

WELLBEING IN STUDIES AND STUDENT LIFE IN ÅBO & VASA

A Guide for International Students



WELCOME TO ÅBO & VASA

Åbo (Turku) and Vasa (Vaasa) are vibrant university cities welcoming international master's and exchange students. Both cities offer rich academic environments, multicultural communities, and strong student support networks. You will find dedicated international offices, student tutors, and peer groups ready to help you settle in, thrive in your studies, and enjoy life in Finland.





BALANCING ACADEMIC SUCCESS AND WELLBEING



Set realistic goals and plan your time effectively. Prioritize quality over quantity in your study sessions — focused, shorter sessions are more effective than long, exhausting ones. Create a weekly schedule that balances coursework, personal time, and rest.



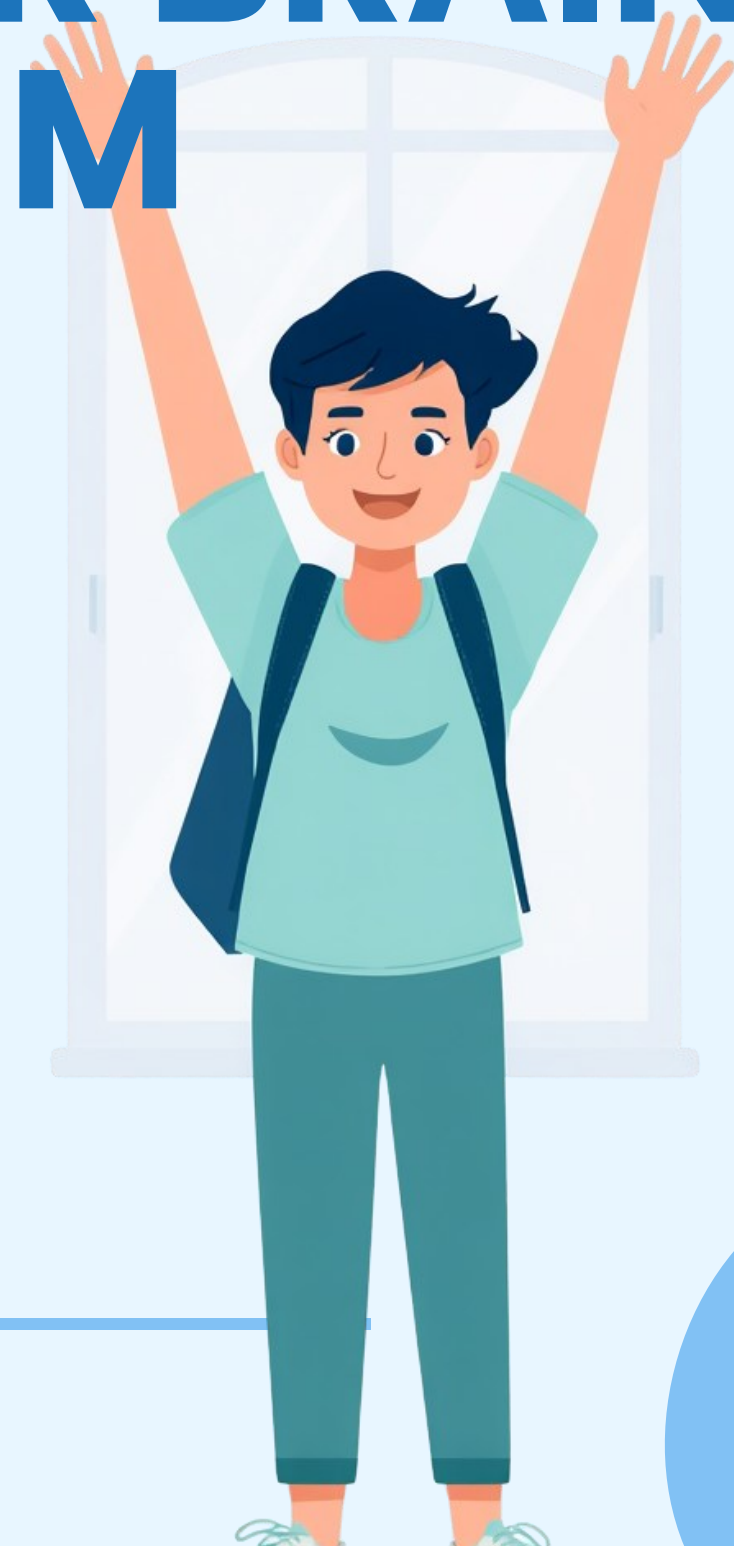
Maintain regular sleep patterns to support memory and concentration. Stay mindful of stress levels — recognize early signs of burnout and don't hesitate to seek help from university services or student support networks.



