

# **Alumni's Lives after Graduation from Savonia University of Applied Sciences**

**Van Vu**

Bachelor's Thesis

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<p>Abstract</p> <p>The objective of this thesis was to gather the information of Finnish higher education, Savonia UAS, international students and alumni of Savonia UAS. The theoretical part presents reasons why international students come to Finland and which factors affect employment opportunities ; in addition the theoretical part provides an introduction to Savonia UAS. The practical part of the thesis is based on a questionnaire to prove the importance of alumni on helping the fellow graduates to find a job and to obtain opinions about alumni networks.</p> <p>The thesis starts with the definition of Finnish Higher Education and the description of the processes of decision-making of international students. After that the thesis discussed employment opportunities in Finland and the current situation of former graduates. This preliminary chapter was made based on primary information such as online sources. The theoretical part clarifies what attracts international students to study in Finland, what makes them stay in the country and what factors affect employment opportunities.</p> <p>Concerning the usefulness of alumni's experience for recent graduates and incoming international students, this research covers the current situations of foreign students after graduation by presenting the statistics from Vipunen and other official academic websites as background information. The thesis discusses how alumni can convey their stories into guidance for the following generations and if they are familiar with the alumni's network. Thus, a questionnaire was made to clarify these questions. The results indicated that most of the alumni were able to find employment to match their education but they found that the employment services were not effective enough and Savonia UAS should enhance the alumni network. In order to make more students pay attention to and participate in this network, there should be more regular activities in the network to keep everyone in touch.</p> <p>Finally, according to the alumni, earning more professional experience and mastering the Finnish language are the key to successfully find a good employment.</p>			
<p>Keywords Alumni, Lives, Graduates, Impact, Post-graduation, Network</p>			



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## 1 INTRODUCTION

Employment Opportunity plays an important role not only for undergraduate students but also for every citizen since it is one of the sources of earning money to make-end-meet daily. Since the living condition around the globe has been increasing significantly, everyone is capable of affording the education; many families even send their children abroad to be able to obtain better quality of education. Therefore, the chances to be employed by a good company for a long period of time are scarce, which leads to increasing employment hunting. However, not all students are ready for the tough environment and well prepared for the competitive labor market, only the alumni, who already finished their studies and struggled with their life after graduation understand the most.

In Finland where the education was provided for free to native and international students with a wide range from Bachelor to Master Degree, there are still a lot of obstacles having a job after graduating. Therefore, being through all the ups and downs and even manage to be employed or self-employed is something the UAS need to acknowledge and yet, find a way to help the fresh graduate with the experience of the alumni.

In Finland, there are many systems that provide foreigners with the degrees and certificates and one of the most popular systems is called University of Applied Sciences (UAS) or formerly known as “polytechnics” where the practical skills are focused and students are prepared to be able to merge into business environment efficiently. Normally, when students graduate from one UAS, they can choose to register in the alumni’s network in association with the school. By doing that, there will be many benefits catered by the university to their former students as a way to acknowledge their studies and these supports from school is not only to help the alumni to create the wider network with others but also take part in other activities held by the institution.

This paper aims to discover alumni’s life after graduation, their experience and which impact they can create especially for recent graduates and international students of Savonia UAS and the familiarity between them with the alumni’s network. The background for this thesis will be based mainly on the data of Finnish National Agency for Education ([cimo.fi/oph.fi](http://cimo.fi/oph.fi)) Savonia UAS, Finnish Network for International Programmes (FINNips) in conjunction with statistics and information from Ministry of Economic Affairs and Employment ([tem.fi](http://tem.fi)) and International Labour Organization ([ilo.org](http://ilo.org)). Besides, there is a survey conducted specially for the alumni to express what they have been through

after graduation and to collect their ideas on the topic “employment” for freshly graduates and on alumni’s network to help generate the suggestions for Savonia UAS.

