

Master's thesis

Leadership and Service Design

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DESIGNING A PROCESS FOR INTERNATIONAL DEGREE STUDENTS STARTING STUDIES IN FINLAND

– Case study: International degree students in the
degree programme in Music Pedagogy at Turku
UAS Arts Academy



MASTER'S THESIS | ABSTRACT

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DESIGNING A PROCESS FOR INTERNATIONAL DEGREE STUDENTS STARTING STUDIES IN FINLAND

- Case study: International degree students in the Degree Programme in Music Pedagogy at Turku UAS Arts Academy

The present Master's thesis studies the international degree students' experience in the Finnish higher education, as well as plans and efforts Finland has in exporting education and how that affects the Finnish higher education institutions. Using the Turku University of Applied Sciences Music Pedagogy Degree Programme as a case study, the thesis also studies the international degree students' application process and their start of the studies, and based on the study aims to develop and design a process that helps the students to navigate through the process and integrate in to the local communities.

The methods and tools used in this study include desk research, student and expert interviews, survey, online research, personas, customer journey map, benchmarking, co-design workshop and service blueprint. The study uses the double-diamond model as the process chart. The service concept designed based on the research is presented through a service blueprint.

The research conclusions highlight the importance of first impressions. The impressions applicants get when they first look for information about the degree programme and the application instructions can be difficult to change. The conclusions also show that it is not only important that the information is available, but also highlights the need for higher accessibility to it.

The research concludes that the international degree students' application process and start of studies can be developed through the accessibility of the information, providing interesting information and the clarity of the information. To encourage international degree students to stay and be employed in Finland, attention needs to be paid to the accessibility of the different services provided by the HEIs and to informing the international degree students of the existing services. International degree students should become a part of the local community during the studies.

KEYWORDS:

International degree students, exporting education, service design, higher education.

Jussi-Pekka Piiparinen

KANSAINVÄLISTEN TUTKINTO-OPISKELIJOIDEN HAKUPROSESSIN JA OPINTOJEN ALOITUKSEN KEHITTÄMINEN

- Kansainväliset tutkinto-opiskelijat Turun ammattikorkeakoulun Taideakatemia Musiikin pedagogiikan tutkinto-ohjelmassa

Tämä opinnäytetyö tutkii kansainvälisten tutkinto-opiskelijoiden kokemuksia ja vaikutuksia suomalaisissa korkeakouluissa ja Suomen suunnitelmia koulutusviennin saralla, sekä sen mahdollisia vaikutuksia korkeakoulujen osalta. Tämä opinnäytetyö käyttää Turun ammattikorkeakoulun musiikin pedagogiikan koulutusta esimerkkitapauksena ja selvittää koulutusohjelman kansainvälisten tutkinto-opiskelijoiden hakemusprosessia ja opintojen alkuvaiheita. Tutkimuksen pohjalta tämä opinnäytetyö pyrkii kehittämään hakemusprosessia ja helpottamaan opiskelijoiden sopeutumista paikallisiin yhteisöihin opintojen alkuvaiheessa.

Tässä opinnäytetyössä käytetyt menetelmät ja palvelumuotoilun menetelmät sisältävät työpöytä tutkimuksen, opiskelijahaastatteluja, kyselyn, online-tutkimuksen, käyttäjäpersoonia, customer journey mapeja, benchmarkkausta, co-design työpajan, service blueprintin ja asiantuntijahaastatteluja. Opinnäytetyö käyttää double-diamondia prosessin etenemismallina. Palvelukonsepti esitetään service blueprintin muodossa.

Tutkimuksen johtopäätökset korostavat ensivaikutelman tärkeyttä. Vaikutelma, joka hakijalle jää, kun hän ensimmäistä kertaa tutustuu koulutuksen esittelyyn ja hakuohjeisiin, voi olla vaikea muuttaa. Johtopäätökset tuovat myös esiin sen, että informaation olemassaolo yksinään ei vielä riitä, vaan tärkeää on huomioida informaation saavutettavuus.

Tutkimuksen johtopäätöksiä kansainvälisen tutkinto-opiskelijan hakuprosessia ja opintojen aloitusta voidaan kehittää informaation saatavuuden, mielenkiintoisuuden ja selkeyden avulla. Kansainvälisen tutkinto-opiskelijan jäämistä ja työllistymistä Suomeen pystytään auttamaan kiinnittämällä huomiota korkeakoulujen eri palvelujen saavutettavuuteen ja niistä tiedottamiseen kansainvälisille tutkinto-opiskelijoille. Kansainväliset tutkinto-opiskelijat tulee saada osaksi paikallista yhteisöä opintojen aikana.

ASIASANAT:

Kansainväliset tutkinto-opiskelijat, koulutusvienti, palvelumuotoilu, korkeakoulutus

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS (OR) SYMBOLS

Abbreviation	Explanation of abbreviation (Source)
Arene	The Rectors' Conference of Finnish Universities of Applied Sciences
EEA	European economic area
EDUFI	Finnish National Agency for Education
EU	European Union
HEI	Higher education institution
Minedu	Ministry of Education
SIMHE	Supporting immigrants in higher education
UAS	University of Applied Sciences

1 INTRODUCTION

English taught higher education degree programmes are becoming more and more common internationally, especially in the Master's level, but also within the bachelor's level degrees, in Finland. With wider scope of degree programmes to choose from, higher education institutions are also welcoming more international degree students. Although international degree students are not a new thing within higher education, the process of welcoming the applicants and accepted students is still developing.

The theoretical part of this thesis looks into the international aspects of Finnish higher education through exporting education and international degree students from the national, local and institutional perspective. What is the effect of having international degree students and what happens with the students after they complete the degree. The service design part of the thesis looks into the journey of the student from application to graduation and how that journey could be developed to help the student with the studies as well as with integration to the local society and ultimately staying in Finland and finding employment.

For the service design part the thesis focuses on the Turku University of Applied Sciences (Turku UAS) degree programme in Music Pedagogy as a case study. The author of this thesis works in the Turku UAS Arts Academy as the international relations coordinator. The job description includes the student mobility and student exchanges, but does not include issues related to international degree students, except if an international degree student is applying for exchange studies.

1.1 Background for the commission

The degree programme in Music Pedagogy at Turku UAS has welcomed international degree students since the beginning of the programme in 1996. Even as the degree programme welcomes international students, the degree is not taught in English. A large part of the music programme's curriculum comes from individual teaching with the instrument teacher, therefore making it possible for the student to get the instructions in English, or in another common language, for example Russian, the student has with the teacher. The course implementations sometimes also have small groups taught in English or the course implementation is adapted for the international students.

As the degree programme adapts, depending on how many international students start each year and which instruments the students play, there is no clear and repeated process for the students or the programme. This thesis focuses on developing that process, making it simpler for the students to complete the application, find the necessary information regarding starting life in Finland and Turku, and for the degree programme personnel to have the required information on hand, when it is needed. This thesis also focuses on creating a recruitment handbook for the degree programme personnel to use, to gain prospective applicants.

1.2 Goals, research problem and frame of reference of the thesis

Aim of this thesis is to provide simple answers and necessary information in one complete information package for international degree students applying for the degree programme in Music Pedagogy at Turku UAS Arts Academy. There are three research questions in this thesis. First question examines how the international degree students' application process can be developed. The second research question looks how to help the international degree students in the start of their studies. And the third research question considers how the international degree students' choice of staying in Finland after the degree can be affected. The service concept will also aim to provide the information the international degree students may need after acceptance, but before arrival to Finland, the information when they arrive in Finland and start the studies and useful information during studies. The thesis also provides the staff of degree programme in Music Pedagogy information tool, a repeatable application process, the necessary information for different phases of the process and for the start of studies. A study by Finnish National for Education published in 2018 states that the satisfaction with the services, advice and information offered in the beginning of the studies, serving as the first impression, have a pivotal role in the students' overall experience during the studies (EDUFI 2018a, p. 3).

For the research in this thesis (Figure 1), the focus of the theoretical part is on the international degree students in Finland, with some reference to international degree students in other countries as well, and in the exportation of Finnish education. The research is completed as a desk research (Figure 1 and 2) and takes a look in to Finland's national plan on exporting education and how that ties into the international degree programmes within the higher education. The desk research also looks into the

effect international degree students have in different levels of the society. The service design part of the thesis is used to develop the application process from the international applicants' perspective and plan the start of the studies in so that the international degree students have a comfortable and accommodating start to their life in a new and foreign location.

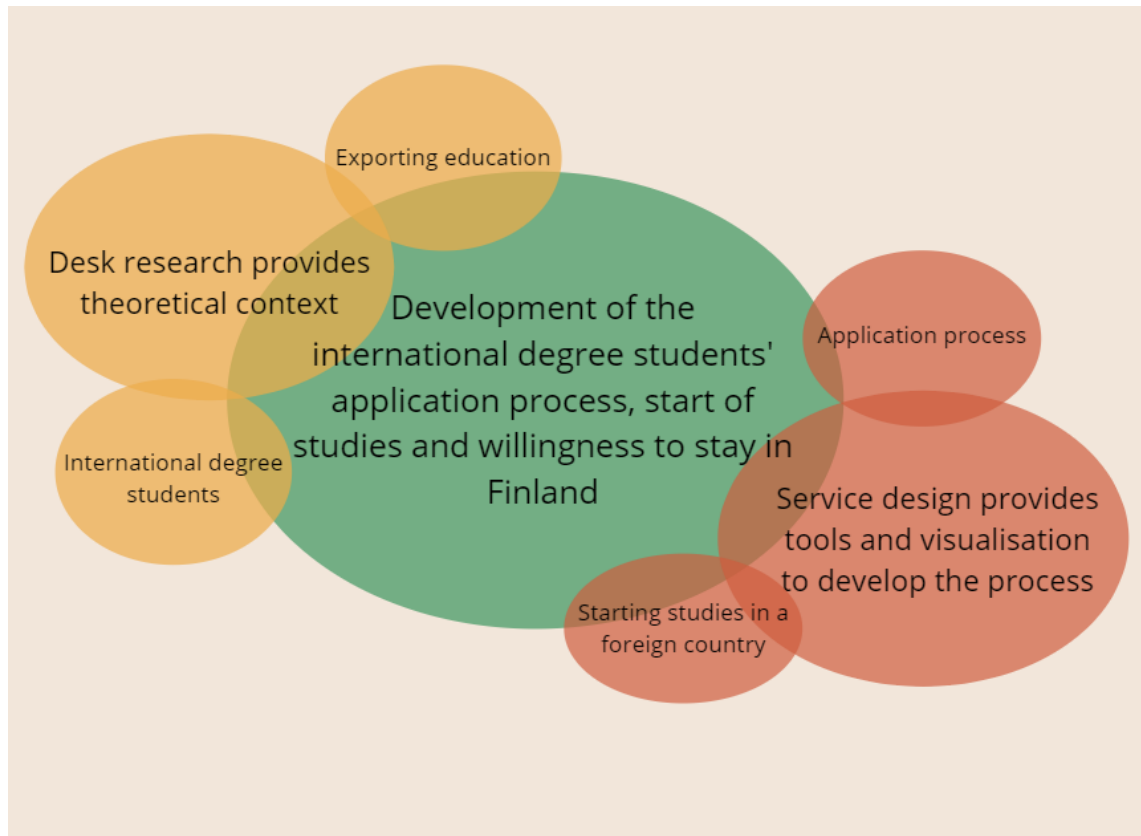


Figure 1. Frame of reference.

1.3 Research methods, service design tools and the process chart

The thesis process follows the double diamond model (Figure 2). Double Diamond is a common process form used within design projects, but also well-known amongst non-designers as a tool to guide the process of the project. Double Diamond is divided in four phases: discover, define develop and deliver. (Design Council 2021.)

A large part of the case study research used for the service design section of this thesis comes from interviews with the international degree students in the degree programme in Music Pedagogy, and that information from the interviews will then be used to complete the service design tools: personas, customer journey maps and a service

blueprint (Figure 2). The student interviews are combined with expert interviews with the teachers in the degree programme in Music Pedagogy.

Co-design workshop provides deeper information for the international students' point of view of their application journey and of the beginning of their studies (Figure 2). Students are able to reflect on their journey as they can compare their experience with other international degree students and help generate ideas for the service design part of the thesis. Benchmarking was used to provide comparisons and possible development ideas from other similar services. First benchmarking uses the online guidance provided by Haaga-Helia university of applied sciences for the new applicants as an example of international degree programmes and application information promoted on a university of applied sciences' webpage. The second part of benchmarking is completed with a look into the exchange students' application journey in Turku UAS and provides information on how a similar service within the same organisation is promoted, informed and completed on the webpage (Figure 2). Benchmarking the exchange student process is completed through the thesis author's previous knowledge of and expertise on the process gained through work experience. Benchmarking will also include a look into another higher education institution's international bachelor's degree programme. This benchmarking is completed through online research (Figure 2).

Service design tools used in this thesis include personas, customer journey maps and a service blueprint (Figure 2). One of the biggest determining factors for international degree students' journey is whether the student is a European Union citizen or not. Therefore the thesis has personas representing both, EU students and non-EU students. As with the personas, there are also separate customer journey maps representing EU-students journey and non-EU-students. Both maps are designed based on the student interviews and personas representing each journey.

Following the personas and customer journey maps, this builds a service concept using a service blueprint as the background structure. The backstage actions of the service blueprints are designed based on the student and expert interviews, the co-design workshop and benchmarking (Figure 2). The service blueprint provides a tool for the staff on how to help the international degree students applying and arriving to Finland and what are the main points of emphasis.

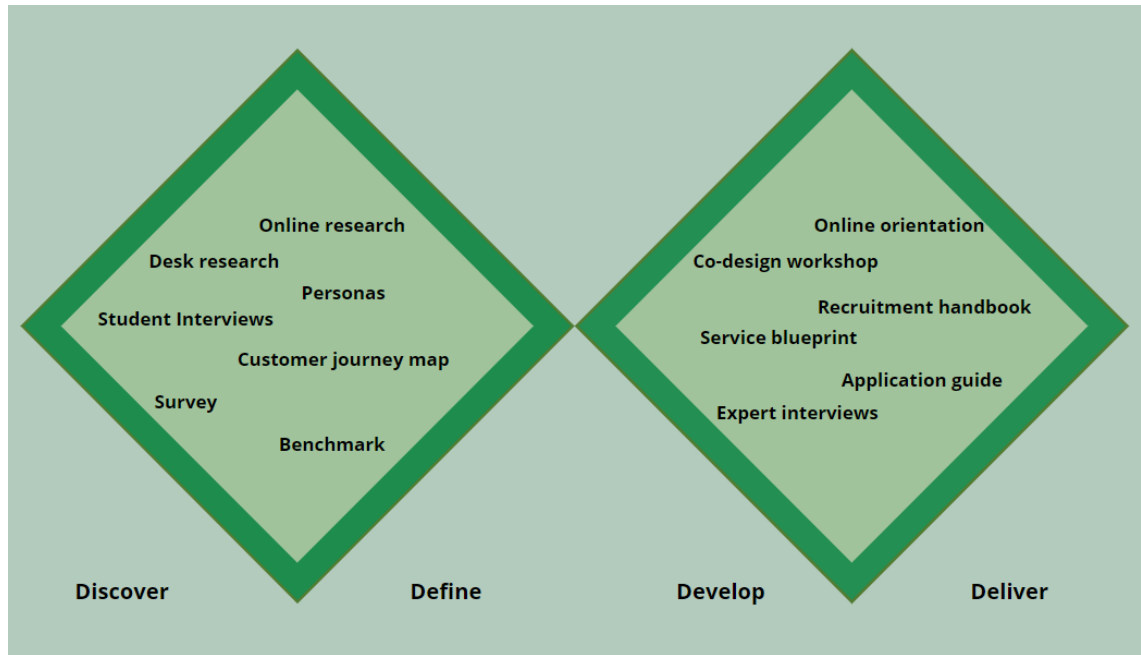


Figure 2. Process chart in a Double Diamond form.

2 EXPORTING EDUCATION IN FINLAND

This thesis studies Finland's national plan on exporting education. Finland's main focus with exporting education is on the higher education, as that is the most impactful within this thesis' topic, international degree students. The research completed in chapters 2 and 3 is through desk research. Desk research is also known as secondary research. Instead of collecting data, desk research is a look into existing research data to provide a broad understanding of a topic (Travis, 2020). The desk research portion of this thesis consists of two separate sections. Both sections are integral parts of the Finnish national plan for internationalization and immigration policy in higher education. The desk research will continue on the third chapter of the thesis with a look into the international degree students, but this chapter is a look in to exporting education. What it means, what is the national plan with it and why it has become such a focal point in the dialogue regarding education in Finland. During the Finnish Governments programme in 2015 to 2019 there was a focus implemented into expediting the possibilities of education exports in all of the education levels (MINEDU 2019).

The definition of Finnish education exporting has been settled to any type of business that is based on education, education system or a transportation of the know-how based on that education, and is paid for by a foreign entity. These activities are built on, and benefit of, the good reputation the Finnish education system has internationally. This interest can be directed in to business through educational export activities when it is about demand for international commercial competence in education or services in the education sector. Whereas with international degree students come to Finland and benefit of the education system as individuals, in exporting the education the target is often a bigger group of students or teaching personnel. These actors get the benefit of learning the education system or the know-how of it and can then use it in teaching again. (EDUFI 2020a, p. 6.)

