You can go to any FSHS centre in Finland, should you for example become ill whilst travelling. See: www.fshs.fi.

To check and cancel your appointments you can use the Self student online service. Please also see the FSHS website for up to date information about the local health centre's contact information and opening hours.

During the fall of 2020 all international students are eligible for health care via The Finnish Student Health Care Services (FSHS). **In emergencies** and when FSHS is closed you should contact the municipal health care. FSHS are expanding in connection to a large reform of social and health care services in Finland. From 1.1. 2021 students from Universities of Applied Sciences will also be included in FSHS' services. **From 1.1.2020 exchange students will use only municipal health care.** The Student Union is in contact with the health care services in Åbo and Vasa to try to guarantee information and service in English. We will update you on all you need to know via our newsletter and social media.

If you have comments about the FSHS, always use their feedback form: <https://www.yths.fi/en/feedback/>. If you have problems getting the right appointment or information, please feel free to contact the Student Union for help.

Booking appointments and asking for advice can be done via these numbers:

Åbo:

General health 046 710 1050
Oral health 046 710 1047
Mental health 046 710 1050

Vasa:

General health 046 710 1097
Oral health 046 710 1098
Mental health 046 710 1097



F · S · H · S

FINNISH STUDENT HEALTH SERVICE

Urgent health care during evenings and weekends:

When the student health centres are closed, and you are in need of urgent health care, you should contact the municipal health care services.

ÅBO: In the evenings and at weekends contact the emergency service by calling the Health Center On-Call Service, phone **02 313 8800**. Tyks T-Hospital is located on Keramikfabriksgatan 1. Read more about Tyks on www.vsshp.fi/en.

VASA: During evenings, nights and weekends contact Vaasa Central Hospital, Sandviksgatan 2–4 Y-building, phone **06 213 1001**. More info at www.vaasacentralhospital.fi.

Let's stay in touch!

We hope you will have a great stay here in Finland. Remember to read the newsletter we at the Student Union sends to your @abo.fi-address every Monday. The newsletter is filled with information about current events and consists mostly of information from the Student Union, the university and the student associations.

You can find information about events on Instagram or Facebook, and our webpage contains lots of information about our services and the student life at ÅAU. Feel free to contact us on social media, phone or email if you want to! You can find all the contact information on our webpage.

www.studentkaren.fi

Contact us

The Secretary General
gs@studentkaren.fi 02 215 46**52**

The Service Expert in Åbo
kansli@studentkaren.fi 02 215 46**50**

The Service Expert in Vasa
havtornen@studentkaren.fi 06 324 7225

The Students' Rights Expert
petra@studentkaren.fi 02 215 46**55**

The Communications Specialist
info@studentkaren.fi 02 215 46**56**

Harassment Contact Persons
trakasseri@studentkaren.fi

Chair of the Student Union Council
fo@studentkaren.fi

Chair of the Board
so@studentkaren.fi

Chief Executive Officer
vd@studentkaren.fi 045 167 2426

Restaurant Manager at the Kåren building in Åbo
anne.peltonen@abo.fi

Find us online

Check our website www.studentkaren.fi
and follow us in social media for up-to-date
information and events



@AASudentkar

Take a look at the Student Union's webshop:

<https://shop.studentkaren.fi/>

Contact information and up to date information about
opening hours and possible corona restrictions:

www.studentkaren.fi/en

Where is ÅAS and ÅAU?

