

Equal Access at the University of Helsinki:

First Steps for International Students who have a Disability or Learning Difficulty

Are you considering studying at the University of Helsinki or are you currently a student and do you have a disability or a learning difficulty? The University of Helsinki is committed to promoting equality and preventing discrimination in all its operations. However, finding the right kind of help can be difficult and confusing. Below you can find information in English on the first steps you can take to get the accommodation you need!

Before you apply

1. Become familiar with the University of Helsinki and its accessibility processes

- Start at the [webpage for special arrangements](#).
- [Chat with current students](#) to hear about their experiences.
- Feel free to email specialneeds@helsinki.fi, admissions@helsinki.fi, and/or the director of the programme you wish to apply to. You can find the director's contact information through the programme's webpage or "[People Finder](#)". Try to ask specific questions that cannot be found by looking on the website.
- Consider reaching out to [Hyero](#), "The University of Helsinki's Different Learners Association" at hyero-hallitus@helsinki.fi (their website is in Finnish but they are able to communicate in English).
- Do not hesitate to contact [Orbis](#), a student organization for international and internationally-minded students at the University of Helsinki. Orbis is an org for students in Arts and Theology but we are happy to assist any international student with regards to equality issues. Email orbis@helsinki.fi.

2. Secure [a certificate of special arrangements](#) from a doctor in your home country. At this stage, the "personal identity code" can be your passport number.

As soon as you are accepted

1. Confirm your study right/accept your study place

- Do this as soon as possible because you may not be able to access some information and assistance until you are officially a student.
- Depending on where you are coming from, the confirmation process will differ. Follow the instructions emailed to you upon acceptance.

2. Email specialneeds@helsinki.fi and request a zoom meeting with an accessibility liaison

- Have the liaison review your [certificate of special arrangements](#) and determine whether you need any other documentation.
- Request a review of your rights at the University of Helsinki and in Finland.
- Discuss the resources available to you and how to make your transition to UH as smooth as possible.
- Discuss your options for anonymity, privacy, as well as self-disclosure.
- Have the liaison find the contact information of the training officer for your specific Master's programme.

3. Set up a meeting with the director of your specific Master's programme (we recommend that the accessibility liaison and/or training officer is also present in this meeting)

- Request information about courses and their schedules for the upcoming semester so that you know what to expect and can plan ahead.
- Identify what you need in order to have an equal learning opportunity (materials, information, space, tools, etc).
- Get a clear plan of how the director will prepare and inform professors, administrators, and tutors and make sure the plan aligns with your decisions about privacy and disclosure. If they need support, refer them to the accessibility liaison.

4. Get familiar with [the Student Union](#) (HYY) and other resources outside the university

- As you plan your move to Finland, there will be many non-academic matters to settle, like [residency](#) and [housing](#). If you run into equality or accessibility issues, HYY may be able to assist or advocate for you in these matters. [The specialist for international students and equality](#) is a good first contact.
- There are also other organizations that offer [support for immigrants with disabilities](#). If you struggle to contact one of these organizations because of a language barrier or any other reason, reach out to your accessibility liaison and/or a HYY representative for help.

Once you arrive in Helsinki

1. Get the most out of [Orientation](#)

- You and your classmates will have at least one study tutor. Utilize their knowledge and assistance- for example, if you need help furnishing your apartment or getting enrolled in [the Student Union](#).

- If possible, attend the Welcome Fair. This will help with [getting registered with the authorities](#). Make sure to note the different steps, depending on whether you are coming from the EU or from outside it.
- During orientation, if not before, you will get access to your email address and the university's intranet. Familiarize yourself with the information on equality, diversity, and accessibility, on [Flamma](#).
- Become acquainted with the university's physical and digital [library](#), and if it is useful for you, check out the [public library system](#) too.
- If you are coming from outside the EU, it will make your life a lot easier if you obtain [a Finnish Identity Card](#). This will help when setting up a [bank account](#), your phone service, and make any online services much more available to you.

2. If necessary, seek assistance outside the university

- In Finland, your municipality of residence is responsible for organising services for people with disabilities. If you have a residence permit and a municipality of residence, you are [entitled to certain services](#).
- You will probably need a certificate from a Finnish doctor, much like the [certificate of special arrangement](#).
- See also, this guide for [immigrants with disabilities](#).

Throughout your studies

If you are experiencing an issue that is unresolved by your programme and/or accessibility liaison, utilize the [expert panel](#).

Additional contact persons

- If the guide above did not give you the answers you need you can always email the special needs office: specialneeds@helsinki.fi. They can redirect your question to the right person.
- If at any point during your studies, you feel like you need mental support, do not hesitate to contact the [study psychologists](#). Just like the special needs office, they can help you find the extra support you need.
- Are you still experiencing difficulties? Do you still have difficulties finding the help you need? Or do you simply need some peer support? Contact Orbis, at orbis@helsinki.fi or through our social media pages; [Facebook](#), [Instagram](#).

If you have feedback about this form, including something to change or add based on your personal experience, email orbis@helsinki.fi.