Accessibility criteria

1 VALUES, ATTITUDES AND CULTURE

This part focuses on the values and attitudes as well as the whole operational culture of a university. What is the attitude towards accessibility at the university?

Operational culture is a way of working, which is developed through the history and culture of the interactions of a community. All members of a community affect the culture, and it affects each member of a community, whether its impact is recognized or not. Two layers of operational culture can be identified: visible and hidden. The most important elements of an accessible culture are parity, non-discrimination, equality and inclusion. This part of the criteria also emphasises interaction and communality.

Equal and non-discriminating operational culture at universities is governed by e.g. Equality act, UN Human Rights Agreement and the Convention of Rights of Persons with Disabilities. The equality act requires universities to create equality plans to promote equality.

Read more from the following pages:

- Oikeusministeriön tietopankki yhdenvertaisuudesta ja syrjimättömyydestä
- United Nations, Human Rights
- Finnish National Agency for Education
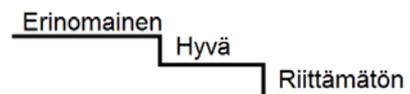- UN Convention of Rights of Persons with Disabilities

Evaluation of the statements

The criteria evaluates statements on three levels:
Excellent – Good – Insufficient. The requirements for
each level are based on the scale used by Kansallinen koulutuksen arviointikeskus (Karvi).
See their auditing manual 2018-2024.

The statements describe a **good level.**

Excellent level: Excellent level requires demonstration of long-term and successful development work. In addition, the development actions provide specific added value to the university, an interest group, or both. The university can demonstrate compelling examples of successful development actions.

Insufficient level: The university lacks either completely or for the most important aspects systematic, functional, and inclusive work methods, and there is no evidence of the impact of accessibility work for the development of the university's actions.

Criteria

1.1 The atmosphere at the university supports equality.

Good level

- Students and staff feel they are important members of the community.
- Students and staff feel safe and respected.
- All members of the university community feel equality is reality, and nobody is being discriminated against.
- The attitudes of students and staff towards diversity and students in need of aid are positive.

1.2 University supports and promotes communality and solidarity

Good level

- University practices promote communality.
- Grouping and working within a group are supported all through the studies.
- Teaching methods and learning environments support communality.
- Teaching and facilitation promote a positive learning atmosphere.

1.3 Individuality and diversity of students is recognized and students are cared about.

Good level

- University takes into account the diversity of students, such as their individual needs, strengths and situations in life.
- University takes into account each student's need for guidance and support.
- University is committed to promoting student well-being.

1.4 Students can have an impact on their own studies, as well as the teaching and operations at their university.

Good level

- Students are systematically included in the development of curricula.
- Different student groups (e.g. students in need of aid, in different situations in life, minorities) are systematically heard when planning education.
- Student organisations have the possibility to actively affect the design and implementation of studies.

1.5. The opinions of students and staff are heard and they are encouraged to be active.

Good level

- Students and staff are encouraged to give feedback, which has an impact.
- The atmosphere at the university encourages development and renewal of actions.

- Students and staff are encouraged to take on an active role in their operational environment.

1.6 Accessibility is discussed at the university.

Good level

- Students and staff can easily bring up matters regarding accessibility.
- Accessibility is discussed in all design, implementation, evaluation and development actions.
- People working at the university leadership and management are responsive to discussions about accessibility.
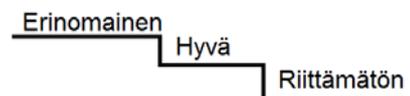
1.7 Written feedback

2 MANAGEMENT

University management is an integral part of accessibility. All levels of management must consider the matters of accessibility, as otherwise implementing accessibility may rely on a few individual teachers and students' own activeness. Accessibility is included in the strategies and visions of some of the universities, but resources are required in order to meet the goals.

The criteria looks at management first on an official level and then through their actions. The official level refers to public aims and statements, such as university's strategies and visions. Actions refer to everyday actions, where the strategy is implemented in practice. The criteria focuses on e.g. whether a university acts upon their public, accessibility promoting aims.

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Criteria

2.1 University management is officially committed to promoting accessible university education.

Good level

- University's strategy and vision includes accessibility.
- University has an accessibility plan.
- University has a person or a function in charge of promoting accessibility.