Vasa fact sheet

Population	67 552
Swedish-speaking	23,0 %

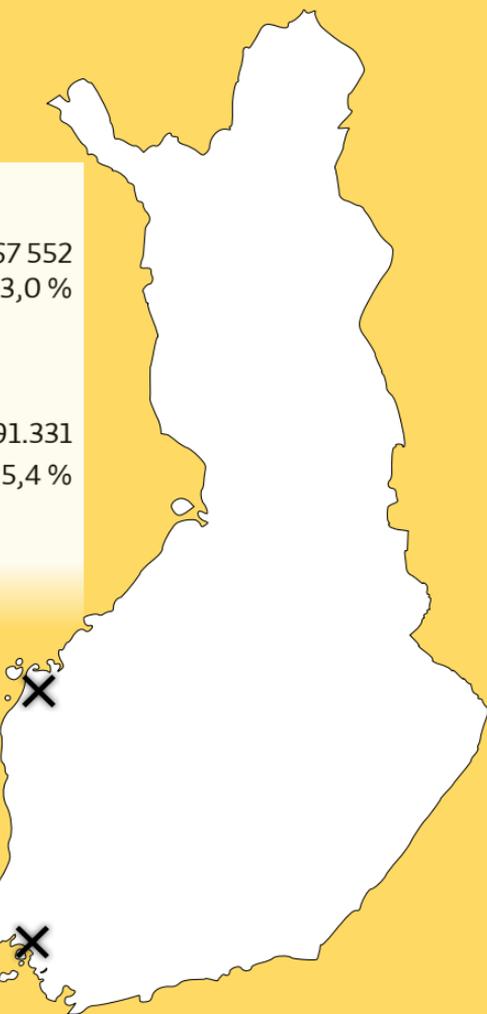
Åbo fact sheet

Population	191.331
Swedish-speaking	5,4 %

Statistics Finland December 2018

Åbo Akademi University
Vaasa / Vasa Campus

Åbo Akademi University
Turku / Åbo Campus





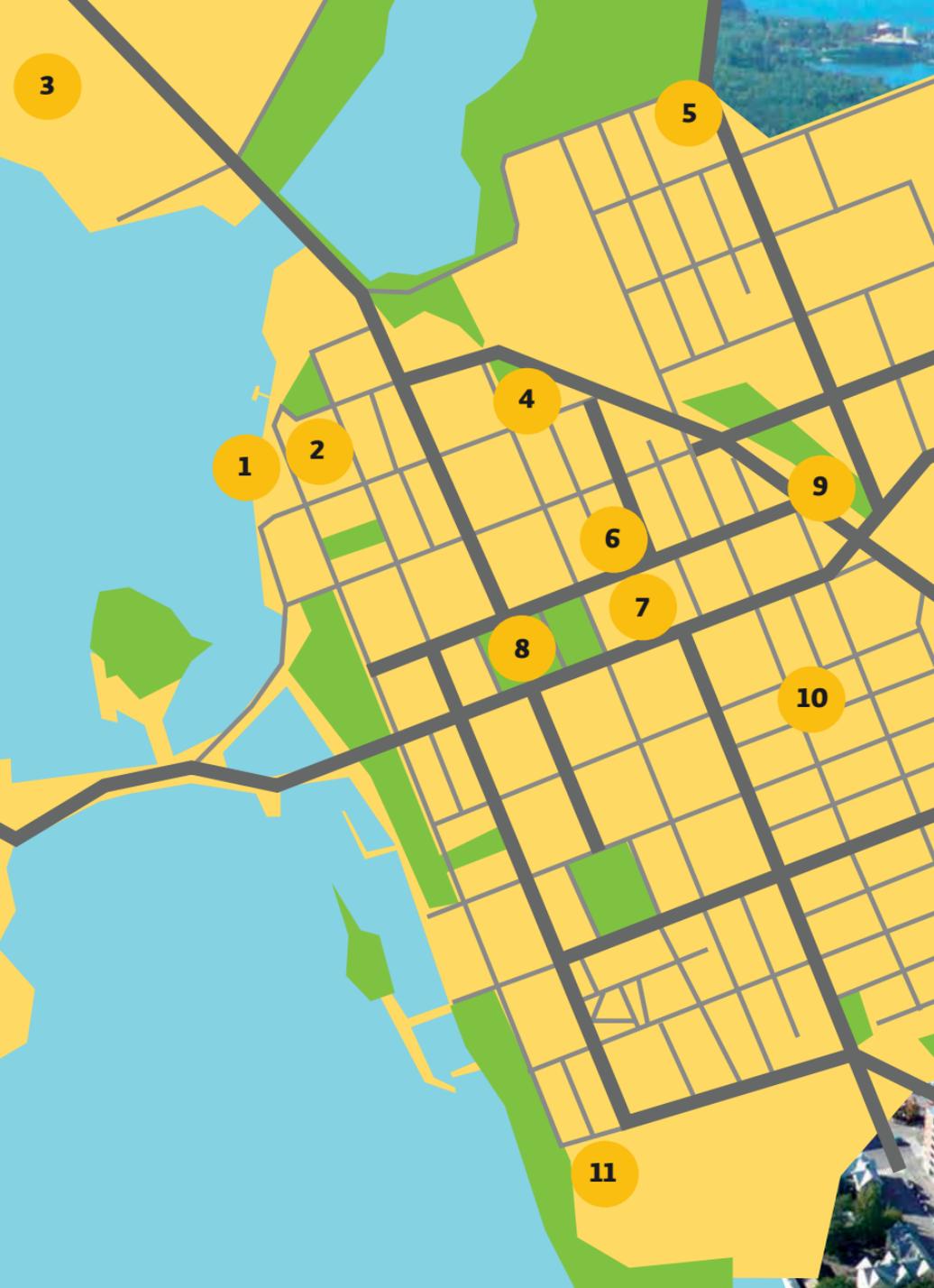
Åbo campus map

1. Agora
2. Arken
3. ASA
4. Axelia
5. BioCity
6. Domus
7. Humanisticum
8. Sibelius Museum
9. Gadolinia
10. Åhuset and Domvillan
11. Teologicum
12. ÅAU Library
13. Turku Cathedral
14. Geohuset
15. ÅAU's main building
16. Gripen
17. Kåren