### **Research objectives and questions**

This research aims to provide insights of the possible help of alumni for the recent graduates and international students during their studies, as well as explore lives of alumni after finishing school if they are doing well or choosing another path. Hence, the output will be efficient source which helps Savonia UAS in understanding their students and strengthen their connection with the alumni’s network as well as provide more support for incoming students from oversea. The objectives will be achieved through finding the answers for these following questions related to the matter:

- What is the situation of foreign students after graduation?
- How can the international students increase their chances of employment based on alumni’s experience?
- Are the alumni familiar with the alumni network?
- How to strengthen the connection between Savonia UAS and both current and former international students?

### **Scope of the study**

This study is designed to help both the Savonia UAS and the alumni to collaborate with each other to help the international students as well as the recent graduates. Therefore, the purpose of this study is to address the strength of the alumni’s network and experience of them which will be the foundation for Savonia to support their new and former students. Moreover, the discovery of their students’ life after graduation will be a good assessment to adjust the curriculum along with other activities and quality of teaching method.

This paper was conducted in Kuopio, Finland and only limits to the Savonia University of Applied Sciences and the alumni belong to this school. The first-hand information was taken from the chosen individuals graduating from Savonia as they have the closer bond with the school’s network. Therefore, the data collected cannot be used to widely judge every UAS and their former international students with the same purpose of this thesis.

### **Methodology**

In order to gather the multidimensional data for the best result, this study will use quantitative research such as online survey for the alumni in association with Savonia UAS. By collecting the information from them, the answer for the questions above will be figured out and it will be such an efficient material for conducting the conclusion for this thesis. The questions will be answered gradually throughout the processes of gathering the results and they can be recognized at first-hand information. Aside of these researches, the use of secondary data is necessary, and it will take an important role in complementing the conclusion.

### **Thesis structure**

The thesis starts with the fundamental information and important data to help readers understand the reasons why Finnish education attracts international students and what has been the reasons for them to stay after their studies. The first part will as well include the finding first job during the academic duration in order to know how students can find ways to support their daily life financially.

The next part of this thesis states the important skills and factors that help international students to easily be employed. This piece will clarify what it takes during the studies to be competitive and which experience the undergraduate will have to go through. Besides, the current situation of the labor market is presented to be the supplement that helps understand this part in a much easier way. After that readers will learn if the government are very supportive of these learners from other countries on the aspect of granting them the means of time to find a job.

Moreover, this paper will show the statistic of the situation of the international students after their graduation to figure out either they have found a job or what type of employment they are related to. This part is to present display the numbers for readers to see the results of the UAS(s) with the curriculum.

Together with the theoretical parts above, the survey is conducted to study the importance of alumni in helping the recent graduates in integrating the daily Finnish lives as can be seen that they successfully manage to be employed in Finland. Along with that, is it a good idea to connect the UAS with the alumni's network to create a better opportunity for the graduates as well as a stronger tie with the international students in cope with new environment? Everything will be found out with the result of the survey.

Furthermore, after the results are collected, it requires a report to pose the reality given in association with the survey for readers to justify if their understanding about Alumni from UAS in Finland fits the reality and to summarize the open answers provided by the surveyors.

Finally, the final part of the thesis is the conclusion of all the matters and factors, elements mentioned. Correspondingly, it will summarize the output to make it easier to comprehend and conduct the limitation of the paper to examine if the results and survey successfully answer the purpose proposed above. It also put an end to this thesis and hope to spread the information achieved for everyone who reads this.



## 2 WHY FINLAND? WHY SAVONIA UNIVERSITY OF APPLIED SCIENCES?

In this chapter, the Finnish education, Savonia UAS's information and programmes offered as well as the decision-making processes of international students and the living condition of the country are presented to explain why Finland is chosen and why many students are attracted by the education and what are the phases for them to decide. Along with this part, the flows of international students will be shown to see the diversity of coming students.

### 2.1 Finnish Higher Education for International Students

According to Finnish National Agency for Education or the Centre of International Mobility (CIMO), there are 2 forms of higher education provided in Finland which are Universities and Universities of Applied Sciences (UAS). The universities are experts in equip students with research and academic education while the UAS(s) are more inclinable to professional working skills that are more practical in working lives. The FIGURE 1 below will describe the studies path for students from Bachelor's degree to Doctoral degrees in Finnish higher education system.

