

# Equality plan of the Oulu University of Applied Sciences 2020-2022

– Students

OAMK

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# 1 The starting points for equality planning

*Equality* means non-discrimination between women and men (Act on Equality between Women and Men 609/1986, hereinafter 'the Equality Act'). An amendment to the act (the Act Amending the Act on Equality Between Women and Men 1329/2014) extended the prohibition of discrimination to also include discrimination on grounds of gender identity or gender expression. *Gender identity* means an individual's own experience of their gender. *Gender expression* means expressing one's gender through clothing, behaviour, or by other means. (Ministry of Social Affairs and Health 2015, 8)

*Non-discrimination* means that no one may be discriminated against on the basis of age, origin, nationality, language, religion, belief, opinion, political activity, trade union activity, family relationships, state of health, disability, sexual orientation or other personal characteristics (section 8, subsection 1 of the Non-discrimination Act 1325/2014; Ministry of the Interior 2010, 32). When a person is discriminated against on two or more grounds, this is called *multiple discrimination*. Non-discrimination and equality are therefore not separate from each other but may be intertwined in a situation of discrimination.

This equality plan of the Oulu University of Applied Sciences (Oamk, Oulu UAS) is drawn up on the basis of the legal provisions and other national guidelines presented in this chapter, internal policies of Oamk, issues raised in student feedback, and a general survey of the equality and non-discrimination situation at Oamk. The plan takes into account the achievement of equality in student selections, the organisation of teaching, learning differences and the evaluation of study performance, as well as the prevention of discrimination. This plan has been drawn up specifically for students of Oamk and for all those working with students, and it takes into account the promotion of both equality and non-discrimination.

## 1.1 The Equality Act

The purpose of the Equality Act is to prevent discrimination based on gender and to promote equality between women and men. Furthermore, the objective of the act is to prevent discrimination based on gender identity or gender expression. (Section 1 of the Equality Act) The Act also obligates universities of applied sciences to draw up a gender equality plan, which must include:

- an assessment of the gender equality situation within the university of applied sciences;
- the necessary measures to promote gender equality;
- a review of the extent to which measures previously included in it have been implemented and of the results achieved.

The gender equality plan is drawn up annually in cooperation with staff and students. Instead of an annual review, the plan may also be drawn up for a maximum period of three years. (Section 5a, subsection 2 of the Equality Act)

According to the Equality Act, special attention must be given to student selections, the organisation of teaching, learning differences and the evaluation of study performance, and to measures to ensure the prevention and elimination of sexual harassment and gender-based harassment (section 5a, subsection 3 of the Equality Act). In addition, education providers are obliged to take pre-emptive action in a purposeful and systematic manner against all discrimination based on gender identity or gender expression (section 6c of the Equality Act). Education providers must also ensure that girls and boys, as well as women and men have equal opportunities for education, training and professional development, and that teaching, research and instructional material support the attainment of the objectives of the Equality Act (section 5 of the Equality Act).

## 1.2 Universities of Applied Sciences Act

According to the Universities of Applied Sciences Act (932/2014, section 28a), admissions for education leading to a Bachelor's or Master's degree are organised in an application procedure carried out jointly between higher education institutions. Universities of applied sciences decide the admissions criteria. Applicants may be divided into separate categories on the basis of their different educational backgrounds. The admissions criteria applied must be consistent for all applicants belonging to the same category. (Section 28 of the Universities of Applied Sciences Act) According to section 28b of the Universities of Applied Sciences Act, universities of applied sciences must ensure that no unreasonably large discrepancies exist between the opportunities of individuals belonging to different applicant categories to gain admission in terms of equitable treatment of all applicants. The act also states that in the joint application procedure, a university of applied sciences must reserve some student places leading to a Bachelor's degree for applicants who have not previously completed a higher education degree under the Finnish education system and have not accepted a student place leading to a higher education degree or have accepted a student place for studies beginning in spring term 2014 or earlier but have not completed a higher education degree. Universities of applied sciences must also reserve reasonable opportunities for admission for those who have completed a higher education degree or accepted a student place. The common student selection practices have been specified in the recommendation for admissions criteria for universities of applied sciences.

Accessibility is another key element in the realisation of equality. According to section 26, subsection 1 of the Universities of Applied Sciences Act, *'Factors relating to the health and functional capacity of an applicant may not preclude admission. However, a person whose state of health or functional capacity makes them incapable of performing the practical tasks or practical training included in the studies in a manner consistent with the study-related safety requirements referred to in section 33 and where the impediment cannot be removed with reasonable measures may not be admitted as a student.'* The university of applied sciences must inform applicants about health-related requirements and other prerequisites related to the studies. This provision applies to the fields of social services and healthcare and pedagogical studies (see the SORA guidelines).

Under section 57 of the Universities of Applied Sciences Act, a person who has applied for entry to a university of applied sciences may lodge a rectification request with an administrative body designated by the university of applied sciences to seek redress for a decision on admission within 14 days from the publication of the admissions results. In consequence of such a

request for rectification, no one's admissions results may be altered detrimentally. The act also lays down provisions on other practices relating to appeals.

### 1.3 The Non-discrimination Act

According to section 15, subsection 1 of the Non-discrimination Act, an education provider, employer or provider of goods and services has to make due and appropriate adjustments necessary in each situation for a person with disabilities to be able, in a manner equal to others, to deal with the authorities and gain access to education, work and generally available goods and services, as well as to manage their work tasks and to advance their career.

The purpose of the Non-discrimination Act is to promote equality and prevent discrimination, as well as to enhance the protection provided by law to those who have been discriminated against. Under section 8, subsection 1 of the act, *'No one may be discriminated against on the basis of age, origin, nationality, language, religion, belief, opinion, political activity, trade union activity, family relationships, state of health, disability, sexual orientation or other personal characteristics.'* Discrimination is prohibited, regardless of whether it is based on a fact or assumption concerning the person themselves or someone else. In addition to direct and indirect discrimination, harassment, denial of reasonable accommodation, as well as an instruction or order to discriminate constitute discrimination as referred to in the Act (section 8, subsection 2). Discrimination is direct if a person, on the grounds of personal characteristics, is treated less favourably than another person in a comparable situation. Discrimination is indirect if an apparently neutral rule, criterion or practice puts a person at a disadvantage compared to others. (Sections 10 and 13 of the Non-discrimination Act).

