

22.11.2023

Non-discrimination and equality plan of Hiiden Opisto

2024–2027



HIIDEN OPISTO

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Prepared: The survey was carried out between 24 October and 5 November 2023.

Update: The non-discrimination and equality plan is reviewed and renewed every three years.

Accepted: At a personnel meeting of Hiiden Opisto on 8 December 2023.

Added to the website of Hiiden Opisto: In January 2024, FI + SV + EN

1 Introduction

Equality focuses primarily on gender equality. The Equality Act creates an obligation to ensure that different genders have equal opportunities for education, and that teaching and learning materials prevent gender discrimination and promote equality (section 5). As of 2015, the Equality Act also applies to discrimination based on gender identity or gender expression.

The Equality Act prohibits discrimination based on gender, gender identity and gender expression in educational institutions. Education and training providers must also work systematically and in an orderly manner to promote gender equality in educational institutions. Educational institutions must also prevent discrimination based on gender identity and gender expression. **Act on Equality between Women and Men** (8.8.1986/609) section 5a (30.12.2014/1329).

According to the Equality Act, the staff and students of the educational institution must participate in the preparation of the equality plan. The equality plan should include: 1) a report on the current equality at the educational institution; 2) the necessary measures to promote equality; 3) an assessment of the implementation and results of the measures included in the previous equality plan. Particular attention should be paid to pupil or student selection, the organisation of teaching, learning differences and an assessment of completed study units, as well as the prevention and elimination of sexual harassment and gender-based harassment. Instead of an annual review, the plan can be drawn up for a maximum of three years at a time.

Non-discrimination means equality between people, meaning that they are not discriminated against based on sex, age, ethnic or national origin, nationality, language, religion or belief, opinion, disability, state of health, sexual orientation, or other personal reasons. Personal factors must not affect people's opportunities to receive education, employment or various services. **Non-discrimination Act** 30.12.2014/1325 section 6.

The Non-discrimination Act obliges educational institutions to consult students, pupils and their parents on measures that promote equality.

Hiiden Opisto's non-discrimination plan is drawn up in cooperation with the staff and pupils' parents and students. The plan is updated at least every three years with staff, pupils, pupils' parents and students.

The equality and non-discrimination plan will be published on Hiiden Opisto's website.

2 Non-discrimination and equality at Hiiden Opisto

Hiiden Opisto is an adult education institution that produces and promotes lifelong learning opportunities, supports the diverse development of personality and life management, implementing the principles of liberal adult education in Western Uusimaa.

The educational activities of Hiiden Opisto focus on the students', staff's and stakeholders' intellectual and practical skills to meet others appreciatively and responsibly. Values of Lohja city strategy 1) bold, renewing and growing, 2) sustainable choices, 3) creating success together, and 4) transparent and participatory guide our operations. From the perspective of equality and non-discrimination, we respect everyone's humanity, and every member of our community is valuable (Lohja city strategy 2023–2030).

2.1 Studying the current situation

Age and gender

Teaching is organised in similar teaching groups, regardless of gender and age. However, it should be noted that Hiiden Opisto mainly organises training for people over 18 years of age. The basic studies of craft arts for children and some family courses may involve children (under 16 years of age). Student selection takes place in the order of enrolment. Participation is open to everyone, regardless of their educational background, which makes the operation of the adult education centre itself more equal and non-discriminating.

Immigrant education

The educational institution offers immigrants high-quality Finnish language teaching. Courses for immigrants are clearly compiled as a separate entity in the study guide and on the website. The planning and coordination of immigrant education is the responsibility of Hiiden Opisto's own immigrant coordinator. Two free courses are offered to immigrants during the academic year with the aid of the annually applied for study voucher support.

Disability

Hiiden Opisto operates in three municipalities: Lohja, Vihti and Siuntio. Some premises designated by the municipalities are not accessible. Hiiden Opisto has 65 locations, some of which have an elevator and unobstructed access. Students have the opportunity to choose a study place that is suitable for wheelchair access, for example.

2.2 Survey on the situation of equality and non-discrimination

An electronic follow-up survey was carried out from 24 October to 5 November 2023. The surveys were addressed to everyone registered at Hiiden Opisto in the autumn term by 13 October 2023, the guardians of students under the age of 18 and staff. The survey was available in Finnish, Swedish and English. In total, **101** responses were received, of which 84 (83%) were student respondents, and 14 (17%) were teachers or other staff members.