Finnish National Agency for Education (EDUFI) funds a project called VETFI to coordinate an experiment on exporting education. The project started in 2017 and has been extended until the end of 2021 (Ammatillinen koulutusvienti 2021). The project is joint-coordinated by two consortiums of educational municipalities, Omnia from Espoo and Gradia from Jyväskylä. The aim of the VETFI project is to recognize the necessary changes to be made within the degree programmes and in the national degree system

with separate international degrees. The project also evaluates the possible consequences of this changes and how they can affect the students' post-graduate competence and eligibility in Finland. In 2020 and 2021 the project's focus areas include piloting a committee for education and degree exportation and compiling a future plan on the supervision of the quality and continuity after the project finishes in 2021. VETFI will also work in cooperation with EDUFI and their global networks in producing and designing communication materials for future use. (VETFI 2021.) It is reasonable to think the communication materials produced and designed could be useful for the Finnish HEI's with international degree programmes as well.

At its best, exporting education produces innovation for Finnish education as well. Finnish education exportation provides products and services for all levels and sectors of education. Through companies and investments it also helps to bring the business world and education institutions closer together. (EDUFI 2020a, p. 6.) The name recognition, branding and marketing of the Finnish education system and quality will also benefit the Finnish HEI's with international degree programmes, as it will attract better applicants.

Exporting education has been gaining momentum to become a significant new business area for growth in Finland. Since 2014, when exporting education largely first took off as a national business, the turnover within the business had grown from 260 Million euros to 359 Million euros by the end of 2018. A year later the turnover of the business was reportedly at 385 Million euros. (EDUFI 2020a, p. 9.)

2.1 National plan for exporting Finnish education

The Finnish National Agency for Education (EDUFI) has produced a roadmap for exporting education (Figure 3). The roadmap provides a national plan from 2020 to 2023 in how to expedite the exportation as well as what are the products that should be focused on. (EDUFI 2020a, p. 9.)

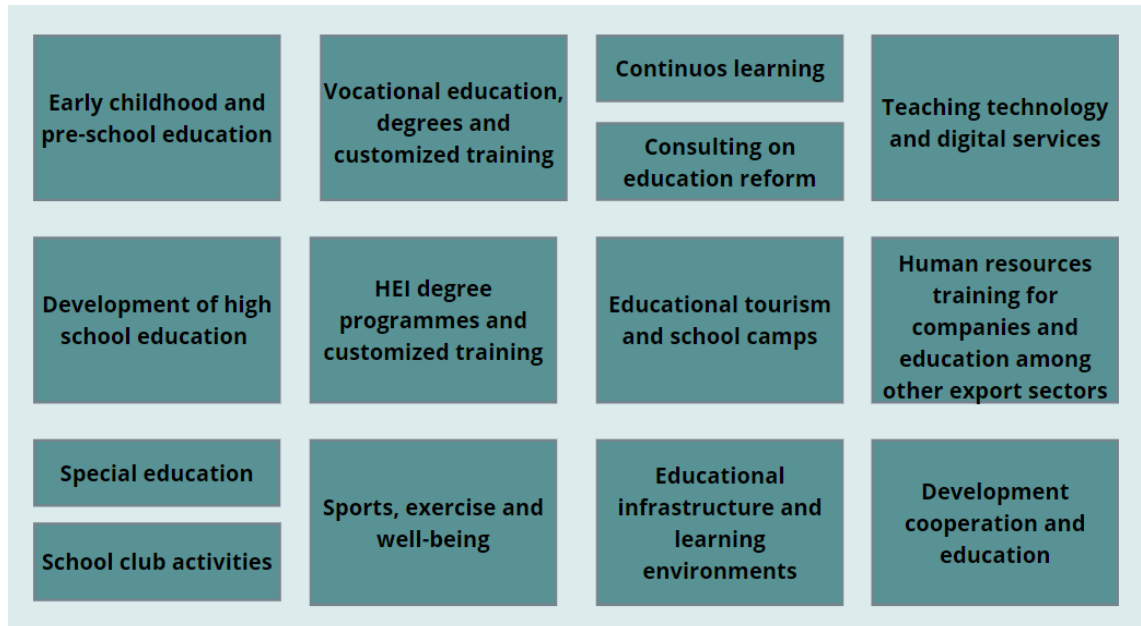


Figure 3. The service sectors within exporting education (Figure based on a figure by EDUFI 2020a, p. 9).

The services that have gained the most demand internationally are related to educating and training rectors, teachers and other experts in the educational sector, as well as services, teaching materials and learning environments related to developing education. Other services that have been in demand include digital innovations and consulting on curricula work and education evaluations. (EDUFI 2020a, p. 9.)

The development of expertise and competence within the companies, higher education institutions and other education institution in the exporting education business has been a pivotal proponent in expediting exporting education. This has factored in by producing new services, that are responding to the international demand. To acquire new experts and to promote know-how in exporting education, *Education Finland* has started a new specialization training just for exporting education. (EDUFI 2020a, p. 9-10.)

While the base for exporting education has been established, EDUFI's roadmap states that it is still essential to support the cooperation of the private and public sectors. It is also important to recognize and eliminate any possible obstacles for exporting to provide adaptable environment for the operation. (EDUFI 2020a, p. 10.)

2.2 The thematical focus areas of exporting education and Education Finland

Education Finland is a programme managed by the Finnish National Agency for Education to promote education export. *Education Finland* started originally as “Future learning Finland” in 2015, but soon changed the name to the current *Education Finland*. It then became part of the *Team Finland* network and is considered as one of the key export programs under the Finnish government. (Education Finland 2021.)

Education Finland exports the know-how and learning methods of Finnish education system around the world. As well as being the exporter, *Education Finland*'s mission is to also support those exporting Finnish education, and these exporters are members of *Education Finland*. The programme works as a network, as they promote cooperation, match customers and service providers. (Education Finland 2021.)

Education Finland is also the responsible operator in facilitating the cooperation between the thematical focus areas of exporting education. For the 2020-2023 roadmap there are 5 focus areas that have been chosen to promote the possibilities of Finnish education export (Table 1). First of the focus areas is the teaching technology. This focus area also includes the digital services and development of the learning environments. These areas have traditionally been considered strengths of Finnish education and situations such as the pandemic caused by the COVID-19 only expose the global need for these systems and technologies, to provide adaptability for teaching methods. Second of the focus groups is the pedagogical development of the early childhood education. This has been globally one of the better known aspects of the Finnish education system, thus creating a natural demand for the know-how. Third focus area is the development of the pedagogy and operating models in basic education. This focus area also notes the need to consult those international education institutions using Finnish operating models. Fourth focus area is about the development of vocational education. This has become a national focus in many countries, providing demand for the service. And in the last focus area the roadmap declares that the universities and universities of applied sciences invest in exporting education within the frames of their strengths and strategies. (EDUFI 2020a, p. 12-13.)

Thematical focus areas	The benefits of the focus area
1. Teaching technology	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Digital services and development of the learning environments. - Traditionally considered as strengths of Finnish education - COVID-19 pandemic exposed the global need for developing digital systems and technologies and teaching methods
2. Pedagogical development of the early childhood education	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Supporting child's natural development - A recognized strength of the Finnish education system - Already existing international demand
3. Development of pedagogy and operating models in basic education	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Continuous education of teachers and the school management board members - Affirmation of the inclusivity - Consulting international schools with Finnish education operating principles
4. Development of vocational education	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Existing demand internationally - Development of adaptable models from the working life cooperation
5. HEI investment in exporting education	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Each institution recognizing their strengths and competitive advantages

Table 1. The thematical focus areas of exporting education (EDUFI 2020a, p. 12).

2.3 Future plans and possible challenges

In 2020 there were approximately 300 companies or education institutions in Finland practicing exporting education (EDUFI 2020a, p. 9). The vision for exporting education is for it to become a prominent growth area for Finland. EDUFI's roadmap has set the target for the value of exporting education to be 1 Billion euros for Finnish economy by 2030. (EDUFI 2020a, p. 10.)

The EDUFI roadmap lays out a plan on how to develop exporting education throughout the coming years and has established four lines of activity for the development. The first line of action the roadmap introduces is to reinforce growth and investments as well as promoting scalable service models. According to EDUFI, the current operators in exporting education can be defined as starters, internationally established, internationalizing and to those integrating other to the growth. The first line of action focuses mostly on the ones committed to growth and those who have already established the service for exporting within the thematical focus area. (EDUFI 2020a, p. 14-15.)

The EDUFI roadmap describes the second line of action as creating channels to cooperation and joint consortia. There are multiple different channels and operators in providing public sector's support for the actors in exporting education. The *Team Finland* -network functions as a way of providing support and services for private sector and the international activities. These services vary from financial consulting to services promoting and developing exporting. This line of action streamlines the cooperation and accessibility between different operators in different points of exporting. (EDUFI 2020a, p. 16.)

The third line of action in the EDUFI roadmap is defined as reinforcing the Finnish competence and know-how. This line of action exploits the demand created by the global brand that Finland has as the model country in learning and education. EDUFI also calls for active cooperation between the business sector and education institutions, to ensure the success, maintaining the reputation and in finding new solutions and innovations. (EDUFI 2020a, p. 17.)

The EDUFI roadmap's fourth line of action calls for the creation of unobstructed environment to operate for demand-driven education exporting and internationalization. This line of action makes sure that the legislation does not needlessly limit the possibilities and that the support and guidance offered to different operators matches

and works for the same purpose. The operating environment has to be competitive for the Finnish education exporting to be successful. (EDUFI 2020a, p. 18)

In 2020 VETFI project conducted a review on the influence of the exported vocational degrees and found out that the influences are already notable in the degree exportation stakeholders and target groups, as well as within the exporters, even though the numbers at this point are still low. The review recognized the exporting of Finnish vocational degrees to have long-term effects on improvement of livelihood and social status, diversification of career paths, clearer career plans and contribution of post-graduate studies. (VETFI 2020.)

According to EDUFI, a significant part of the companies that have recently started with exporting education are still finding the balance between product and service development and sustainable viability in the business. Many of the projects within exporting education are functioning through financing from European Social Fund (ESF) or European Regional Development Fund (ERDF). EDUFI stresses the importance of “smart specialization” to create competitive edge in the area or activity. (EDUFI 2020a, p. 10.)

Other challenges EDUFI points out, are the different chains and functions within decision-making in the public and education sectors in different countries. These can be highly time and resource consuming projects just to get them started, and often require established references and cooperation networks. According to EDUFI, the preparation for this type of investments so far has been lacking. (EDUFI 2020a, p. 10.)

3 INTERNATIONAL DEGREE STUDENTS IN FINNISH HIGHER EDUCATION INSTITUTIONS

The third chapter of this thesis continues the desk research with a look into the statistics and data on international degree students in Finland. In a collection of articles, published by Metropolia University of Applied Sciences in 2020, it was stated that during the recent years Finland has woken up to the realization that the immigration politics must be integrated with the policies of innovation, education, economics and employment. Immigration is required to keep the national maintenance ratio in a tolerable level and the supply of labor force high. Additional benefit of the immigration of students in higher education or higher education degrees is the raised level of internationality and innovation within Finnish companies. (Metropolia 2020, p. 187.)

This thesis looks into international degree students from the national, local and higher education institutions perspective, as well as the perspective of the international degree students. Additionally this chapter evaluates how the implementation of tuition fee affects the future of international degree students, what happens after the students graduate and how actors like *Talent Boost* and SIMHE network function in this field.

3.1 International degree students from national perspective

The amount of international degree students has multiplied during the first 20 years of the 21st century and according to the Finnish National Agency for Education (EDUFI), there were approximately 21 000 international degree students in Finland in 2018 (Arene 2020 p. 4; EDUFI 2018b). Although, since 2014 the number of international degree students has remained mostly stable, and even declined from 2017 to 2019 (Arene 2020, p. 4).

Statistically there are clear roles for universities and universities of applied sciences. universities mostly provide Master's degrees for international degree students, while universities of applied sciences provide Bachelor's degrees. There is some overlap still, as Universities also have Bachelor's students and universities of applied sciences have Master's degree students, but the numbers are marginal. (Arene 2020, p. 4.)

3.1.1 Economical effect of the international degree students

A study published by German Academic Exchange Service (DAAD) defines the costs and benefits of international degree students during and after studies. During studies the main costs are the resources used for recruitment and the teaching of the students (DAAD 2013, p. 4). The benefits during the studies are the revenues from possible tuition fees, from the students who have to pay tuition fees, quality effects within the education and research and tax revenues from the students as consumers and possible income made during the studies (DAAD 2013, p. 9). The costs after the studies are mainly from the basic social benefits and using of public services (DAAD 2013, p. 10). The benefits are again the tax revenues and consumerism, but in a significantly larger scale than that of the during studies (DAAD 2013, p. 9).

According to a calculation by VATT Institute for Economic Research (VATT) the socioeconomical influence of immigration to the public economy in Finland is highly dependent on two factors: the age of the immigrant arriving to Finland and the level of success in employment and the labor market of the immigrant and the potential offspring. Immigrants moving to Finland in the beginning of their careers from the age group of 20-40 years might produce a net benefit of 200 000 euros, when they and their offspring manage in the labor market in a similar level as the people of the same age group born in Finland. Studies in Sweden and USA have resulted in similar results. Immigration of young adults in their best working age produces a definite net benefit for the economy. Although these research results are not specifically accounting for international students, it is notable that the recruitment of international degree students for higher education is economically beneficial, as they belong in the most productive group of young and talented adults. To gain the economic benefit, it is crucial that the international degree students stay in the country after the graduation and are employed to the level of their education. (EDUFI 2014, p. 2.)

According to a study carried out by the Danish Ministry of Science in 2013, the increase of international degree students is socioeconomically beneficial even when the degree is paid by the government. The study was made with Master's degrees. In Denmark EU and EEA students can study without paying a tuition fee, just like in Finland. Accrued from taxes, the long term benefit to the Danish economy of thousand international degree students was counted to be between 50 million and 100 million euros. Part of the reason for the high socioeconomical benefit is the higher rate of EU/EEA students staying and

finding employment in the country than that of non-EU/EEA students. (Danish Ministry of Science 2013, p. 2-4.)

According to a study by DAAD, the cost of investment to a four year degree in higher education of an international degree student would be paid back in five years, when 30 % of the students stay in the country and find employment (DAAD 2013, p. 11). In comparison, the cost of investment to be paid back in Switzerland with the same factors takes 17 years, due to the difference in cost of place of study and level of taxation. The study also notes that international students cause chain effects of intangible benefits and therefore do not show in economic terms. Although most of the benefit comes in long-term, as tax revenue builds up slowly, the study notes that the host country benefits in the short term also in effects to the employment and value creation of consumer spending. Additionally, the study notes that international students cause chain effects of intangible benefits, which will not show in economic terms. The intangible benefits mentioned in the study are cross-border knowledge transfer, multicultural competences across the student body, the recruitment of skilled international professionals and forming of networks in the international level. (DAAD 2013, p. 13-14.)

3.1.2 Recruitment of immigrants in the labor market

A study coordinated by Centre for Economic Development, Transport and the Environment and carried out by Taloustutkimus Ltd. interviewed Finnish entrepreneurs to find out how the recruitment and employment in the labor market relates to immigrants seeking jobs and what factors influence the employers decisions. (Centre for Economic Development, Transport and the Environment 2020, p. 4.)

The research states language skills to be the biggest contributing factor for hiring or not hiring immigrants. The research found that only 23 % of the companies were ready to hire an immigrant who does not speak Finnish fluently. The research did not find significant regional differences, but the companies in the industrial line of work were the most likely to hire an applicant who does not speak fluent Finnish, at 35 % of the responders. Only approximately a quarter of the responders stated, that they would recruit from abroad, and those who would not, stated the reason for not to recruit from abroad, to be for the fact that the applicants likely would not speak fluent Finnish. Different working fields have different expectations and in some cases even regulations for language skills. For example, in social services and health care the fluent Finnish

language skill is regulated by law. But even in the fields where such regulations do not exist, the requirement is still set in the same level. (Centre for Economic Development, Transport and the Environment 2020, p. 5.)

In addition to the language skills, the research also found that the assumed cultural differences have an effect on the employer decision-making. A third of the companies participating in the research assume that immigrants would have problems in adjusting to Finnish working culture, even when they have no prior experience of immigrants in the workplace. Additionally, around 20 % expect that cultural differences are an obstacle in the work performance. 20 % of the respondents also answered that they consider a longer time of living in Finland to have a positive effect in the immigrants ability to adapt to the workplace. This statement is also supported by the employment statistics. (Centre for Economic Development, Transport and the Environment 2020, p. 6-7.)

In the same survey, 50 % of the respondents declared that the country the immigrant is coming from, has an effect on the employers decision for hiring and expectation how the applicant would succeed in the workplace. Applicants from EU, Nordic countries or Estonia have a better chance for employment than other immigrants, according to the responses to the survey, and the result matches with the employment statistics. The effect of the assumption of differences of the immigrant's culture can be seen especially in the hiring decisions of non-EU applicants. Middle-East and Africa are seen more foreign than EU, so the employers have been more reluctant to hire immigrants from these parts. The ethnicity-based discrimination in recruiting is often rationalized with other factors, like language skills or cultural differences. (Centre for Economic Development, Transport and the Environment 2020, p. 6-7.)

The study also found that that employers with previous experience of immigrants are more likely to hire immigrants again. Majority of the respondents with previous experience of immigrants in the workplace agreed with the statement that immigrants are as skilled employees as the Finnish employees. Only 43 % of the respondents from companies with no previous experience of employing immigrants agreed with the statement. Companies with prior experience of employing immigrants are also more likely to recruit from abroad than companies with no prior experience of employing immigrants, 30 % and 19 % respectively. Also the issue with language skill and requirement level is lower in the companies with prior experience of employing immigrants. 29 % of the respondents with prior experience were willing to hire an immigrant with no fluent Finnish level, compared to 11 % of the respondents with no prior

experience, respectively. (Centre for Economic Development, Transport and the Environment 2020, p. 9.)

