



GOVERNING DOCUMENT

Instruction

Approved by the University Board on 24 September 2026

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Instruction on Language Requirements for Positions at Åbo Akademi University

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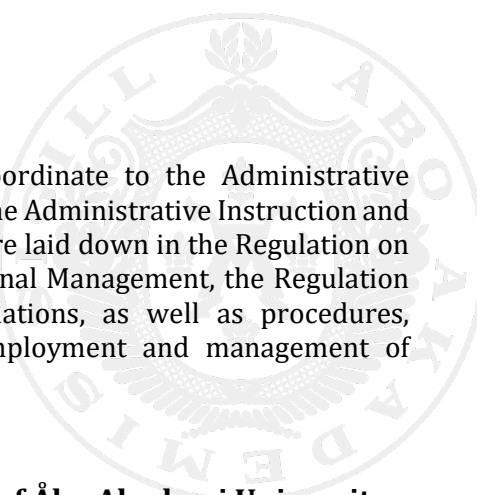
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1 General regulations about Åbo Akademi University

1.1 Statutory basis and scope

Åbo Akademi University's responsibilities as an employer are governed by the Universities Act (558/2009), the Employment Contracts Act (55/2001), other legislative provisions, and the collective agreement for universities. In carrying out its public administrative duties, Åbo Akademi University complies with the Administrative Procedure Act (434/2003). In addition, Åbo Akademi University, as an employer and education provider, is subject to specific legislation and related decrees applicable to each field of science and sector.

These instructions define the language requirements for positions at Åbo Akademi University, with the exception of rector and teaching positions at Vasa Teacher Training School. The language requirements for rector and teaching positions at Vasa Teacher Training School are laid down in the Decree on the Qualification Requirements for Teaching Staff (986/1998).



In the hierarchy of norms, these instructions are subordinate to the Administrative Instruction for Åbo Akademi University and supplement the Administrative Instruction and the Regulations on Personnel. More detailed provisions are laid down in the Regulation on Management and Delegation, the Regulation on Operational Management, the Regulation on Governance and Decision-Making, and other regulations, as well as procedures, guidelines, and agreements governing recruitment, employment and management of positions at Åbo Akademi University.

2 Proficiency in Swedish and Finnish Required of Åbo Akademi University Staff

The administrative language of Åbo Akademi University is Swedish. A sufficient share of the personnel must have excellent proficiency in the administrative language to enable the University to carry out its duties.

When recruiting, units must ensure that they have enough staff members with excellent/good proficiency in Swedish. The requirement of Swedish-language proficiency must be determined separately for each position before it is advertised. The language proficiency of the person selected for the position must be verified before the employment decision is made.

The provisions of the Instruction on Language Requirements concerning demonstration of language proficiency apply for employments exceeding one year.

2.1 Language requirements for teachers

Persons carrying out teaching or research duties at a university must be proficient in the language in which the teaching is to be provided (Government Decree on Universities 770/2009).

The language proficiency requirements for teaching staff at Åbo Akademi University are laid down in section 78 of the Universities Act:

1. A requirement for teaching posts at Åbo Akademi is full proficiency in the Swedish language and an ability to understand the Finnish language. The decision on the proficiency in Swedish and Finnish required of a foreigner or a non-native Finnish citizen rests with Åbo Akademi.
2. Åbo Akademi has a language board to which the Swedish proficiency referred to in subsection 1 may be demonstrated.

Under these instructions, the term teaching positions include positions such as university teacher, university lecturer, senior university lecturer and professor, as well as other positions in which teaching duties constitute a significant proportion of the duties.

2.1.1 Excellent proficiency of Swedish

In these instructions, excellent proficiency in Swedish means a level of language proficiency equivalent to excellent oral and written proficiency in Swedish under the criteria applied in the Government Decree on the Assessment of Proficiency in Finnish and Swedish in the State Administration (481/2003), as required in teaching positions for the successful performance of teaching, supervision, scholarly communication, and participation in the university's collegial and administrative activities.

Excellent proficiency in Swedish may be demonstrated:

- by a person who completed their school education in Swedish and completed a maturity test in Swedish in connection to a higher education degree.
- by a person who has passed a Swedish language examination before the Åbo Akademi University Language Board or the National Certificate of Language Proficiency at level 6.
- by a person who has demonstrated through studies an excellent ability to use Swedish orally and in writing by means of:
 - a matriculation examination with at least the grade magna cum laude approbatur in the mother tongue test in Swedish
 - a matriculation examination with at least the grade eximia cum laude approbatur in Swedish as a second language.

A language examination is not required if the Åbo Akademi University Language Board unanimously determines that, through their previous documented activities, a person has the language proficiency required for the position.

2.1.2 Sufficient proficiency of Swedish

Åbo Akademi University promotes language learning as an integral part of the work.

