



**Accessibility and  
equality programme  
for students**

# 1 PURPOSE AND GOALS OF THE ACCESSIBILITY AND EQUALITY PROGRAMME

**PROMOTING ACCESSIBILITY, EQUALITY** and non-discrimination in studies and teaching is a common goal for the entire higher education community. Both the staff and the students are encouraged to promote equality and non-discrimination in all their daily activities. At Laurea, the promotion of accessibility, equality and non-discrimination is a key tool for realising the higher education institution's goals and values: openness, effectiveness and responsibility.

**THE PURPOSE OF** this accessibility and equality programme is to identify the goals and define the measures for promoting accessibility in studies and the learning environment as well as the equal treatment of students. The programme guides the operations in coordination with Laurea's ethical guidelines, rules and regulations, the staff's equality and non-discrimination plan and the students' guidance and counselling plan.

**THE GOAL OF THE MEASURES** is to promote the equality of all students at Laurea University of Applied Sciences as well as the physical, psychological, social and pedagogical accessibility of functions and facilities in a target-oriented, systematic manner throughout studies.

**THE ACCESSIBILITY AND** equality programme is part of Laurea's quality system. The realisation of the goals promoting accessibility and equality and the influence of the measures are assessed with an accessibility survey sent to students once every four years as well as with a feedback questionnaire sent to new students and a well-being survey sent to second-year students each year. The results of the feedback questionnaires are used to update the programme. The programme is updated every four years.

## The programme is based on the following principles:

### Laurea does not tolerate discrimination, harassment or bullying.

**A PERSON OR A GROUP** of people will not be treated unequally by anyone based on an opinion, characteristic or background. At Laurea, we respect students' culture and religion. The goal is to establish mutually respectful interaction and a positive atmosphere by accepting diversity. We do not tolerate behaviour that is against the law, agreements or good manners.

### Students are treated equally and non-discriminatingly throughout their study paths.

**EQUAL AND NON-DISCRIMINATING** Treatment and services are realised through the joint electronic entrance examinations of universities of applied sciences, the development of physical and digital learning environments and the improvement of teaching, counselling and student services. The individual needs of students and alternative implementation methods are taken into consideration in the activities.

### Laurea is an accessible and tolerant place to study.

**THE FACILITIES, ELECTRONIC SYSTEMS**, learning environments, teaching methods and atmosphere of the higher education institution enable the inclusion and equality of students with diverse personal characteristics and life situations. Laurea is a culturally sensitive and tolerant higher education institution. Laurea's studying and working languages are Finnish and English. Student services are also available in Finnish and English.

# 2 CATEGORIES OF ASSESSING ACCESSIBILITY AND THE SET GOALS AND DEVELOPMENT MEASURES FOR 2021–2024

FUNDED BY THE MINISTRY OF EDUCATION AND CULTURE, the OHO! project, designed to promote student well-being, developed a set of accessibility criteria published at the end of 2019 for assessing accessibility in higher education institutions. The accessibility criteria have been divided into the following categories:



**THE GOALS AND MEASURES** of this accessibility and equality programme have been specified according to the aforementioned categories. The content of the categories are described below from Laurea's point of view. Laurea conducted a current state analysis (2020) on the realisation of equality, non-discrimination and accessibility to be used as a basis for determining the goals and development measures for 2021–2024.

## Values, attitudes and operating culture

**LAUREA'S VALUES ARE** openness, effectiveness and responsibility. All the members of the higher education community – the students and the staff – impact the operating culture which, in turn, affects all of its members. An operating culture promoting accessibility and equality is focused on our values as well as non-discrimination, parity and inclusion. This category also emphasises interaction and a sense of community.

**GOAL 1:** No student will experience bullying, discrimination, harassment or dismissive or disrespectful treatment by a member of Laurea. Laurea's rules and regulations unambiguously forbid unprofessional treatment both in teaching and on social media.

**ACTION:** At the student orientation, it is important to emphasise that any inappropriate behaviour must immediately be reported as a safety anomaly, and each student is instructed on how to fill in the report at the start of their studies. A student can also report their experiences to the harassment contact person of the student union or to a personal tutor, whereupon the behaviour is addressed.

**LAUREA'S RULES AND REGULATIONS** describe a procedure where inappropriate treatment is always addressed with internal disciplinary measures. The staff receives training and information concerning preventing and identifying harassment and inappropriate treatment as well as handling cases of harassment.

**RESPONSIBILITY:** Safety and Security Services

**GOAL 2:** The higher education institution supports and promotes a sense of community and solidarity.

**ACTION:** Grouping and getting to know the other students is emphasised more strongly in the orientation for daytime, blended and online studies. The views of students needing different types of supporting, living in different conditions and belonging to minorities are taken into account.