Realisation of equality

The realisation of equality was examined by asking whether different gender representatives were treated equally among students and by staff at Hiiden Opisto. In addition, the respondents were asked whether they felt that they treated others equally, regardless of gender.

Of the respondents, **81** (80% of the respondents) felt that teachers and staff **always** treated students of different genders equally, and **11 people** (11% of respondents) felt that treatment was equal **more often than not**. (Figure 1)

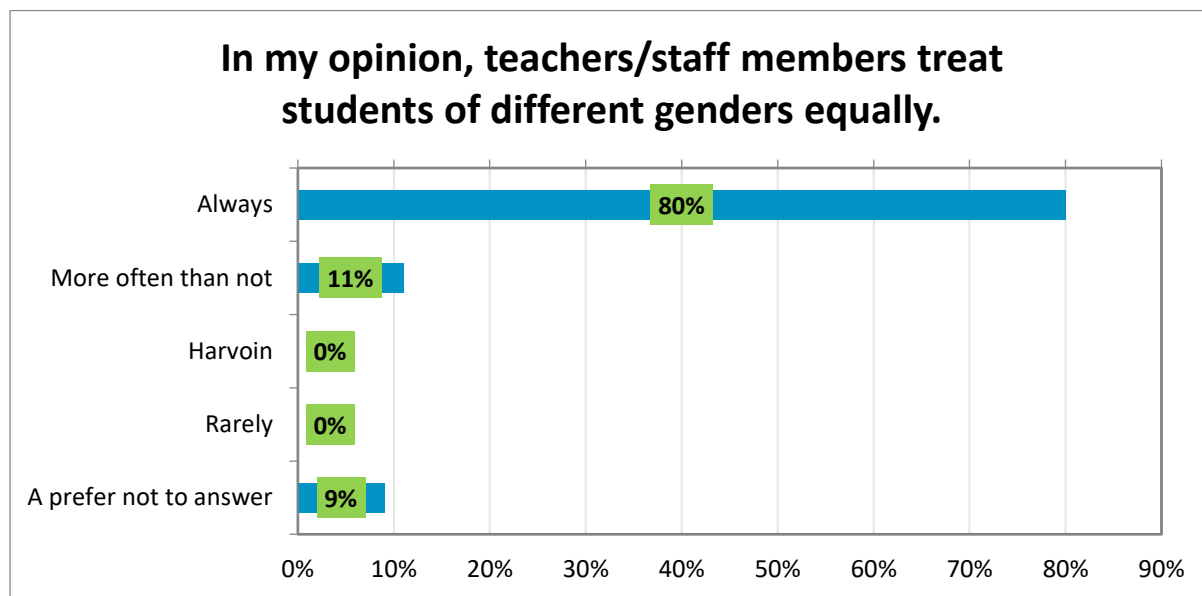


Figure 1: The majority of respondents (80%) felt that teachers and staff always treated students of different genders equally.

Correspondingly, **71 respondents** (70%) felt that they had **always** received equal treatment among students, and **24 respondents** (24%) felt it **more often than not**. (Figure 2)

Based on the survey, **89 respondents** (88% of respondents) felt that they **always** treated others equally, regardless of gender, and **11 respondents** (11% of respondents) felt that they treated others equally **more often than not**.

To promote equality, it was proposed to use people of different genders in marketing illustrations. Jokes containing gender discrimination during a course were perceived as inappropriate, and the respondents hoped for zero tolerance for discriminatory comments related to gender or origin. The teacher was expected to be exemplary and neutral towards topics not covered in the course.

