CHECKLIST:

☐ Read through the Pre-arrival guide and other material part of the electronic welcome package sent to you by Åbo Akademi University. Find out as much as possible about Finland and the city.

☐ Arrange with adequate insurance (See information on page 8-9). Note, requirement for visa.

☐ Apply for a residence permit (concerns all non-EU students). (See information on page 5-6.)

☐ Confirm your intention to study at Åbo Akademi University. (See information on page 4.)

☐ Apply for housing. (See information on page 7-8.)

☐ Book your trip so that you arrive in Vasa during the registration period which ends 5 September. Try to arrive in time for the orientation course. (See information on page 9-12.)

☐ Draw up a budget for your stay in Finland. (See information on page 18-20.)

☐ Accept your housing offer by paying the housing deposit fee.

☐ Bring the original copies of your secondary school leaving certificate and/or Bachelor’s degree certificate (when applying to the Master’s level) as well as original transcripts and other official statements issued to you by your former school or university. You will need these when you register. (See information on page 11.)

☐ Make sure that your luggage is properly labelled and that you are carrying valuables and important information concerning your studies and your trip in your hand luggage.
Congratulations! You have been offered a study entitlement at Åbo Akademi University. You might have several questions concerning the start of your studies - this guide aims to answer most of the questions that new degree students may have before accepting the study offer, when preparing for their studies as well as in the initial stages of the studies.

Please read this guide carefully. Follow the instructions given and if you have any further questions; do not hesitate to contact the Office of Academic and Student Affairs (contact information at the end of this guide).

When you arrive, you will receive more information about the studies as well as more detailed information about living in Vasa/Vaasa.

An orientation course for international degree students will be arranged in the beginning of the term. For more information about that course, please see the chapter on arrival and registration.

We want to welcome you to Åbo Akademi University! We hope you will feel at home at our university and that this guide will facilitate the early stages of your studies.

Welcome! - Välkommen!

THE UNIVERSITY

Åbo Akademi University is a Swedish-language university, which means that the main language of teaching and administration is Swedish. Currently the university also offers 8 Master’s degree programmes taught in English and new programmes are being planned. There are also double degree programmes offered in cooperation with partner universities. However, the main part of the curriculum is taught in Swedish.

The university was founded in 1918 in order to provide higher education for the Swedish-speaking minority in Finland. About 7000 students are currently enrolled. About 1000 of these are international students studying either for a whole degree or for shorter periods as exchange students.

Åbo Akademi University has two main campuses in Åbo and Vasa. Åbo Akademi University comprises 12 departments:

- Faculty of Arts
- Faculty of Education
- Faculty of Theology
- Department of Psychology and Logopedics
- School of Business and Economics
- Department of Social Sciences
- Department of Law
- Department of Political Science
- Department of Natural Sciences
- Department of Biosciences
- Department of Information Technologies
- Department of Chemical Engineering
ACCEPTING YOUR PLACE OF STUDY

CONFIRMATION FORM

It is vital that you complete and return the form for confirmation of your intention to study at Åbo Akademi University to the Office of Academic and Student Affairs no later than 29 July, 2014 by 16.15 (Finnish time = CET + 1) (postmarks not accepted, the form must reach the Office of Academic and Student Affairs before this date). This form is sent to accepted students together with the letter of admission. If you fail to send in the confirmation form, you will lose the right to enroll at Åbo Akademi University.

On the confirmation form, admitted students must choose between the following options:

1) To accept your study place
2) Not to accept your study place.

The rules regarding accepting a study place are somewhat different depending on which group of students you belong to and what level (undergraduate or master) you have been admitted to. Please see the confirmation form for details regarding your confirmation.

Please also note that confirmation is not the same as registration. After confirming your intention to start your studies you also need to register at the university. Note that if you plan on postponing the commencement of your studies you must first confirm your intention to accept the study entitlement by the deadline, after which you have the right to register as absent (please see the chapter on registration for more information).

The confirmation form can be sent electronically as an e-mail attachment to admission@abo.fi or by fax or regular mail, please see the contact details at the end of this guide. If you confirm by e-mail, please write your complete name, date of birth and the subject/programme you have been admitted to in the e-mail. Please note the deadline!
IMMIGRATION REQUIREMENTS

The first thing that must be addressed immediately after receiving the admission letter is the application for a residence permit. If you are a non EU/EEA-national it is very important that you apply for a residence permit for students as early as possible. Due to the many applications during the summer months, extra time must be reserved for the application.

In this chapter the basic principles of the state regulations regarding entry visas, the right to reside and work permits are presented. Please check the information given by the Finnish Immigration Service for more details:

http://www.migri.fi/studying_in_finland

The Finnish Immigration Service is the government authority responsible for issuing permits and visas to enter Finland. Contact the Finnish diplomatic mission closest to you.

NATIONALS OF THE NORDIC COUNTRIES

If you are a citizen of Sweden, Norway, Denmark or Iceland, you do not need an entry visa or a residence permit to study in Finland. Citizens of the Nordic countries may reside, work and study in Finland without any limitations. More information about mobility between the Nordic countries can also be obtained from the Hallå Norden web site: http://www.norden.org/da/norden-for-dig/studere-i-norden.

NATIONALS OF THE EU/EEA COUNTRIES

Students from the EU countries need to register their right to reside in Finland if the period of study in Finland exceeds three months. A written certificate of registration is given to a person who has been registered after the authorities have established whether the requirements for registration are met. A residence permit is granted for one year at a time or for the duration of the time of study (if this is shorter than one year).