3.1.3 Employment of international degree students

EDUFI completed a study of how international degree students are positioned within a year from graduating and within three years from graduating. The study was carried out in 2017 with international degree students who graduated in 2014 and 2016 being the groups monitored for the study. The study also separates EU and EEA nationals as one group and other countries as another group. It should be noted that the study is not comparing one group and following its change from one year after graduating to three years after graduation. Instead, the study has two different reference groups. One group represents the students one year after graduation and the other group representing three years after graduation. (EDUFI 2020b.)

One year after graduation over a quarter of the international degree students had left the country (Figure 4). The study shows a clear difference between EU/EEA countries and other countries. 38 % of the EU/EEA group had left the country, while 23 % of the students from other countries had left the country within one year after the studies (Figure 4). The two reference groups for EU/EEA graduates do not have difference from one year after graduation to three years after graduation (Figure 5). From both groups 31 % are employed full-time, 11 % studying, 5 % unemployed and 38 % have left the country (Figures 4 and 5). The status is unknown for 14 % and 15 % of the graduates (Figures 4 and 5). (EDUFI 2020b, p. 2-3.)

The reference groups for students outside of EU/EEA countries have more of a change from one year after graduation to three years after graduation. One year after graduation 34 % of the graduated students are employed full-time, while 20 % are studying, 5 % unemployed and 23 % have left the country (Figure 4). Three years after the graduation 25 % are employed full-time, 22 % are studying, 6 % unemployed and 26 % have left the country (Figure 5). The status is unknown for 18 % and 22 % of the graduates (Figures 4 and 5). (EDUFI 2020b, p. 2-3.)

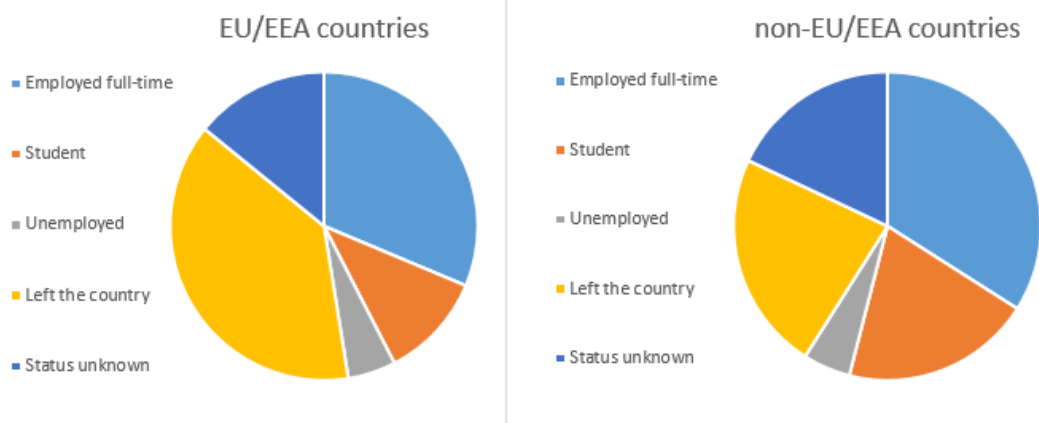


Figure 4. Status of the international students one year after graduation (Figure based on statistics by EDUFI 2020b, p. 2-3).

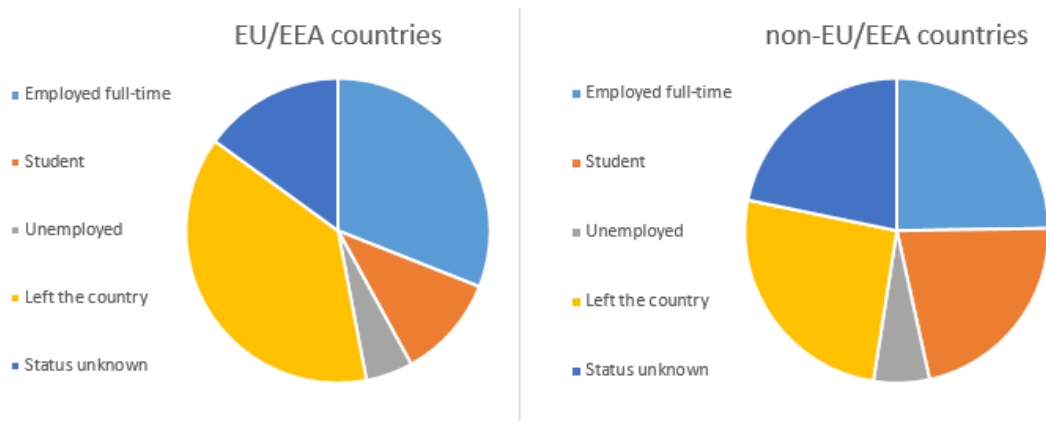


Figure 5. Status of the international students three years after graduation (Figure based on statistics by EDUFI 2020b, p. 2-3).

When compared to Finnish students, the difference is prominent. Finnish students are employed full-time 63 % one year after graduation and 71 % three years after graduation. 28 % and 19 % are studying, while 5 % are unemployed of the one year after graduation group as well as the three years after graduation group. 2 % have left the country one year after graduation and 3 % have left the country three years after graduation. (EDUFI 2020b, p. 2-3.)

The study also compared the employment level in different fields and different degrees. According to the study, one year after graduation, degrees from universities of applied sciences lead to employment for 51 % of the graduates, while for master's degrees from universities lead to employment for 43 % of the graduates and PhD lead to employment

for 39 % of the graduates. The highest employment rate is in the field of health and well-being (69 %), information technology (55 %) and services (51 %). (EDUFI 2020b, p. 4.)

When comparing the professions of the three groups one year after graduation, the Finnish and EU/EEA graduates have a clear resemblance in what type of roles they are employed in. Both groups are well represented in the specialist and expert roles. 31 % of the Finnish and 36 % of the EU/EEA graduates are employed as specialists, while 26 % of the Finnish and 23 % of the EU/EEA graduates are employed as experts (Figure 6). The same numbers for non-EU/EEA graduates are well below those marks, at 25 % employed as specialists and 11 % employed as experts respectively (Figure 5). All three groups are relatively evenly represented within office and customer service workers and service and sales workers (Figure 6). 21 % of the non-EU/EEA graduates are employed as other workers, while the Finnish and EU/EEA graduates are both only 2 % employed as other workers respectively, marking a clear distinction (Figure 6). (EDUFI 2020b, p. 5). Specialists in this study are defined as professions which level of professionalism reaches the requirement of a bachelor's degree at a minimum. Experts are defined as professions which level of professionalism reaches the requirement of tertiary school education at a minimum. (Statistics Finland 2012.)

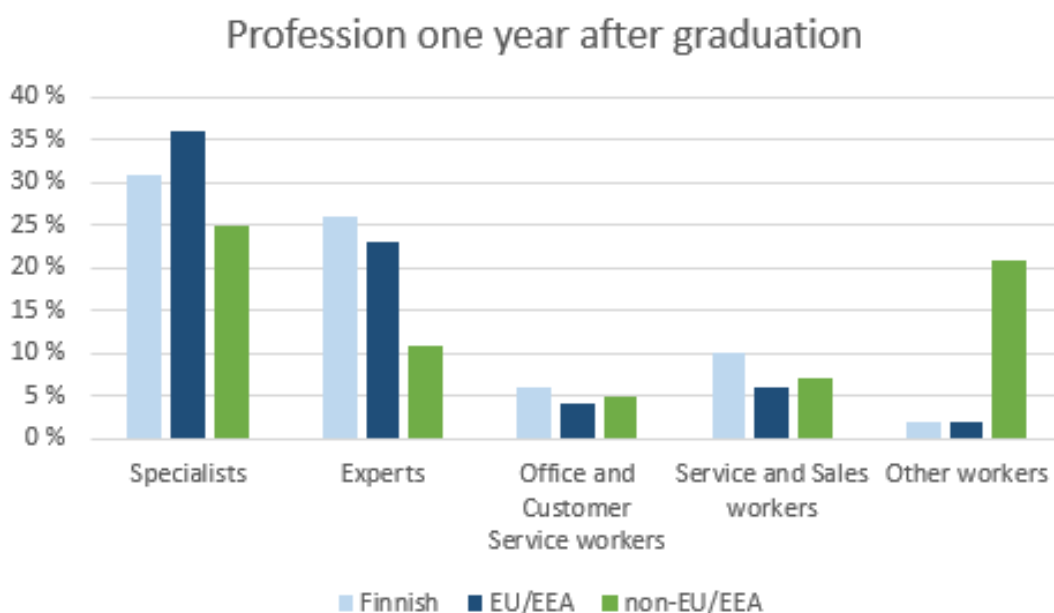


Figure 6. Profession one year after graduation (Figure based on statistics by EDUFI 2020b, p. 5).

3.1.4 Effect of the tuition fee for non-EU international degree students

Tuition fee for students outside of EU and EEA countries started in the academic year 2017-18 (EDUFI 2018a, p. 1). The amount of international degree students has risen steadily throughout the first decades of the 2000s, until the tuition fee came in effect. Since 2017, the first year of the tuition fee, the amount of international degree students starting studies in Finland has decreased slightly, although the sample at this point is only four years. (Arene 2020, p. 4.)

The implementation of the tuition fee had a similar consequence for both of the most common degrees international degree students apply for in Finland: Master's degrees offered by the universities and Bachelor's degrees offered by the universities of applied sciences. The drop-off in new international degree students starting studies after the implementation of the tuition fee was the starkest in the Master's degrees offered by the universities, and in the two following years it has not recovered to the previous level, while in the universities of applied sciences the two following years have seemed to be trending towards the same level as before the implementation of the tuition fee. (Arene 2020, p. 4-5.)

For further conclusions of the effect for the number of international degree students starting their studies per year, the trend needs to be followed for a longer period of time to broaden the sample. Additionally, how the corona pandemic effects the next generation's desire to apply to study abroad, can only be predicted while conducting this thesis, but the effects can be long lasting. (Arene 2020, p. 21-22.)

To follow the development, effects and trends caused by the implementation of the tuition fee, the Ministry of Education and Culture formed a task force specifically for this assignment. The task force's mission is specified in three parts. The first mission is to track and estimate the effect of the tuition fee in the internationalization of the higher education institutions and student flow. The second mission of the task force is to collect data of the different scholarship practices implemented by the higher education institutions. The third mission is to report regularly back to the Ministry of Education and Culture. The main areas of focus for the tracking and evaluation are the effects of the tuition fee in different programmes, application and selection process, the amount of the tuition fee and the payment practices, scholarship practices, progress of the studies,

support systems and integration to the student community and society, marketing, employment and placement in postgraduate studies. (MINEDU 2018, p. 7.)

3.1.5 Talent Boost and Supporting Immigrants in Higher Education (SIMHE) services

Talent Boost is an operational programme implemented under the Ministry of Economic Affairs and Employment (Työ- ja elinkeinoministeriö, TEM). The programme's objectives are divided into three parts. The first objective is to make Finland "an internationally attractive place to work, study, carry out research, and invest." Second objective is that the employers in Finland are "willing and able to recruit international talent." Third objective is to ensure "the expertise of international specialists driving the internationalization and renewal of Finnish companies and organisations." (TEM 2021.)

Supporting Immigrants in Higher Education in Finland (SIMHE) is a network that is endorsed by the Ministry of Education and Culture. The network started in 2016, with Metropolia University of Applied Sciences and University of Jyväskylä the first higher education institutions participating in the network. In 2017 the network grew to six institutions, as University of Turku, University of Helsinki, Oulu University of Applied Sciences and Karelia University of Applied Sciences joined the network. The network aims to promote and improve the recognition of prior accomplished studies of immigrants with higher education background. The network helps immigrants to find their paths in the Finnish higher education as effectively and appropriately as possible. (EDUFI 2021.)

Talent Boost and the SIMHE network aim to bring together different actors in the same fields and respond to the national needs and objectives for employment- and study-based immigration (Lindeman & Piironen, 2020, p.187-189). In addition to the talent attraction (Figure 7), *Talent Boost* focuses also on the issues about losing that talent after education and developing national plan for how to keep the talent in Finland (Business Finland 2020).



Figure 7. Talent Attraction Management model (Business Finland 2020).

Operational programmes like *Talent Boost* and SIMHE play an important role in making sure that the organizations involved with recruiting, educating and employing immigrants work in unison instead of pulling in different directions, and each organization benefitting from each other. (Lindeman & Piironen, 2020, p.187-189.)

3.2 International degree students from the higher education institution's perspective

Internationalization is considered an important part of higher education. The Higher education institutions (HEI) consider it to be their mission to educate their students to be competent in an international and multicultural environment, since that is the way the working life is, and has been, trending. The Ministry of Education and Culture stated in the HEI internationalization strategy in 2009 an aim that a Finnish higher education presents the students the competencies to work in an international environment and that all bachelor's and master's degrees contain a portion that supports internationalization. (EDUFI 2012, p. 2.)

HEIs in Finland have various different forms for internationalization, like student and staff mobility between foreign partner institutions, courses in English and participation of exchange students in the same class encouraging contacts and meeting with international students. Many degree programmes have a certain amount of the studies taught in English and some programmes even have reserved a slot in the students' individual study plan to have part of their studies in some level of international context. (EDUFI 2012, p. 4.)

In 2017, the Ministry of Education and Culture stated that international cooperation further strengthens the quality of Finnish higher education, and is an integral part of establishing the positive reputation that has been gained (MINEDU 2017, p. 8-9). While the international cooperation usually means exchange studies, and it does provide the foreign language teaching to be a part of the degree, the exposure is multiplied when the whole degree programme is in English and the international degree students are part of the class for the whole degree instead of a semester or an academic year. This will help with providing genuine mechanisms supporting multicultural working. (EDUFI 2012, p. 5.)

Internationalization in higher education does not only provide personal growth for the students, but according to a dissertation by Terhi Nokkala, it also provides growth in academics and even in the general population. Individual growth is an expected benefit of internationalization, and it is also considered a change that is required in the future society. (Nokkala 2007, p. 119-120.)

3.3 International degree students' experience in Finland

Finnish National Agency for Education completed an International Student Barometer study within international degree students about the reasons they decided to apply for a Finnish HEIs in 2017. The study found eleven different reasons that at least three quarters of the respondents listed as important or very important. The top criteria, which came up in at least 90 % of the responses, are the contents and quality of the education and research, cost of education, reputation of the HEI and personal safety. The rest of the criteria in this group are about the cost of living and possibility earn while studying or get a scholarship, possibility for post-graduate studies and full-time employment after graduation. What the students found the least important was the proximity for the home

country, as only 27 % of the responses listed that as an important or very important for them. (EDUFI 2018a, p. 2.)

The same study found that 91 % of the respondents were satisfied with their overall experience in the Finnish higher education, a 2 % raise from the same study three years earlier. In the questionnaire the best overall feedback was given for the services in the beginning of the studies, like the orientation weeks by the institutions, but also the services before arrival to the country, like help in finding accommodation, registration as a student and how to find the correct places and academic personnel. The study publication also states the importance of these services in the beginning of the study experience, as it serves as the first impression. The easy start will make each of the following steps easier. From the services in the beginning of the studies, the respondents were the least happy with how the progress of the studies and study methods were explained. (EDUFI 2018a, p. 3.)

The study found that the students who used different support services during their studies were generally happy with the services offered. But the problem that came up in the study was that the international degree students do not find these services well. Only 18 % of the respondents said that they had used the career and recruitment services during their studies. 38 % of the respondents did not even know how they could find a service like that. Third of the respondents also did not know how they could find study advisor's services. Study counselling, tutoring and international relations services were all used by less than half of the respondents. (EDUFI 2018a, p. 5.)

The study points out the career and recruitment services, and other services related to employment, as the clear development target. The service itself has worked well and the feedback from international degree students has been positive in general, but the communication of the existence of the services is lost somewhere in the process. To raise the percentage of international degree students staying in Finland in full-time employment, this is the clear missing link currently, and something that could have a profound effect, if it can be turned to a strength. (EDUFI 2018a, p. 6.)

In 2019 the Finnish Government set promotion of the employment possibilities for international degree students as one of the government programme's goals. Included in the suggestions, the government programme proposes changes to the residence permit process, which would benefit the students coming from outside of EU and EEA. (MINEDU 2021, p. 7). The focus point of this process is in the streamlining of the process

of students receiving the residence permit and for the students to be able to receive the residence permit decision as fast as possible. As it currently stands, the residence permit is in principle granted for two years, but also depending on the degree the student is taking. (MINEDU 2021, p. 14.)

After graduation, the international degree students outside of EU/EEA are permitted to stay in Finland for work or the student can apply for residence permit to stay in Finland to apply for a job. Under current legislation this temporary residence permit for job searching can be granted for maximum of one year. International degree students under student visa can work a maximum of 25 hours a week while studying. If the work is considered to a part of the studies, for example an internship or a paid thesis, there are no hour limits. Additionally, while the student's HEI's semester is not ongoing the 25 hour limit is not enforced. (MINEDU 2021, p. 15.)

4 INTERNATIONAL DEGREE STUDENTS' APPLICATION PROCESS AND START OF STUDIES – CASE STUDY WITH TURKU UAS ARTS ACADEMY MUSIC PEDAGOGY DEGREE PROGRAMME

The research methods and service design tools used in this thesis are used in the context of the case study, apart from the desk research used in the theoretical part of the thesis. The case study focuses on the international degree students in the degree programme of Music at Turku UAS Arts Academy. The case study focuses on the students' application process and the beginning of the studies.

The research methods and service design tools in this thesis provide information for the final service concept. These methods and tools include interviews with international degree students and teachers in the degree programme of Music. Based on the student interviews, the thesis includes three personas and two customer journey maps. In addition to the interviews, the teachers in the degree programme in music participated in a survey. A co-design workshop with international degree students from the degree programme in Music provides a background for a third Customer Journey Map. Additionally, benchmarking the exchange student application process provides ideas and options on how to implement the development ideas for the application process. All of the methods and tools create a final service blueprint, which also provides the structure for the final service concept.