2.2 University management is committed to promote accessibility in practice.

Good level

- All levels of management value competences related to staff equality and accessibility.
- New staff members are familiarized with the principles and practices of equality and accessibility.
- All levels of management take into account the diversity and equality of students.
- There are resources allocated to implement accessibility (e.g. funding, tasks and responsibilities).
- Staff receive regular, relevant to their tasks, and up-to-date training to implement accessibility.
- Accessibility implementation is regularly evaluated for its quality and quantity. The members of the university management take the results into account when developing the university's actions.

2.3 University practices are transparent and open.

Good level

- University operates on its written strategies and values in practice.
- Students and staff know the methods and guidelines.
- Guidelines and rules are applied fairly.

2.4 Written feedback

3 PHYSICAL ENVIRONMENT

This part if the criteria focuses on the physical accessibility of the university. This refers to the university buildings, rooms and outdoor areas, which need to be accessible to all users. Physical accessibility starts from the yard of the building, for example the parking lot. From there, accessibility should continue on to all premises the university uses.
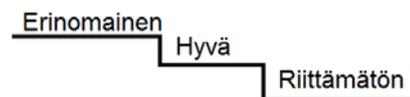
Physical accessibility is often used in colloquial parlance to mean that a person, who has difficulties in movement or who uses aids to get around, is able to move around in a building. This requires e.g. electric doors, ramps which are slanted enough, elevators and other similar solutions. However, physical accessibility also includes other aspects, as premises also need to be usable for people with difficulties in seeing or hearing, or who are burdened by sensory overload. This requires e.g. quiet spaces, adjustable lighting and induction loops for the lecture halls. Accessible signs are also a part of physical accessibility. An important part of accessible environment is naturally also healthy indoor air.

Several laws and regulations regulate universities' accessibility.

Read more:

- [Ministry of the Environment, regarding accessibility](#)
- [Government Decree on Accessibility of Buildings](#)
- [Living in Finland – Disabled persons](#)

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Criteria

3.1 Physical environment of the university (outdoor premises, buildings, rooms and furniture) is accessible.

Good level

- Parking lots and walkways outside are accessible.
- Getting around the university and all its entrances is accessible to all users.
- Working within the university premises is accessible to all users (regarding e.g. hearing, seeing, moving and participation).
- There are enough signs and they are considered from viewpoints of several different types of users regarding their placement, clarity, and legibility. Signposting is implemented in several different ways (e.g. virtual guidance).
- The building has, based on its size, enough accessible and gender-neutral toilets located in different parts of the building.
- Accessibility of temporary routes is communicated regularly through building site information, and all users of the premises have easy access to the information.

3.2 Information about the physical accessibility of the university is available on the university public website.

Good level

- Public website of the university contains information about the accessibility of various rooms, as well as the locations of accessible car parks, entrances and toilets as well as the induction loops.
- Information about the physical accessibility of the university is available on the website on all languages the university uses, and the information can also be accessed with assistive technologies.

3.3 University has practices to ensure the staff know about the accessibility and location of classrooms and other premises.

Good level

- Staff can find the descriptions of the accessibility of the university's premises and rooms from e.g. website or intranet.
- Room reservation system of the university has descriptions of the accessibility of various buildings and rooms (e.g. induction loops, physical access to the room).
- Staff regularily develops their accessibility competences through training aimed specifically at different staff groups.

3.4 Physical accessibility is taken into account in the rescue plan of the university.

Good level

- University resque plans take into account physical accessibility.
- Rescue drills, safety demonstrations and other such situations take into account physical accessibility.

3.5 Written feedback
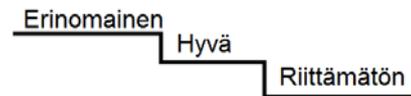
4 DIGITAL ACCESSIBILITY

Digitalisation is a visible part of accessibility. In these criteria, we refer to the university's digital platforms, on-line contents, and materials. Making a service digital does not automatically make it accessible, as accessibility needs to be considered individually in the design of digital systems and services.

Accessibility directive has become into effect in stages since beginning of 2019, and it obligates universities to make their digital services accessible. This includes university's on-line contents, learning platforms, and other services. All teachers can have an impact in the implementation of accessibility when, for example, creating digital learning materials.