Find your way in Åbo

1. Turku Cathedral
2. Kåren
3. ÅAU Library
4. Gadolinia
5. Arken
6. ASA
7. Turku City Library
8. Turku Market Square
9. Puutori Square
10. Bus Station
11. Turku Art Museum
12. Turku Railway Station
13. Kupittaa Railway Station
14. Turku University Hospital
15. Emergency services (Tyks Acute)
16. Finnish Student Health Service
17. Turku Student Village Foundation
18. Kela
19. Turku Central Police Station





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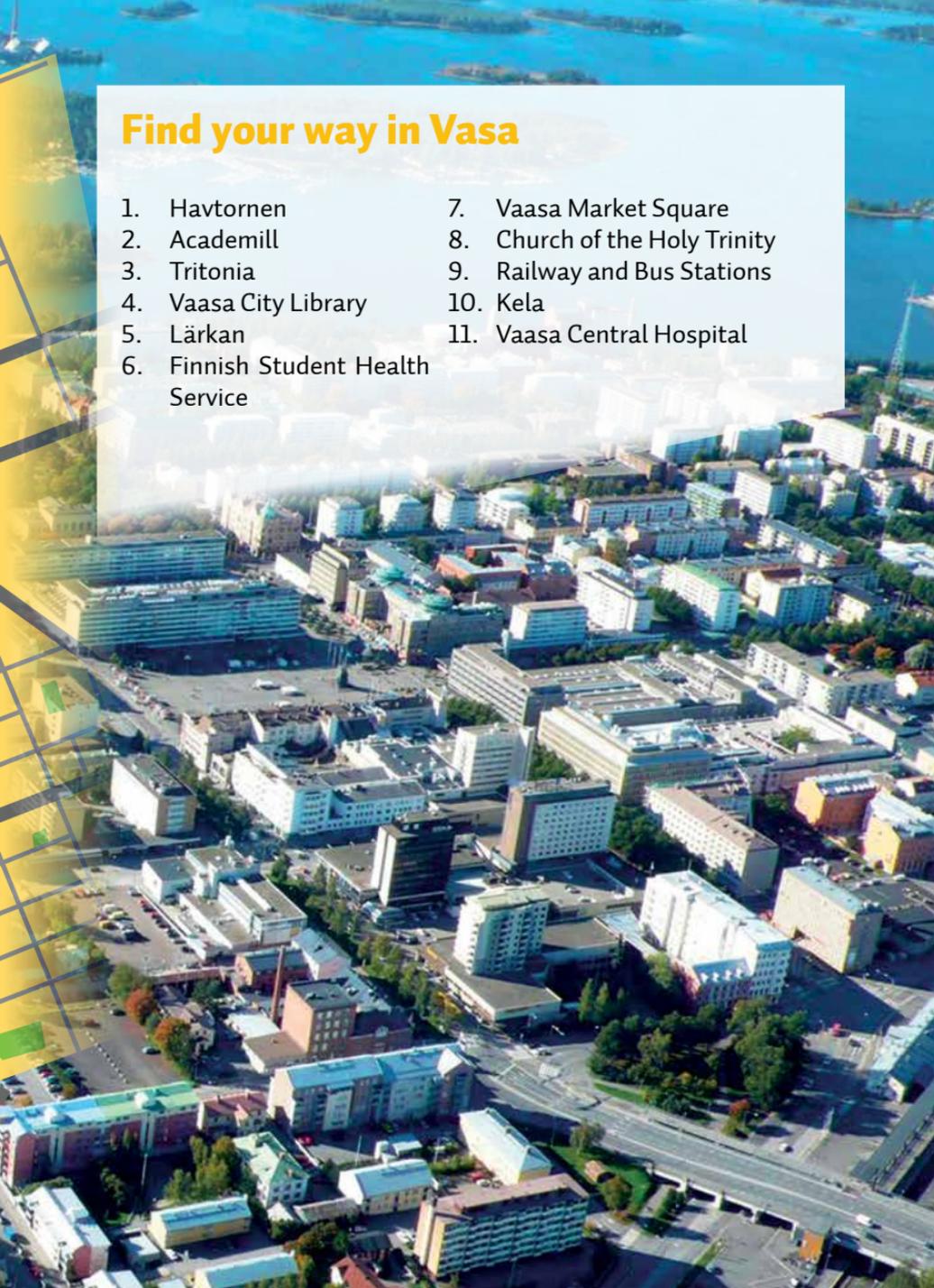
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10

11

Find your way in Vasa

1. Havtornen
2. Academill
3. Tritonia
4. Vaasa City Library
5. Lärkan
6. Finnish Student Health Service
7. Vaasa Market Square
8. Church of the Holy Trinity
9. Railway and Bus Stations
10. Kela
11. Vaasa Central Hospital





www.studentkaren.fi