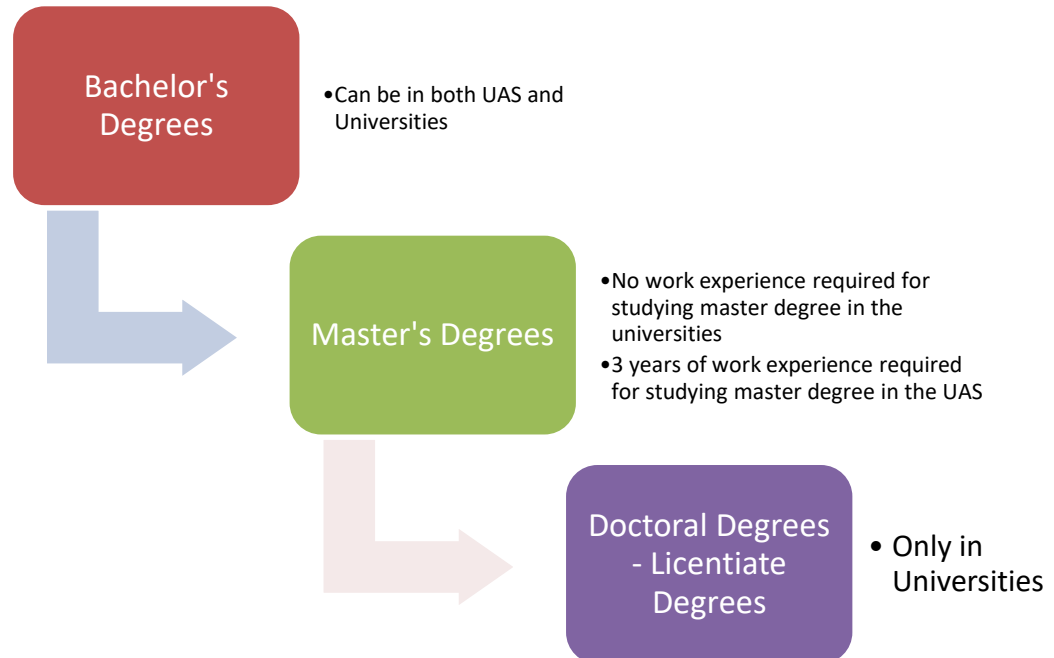


Figure 1. Structure of the Finnish Higher Education System (CIMO, 2016)

In total, there are 24 Universities of Applied Sciences (UAS) and 14 Universities that provide students with Bachelor and Master Degree, in which the Bachelor degree of

UAS requires 210, 240 or 270 ECTS with the time duration from 3,5 to 4,5 years while the same programme from Universities requires 180 ECTS and the studies lasts for 3 years. Besides, the ECTS and studies duration vary for Master Degree as well, for UAS this kind of degree offers 60 to 90 credits during 1 to 1.5 years while in Universities, that will be 240 credits in 4 years. This is easy to understand the reason why each type of institution has their own distinction that comes along with diverse studies programme and periods. (CIMO 2016)

Agriculture, Forestry and Environmental Sciences	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>•Novia UAS and Tampere UAS</li> </ul>
Arts and Design	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>•Tampere UAS</li> <li>•University of the Arts Helsinki</li> </ul>
Computer Sciences and Information Technology	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>•Centria UAS, Haaga-Helia UAS, Helsinki Metropolia UAS, Lahti UAS, Lapland UAS, Laurea UAS, Oulu UAS, Turku UAS, Vaasa UAS, XAMK UAS</li> </ul>
Economics, Business and Administration	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>•Aalto University</li> <li>•In these UAS: Arcada, Centria, Haaga-Helia, HAMK, Helsinki Metropolia, JAMK, Kajaani, Karelia, Lahti, Lapland, Laurea, Novia, Oulu, Saiman, Satakunta, Savonia, Seinajoki, Tampere, Turku, Vaasa, XAMK</li> </ul>
Engineering and Technology	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>•Tampere University of Technology</li> <li>•In these UAS: Arcada, Centria, HAMK, Helsinki Metropolia, JAMK, Saima, Savonia, Tampere, XAMK</li> </ul>
Nursing, Health Care and Social Services	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>•In these UAS: Arcada, Centria, Diaconia, Helsinki Metropolia, JAMK, Lahti, Lapland, Laurea, Novia,Saima, Satakunta, Seinajoki, Turku</li> </ul>
Languages	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>•None of both systems offer this programme</li> </ul>
Sport Sciences	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>•Haaga-Helia UAS and Kajaani UAS</li> </ul>
Tourism and Catering	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>•Haaga-Helia UAS, Kajaani UAS, Lapland UAS and Saima UAS</li> </ul>