The following documents will be required:

- A completed application form (can be collected from the local police station)
- A valid passport or other ID accepted by the authorities
- The admission letter issued by the university
- An account of the applicant’s financial situation
- One passport sized photograph

The application is handed in at the local police. The address of the police station in Vasa is:

Address: Korsholmsesplanaden 45
Phone: 071 87 40511
Office hours: Mon-Fri 8 am – 4.15 pm

STUDENTS FROM OUTSIDE EU/EEA

Students from countries that are not EU/EEA member countries, who wish to stay in Finland for more than 3 months, must be in possession of a residence permit already when entering the country. The application for the permit should be submitted to the Finnish diplomatic mission in the student’s country of origin, or if the student lives abroad, the Finnish diplomatic mission in your country of residence. The fee for the first residence permit for studies is 300 euros.

The application for the residence permit must be made in good time before departure, preferably immediately after receiving the admission letter to Åbo Akademi University. The application can be completed online. If you have submitted your application via the e-service, you need to visit a Finnish embassy to verify your identity, provide your biometric data (fingerprints) and to present the original copies of any supplements needed for the application. An application cannot be processed until you have visited the embassy.
Note that it can take a long time to process the visa application and, as students must register at the university by 5 September 2014, you must pay particular attention to the visa application and reserve enough time in order to ensure that you are able to arrive and register by 5 September at the very latest.

Apply for the visa immediately after receiving the admission letter. Should you have problems with the application process, please keep the International office at Åbo Akademi University informed of this.

To obtain a residence permit for Finland, the applicant must fulfil the following conditions:

• The applicant must be at least 18 years of age.

• The applicant must have received the admission letter issued by Åbo Akademi University (the electronic admission letter is sufficient).

• The applicant must prove that he/she has sufficient funds to cover the expenses for the study period in Finland. (This is normally done by showing proof of having at least 6720 euro (560 euro per month) as scholarship or a deposit in a Finnish bank account.)

• The applicant must have sufficient insurance and show details of a comprehensive health insurance coverage. Your insurance must cover medical expenses up to the amount of 100,000 euros if your studies in Finland last less than two years. Your insurance must cover medical expenses up to the amount of 30,000 euros if your studies in Finland last two years or longer. (Please see the chapter about Insurance for more information.)

• In some cases the applicant must also prove knowledge of English language (please contact the diplomatic mission for more information about this.)

For more information, please see the information provided by the Finnish Immigration Services enclosed with the admission letter.

If you have a conditional offer, please note that the conditional admission letter is valid when applying for the residence permit provided that you fulfil the condition stipulated in the letter.

Note that Åbo Akademi University will not issue a new admission letter to a student. You should therefore not give away your original letter or lose it.

Åbo Akademi University works closely with the Immigration office’s unit for residence permits. Among other things we send detailed lists of all admitted students to the Immigration office in order to facilitate the application process. It is however the students responsibility to make the application for a residence permit in time and meet the requirements.

APPLICANTS ALREADY RESIDENT IN FINLAND

The local police station will provide the necessary information for renewal of the visa or residence permit. (See the address above.) The police should be contacted before the residence permit expires. The following documents will be required:

• A valid passport
• The acceptance letter issued by Åbo Akademi University
• Evidence that the applicant’s finances will cover all expenses in Finland or a statement of financial support (grant, loan, family support).
• Details of a comprehensive health insurance coverage

If you are renewing a residence permit for ongoing studies you will also need to show a transcript of records and a certificate of enrollment.

WORKING IN FINLAND AS AN INTERNATIONAL STUDENT

Students should not rely on finding a job while studying in Finland. Finnish language skills are often required by employers. The Career Services at Åbo Akademi University offers career guidance also for international degree students.

Please note that Åbo Akademi University does not offer any financial support to degree students. There are no grants for students at the
bachelor or master level.

**CITIZENS OF THE EU/EEA AND THE NORDIC COUNTRIES**

International students who are citizens of the Nordic, the EU or the EEA countries are allowed to work without restrictions in Finland and they do not need a work permit.

**STUDENTS OF OTHER NATIONALITIES**

Students are allowed to work without a work permit within certain limits. A work permit is not needed for part-time work (25 hours a week) during term time or full-time work during holidays (the periods May 1 - September 30 and December 15 - January 15).

In order to work more than 25 hours per week during term time, students must obtain a work permit. The work permit is subject to a charge and the application should be submitted to the local police station (see address above). Although international students coming from third party states (outside the EU) can work and earn income during their studies, they must still make the above-mentioned deposit of 6 720 euro (560 euro/month) to finance their studies and living costs when applying for an extension to the residence permit.

For further information: [http://www.migri.fi/working_in_finland](http://www.migri.fi/working_in_finland).

**HOUSING IN VASA**

Universities in Finland are not responsible for the accommodation of students. Student must themselves apply for housing **before arrival**. Please find some alternatives presented below.

There are several options when looking for accommodation in Vasa.

**Lärkan** offers student apartments 1.2 km from the university, close to the railway station and the city centre. Fill in your housing application online at [http://studiebostader.fi/](http://studiebostader.fi/).

**Voas**, the Student Housing Foundation in Vasa, offers another option for students in Vasa. You can apply for housing online at: [http://www.voas.fi/](http://www.voas.fi/).

It is also possible to rent an apartment on the open market; see e.g. [http://www.oikotie.fi](http://www.oikotie.fi) and [http://www.vuokraovi.com/](http://www.vuokraovi.com/) (select English and “Vaasa”) This can in many cases become more expensive than student accommodation.

Note that there is a shortage in housing at the beginning of the autumn term. Therefore, please do not rely on finding a room after arrival; make the arrangements beforehand.

**INSURANCE**

Please note that health insurance is one of the obligatory requirements for obtaining a residence permit for studies.