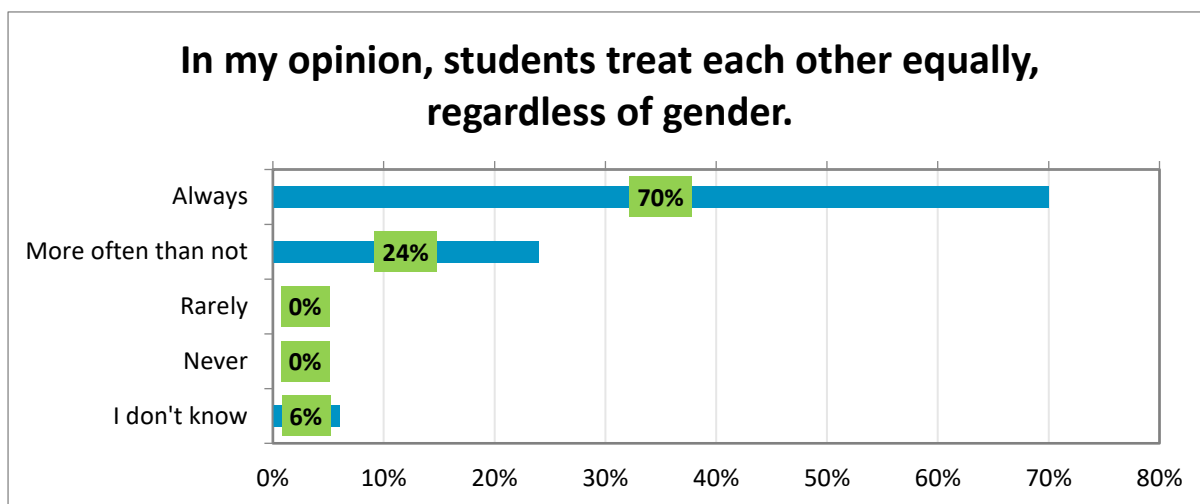


Figure 2: The majority (70%) of respondents felt that students always treated each other equally, regardless of gender.

Occurrence of harassment


Two of the respondents had experienced harassment at the educational institution. Harassment is discrimination prohibited by the Non-discrimination Act. Harassment is a deliberate violation of the human dignity of a person or a group of people. Harassment occurs when a person creates a demeaning, humiliating, threatening, hostile or offensive environment related to a prohibited ground of discrimination such as sexual orientation, origin or disability. Harassment can be manifested in various ways such as emails, facial expressions, gestures, or spreading inappropriate content online or in other communication channels, for example. (Definition and legislation on harassment, <https://www.oph.fi/fi/koulutus-ja-tutkinnot/hairinnan-maarittely-ja-lainsaandanto>).

Based on the open answers, it is unclear on what basis the survey respondents had felt that they had been discriminated against, and how systematic and repeated the harassment had been.

Realisation of non-discrimination

The realisation of equality was studied with questions about discrimination. Of the respondents, **91% had not noticed discrimination** at Hiiden Opisto during the past year. In most cases, discrimination was experienced based on opinion (6% of respondents), while two people felt discriminated against based on skin colour or age, and three people felt discriminated against for other reasons. Of those who had observed discrimination, six had noticed it among teachers or staff. Four of the respondents had experienced discrimination among/by students.

Towards the end of the survey, the respondents evaluated their own behaviour from the perspective of equality and non-discrimination when participating in Hiiden Opisto's courses. Of the respondents, **86%** felt that they had **always** treated everyone equally, and **13%** felt that they had treated everyone equally **more often than not**. Answers to the question "On what grounds do you treat others unequally?" openly considered the respondent's own attitude towards others. Accepting another person's differences was sometimes perceived as challenging. However, the answers did not reveal exactly what kind of difference was troubling. Some respondents felt that their own behaviour depended on the treatment they receive. It is challenging to treat a rude person kindly.

A close-up portrait of a woman with dark, curly hair, smiling warmly. She is wearing a bright yellow top and large gold hoop earrings. Her hands are positioned in front of her, with her fingers interlaced to form a heart shape. The background is a soft, out-of-focus grey.

*“Respect and kindness
should always be the
foundation of all human
interaction.”*

Challenges with the realisation of equality and non-discrimination at Hiiden Opisto

In the last two questions, the respondents considered the realisation of equality and non-discrimination at Hiiden Opisto and shared ways of increasing equality and non-discrimination at Hiiden Opisto.

Several responses discussed the **accessibility** of teaching facilities for people with reduced mobility. In addition, **being accepted on a course** was perceived as challenging, especially for popular courses. It is considered annoying to be on the waiting list. You can register for courses at Hiiden Opisto online using a computer or mobile device or by calling the office. Registration for courses for the autumn term and the entire academic year will commence at the beginning of August and for courses for the spring term in November. When course enrolment starts, several people are online and on the phone at the same time, which also increases the likelihood of being left without a course place.

3 Measures to promote equality and non-discrimination

The answers to the equality and non-discrimination survey considered the **accessibility** of Hiiden Opisto's services from several perspectives. Regardless of the perspective, the basis of teaching activities must be the promotion of equality and human rights. In accordance with the principles of liberal adult education, everyone should have the opportunity to learn, educate and develop themselves, regardless of different personal challenges.

3.1 Measures to promote accessibility

Based on the survey responses, we have decided to examine physical accessibility and social accessibility. We will also consider current and potential ways of promoting economic accessibility in our courses.