4.1 Survey for the teachers in the Music Pedagogy degree programme

In research, survey is used as a method to collect quantitative and qualitative data from a group of people, by evaluating the individual responses as a larger body and to analyze deviation and consensus (Ponto 2015). In this thesis the survey was utilized as a way to find background info of the international degree students, their application process and how their process is viewed from the service providers point of view.

The survey (Appendix 1) was implemented on Google Forms and it was sent to the teachers of the Music degree programme, who have either been a tutor teacher of international degree students or an instrument teacher of international degree students.

With the help of the head of the department, six matches were found for this survey. The survey received four responses, making the sample size small. For the purpose of the research this did not prove to be a problem, since the purpose of the survey was to gain better background information. A more detailed information of the teacher's point of view is gained through expert interviews presented in the section 4.2.1.

The survey (Appendix 1) found out that the teachers don't consider there to happen overlapping with the Turku UAS admissions office on what tasks are done by whom within the international degree students' application process. The survey (Appendix 1) also concluded that all of the respondents know that applicants have found out about the degree programme through meeting a teacher from the degree programme before starting the application process. All respondents also know applicants to have found out about the programme through acquaintances. The survey (Appendix 1) responses gave no consensus whether the applicants are first in contact before starting the application process or after, as both are common to occur. The open questions of the survey (Appendix 1) revealed that the applicants often wonder if the application process can be completed remotely and what should their application video contain. Usual ways of instructing the applicants include teachers giving the information themselves, instructing the applicant to contact the admissions office, forwarding the questions to tutor teacher or the head of the degree programme or finding the answer from the Turku UAS webpage or intranet systems (Appendix 1).

4.2 Interviews with the Music Pedagogy degree programme personnel

Interviews enable the respondent to answer the presented questions more profoundly, thus providing more insight. Interviews can be conducted for example via telephone, email, face-to-face and online video conferences. (Statistics Finland, 2019). Interviews are a qualitative research method, and especially expert interviews enable the interviewee, an expert of the topic, to expand on their knowledge of the topic and share their experience. (Meuser and Nagel 2009, p. 17.)

The first interview of the thesis was the interview with the Head of the Music and Performing Arts department at Turku UAS Arts Academy, conducted on 8th of February 2021. This interview was conducted through a list of questions sent via email (Appendix 2). The first interview was aimed to provide background information of the degree

programme, history of international degree students in the programme and information of how the system works in the Music degree programme.

The teacher interviews were conducted through video conferences using the Zoom platform on 19th of April and 7th of May 2021. The teacher interviews provide the expert perspective on the topic. The structure of the interview is more free-flowing and conversational, giving the experts space to share their experiences. The expert interview loosely follows the chronological order of the steps in the international applicants application process, spotlighting the same step from the service providers point of view. The Interviews provide a perspective for the customer journey maps, but most importantly they inform the service steps for the service blueprint. (Appendix 4.)

In this thesis the student interviews were conducted through video conference using the Zoom and Microsoft Teams platforms. These platforms enable face-to-face connection, making the situation resemble an in-person interview situation. The platform also makes it possible to record the interview situation as a video, functioning as the notes of the interview, and helping the interviewer to focus on the interaction.

The interview follows the chronological order of the students application journey. The students tell how they experienced each step of the journey, what information did they receive, how they received the information and what information would they have needed or wanted to receive, but did not. The insights and information collected via student interviews are used to create Personas and Customer Journey Maps and design the Service Blueprint.

4.2.1 Expert interviews with teachers in the Music Pedagogy degree programme

First of the expert interviews was completed as an email interview with the Head of Education in the department of Music and Performing Arts, Eero Linjama. The interview was conducted on 8th of February 2021 (Appendix 2). This email interview provided the background information for the case study of the thesis. The information provided better understanding of the degree programme and it's nature as a Finnish taught programme and it also helped creating the structure for the expert interviews with the degree programme teachers and the student interviews.

The two teachers interviewed both have been tutor teachers as well as instrument teachers for international degree students. First interview was conducted with Mikko

Luoma on 19th of April 2021. The interview structure can be found on Appendix 4. Luoma's instrument is accordion and he also teaches chamber music at Turku UAS Arts Academy. Luoma has also actively participated in different international music events and competition, where he commonly meets students interested in applying to Turku UAS, or talented musicians who he has wanted to recruit and suggest the student to apply. In the interview Luoma notes that in these recruiting situations, it would be helpful for him to have a one clear website where to point the student and know that the student will get all the relevant information from there, and also a positive impression of the degree programme. Luoma describes this as the moment where the student needs to be hooked in to make them want to apply for this degree.

As the start of the application process is important in making a good impression, Luoma also notes that the start of the studies and how the new students receive all the information is highly important and helps the students to adapt in the new situation. Also the smoother the start is, everything that follows will be that much easier. Luoma also points out, that it does not only help the students, but it is also very helpful for the teachers.

Luoma considers the lack of Finnish language skills to be one of the bigger problems with the international degree students, especially when it comes to plans on finding employment after finishing the degree. He also thinks that there is no urgency or push for the international degree students to learn Finnish during their studies. Luoma also considers the English language skills to be a problem among some of the students, but most develop their language skills during their studies well enough.

The second expert interview was conducted with Erkki Lahesmaa on 7th of May. The interview structure can be found on Appendix 4. Lahesmaa's instrument is cello and has been both a tutor teacher and an instrument teacher for international degree students. The interview in many parts reflected and confirmed ideas and opinions raised in the interview with Mikko Luoma. Just like Luoma, Lahesmaa also sees a problem in the start of the application journey, as the website does not serve international applicants well and it does not provide help in recruiting. Lahesmaa mentioned that many international degree students find out about the programme while participating some courses or competitions where a Turku UAS teacher is also participating in, as has been pointed out in previous interviews as well. Lahesmaa considers these recruiting situations extremely important, since in his opinion Turku UAS Music pedagogy degree programme

requires more international degree students in the future to maintain the high level of the programme.

Lahesmaa does not consider the actual application process to have many problems once it has started for the applicants. The web portal (opintopolku) serves its purpose well and functions in English as well. Some applicants still require step-by-step instructing throughout the process, but, according to Lahesmaa, this part of the application journey works sufficiently well between the teachers and administrative staff within the degree programme and Turku UAS.

Lahesmaa also noted the fact that sometimes the sending of the acceptance letter extends and might be too late for some students to be able to apply and receive the visa before the start of studies. These students miss the official orientation days and start behind on all the administrative issues needed to do. Instead of getting all the information over couple of days it is given in one meeting with the tutor teacher or instrument teacher. This often leads to the students having more questions along the semester or they have missed some information completely. According to Lahesmaa, the students tutors are very active in this phase and the teachers rely on them to help. Lahesmaa pointed out that during the COVID-19 pandemic the online participation and its possibilities have been realized better. In the future, when the students are unable to participate in person for the orientation days, they could join online and not miss all of the information.

According to Lahesmaa, most international degree students continue to apply for a Master's degree after finishing the bachelor. Some apply in Finland and some abroad, or possibly both. Of those who find employment after the degree, most do so through the networks they have managed to build during the studies. Internships and different projects in cooperation with potential employers, like Turku Philharmonic Orchestra, have proven to be beneficial for the students. In the pedagogical side the language barrier is the common obstacle. Most employers require fluent Finnish.

4.2.2 Interviews with international degree students from the Music Pedagogy degree programme

A persona is a fictional profile of a service user, based on a specific customer segment (Stickdorn et al. 2018, p. 40-41; Stickdorn et al. 2019, p. 178). In this thesis the Personas

create user profiles for the application process, representing international degree students.

Three personas, one representing an EU citizen, two representing students from outside of EU provide the base information for the customer journey maps and service blueprint presented in this thesis. The three personas are a result of combined four student interviews conducted on 19th of February, 19th of March, 26th of March and 29th of March 2021. The interviews follow the chronological order of the students' journey from application to starting of studies and what they plan to do after they finish the degree (Appendix 3). The interviewed students have already gone through the application process, but the resulting personas represent students who are in the application process.

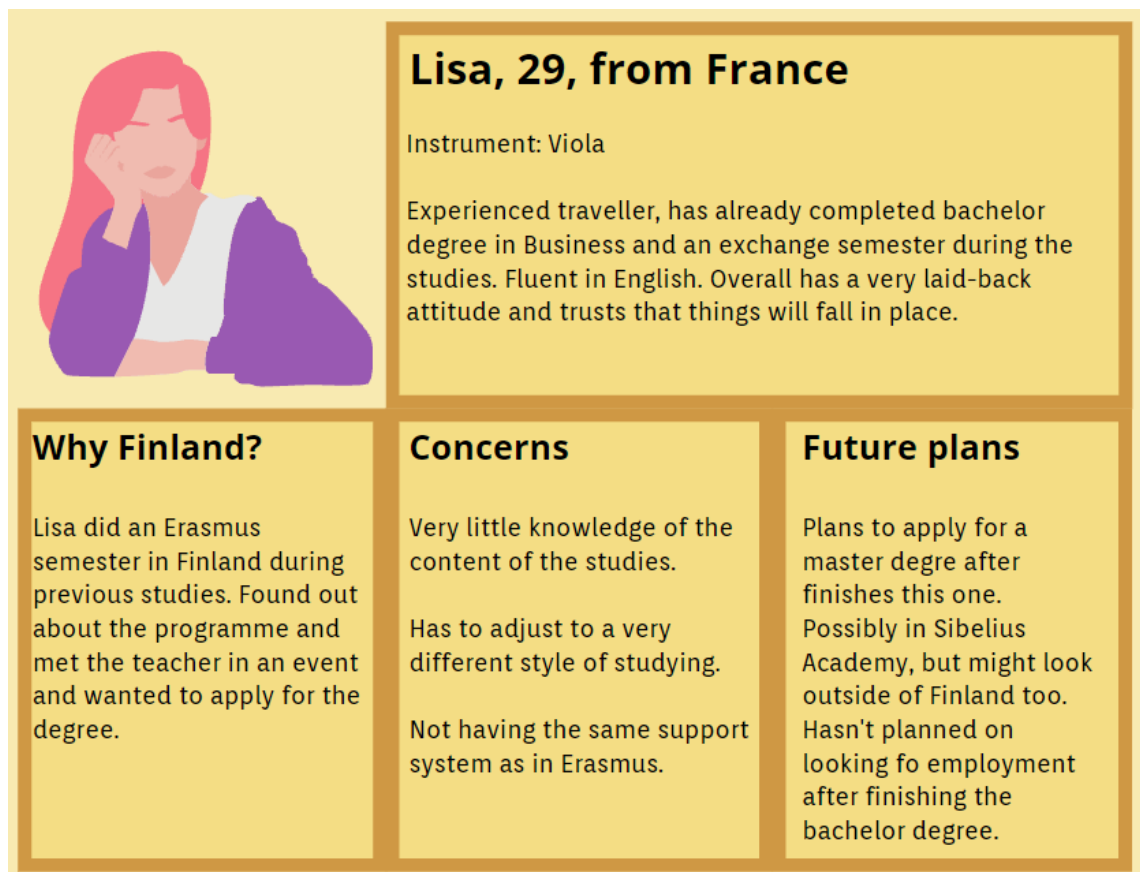


Figure 8. Persona for EU student.

The first persona is of an applicant from an EU country (Figure 8). In this case the student, Lisa, is from France and her instrument is viola. Lisa has already completed one bachelor's degree, Business Administration, and she completed that degree in France.

During her degree she did an exchange semester in Turku UAS, and while staying in Turku, she met students from Arts Academy. Through the students she got to know more about the degree and eventually also met the viola teacher. After completing the Business Administration bachelor's degree, Lisa decided to apply for the Music programme in Turku UAS Arts Academy to play the viola and become a Music pedagogue. To learn more about the application process, Lisa emailed the instrument teacher and got the necessary information on how to apply, where to fill in the application and when the deadlines are.

As an applicant, Lisa's concerns are more about the actual studies that she is applying to, and less about the application process. As she already has one degree and has gone an application process to Turku UAS as an exchange student. Additionally, as she has met the teacher and is familiar with the culture, she knows that there is a low level of hierarchy, so she has no problem in reaching out and asking advice. Lisa's concerns about the studies are about the actual content of the studies. How much the studies are theory based, how much it will be individual instrument classes or is it more chamber music and orchestra. The degree and way of learning in an arts programme is difficult than what it was in Lisa's business studies. As an Erasmus student the process of applying and arriving to Finland were very structured and there was a support system from her own University as well as the host University and from the other exchange students and student tutors. As an individual student starting a new degree in a different country, these support systems are missing.

Lisa has a plan of applying for a Master's degree in Music after she finishes the Bachelor. She has thought of Sibelius Academy in Helsinki as a possibility, but might also look for options outside of Finland for that. Lisa does not look too much into the future though, as she prefers to let things fall in their place on their own time and will make the decisions when the time comes.

Lisa's journey and way of learning about the degree is not a repeatable process, but it also represents a common situation that the applying students have. The international degree students usually know about the instrument teacher first and about the degree programme second. How the students learn about the teachers come in varying forms. Often the students have met the teacher in a competition or participated in the teacher's Master class.



Figure 9. Persona for non-EU student.

The first of the personas representing non-EU students is Ivan from Russia (Figure 9). His instrument is flute and he learned of the Turku UAS Music degree programme when the programme's flute teacher was in Russia to participate in a Music competition. Ivan speaks some English, but at this point is not very comfortable using it. The instrument teacher speaks Russian, so that helps encourage Ivan to apply for the programme. The teacher also helps with Ivan's questions regarding the application process and other concerns he has during the process. Not being fluent in English is still a concern, since not all of the studies will be with the same instrument teacher.

Another step causing stress throughout the process is the visa application. The process and the amount of documents and certificates needed seemed daunting for someone who has not been traveling much. Ivan also needs to find accommodation, which he finds stressful to do in English and looking for places to live in a city and country he does not know.

Ivan would also like to work while studying, to earn some extra money and make the living situation easier. Concern with this is that Ivan is not sure how to find a job in Finland and how the regulations on working function with the student visa.

After the bachelor's degree Ivan would like to find a job in Turku, or possibly elsewhere in Finland, and stay here for the foreseeable future. He has some interest for a Master's degree also, but would prefer to try and find a job before continuing with the studies in a higher degree.



Figure 10. Persona for non-EU student.

The second of the non-EU student personas is Dilara from Turkey (Figure 10). Her instrument is violin. Dilara decided to apply, because she knew the Turku UAS Music degree programme's violin teacher by reputation and wanted to be taught by him. Dilara has some experience traveling around Europe and has no problem understanding or using English.

She is an organized person and likes to get all the necessary information right away so she can plan her process and schedule everything. In the application process she has

found it inconvenient how she has to jump from one platform or website to another to find the necessary information. She has not been able to find much information about the what the studies contain, how big portion is instrument teaching, how much theory and how is the pedagogical side of the degree programme.

Dilara is planning to apply for a Master's degree after finishing the bachelor. She would prefer to stay within the Nordic countries, including Finland, as some master's degrees in Nordic Universities will not require a proof of English language level, since her bachelor's degree is from a Nordic country.

4.3 International degree student' application journey

A customer journey map describes the service experience from the customer's perspective. With customer journey map it is possible to define the different touchpoints the customer has in the service experience (Stickdorn et al. 2018, p. 44-45). In this thesis customer journey maps define the specific phases of the international degree students' journey and the actions related to those phases. The customer journey maps also show the main concerns the students had in each phase.

The thesis has three customer journey maps in total. One map is for the journey of an EU/EEA student (Figure 11) and another map for a journey of a non-EU/EEA student (Figure 12). These two customer journey maps are designed based on the student interviews, with some information also added from the experiences the expert interviews by the degree programme teachers provided, as well as the survey that was completed with the teachers.

A third customer journey map (Figure 16) is created by using the information gained in the co-design workshop conducted with three international degree students. That customer journey map will be presented in the section 4.4. All three customer journey maps provide information for the service blueprint.

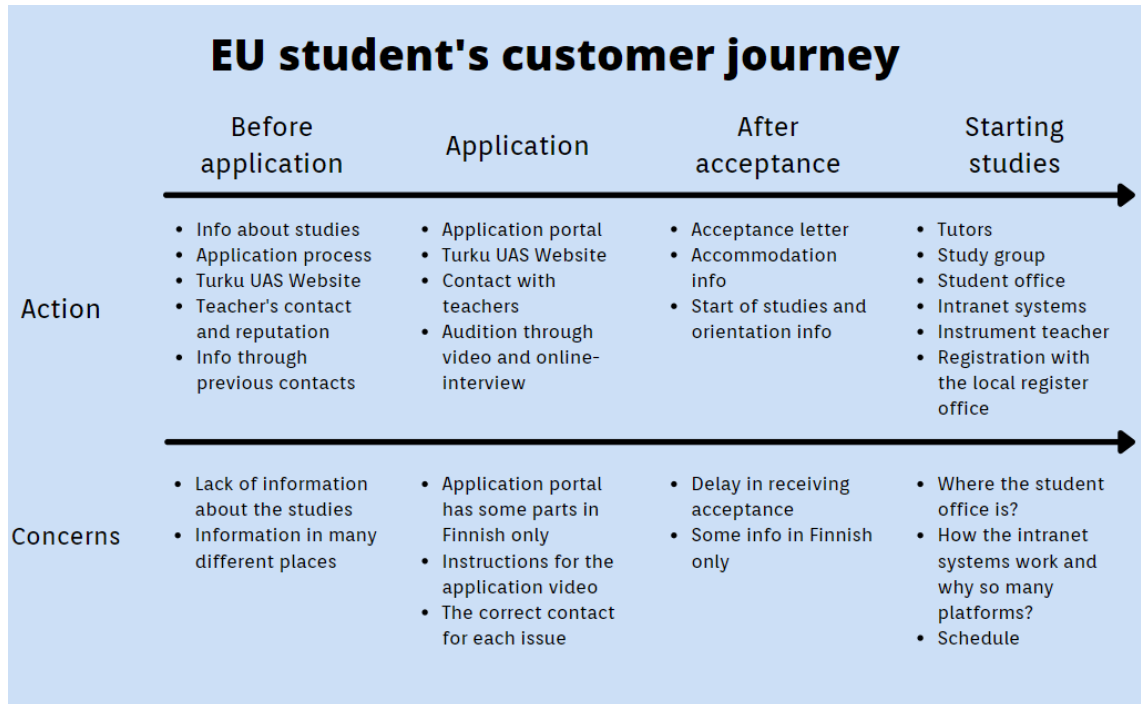


Figure 11. EU student's customer journey map.