All registered students who are members of the Student Union of Åbo Akademi University are entitled to use the services of the Student Health Care Centre in Vasa. It does not, however, provide emergency or hospital services. The student must therefore have a health insurance that covers such cases.

If you are a national of an EU or EEA country your national health care insurance is valid in Finland. To prove this you will have to bring a “European health insurance card” issued in your home country.

For more information, please see: [http://ec.europa.eu/social/main.jsp?catId=559](http://ec.europa.eu/social/main.jsp?catId=559)

A person, who comes to Finland to study, is normally considered to be living in Finland for a limited period only and does not meet the requirement of permanent residence. This means that they are not entitled to the Social Insurance Institution (Folksam/ FPA/ Kansaneläkelaitos KELA) benefits.

In addition to health insurance, we strongly advise students to arrange, already in the home
country, with travel insurance and insurance for personal possessions against theft, loss or breakage.

**STUDENTS FROM OUTSIDE THE EU/EEA**

Students and scholars coming from outside the EU/EEA-countries must have their own medical insurance in order to get a residence permit. How much the insurance must cover is dependent on the length of the intended studies.

A student from outside the EU/EEA area who enters Finland to study for **less than two years** is not usually granted the right of domicile, i.e. a home municipality in Finland, and therefore is not entitled to municipal health care services. Consequently, the student must have private insurance which covers the cost of medical treatment up to €100 000.

A student who enters Finland to study for **at least two years** is usually granted the right to domicile, i.e. a home municipality in Finland and is therefore entitled to municipal health care services. Consequently, the student must have private insurance which covers the cost of medical treatment up to €30 000 (primarily medication costs).

In order to avoid the costs which in case of intensive care or difficult operations can rise unbearable, students coming from outside the EU/EEA-countries must have their own medical insurance.

**MARSH STUDENT INSURANCE PACKAGE (SIP)**

Åbo Akademi University has partnered with the Student Insurance Package (SIP) provider MARSH and we recommend this insurance package to all degree students from outside the EU/EEA area. The insurance can also be bought by EU students if they wish to have private health insurance during their stay in Finland.

This insurance has been pre-approved by the Finnish Immigration Service. This pre-approval will result in a quicker decision on your application for a residence permit.

For more detailed information about the type of coverage you will need and its cost, please see the information leaflet included in the welcome package and visit the insurance providers website.

http://www.sipinsurance.eu/

Please note that any communication or questions about this insurance should be directed to the insurance provider.
ARRIVAL

TRAVELLING TO VASA/VAASA

Vasa is situated 420 km north of the capital Helsinki (Helsingfors).

BY PLANE

There is an international airport in Vasa (VAA) with regular flights to Helsingfors (Helsinki) and Stockholm, with several airlines operating the routes, e.g. Finnair, Scandinavian Airlines and Air Baltic. Vaasa Airport is located about 9 kilometres from the centre of Vasa. There is a regular bus connection between the airport and the city centre: http://www.vaasanpaikallisliikenne.fi/ (only in Finnish and Swedish, look for Lentokentälliikenne/Flygfälttrafik). Another option is taxi; taxis operating are on call at the taxi stand in front of the airport during the scheduled arrival times.

Ryanair flies to Tampere (240 km from Vasa). From Tampere there are buses and trains regularly to Vasa. Wizzair has route from Gdansk (Poland) and Budapest (Hungary) to Turku (Åbo), 330 km south from Vasa. From Turku there are trains and buses to Vasa.

BY SHIP

The passenger and freight traffic is served by a ship connection between Vasa and Umeå (Sweden); the shipping company is RG Line. The largest cruising ships in Europe operate the routes from Stockholm (Sweden) to Turku or Helsinki. These routes are operated mainly by Viking Line and Tallink Silja. From Germany to Helsinki there are ships for persons travelling by car, but they also take deck passengers. These routes are operated by Finnlines.

BY RAIL

Vasa is connected to all the bigger cities, to Helsinki-Vantaa airport and to Turku harbour by rail. The journey from Vasa to Helsinki lasts about 4 hours, depending on the connection. A one-way ticket is about 60 euros, but with a Finnish student card, you will get a 50% discount. Timetables and information are available on http://www.vr.fi.

BY CAR

The possibilities to reach Finland by car are mostly limited to the ferry routes from Sweden or Germany. The road network consists mainly of country roads with a speed limit of 80 km/h. Some main routes have a limit of 100 km/h, and highways 120 km/h. Keeping the speed limit is important since speeding fines are high and the traffic is controlled frequently. The law requires drivers to use headlights also during the day, and using a mobile phone while driving is prohibited. During the winter period winter tyres are required (preferably studded tyres).

ARRIVAL TIME

Since it is very important that the new international students settle in, find their way around and get acquainted with the study system at Åbo Akademi University, it is strongly recommended that all degree students participate in the orientation course arranged at the end of August (see below).

All new international degree students must register before 5 September 2014. If they fail to do this they will forfeit the right to register. If students face serious problems in arranging their travel to Finland for example due to residence issues, please contact the International office by the end of August.

Students are strongly advised to find housing before their arrival. If you arrive during a weekend or in the evening it might not be possible to obtain a key from the housing office or landlord. Information about temporary accommodation in Vasa can be obtained from the Vaasa tourist office, http://matkailu.vaasa.fi.
REGISTRATION

Students who have accepted the study entitlement by 29 July 2014 can register either as present or as absent.

The registration must be made during the registration period between 25 August and 5 September 2014. First-year degree students who have not registered by 5 September will lose their right to register.

Note that a student must register every year. The registration procedures for new students is however different than for older students. All students that have been registered during the previous year receive information about registration as well as a registration form before the start of the autumn term.