Figure 2. Bachelor's Degree Programmes in English (CIMO, 2016)

According to figure 2, for Bachelor's degrees, there are nine programmes but only eight out of nine are offered either by the universities or by the UAS. Among of that, there are four popular degrees that are widely provided by those institutions which are computer sciences and information technology, economics business and administration, engineering and technology and finally nursing, health care and social services. The rest of them are provided by a few institutions and only the programme of language are not offered by any university or UAS.

Along with the bachelor's degrees is the master's degree programmes in English with a wide range of majors, which are much more comparing to the programmes for bachelor's students. (CIMO 2016)

Algriculture, Forestry and Environmental Sciences	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Lappeenranta Uni of Technology, Uni of Eastern Finland, Uni of Helsinki, Uni of Jyvaskyla, Uni of Turku</li> <li>• Novia UAS, Tampere UAS,</li> </ul>
Architecture, Arts and Design	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Aalto Uni, Tampere Uni of Technology, Uni of the Arts Helsinki, Uni of Lapland, Uni of Oulu, Uni of Turku</li> <li>• Tampere UAS, Turku UAS</li> </ul>
Communication and Media Sciences	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Aalto Uni, Uni of Helsinki, Uni of Jyvaskyla, Uni of Lapland, Uni of Tampere, Uni of Turku, Uni of Vaasa</li> <li>• Arcada UAS, Haaga-Helia UAS</li> </ul>
Computer Sciences and Information Technology	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Aalto Uni, Abo Akademi Uni, Lappeenranta Uni of Technology, Tampere Uni of Technology, Uni of Eastern Finland, Uni of Helsinki, Uni of Jyvaskyla, Uni of Oulu, Uni of Tampere, Uni of Turku</li> <li>• The UAS: Haaga-Helia, Helsinki Metropolia, JAMK, Sakakunta, Tampere</li> </ul>
Economics, Business and Administration	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Aalto Uni, Hanken School of Economics, Lappeenranta Uni of Technology, Tampere Uni of Technology, Uni of the Arts Helsinki, Uni of Eastern Finland, Uni of Helsinki, Uni of Jyvaskyla, Uni of Lapland, Uni of Oulu, Uni of Tampere, Uni of Turku, Uni of Vaasa</li> <li>• In these uas: Arcada, Centria, Haaga-Helia, HAMK, Helsinki Metropolia, JAMK, Lahti, Lapland, Laurea, Saimaa, Satakunta, Seinajoki, Tampere, Turku, XAMK</li> </ul>
Educational Sciences	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Aalto University, University of the Arts Helsinki, University of Eastern Finland, University of Jyvaskyla, University of Lapland, University of Oulu, University of Tampere</li> </ul>
Engineering and Technology	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Aalto Uni, Abo Akademi Uni, Lappeenranta Uni of Technology, Tampere Uni of Technology, Uni of Eastern Finland, Uni of Jyvaskyla, Uni of Oulu, Uni of Vaasa</li> <li>• Lahti UAS, Turku UAS</li> </ul>
Health Care and Social Services	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Arcada UAS, Helsinki Metropolia UAS, Laurea UAS, XAMK UAS</li> <li>• Uni of Eastern Finland, Uni of Helsinki, Uni of Jyvaskyla, Uni of Oulu, Uni of Tampere, Uni of Turku</li> </ul>
Humanities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• University of Helsinki, University of Jyvaskyla, University of Tampere, University of Turku</li> </ul>
Interdisciplinary Studies	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Aalto University, University of Helsinki, University of Tampere</li> </ul>
Languages	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• University of Eastern Finland, University of Helsinki, University of Jyvaskyla</li> </ul>
Law	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Abo Akademi Uni, Hanken School of Economics, Uni of Eastern Finland, Uni of Helsinki, Uni of Lapland, Uni of Turku</li> </ul>
Mathematics and Natural Sciences	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Aalto Uni, Abo Akademi Uni, Lappeenranta Uni of Technology, Uni of Eastern Finland, Uni of Helsinki, Uni of Oulu, Uni of Tampere, Uni of Turku</li> </ul>
Medical Sciences	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• University of Eastern Finland, University of Helsinki, University of Oulu, University of Tampere, University of Turku</li> </ul>
Social Sciences	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Abo Akademi Uni, Uni of Eastern Finland, Uni of Helsinki, Uni of Jyvaskyla, Uni of Tampere, Uni of Turku</li> </ul>
Sport Sciences	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• University of Jyvaskyla and University of Turku</li> </ul>
Theology	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• University of Helsinki</li> </ul>
Tourism and Catering	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• University of Lapland</li> </ul>