Read more from the following pages:

- EU Accessibility Directive
- Web accessibility for developers
- Culture for All – checklists
- Assistive technologies (Wikipedia)
- 10 tips for Making Your Website Accessible
- WCAG 2.1 Guidelines
- Accessibility (GoogleDevelopers)

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Criteria

4.1 Digital learning environments and teaching materials are accessible.

Good level

- Digital learning environments and learning materials are clear, logical, and information is easy to find.
- Digital learning environments and materials can easily be used with various devices, aids, and connections.
- Digital learning environments are visually accessible (e.g. font, colour contrast, layout, alt texts for images.)
- The language used in digital learning environments and materials is clear and intelligible.
- The students have the opportunity to make and save choices regarding the appearance of the learning environment (e.g. personification, fonts, colours).

4.2 Teaching staff is familiarized with the accessibility demands and receive support in using them in practice.

Good level

- University has instructions for promoting digital accessibility, and staff has received training to implement it.
- University has a person or a function in charge of promoting accessibility, who is able to offer support for using and designing accessible learning environments and teaching materials.
- Teaching staff knows what types of aids may be used in education and learning environments (e.g. screen readers).
- Teaching staff has sufficient knowledge and support to create accessible documents and other files (e.g. subtitling videos).

4.3 Students are familiarized with and receive support in the use of digital learning environments and learning materials.

Good level

- University has a person or a function in charge of promoting accessibility, who the students may turn to to receive support in the use of digital learning environments and learning materials.
- Students may, if needed, get guidance in what types of aids may be used in digital learning environments (e.g. screen readers).

4.4 On-line contents of the university (e.g. intranet) are accessible and their usability is high.

Good level

- On-line contents are clear, logical, and information is easy to find.
- On-line contents are easy to use (e.g. search functions).
- On-line contents can easily be used with various devices, aids, and connections.
- On-line contents are visually accessible (e.g. font, colour contrasts, layout, alt texts for images).
- The language used in on-line contents is clear and intelligible.

4.5 Students and staff can give feedback on the accessibility of digital learning environments and on-line contents, and the feedback has an impact.

Good level

- Learning and on-line environments have built-in feedback functions.
- Feedback functions are easy to find and use.
- Feedback is used to develop the accessibility of digital services

4.6 Digital accessibility is developed purposefully.

Good level

- Upper management has approved a plan to promote digital accessibility, and realistic resources have been allocated to it.
- University has a person specifically named for developing digital accessibility.
- Accessibility is considered when purchasing on-line services, software, systems, applications, and devices.
- The progress of digital accessibility is evaluated by quality and quantity.
- The progress of digital accessibility is reported to the whole university community in various situations.

4.7 Written feedback

5 TEACHING AND LEARNING

This part of the criteria focuses on teaching and learning, which are in the centre of a university's functions. The section especially focuses on accessibility in designing and implementing education. This means taking the diversity of students into account in teaching and evaluation. Pedagogical choices made in education should support the diverse students' possibility to take part in education, to learn, and to demonstrate their competences. This may require, for example, combining different types of assignments and teaching styles. Accessibility must also be considered when choosing and creating learning materials.
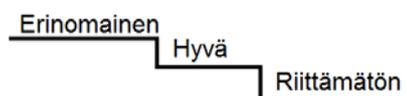
This part also includes the accessibility for training and exchange studies, as well as study planning.

Universities are obligated to accessibility by e.g. Equality act (Equality act 6 § (30.12.2014/1325). The equality act requires universities to create equality plans to promote equality.

Read more:

- [Accessibility and Learning Support in Finland](#)
- [Ministry of Education and Culture: Accessibility and Diversity of Culture](#)

Evaluation of the statements

Erinomainen
Hyvä
Riittämätön

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Criteria

5.1 Teaching staff has sufficient competences to design and implement accessible education.

Good level

- Teaching staff receives regularly up-to-date training to implement accessibility.
- University has a person or a function in charge of promoting accessibility, who is able to support the teaching staff in developing accessible teaching and guidance.

5.2 Diverse teaching methods are used in education

Good level

- Teaching methods use multiple channels and consider the students' needs.
- Students may use individual learning methods.
- Different ways of learning are taken into account in teaching.
- Teaching emphasises a way of guidance, which respects the student.
- Methods used in education promote communality.

5.3 Learning environments and materials are accessible and appropriate.

Learning environment refers to physical, mental, social, and digital environment.