The education provider must evaluate the realisation of equality in their activities and take necessary measures to promote the realisation of equality. These measures must be effective, expedient and proportionate, taking into account the educational institution's operating environment, resources and other circumstances. The education provider must ensure that the educational institution has a plan for the necessary measures for promotion of equality. A university of applied sciences must reserve an opportunity for the students or their representatives to be heard on the fostering measures. (Section 6 of the Non-discrimination Act)

### 1.4. Web Accessibility Directive

The Web Accessibility Directive (2016/2102) and the related national legislation require public authorities to make digital services accessible. The Finnish Act on the Provision of Digital Services (306/2019) entered into force on 1 April 2019. The application of accessibility requirements began in stages on 23 September 2019. Promoting accessibility is an essential part of the digitalisation of public administration services. Accessibility means that websites and mobile applications and their content are such that anyone can use them and understand what they say. In addition to accessibility requirements, the act lays down provisions on the organisation of digital services by public authorities and obliges public administration to provide its customers with the possibility to communicate with the authorities by electronic means. (<https://vm.fi/saavutettavuusdirektiivi>)

The first transitional period of the act ended on 23 September 2019. This means that any new website published on or after this date must comply with the accessibility requirements laid down in the act. The Web Accessibility Directive and the [Act on the Provision of Digital Services](#) implementing the Directive on a national level are based on the [UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities](#). In practice, the law requires compliance with the level A and AA criteria of the [W3C Web Content Accessibility Guidelines](#) (WCAG). They enable, for example, users who are not able to use the mouse or who have difficulty reading or poor vision or hearing to access online services. (Communication published on the Oamk staff intranet Heimo on 23 September 2019)

## 2 Report on the equality and non-discrimination situation at Oamk

### 2.1 Current guidelines on equality and non-discrimination at Oamk

Oamk participates in the 'Work does not discriminate' campaign of the Confederation of Finnish Industries (EK). Oamk is also committed to promoting an open and non-discriminatory working culture for all. In addition, Oamk is involved in the #harassmentfree campaign of the Ministry of Justice. Oamk aspires to be a community with zero tolerance for sexual harassment and a low threshold for seeking help. Oamk has previously drawn up the document [Oulu UAS – Pleasant for Everyone](#), which specifies the good conduct guidelines applied at Oamk. There are separate versions of the manual for both staff and students. The good conduct guidelines describe how to deal with problems. The student recruitment campaign #trustyourself also covers the same themes. Oamk develops policies that take into account equality and anti-harassment practices and promote open discussions on these topics with staff and students. Oamk works in cooperation with the Student Union OSAKO, which means that the same themes are also considered from students' perspectives. Oamk is also further developing its anti-harassment policies, and the topic is also being discussed with students. Here too, Oamk is working in cooperation with the Student Union OSAKO, which coordinates harassment contact person activities at Oamk. Oamk will continue to pay attention to a good working climate and the development of an open culture of dialogue. The aim is to have clear and systematic procedures in place throughout the organisation. This ensures equality between staff and students, which in turn promotes the quality culture at Oamk. The involvement of the Oamk staff and students in joint development will continue. (Oamk Executive Quality Review 2018)

Oamk cannot directly influence the number of applicants of different sexes or ages, but the aim is to create equal opportunities for all to study regardless of gender or age. Equal treatment of women and men and people of different ages must also be reflected in education and other activities of Oamk. Oamk offers both daytime and multiform studies, as well as alternative routes to becoming a student. Oamk aims to be flexible and to respond to a wide range of life situations. New flexible paths for becoming a student are constantly being developed. The Open University of Applied Sciences supports lifelong learning and professional growth by enabling smooth study paths and learning in different life situations. Cross-studies between different

higher education establishments and the development of joint courses enable students to study all year round (see, e.g., CampusOnline).

The Government Action Plan for Gender Equality 2016-2019 (Publications of the Ministry of Social Affairs and Health 2016:4) states that women and men are equal and that the objective is also to continue the promotion of gender equality in education. This action plan further states that the segregation of education by gender has been reduced and that equal opportunities are ensured for both girls and boys for personal development, learning and growth. Oamk has also promoted the application of girls to technology sectors, for example, through the 'You can! Girls and Technology' ESF project.

## 2.2 Results of the equality section of the student survey

With the previous equality plan for 2016-2018, equality and non-discrimination have gained more attention at Oamk and have become part of everyday life.

The 2018 student survey included a section on gender equality, which included, for comparison, the same questions as the 2016 survey, only slightly clarified. The questions examined students' experiences of inequality and harassment, as well as their awareness of the points of contact for equality. In addition, students could freely describe in the section other possible issues or observations concerning equality that require action or improvement. The background questions continued to include, under the question on the student's gender, the alternatives 'Female', 'Male', 'Other' and 'I do not want to specify'. The latter two were chosen by a total of 8.07% of the respondents. The total number of respondents to the gender equality section was 161. A Webropol report of the gender equality section responses is provided in Appendix 1, with responses to direct open-ended questions deleted. However, the key points of the responses to the open-ended questions are discussed below.

When asked '*Have you experienced unequal treatment in the UAS community?*', most students selected the option 'No, I have not' (76 responses). The top 5 reasons for unequal treatment were 'Other reason' (45 responses), 'Opinion' (21), 'Learning difficulties' (14), 'Gender' (12), and 'Religion or belief' (8). Those who chose the option 'Other reason' had experienced inequality, for example, because of their field or mode of study or in connection with practical training, or they felt that students are being treated differently. Compared to the previous survey, 'Age' was no longer among the top 5 reasons, and 'Religion or belief' was in the top 5 for the first time.

When asked '*In what situations or issues have you faced inequality?*', the top 5 answers were 'In an educational context' (40 responses), 'In study performance evaluation' (36), 'In a study group' (22), 'In another context' (20), and 'In group work' (19). Compared to the previous survey, 'In practical training' was no longer among the top 5 responses, and 'In another context' was in the top 5 for the first time. However, some students also reported under the option 'In another context' issues concerning, for example, practical training or unequal treatment by teachers or other students.

To the question '*Have you experienced sexual or gender-based harassment in the UAS community?*', almost all respondents chose 'No, I have not' (156 responses). However, a small number of students had experienced harassment either by staff (2 responses) or by students (3).

When asked 'If you encounter gender inequality or sexual or gender-based harassment, do you know who to contact?', the most popular response was 'No' (40.99%), followed by 'I think so' (37.27%) and 'Yes' (21.74%).

The request for open feedback '*Describe some examples or situations where equality is well achieved*' gathered 68 responses. Based on the responses, Oamk seems to have an equal atmosphere as regards fundamental issues such as age and gender.

