



GUIDEBOOK FOR
INTERNATIONAL TUTORS IN HAMK UAS

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1 Introduction

Tutors are essential for any student but especially for international students, because moving to another country is challenging even to the most independent of us. International tutors have a great responsibility in welcoming the new students and helping them to adapt quickly.

In the beginning, the international students may need a little bit more support than Finnish students. However, tutoring international students is not supposed to be a full-time job. They, too, need to adapt to their new life and form their own daily routines. As a tutor, you are expected to help, guide and socialize, but do not abandon your studies or personal life for any of the above mentioned.

The tutoring adviser works for the Student Union of HAMK and together with the Student Union's Board and its tutoring responsible ensures the well-being of all tutors and supports them whenever needed. Do not hesitate to contact us if you need help, have questions or want to give feedback. In addition, your Student Union is always interested in developing new services, events and activities for students regardless of their nationality. We warmly welcome new ideas, please share them!

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2 International students – who are they?

In HAMK UAS, the term international student usually refers to one of these two:

- a degree student: a student who will obtain his/her whole degree in HAMK.
- an exchange student: a student who studies in a University or a University of Applied Sciences abroad and visits HAMK attending classes for one or two semesters.

Degree students move to Finland for 3-5 years and learn Finnish language (some more than others). Quite often their budget is as tight as Finnish students' – if not tighter. In every aspect, degree students should be treated equally with Finnish students.

Exchange students come to Finland through different exchange programs (for example: Erasmus, Nordplus, First). They usually come for a short period of 3-5 months and for most of them, their time in Finland is an exciting breath of fresh air with few courses on the side. Their families and friends are left behind, which might give them more freedom, but they will return home soon enough, so they might not experience much homesickness or cultural shock.

There is at least one similarity between these international students: the lack of social network in Finland. When moving to Finland from overseas, students leave their social networks behind. Tutors are their first contact to the people in this country. They give the student a first impression on HAMK UAS and its students, Finland and tutors in general. Tutors are their first link to the Finnish society. You do not have to become everyone's best friend, but you need to be friendly and patient even if the new student is having a bad day – it could simply be that she or he is suffering from culture shock.

The international students you tutor will come from various backgrounds and have different tastes and interests and they will be expecting different things from their time in Finland. Some come to study something they cannot study at home; others because of Finnish heritage, interest in the country language or culture. There are also those who come here to escape difficult relationships or situations at home or just want to take a semester off to travel and party. Whatever the reason, you should remember you are only tutors. You are trained to be peer guides and to help students adapt to their studies at HAMK UAS and life in Finland. You do not need to be best friends, personal assistants, Finnish language teachers or therapists.



3 Tutoring international students

As stated before, tutoring international students might be a bit more time consuming than tutoring Finnish students. Tutoring international students starts even before they have entered the country.

Exchange students

HAMK UAS units have different practices regarding exchange students. However, generally, degree programs and units deal with their exchange students themselves with no general administration from International affairs office in Hämeenlinna University Centre. Degree programs have international affairs coordinators/secretaries that coordinate the activities of one or several degree programs. It is their job to confirm all the official dates with the incoming exchange students as well as tell them about student apartments and how to apply for one.

Every incoming exchange student should have an assigned tutor for them before they arrive – this means that the exchange student tutors should know who they are tutoring before the students arrive. Practices vary between degree programs; contact your degree program’s coordinator/secretary of international affairs about this.

Exchange student’s tutor’s responsibilities are:

- Contacting the student beforehand (e-mail, Facebook), introducing him- or herself and informing the student about any important issues.
- Picking him/her up from bus or train station.
- Taking the student to his/her flat.
- Giving the student a city tour and a campus tour and showing them all important services.
- Forwarding messages and information to the exchange student during the semester.

- Helping the student with study-related issues and giving support in difficult situations (for example booking doctor's appointment).

Degree students

The incoming degree students are treated similarly as new Finnish students and they receive the same info as the Finnish students. Still, you should check your student email even during summer in case someone is trying to contact you!

3.1 Before arrival

Exchange students

Actively contact your degree program's coordinator/secretary of international affairs and ask whom you will be tutoring. Most degree programs know who is coming already at the end of April/October. If you have been named to tutor a certain student and you have his/her email address, send them an email.

- Emailing an incoming student: send an email before she/he arrives. Introduce yourself and ask them if they have received help in finding an apartment. Also, ask them the exact date and time they will be arriving in Finland and to your campus, so you can give them advice with travelling plans and pick them up from the bus or railway station in your campus town. It is important to let them know someone knows they are coming and will be expecting them. Also, let them ask questions in advance about student life in Finland and HAMK UAS.
- Contacting students on Facebook: the International Affairs office of HAMK UAS administers a Facebook group for exchange students. You will receive an invitation to join this closed group. Once invited, introduce yourself and mention what you are studying. Be prepared to answer

questions. You can also promote parties and other student activities in the group.