Good level

- Diversity and individual needs of students are considered in the design and implementation of learning environments and materials.
- Teaching and guidance supports the students' participation and promotes a positive learning atmosphere.
- Teaching materials are easily accessible and given to the students on time.
- Teaching materials utilize multiple channels, and are clear both visually and language-wise (e.g. digital, paper, videos, on-line materials).
- Students get the support they need to use the materials in the learning environments.

5.4 Students get support for developing their study skills.

Good level

- The study skills of students are evaluated at the beginning of the studies.
- Students get information and the needed support to develop their study skills all through their studies (e.g. orientation courses, study skills courses, scheduling studies, thesis supervision).

5.5 Students' individual needs are taken into account through their individual study plans (HOPS).

Good level

- Staff members facilitating the writing of the individual study plans (HOPS) are able to take into account accessibility and students' individual needs (regarding e.g. family relationships, life situation, language skills, ability to function or learn).
- HOPS has, if needed, a plan for individual support and guidance.
- HOPS is developed throughout the studies (including career planning) in regular guidance discussions.
- HOPS is used in planning, implementing, and evaluating the studies.

5.6 Diverse evaluation methods suitable for different types of learners are used in evaluation.

Good level

- Evaluation uses diverse methods for displaying competences (e.g. exam, oral exams, written assignments, presentations).
- Individual arrangements may be used in evaluation (extra time, aids, quiet space, supplementary oral tasks).
- Evaluation criteria is clear and the students know the bases for evaluation.
- Students have the opportunity to get feedback of their learning and competences.

5.7 Accessibility is taken into account in practical training and collaboration with employees.

Good level

- Students' individual strengths and requirements for support are taken into account when designing and implementing training.
- University has instructions how to implement accessible training and working life collaboration, and both the training instructors and employers are aware of it.
- If needed, the student, training instructor and employer agree on how to implement accessible practical training.
- The students get the support they need before, during, and after training,
- Both the student and the employee give feedback on the success of the training.

5.8 Written feedback

6 SUPPORT AND GUIDANCE

This part of the criteria focuses on the support and guidance given to the students. It must be noted that students receive support and guidance from many different people at universities, not just from the teaching staff. Support and guidance may be given by e.g. student counsellors who have specialised in study guidance, teacher tutors, student psychologists, and special needs educators – or by various peer support groups. Support must be given in different situations, and this this why the people giving it vary as well: other people giving support and guidance include accessibility experts, and people in charge of student exchange and career planning.
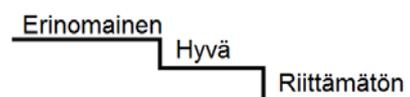
Many collaboration partners of the universities may also be included in the people giving support, in addition to the university staff. This includes student organisations, university priests, national student organisations, and professionals in health care, most significantly Finnish Student Health Service FSHS. The criteria also includes university library services as a part of giving support and guidance.

Support and guidance enable the progress in studies, and that may also promote a student's wellbeing. This is why support and guidance play a significant role.

Read more:

- [Audiobook services by Celianet](#)
- [Nyyti ry, Mental Wellbeing for Students – non-profit organisation](#)
- [SYL, National Union of University Students in Finland](#)
- [YTHS, Finnish Student Health Care Service](#)

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Criteria

6.1 Students receive the support and guidance they need at all stages of their studies.

Good level

- University has procedures for giving guidance during different stages of studies (beginning and during studies, writing the thesis, student exchange, practical training and at the end of the studies).
- Study guidance is implemented according to the procedure.
- The persons giving the guidance have appropriate expertise and sufficient resources.
- Students can easily find the contact information of the people offering guidance and support.

6.2 Students get support and information for planning their studies.

Good level

- University has a person or function (e.g. student counsellor, teacher tutor, guidance counsellor) who gives information and support for planning studies.
- University webpages have diverse and clear information to support planning studies.
- The students are reminded of the importance of planning at the beginning of their studies.
- Individual study plan HOPS is drawn up at the beginning of the studies, and it is updated throughout the studies.

6.3 Students may receive individual arrangements all throughout their studies.

Good level

- Students can easily find information about individual arrangements (e.g. extra time, aids, quiet space, adjusted loan periods, Celia services), as well as the contact information of the people in charge of them.
- Before beginning their studies, the students receive information about how to apply for individual arrangements for studies.
- Students get support for applying for individual arrangements all throughout their studies.
- There are diverse individual study arrangements available, and they are designed based on the students' needs.
- Students and staff give regular feedback about how the arrangements are implemented and their functionality.
- The students may make a complaint to the university, if the promised arrangements are not implemented.