The request for open feedback '*Describe some issues or observations concerning equality that requires action or improvement*' garnered 89 responses. The respondents mentioned issues such as inequality in different fields and study programmes (e.g., level of respect, standards, information flow). Another example mentioned concerned a performance assessment: the respondents felt that personal characteristics of the individuals involved had influenced the assessment and that some students had received special treatment depending on their personal relationship with the assessor or due to their background (e.g., previous knowledge, educational background, professional background). On the other hand, some respondents hoped to avoid special treatment due to their diversity, foreign background or membership of a minority. Some respondents hoped that the needs of students following a personal study plan would be taken better into account, while others wanted to be treated equally to others in terms of their skills. Some respondents considered that the mode of study (daytime/multiform) should not affect the quality of teaching, while some hoped for more opportunities for distance learning. On the other hand, regardless of the mode of study, teaching should be of equal quality and modern. A number of responses were also received regarding practical training opportunities: students hoped that they would be more easily and equally available.

The open replies also mentioned the variation in teachers' competence, substitute arrangements, use of discriminatory language and gender-related attitudes. Some respondents hoped that teachers would take even better into account diverse learners, such as those with learning difficulties. Flexible ways of demonstrating skills were also mentioned. Equal treatment was therefore called for on a number of issues which require support from teachers and other staff, but also among students.

The themes concerning equality that emerged from the results of the student survey have been discussed in different working groups and are being developed on the basis of feedback.

## 3 Objectives and planned measures at Oamk

The objective of equality work at Oamk is to:

- promote equal treatment of all students, irrespective of gender, age, origin, nationality, language, religion, belief or opinion, political or trade union activity, family relationships, health, disability, sexual orientation, or other personal characteristics, as well as to prevent discrimination based on gender identity or gender expression (see section 8 of the Non-discrimination Act and sections 6c and 7 of the Equality Act);
- assess the achievement of equality at Oamk;
- develop and implement the necessary measures to promote equality;
- review the implementation and results of the measures included in the previous equality plan (see section 5a of the Equality Act);
- provide guidance on the implementation and procedures of equality work;
- raise awareness of equality work.

Below is a more detailed description of accessibility targets at Oamk. The targets are based on the acts referred to above, the overall equality situation at Oamk and the 2018 student survey.

### 3.1 Accessibility and web accessibility in the study environment

Today, the term 'accessibility' is used especially when referring to the accessibility and functionality of buildings and other built environments. The environment or a single building is considered accessible when it is functional, safe and comfortable to use by different user groups and when it is easy to access all the premises of the building. The term 'web accessibility', on the other hand, is quite well established in the context of online services. Web accessibility means accessibility in the digital world: making it easy for people to access online services and their content. Web accessibility improves equality in digital society. When web accessibility is fully taken into account, different users will be able to use online services independently. This increases the autonomy and inclusion of people with disabilities in society. (<https://www.saavutettavuusvaatimukset.fi/tietoa-saavutettavuudesta/>)

The objective is to create a higher education environment in which each member of the community, irrespective of their personal characteristics, is able to act and participate equally with others. The concept of accessibility includes the idea that the environment should be suitable for the widest range of people. The higher education environment can be divided into a physical, social and psychological dimension. The physical environment refers to buildings, educational materials, teaching methods, and tools. The social environment refers to the knowledge, skills and attitudes of members of the community. The psychological environment relates to valuing diversity as a resource at the level of the entire educational establishment. (Ministry of Education and Culture 2012)

The following accessibility objectives have been adapted to on the basis of a survey carried out by the Ministry of Education and Culture, as well as on accessibility requirements.

### 3.1.1 Accessibility of the physical environment

#### Objectives and measures

- Promoting accessibility of the built environment
- Integration of mobility aids and equipment into accessibility planning

Persons with reduced mobility should be taken into account by checking and increasing the number of, for example, the following: handrails and grab handles, wide passageways and accessible routes (thresholds, ramps and lift access, automatic doors, etc.). The check should also cover classrooms. Each campus must also have clear route signs. Lighting, ergonomics and the acoustic environment should also be functional (e.g., installation of audio induction loops). Oamk is currently in the process of moving to the Linnanmaa campus. The accessibility of the learning environment is also taken into account in connection with the move.

- Ensuring the accessibility of electronic communications

Information, guides and instructions directed at students should be clear and available through multiple channels. As communications and information increasingly move online and to digital format, it is important to ensure the accessibility of all electronic channels.

The design and implementation of accessible online services must take into account the following three areas: technical implementation, ease of use, and clarity and comprehensibility of the content. (<https://www.saavutettavuusvaatimukset.fi/tietoa-saavutettavuudesta/>)

Accessibility and its achievement should be understood as a key principle that is taken into account in Oamk's everyday practices concerning online publications, from design to publication and maintenance. All new websites (published on or after 23 September 2018) have been legally required to comply with accessibility requirements since 23 September 2019. The transitional period will end on 23 September 2020, after which accessibility legislation will also apply to websites published before 23 September 2019, i.e., most pages of the Oamk website. For mobile services, the time limit is 23 June 2021. According to the legislation, no exact time limit is set for intranets (Heimo and Oiva), but the legislation will start to apply to them when they are next renewed. It should be noted, however, that the law also applies to files shared through websites. For these, the transitional period depends on the deployment time of the file sharing service. For example, files shared via Oamk Moodle or Office 365 should be made accessible by 23 September 2020. Oamk staff and students will be provided opportunities to learn more about accessibility, for example, through an online course. (Oamk communication of 23 September 2019)

In the case of video and audio recordings, accessibility is required starting from 23 September 2020. Accessibility is not required for video and audio recordings published before this date, but if they are not accessible, this must be mentioned in the service-specific accessibility statement. Old files (such as DOC or PDF files) that have been posted on a website prior to 23 September 2018 do not need to be modified and made accessible, unless they are necessary for the users of the service. Older files also need to be made accessible if they are particularly important for users, i.e. if students need the file to be able to complete their studies. The objective of accessibility legislation is to remove unnecessary barriers to the use of electronic services. The aim is to enable everyone to independently carry out study- or work-related tasks online.

E-learning and e-counselling were developed at Oamk in the 'Online Student Counselling' project, which began in 2015. In the same connection, Oamk also introduced the eCounselling services. The 'eCounselling for Every Student!' project aims to further develop online student counselling. The purpose of the project is to develop the accessibility of digital counselling services and thus the effectiveness of guidance. In connection with the project, Oamk has also enabled students to sign documents electronically and has extended the availability of chat services. Equal opportunities for guidance and counselling should also be available to all students and applicants, regardless of distance or life circumstances. For example, videos make excellent guidance and counselling material that is not dependent on time or place from the point of view of diverse learners and equal accessibility to services (students with dyslexia, remote and multiform students and applicants, etc.).