**RESPONSIBILITY:** Personal tutors of new students.

**GOAL 3:** The individuality and diversity of students is taken into account and the operators care about the students.

**ACTION:** Students receive Finnish and English-language services that support their well-being from student health care, a counselling psychologist, special education teacher, student social counsellor, university chaplain, head of student affairs, personal tutor or other Laurea staff member.

**RESPONSIBILITY:** Operators offering services to support student well-being.

## Leadership

**LEADERSHIP IS REVIEWED** at a strategic level and with everyday practices to make the strategy policies tangible. Accessibility is assessed according to whether the higher education institution is operating in line with the stated goals promoting accessibility, among other things.

**GOAL 1:** The management of the higher education institution is committed to promote accessible higher education in the strategy.

**ACTION:** The next update of the strategy should emphasise the aim for accessible, equal and non-discriminating higher education.

**RESPONSIBILITY:** Service Unit Management Team.

**GOAL 2:** The management of the higher education institution is committed to promote accessibility and equality in practice.

**ACTION:** The realisation of the accessibility and equality programme is monitored in the Service Unit and Education Management Teams once a year as follows:

- Service Unit Management Team: values, attitudes and operating culture; leadership; communications; physical environment; digital accessibility; student admissions
- Education Management Team: teaching and learning; support and counselling  
Responsibility: Service Unit Management Team and Education Management Team

## Physical environment

**THE PHYSICAL ENVIRONMENT** refers to Laurea's buildings, facilities, yards and parking areas that must be accessible for all users. Physical accessibility means that a person with reduced mobility or a person requiring mobility aids is able to access the facilities. The facilities must also be accessible to those with impaired eyesight or hearing as well as those with sensory processing sensitivity.

**GOAL 1:** The physical environment of the higher education institution (outdoor premises, buildings, facilities and furniture) is accessible.

**ACTION:** The usability of the doors is inspected from the perspective of people with reduced mobility, the need to increase the number of gender-neutral restrooms is assessed and the informative nature and placement of signs is reviewed. Decisions are made on purposeful investments.

**RESPONSIBILITY:** Facility Services.

**GOAL 2:** The information on the accessibility of the physical environment of the higher education institution can be found on the public website.

**ACTION:** The information on the accessibility of the physical environment of all the campuses is recorded on the public website.

**RESPONSIBILITY:** Web Services.

## Digital accessibility

**THE ACCESSIBILITY OF** digital services means that anyone can use the digital services, regardless of their situation. Digital services refers to information systems and interfaces, online learning environments, project websites, digital learning materials, electronic publications and theses, websites and other public web services, among other things.

**AN ACCESSIBLE WEB SERVICE** takes the following factors into account:

- Technical implementation
- Ease of use
- Clear and comprehensible content

**GOAL 1:** All of Laurea's digital services are accessible as specified in legislation.

**ACTION 1:** The accessibility of students' digital services is reviewed, the websites are updated by the service suppliers and accessibility statements are prepared in cooperation with the information system administrators.

**ACTION 2:** Our electronic forms are reviewed and corrected in accordance with the instructions of the accessibility directive WCAG 2.1.

**ACTION 3:** Audits and accessibility statements are completed by an external consultant (audits of Canvas, My.laurea and Servicedesk).

**ACTION 4:** Moving forward, accessibility must be one of the requirements in any information system procurement and deployment of new digital services.

**RESPONSIBILITY:** IT Management.

**GOAL 2:** The teaching staff understands the importance of digital accessibility in their work.

**ACTION:** The teaching staff is instructed to ensure the accessibility of teaching materials published in the workspaces of the Canvas learning platform.

**RESPONSIBILITY:** dCell.

**GOAL 3:** The teaching staff is able to guide the students in utilising assistive tools in digital learning environments.

**Action:** Teachers are instructed on accessibility requirements and the use of identified assistive tools (e.g. screen reader) in Canvas.

**RESPONSIBILITY:** dCell.

## Teaching and learning

**ACCESSIBILITY AND EQUALITY** are comprehensibly taken into consideration in planning and implementing teaching and the learning process. The pedagogical solutions of teaching support the opportunities of as diverse a student base as possible to participate in teaching, learn and demonstrate their competence. Accessibility is also taken into consideration when selecting and preparing teaching materials.

**GOAL 1:** Students receive support in the development of their studying skills.

**ACTION:** Students are told about their opportunities for support in the orientation. Students in need of better studying skills are supported by a special education teacher.

**RESPONSIBILITY:** Special Education Teacher.

**GOAL 2:** Students are instructed in preparing their personal study plan throughout their studies.

**ACTION:** Personal study plans are updated so that they consist of studies in accordance with the curriculum. This makes the guidance and counselling provided by personal tutors meaningful and supportive of the students' progress.