To be eligible for employment as a teacher at Åbo Akademi University, a person who is not a native Finnish citizen must demonstrate at least sufficient proficiency in Swedish (at least B2 according to the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages, CEFR). A person whose school education language is Swedish is considered to have the required proficiency. The responsible decision-maker may impose a higher Swedish-language proficiency requirement depending on the position's placement.

Åbo Akademi University may employ native Finnish citizens as teachers on a fixed-term basis for a maximum of three years if, at the time of the employment decision, they do not demonstrate excellent proficiency in Swedish but do demonstrate sufficient proficiency (B2 CEFR). Upon employment, the employing unit and HR Services shall draw up an individual language development plan with the employee, with the aim of achieving excellent proficiency in Swedish, which is a prerequisite for permanent employment. Excellent proficiency in Swedish must be demonstrated in one of the ways specified in section 2.1.1 before the fixed-term employment ends.

The requirement of at least sufficient proficiency in Swedish may be demonstrated by passing the Civil Service Language Proficiency Certificate examination (good proficiency) or the National Certificate of Language Proficiency (B2 CEFR), in accordance with the Government Decree on the Assessment of Proficiency in Finnish and Swedish in the State Administration (481/2003). Proficiency may also be demonstrated through the studies

specified in that Decree. A language examination is not required if the Åbo Akademi University Language Board unanimously determines that, through their previous activities, a person has the language proficiency required for the position.

2.1.3 Proficiency in Finnish

Teachers at Åbo Akademi University are required to be able to understand Finnish in accordance with section 78 of the Universities Act.

2.1.4 Exemptions from language requirements for teaching positions

When recruiting to a position that concerns teaching in a language other than Swedish, the job description may state that proficiency in Swedish and Finnish is not required of a person who is not a native Finnish citizen.

The responsible unit may grant an exemption from the Finnish-language proficiency requirement to a person who is not a native Finnish citizen, if such proficiency is not considered necessary for the successful performance of the duties of the position.

2.2 Language requirements for experts and other support staff

Other expert and support staff must have the proficiency in Swedish required for the successful performance of the duties of the position.

2.2.1 Proficiency in Swedish

Excellent oral and written proficiency in Swedish is required of an employee who:

- serves as a director or head of a unit
- serves as a presenting or preparatory officer in a body referred to in the Regulation on Governance and Decision-Making at Åbo Akademi University

At least good oral and written proficiency in Swedish is required of an employee who:

- serves as secretary to a body referred to in the Regulation on Governance and Decision-Making at Åbo Akademi University
- provides services to students.

At least satisfactory oral and written proficiency in Swedish is required of other expert and support staff, unless the employing unit determines that the position requires only the ability to understand Swedish.

A person who is not a native Finnish citizen must have the proficiency in Swedish required for the successful performance of the duties of the position.

For compelling reasons, the Rector may grant an exemption from the language proficiency requirements for other expert and support staff.

2.2.2 Demonstration of proficiency in Swedish

Proficiency in Swedish may be demonstrated by means of the National Certificate of Language Proficiency in accordance with the Government Decree on the Assessment of Proficiency in Finnish and Swedish in the State Administration (481/2003). Proficiency may also be demonstrated through the studies specified in that Decree.

3 The Language board of Åbo Akademi

3.1 The role and composition of the Language Board

Åbo Akademi University has a Language Board as referred to in the Universities Act.

The Language Board's task is to

- 1) organise examinations to demonstrate the proficiency in Swedish as referred to in these instructions
- 2) carry out any other duties assigned to the Language Board.

The Language Board issues certificates confirming demonstrated proficiency in Swedish.

The Rector appoints the Chair and two Vice-Chairs of the Language Board. One of them must have research studies in Swedish, while the other two must be experts in the Swedish language, have completed studies in the language at least at master's level, and have practical experience of working as language experts. Both Åbo Akademi University in Turku and Åbo Akademi University in Vaasa must be represented. In addition, the Rector appoints one member and one deputy member for each unit that provides teaching.

The members are appointed for three years at a time. The members of the Language Board must be teachers at Åbo Akademi University and have excellent proficiency in Swedish.

The Rector appoints a staff member at Åbo Akademi University to serve as Secretary to the Language Board.

3.2 Åbo Akademi University's examination for demonstrating proficiency in Swedish

Åbo Akademi University's examination for demonstrating proficiency in Swedish comprises components assessing written and oral proficiency, in accordance with the Language Board's guidelines.

4 Other provisions

4.1 Entry into force

These instructions enter into force on 1 October 2026 and apply to recruitment processes initiated after that date. It replaces the Instruction on the Proficiency in Swedish and Finnish Required of Teachers at Åbo Akademi University (approved by the University Board on 25

February 2010) and the Instruction on the Proficiency in Swedish Required of Administrative and Technical Staff at Åbo Akademi University (approved by the Rector on 7 December 2011).