Oamk has renewed its Finnish and English websites and staff and student induction materials and expanded the contents of the Study Guide, where the information is easily accessible by all. The relevancy of information in the Study Guide and in Oiva is ensured through regular checks and updates. Particular attention has been paid to the updating of the Oiva forms. The layout of the Study Guide has been modified to reflect the updated Oamk website.

- Ensuring accessibility of learning materials

The aim is to make education-related matters such as teaching, learning materials, exercises and learning environments accessible to all Oamk students. Equipment and materials should be available to all in advance or later and possibly in different formats (for listening/reading). The Oamk Library also offers audio books (CELIA Library). Oamk staff should be educated on the nature of accessible online learning materials. Such materials must be available to all students who need them.

- Ensuring good learning opportunities for all kinds of students
- Support and individual arrangements should be provided as appropriate

All kinds of students must be provided with good learning opportunities. This can be achieved, for example, by providing students with flexible access to studies, by ensuring the accessibility of learning materials, and by providing support in accordance with the needs of the student. Starting from the autumn of 2019, applicants for Finnish-language study programmes must take the national digital entrance exam (except in the case of arts).

Support measures for entrance exams and course exams may include, for example, additional time, the possibility of using a personal aid and, if necessary, using a computer as a writing tool. Services of assistants, typists and interpreters should also be

available where necessary. Alternative methods of performance (e.g., visual and auditory methods) should be increased, such as oral examinations. Different teaching methods should also be used, taking into account the needs of diverse learners. The provision of a peaceful learning environment should also be ensured where possible.

The Oamk website and the [ammattikorkeakouluun.fi](http://ammattikorkeakouluun.fi) service contain information on accessibility in student selections. If an applicant needs individual arrangements during the entrance exam on the basis of their state of health or disability, the applicant must complete the application for such individual arrangements. It should also be possible to notify Oamk of the need for individual arrangements in connection with the registration for course exams and during exams. Teachers should also be informed of any specific needs and opportunities to ensure individual arrangements. The opportunities for taking exams have been expanded with the electronic examination system Exam, introduced at Oamk in 2016. The Exam system allows students to take exams flexibly within the campus opening hours and within the time limits set by teachers for the exams. The system also allows students to take personalised exams tailored to the student's special needs (e.g., due to the need for extra time). Accessibility in exam rooms is taken into account, for example, with height adjustable tables. Special needs should be indicated in connection with the registration for the exam.

### **3.1.2 Accessibility of the social environment**

#### **Objectives and measures**

- Diverse learners (i.e., students with dyslexia or other learning difficulties) should be recognised as part of the UAS student community, and the needs for developing existing behavioural models should be identified

All students should be accepted as part of the UAS community and all should have equal opportunities to study. Identifying and taking into account diverse learners should be a natural part of UAS activities. Learning difficulties must not give students a sense of exclusion or experience of discrimination.

- Teaching and counselling must be accessible to all

Teaching and counselling must be equal and accessible to all Oamk students. In line with section 14 of the Universities of Applied Sciences Act, Oamk must arrange effective study guidance and support students' professional growth. Student wellbeing covers the entire UAS environment and the various actors at Oamk. All Oamk employees are responsible for providing counselling.

Student guidance at Oamk has been implemented with the campus study counsellor (Kampusopo) concept. Study counsellors are responsible for comprehensive counselling, guidance and support services. Their specific area of responsibility is students who need special counselling. Campus study counsellors also organise dyslexia tests and other individual tests. The aim of these activities is to ensure that all students and applicants have access to consistent and high-quality study counselling services. Another aim is to promote the development of the professional skills of students and to ensure high-quality and equal learning conditions for students so that qualifications and studies can be completed within the target time. To support studies,

Oamk also organises multidisciplinary study groups (e.g., Valtti) to promote the progress of studies and the wellbeing of students in accordance with the guidance plan.

Oamk has also taken part in a project to develop the guidance of diverse learners through digital applications. Two DigiTools groups have already been held with students with dyslexia from both Oamk and the University of Oulu. The measures are implemented jointly by Oamk and the University of Oulu, in cooperation with Eri-Laisten Oppijoiden Liitto ry (the Finnish Diverse Learners' Association).

According to estimates, around 20% of the population are considered 'diverse learners'. This figure includes all levels of dyslexia (mild, moderate and difficult) and other learning difficulties. According to the Diverse Learners' Association, there is so far only limited research available on the use of learning aids in Finland. Assistive devices are important to diverse learners, but still a rather unknown form of support for coping with studies, working life and everyday life. IT aids include various computer programs that convert text into speech, speech synthesisers that read text aloud, scanners, audiobooks, scanning dictionary pens, photographing and recording devices for taking notes, and tablet computers with their many applications. A large number of diverse learners benefit from the use of assistive devices.

- Supporting teachers in the design of pedagogical solutions promoting accessibility

Teachers need to be supported in identifying special needs, in designing pedagogical solutions that promote accessibility, and in taking into account the needs of different student groups. Provision of information on learning difficulties will be expanded for both students and staff. Teacher tutors will be trained in accordance with the new counselling plan, also taking into account the needs of diverse learners. Information on accessibility and learning difficulties will be incorporated in appropriate study modules. Oamk is also considering other channels for the dissemination and development of viable practices. In addition to personal support, dissemination of information and possible training, e-databases, for example, on how to take account of students' diversity in teaching could also be developed. Support and information must be effective and reach the staff as widely as possible.

### **3.1.3 Accessibility of the psychological environment**

#### **Objectives and measures**

- Promotion of the appreciation and acceptance of diversity

Oamk commits to promoting the appreciation and acceptance of diversity among students and staff. One way of doing this is to influence negative attitudes, which are often driven by ignorance. Such issues can be taken into account, for example, in training and dissemination of information. International students must also be welcomed as part of the Oamk community.

The aim is to diversify studying and make it more flexible. Students must have equal opportunities to study in different life situations. Oamk aims to offer different ways of studying and to expand the paths to becoming a student. The process of

identifying and recognising acquired competencies (the HOT function) has been developed and updated by a decision of the Vice Rector (Vice Rector 023/2019). Studies have become more personalised, and the individual study path can be different for everyone.

(Adapted from the publication 'Slowly but surely? Progress in the accessibility of university and polytechnic education in the 2000s'. 2012. Publications of the Ministry of Education and Culture 2012:10.)