Figure 3. Master's Degree Programmes in English (CIMO, 2016) (Uni = University, UAS = University of Applied Sciences)

A wide range of programmes will give future undergraduate many options to consider before proceeding their application documents. All future candidates who want to apply for the UAS or Universities all have to go through the joint online application system which is opened 2 times a year for autumn semester and spring semester. However, for UAS, all applicants have to participate in the entrance exam along with sending compulsory documents to the UAS of their choices while for Universities, they have to submit the required certificates and papers to be evaluated by the Finnish Universities (StudyInfo 2017b). For international applicants already reside in Finland, they can take the exam at the chosen institution whereas for others who live abroad they will have to do it in another way. (FINNIPS, 2017)

The Finnish Network for International Programmes (FINNIPS) is a network created by the UASs with the mission to arrange the Entrance Exam for Programmes taught in English for candidates outside of Finland. By this way, the future students will have a much easier approach to study in Finland by decide where they can join the exam. After sending the documents they will be invited to compete to get one place in their dreamed institutions. The following table will give one example of how the competition for spring term in 2017 was held. (FINNIPS, 2017)

Country	City	Exam Dates
Brazil	São Paulo	April 6-7 2017
China	Guangzhou	April 5-6 2017
	Wuhan	April 8-9 2017
Estonia	Tallinn	April 5-6 2017
Germany	Frankfurt	April 10-11 2017
Great Britain	London	April 11-12 2017
Hungary	Budapest	April 5-6 2017
Kazakhstan	Astana	April 5-6 2017
Kenya	Nairobi	April 10-12 2017
Nepal	Kathmandu	April 9-11 2017
Russia	Moscow	April 5-6 2017
	St. Petersburg	April 5-6 2017
USA	Chicago	April 8-4 2017
Vietnam	Ho Chi Minh City	April 1-2 2017
	Hanoi	April 4-5 2017

Table 1. Entrance Exam around the world for Spring Semester in 2017 (FINNIPS, 2017)

After finishing the exam, in approximately one month the results will be published on the websites of the UAS(s), who pass can continue to proceed their visa papers and prepare for a new student's life while other can remain in waiting list or worse, request for a consideration for the result. (StudyInfo 2017b)

Although Finnish Education has been well-known for non-tuition fees for a while, in the year 2017 there has been a new change which probably can affect the decisions of incoming students and future candidates. By autumn of 2017 all non-EU/EEA students applying for English-taught Bachelor and Master degrees are required to pay tuition fee, aside of that, scholarship is available for talented students (ICEF Monitor 2016). The annual fee one has to pay is around from 4,000 to 20,000 euros depends on the universities and programmes (CIMO, 2017). This is the only critical change in the educational policy of Finnish Higher Education for international students.

When international students finish their studies, they can apply for one-year extension residence permit to look for an employment, if they find a job which can help them live on their own they can change the type of residence permit. After a continuous time living in Finland after graduation, it is possible to apply for permanent visa or Finnish nationality (CIMO, 2017). This is one point of the educational policy that encourages freshly graduates to look for the opportunity to work and stay in Finland for long term.

