

*THE NON-DISCRIMINATION POLICY  
OF THE STUDENT UNION OF  
HELSINKI METROPOLIA UNIVERSITY  
OF APPLIED SCIENCES*

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## Introduction

METKA has declared itself a discrimination-free zone. This declaration means that the organization welcomes everyone without any kind of distinction, such as sex, gender, age, ethnicity, nationality, religion, conviction, political or other opinion, state of health, possible disability, sexual orientation or any other personal characteristic. In addition to opposing all discrimination METKA actively intervenes when discrimination occurs and actively declares the principle of equality of all people.

This policy paper defines more clearly what equality means in METKA. Concrete guidelines in the attachment ensure that the policy paper's principles are translated into action. METKA's non-discrimination policy is based on the Finnish Non-Discrimination Act and also covers gender equality, which is dealt with in diverse laws.

This policy is valid for the time period of 2013-2016. All staff and board members are responsible for implementing the policy. Implementation will be followed up by METKA's board member in charge of non-discrimination issues as well as METKA's social policy specialist. Also, there will be an annual questionnaire following up the non-discrimination policy and its results will be reported to the Student Parliament.

## Worldview, belief and opinion

We allow and respect differing convictions, both political and religious. We do not limit participation of persons with a political or religious background, instead we guarantee different political organizations as well as religious and non-religious associations an equal opportunity to participate in METKA's activities. We do not endorse conversions.

Differences in opinion are common and only become a problem when they hinder working together. We welcome and listen to new opinions. Courses of action are designed with a common interest in mind, not according to personal opinions.

The majority of METKA's activities are alcohol-free. Special attention is given to the advertisement of these activities.

For instance, those who do not wish to consume alcohol are taken into consideration when organizing METKA's annual Christmas party METKAN glögit or METKA's annual gala. Curious questions as to why somebody does not drink shall be avoided. If food is served at an event, we attempt to enquire about special diets beforehand. If this is not possible, we shall at least offer a vegetarian and a non-pork option.

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## Ethnic background, nationality and language

Metropolia students and METKA activists include people of many different nationalities and ethnic backgrounds, who often also speak different mother tongues. Diversity is enriching, and we do not accept any racist or otherwise discriminating behaviour.

Metropolia's languages of instruction are Finnish and English. Yet, Metropolia does not translate all published information into English or the English translation is only offered at a later point in time. According to METKA's communications action plan METKA always communicates in both Finnish and English. This bilingual approach aims at reaching out to international students and encourage them to participate in METKA's activities.

METKA does not arrange events for specific student groups, for instance for students of a particular field of study. Such events can be organized by students themselves or by student associations. Even though all METKA activities might not be completely bilingual, we always take non-Finnish speakers into account. It has to be clearly communicated if an event is difficult to attend without Finnish skills.

## Age and life situation

Stereotypical higher education student is single, in her / his twenties and finds friends by partying with other students. Higher education students are in fact a heterogeneous crowd who only have one thing in common. Their student status. Due to the existing stereotype, the Student Union is also considered to be a working environment for young people. We have to be careful when highlighting youthfulness so potential activists won't get ruled out or that we don't practise age discrimination when recruiting new employees. Everyone can face age discrimination, even young people.

Majority of students in the capital city area are forced to have a job alongside their studies to secure their living. If daytime students work in the evenings and evening students work during the day, arranging activities, while still taking into account of all the students, can be impossible. Taking care of children or people close to you can also make participation difficult. According to the Equality Act the employer is to make consolidation of work and family lives easier. METKA takes notice of students', activists' and employees' family situations in its activities and for example enables people to take their children to meetings if necessary.

METKA aims that every activist, student and METKA member can take part in activities regardless of age, family situation or other matters.

## Sexual Orientation

Heteronormativity is a prevalent way of thinking in Finnish society even though there are members of sexual and gender minorities in high places of the society. Heteronormativity is a set of norms, stating that there are only two genders and that people are romantically, emotionally and/or sexually only interested in the opposite gender. This is a discriminatory way of thinking and it excludes people of sexual and gender minorities, because in terms of sexuality people may identify for example as asexuals, bisexuals, heterosexuals, gays, lesbians, something else or not identify themselves at all. When it comes to gender, people might also identify other than man or woman, and therefore talking about opposite gender is misleading.