### Summary

The achievement of the objectives discussed in this plan need to be properly communicated, instructed and implemented as regards both staff and students. Equality issues must be considered in all activities. There is zero tolerance for bullying and harassment. Staff and students need to know about the equality work at Oamk and the operating models in the event of unequal treatment. The work on gender equality will be communicated and implemented through the working groups discussed in section 4.2. It is also important to identify existing practices and to improve the capacity to develop them.

## 4 Guidelines, working groups and points of contact on gender equality

### 4.1 Guidelines on equality

The [Study Guide](#) contains key rules, instructions and guides related to studying. The contents of teaching, teaching arrangements required by the Equality Act and other operations supporting equality work are described in more detail in the Oamk [Degree Regulations](#), [knowledge assessment procedure](#) and [curricula](#). The Degree Regulations (Board of Oamk 2015a, Rector of Oamk 2015a) clarify the duties of Oamk and education provided therein, student selection, enrolment and study rights, organisation of teaching and studies, studying, and approval of completed degrees and certificates and additionally contains certain other regulations. According to the assessment procedure (Rector of Oamk 2015b), assessment must be fair, reliable, constructive and encouraging. The objective of identifying and recognising competence is to create a flexible and motivating path for the student and to promote the progress of studies according to the personal study path (PSP) (Vice Rector of Oamk, 18 April 2019, section 23).

By means of personal curricula and student counselling, students are encouraged to diversified and unprejudiced study and career planning. Some of the guidelines also cover the way Oamk operates, as well as public safety and the use of intoxicants. Under section 31 of the Universities of Applied Sciences Act, students have the right to a safe learning environment. The university of applied sciences may adopt its own rules or issue other regulations to promote internal order, unhindered progress in studies and a safe and pleasant university of applied sciences community. The [Rules and Regulations](#) of Oamk (Board of Oamk 2015b) ensure the general safety and wellbeing of staff and students at the UAS, as well as promote equal treatment.

According to the Rules and Regulations, everyone is responsible for exhibiting good behaviour at Oamk. Disturbing, offending, or threatening behaviour is prohibited in all activities. Inappropriate behaviour includes activities indicative of disturbance of general orderliness or of violence, discrimination, or bullying; physical or verbal threatening of others; and presenting the work of someone else as one's own or other forms of cheating related to studies. The Rules and Regulations also contain more detailed regulations concerning public safety.

The document '[Intervention is caring — Intervention in students' harmful use of intoxicants](#)' (Director of Study Affairs, 23 May 2016, update) provides operating instructions when harmful use of intoxicants by students is suspected. The document '[Solutions to deal with unsuitability for studies \(SORA\). Guidelines for the application of SORA legislation](#)' (Rector's Decision 32/25 April 2016) assists in organising a safe learning environment for students.

Oamk pays attention to the realisation of equality and non-discriminatory practices in the implementation of teaching and counselling. Oamk has drawn up a document on [accessibility in studies](#) (in Finnish), which discusses, for example, various learning difficulties and how to face them.

[Oamk's Study Counselling Plan](#) (in Finnish) supports students' opportunities to complete their studies and facilitates the transition to work (Director of Study Affairs 2016b).

The Oamk Quality Manual covers general principles concerning the quality system. The Quality Manual is available from Heimo under the heading 'Tapa toimia'. As a student, you can influence your studies and participate in the development of Oamk's activities. This is discussed in the Study Guide section on [how to influence your studies](#). The student feedback system consists of interactive study module feedback, surveys concerning education and services, as well as activities of the degree programme teams and other working groups. Feedback from students is also collected through a student feedback survey at the graduation stage and through career surveys.

## 4.2 Working groups dealing with equality

Cases are referred to working groups as appropriate. The first channels for providing student feedback on equality issues can include, for example, degree programme teams and feedback surveys.

The table below summarises the working groups that plan, implement, monitor, evaluate and develop equality among Oamk students. The working groups also have one or more student representatives. OSAKO appoints student representatives to the Oamk Board and to the bodies referred to in chapter 4 of the Universities of Applied Sciences Act. The student representatives may bring, for example, equality matters for discussion at the meetings of working groups dealing with equality.

Working group	Task
Degree programme teams	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Pedagogical development of curricula and teaching, counselling and learning</li> <li>• Monitoring of the quality and performance of degree programmes</li> <li>• Handling of student feedback and arrangements for feedback sessions</li> <li>• Participation in other pedagogical development</li> <li>• Information and reporting</li> </ul>
Student wellbeing teams	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Developing the wellbeing of students and the student community through multi-professional cooperation</li> <li>• Promoting physical, psychological and social accessibility of studies in order to achieve equality</li> <li>• Coordinating and planning preventive wellbeing activities on campus</li> <li>• Addressing the concerns of students and student groups and proposing measures to resolve them</li> <li>• Discussing practical instructions to take into account the diversity of students and agreeing on individual arrangements</li> <li>• Informing and, if necessary, organising training on issues concerning student wellbeing</li> <li>• Cooperating with the study psychologist and student health care, campus safety and crisis preparedness teams and student associations</li> <li>• Contributing to the preparation of surveys on student wellbeing, processing the results and preparing possible follow-up measures</li> </ul>
Study counsellors' working group	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Developing equality issues, including accessibility</li> </ul>
Joint Action Advisory Board	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Acts as the statutory equality committee</li> <li>• Promotes equality at Oamk</li> </ul>

### 4.3 Student points of contact in equality matters

The table presents the points of contact in the order in which matters can proceed, as appropriate. However, matters always proceed on a case-by-case basis, and you may contact any of the points of contact below on any matter pertaining to equality. The table below lists the points of contact for Oamk students in matters concerning equality. In addition, the working groups presented above can also serve as a contact point in matters concerning gender equality.