The customer's application journey is divided into four phases: before application, application, after acceptance and starting studies. In the first phase the main actions revolve around gaining information. At this point the interests are about what the studies contain and how the application process proceeds. Students usually find information through the contacts they have to the degree programme, whether they are teachers or students in the degree programme. Main concerns in this phase are the lack of available information the students are able to find regarding the studies. As the degree programme is officially taught in Finnish, the website also has the detailed information of the programme in Finnish only (Picture 1). The information about the programme and application process is also divided into different places, as the application process is handled through a separate portal.

Study at Turku UAS
Interested in degree studies or a student exchange in Turku?

RDI
Let's innovate together! Find out about our ongoing projects and active research groups.

Contact us
See the list of faculty staff or find an expert to answer your questions.

Degree Programmes

Bachelor's Degree Programmes in Finnish

- Film and Media
- Fine Arts
- Music
- Performing Arts

[More information can be found on the Finnish website](#)

Master's Degree Programmes in Finnish

- Contemporary Contexts of Arts
- [Creative Design Management](#)
- Creative Well-Being (together with the Faculty of Health and Wellbeing)
- Cultural and Media Entrepreneurship

Picture 1. Information regarding the degree programme (Turku UAS 2020).

In the second phase the main actions are the actual completion of the application in the online portal. Based on these applications the students are requested to send an application video, which is a recording of the students playing their instrument. This information is again usually received through the previously existing contacts and from the websites. A problem students have faced in this phase is that some parts in the application portal are only in Finnish, for example when the students choose the degree programme they are applying to. The instructions for the application video were also considered to be quite undefined and the students were unsure on who to contact in which issue.

Third phase of the application journey covers the time from the moment the student is accepted to the studies and plans the travel to Turku, applies for accommodation and sorts out all the documents and certificates needed for the immigration. If the acceptance letters are sent out very late, it has an effect on the students' ability to apply for accommodation and the time they have to prepare all the documents. As the students are registered to a Finnish degree programme, some of the information received in this phase is in Finnish and during the summer months when the holidays have begun, it can be difficult to get in contact with the teachers and other staff.

Fourth phase of the application journey is the weeks before arriving to Finland and starting the studies and the first month of the studies, when the students receive all the

information regarding studies, administrative issues, intranet systems, how the reservation systems for the music studios work and what they need to do regarding immigration. As Turku UAS uses multiple intranet systems, the student counselling office and student union are located in a campus building other side of the city center and on top of it the student needs to handle the immigration process, this can be an overwhelming month for the students.

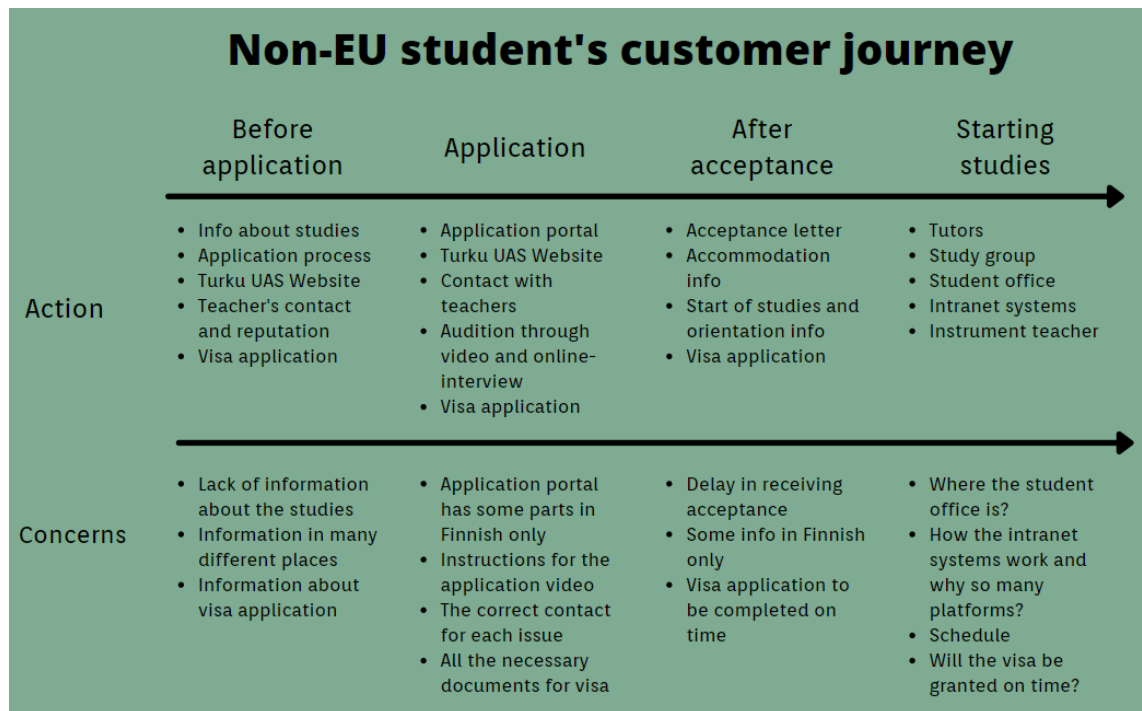


Figure 12. Non-EU student's customer journey map.

The main difference for a non-EU student's journey is the need for a visa application. Another thing to note for non-EU students would be the tuition fee, but in the case of the students studying in the Music degree programme, the non-EU students are not required to pay the tuition fee, since the degree is a Finnish taught programme (Turku UAS 2021a).

Students can apply for the visa once they have been accepted to the programme and received the admission letter. To make the process as easy and quick as possible, the students should sort out the necessary documents and certificates well in advance. The process can take week, possibly a couple of months even. The Turku UAS website instructs the students as follows: **“Start the application process for residence permit immediately** when you have received information of admission because the process

can take several months. If you apply for the residence permit in July, it's impossible to get residence permit before the studies start in autumn." (Turku UAS 2021b.)

Receiving the admission letter late can mean that the student will not receive the student visa on time to join the orientation days. As stated earlier, the first month of the studies can be an overwhelming time for the arriving students, and it will be even more so, if they cannot join the orientation days to meet their study group and find peer support, leading them to play catch-up with everything.

4.4 Co-design workshop with Music pedagogy degree programme international degree students

Co-design is a design method that involves service users in the design process. It is an approach that is used in the discovery phase of the process as well as in the ideation phase of the process, as the service or product users can have a central role in designing the final product that they will then be using. (Elizarova et al. 2017.)

The method of the co-design workshop does not follow any exact method, instead it has features from the 635-method and design charrette, that were modified to fit the scenario, the purpose of the workshop and the online setting. The 635-method gets its name from the idea of asking six people to come up with three ideas in 5 minutes. This method is used to produce ideas and solutions to identified problems. (MacNaught 2014). Design charrette is also used to produce ideas first as individuals or small groups, and then develop the ones with most potential further as a larger group. In a design charrette the first phase is to let the individual or smaller group to come up with ideas and sketches for a few minutes. After that the ideas are introduced to others and the others can pitch in. (Pernice 2013.)

The co-design workshop of this thesis had three international degree students as participants. One of the students is an EU citizens and two are outside of EU, so that both customer journey maps are also represented in the workshop. The workshop is used to create a third customer journey map. This third customer journey map represents a journey that the students consider to be the optimal way of going through the application process. They were not asked to consider what would be realistically possible to do and implement, rather just give their ideas of how the experience throughout the

application journey would be better for the applicants. The participating students design this journey based on the experience they had with the application process.

The co-design workshop was carried out through a video conference using the Zoom platform and executed using Google Jamboard as the ideation tool. In Jamboard each participant was able to write their ideas and thoughts in their own separate page.

In the first phase (Figure 13) of the workshop the participants were given four minutes and asked to come up with three ideas in the first phase of the application journey, “before applying.” This was followed with another four minutes to do the same in the second phase of the journey and followed through all four phases of the application journey.

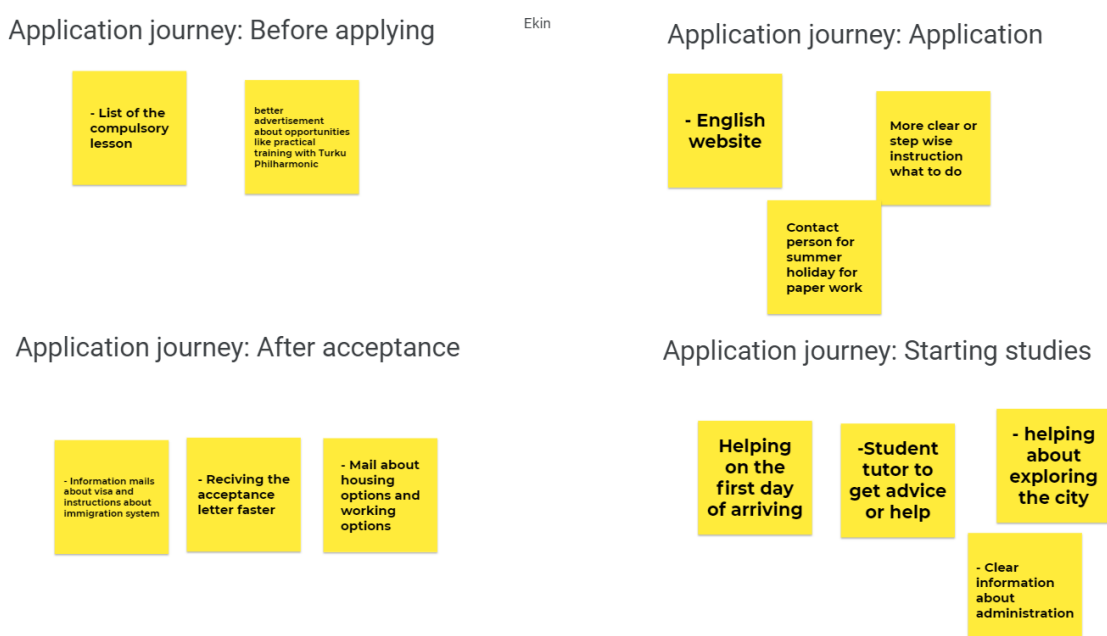


Figure 13. Workshop phase 1.

In the second phase (Figure 14) of the workshop the participants were asked to switch pages, so that everyone was looking at the ideas of one of the other participants had come up with. The participants then chose their favorite idea from each of the four phases in the application journey and change the colour of that notepad from yellow to green. After going through all four phases, the participants would switch pages again to evaluate again another participants ideas. As this page now already had some notepads turned from yellow to green, the participants could choose another notepad and switch the colour from yellow to green, or they could choose the green notepad and turn it from

green to pink. After every participant had gone through the other two participants' ideas, there were yellow, green and pink notepads. Yellow notepad means that neither of the other participants had chosen that idea as their favorite, green means that one of the other participants had chosen that idea as their favorite and pink means that both of the other participants had chosen that as their favorite idea.

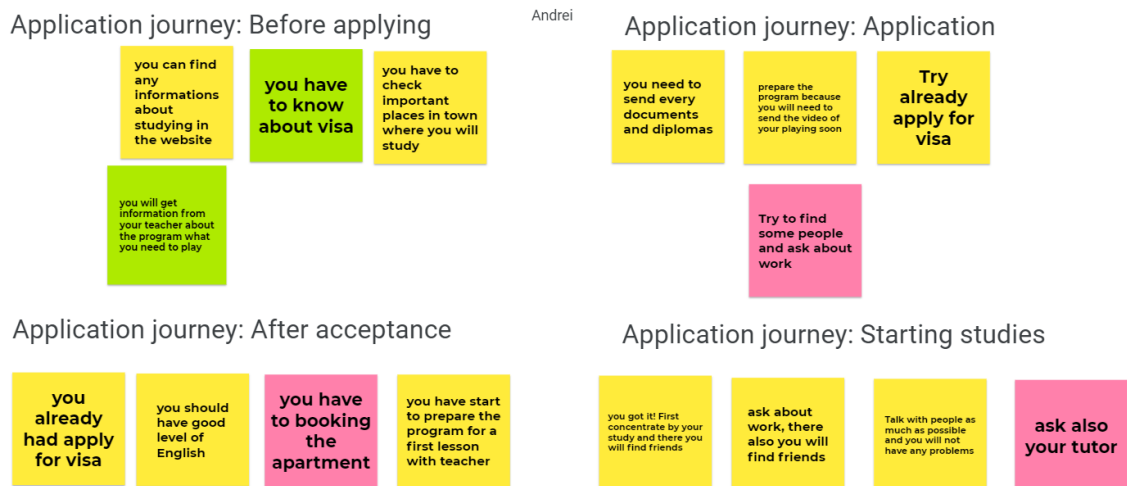


Figure 14. Workshop phase 2.

While the other phases of the workshop were carried out in silence, in the third phase (Figure 15) everyone worked as a group and the group went through the four phases of the application journey by talking about the ideas they had come up with or the ideas they had liked from the other participants. In this conversation they had a chance to further explain their own ideas or expand on the ideas of the others, or even come up with new ones, if they were inspired by what they saw in other notepads. While the group discussed the issues, ideas and experiences, the workshop conductor wrote up the notes and guided the participants to follow the application journey's four phases.

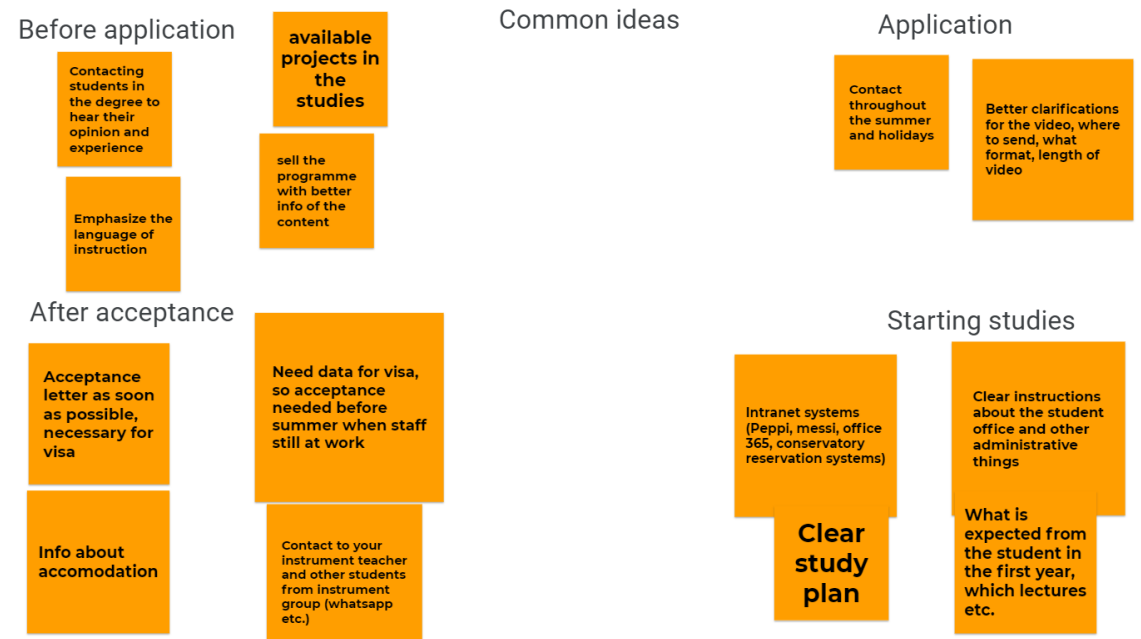


Figure 15. Workshop phase 3.

The final phase of the workshop was then designed in to a customer journey map (Picture 11). This customer journey map does not consider how the ideas can be implemented in the application journey, it just represents the ideas the students produced in the workshop. The final service blueprint will be designed based on the actual customer journey maps presented in the section 4.3, with the addition of the ideas in the co-designed customer journey map.