If you already have a study entitlement at Åbo Akademi University, note that in order to accept the new entitlement, you must register according to the procedures for new students during the registration period (25.8-5.9.2014).

REGISTER AS PRESENT

The initial registration must be made in person at the university between 25 August and 5 September 2014. The academic year starts with an orientation course (see above).

Students studying at the campus in Vasa register at Academill, Strandgatan 2. Registration is possible every weekday during this period between 9 am and 3 pm.

At registration, the student is required to produce the following evidence of his/her qualifications for inspection:

- Copy of admission letter issued by Åbo Akademi University.
- The original copy (and translation) of the following documents proving eligibility for admission:
  - Secondary school certificate or school-leaving examination certificate (applies to students admitted to bachelor level studies).

ORIENTATION COURSE

Participating in the orientation course is strongly recommended to all new degree students. Depending on language abilities and on the programme or the subject that the student is admitted to, the students have the possibility to participate in either the orientation course arranged for new students (held in Swedish) or the orientation course for international students (held in English).

The course aims to introduce the new environment, the university and study related matters that the student needs to know in order to study successfully at Åbo Akademi University.

The orientation course for new international students at the Vasa campus is arranged 27-29 August 2014.

The different programmes of the orientation courses with confirmed dates will be sent to all accepted students by mail during the summer. The programme along with other useful information will also be available at http://www.abo.fi.

STUDENT TUTORS

Åbo Akademi University has a system of student tutors for all new degree students. The students will be grouped in so called tutor-groups with one or two older students and a group of new students. The students who will be assigned to act as tutors will introduce the university campus as well as the city of Vasa and she/he will also be available to answer questions concerning practical arrangements. The tutor can also be contacted by the student in case she/he has any questions. The students will meet their tutors on the orientation course. Please observe that a tutor is not a teacher, but a fellow student.
• University diploma or transcript of completed university studies (applies to students admitted to one of the Master’s Programmes taught in English or to Master’s level studies).
• Passport or other evidence to prove the applicant’s identity.
• Receipt of the payment of the Student Union membership fee. Bank giro forms for this purpose are available at the Office for Academic and Student Affairs. Payment is compulsory for degree-students and optional for doctoral students (more information about the membership is available further on in this guide).
• A carefully completed registration form (the registration form is handed to the student during registration).

Students who have not provided the university with certified copies of the secondary school leaving certificates or university degree diploma when sending in their application, must do so at registration.

The original degree certificates (secondary and university) must be handed in at registration for inspection. The certificates will be returned to the students a few weeks after the registration period. The registration is however immediate meaning that even though the certificates are handed in for inspection, the student is registered and will receive the matriculation number (i.e. student number) and other information at the time of registration.

The information on the registration form will be registered in Åbo Akademi University’s study register (TURE). Information about enrolment will also be sent to the national application and acceptance register (HAREK). For more information about the acceptance register, please see www.oph.fi or contact the Office for Academic and Student Affairs.

A certificate of enrolment will be issued to registered students upon request. Students who have registered at the university will receive a matriculation number. Registered students will have to use their matriculation number for course registration, registration for examinations and whenever they request the university to issue a transcript of their study record.

Please note that the university will withdraw the offer of admission, if it is discovered that a student does not possess the required qualifications for the programme to which he/she has been offered admission, or if the university receives proof against the authenticity of the submitted documents. Please note that Åbo Akademi University has the right to investigate the authenticity of any documents that students hand in with their application. If a falsification of degree certificates or language results is discovered, the students will lose the right to study even if he or she has already enrolled.

REGISTER AS ABSENT

To register as absent means that the student will not actively study during the time for which he/she is registered as absent for. During this time a student can not register any credits or enroll in classes.

A student can register as absent either in person or through an ombudsman if he/she is not able to register him/herself. The registration as absent must be made before 5 September 2014. If a student fails to register as present or absent before this date, he/she will lose the right to register. A registration as absent can at any time of the academic year be changed to present.

If a student wishes to register as absent, s/he should contact the Office of Academic and Student Affairs (see contact information at the end of this guide), for example by e-mail. The student will get a form for registering as absent that s/he should fill in, print out and sign, and then send to the Office of Academic and Student Affairs either as scanned by e-mail, by fax or by regular post. However, the student needs to make sure that the form reaches the office before the end of office hours on 5 September, otherwise the student will lose his/her right to register at the university.

Students registering as absent should also note that they need to submit original degree certificates and official translations (secondary and university) for inspection when they register as present for the first time. If the student is unable to submit these documents upon registration, or if there is proof against the authenticity of the documents, the university will with-
draw the offer of admission.

Students registering as absent will receive a matriculation number.

If a student registers as absent he or she does not need to pay the Student Union fee for the term(s) he or she is registered as absent.

If you intend to register as absent please note the regulations concerning the time limitation on the study entitlement available at www.abo.fi/student/en/begransadstudietid. Students are allowed to register as absent for a total of two academic years or 4 terms.

If a student registers as absent during the first academic year of his or her studies, registration documents will be sent to the students during the following summer. It is therefore important that students update their contact details if these change. Please also note that the university will not issue a new admission letter. When the student applies for the residence permit the original admission letter must be used.

Students can change the registration from absent to present at any time of the academic year. A student should however always consult a study advisor, the programme coordinator, his or her teacher tutor or professor if he or she intends to change the registration during an ongoing term or in the beginning of the spring term in order to make sure that there are available courses and that he or she can make a suitable study plan. Note that some programmes are set up in such a way that it is not possible to start the programme in the middle of the term or from the spring term.