- Find out beforehand where the new student is going to live and how to get there. Also, find out when/how the new student receives the key to his/her flat. Ask your degree program's secretary/coordinator of international affairs if you can pick up the key in advance (especially if the student arrives in the evening or during weekend). Also, ask about when and where the new student will sign the rental agreement.

Degree Students

If you do receive an email, answer it promptly – the issue might not seem big or urgent to you but for that student it might be very important. Since international degree students are supposed to be treated the same as Finnish students, they should not expect pick-ups from the train or help with the accommodation, but if you want to help them, you can.

You are not expected to help the new students to find accommodation or with immigration issues. It is very important that you do not advise them on issues you are not certain of. Instruct them to contact your degree program's international affairs secretary/coordinator or HAMK UAS admissions office if they have questions that are beyond your knowledge. Remember that tutors are not expected to know on everything; they just need to know where to find help.

3.2 On arrival

Tutors do not have to pick up the international students from the airport. However, one of the most important duties a tutor is to pick up the new international student from the bus or railway station of your campus city. If you are not able to meet the new student, please arrange for a fellow tutor to do the

pickup. If you cannot find anyone, please contact your student counselor or secretary/coordinator of international affairs. **It is important that someone will be at the station welcoming the new student!**

Use this checklist when picking up the new student:

- Agree on the arrival date and time beforehand with the incoming student and your degree program's coordinator for international affairs.
- Agree to meet him/her in a place that is easy to find (info desk/meeting point at a bus station etc.).
- Be on time (or early!)
- Have the student's contact information written down and with you. Also, give your contact information (phone number) in advance to the arriving student.
- Help the new student with the luggage.
- Prepare yourself for anything and everything. Be patient.

3.3 At the apartment

Once you are at the student's apartment, the student is probably exhausted from the travelling. Do not pour all the information possible on her/him there and then, but do check at least these:

- Make sure that the room/apartment has the essentials for staying the night (bed, bedding, toilet paper, etc.).
- Remember to tell the new student that he/she can drink the tap water in Finland.
- Show how to use the stove/oven, fridge, shower, any equipment the apartment might have.
- Make sure the student knows how the lock on the apartment door works and knows to keep the key with him/her at all times. Calling a locksmith or making new keys can be very expensive.

- Tour the building: laundry room (explain how to operate the machines), mailboxes, garbage bins outdoors, the nearest bus stop etc.
- Show the closest food store and tell how long it is open. Note that if it is late and the big stores are closed, it might be a good idea to walk to the closest late-open store or kiosk to buy some food/other essentials.
- Help the student with Internet access. Getting Internet access fast is vital for most students. Internet is included in HOPS rental agreements and there should be a modem box with the right wires in the flat. If the modem box is missing, please contact HOPS office!
- If an exchange student arrives in the morning, you can help him/her pick up the possible pre-ordered Survival Kit(s).

After you leave the apartment:

- Inform the secretary/coordinator of international affairs of your degree program that the new student has arrived, and the pickup was successful (send them an email).



Make arrangements with the new student for the same day (if you have time) or the next day and take him/her to a city and a campus tour.

3.4 The day after arrival

Tutor's duties do not end after escorting the new student to the flat. As a tutor, you should at least do the following:

- Take the new student to a **town tour** in your campus town. Walking is the best way to do this because then she/he will learn how to get around. At least show the following:
 - I. Where your HAMK UAS unit is and how to get there easily.
 - II. Where the nearest/least expensive food store is. Go shopping together!

- III. Where the closest pharmacy/bank/post office is.
 - IV. How to get a bus card if the student needs one.
 - V. Where the closest bus stop is and how to read the bus timetable.
 - VI. Where to get a SIM card if the student needs one. You can buy a prepaid SIM card easily from, for example, R-Kioski.
- Take the new student to a **HAMK UAS campus tour** on your campus. Show at least the following:
 - I. Classrooms and how to find the right one.
 - II. Cafeteria/cafe
 - III. Student counselor's office
 - IV. Secretary/coordinator of international affairs office
 - V. Library – you can also get a library card
 - VI. IT help desk/how to get IT help online if needed
 - VII. Sports facilities
 - VIII. Student Union's office and Lounge (in HML University Centre)
 - IX. Local student association office and services
 - X. Any other services on campus you feel are relevant

Also, be prepared to tell the new students about different courses (if you study in the same Degree Programme) and study practices in HAMK UAS.