Heterosexuality is often thought to be a norm rather than sexual orientation. This means that when Alexander tells about his weekend with his partner Mary, people feel he is talking only about his weekend. But when Carl talk about his weekend with his partner Leonard, people then feel that he is talking about his sexual orientation.

Everyone has a right to choose whether to talk about their sexual orientation or not. It should also be considered that even friendly querying can be distressing or offensive. Speculating person's sexual orientation is also unnecessary, because that causes social pressure to reveal more than the person would be comfortable with. Jokes can also be offensive even though the joker wouldn't mean them that way.

## Gender

A person's gender is designated by other people soon after birth, and often children are raised into certain roles on the basis of this definition. There are only two legal genders in Finland. This categorization fails to take into account that people cannot be unequivocally divided into women and men. Sometimes a person's inner sense of gender identity is not consistent with the gender designated at birth or with the person's gender expression. The naturalized gender system is disarranged by, for example, intersexuals, transsexuals, and people who prefer not to define their gender or define it as something other than female or male. Also the forced binary system produces prejudices and expectations of what a "woman" or a "man" is or what they can do.

In METKA one's own gender identity, or decision not to define one's gender, is respected, and room is given to different gender expressions. While assigning tasks, we consider if people of specific gender are more often assigned with certain tasks. While making polls, we consider if it is necessary to ask one's gender. If it is necessary, there must also be options "other" or "I choose not to answer" available.

METKA's duty as an employer is to act according to The Act on Equality between Women and Men. According to the Equality Act, every employer must promote equality in a goal-directed and planned way. This means for example trying to ensure that job vacancies attract applications from both women and men, and that there will be no gendered division. Also employers must improve on equality on work conditions.

## Disability, health and accessibility

Metropolia campuses, especially Bulevardi campus, are inaccessible. METKA's member service point M-piste and temporal service points at campuses must be easily accessed. It is important to inform about accessible routes. Everyone in METKA must know how to guide people visiting METKA or M-piste how to use those accessible routes. METKA works actively in Metropolia to promote accessibility when for example designing new campuses.

We don't tolerate discriminating someone based on their health or disability. Everyone must be treated equally and appropriately. Talking about someone's health or disability must be their own choice. It is not okay to make assumptions about people's abilities, as they have the right to decide whether to ask for special arrangements or not. An illness can be a short- or a long-term one. In a long-term illness there are often also symptomless periods. People themselves must be able to define their abilities and those don't necessarily mean illness or disability. For example, a learning difficulty can be seen as a personal attribute rather than a disability.

We consider accessibility of activities beforehand by, for example, discussing about separate passageways. If there is a reason to believe that the locale might be inaccessible, there must be information about the special arrangements beforehand when advertising the event.

Strong perfumes or pets might cause severe symptoms to allergic people and we must consider this so that involvement of the allergic people isn't limited. We take into account different food allergies by, for example, keeping food ingredients separated or avoiding the most common allergens.

## What to do in case of discrimination or harassment

Harassment is a subjective experience. The harasser might not mean it to be harassment though the victim experiences it so. If you feel some actions towards you are unpleasant and harassment, you must tell it to the harasser.

Both employers and schools are obliged to prevent sexual and gender-based discrimination. The school's responsibility to eliminate harassment starts when its accountable representative has been notified about the harassment.

There are two harassment contact persons in METKA. They support and (if the student wants it) help to report the cases of discrimination or harassment. Their contact information can be found on METKA's web page ([metkaweb.fi](http://metkaweb.fi)).

If there is problem in study related issues, such as the rights and obligations of the students, you can contact METKA's Student Advocate (aka Educational Policy Specialist). The contact information can also be found on the METKA web page.

## Special Arrangements in Metropolia

According to the Metropolia's Non-Discrimination Policy, Metropolia makes special arrangements for students while applying to Metropolia and studying there. Special arrangements are applied by using an application that can be found as Appendix 1 in The Non-Discrimination Policy of Metropolia. The content of the special arrangements is decided individually to match each case.

The student should talk about the need of special arrangements with the tutor teacher or the student advisor. In the case of dyslexia the dyslexia test and statement by a special education teacher at Metropolia are sufficient. Metropolia arranges group dyslexia tests each academic year.