If a student changes the registration from absent to present during the academic year the registration procedures described above must be followed. The student must also pay the student union fee for the ongoing term, even if the term is mid-way.

**LIMITED STUDY TIME**

All new students need to take into consideration the limited time of study available.
STUDENT CARDS

All students studying at a Finnish university are members of the Student Union at the university in question. The membership fee in 2014-2015 is 106 euros for the whole academic year. The membership fee must be paid before registration at the university (the student must also pay any bank fees related to the payment).

After having paid the Student Union fee and registered, the student can apply for a student ID card. The student union fee is paid through a bank using a specific bank giro form, which can be obtained at the Office of Academic and Student Affairs before registering.

The student card used is called Lyyra. The student card is ordered with an electronic ordering form at http://portaali.lyyra.fi. A digital photo is required. It will take 3-4 weeks to process the card application and each student can monitor the status of the application through a link sent to the student confirming a successful card application. If a student orders a card with the credit card option, the card will be mailed to the address the student currently has registered with the Finnish authorities. All other cards, when ready, can be collected at the Student Union office in Havtornen (Address: Inre Hamnen, opposite to the Academill building).

The student card entitles the holder to use the Student Health Service and to discounts on e.g. meals in the student cafeterias, long-distance buses and train tickets and also on ferries and flights, theatres and other cultural events etc. It also works as a university library card. Please note that in order to be able to apply for the Student ID card, you must have registered at the university as present and obtained a student number.

STUDYING AT ÅBO AKADEMI UNIVERSITY

ACADEMIC CALENDAR

The academic year starts on 1 August and ends 31 July. Both terms are divided into four teaching periods.

AUTUMN TERM:
Period I: 1 September – 24 October
Period II: 27 October – 19 December

SPRING TERM:
Period III: 7 January – 13 March
Period IV: 16 March – 29 May

Examinations will still be conducted during the last week of May.

DEGREE STRUCTURE

All the departments at Åbo Akademi University offer the undergraduate degrees of kandidat (in pharmacy the undergraduate degree is called farmaceut and in law rättsnotarie) and magister (within technology the master degree is called Diplomingenjör, which is equivalent to Master of Science in Technology). These degrees are usually internationally compared to those of Bachelor (kandidat) and Master (magister).

Students are generally admitted to a degree programme leading to both a Bachelor’s and a Master’s degree. The Bachelor’s degree consists of 180 credits (3 years of full-time study) and the Master’s degree of 120 credits (2 years of full-time study) (Master’s degree in Psychology 150 credits, 2 1/2 years). However students are also admitted directly to the Master level for Master’s studies or to one of the Master’s degree programmes (some of which are taught in English).
Most departments organise their courses in degree programmes. These usually have a similar structure; they consist of a major subject and one or two minor subjects in addition to general and language studies. All course work is measured in credits (studiepoäng in Swedish). A normal workload is 60 credits per academic year.

Courses are divided into three categories according to their level: basic, intermediate and advanced studies. Basic and intermediate studies are part of the Bachelor’s degree while the advanced studies are taken within the Master’s degree. At the end of the Bachelor’s degree students write a short Bachelor’s thesis. Within the Master’s degree a longer Master’s thesis is written. An internship can form part of the Bachelor’s degree.

CREDITS

All courses are measured in credits, which in Finland are called studiepoäng (opintopiste in Finnish). A full course-load is 60 credits per academic year and equals about 1 600 hours of work.

GRADERS

The grading system uses a scale from A-E (5-1) where A (5) is the highest score while E (1) is the lowest pass. Some courses are assessed on a pass or fail basis only with no further grading. The master thesis can be graded on a different scale from laudatur, eximia cum laude approbatur, magna cum laude approbatur, cum laude approbatur, non sine laude approbatur, lubenter approbatur and approbatur, laudatur being the highest grade. The master thesis in technology (diplomarbete) is graded on a scale from A (5)-E (1) with A being the highest grade.

ASSESSMENTS

Courses are assessed either by a written examination at the end of the course or by essays and papers handed in during and/or after the course. There are no set examination periods at Åbo Akademi University. The written examination is usually done on the last day of the course or a few weeks later.

CHEATING

Åbo Akademi University takes cheating and plagiarism seriously. In 2008, the Åbo Akademi University Senate approved the Procedures for Handling Cases of Plagiarism. These can be read at: https://www.abo.fi/student/en/etik_plagiat.

More information about academic and practical issues regarding your studies will be given during the orientation day for international degree students.

SWEDISH FOR INTERNATIONAL STUDENTS

Students admitted to a Master’s Programme taught in English are required to take the course Swedish as a foreign language level 1 (5 credits). At the Vasa campus the course is called Swedish Basic Course for Exchange Students (5 credits).

Students admitted to the regular Master’s level studies (i.e. programmes officially taught in Swedish) are required to take 10 credits of Swedish (Swedish as a foreign language, levels 1 and 2). However, in order to successfully be able to pursue their studies these students are required to learn Swedish in accordance with the language requirements for each programme. The main language of instruction at Åbo Akademi University is Swedish. This means that, for example, when making study plans students must take into consideration that many courses are taught in Swedish, and therefore knowledge of Swedish might be required for some courses. For example when selecting minor subjects this is something that must be considered.

International students admitted with the right to complete both a three-year Bachelor’s degree and a two-year Master’s degree are required to pass a Swedish language test. Students with knowledge of Swedish can take a test in September in Åbo. If they pass the test (which equals level four of the language courses) they need not participate in any Swedish language courses.

