



UNIVERSITY OF HELSINKI

UniBuddy Programme Guide



Welcome to the UniBuddy Program at the University of Helsinki!

As a UniBuddy, you play a vital role in assisting new international staff members in their transition to the university and the vibrant city of Helsinki. Your support will greatly contribute to their successful integration and overall experience. To ensure a smooth and rewarding partnership, we've put together the following guidelines:

Diverse Backgrounds Welcome

You do not need to match your buddy's academic or professional background. The program aims to foster cultural exchange and provide insights from various perspectives. Embrace the opportunity to learn from one another's diverse experiences. As UniBuddy at UH is not a part of the onboarding to actual working, it is fully ok for you to not have answers to work-related questions.

Commitment and Communication

It is recommended to have a minimum of three meetings with your buddy over the course of a semester. Consistent communication helps build trust and familiarity, making the integration process more effective. Of course, you can meet as many times as both parties are willing to meet. You can also choose to discuss using some other language than English, but please bear in mind that the newcomer might also wish to practice her or his English with you.

Cultural Exchange and Unofficial Insights

While sharing the information about the university you have is often useful, also consider introducing your buddy to the unofficial side of living in Finland. Share your favorite local spots, customs, and cultural events that might not be covered in official orientations. Tell what you do, that is often more interesting and informative than reading about Finnish life in general.

Listening and Empathy

Your UniBuddy might have questions, concerns, or challenges related to their new environment. Be a patient listener, offer guidance, and provide reassurance whenever possible. Your empathy will be highly valued.

Respect for Boundaries

Everyone has their own comfort zones and personal boundaries. Respect your buddy's preferences regarding the frequency and nature of interactions. If either party feels uncomfortable, encourage an open discussion to find a suitable balance.

Language and Communication

Be mindful of language barriers. Speak clearly and avoid using slang or complex jargon. If language becomes a challenge, explore alternative communication methods such as using translation apps.

Cultural Sensitivity

Recognize that cultural differences exist and can influence perspectives and behaviors. Approach conversations with cultural sensitivity and, encourage open dialogue to bridge any gaps that may arise.

Sharing Experiences

Feel free to share your personal experiences of adapting to life in Finland or at the university. Sharing stories of your own challenges and triumphs can provide valuable insights and make your buddy feel more at ease.

Encourage Independence

While your guidance is important, empower your buddy to explore and discover things on their own. Help, but also encourage them to seek out resources and build their own network within the university community.

Feedback and Support

We value your commitment to the UniBuddy Program. If you encounter any issues or have suggestions for improvement, don't hesitate to reach out to the program coordinators at unibuddy@helsinki.fi. Your feedback is invaluable in enhancing the program for future participants.

Thank you for your dedication to fostering an inclusive and welcoming environment at the University of Helsinki. Your role as a UNiBuddy is instrumental in making a positive impact on the international staff members' experience. Enjoy the journey of cultural exchange and friendship-building!