6.4 Collaboration between teaching staff and support services promotes accessibility of the university.

Good level

- Teaching staff knows the support and guidance services, and are able to direct students to them.
- Teaching staff is able to utilize support services regarding accessibility in their work.
- Teaching staff and support services work together in order to take into account the individuality of students.

6.5 Accessibility is taken into account in international training and student exchange.

Good level

- University has accessible instructions and practices regrading international training and student exchange.
- Students get the required information, support and guidance before, during and after international training or exchange.
- Students give feedback about the success of the international training or exchange.

6.6 University offers enough services to support student well-being.

Good level

- University offers sufficient support for student well-being, maintaining the ability to study, and life management (e.g. sports services, student psychologists)
- Well-being support services have sufficient staff and special expertise (e.g. student psychologists, people in charge of accessibility, anti-harassment and anti-bullying work).
- Services are accessible to diverse user groups.
- The appropriateness, sufficiency and quality of services is monitored through feedback.

6.7 Universities students' unions and organisations support the promotion of accessibility.

Good level

- Student organisations and unions promote accessibility at universities, and students may receive support in representation of interests when it comes to matters regarding accessibility and equality.
- All students have the opportunity to take part in the actions of the student organisations and unions, and their activities take into account accessibility and diversity of students.
- Tutor work and training addresses the promotion of accessibility.

6.8 University library services take accessibility into account

Good level

- Library staff is familiar with accessibility, and promotes equal opportunities in their actions.
- University library services and environment takes into consideration students' individual needs (e.g. extensions to loan periods, quiet study spaces).
- Students have the possibility to get accessible guidance in using the information retrieval systems at the libraries and finding literature of their field.
- Accessibility is taken into account in the library purchases.
- University library collaborates with Celia library.
- Students have the possibility to use Celia audio book services.

6.9 Written feedback

7 COMMUNICATION

Functional communication, which reaches its target audience, is important to everybody work at universities. It is also important to the people who are interested in universities, such as people seeking for a place to study, or finding information about the university. In these criteria, communication refers both to the internal communication within a university as well as external communication to a wider audience.
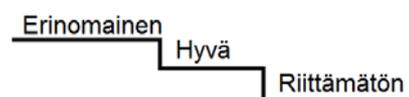
Communication contains reporting widely about the university events and current issues, but also communication in unexpected situations: lecture cancellations, temporary organisation during renovations and so on. Many different parties at universities carry out communication. Communications Services are often responsible for communicating outside the university, and they usually also act as the experts who guide other staff in communicating. Accessibility act governs the accessibility of public sector communication, such as the digital contents of universities. This includes, for example, the Internet pages of a university.

The diversity of the recipients of the message must be considered when thinking about the accessibility of communication. This means that the most important information must be accessible to people with visual or aural disabilities, the information can be read using various terminals, regardless of the speed of the recipient's internet connection. Using multiple channels in communication is worth the effort, as the messages reach their recipients better.

There is plenty of information about the accessibility of communication online. Read more:

- EU Accessibility Directive
- Web accessibility for developers
- Culture for All – checklists
- Assistive technologies (Wikipedia)
- 10 tips for Making Your Website Accessible
- WCAG 2.1 Guidelines
- Accessibility (GoogleDevelopers)

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Criteria

7.1 University communication promotes equality and diversity.

Good level

- University takes into account diversity and equal opportunities for all to receive communication.
- Communication uses multiple channels and is accessible through various aids.
- The most important contents of communication are available in all languages used at the university.
- When making purchases for communication, accessibility and the accessibility competence of the service provider are taken into account.

7.2 University staff communication is accessible.

Good level

- University staff communication reaches the desired target groups.
- University staff communication is intelligible and up-to-date.
- Communication is accessible from the viewpoints of the channel and content.
- University has procedures in place on how to communicate to different target groups in different situations (e.g. emergency communication, room changes, cancellations, reminders).
- Staff gets training and support regarding accessible communication.
- University event organisers have instructions on how to implement accessible communication and events.