International degree applicants can apply to the Swedish summer course in August, taking place in Turku (please see http://www.abo.fi/student/en/eilc for more information).
ACADEMIC ADVISING

All departments have Student advisors who provide academic advising. In addition, all subjects have student and teacher tutors who can assist you with academic matters. You will meet these people during the orientation for new degree students.

You can also turn to the International office for help. Note, however that the International office can not advise you in matters related to your studies (i.e. study plan).

MINPLAN

MinPlan is an electronic tool for making a study plan on-line. It is also an electronic support for planning the studies and the entire degree at Åbo Akademi University. MinPlan (“My Plan”) can be found at www.abo.fi/minplan.

To log on, the user name and password for Åbo Akademi University is required. Manuals and help in using MinPlan is available at http://www.abo.fi/student/minplanmanualer/?setlanguage=en.

EXTRACT FROM THE CRIMINAL RECORDS

Students admitted to the University in 2012 or later may be requested to provide an extract from the criminal records for the assessment of their ability to study. Such an extract may be requested only from students whose studies include practical training or other activities involving work with minors. The extract will be requested before the beginning of the practical training or other activity. To ensure the safety of minors, it is necessary to ascertain that the student about to begin practical training has no criminal record of certain serious crimes (sex offence, murder, aggravated assault and battery, aggravated burglary and robbery and narcotics offence).

DRUG TESTS DURING STUDIES

In certain limited cases, students may be obligated to present a drug test certificate. This primarily concerns situations where testing is necessary to ascertain a student’s ability to function, provided that certain additional conditions specified in detail by law are met.

ACCESSIBILITY

Teaching is, as far as possible, planned so that students with different types of special needs are taken into account. In case of any problems, please contact the Office for Academic and Student Affairs. We will help contacting the people who are able to actuate in these matters.

LIBRARIES

There are two main libraries in Vasa. The university library Tritonia is the scientific library which serves all the universities in Vasa. Most books on the reading lists for courses and examinations can be found in Tritonia. As a student you can apply for a user card. The public library is at Biblioteksgatan 13 and offers collections of literature in many languages. It has a music department,
a scientific department and a department with children’s books. Both libraries have journals, newspapers, e-books and e-journals, reading rooms and computer facilities.

**COMPUTER SERVICES**

The Computing Centre (Datacentralen) provides computing services free of charge for students and staff at Åbo Akademi University. All students will receive a free account in the computer network, which enables them to use the computer services provided by the university. There are several computer classes with computers for student use.

Students who register during the first week of registration can obtain the user account at registration. If you register during the second week of registration you must go to the Computing Centre to complete the user agreement in order to obtain the user account. Note that this can only be done after registration.

**E-MAIL**

Your e-mail address at the university will be Firstname.Lastname@abo.fi. The e-mail account is part of the user agreement and you receive it after signing the user agreement. Please use the university e-mail account as this is the address that teachers and other personnel will use when contacting you. Also note that whenever the university needs to send out information concerning all students, that information will be sent to the university e-mail addresses (for example information about university elections or reforms or other important information that needs to be sent to all students, for example if there is an event at the university or an emergency of some sort).

**KEYS**

Students can obtain a key to the Vasa campus building Academill. The key is personal and programmed for you. To receive the key, you must have registered and pay a deposit fee of 35 euros. Please ask at the Facilities Services (B1) for more information if you need a key.

**STUDENT UNION**

All students studying at a Finnish university have to be members of the Student Union at the university in question. The compulsory membership fee 2014-2015 is 106 euros for the whole academic year.

Your membership in the Student Union will entitle you to health care, a student card, and reduced prices for lunches at student cafes, travel tickets, tickets to theatre and concerts and will enable you to utilize the Student Union services and participate in the activities of the Student Union.

The Student Union aims to create an atmosphere of friendship among the students. For this purpose it organises different kinds of events and subsidises the students’ societies. The students’ societies arrange excursions, parties, cultural events etc.

The Student Union office is situated in the “Havtornen” Building, the old tree building that is connected to Academill via a long corridor. To find your way to Havtornen, follow the signs from Academill. The Student Union has a mailing list for all international degree students in Vasa. More information on this will be given during the Orientation course.


**HEALTH CARE**

The Finnish Student Health Service provides health care for students enrolled at the universities. A health care fee is included in the Student Union membership fee. By paying the fee, students are eligible for student health service. This insurance covers regular medical consultations, physiotherapy, psychotherapy, x-ray and laboratory testing as well as general and specialized dental care. The Finnish Student Health Service in Vasa is open during office hours. It is located
on Hovrättsesplanaden 15 C. For appointments call 046 710 1097 (046 710 1098 for dental care).

For urgent medical care outside office hours, please turn to the Main Health Centre at Smedsbyvägen (Sepänkyläntie) 14-16. In emergencies the Vasa Central Hospital has a 24 hour Accident & Emergency Clinic at Sandviksgatan (Hietalahdenkatu) 2-4.

Students from EU-countries need to obtain a European Health Insurance Card from a health insurance service in their home country before departure. Nationals of other countries must arrange their health insurance privately before departure. Please see the chapter about insurance.

**CAREER SERVICES**

Åbo Akademi University has a Career Service unit (Arbetsforum) that helps students with career planning as well as practical issues around finding a job (part-time, during vacations or after graduation). The Coordinator for Career Services in Vasa is found in the A-building, 2nd floor. More information about the Career Services will be available on the Orientation day for international degree students.

**THE CENTRE FOR LANGUAGE AND COMMUNICATION**

Åbo Akademi University has a Centre for Language and Communication (Centret för språk och kommunikation) that offers language courses for students. Language courses are offered on a basic, intermediate and advanced level. It is also possible to take specialized courses in certain languages. The language centre also provides Swedish and Finnish courses for international students. Note that courses in Swedish and Finnish can be compulsory for degree students depending on which type of degree programme or master programme a student is enrolled in (please see the chapter on Studying at Åbo Akademi University).