4 The Student Union of HAMK UAS for international students

The Student Union of HAMK UAS is by law the official representative of all students in HAMK UAS. This also includes exchange students. In addition to the Student Union, there are local student associations (FAMKO, HAVO, HIOP, HÄTÄ, LOK, Metsäpojat, RINO and Toveriliitto) who organize student activities such as sports events and parties in their campus city. The Student Union, however, is the official channel towards school and national organizations.

4.1 Membership

All students studying at HAMK UAS can become members of the Student Union. Exchange students and other visiting students are also entitled to join for one or two semesters, depending on how long they will study in HAMK UAS. After joining, they will receive a Finnish student card, which they can use to gain many different benefits. The most important benefit is usually the 45-55% discount on railways and bus tickets. Finnish national railways VR and coach service provider Matkahuolto only accept Finnish student cards, not student cards from abroad or the International Student Identity Card (ISIC). This practice is very different from other EU countries and may come as a surprise, so remember to mention it. In addition, with the student card exchange students are entitled to several other national and local benefits and offers.

The membership form and instructions are on the Student Unions webpage: www.hamko.fi/en/student-card

If you have any questions about the membership or filling the online form, please contact hamko@hamko.fi



4.2 Services

International students are entitled to the same services as the Finnish students. Some services are targeted to exchange students:

Survival Kit

Survival Kit is a pre-orderable package that the incoming exchange students can buy from the Student Union. The kit will be delivered to the student's campus

where it can be collected when she/he arrives. The student will receive an email about the exact location and time where she/he can pick up the kit. It is very important to include the arrival date in the form so the Student Union's office knows when to deliver the right kit.

Survival Kit includes the following items

The kit includes important kitchen utensils and bedding that students need in their flats. All of the items are delivered in a plastic box so it is easy to carry. The items included are:

- fork, knife, spoon, teaspoon
- mug
- glass
- soup bowl, plate, small plate
- kitchen utensil- set (5 pieces)
- a kettle and a lid
- frying pan
- kitchen towels
- potholder
- dishcloth
- pillow
- sheets (under sheet, pillowcase, duvet cover)
- duvet

The kits are delivered to the student's campus packed. More about the Survival Kit's from HAMKO's webpage (<http://hamko.fi/en/survival-kits>).



5 Cultural tutoring

If you are not a Finnish speaker, it is a good idea to learn some Finnish before new international students arrive. If you know basic Finnish, the international affairs coordinator can rely on you more.

Tutoring international students is obviously more than just helping them to ease to their studies. International students have to also adapt into a new culture. As discussed previously in this guidebook, one characteristic the international students have in common is the lack of social network in Finland.

5.1 Making friends

As tutors, your role is to help them create a network by making it easier for them to meet people. The better their social network is the easier adapting to Finland will be. Although students often go to study abroad "to meet new people" and "to become international", you should be aware of few things:

- Students' language skills vary, and this might make people shy at first. English is still mostly a second language to students. Encourage shy people to use their language skills bravely. Sometimes tutors need to be active at first (and make mistakes while speaking) before the ice is broken. You can also encourage them to speak Finnish!

- People seek security. Therefore, do not feel offended if your Spanish student immediately bonds with another Spanish student – it is only natural because they often share a language and cultural background. Instead of feeling rejected, be active and invite the new student out for a coffee, to meet your friends or to parties, sports events, etc. Soon she/he will have a vivid social network of both international students and Finns.
- Most international students want to hang out with Finns and get to know them better. Therefore, you should attend to international students' events as much as your studies and other life allow. Also, if it is possible, be active in trying to integrate the international student to your life in Finland.
- At least in the beginning, take extra care in forwarding all event messages to the students you tutor. That might mean being active in social media, sending a couple of extra emails or text messages but it is a tutor's duty to try to activate students, especially in the beginning.

5.2 Finding work

Tutors do not need to help international students to find work. Exchange students do not really even ask if they can work in Finland but quite often international degree students want to know if this is a possibility for them. This obviously depends on their visa and language skills. There are jobs where Finnish is not needed to fulfill the task but it is always better if you know even basic Finnish. If you have worked in Finland and know about the Finnish work culture, it is always a good thing to share your knowledge.

5.3 Free time activities

Different cultures and people have different ideas on how free time should be spent and what is considered as fun leisure activity. It might be good to sometimes look beyond the student parties when trying to activate international

students. Parties are ok, but especially degree students might also want to have something else to do. When you first contact a new student try to get to know them a bit and ask them about their hobbies or interests and whether they want to continue them during their time in Finland.

5.4 Finnish customs and culture

Finnish culture and customs may seem weird to international students. In order to help them to adapt, you can at least tell them the following practical matters about Finnish culture.