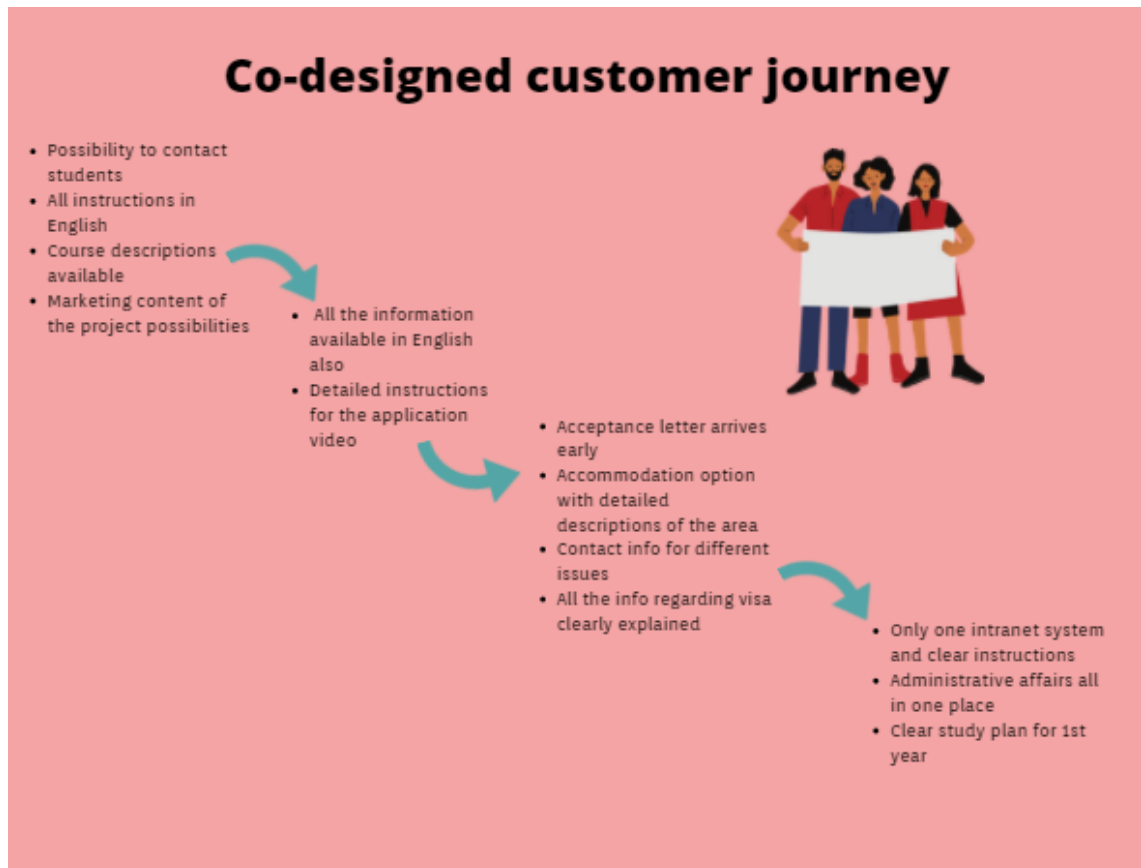


Figure 16. Co-designed customer journey.

The Co-designed customer journey map (Figure 16) shows the students' desire to find the information in an easy and simple way and to have it available to them from the first step on. In the workshop the students pointed out that it would be beneficial for the applying students to have a possibility to contact international degree students currently studying the degree or recently graduated. This way the students could pose their questions answered by someone who can relate to their situation. Another idea the students came up quite quickly and agreed on was the necessity to have all the information of every step in English.

4.5 Comparing the Turku UAS Music Pedagogy degree programme with other international higher education services

This thesis uses the benchmarking research method to compare the application process and information available online on the Turku UAS Music Pedagogy degree programme with other international services provided by HEI's. The First benchmarking is done

through the application process to Haaga-Helia university of applied sciences. Haaga-Helia was chosen as a benchmarking option, as they offer a variety of bachelor's degrees in English. Haaga-Helia's application process and available online information of the degree programme is completed through online. The second comparison is through benchmarking the exchange student application and start of studies process in Turku UAS. To benchmark this service, the author uses pre-existing knowledge and experience from working in the international relations office at Turku UAS.

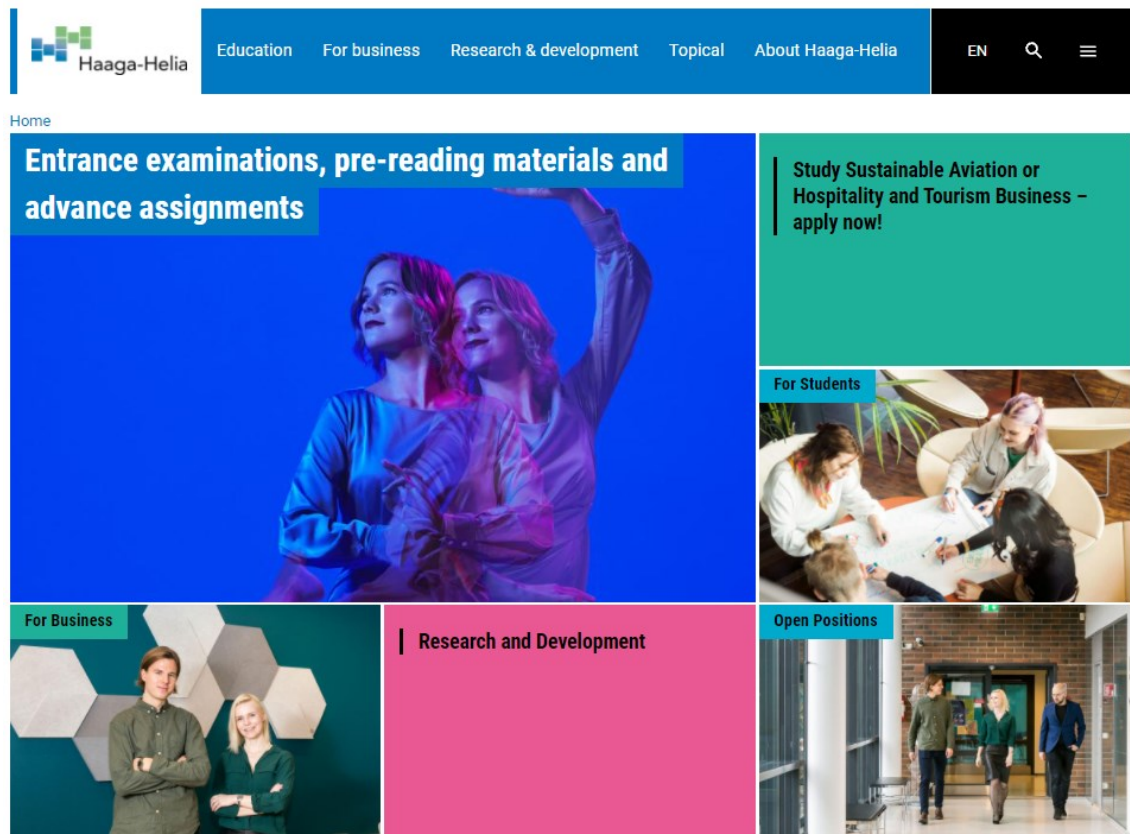
Online research typically consists of one of three different methods of study. First one is through surveys or interviews conducted with online-users. Second one is evaluating design characteristics, for example on a company's website. Third one is analyzing online content provided by a company or of a service. (Webb 2017.) In this thesis the benchmarking will use the third method, analyzing online content, to evaluate the application process and available information on Haaga-Helia's website, and compare that to what is offered on Turku UAS website for those looking to apply for the Music Pedagogy degree programme.

The application of benchmarking can be divided in four parts. First part is the thorough understanding of the existing process. Second part is analyzing the processes of other service providers. Third part is the comparing of the own process' performance with the other processes analyzed. Fourth part is the implementation of the necessary steps to improve the performance of the process. (Riley 2018.) As said before, the author of this thesis works as the international relations coordinator at Turku UAS Arts Academy and the sector of Health and Well-being. Through the existing experience and expertise gained at work the author already has a thorough understanding of the exchange students' process.

4.5.1 Haaga-Helia international degree programmes in comparison to Turku UAS Music Pedagogy degree programme

Haaga-Helia is a university of applied sciences, and offers degrees in both Bachelors Masters level. There are over 10 000 students enrolled in Haaga-Helia. It has campuses in three different cities, Helsinki, Porvoo and Vierumäki, as well as degrees implemented fully online. (Studentum 2021.)

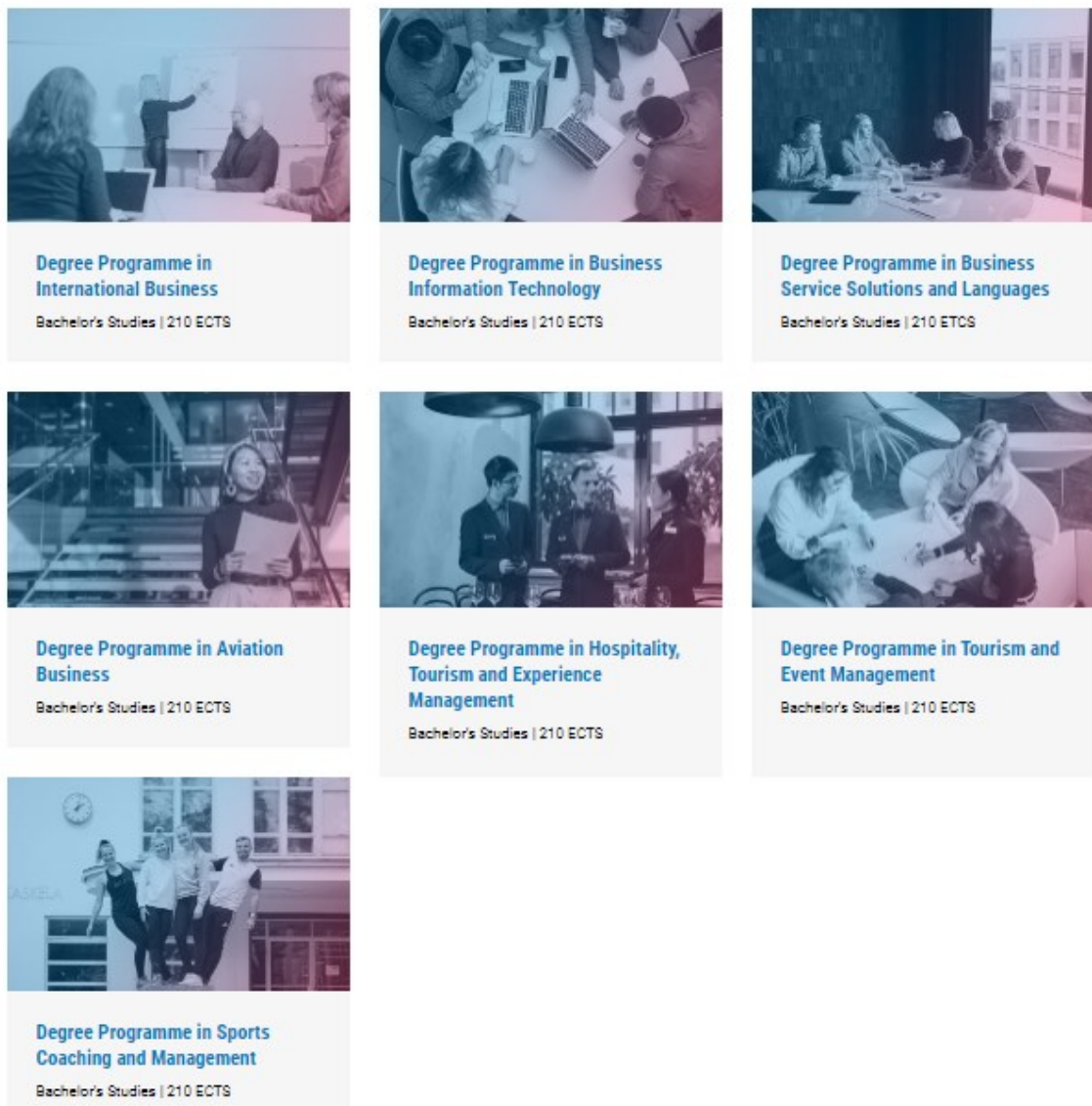
Haaga-Helia's website's homepage (Picture 2) is oriented towards providing information for potential new students, as the focal picture and link on the page is regarding the entrance examinations and further instructions regarding applying. The homepage makes a clear separation also for businesses and possible job-searchers on where to follow, as well as having their own page then for students. This way the homepage directs people who have ended in to their website with different motivators under these main categories and makes the navigation on the website simple and efficient.



Picture 2. Haaga-Helia front page (Haaga-Helia 2021a).

From the front page's topline (Picture 2), a prospective applicant can find the different degree programmes through the "Education" option. The different degree programmes are listed as their own boxes (Picture 3) to make it more visual, and each box directs the reader to more detailed information regarding the chosen programme.

Our Bachelor's Programmes



Picture 3. Haaga-Helia's Bachelor's programmes (Haaga-Helia 2021b).

The same website (Picture 3) also contains more basic level information, as well as statistics, regarding the institution and about life and studying in Finland (Picture 4). This website also gives further contact information and instructions for possible questions and assistance.

Interested in our Bachelor-level studies?



If you want general information about Haaga-Helia's degrees taught in English, please fill in the form. The service is provided by Haaga-Helia's partner [Studee](#). If you have a pending application to Haaga-Helia, please contact [admissions\(a\)haaga-helia.fi](mailto:admissions(a)haaga-helia.fi) for any assistance.

Picture 4. Additional information for applicants (Haaga-Helia 2021b).

Following through the central picture and headline on the front page (Picture 2) the website brings the reader to the entrance examinations site (Picture 5) with additional information on the examinations divided under the available programmes in the current application round. This site also has the practical information on the entrance examinations, for example the date, time and location, listed under each programme.

Entrance examinations, pre-reading materials and advance assignments



This site contains information about Haaga-Helia's entrance examinations, pre-reading materials and advance assignments.

Invitations to the entrance examinations (Joint application, autumn 2021)

Invitations to the entrance examinations of Bachelor programmes will be sent by e-mail. Please note that you must have filled in the online application form during the application period (1 to 15 September 2021, 15.00 Finnish time) in Studyinfo.fi.

Bachelor's degree programmes

Aviation Business, full-time studies



Business Information Technology, full-time studies



International Business, full-time studies



Additional application for Aviation Business, full-time studies



Picture 5. Haaga-Helia application instructions (Haaga-Helia 2021c).

For students" section of the website (Picture 6) focuses on the students accepted on the degree programmes. This website contains information for those students who have started their studies in the previous years already, but the clear focus is on the students about to start their studies, as indicated by the central picture and headline "Starting your studies." This website also introduces some of the different services available for the students in the institution. The importance of highlighting these services was pointed out in the chapter 3.3.

For students



Studying at Haaga-Helia

Haaga-Helia opens doors to future careers and also to numerous opportunities. This page helps you to discover the opportunities, find interesting student events and other useful information needed during your studies.

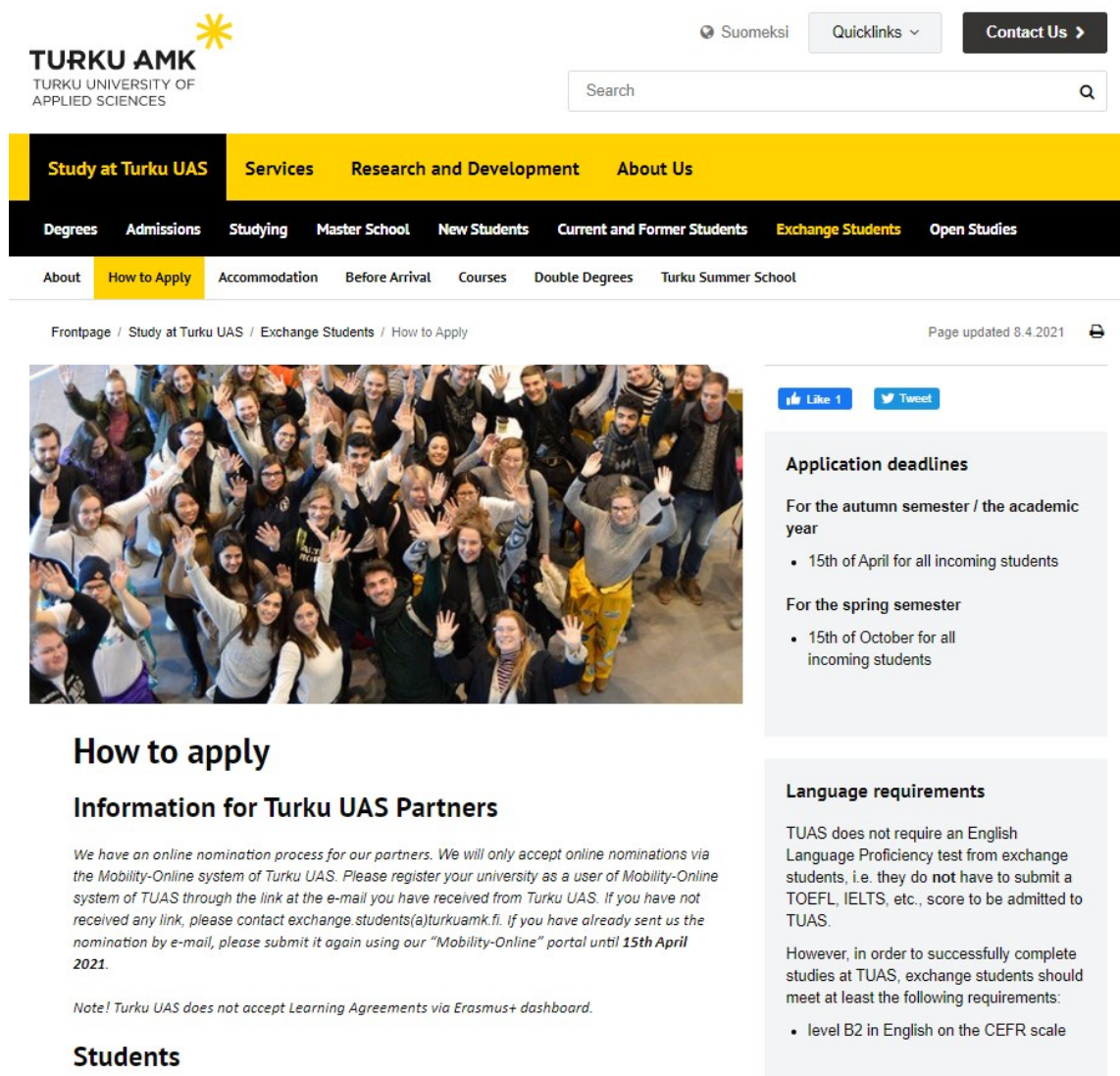


Picture 6. Haaga-Helia information for new students (Haaga-Helia 2021d).