**LIVING IN VASA**

Vasa (Vaasa in Finnish) is a city on the western coast of Finland with over 60,000 inhabitants. The majority in Vasa (about 70 %) speaks Finnish, and a large minority (24 %) speaks Swedish.

Vasa is a living bilingual city, where most inhabitants speak both languages well and use two languages in their everyday life.

Vasa is also a university city with many institutions of higher education. In addition to the Åbo Akademi University campus, you can find the University of Vaasa (Vaasan yliopisto), which operates in Finnish, as well as Vaasa University of Applied Sciences (VAMK). Together with the Swedish School of Economics (Hanken) and Novia University of Applied Sciences these institutions bring over 12,000 students to Vasa, creating the living atmosphere of a university city.

**BUDGETING**

Finland, together with most countries in the European Union uses the euro (EUR, €) as national currency.

1 USD = 0.72 EUR
1 EUR = 1.38 USD (April-14)

Students do not have to pay any tuition fees at Åbo Akademi University.

Before leaving their home country the students should, however, make sure that they have enough funds for the stay through grants, scholarships or private funds. The total monthly expenses of a single student are on average 600-800 euro. The university does not offer any financial aid to international students and students should not rely on finding a job while in Finland.

Also note the financial requirements for obtaining a residence permit.

**HOW EXPENSIVE IS FINLAND?**

To give you an idea of the cost of living in Finland, the approximate prices of the following
items might be useful:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Item</th>
<th>Unit</th>
<th>Price (€)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Low fat milk</td>
<td>1 l</td>
<td>0.97</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Butter</td>
<td>500 g</td>
<td>3.06</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cheese, Emmenthal</td>
<td>1 kg</td>
<td>14.13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Eggs</td>
<td>1 kg</td>
<td>4.25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Potatoes</td>
<td>1 kg</td>
<td>0.94</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wheat flour</td>
<td>2 kg</td>
<td>1.21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wheat bread</td>
<td>500 g</td>
<td>1.65</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Beef, ground</td>
<td>1 kg</td>
<td>8.74</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Beef roast</td>
<td>1 kg</td>
<td>13.54</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sausage</td>
<td>1 kg</td>
<td>4.24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tuna fish, tinned</td>
<td>150 g</td>
<td>1.49</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Coffee, packaged</td>
<td>500 g</td>
<td>4.25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Caster sugar</td>
<td>1 kg</td>
<td>1.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Oranges</td>
<td>1 kg</td>
<td>1.46</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Petrol 95E</td>
<td>1 l</td>
<td>1.56</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Statistics Finland, Price statistics 2013

FINANCES

Although there are no tuition fees for degree students at Åbo Akademi University at the moment, students must be members of the student union (the annual membership fee in 2014 is 106 euros). The fee for the residence permit or registration of right to reside must be covered each year. In addition to these fees students must be in possession of insurance (in addition to health insurance, a travel insurance and insurance of personal belongings is recommended).

At the beginning of the term there are a number of expenses (deposit fees etc.) that students should be prepared for. It is important to bring some cash (euros) with you as you will need some money during the first days of your stay (travels, student union fee, housing and living expenses). Note that it can take several days to make an international bank transfer.

A student coming from outside the European Union must also prove that he/she has sufficient funds to cover the expenses for studying in Finland. This is done by depositing in a Finnish bank the sum stipulated by the Finnish Immigration Service, at present 6720 euro for one year (560 per month), or provide a certificate that testifies a monthly payment of a sum corresponding to the monthly expenses in Finland (approx. 560 euro per month).

A new deposit is required at the beginning of each academic year. If a student holds a scholarship, the awarding body should provide the authorities with an acceptable guarantee of payment. Citizens from EU and EEA member states do not need this deposit when applying for a residence permit.

We want to emphasise that the university is not able to provide financial aid of any kind to international students. International students must therefore finance their studies through private funding or scholarships from a sponsoring body outside Finland.

SCHOLARSHIPS

The Centre for International Mobility - CIMO (http://www.studyinfinland.fi/) and some other organisations grant scholarships for advanced undergraduates, postgraduates and researchers, for studies and research in Finland. International students are eligible for state support, if their residence in Finland has been granted for other purposes than studies and can be considered permanent. The university does not have scholarships and does not run financial support schemes for international students.

BANK AND POST OFFICE

Contact your local bank in order to find out if you can open a bank account in Vasa through them before your departure. Also check with your bank that your cards will work in Finland, and what the bank charges for lifting money abroad. It is also easy to open a Finnish bank account after your arrival. Bring your passport with you when you are visiting the bank. You can get a Finnish card to draw money from the ATM, since paying at the desk service is expensive.

All major credit cards can be used in Finland in most places. The most common credit card is VISA. Note however that may not be able pay with credit card at the university nor for example at the Student union.

The main post office is located in the city centre at Hovrättesesplanaden 23. Stamps can usually also be bought in regular supermarkets.
CLIMATE

Due to the warm Gulf Stream, Finland has a milder climate than many other areas equally far up north. Finland also has four distinct seasons.

During the autumn (September-November) the temperature is usually around 0-10 °C and it is a good idea to bring an umbrella or a raincoat as well as a winter coat, as you will most likely get the opportunity to use it.

The amount of hours of daylight will decrease during the autumn. The winter lasts from November until March and there is generally snow from December until March. The temperature is usually below zero and between -5 and -10°C, but it can also be colder in Vasa, even -25°C.