Contact point	Influence on equality issues
<a href="#">Student union OSAKO</a> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>OSAKO student representatives</li> <li>OSAKO harassment contact persons</li> <li>Student tutors</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Student representatives appointed by OSAKO ensure that the students' perspective is taken into account in decision-making and handling of equality matters in the working groups</li> <li>A student who experiences harassment and/or discrimination can contact a harassment contact person trained by OSAKO</li> <li>Student tutors act as peer tutors for other students and those in need of special support, as well as work with staff responsible for student counselling, thus ensuring that the students' perspective is taken into account in the organisation of studies</li> </ul>
Head of unit, head of degree programme, teacher, teacher tutor	Student feedback system <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>student feedback for all study modules</li> <li>annual student survey</li> </ul> Personal or group discussions concerning, for example, prevention, handling and elimination of unequal treatment
Oamk counselling services <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Campus study counsellor (Kampusopo)</li> <li>Teacher tutor</li> </ul>	
Academic Affairs (University of Oulu) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>International Services / representatives of international partner universities</li> <li>Study psychologists</li> <li>Academic Sports Services</li> <li>Head of Academic Affairs and other local services team staff</li> </ul>	Personal or group discussions concerning, for example, prevention, handling and elimination of unequal treatment
Services external to Oamk <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Student health care</li> <li>Educational institution services of parishes</li> </ul>	Personal or group discussions concerning, for example, prevention, handling and elimination of unequal treatment
Board of Examiners	Processing of requests for the rectification of study attainments, including requests for the rectification decisions concerning the recognition of prior studies or knowledge. (Sections 15, 19 and 57 of the Universities of Applied Sciences Act)
Rector	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Responsible for the implementation, steering and performance guidance of the key tasks set out in the Oamk strategy</li> </ul>

- 
- Processes any requests for rectification submitted by applicants and requests for rectification concerning a decision revoking the right to study
- 

Board of Directors of the University of  
Applied Sciences

- Decides on the key targets, strategy and principles of governance regarding the operations and finances of the UAS
  - Adopts the Rules of Procedure and other relevant provisions on general organisation and operation of the UAS, and determines the operating structure of the UAS
  - Decides on the number of students to be selected for the UAS
- 

## 5 Monitoring and assessment of equality work at Oamk

The measures set out in the previous equality plan have been well implemented and are still partially applied. Equality work is communicated through multiple channels. The equality plan will also be translated into English, as will any bulletins, materials and documents concerning equality work.

The implementation of equality work will be monitored and evaluated annually in the working groups presented above. Any equality issues raised will be dealt with on a case-by-case basis in the relevant working group and according to the rules of procedure of that working group. Issues can be passed on, for example, through degree programme teams or other working groups and points of contact. Potential development needs are reported to the management of Student Services. Where necessary, it will take matters forward to the Executive Team of Oamk and updates the equality plan on the basis of identified development needs once every three years. The preparatory work for the updating of the plan is carried out in cooperation with students and staff.

The implementation of equality is also monitored and evaluated through student surveys and student feedback. Oamk organises a student survey for Oamk degree students annually. In order to maintain a good response rate, questions concerning a specific theme are kept short. The feedback given by students is discussed, for example, in the degree programme teams and in the Oamk Executive Team. Students are provided with information on the feedback received and on any measures to be taken on the basis of it, using multiple channels. The implementation of the agreed measures is also monitored.

The results of the equality section of the 2018 student survey are discussed in section 2.2, and based on the responses, it is certain that the development targets and objectives have been identified. The survey responses have been discussed in the service units and departments of Oamk. The development targets and measures that emerged from student feedback are reported in the working groups.

As a rule, student feedback is collected for all study modules. With the help of a brief electronic study module feedback form, students are requested to assess the development of their skills and knowledge and teachers receive feedback on the course content and implementation. The feedback is also used in the development of the study modules. Teachers discuss the feedback together with students, and feedback is also discussed in development discussions with the supervisors. Study module feedback is also used in peer learning in the degree programmes.

The possibilities for students to influence their personal studies are quite good at Oamk, but not all students have sufficient knowledge about the feedback channels available. The topic has been promoted in several ways in recent years; for example, concrete examples of development activities carried out on the basis of student feedback have been broadcasted on the info screens on campus and published on the student intranet Oiva. Communicating about the effectiveness of feedback motivates students to respond to surveys. For the past three years, Oamk has set up a stand informing students about their opportunities to exert influence at the Oamk opening function. This year, students were also asked which communication channel should be used to inform students about their opportunities to exert influence. The majority of students follow social media in particular, but the second most common wish was that teachers would also discuss the opportunities during lessons. In the third place was Tuudo. Teachers play a major role in disseminating information, and this needs to be highlighted more heavily than in the past. For example, study module feedback provides a channel for students to influence, and teachers can influence the response rate with their own actions. Based on feedback from students, a social media campaign is currently being planned which will be combined with additional information published through other channels. Communication on how students can influence how effective feedback is will continue to be developed during the coming year. (Oamk Executive Quality Review 2019)

This plan has been prepared in cooperation with Student Services, the Student Union OSAKO and study counsellors during the academic year 2019-2020. The above parties have been asked to comment on the plan at the various stages of drafting. The plan has also been discussed in bilateral meetings, in the study counsellors' working group, in the Student Services management team, and in the OSAKO working groups. The plan aims to raise awareness, for example, of the prohibition of discrimination and of the points of contact in the event of discrimination. It also presents new perspectives, objectives and development targets for the promotion of equality. The next plan will discuss the achievement of the objectives set here.

# References

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Oulu UAS – Pleasant for Everyone. Good conduct guidelines.

## Appendices

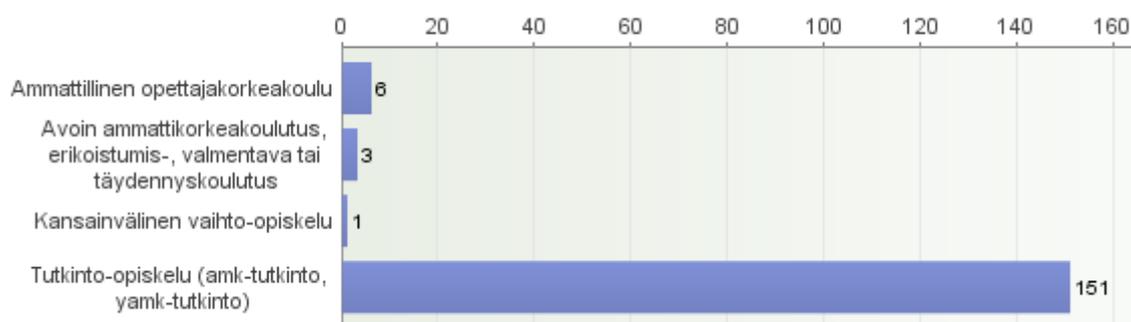
## Appendix 1: 2018 Student Survey — Equality

### 2018 Student Survey

#### BACKGROUND QUESTIONS

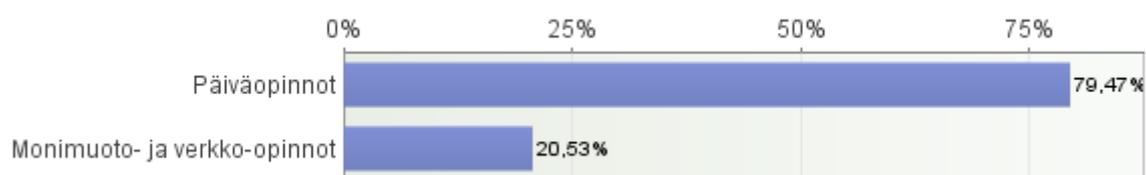
1. What is your study programme?