## 2.2 About Savonia University of Applied Sciences

Savonia University of Applied Sciences is one of the largest and most versatile Universities of Applied Sciences in Finland. Before, the institution is run as the Savonia University of Applied Sciences Ltd. The year of 2016 was the second year that Savonia UAS run as a limited company. Savonia has 3 campuses which are in Jyväskylä, Kuopio and Varkaus which offers not only fulltime programme but also another option to work and study at the same time (Master's Degree and specialised studies) and the studies in the Open University of Applied Sciences as well (Savonia 2017b, Savonia 2016). Below information are the Bachelor and Master degree offered by Savonia along with the online programme:

- Bachelor of Engineering, Mechanical Engineering: this programme offers the chance for young students to be experts in both mechanical engineering and industrial management. The specialization in this programme is industrial man-

agement focusing and on project management and networks particularly. (Savonia 2017c)

- Bachelor of Business Administrations, International Business: Savonia UAS offers the programme of business administrations, international business or BBA. This programme is conducted in English with four cores which are focused entrepreneurial thinking, internationalisation of small and medium sized enterprises (SME), research development and innovation (RDI) and intercultural communication. The programme aims to train future global business experts to adapt with the international changes. (Savonia 2017a)
- Two online courses opened in 2017 as two focus area in the programme of Business Administrations, International Business:
  - Design Business: this course help students to generate the ideas for the business models and processes in the sustainable fashion business, service design, creative leadership and digital concepting. (Savonia 2017d)
  - Wellness Business: this course specialises in the trend of wellness, health and well-being such as Nature-Wellness and Green Care as well as Wellness technology and event planning. (Savonia 2017e)
- Bachelor of Engineering in Internet of Things: Due to the fast change and innovation development of the world's technologies, this programme offers students the chance to be expert in information technology in the field of Internet of Things. After graduation, the graduates will be able to operate efficiently and set objectives for working teams as well as working in the digital health and industrial internet sectors. (Savonia 2017f)
- Bachelor's Degree Programme in Nursing: For students who wish to be a skilful nurse to take care of the patient and be decisive in all situations, Savonia UAS has offered this programme to train the students into an expert with efficient nursing skills with the ability to adapt, assess and analyse personal nursing skills in different cases. (Savonia 2017g)
- Master's Degree Programme in Digital Health: Savonia UAS offers this programme to students who want to challenge themselves with digitalisation, community concerning and focus on working life. The specialisations in this pro-

gramme are inventive development of digital social and health care services, service production, expert organisation management and contribution to service quality and management. After studying, students will be able to work flexibly in different environments. (Savonia 2017h)

### 2.3 Decision-making

There are many elements that need to be considered when a person decides to move to another country to study or live. Finland is not an exception; the mobility of out coming and incoming students is critical part to measure the potential of Finnish higher education as well. Before digging into which factors are important, it is crucial to have an overview of number of students in Finland including both degree students and exchange students first and foremost.