As the spring season begins (March-May) the days will get longer and warmer. The temperature is around 5-10°C. The summer lasts from June until August. In the end of June the sun will be up almost around the clock. This is called the Midnight Sun. The temperature can rise up to 25°C (even higher in July-August).

LOCAL TRANSPORT

The majority of students in Vasa use bicycles for transports, even in the winter. It is a cheap and easy way to get around since the city is quite small. There are many places you can buy used bikes to a price around 100 euros, and sell to another student when leaving.

Vasa has a public transport network operated by buses. A student bus card covers 40 trips and costs 39.00 euros. The buses are mainly on routes from the city centre to the suburban areas. As the student accommodations are in, or close to, the city centre, students rarely need to uses buses.

SOCIAL LIFE

EATING OUT

There is one student restaurant and a cafeteria located at the Vasa campus. These are not open in the evenings. A student lunch costs about 2.60 euros.

There are also many restaurants and pubs in Vasa. You can have a reasonable meal at a café for around 9 euros.

SPORTS

Several gym centres offer fitness classes in Vasa. The university has a part-time sports secretary who can help you with your interests. For more information see http://www.abo.fi/student/Content/Topic/topic/vasa.

CULTURE AND ENTERTAINMENT

The cultural life of Vasa includes some twenty museums, music happenings, two main theatres (the Swedish language Wasa teater and the Finnish Vaasan kaupunginteatteri). Vaasa city orchestra performs regularly and the cinema shows recent movies in original language with subtitles in Finnish and Swedish.

If you prefer to perform yourself, there are student choirs and orchestras, student theatres and art classes. For more information on the student choirs, student orchestras and student clubs, contact the Student Union of Åbo Akademi University.
FURTHER INFORMATION

If you have any questions regarding the start of your studies or registration, please do not hesitate to contact the Office of Academic and Student Affairs of Åbo Akademi University, please find the contact information below:

CONTACT INFORMATION

Gurli-Maria Gardberg, International Officer
Located in Office of Academic and Student Affairs in Åbo/Turku.
Phone: +358 2 215 4891
Reception hours: Mon, Tue, Thu, Fri 10 am - 12 noon (CET+1)

Annikki Abrahamsson, Secretary
Located in Office of Academic and Student Affairs in Åbo/Turku.
Phone: +358-2-215 4836
Reception hours: Mon, Tue, Wed, Thu, Fri 10 am - 12 noon, 1-3 pm (CET+1)

Office of Academic and Student Affairs/
The International Office
Åbo Akademi University
Tavastgatan 13
FI-20500 Åbo
Fax: +358 2 215 3230
e-mail: admission@abo.fi
www.abo.fi

Address in Vasa:
Åbo Akademi i Vasa
PB 311
65101 VASA

Visiting address in Vasa:
Strandgatan 2

Each department has a head of students affairs and a student advisor. Among other things they provide study advising and can answer specific questions related to the degree programmes. If you are admitted to a Master’s programme taught in English you can also contact the programme directly.

Please see http://www.abo.fi/student/en/studiekansli for contact details to the study advisors and other personnel at the Academic offices.

General Information, studinfo@abo.fi or admission@abo.fi

INTERNET

On the Internet you can find information about Åbo Akademi University at the following address:

www.abo.fi.
The information provided online is often more updated than the one in printed publications. Please refer to the Internet for the most recent information.

For information specifically aimed at new students, please see:
http://www.abo.fi/student/en/fornyastuderande

For information regarding the studies:
http://www.abo.fi/student/en/studieinformation

For study advising:

Pre-arrival information, please see:
http://www.abo.fi/admission and
http://www.abo.fi/student/en/fornyastuderande
USEFUL WWW-SITES

Please find below a number of useful sites on the Internet concerning living and studying in Vasa and Finland.

STUDYING IN FINLAND

http://www.abo.fi
Åbo Akademi University

http://www.abo.fi/student/en/
Information for students at Åbo Akademi University

http://finland.cimo.fi/
Guide for International Students in Finland

SOCIAL ISSUES

http://www.yths.fi
The Finnish Student Health Services

http://www.kela.fi
The Finnish Social Security Institution (FPA)

http://www.skr.fi/default.asp?docId=12256
Grants for Foreigners

INSURANCE

http://www.sipinsurance.eu/
MARSH Student Insurance Program

http://ec.europa.eu/social/main.jsp?catId=559
Information on European Health Insurance Card

FINNISH CULTURE

http://www.culture.info/finland
Finland - Art and Culture destination

http://www.kaapeli.fi/~hurrarna/etext.html
Finland-Swedish Websites

STUDENT ORGANISATIONS

http://www.abo.fi/karen
The Student Union of Åbo Akademi University

http://www.syl.fi/english
The National Union of University Students in Finland (SYL/FSF)

GENERAL INFORMATION

http://finland.fi
This is Finland

www.visitfinland.com
http://wikitravel.org/en/Finland

http://www.travel.fi/int/
Travel in Finland

http://www.vaasa.fi
General Information on Vasa/Vaasa

http://www.foresca.com/
The current Weather in Vasa/Vaasa

http://yle.fi/uutiset/news
Yle News - Finland’s English-language news desk

FINNISH STATE REGULATIONS

http://formin.finland.fi/english
Finnish diplomatic missions abroad

http://www.poliisi.fi/english/pi278en.htm
Residence in Finland

http://www.migri.fi
Finnish Immigration Service, entry visas, residence and work permits
MAP OF THE CAMPUS

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A Åbo Akademi University in Vasa, central administration
B Department of Political Science
Department of Social Science
Computing center
Center for Lifelong Learning
C Auditoriums
D, E, F Faculty of Education
G Media City
Computer facilities