Number of respondents: 161



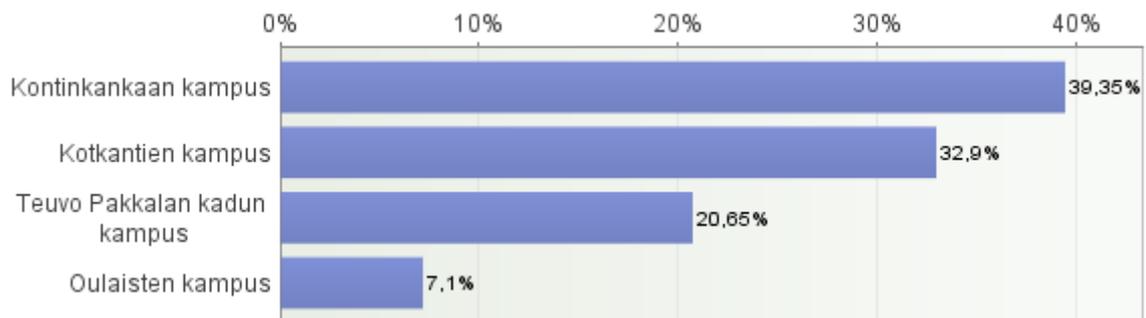
2. What is your principal mode of study?

Number of respondents: 151



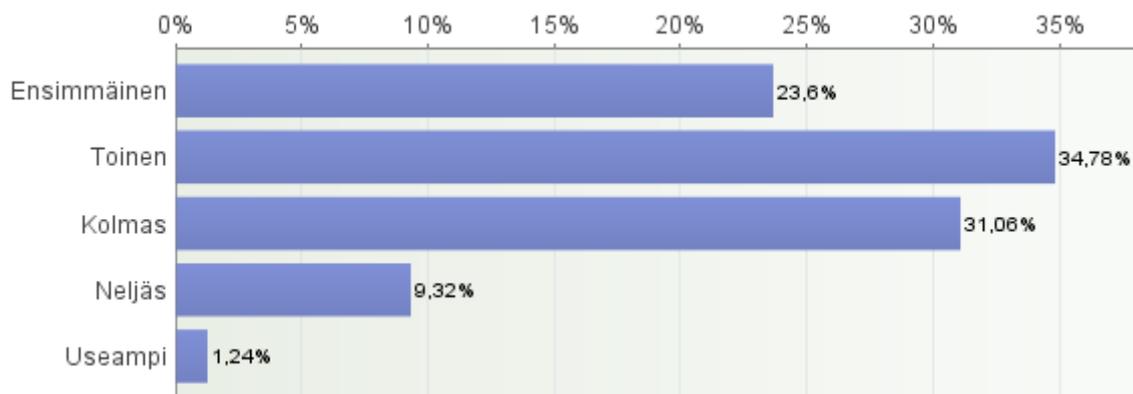
3. On which campus do you study primarily?

Number of respondents: 155



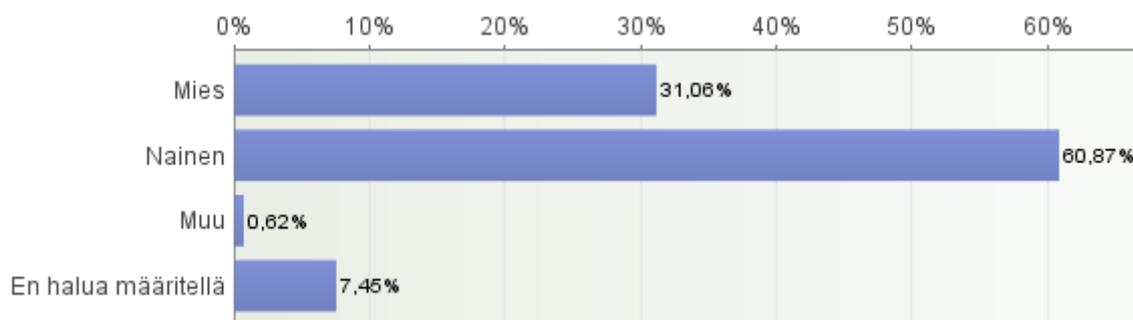
4. How many academic years (including the current academic year) have you studied in your current degree programme?

