

Update of Åbo Akademi University's property strategy (summary)

Åbo Akademi University's Board approved a property strategy on 9 March 2020, just before the pandemic shut down society and emptied the campus. Since then, the board has approved a financial balancing programme and a strategy for ÅAU. These major changes are the reason why the property strategy is now being updated.

The property strategy presents an environmental and future analysis and two different solution scenarios for Åbo Akademi University's properties in Turku and Vaasa: a moderate solution and a more comprehensive solution. These are to form the basis for the more concrete property regulation plan, which the board will consider for the first time on 2 February 2022. Based on the environmental and future analysis, it is concluded that ÅAU needs

- appropriate, flexible, multifunctional and accessible learning environments that meet the requirements of the future higher education pedagogy, digitalisation and high-quality learning, as well as the requirements of excellent research and continuous learning.
- premises solutions that promote interdisciplinarity and synergies between faculties and other units as well as cooperation between the campuses in Vaasa and Turku, and international cooperation.
- campuses that promote well-being and social interaction among students and staff and that meet security requirements.
- campuses that enable the working methods of the future that combine work on campus with hybrid and remote work, face-to-face studies and online studies.

- participatory and inclusive space planning that takes various needs into account.
- sustainable solutions from both an economic and a climate perspective.
- premises that are healthy and attractive for staff and students of different ages and with different backgrounds.
- a close partnership with key players to achieve high-quality campuses in attractive and historically interesting environments

The scenario of a more radical change best corresponds to the above-mentioned overall goals in that the scenario is based on ÅAU renting a larger new building in the Stjärnan quarter. The scenario also provides the best conditions for a sustainable economy. On this point, ÅAU's analyses are broadly consistent with the analyses that Newsec made in 2019.

In the current situation and in the scenario of a moderate change, the older properties in particular are not accessible and flexible in all respects and they do not meet the requirements for digitalisation or new ways of teaching and working in the best ways. Many older properties are also currently poorly utilised, which is not defensible from a sustainability point of view. At the same time, the costs in the moderate scenario would increase in an unsustainable way.

According to the scenario of a more radical change, the operations in Turku will be centred as much as possible around Piispankatu and its immediate vicinity. ÅAU will concentrate teaching and research, which is now arranged at about twenty properties, into a few larger property units with modern flexible learning environments. With a major new building and library operations concentrated mainly in Boktornet, the Stjärnan quarter on Piispankatu, next to the cathedral, will serve as a hub for modern university activity in a historically significant environment. This investment will be made possible by ÅAU relinquishing several of the current properties, especially those that do not correspond to current and future requirements for the activity, e.g., current pedagogy, digitalisation, flexibility and multi-functionality, accessibility and sustainability.

In the future, ÅAU will pay market rent for all properties, which will create incentives for efficient property use and good management of the properties. It also means that ÅAU's rental expenses will be reduced when properties are relinquished. Instead, ÅAU will receive financial support from the Åbo Akademi University Foundation in another form, which will make it possible for ÅAU to rent premises in a suitable new building to be built

in the Stjärnan quarter. The goal is to find as cost-neutral solutions as possible, even though the starting point is a larger new building.

In Vaasa, the university operations are concentrated within the Academill premises and ÅAU is relinquishing the parts of the property that are not needed. The lease for Academill is valid until the end of 2027. The campus in Vaasa is being developed to meet future requirements regarding flexibility and multifunctionality, accessibility, pedagogy, digitalisation, new ways of working and sustainability. Grades 1–9 and the upper secondary school at the Vaasa training school will continue in the current property complex in their respective quarters. The upper secondary school's current building, Spektrum, will be demolished and replaced by more suitable premises, according to the Board's decision in December 2021. During the construction period, the upper secondary school will use parts of Academill as its temporary premises. The goal is for property expenses for the Vaasa campus to not increase in the long term.

The property strategy will be implemented in the following way

- Facilities Management will draw up a concrete property regulation plan for the realisation of the strategy. The plan will include information about properties that ÅAU will invest in in the future and properties that ÅAU will relinquish. The plan will be submitted for comment within ÅAU and will be preliminarily considered by the Board in the spring of 2022.
- A new economic model for real estate cooperation is being developed with close cooperation between ÅAU and the Åbo Akademi University Foundation. The Board will make a preliminary decision on the model in the spring of 2022.
- As the current lease expires in 2027, solutions should be found in collaboration with the University of Turku for the space that the biosciences need. Decisions should be made as soon as possible in the spring of 2022.
- A great deal of emphasis will be placed on communication internally and externally, as well as on the participation of current staff and students during the planning process. External support for the process will be used, and project managers will be employed for a versatile inclusive planning of the major investment projects and the use of the properties.

- The Director of University Services is responsible for ensuring that property regulation planning is coordinated with the development work carried out in parallel at ÅAU regarding, among other things: digitalisation, university learning and new ways of working.
- Dialogues will be held with key partners, especially with Novia University of Applied Sciences, about opportunities for joint property use.
- The Director of University Services, the Director of Facilities Management and the Property Manager will work with the operational property planning, develop regulatory documents for renovation and relocation processes, execute the property regulation plan and follow up on the projects. These parties are responsible for including staff and students in the planning process.
- The Board and management of ÅAU together with the management of University Services will follow up on the goal fulfilment of the strategy and property regulation plan.

The property strategy is formulated by University Services in dialogue with the Rector and Vice Rectors, the CFO, Åbo Akademi University Foundation's CEO, Financial Director and Real Estate Manager, Novia's Rector and Management Group, ÅAU's Board, the Åbo Akademi University Foundation's Board, various property owners, the Student Union's Board and student associations. An open information meeting for staff and students about the property strategy was arranged on 4 October 2021. The Faculty Boards, Centre for Lifelong Learning, ÅAU Library and the Student Union's Board have issued statements on the draft of the strategy during the late autumn of 2021. The statements particularly emphasised the importance of participation in the processes. They also wanted more visibility of the research and the Vaasa campus, and more concreteness, e.g., regarding schedules and concrete property proposals, i.e., such issues that the property regulation plan will address. The environmental analysis of the real estate strategy and the mentioning of the space that the biosciences need received positive feedback. The Executive Group discussed the property strategy in early December, and the Board first considered the property strategy on 13 December 2021. The discussion and statements have been taken into account as much as possible in the final real estate strategy.

The property strategy is valid until the year 2030 or until the property strategy is updated. The Board and management of ÅAU together with the management of University Services will follow up on the goal fulfilment of the strategy and property regulation plan.