

*ACADEMIC INTEGRITY AT JAMK: A STUDENT PERSPECTIVE*  
**September 10, 2015**

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## 1. Tervetuloa and welcome

This guide to JAMK's ethical study environment is made by students, for students, to help you get started with your academic career and to help smooth your path into academic life. The goal of this document is to help clarify some of the guidelines and expectations at JAMK. All students, including exchange, degree, double-degree, open university, and Finnish or foreign students, should be able to learn about and understand what the guidelines and expectations here at JAMK are.

As a new student at the University of Applied Sciences (JAMK) in Jyväskylä, Finland, we welcome you into your new study community! This is where it starts, your academic and professional career. Long hours of study and challenging new tasks await you. But do not worry! On top of that, great people, and amazing events and experiences will be a part of your study time here at JAMK. You and your fellow students will experience a distinctive Finnish higher education environment that may also challenge you in ways that you did not expect. Just stay sharp and positive and enjoy the shared experience!

In recent years the number of foreign students attending our school has increased dramatically. Foreign students bring their own traditions of teaching, learning and study practices to JAMK. Sometimes misunderstandings occur when traditions and practices differ substantially from traditional Finnish traditions and practices. The community as a whole realized that these "local" expectations and practices were not clearly communicated to many of its stakeholders. This is why students expressed a need for a student guide, to help you in understanding what the local rules are and how to follow them. This compilation will also help to increase the awareness of students' own responsibilities when making study-related decisions. This will help you to complete your studies in a more meaningful way and get the best out of yourself as a student at JAMK.

It is important to note that this document does not intend to replace the ethical guidelines as described by the Ethical Committee of JAMK, or other JAMK regulations or instructions from teachers. Instead, this is a student written guide that addresses certain issues from the perspectives of students. You can find

JAMK's ethical principles guideline here: <https://www.jamk.fi/globalassets/tietoa-jamkista--about-jamk/esittely/ethical-principles-20130513.pdf>

## 2. Finnish Culture

In order to understand what we mean by “local” traditions and practices it is helpful to familiarize yourself with Finnish culture and values, because these subjective concepts drive the rules, practices and expectations at the institutional and classroom levels, and you are now effectively a part of this community.

Perhaps you have heard that Finns are shy people. This is simply a commonly held stereotype that many foreign people have about Finns. Nonetheless we are often surprised when we discover that individuals' behaviors may differ from certain of our expectations. For you, as a student at JAMK, this is an opportunity to learn about Finnish culture and values during your study time in Finland. The same learning opportunity applies to Finns who have the chance to learn more from foreign students about other cultures!

### 2.1 Getting to know Finnish values and behaviors

Finnish values, behaviors provide the overarching guidance for expectations and practices in JAMK's community. When you learn why Finns behave in certain ways, you will gain insight into the community you are part of and realize that those values and behaviors are respected throughout Finnish society.

When arriving in Finland you might notice Finns being quiet. Finns appreciate silence and may say only what they believe is necessary or essential. For example, to a Finn, the American's small talk comment about how nice weather is should be obvious to all. If you come from a more socially interactive culture it may feel a bit strange to find that you are not spoken to. As well, Finns like to maintain a certain physical distance from others, perhaps 60 centimeters. This all simply means that most Finns will respect your own personal space and privacy. Hence, it might seem that it takes some time until a Finn warms up you.

You may also discover that Finns are extremely rule oriented. Finns seem to know the rules no matter where they are written and they are each determined to strictly follow the rules. At school this means that if there is an assignment or deadline given, the

Finns expect you to plan your schedule so that the assignment will be submitted on time and strictly according to instructions of the teacher. When a Finn promises you something it is considered as a written contract. If you agree on something with your classmate or teacher you are likewise expected to keep your promise. For Finns, to be known as a reliable person is indeed among the most important of values.

Furthermore, be aware that Finns are strongly oriented toward equality, equity and fairness. This means that ideally everyone in the JAMK community is treated equally, including students, teachers, administrators and staff. As well, your gender, race or ethnicity, religion, or age will not factor in your success at JAMK. One might say that at JAMK we are all wearing the same shoes.

## 2.2 Finnish study culture

Internationally, the Finnish education system enjoys a reputation for high quality - maybe that is one reason why you chose to apply for a study position here at JAMK. You will find yourself in a highly open and learning-centered study environment, where teachers expect that you will track your own progress through courses and assignments, and that you assume personal responsibility for your attendance and overall study progress.