**RESPONSIBILITY:** Planner, Education Development.

**GOAL 3:** Students' competence is identified and recognised with purposeful methods.

**ACTION:** Promoting operations that enable the student-driven demonstration of competence and recognition of competence as well as the related efficient progress of the studies.

**RESPONSIBILITY:** Director responsible for the development of guidance and counselling.

**GOAL 4:** Students receive sufficient feedback on their learning and competence.

**ACTION:** Implementing a thematic year of guidance, counselling and feedback with campaigns on the significance



of feedback in developing learning and competence and, on the other hand, in developing our operations. Providing feedback helps students make a difference and teachers to support the development of the students' competence.

**RESPONSIBILITY:** Quality management development group, pedagogy development group.

## Support and counselling

**AT LAUREA, SUPPORT,** guidance and counselling is provided by teachers but also many other parties, such as heads of student affairs, personal tutors, counselling psychologists, special education teachers, teachers supporting students with difficulties reading and writing, international services, career services and the staff of the Student Affairs Offices and libraries. In addition to the staff of the higher education institution, support, guidance and counselling is also provided by several partners of Laurea, such as the student union Laureamko, campus chaplains, national student organisations and health care professionals.

**GOAL 1:** Students receive the needed support, guidance and counselling throughout their studies.

**ACTION:** A student-oriented approach is promoted in any guidance and counselling operations. The capacity of the Counselling Psychologist service is increased to a sufficient level. The names of the personal tutors in charge of students' guidance, the Head of Student Affairs and the thesis advisor are recorded in Pakki once they have been appointed. The other parties providing guidance and counselling are clearly stated in the students' intranet.

**RESPONSIBILITY:** Director responsible for the development of guidance and counselling.

**GOAL 2:** Students in need of special support have access to customised arrangements throughout their studies.

**ACTION:** The orientation materials sent to students before their studies contain information on applying for customised study arrangements due to learning difficulties, for example. Customised arrangements are planned based on the students' needs.

**RESPONSIBILITY:** Special Education Teacher, personal tutor, Head of Student Affairs.

## Communications

**COMMUNICATIONS ARE MEANS** of making a difference and reporting events and news of the higher education institution both externally and internally. In crises, up-to-date, informative communications are particularly important.

**IN TERMS OF ACCESSIBILITY,** we consider the diversity of the recipients. The key information is also available to those with impaired eyesight or hearing and across various devices. Attention is also paid to multi-channel communications

to ensure that all the recipients receive the message.

**GOAL 1:** The communications of the higher education institution promote equality and diversity.

**ACTION:** All communications should be clear and comprehensible. Purposeful communications in both languages (FI/EN). Increasing the coverage of English-language communications and investing in video subtitles.

**RESPONSIBILITY:** Web Services.

**GOAL 2:** Accessibility is taken into consideration in designing websites, releasing materials and using social media

**ACTION:** Accessibility is taken into consideration in the renewal of introductions as required by accessibility legislation.

**RESPONSIBILITY:** Web Services.

**GOAL 3:** Accessibility is taken into consideration in the strategic communications planning and instructions

**Action:** Specifying responsibilities in communications. Preparing and distributing instructions on considering accessibility in different materials.

**RESPONSIBILITY:** Director in charge of communications.

**GOAL 4:** The accessibility of communications is systematically assessed as part of quality management at the higher education institution

**ACTION:** We assess accessibility systematically by means of monitoring tools and separate accessibility evaluations.

**Responsibility:** Web Services

## Student admissions

**THE GROUNDS OF LAUREA'S** student admissions are in compliance with the Non-Discrimination Act. Student admissions cover the entire application process, including joint and separate application processes. Information on the higher education institution, education and entrance requirements and practical studies in different fields is offered as support for choosing studies. Information is offered in an accessible format so that anyone can easily find and understand the information. Accessibility is also realised in the actual application process, including the entrance examination and the transparency of the student admission results.

**GOAL 1:** The results of student admissions are in an accessible format.

**ACTION:** The results are made more accessible, for example continuing to display the minimum score for Laurea on the website so that applicants can compare the score to their own scores.

**RESPONSIBILITY:** Admissions Services.

# 3 INSTRUCTIONS FOR STUDENTS

**IF A STUDENT EXPERIENCES** or observes inappropriate behaviour or treatment, they may contact some of the following parties:

- Personal tutor, Head of Student Affairs or Director of Safety and Security
- Harassment contact person of the student union Laureamko. The contact information of the harassment contact person can be found on the Laureamko website.
- Laurea will introduce a Whistleblower channel in late 2021 for reporting misconducts and inappropriate actions.