Applicants requiring special arrangements in the entrance examination should submit a free-form written application for special arrangements to the Admissions Office after receiving the entrance examination invitation. A medical certificate or other expert statement on the disability or illness in question must be attached to the application.

## Recommendations

- Different religious and political views are accepted and those representing them are welcomed to events. Actual conversion is however not accepted. If representatives of different religions, ideologies and political parties are invited to an event, the invitations are sent out equally.
- When organizing parties, annual gala and other events where alcohol is being served or sold, we take into consideration that not all people consume alcohol (at all or in the event in question). It is not okay to ask a person why they don't drink. In parties there must always be a non-alcoholic drink in discount.
- Different kind of diets, whether it is caused by ethical reasons, allergies or other reasons, are considered in events by, for example, asking participants about their diets beforehand. If that's not possible, the most common diets, such as vegetarian and lactose free diets are considered.
- Accessible places to organize events are listed.
- METKA communicates in both Finnish and English at the same time.
- When planning events we consider beforehand how to pay attention to those participants who don't speak Finnish
- When organizing parties, age limits are considered
- In job advertisements youthfulness is not highlighted
- It is fine to bring kids to most of the METKA's events when taking into account the nature of the event in question
- It is not okay to make assumptions about a person's sexual orientation.
- Let people choose themselves what things they want share about themselves, don't ask.
- When organizing sitting arrangement for the annual gala, all couples are treated equally regardless of their gender. Also those relationships that include more than two people are considered at the sitting arrangement.
- Let people define their own gender themselves, don't make assumptions
- Don't assign tasks based on (assumed) gender
- Don't ask gender unless absolutely necessary
- When making polls there must be more options than just female and male, for example 'other' or 'I don't want to answer'
- All events and activities are organized in accessible places when possible. If not, participants are informed beforehand about the alternative routes. Person responsible is chosen to guide and possibly assist participants who need help.

- Do not bring pets to the office or indoor events.
- Avoid using strong perfumes.
- There is at least a short English summary available of all the official documents of METKA, and also a named person, who will give more information about the document in question if needed.
- When updating METKA's communications action plan it's considered how to communicate about accessibility or inaccessibility.

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## Appendix: Organizing events

### *Planning*

- When choosing the place for the event, remember to think if students of all ages are allowed and if they have special arrangements for disabled students.
- What time and for which group of people is the event organized for? Do you want both day-time and evening students to attend? What is the character of the event, can children attend?
- Is the event bilingual?
  - For example a bilingual panel: Some of the speakers can speak Finnish and some English. One of the organizers can choose to briefly translate the topics to the other language. The viewers can help when there is a need. This should be mentioned in the beginning of the event. Not all needs to be translated as most of the attendees understand both Finnish and English.
  - For example a party or annual gala: Think if the party or the gala could have two hosts, one for both languages (Finnish and English). Even one host could speak both languages. Not everything needs to be translated, the most important instructions of course but the lighter subjects could be mentioned only in English. In speeches it would be good to say something in both languages because it gets boring to listen the same things twice.
- When thinking about the drinks, make sure there is a non-alcoholic option always available and also on offer. If the event has food to be served, make sure to ask the guests about their special diet beforehand.
- Does the event have offers and for whom? Make sure offers are not available just for a specific genre, for example, members of a certain gender. In the annual gala, the non-alcoholic option can be cheaper as the costs are smaller.

### *Publicity*

- Informing about alternative routes for handicapped persons early before the event. A person should be named for guiding and helping the handicapped.
- If the event is mainly in Finnish, a small description in English should be added on the Internet when the event is advertised.
- If the event is even partly bilingual, that needs to be noticed in all publicity. Even in posters.

- When advertising, you need to think through if you decide to make the advertising funny, for example playing with stereotypes. Even if something is meant as a joke, it might hurt somebody.
- Think how to present all the information as simply as possible to avoid confusion and misunderstanding.
- If written instructions or signs are made for the event, they should be in both languages.

### *The day of the event*

- Before the beginning of the event, make sure to check the situation for handicapped toilets. Even if there is one, the entrance to it might be blocked with items.
- In the beginning of the event you can ask if there are non-Finnish speakers present. Should this be the case, hosts are advised to briefly tell instructions in English, too.

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