Most notable feature of the Haaga-Helia website is how accessible all of the information for a new applicant or a new student is. The information is located under logical topics and navigation on the website is simple. The reader doesn't have to scroll up and down the page or go through drop-down menus to find out the information, as the first step of the website is to direct the different types of visitors to their own areas (Picture 2).

4.5.2 Benchmarking the Turku UAS exchange student application process

Although some of the rules and regulations that apply to exchange students are different than those of international degree students, there are many similarities also. The main similarity of course being the fact that the student is starting a semester in a foreign country. Turku UAS has an established process designed for exchange students and personnel assigned for the smooth operation of this process. As the process, and the services within, are under the same organization, applying some parts of the process is an easier transfer to make and the adaptation would be simple. The exchange students' process and international degree students' process could also have possibilities for cooperation.



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Frontpage / Study at Turku UAS / Exchange Students / How to Apply Page updated 8.4.2021

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Application deadlines

For the autumn semester / the academic year

- 15th of April for all incoming students

For the spring semester

- 15th of October for all incoming students

Language requirements

TUAS does not require an English Language Proficiency test from exchange students, i.e. they do **not** have to submit a TOEFL, IELTS, etc., score to be admitted to TUAS.

However, in order to successfully complete studies at TUAS, exchange students should meet at least the following requirements:

- level B2 in English on the CEFR scale

How to apply

Information for Turku UAS Partners

We have an online nomination process for our partners. We will only accept online nominations via the Mobility-Online system of Turku UAS. Please register your university as a user of Mobility-Online system of TUAS through the link at the e-mail you have received from Turku UAS. If you have not received any link, please contact exchange.students(a)turkuamk.fi. If you have already sent us the nomination by e-mail, please submit it again using our "Mobility-Online" portal until 15th April 2021.


Note! Turku UAS does not accept Learning Agreements via Erasmus+ dashboard.

Students

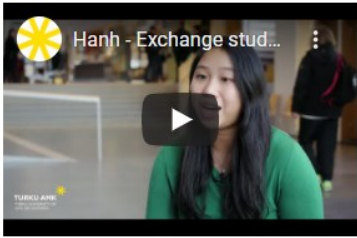
Picture 7. Instructions for exchange students (Turku UAS 2021c).

Turku UAS international services provide a webpage (Picture 7) with nomination information for the partner Universities, step-by-step application information for the students, direct links to information about accommodation options, available courses, what is necessary to know and do before arriving to Finland and other relevant information. The exchange students can also find information on who to contact and videos of past exchange students sharing their experience of exchange studies in Turku UAS (Picture 8).


Student Experiences



Emanuel - Exchange st...



Hanh - Exchange stud...



Kitty - Exchange stude...

Contact us

If you have any questions about the exchange period, get in touch with the international relations staff at the faculties or with the International Student Services. We look forward to meeting you in Finland!

<p>International Student Services</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • exchange.students@turkuamk.fi <p>Faculty of Health and Well-being</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Taina Nordgren 	<p>Arts Academy</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Jussi-Pekka Piiparinen <p>Faculty of Engineering and Business</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • TELI.international@turkuamk.fi • General inquiries, agreements <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◦ Leena Saarinen
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Picture 8. Student experiences and contact information (Turku UAS 2021c).

For an exchange student the customer journey (Figure 18) starts as being already a student in a higher education institution. They receive information about Turku UAS from their own University contacts, or possibly other students in exchange or who have been previously in exchange. This part of the application journey does not provide much in the way of a replicable action for the international degree students' application journey. One thing that could be taken notice of is having that one website which provides all of the generally necessary information.

Turku UAS exchange students have their own online application portal, while the international degree students use the same online portal as any students applying for degree studies in Finland. Any changes to this system is not within this thesis' realm of possibilities. In this phase the exchange students choose the courses and projects for their exchange semester, and all of the studies available in English can be found on the website. The international degree students are not applying to a certain set of courses, as they are applying to the whole degree programme, but making the course lists available in English with some introduction of the course contacts could be beneficial. Providing some marketing material, like the shared videos of the exchange students' experiences (Picture 8), or descriptions of the different projects the students have possibility to take part in while studying at Turku UAS is another thing that could work as a recruiting tool.

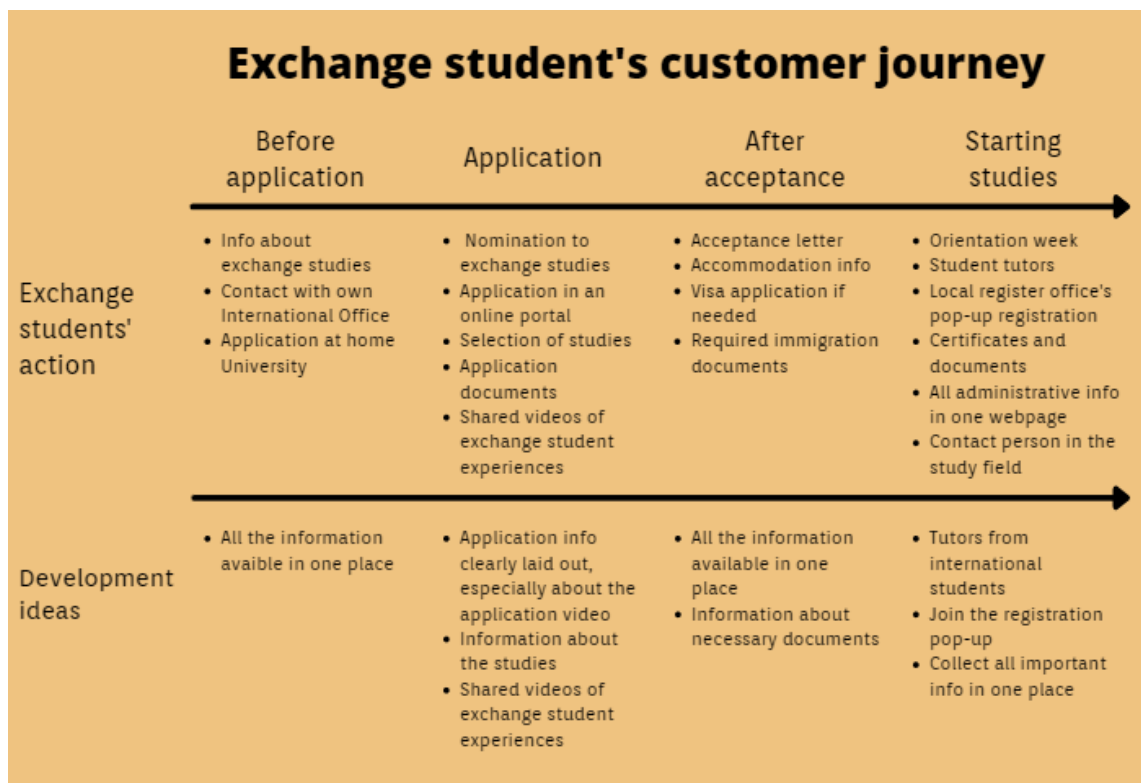


Figure 17. Exchange student's customer journey.

After the exchange students are accepted for the exchange semester, they receive an email with the acceptance letter attached, information about accommodation, information about the visa application process when required, documents required for the exchange semester, for example health documents and insurance. The international degree

students generally receive the same information and the acceptance letter also. The problem in this phase that the interviewed students pointed out was how late they received the acceptance letter and some of the received information was in Finnish. Receiving information in Finnish is due to the fact that the students are accepted in a Finnish taught programme, so the automatically generated emails will then also be in Finnish. Another note for this phase is to again have all the necessary information easily available in one place.

Benchmarking the Turku UAS exchange student process produced clearly the most development ideas for the last phase of the journey. The exchange students have an assigned student tutor. The student tutors usually work in pairs or in groups of three and have a group four to eight exchange students, depending on the amount of arriving exchange students and the number of student tutors. The international degree students are part of a starting study group, which has their own student tutors also. This phase could be developed by recruiting one of the international degree students from previous year's group to be a tutor, so there would be someone who could better relate to the international degree students' situation. Turku UAS has also agreed with the local register office to organize a pop-up event at the campus, where the exchange students can come and register their stay in Finland, instead of causing huge lineups at the office.

Exchange students and international degree students have a vast amount of information that they need to digest during the first weeks. There is all of the information about related to the studies, all of the administrative issues that need to be taken care of, and the students have just moved in to a new country and met a number of new people. The orientation week, where all this information is presented, is an overwhelming experience for most students, therefore it would be important to not just give all of the information, but to help the students to learn how to search for the information and have it easily available and accessible. The Turku UAS international services have a page in the Turku UAS intranet system Messi that is just for this purpose (Picture 9). This page is directed to exchange students, but could be used as it is for the international degree students also, as so much of the information is useful for them too. It would also be simple to produce a similar page directed to international degree students.

Information for Exchange Students

Here you can find useful information and links for exchange students.

Note!

Globe – International services Please contact our international relations experts by email. You can also book a personal appointment. More information: <https://messi.turkuamk.fi/english/Studying/10/Pages/default.aspx>

Click the headers below for more information.

GENERAL ORIENTATION AND FACULTY ORIENTATION MATERIALS 7. - 8.1. 2021

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ACCESS CONTROL CARD (ACCESS TO THE CLASSROOMS)

SAFETY AT TUAS

REQUESTING THE TRANSCRIPT OF RECORDS IN THE END OF YOUR STUDIES/PRACTICAL TRAINING AT TUAS

MORE INFORMATION



LINKS

- [Student Union TUO](#)
- [CampusSport](#)
- [ESN-IAC page on Facebook](#)
- [ESN-IAC](#)

USEFUL FORMS

- [Learning Agreement for EU students](#)
- [Learning Agreement for non-EU students](#)

Picture 9. Orientation information for exchange students after arrival (Turku UAS 2021d).

The exchange student webpage (Picture 9) already contains the information for the intranet systems, how to use the printer, how the students can get the Finnish identity code and register to the Finnish population system and how to get the access control card. All this information works as it is for the international degree students as well. Also, information like the Friendship programme is beneficial for the international degree students, since that can help them find more friends and acquaintances in the city and help them to be integrated to the society. As all this information is currently marked for exchange students, the international degree students might not take a look into it. And although these information exist in the intranet, it is not as easily accessible as it is for the exchange students. Currently the headline for the webpage is “Information for exchange students” and possibly changing it to “Information for international students” could help alleviate this problem. But it could also pose the problem that exchange

students interpret the term “international students” to refer only the international degree students.” Furthermore, as some of the information there is not for the international degree students, but only for the exchange students, it would be beneficial and more clear to everyone if these were separate.

5 SERVICE CONCEPT

The service concept of this thesis uses service blueprint as the building block to provide structure for the service. The service concept for the students' journey from application to start of studies contains the different steps that have been highlighted in the customer journey maps. Through service blueprint, the concept partly describes the steps in what they currently are, but have additional context in how those steps could be improved based on the suggestions gained through the research, which can be found in the chapter 4.

Service blueprints can be used as extensions of customer journey maps. Service blueprint adds the service providers frontstage and backstage actions to the customers experience, to further define the different moments of the process. (Stickdorn et al. 2018, p. 54.)

This thesis uses service blueprint to define and match the backroom actions with the international applicants' journey. With defined phases and actions the degree programme personnel and administrative staff who will be in contact with the students will also have a repeatable process and know what challenges the students could be expected to face. With a repeatable and an expected process the applicants can be provided with the answers and information they will be needing, thus minimizing confusion and uncertainty, and cutting down on extra or duplicate work.

5.1 Service blueprint for the application process

The process is divided in two parts and each part has its own service blueprint (Figures 18 and 19). Additionally there is one complete service blueprint (Figure 20), to collect the whole process into one journey. The first blueprint (Figure 18) is for the application process, where the customer is an applicant, not yet a student. The second blueprint (Figure 19) represents the process and actions after acceptance until the start of studies. The blueprints highlight the important moments of the two parts of the process and also communicates the moments that should be paid extra attention to during the process. The service blueprints focus more on the service providers side of the actions. The applicants' journey is described in more detail in the customer journey maps.

First of the two service blueprints (Figure 18) divides the actors in to “applicant”, “degree programme personnel” and “administration.” Applicant’s actions are divided in four parts, that follow the ones that have been presented in the customer journey maps: “learning about the degree”, “online application process”, “application tasks” and “application interview.” The blueprint combines existing actions with actions that should be considered for future use. The process also currently has the degree programme’s and administration’s tasks loosely separated, as the teacher interviews have pointed out, but the intention is to provide a clearer picture of what action is whose responsibility. Since the expert interviews with the teachers also pointed out that it has not been an actual problem with the administrative staff to decide who does what. Instead they have learned throughout the years how things go. Therefore there does not seem to be a need for a stricter division between the tasks. But a bigger picture level of dividing the tasks would still be beneficial, since this knowledge of “how things usually go” might be lost through personnel changes in the organization. The separation of the tasks has fluidity also because the teachers from the music degree programme are often the first contact to these applicants, as they might have already met, the teacher was possibly the one trying to recruit the applicant, as is pointed out in the expert interviews. In these situations it is common for the applicant to always contact the teacher first. If the teacher has a good understanding and knowledge of the administrative side also, they might end up responding to those questions as well.

This service blueprint could be used as an orientation material for new teachers or staff who work with international degree student applications to get them easily acquainted with the possible tasks they face. Although another teacher could respond to the applicants questions about the administrative side, a less experienced teacher does not know or be completely sure how to answer. This blueprint gives them a clear idea what is expected that they know and who they can turn to in other issues.

Application process



Applicant	Learning about the degree	Online application process	Application tasks	Application interview
Degree programme personnel 	Recruiting potential students. Provide and create material for the recruitment handbook.	Contact with the applicants regarding questions about the studies Determination of the application requirements and criteria.	Define the application tasks. Evaluation of the applications.	Hold the interviews. Evaluation of the interviews. Define the criteria.
Administration 	Updating application info. Degree programme and study info on the website. Accessibility for the recruitment material	Maintenance of the application tool. Accessible online instructions.	Maintenance of the application tool. Accessible online instructions.	Instructions for the interview. Interview schedule. Collection of the final application data.

Figure 18. Service blueprint for the application process.

The expert interviews (Chapter 4.2.1) pointed out the necessity to recruit more international applicants for the degree programme. The interviews also noted that the teacher do not have much to recruit with, since they do not have any proper materials for it except for their own expertise. But for an international applicant wanting to know more about the degree programme, there is not much they can find, since the programme is officially a Finnish taught programme and the online information is mostly in Finnish. As the beginning of the application process is the most important step of the whole process, since the student might not follow through with the process if they have doubts from the start. This step will be the main point of focus for the first part of the service blueprint and the whole service concept.

The following steps of the process are more established in the application process and have less flexibility, as some parts of the process follow national and institutional

regulations and schedules. For this part of the process it is important to establish the tasks and possible issues that arise during the applicants' journey.

Recruitment handbook

The recruitment handbook's purpose is two-fold, as it is supposed to work independently, but also for the teacher's to be able to use it as an actual piece of information and marketing material they can show to potential international applicants. As the plan is for the handbook to be accessible from the Turku UAS website (Picture 1), the interested students can access it independently, receive information of the degree programme, of the application process and would also be able to see the marketing materials. These marketing materials would be videos from different events and projects as well as some comments, video or text, from the international degree students in the programme. This same link could be used by the teachers who meet potential applicants they are recruiting for the programme, as they would have something concrete they can show these potential applicants and give them clear instructions on how they can find more information about the degree programme as well as what the application process requires.

The easiest way to produce this handbook would be a pdf-document, that could be embedded as a link on the website. This way it would also be easy to share directly via email. The pdf could also have separate links to videos. The Turku UAS Arts Academy already has an existing and active YouTube channel (Taideakatemia Live) which could function as the platform for the videos. As an additional benefit, this way the recruitment process would also cause more traffic on the institutions social media channels.

A separate website would be a good option this also, as the videos could be embedded in to the site and would not require opening extra tabs on the browser. The website would also be quicker to update, as with the pdf-document it would require a new document to be uploaded with every update. The problem with a separate website is that this option is not considered to be within the tuas.fi-websites structure, as other degree programme do not have similar websites.

5.2 Service blueprint for the start of studies

Second part of the process starts from the moment the applicant is accepted as a student to the degree programme. Therefore the customer's term in the second service blueprint (Figure 19) is also changed from "applicant" to "student." The other two actors are the same as in the first service blueprint. The actions in the second blueprint are divided into "receiving acceptance info", "information about arrival and start of studies", "orientation week."

The first two actions are mostly determined by the national and organizational regulations and in many parts. The administrative side has the responsibility on most these tasks. For example keeping the information regarding visa application updated and have the correct links available. The administration makes sure that all the information that is available on the website is up-to-date and evaluates whether the information is accessible and clear. The accepted students might be in contact with degree programme personnel also with the administrative issues, but according to the expert interviews, this has not been a problem, as the communication between the administration and degree programme personnel has worked well.

The degree programme personnel's task are more about how the orientation days will be organized, selecting the peer tutors for the group that is starting and also informing the decisions regarding each applicants' application.