Teaching and learning traditions vary worldwide and Finnish study culture tends to be rather informal. You can for example call your lecturers by their first names and interactive communication in the classroom is encouraged by most lecturers, so do not hesitate to ask questions. You can also talk to your teacher before or after a lecture or send an email for advice or to make an appointment. When using email always be sure to identify the course you are referring to, the day of the course (there are often multiple groups of the same course) and any other information that will help the teacher identify you specifically from among his or her many students. It is also very helpful to upload a personal photograph to the Optima learning system so that the teacher can more easily identify you.

Education in Finland aims to develop your professional skills in order to help you develop into an independent professional in the field you have chosen. Hence, as a student you need to take personal and professional responsibility for arriving to lectures and completing assignments on time, while at the same time presenting mature behavior in the classroom (minimal chatting or other

disturbing activity). As well, because group-work is so emphasized at JAMK, it is important that you fully collaborate with your fellow students.

There are moments in your student life when familiar strategies are no longer sufficient. Therefore one important aspect of personal responsibility is your willingness to call for help if things start to go wrong. Asking for help is not perceived as weakness, but rather is considered as a sign of maturity and being realistic about your capacity. In order to change the strategy, you might need help with, for example, study skills, academic writing or preparing for exams. For you as a student to become a respectable and independent professional it is recommended to create and develop new strategies that can build your confidence and help to ensure your success.

At one point during the semester, usually towards the end, you will find yourself super busy! Usually the busiest parts of the semester are close to the end when all of the deadlines seem to merge. So now you can plan for this and hopefully not be forced to complete tasks in a rush later, or even worse, making choices that cut corners or may violate ethical rules. Most lecturers are thoughtful about informing you in advance about the tasks and deadlines for the courses, so you can have a picture about the future workload at the beginning of each course. And if that kind of information is not freely given, ask for it. You are studying for your own benefit. It is also helpful to seek a balance between your work life (your studies) and your social life!

During your study time at JAMK, you may experience working in groups for the first time. This is designed to prepare you for international working contexts, where you learn to co-operate with people with varying personalities and characteristics, including nationality, gender, or age, and this should improve your communication, meeting, listening and time-management skills. Nowadays, working environments are highly global and diverse, so at JAMK you may even find yourself in virtual work group with students from other universities around the globe! This can all be challenging, but it will help to shape your future working life. So embrace the opportunities available at JAMK. The best method to learn is by doing and experiencing.

Additionally, unlike in some countries, grades are not the ultimate goal for Finnish students. It is nice to earn good grades, but in the end it is about understanding, applying and thinking further! You

are here to learn, to raise your theoretical and technical knowledge and to improve studying strategies. You will implement these strategies in your following career through working life or further studies.

### 3. The JAMK community

JAMK is an international higher education institution with expertise in eight different fields of study: ICT, Culture, Business Administration, Natural Resources and the Environment, Social Services and Health Care, Tourism and Hospitality, Technology and Transport. You will be one of more than 8.500 students from over 70 countries. Students can be described by the following categories:

Degree students (Finnish and foreign)  
Double-degree students (in cooperation with other schools)  
Exchange students at JAMK (foreign students)  
Open University students (can be either Finnish or foreign)

Across such a range of study groups, you may find individuals in various situations in life. Some students may be as young as seventeen and may now be living for the first time on their own, while others may already have families and work while they are studying at JAMK. Different circumstances and life stages impacts on a variety of resources such as time and money, thus may affect your study life at the campus.

In order to balance life in and outside of university, being able to juggle between timetables effortlessly becomes an essential skill. The ELMO Student Intranet that also works as a management system ([www.elmo.jamk.fi](http://www.elmo.jamk.fi)) and Optima learning system ([www.optima.jamk.fi](http://www.optima.jamk.fi)) as well as your school email ([www.webaccess.jamk.fi](http://www.webaccess.jamk.fi)) will help with your scheduling needs, each of which you can easily access with your personal login credentials.

Being a student can be taxing. So make sure that you get the mental and physical rest you need to be at peak performance for most of the time. Figure out your way to unwind and chill for a bit, and to get your mind off of school things. Having a night off from school things and other responsibilities, and having some time for just YOU and your own thoughts can be fruitful.

A major part of the JAMK community is JAMKO, your student union. JAMKO represents the students in JAMK's administration, and supports you in various ways. More information can be found in the support resources section of this guide and also at <https://www.jamko.fi/en/>.

## 4. Academic standards and practices

Now that you have entered academic life there are certain expectations to follow. Research at JAMK has shown that those expectations may not be fully communicated across the entire campus. The following four areas were found to be the main challenge areas that students face, especially in their first year of studies.