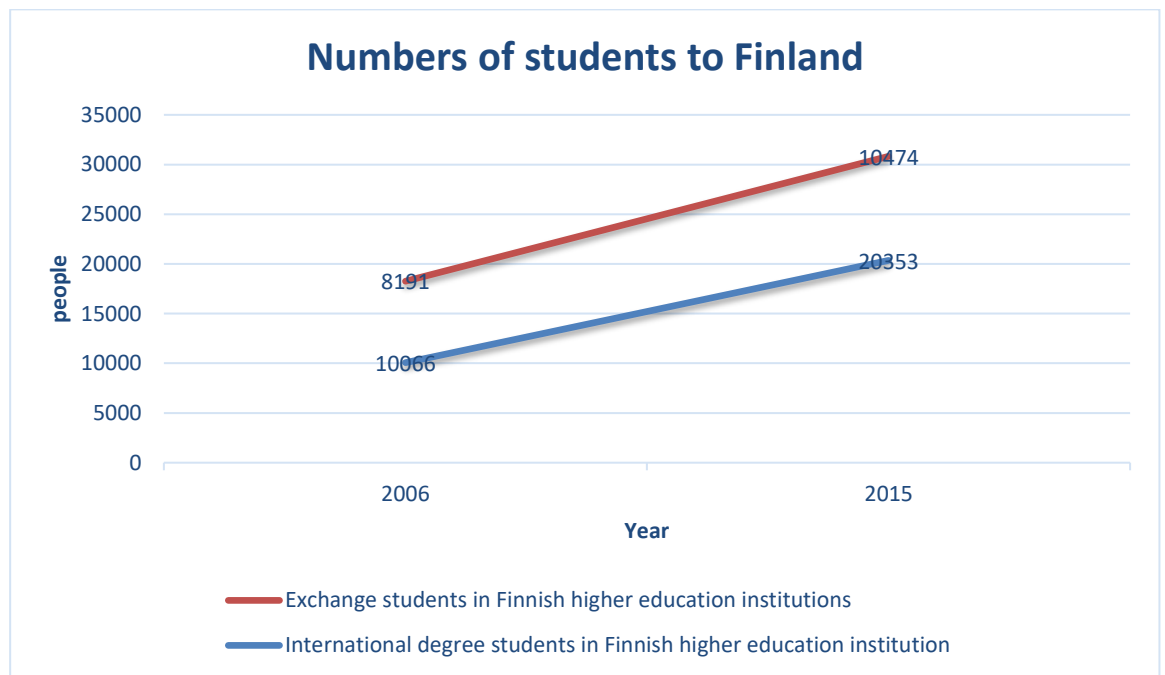


Figure 4. Student mobility to Finland 2006-2015: Higher education (CIMO, 2017)

The number of exchange students remains stable throughout the period from 2006 to 2015; however, there is significant increase of international degree students in Finnish higher education institutions. It is easy to understand since Finland has been rated as the most peaceful and sustainable country in the world (Fragile States Index 2016) and its education remains number one in the ranking system for education for many years (World Economic Forum 2015). The increase in incoming students is comprehensible as well since before the new regulation has passed on 1<sup>st</sup> January 2016 introducing tuition fee for non-EU/EEA, education in Finland was free for everyone since and it is fundamental for every citizen to study free of charge (Universities Act, 2009). International

students come from many places but to know clearly, the following figure will present carefully.