Number of respondents: 161



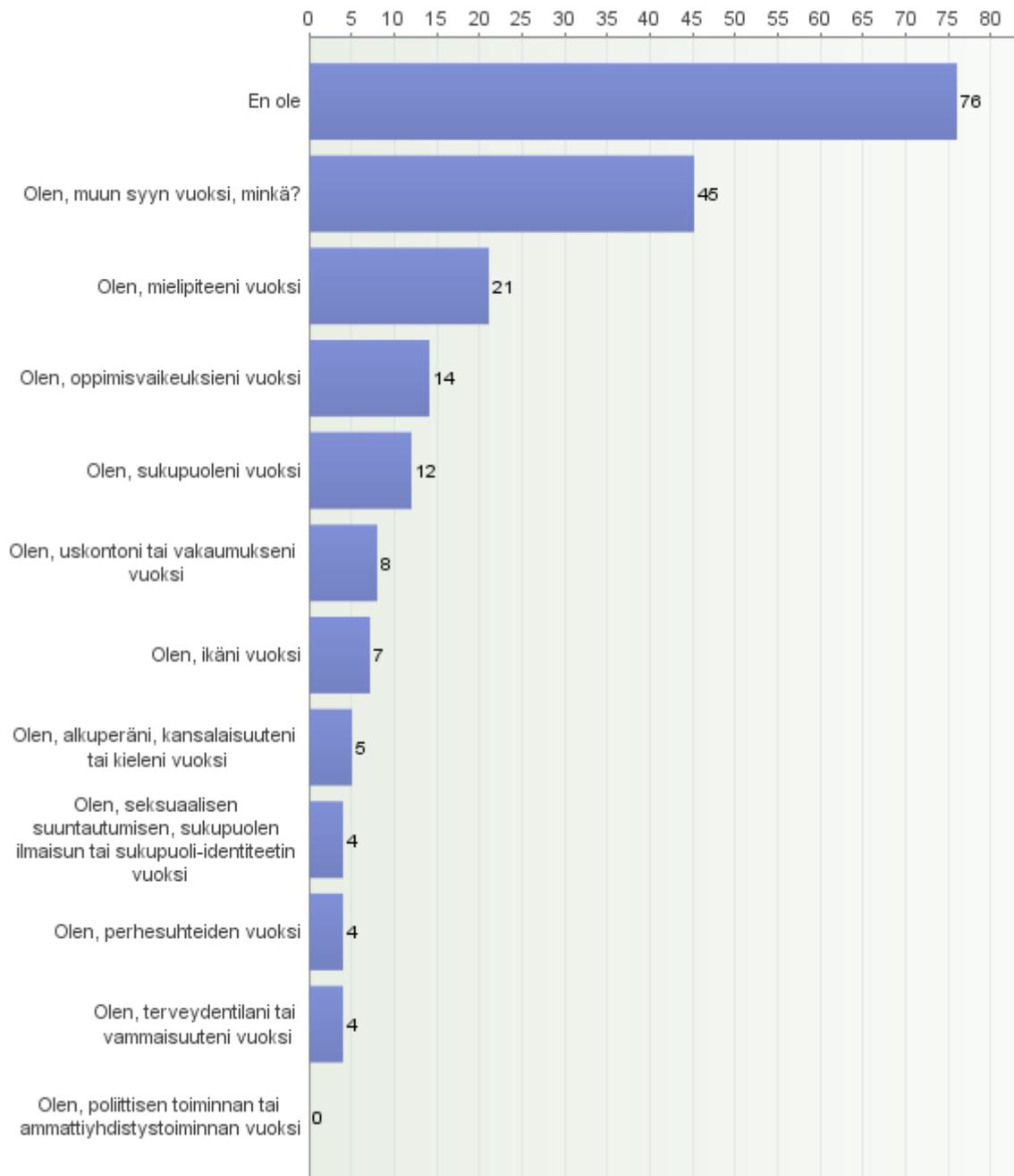
5. What is your gender?

Number of respondents: 161



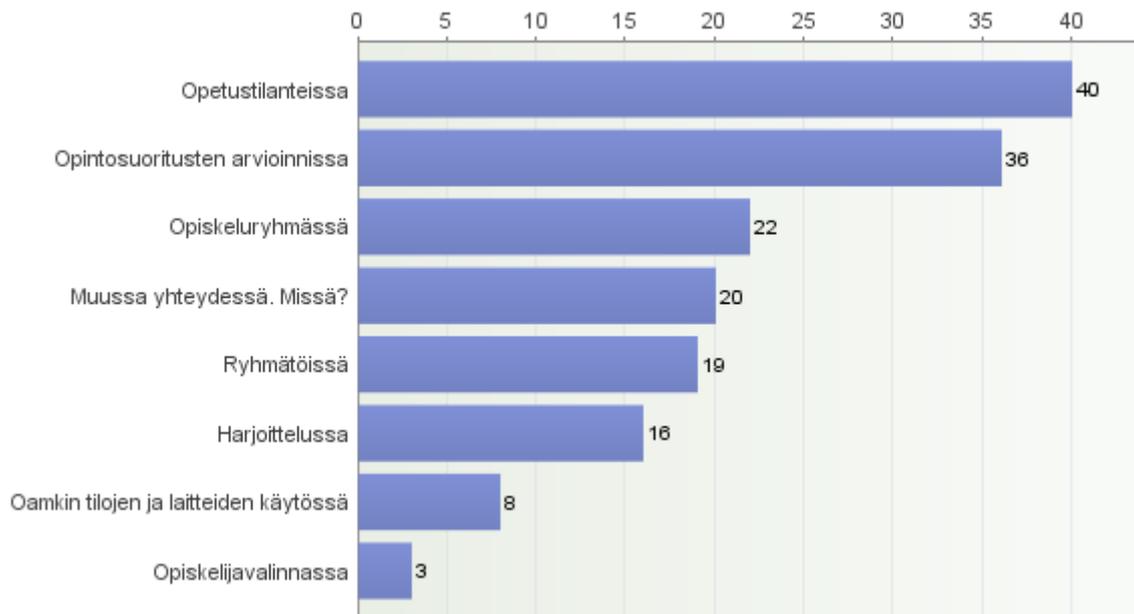
## 7. Have you experienced unequal treatment in the UAS community?

Number of respondents: 161



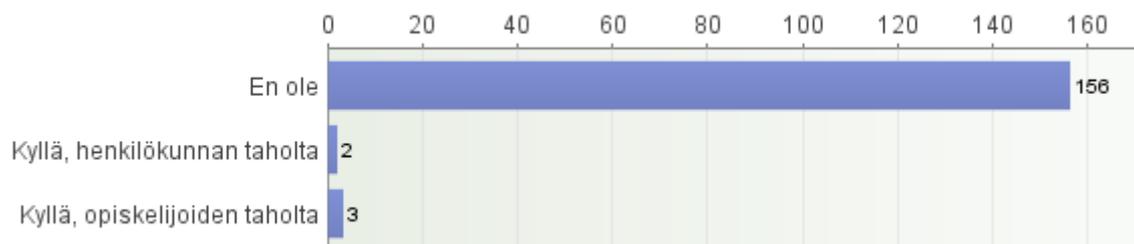
8. In what situations or issues have you faced inequality?

Number of respondents: 85



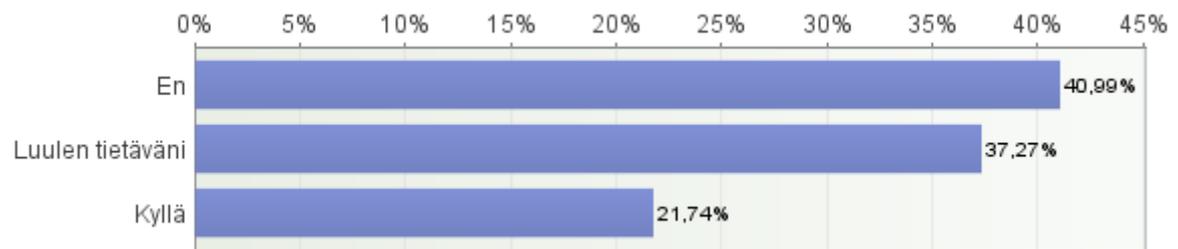
9. Have you experienced sexual or gender-based harassment in the UAS community?

Number of respondents: 161



10. If you encounter gender inequality or sexual or gender-based harassment, do you know who to contact?

Number of respondents: 161



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