7.3 Accessibility is considered in webpage design, published materials and use of social media.

Good level

- Staff has access to a publishing system, webpage template and instructions, which enable accessibility.
- The organisation is familiar with the laws and standards regarding on-line accessibility (accessibility act), and is committed to them.
- Materials, such as guides, announcements, printed materials, files, electronic publications, videos and podcasts, are accessible.

7.4. Strategic planning of communication and guidance takes accessibility into account.

Good level

- University has clear communications processes and practices, and they take accessibility into account.
- Communications guidelines are published in a clear format and are accessible to all.
- In addition to accessibility, the planning and guidance of communication takes also ethicality and copyrights into account.

7.5 Staff has sufficient resources to implement and develop accessible communication.

Good level

- Training is organised about accessible communications, and the university's internal communication channels bring the matter up regularly.
- Staff has sufficient competences and time resources in order to implement accessible communication.
- University has a person or a function in charge of promoting accessibility.

7.6 Accessibility of communication is systematically evaluated as a part of the quality control process of the university.

Good level

- Accessibility of communication is noted in the quality work of the university and related documents.
- Feedback about the accessibility of communication is collected regularly, it is being reacted to, and communications are developed accordingly.

7.7 Written feedback

8 STUDENT SELECTION

Student selection covers the whole process from applying for a place to study at a university to receiving a study place. Everything begins from planning where to apply. In order to support the choice, there needs to be information about the universities, their studies, degree programmes and entrance demands available. It is also important to find information what it is actually like to study in an individual field. This information is especially important to people with a disability, illness or for instance reading or writing difficulties, since they also need to evaluate whether or not studying in an interesting field is suitable for them in practice. The operational environment of a university is also significant, so it may be necessary for an applicant to visit the university premises beforehand. This means it is important for the applicants to have, in addition to the glamorous advertisement phrases, relevant, every-day information. This information must be accessible, so that anybody can easily find and understand it.
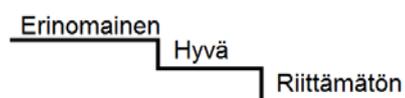
Accessibility must also be implemented into the applications process itself, including the entrance exam. In most cases, entrance exams already offer, for example, extra time or a computer to support writing. Finally, the results of the student selection must also be accessible.

Student selection at universities and universities of applied sciences must adhere to the equality act.

Read more

- [How to apply to a University of Applied Sciences](#) (studyinfo)
- [Ministry of Education and Culture: Developing student admissions](#)

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The criteria evaluates statements on three levels:
Excellent – Good – Insufficient. The requirements for each level are based on the scale used by Kansallinen koulutuksen arviointikeskus (Karvi). See their [auditing manual 2018-2024.](#) The statements describe a good level.

Excellent level: Excellent level requires demonstration of long-term and successful development work. In addition, the development actions provide specific added value to the university, an interest group, or both. The university can demonstrate compelling examples of successful development actions.

Insufficient level: The university lacks either completely or for the most important aspects systematic, functional, and inclusive work methods, and there is no evidence of the impact of accessibility work for the development of the university's actions.

Criteria

8.1. Student selection process of the university is accessible.

Good level

- Diversity of applicants is considered when planning the applications process.
- University ensures that the staff involved in the different stages of the application process has sufficient training and information about accessibility in the application process, such as individual arrangements.

8.2 Student selection information is accessible to the applicants.

Good level

- Information about the student selection at the university is in an accessible format.
- Information about fields of study and studying, premises, individual study arrangements as well as possible future professions is easily available already before applying to a university.
- Applicants receive the information they need about the criteria of student selection, application process and entrance exam in advance.

8.3 Applicants who require individual arrangements are taken into account when organising entrance exams.

Good level

- Applicants have received information beforehand about the individual arrangements in entrance exams, as well as how to apply for them and how they are organised.
- There is sufficient staff, equipment, and premises to ensure smooth implementation of individual arrangements during entrance exams.
- When an entrance exam contains digital materials, their accessibility is ensured on the WCAG 2.1. AA level (see https://www.w3.org/TR/WCAG21/)
- Applicants may issue complaints about the implementation of individual arrangements at entrance exams. The material regarding applying for individual arrangements also includes information about the possibility, and how to issue a complaint.

8.4 Student selection results are in an accessible format.

Good level

- Results are easily available.
- Applicants can get, if they so desire, individual feedback about the results of the entrance exam.

8.5 Written feedback