Physical accessibility means that people using the services of Hiiden Opisto can enter teaching facilities and move around them unobstructed, regardless of challenges related to bodily capacity. Accessibility is not only limited to physical movement but also takes issues related to hearing, seeing, communicating and understanding into account.

Hiiden Opisto's operations are centralised in school centres that have an elevator available, for example. Such school centres include: Laurentius House, Kuoppanummi School Centre, Ojamo House and Siuntion Sydän. Teaching is organised to increase regional equality widely in different parts of the administrator municipality Lohja, as well as in the contract municipalities Vihti and Siuntio. In remote areas, teaching facilities are not always accessible. However, the provision of education in remote areas promotes regional equality regarding participation in training.

Social accessibility means friendly customer service and communication that shows that the activities are open to everyone. The aim is to ensure that everyone can study in peace and have space to study in teaching situations. Everyone should feel welcome in the course as themselves. Social accessibility includes universal acceptance and equality – permission to be yourself and to express your opinion. It places responsibility not only on the staff and the teachers of the school but

also on those participating in the teaching. It is also related to other services of the educational institution, such as office services, and encountering people in educational situations in general.

Economic accessibility in liberal adult education suggests that education and learning opportunities are economically accessible to all individuals. This means that the costs of the training, including teaching materials, course fees and any travel costs, are not an obstacle to participation.

In Finland, the funding system for education is structured so that the course fees of liberal adult education institutions (adult education centres, folk high schools, summer universities, sports training centres and study centres) can be kept reasonable.

Liberal adult education is an activity falling within the scope of the law (Act on Liberal Adult Education 632/1998). Institutions of liberal adult education receive a **central government transfer** for the operating costs of training. The state's funding share for liberal adult education is 57%, and for integration training 100%. In addition, the operations of Hiiden Opisto are financially maintained by the administrator municipality Lohja and the contract municipalities Vihti and Siuntio, who pay their share of the actual teaching hours in their municipality as **training compensation**.

The central government transfer system is supplemented by **discretionary government grants** to education and its development. Hiiden Opisto annually applies for **study voucher support** for liberal adult education granted by the Finnish National Agency for Education. Hiiden Opisto uses study vouchers to support the education of immigrants, persons experiencing learning difficulties and persons receiving a pension. The study voucher support should provide compensation for the fees charged for adult study in non-degree liberal adult education. Two normally priced courses of the person's choice are not charged from those who have applied for study voucher support. Unemployed people can study in Hiiden Opisto's regularly priced courses at half the price.

To develop its operations, Hiiden Opisto is applying for discretionary government grants for **development projects** from the Finnish National Agency for Education. The projects last 2–3 years on average, and their self-financing share is usually 15%.

Actions:

- We treat everyone equally, don't making a big deal out of it and just do it well, so that no one is discriminated against or favoured.
- Everyone is treated respectfully and in a friendly manner.
- In the teaching situation, everyone pays attention to their own words and tries to be as neutral as possible when expressing their opinions. This applies to both teachers and participants.
- Information about the accessibility of entering and moving within the teaching facilities is added to the course information.
- The teaching facilities will be listed on the homepage of Hiiden Opisto, and those that are fully accessible will be marked clearly.
- Information about the accessibility of the teaching facilities will be added on the online store and the course-specific details.
- The use of the study voucher for immigrants, retired students and students at risk of social exclusion will be continued. Increasing the distribution of information about the study voucher on various channels: Which courses can I get free of charge with the study voucher support? How do I apply for study voucher support for course fees?
- Multichannel announcements on the 50% discount on course fees for unemployed students.

- Provide a free course admission for a disabled person's assistant, interpreter, guide or instructor.
- Efforts will be made to arrange replacement courses for courses that fill up immediately and have a large number of students on the waiting list.
- Efforts will be made to find solutions to make the registration system more equal.

3.2 Measures to promote equality

There is zero tolerance for harassment and discriminatory behaviour (racist, sexual and gender commentary) in Hiiden Opisto's operations.

Actions:

- Zero tolerance for harassment and discriminatory behaviour (racist, sexual and gender commentary).
- The teacher immediately intervenes (conversation, jokes, gestures, facial expressions, etc.) if they detect discrimination or an attitude towards a gender.
- Training will be provided for staff to learn how to face and resolve situations of harassment or discrimination based on gender.
- Staff will receive clear instructions on who to contact if they detect gender-based harassment or discrimination.
- We talk more about equality and non-discrimination in different situations – including on social media. Encourage everyone to raise possible deviations from this.

Sources

Definition and legislation on harassment. Finnish National Agency for Education.

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