

# The Student Union of ÅAU's Principles for safer spaces

The Student Union Council at Åbo Akademi University approved the Safer Space Policy at the meeting 7/22. The policy assumes everyone's right to their own space, personal integrity, and the right to be heard and understood. The Student Union wants to develop safer spaces at all events and in everyday activities. The model for the safer space policy describes the process of individual and shared responsibility. The principles outline fundamental social rules that make sure everyone can feel safe and taken care of in all situations. The Student Union wishes that these principles are considered during all events and operations with associations and students. Safer spaces benefit everyone.

In case you are ever in a situation where you feel uncomfortable during an event and you feel that you cannot solve the issue by yourself, we urge you to contact the event organizers.

## **Safer Space Policy – The Student Union of Åbo Akademi University (ÅAS)**

- Respect the mental integrity and bodily autonomy of others.
- Remember that you do not know another person's boundaries unless you ask them.
- Never touch anyone without their consent.
- You have a right to ask for your own personal space.
- Never ridicule, taut, disregard, or humiliate anyone.
- Abstain from commenting on someone's looks, gossiping, or maintaining stereotypes.
- Treat others as you would like to be treated yourself.
- Listen – do not make assumptions.
- Do not make assumptions based on looks or behavior. Never assume someone's sexual orientation, gender, nationality, religious beliefs, social values, socioeconomic background, or health.
- Give space for others to join the conversation. Treat sensitive topics with respect.
- Listen and learn. Take in new information, people, and points of view without prejudice.
- Treat new situations as an opportunity to learn and evolve.
- Apologize if you have treated someone badly, be it either on purpose or by mistake.
- Be respectful.

The Student Union of Åbo Akademi University is an organisation that follows the safer space policy. This means that all activity within the organisation follows these principles. The principles are meant to create a sense of safety and understanding for all students within our student community. The principles are in place to remind everyone of respecting the boundaries of others and to call everyone to scrutinize their own behavior and be aware of areas where they can intervene to create a safer space.

The Student Union values equality, respect, and a safe space for everyone. The safer space policy is designed with the following values in mind:

- The right to be yourself and express yourself however you want to.
- The right to your own personal space.
- Respectful conversations.
- A safer environment for everyone.
- Zero tolerance for harassment or discrimination of any sort.
- Individual and collective responsibility.

### **How the Safer Space Policy looks in practice.**

- We give each other space to be ourselves and express ourselves freely.
- We give each other physical space. We respect the personal space and physical boundaries of others.
- We do not make assumptions and instead ask respectful and polite questions. We should never assume someone's gender, ethnicity, sexuality, relationship, level of education, political leanings, language, culture, health, or other personal characteristics.
- We should not make assumptions about anyone based on these characteristics.
- We make efforts to have a culture of respect when conversing. We do this by listening when another speaks, we let each other feel heard, and we do not make personal attacks.
- We do not use degrading language. We do not use racist, sexist, or ableist terminology in either serious or joking manners.
- If something has gone badly, we apologize and do better next time.
- We protect each other and look out for each other's safety in all circumstances.
- We intervene when we observe something inappropriate happening, either by ourselves or with the help of someone else.
- When we remark upon problematic behavior, we do it respectfully and constructively.
- The Student Union does not tolerate any harassment or discrimination of any sort. The victims of harassment and/or discrimination are met with support and are always taken seriously.
- The communication for what issues can be taken to the harassment contact persons is clear both internally and externally.
- In case you are accused of inappropriate or bad behavior, you take the criticism to heart and make sure to do better in the future.

We all have a collective responsibility to act according to these principles and values. A safer space is achievable when the principles are followed. Nobody is perfect, everyone makes mistakes, but we can always learn from these mistakes.