### 4.1 Classroom and campus behavior

Expectations pertaining to classroom behaviors are driven principally by Finnish values such as honesty, trust, rules, punctuality and equality. We recommend for you to be on time to your classes; switch your mobile phones to silent mode; to reduce unrelated communication outside of the classroom topics to a minimum; and pay attention to the course content and activities. This way and by listening attentively you show respect towards the lecturer and your classmates, and remember that course-related discussions and questions are welcome! Whenever a lecturer encourages discussion, take your opportunity and participate actively, but respectfully.

There are also certain rules on how to behave around the campus. Finns like their environment to be rather neat and clean, even to the extent that it may annoy people not used to such strictness. A good example of this is smoking, and smoking on campus is limited to certain approved smoking areas around the campus. However, some people do not always follow these restrictions and they might smoke in front of entrances. Such was the case last spring when JAMKO received complaints regarding that topic. When the smokers were told to smoke elsewhere, they were upset by such "up-tightness." Talk about cultural differences!

### 4.2 Academic writing

A critical part of academic education is academic writing. This means that your arguments and claims should be supported by verifiable sources, your own theories must be developed in the



contexts of other theories, and your methods and results need to have a rigorous scientific basis. The key to academic writing is using credible sources and correctly attributing text and claims to the original author. In a way the saying “standing on the shoulder of giants” comes to life when creating a piece of academic text. You are using the work of other people to draw your conclusions and to develop and get your points through. While studying, you will come across numerous projects, reports and essays in which your Teacher will require you to take an academic approach in your writing.

So what is academic writing? As mentioned, it is separating your own thoughts from other people’s ideas, and it is using valid sources while creating in-text citations and a reference list at the end. This system will help the reader to understand where your thoughts are coming from. Here at JAMK we do have our own reporting system and it will guide you through the process of academic writing. You can find the instructions online here: <http://op-pimateriaalit.jamk.fi/projectreportinginstructions>

You may feel overwhelmed in the beginning, and it may not be correct on your first try, but following the reporting guidelines will help you to develop your academic writing skills. Let us take a look at an example. The teacher has given you a task to write about the economic situation in Saudi-Arabia. You could go ahead and write something on how you feel about the topic, but it would not be informative or reliable. You will need support from other authors’ work to make a proper, sophisticated answer. This requires you to find existing information about the topics, which can be found in articles, research papers, books, press releases etc. So fire up your online library search engine or visit the library yourself. Once you decide to use a source within your paper, you may choose to quote directly, summarize or paraphrase the text. These terms are effectively defined by Purdue University (n.a.):

**Quotations** must be identical to the original, using a narrow segment of the source. They must match the source document word for word and must be attributed to the original author.

**Paraphrasing** involves putting a passage from source material into your own words. A paraphrase must also be attributed to the original source. Paraphrased material is usually shorter than the original passage, taking a somewhat broader segment of the source and condensing it slightly.

**Summarizing** involves putting the main idea(s) into your own words, including only the main point(s). Once again, it is necessary to attribute summarized ideas to the original source. Summaries are significantly shorter than the original and take a broad overview of the source material.

**Reference:** Purdue University. n.a. Quoting, Paraphrasing, and Summarizing. Accessed on 13 August 2015. Retrieved from <https://owl.english.purdue.edu/owl/resource/563/1/>

If you use information or direct text from a source that you do not cite and reference, you may be accused of plagiarism, which at university and particularly at JAMK has severe consequences, because in effect you are using some other person's work as your own. In some cultures it is a compliment to use other's texts, and it may be a common practice not to provide source materials. As well, personal circumstances such as poor time management may tempt a student to cut corners. But plagiarism is no small thing, at least at JAMK, and your teacher may choose to give you a failing grade for the paper or project, or even the course, and even may choose to report your actions to the director of your school. Even politicians have gone down because of plagiarism! In 2013 Germany's education minister had to resign after she was stripped of her doctorate because her doctoral thesis was partly copied. In order to identify plagiarized texts, JAMK uses the Urkund plagiarism detection system (<http://www.orkund.com/en/>) to analyze your submitted assignments.

### 4.3 Cheating with and without intent

Our diverse student body includes individuals with a wide range of life situations. For example, some students need to work in order to finance their studies in Finland, or perhaps some individuals place too much emphasis on social life over studies, and of course studying in a second language can be challenging! Any of these, or a combination of problems, may create a need to generate coping strategies, some of which may not be positive. Needless to say, study challenges can generate a lot of stress, and you may find yourself in a situation where you feel compelled to cut ethical corners. You may for example be tempted to plagiarize or perhaps even cheat on an exam. And these days cheating has gone high tech, and lecturers are aware of this development.