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TAKE BREAKS – YOUR BRAIN AND BODY NEED THEM

Short breaks increase focus and help prevent burnout during long study sessions. Try the Pomodoro Technique: study for 25 minutes, then take a 5-minute break. Step away from your screen – go for a short walk, stretch, or simply breathe some fresh Finnish air. Regular breaks keep your mind sharp and your energy levels steady throughout the day.



EXERCISE & PHYSICAL ACTIVITY



Aim for at least 30 minutes of physical activity daily. Explore local options like cycling, walking, gym sessions, and winter sports such as skiing or ice skating. Staying active boosts energy, reduces stress, and improves focus.

Join ÅA sports/campus sport or group activities to stay motivated and meet new people. Many places in Åbo and Vasa offer affordable sports facilities and student discounts for international students.

SOCIAL CONNECTIONS & STUDENT LIFE



Participate in student organizations and events – (tutors, ESN) join clubs, attend orientations, and get involved in campus life to build your social circle from day one.

Meet locals and fellow international students to broaden your network. Balance social time with your studies to stay energized, motivated, and emotionally supported throughout your studies.



NUTRITION & HEALTHY EATING

Eat balanced meals that include a variety of vegetables, lean proteins, and whole grains. A nutritious diet fuels your brain and body, helping you stay focused and energized throughout your study sessions.

Plan your meals in advance to avoid stress eating or skipping meals during busy study periods. Preparing simple, healthy meals at home saves time and money while supporting your overall wellbeing.

Explore local markets in Åbo and Vasa for fresh Finnish produce. Seasonal ingredients are affordable and nutritious — a great way to discover local food culture while maintaining a healthy diet.

MANAGING WELLBEING IN FINLAND'S UNIQUE CLIMATE



Finland's dark winters bring limited daylight that can affect your mood, energy, and motivation. Adjusting your daily routines to match the changing seasons is essential for maintaining wellbeing throughout the academic year.



Long summer days with nearly endless sunlight bring their own challenges — disrupted sleep and overstimulation. Learning to embrace both extremes will help you thrive as a student in Åbo and Vasa.



COPING WITH DARK WINTERS

- ✓ Spend time outdoors during daylight hours, even on cloudy days, to absorb natural light and stay connected with the outside world.
- ✓ Take extra vitamin D during the darkest winter months.
- ✓ Stay socially active and maintain regular routines to prevent isolation during the dark season.

EMBRACING LONG SUMMER DAYS

Finland's summer brings nearly endless daylight — a magical experience for newcomers!

- Maintain a consistent sleep schedule despite late sunsets — use blackout curtains to help
- Enjoy outdoor activities: cycling, hiking, beach visits, and open-air festivals
- Use natural light to boost your mood, energy, and vitamin D levels
- Embrace the midnight sun — it's one of Finland's most unique gifts!



CULTURE SHOCK

Culture shock can involve feelings of anxiety and uncertainty due to living in a new country or place where cultures feel different from what you are used to.

Honeymoon stage – everything seems amazing! Your new country is fascinating and exciting and you feel happy all the time. You are enjoying all of your new experiences, and you feel like this might be the best decision you have ever made.

Anxiety stage – After a while you may start to have some doubts. You may start to notice that not everything is so perfect with your new country and start noticing things that you dislike.

Adjustment stage – After some time, you will slowly start to see things differently. You will not only see the negative things anymore but also start to see the positive things again and see that they can exist together.

Acceptance stage – Now you really start to understand how things work in the new country and start to feel used to things, and at home. By now you have probably made some friends and found some hobbies, things that you like doing and a routine.



GOOD TO REMEMBER

- No culture is static! Cultures are changing and adapting all the time.
- Multiple cultures can exist in the same spaces
- Everyone is an individual
- Different cultures and different individuals meeting is important and enriches us all

TRY THIS

- Think of your exchange as a whole journey, not just the first days or weeks
- Be curious and open to trying new things
- Talk to people, both your new friends and your own friends and family back home
- Keep your good routines, they help you!
- Remember it is normal to feel all the above stages including homesick and lonely
- Be patient and kind with yourself

USEFUL CONTACTS DURING YOUR STUDIES – MENTAL HEALTH

MIELI Mental Health Finland – is a mental health organisation whose mission is to promote mental health, provide crisis counselling and prevent mental health problems.

HELSINKI MISSIO – offers free counselling from professional helpers for young people. You can ring and talk about anything that is important to you.

Åbo Akademi University Student Priest – The student priests are bound by professional secrecy and are at service in questions about baptism, marriage, confirmation and other church services.



USEFUL CONTACTS DURING YOUR STUDIES – STUDIES

Study advisors (international degree)
International office (exchange students)

If you have any questions or worries about your studies, do not hesitate to contact us!

Study Psychologist (only for international degree students) – For support regarding study skills, learning, setting goals, motivation, time management, learning difficulties and stress.

YOUR JOURNEY STARTS HERE

Explore Åbo & Vasa · Make Connections · Use
Support Services · Enjoy the Experience