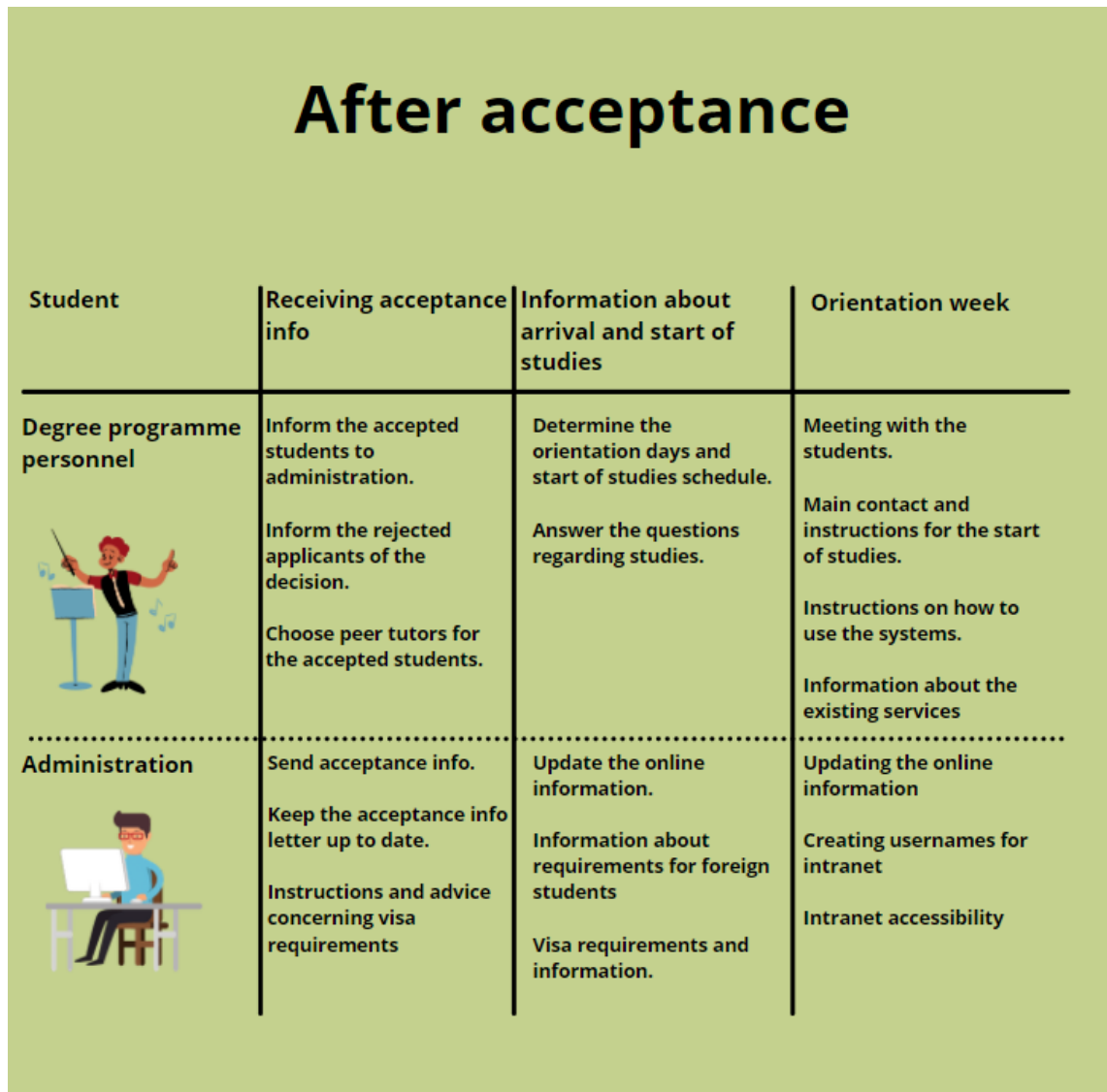


Figure 19. Service blueprint for the after acceptance process.

The main focus of development in the second service blueprint is in the last action, the “Orientation week.” Just like the recruitment in the first service blueprint, the orientation week is the start of the studies and also represents the beginning of the life in a new country for the international degree students. How well they are introduced and integrated to the student group, the institution, to the different online-systems and to the institutional services available for them, will pay dividends throughout the students’ time with Turku UAS. As referenced in the desk research (Chapter 3.3), the international degree students who use the different services provided by their education institution are generally happy with the services and find them useful. Helping the international degree students to find out about the Turku UAS services in the beginning of their studies will

increase the likelihood they are able to utilize these services during their studies. Career services provide help for all students to find possible career paths and post-graduate study possibilities after finishing the degree. Helping the students find possibilities after their degree will play a role in being able to keep the students in Finland after graduation.

Start of studies information package

To ensure the international students receive and find all the necessary and beneficial information in the beginning of their studies as feasibly as possible, this service concept provides them with an information package designed for this purpose. As noted in the expert and student interviews, some international degree students will arrive to Finland after the orientation week, because the visa process sometimes takes so long. Therefore the degree programme cannot count on the students receiving all of the information in the orientation days.

For those students who do arrive in time for the orientation days, they would also benefit from having all of the important and useful information collected in one place. The beginning of studies is a time when the international students are learning to live in a new country, they are meeting new people, figuring out their new schedule with the studies and taking care of the mandatory immigration responsibilities. With so many new things happening at once, it is difficult to digest all of the received information. An information package they can return to would serve them throughout their study experience. The information package can work as a printable document or an additional website on the Turku UAS website, as presented in the benchmarking (Chapter 4.5.2).

Applicant/student	Learning of the degree programme	Finding information about the application	Filling in the online application	Interview and application video	Acceptance letter	Finding accommodation, preparing to move to a foreign country, possible visa application	Information about the start of studies	Orientation week and the beginning of studies	Study cycle	Graduation
Degree programme personnel	Recruiting potential applicants, talented musicians	Providing material for the website	Helping the applicants, responding to any questions, contact with the institutional administration	Provide instructions for the application, interview the applicants and evaluation	Decisions of accepted and rejected students	Help students with questions related to studies and orientation week, selection of peer tutors	Planning and providing the orientation programme, meeting times, links for online participation	Organize the orientation week, meetings with the students	Teaching, guiding, tutoring and being the overall point of contact	Teaching, guiding, tutoring and being the overall point of contact
Turku UAS Administration	Turku UAS website maintenance	Turku UAS website maintenance	Helping the applicants, responding to any questions, contact with the degree programme personnel	Up-to-date information on platforms	Sending the acceptance letters and information for possible visa applications, accommodation etc.	Maintaining the information for possible visa applications, accommodation etc. on the website. Organize training for peer tutors	Obtain and archive required documents from students	Organizing the IT usernames, passwords, email, profile for the intranet systems	Providing the University services, career services, study counselling, international services etc.	Providing the degree certificate
National administration	Regulations for the applications		Maintenance of the application website		Visa application information					

Figure 20. Complete service blueprint.

Validity of the research

The research used small sample and participation in certain research methods, like the survey and co-design workshop. As the survey's role was to provide background information for the topic, the small sample of only four replies didn't create a problem, but with a bigger sample more issues could have been brought up and it could further verify the opinions. In the co-design workshop the small participation of three students created an open environment and all of the participants were willing to talk and explain their commentary. But with more participants a second workshop could have been organized and the results between the two workshops compare. Or the students could have been divided into groups of EU and non-EU students.

The research would also benefit from following through the application period and start of studies with specific starting groups in different years. This way the applicants' and students' comments would be made during the application and start of studies instead of one to three years afterwards. With a longer tracking the questions could be followed up a year or two later and then again when graduating and after graduation. This would provide more depth and reflection to the commentary.

6 CONCLUSIONS

The COVID-19 pandemic and its long-term effects on international degree students and in the quantity of future applications at this point is still an unknown. There have been discussions about people being more hesitant on moving abroad and leaving their support networks, thus taking the risk of being stuck alone in a different country. The other effect might be the availability of online learning and how that can affect applicants' decisions on whether to apply abroad or apply for an international degree they can complete from their current home.

Exporting education can be a factor in this, as it is a way to bring familiarity and knowledge of Finnish education system to potential future students. Better knowledge of what to expect can encourage more applicants to Finland, as it will be less of an unknown. Also the branding of Finnish education and advertising its quality can be an enticing factor for international applicants when choosing an education institution.

It is justified to assume that the teaching and studying have changed for good due to the pandemic and the distance learning will stay as a meaningful part of the education. How the distance learning affects the international degree students and their ability to integrate in to their study groups and create local networks will be another thing to monitor. Or even better, be proactive in bringing the international degree students closer to the institution's services and student life and student groups, to avoid the risks of exclusion.

The research conclusions are divided under two parts. First one discusses the research questions of developing the application process for international degree students and help in the start of studies phase. Second part discusses the research question regarding international degree students staying and finding employment in Finland.

First impression as a deciding factor

The first impression carries a lot of weight, whether it is the website for the application process, introductory website of the degree programme or the orientation days in the beginning of studies. The expert interview with degree programme teacher Mikko Luoma reflected the sentiment also. This is also the reasoning for the service concepts main

focus areas being in the beginning of the application process and the beginning of the studies.

In the recruitment situation the clear and simple instructions convince the potential applicants better and make the job of the recruiter easier. If the recruiter appears to be a bit lost on how to instruct the applicant, the applicant does not get the impression that the process will be simple and easy to follow. It has the potential to be a deciding difference for the applicant not to apply for a programme that does not seem to be well organized.

Another factor for the first impression in the beginning of the application phase can be the accessibility of the information. Haaga-Helia's website (Chapter 4.5.1) is an example of a website that invites the potential applicant or a new students to learn more about the possibilities and has the information presented in an accessible manner. This way the applicant is not left with confusion, but actually knows what the application process entails.

HEI Services are not familiar enough

As also referenced in the Chapter 3.3 the beginning of the studies plays a determining role in how well the students will use the available services throughout their degree. The students who find the available services will be better equipped to contact the right people and stay in the information loop regarding useful possibilities, events, openings and such.

Instead of changing the existing services the main focus should be in how the services are marketed and communicated to the students. Once the students are within the services, for example the career and recruiting services, feedback can be collected for possible development needs within the provided services.

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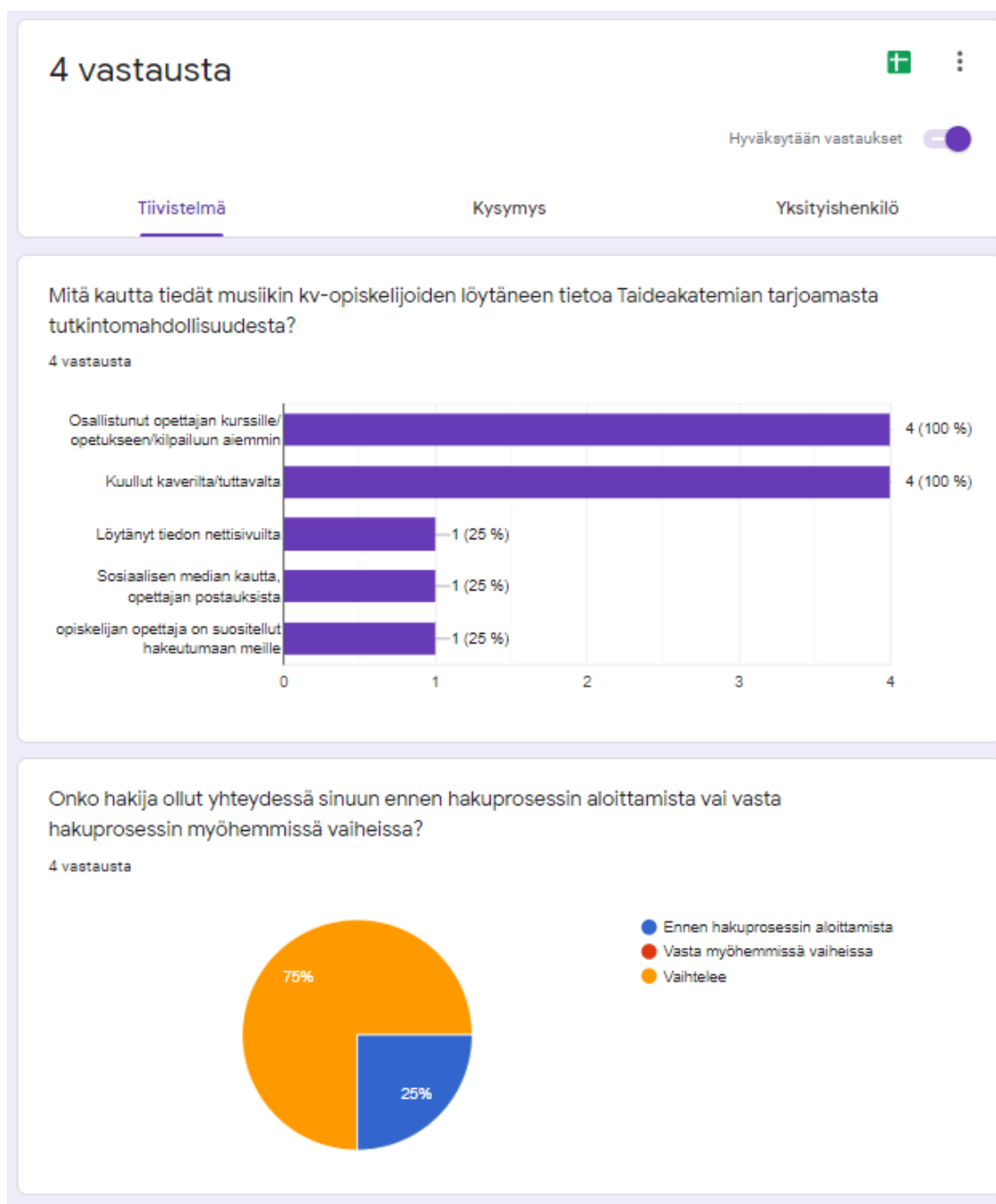
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Survey for the teachers



Mitä hakijat haluavat kysyä hakuprosessista? Mikä on epäselvää

4 vastausta

Onnistuuko hakemus etänä, kuinka kauan kestää saada tieto hyväksynnästä, opintojen sisältö

Voiko hakea etänä videolla, mitä tallenteen tulee sisältää

kuinka paljon opetusta saa viikoittain, hakuvaiheessa kysymyksiä on loppujenlopuksi aika vähän

Hakuun liittyviä kysymyksiä tulee varsin harvoin, kysymykset ovat pääosin samoja kuin kotimaisilla hakijoilla: haun aikataulut, hakutallenteisiin liittyvät asiat, milloin tulokset selviävät.

Mihin ohjeistat hakijat etsimään tietoa?

4 vastausta

Vastaa itse tai nettisivuille

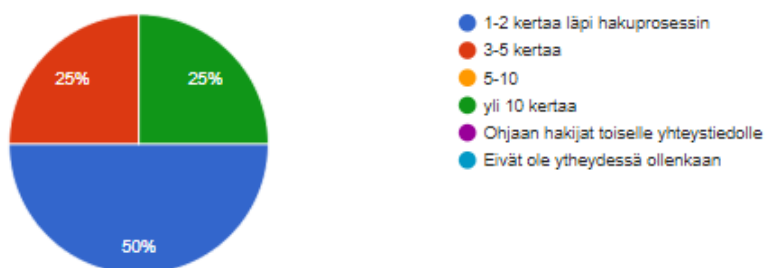
Vastaa itse, ohjaan oppilaitoksen verkkosivulle, jossa hakemuksen voi tehdä

ottamaan suoraan yhteyttä joko TK_päällikköön tai tulevaan pääaineopettajaan

Oman infon jälkeen koulutus- & tutkimuspäällikön tykö. Mahdollisena viiteryhmänä myös aiemmin saapuneet kv-opiskelijat samalta kielialueelta kuin hakija.

Kuinka monta kertaa hakuprosessin aikana hakija on yhteydessä sinuun tavallisesti?

4 vastausta





Oletko huomannut kv-opiskelijoilla jonkin tyypillisen/toistuvan haasteen opiskelujen alkuvaiheessa?

4 vastausta

kieliongelmat, orientaatiossa jää asioita epäselviksi,

En ole

suomen kieli ja suhtautuminen kieliopintoihin muutenkin

Kieliongelmat (edes englanti ei aina ota sujuakseen), orientaatioongelmat (mitä-missä-milloin tapahtuu?), yleinen "asettuminen", yksinäisyydestä johtuva harhailu, epäselvien asioiden pitkittynyt selvittäminen

Questions for the email interview

1. Mistä asti kv-tutkinto-opsikelijoita on hyväksytty Musiikin koulutusohjelmaan?
2. Mistä ajatus kv-opiskelijoihin vastaanottamiseen sai alkunsa?
3. Onko jotain materiaalia (tutkimuksia, tilastoja ykms.), joita käytettiin päätöksen tukemiseksi?
4. Miten ulkomaisia opiskelijoita tavoitetaan? Mitä kautta tutkintoa markkinoidaan?
5. Onko rajoitettu kuinka monta kv-opiskelijaa voidaan ottaa?
6. Soittotunnit menee varmaan englanniksi opettajan kanssa, mutta miten muu opetus toteutetaan?

Student interview structure

- How I learned of the degree programme?
- How I found info for application?
 - o What info was missing what was good?
- After application/acceptance, what info got?
 - o What information would have needed but didn't get?
 - o What you wish you had known?
 - o Who you contacted?
- What information you received before arrival?
 - o What I wish I had known?
- And after arrival?
 - o What I wish I had known?
- After graduation plans?
- What kind of help for employment have you gotten?
 - o What kind of help for employment you might want to get?
- Strengths of higher education in Finland?
- Weaknesses of higher education in Finland?

Expert interview structure

- Miten hakuprosessi/rekrytointi alkaa koulutuksen näkökulmasta?
- Miten rekrytointia voisi kehittää?
- Mitkä asiat hakuvaiheessa työllistävät eniten?
- Tuntuuko jokin asia hakuvaiheessa ongelmalliselta/haastavalta? Koulutukselle tai opiskelijoille?
- Tehdäänkö jossain asiassa päällekkäistä työtä?
- Hyväksynnän jälkeen informaatio, miten opiskelijat saavat? Mikä aikataulu hyväksyntöjen osalta?
- Mitä informaatiota opiskelijat saavat/kaipaavat ennen saapumista Suomeen?
- Miten aloittavat opiskelijat saadaan koulun yleisten palvelujen pariin?
- Miten opiskelijoiden integroitumista ryhmään edistetään?
- Kv-opiskelijoiden työllistyminen?
- Miten työllistymistä tuetaan?
- Muita kommentteja?