- Finnish people take their shoes off indoors, especially when visiting someone's home.
- Finns shake hands when they meet a stranger and sometimes hug when they meet a friend. Finns however, do not kiss on the cheek.
- When visiting a Finnish friend, it is better to inform them in advance. Privacy is usually important to Finns.
- Finns like coffee. You will be offered coffee in most places, at least when visiting a Finnish home.
- Finns love their personal space and do not usually go very close to strangers. For example, Finns usually prefer sitting alone on a bus or in a lecture room, rather than sitting next to a person, they do not know.
- Finnish people are punctual. They expect you to pay your bills on time and arrive when agreed. If something is said to start at 12:00 it indeed will start at 12 o'clock sharp. Finns consider it very rude to be late.
- Finns use the 24 hour clock. In spoken language, Finns often use the 12 hour clock but all offices and shops will give their opening hours in 24 hour form.

- Daylight saving time – or summer time – is normal in Finland, but changing the time might come as a surprise to some international students. In Finland, as in rest of the EU, daylight saving time begins on the last Sunday of March and ends on the last Sunday of October.
- You cannot take your own drinks to a bar but in house parties, Finns take their own bottles with them.
- Smoking is not allowed indoors anywhere.
- Finnish police is reliable and cannot be bribed.
- During the Finnish holidays some shops are closed
- Finns can be very reserved in the presence of people they do not know. This may seem like they are angry or arrogant but usually that is not the case.
- In Finland, the everyman’s rights give anyone the right to walk in forests and pick wild berries and mushrooms. Be careful, though. Do not go into an unknown forest alone, you might get lost and do not pick anything you do not know for sure is edible. There are poisonous berries and mushrooms and they might look the same as edible ones in another country!
- Sauna is a place for relaxing and has nothing to do with sex. Finns consider sexual behavior in sauna (for example staring at naked people) rude.

5.5 Studying at HAMK UAS

You are obviously an expert on this subject. Please bear in mind that the international student has the right to form her/his own opinions on the topic,

so do not give your personal feelings as the absolute truth. Tell them at least the following facts about studying in Finland:

- Finnish education system comprises of nine-years of basic education (comprehensive school), then three years of upper secondary education (general education or vocational education and training) and finally higher education, provided by universities and universities of applied sciences. Only the comprehensive school is compulsory for all.
- In Finnish schools and universities, students are expected to be on time and actively attend the lectures.
- Cheating is not allowed. Finnish students will not approve of this behavior and the teachers will fail you if you cheat in an exam.

5.6 What to do during free time?

The Student Union often receives enquiries about hobby possibilities in HAMK UAS campus towns. There is no comprehensive list of all the possible hobbies in all seven towns. Here is a list of what students/tutors most frequently ask:

- *Are there any clubs or societies?*

HAMK UAS students can find their own clubs and societies under the Student Union. More information about clubs, including a list of active clubs, can be found on the Student Union’s webpage under Student Culture.

- *Are there any sports clubs or other sports possibilities?*

For sport services, HAMK UAS students can turn towards HAMK Moves student sport services. Some services in smaller campuses are free of charge but in Hämeenlinna (University Centre) students need to buy a sports pass to be able to use the services. More information on HAMK Moves webpage (<https://www.hamk.fi/planning-studies/hamk-moves/?lang=en>)

- *Are there any sports events?*

There are various sports events organized annually for students from local competitions to European and World Student Championships. Information on different sports and tournaments can be found from the Finnish Student Sport Federation's (OLL) webpages (www.opiskelijaliikunta.fi). Please contact Student Unions board member responsible for sports in case you want more information. Additionally, the HAMK Moves organizes sports and wellbeing events, such as floorball tournaments, throughout the academic year.

Contact the Student Union's tutoring adviser or board members responsible for tutoring in case you have any questions.

6 Getting credits from tutoring

As an international tutor, you are entitled to ECTS credits from your training as well as all the tasks mentioned in this guide and any other tasks you do while tutoring international students. Your student counselor or coordinator of international affairs normally gives you your international tutor tasks. Always remember to write down everything you have done and list the hours. It is difficult to try to recall times, dates and durations afterwards. Remember to also include your international tutor tasks and experiences to your tutor portfolio.

7 Checklist

You can use this checklist when tutoring international students:

- I know who my degree program's coordinator for international affairs is.
- I have contacted the coordinator and discussed with him/her about the incoming students.
- I have the contact information of the incoming students I will tutor and I have sent them an email/contacted them in social media.
- I know how and when the incoming student will arrive to Finland and to my campus city.
- I have picked up the new student's keys / I know how the new student will receive the keys.
- I have taken the student to city and campus tours.
- I have helped the new student with getting a student card, Internet access, a Finnish SIM card, bus card, library card etc.
- I have continued to stay in touch with the student after the arrival and sent him/her information about events.