Be aware also that while a lecturer may allow an assignment to be completed in a group, he or she may also require that a task be

completed individually and not through cooperation with others. There are cultures where supporting each other in a group outside of class is quite normal and not seen as cheating. If you share your ideas with others on individual tasks your submissions may all seem too similar. The Urkund plagiarism detection system will recognize this as well! So it might happen that your lecturer will approach you to discuss your shared outcomes.

We know that students may be unaware of local practices and choose methods that are consistent with those they expect at home. When these practices differ from local practices at JAMK we refer to this as “cheating without intent.” The implications and outcomes may be the same, and so this guide serves to inform about what the local assumptions and practices actually are.

In summary, study problems and ethical issues often emerge from these situations:

- 1) Traditions of teaching and learning and associated practices in Finland and at JAMK may differ from those back home.
- 2) Students may face personal challenges related to study skills, may express diverse learning abilities, may overdo the social scene, may be financially compelled to seek work, or may need to further develop their English as a Second Language (ESL) or Finnish language skills.
- 3) Students, both Finnish and foreign, may simply not be familiar with academic integrity and associated practices at JAMK or have not yet learned how the academic environment and community works.

#### 4.4 Group-work and teamwork

At JAMK, group-and teamwork will be an essential part of your studying process. Your teacher may choose who is in your group, or in some cases you may form your own team. Group-work allows you to learn to cooperate with different kinds of people. There might be differences in nationality, age, gender, background or personality. The key is to learn to collaborate, using each member’s individual skills to achieve a common goal. You will also learn to solve conflicts in a constructive and positive manner.

We would like to offer some advice here about dealing with group work scenarios:

- A) Agree together on group rules, as this will help everyone understand the goals, how communication occurs, what tasks each person is responsible for, and what the milestones will be.
- B) Arrange regular meetings, arrive according to the agreed time schedule, and inform your fellow students when you are not able to attend a meeting beforehand.
- C) Share the workload and do not be afraid of conflict - that is a part of group work - you will deal with such situations in working life as well.
- D) Be open to uncertain and new situations and proactively motivate your group members – and actively promote outstanding group participation.

## 5. Takeaways

The transition to university studies, especially when coming from a different country, may seem like a daunting task. We hope this guide has helped you to understand JAMK better as a community, and to increase your awareness of the standards, practices and methods common to this academic environment. And hopefully you have learned more about Finnish culture and values that are prevalent across the campus and the city. And of course be sure also to read JAMK's Ethical Guidelines publication.

In view of everything discussed here, be sure to avail yourself of the wide range of support that is available to you at JAMK. And don't delay! If you find yourself experiencing difficulties in any aspects of your studies, help is nearby. The key of course is to seek information and support when you need it most, before problems reach a crisis point!

## 6. Support Resources

Your student tutors are here for you. If you have difficulties regarding the studies such as you are insecure about the expectations or the methods used in JAMK or if you face any other challenges, do not hesitate to contact your tutor outside of official meetings for guidance.

JAMKO (<https://www.jamko.fi/en/>) is also starting a mentoring program, where volunteer senior students are trained as mentors. If you find yourself challenged with your studies after the first year, a mentor is a very good way to get help. Are you struggling with motivation, tasks seems too difficult or you feel stuck, contacting a mentor might help you.

If you find yourself hindered by harassment, be it verbal, physical or discrimination such as unequal treatment with grades or courses, Student Union JAMKO is here to help. JAMKO has a harassment contact person, who deals with these issues with confidentiality. **If you come across a situation of harassment as a victim or bystander**, contact JAMKO's Harassment Contact Person via email: [hairinta@jamko.fi](mailto:hairinta@jamko.fi).

Additionally JAMK offers study related help too. Every degree program has a study counsellor you can talk to.

You can see JAMK-related help services in more detail within JAMKO's New Student Guide: <http://oppimateriaalit.jamk.fi/jamkoguide/navigating-jamk-uas/guidance-and-support/>

You can also find detailed information related to study guidance and support in the Study Guide. On the following page you can find descriptions of and the contact information for the study counselors of each School, student psychologist, school pastor, student services secretaries and also information about career tutors, student tutors and mentors:

<http://opinto-oppaat.jamk.fi/en/Study-Guide-Bachelors-Degrees/Studying-at-jamk/Study-Guidance-and-Support/>

Assistance and guidance with student exchange related matters is also available at JAMK both for incoming and outgoing exchange students. Contact information for the International Coordinators of each School and International Services at JAMK can be found on the website at <http://www.jamk.fi/en/JAMK-information/international/Contact-information-for-international-activities/> or alternatively in the Elmo Student Intra in the section [Internationalisation through Studies - Contact Information](#)

*We wish you the best of luck in your path to academic success!*

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