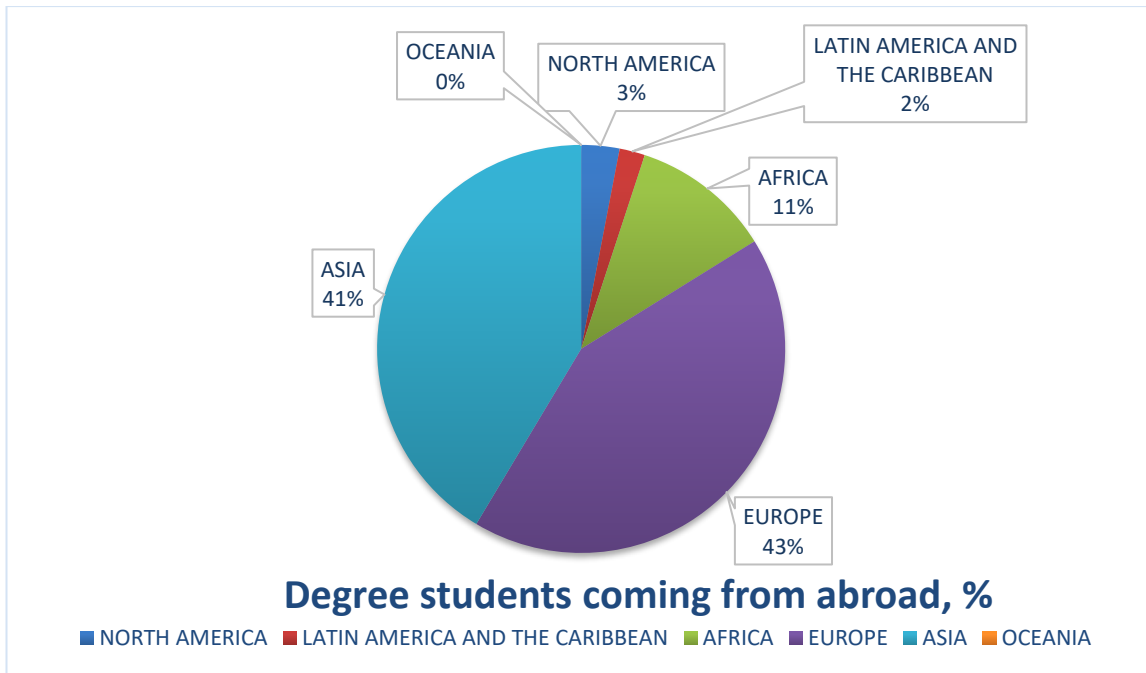


FIGURE 5. Students from abroad in Finnish higher education institutions (CIMO 2017)

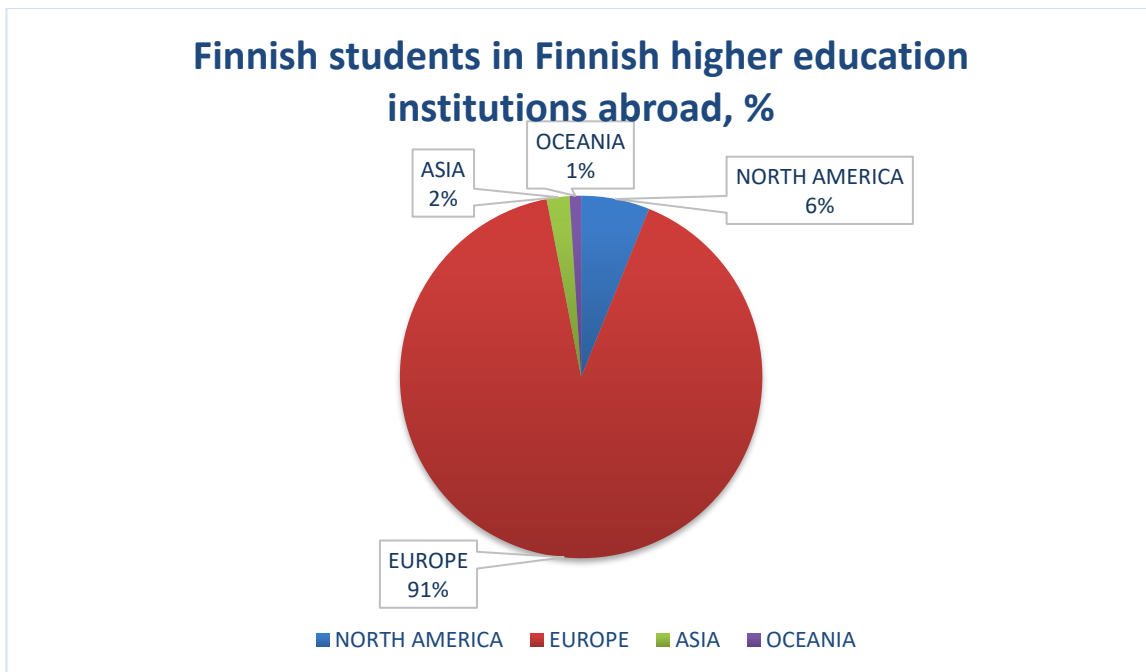


FIGURE 6. Finnish degree students in Finnish higher education institutions abroad (CIMO 2017)



As it is shown above, Finnish students are more inclinable to study in other countries in Europe while European and Asian students are more likely to move to Finland. The percentage flow of out-going Finnish students is not equal since only 2 percent to Asia, 6 percent to North America and only 1 percent to Oceania. However, if we take a closer look, there are places that Finnish degree students and international undergraduate favor most among loads of country in the world. Unlike, foreign students who seek opportunities to come to Finland in order to experience new country, new lifestyle, the Finns on the other hand take the chance to move to other countries in Europe. (CIMO 2017)

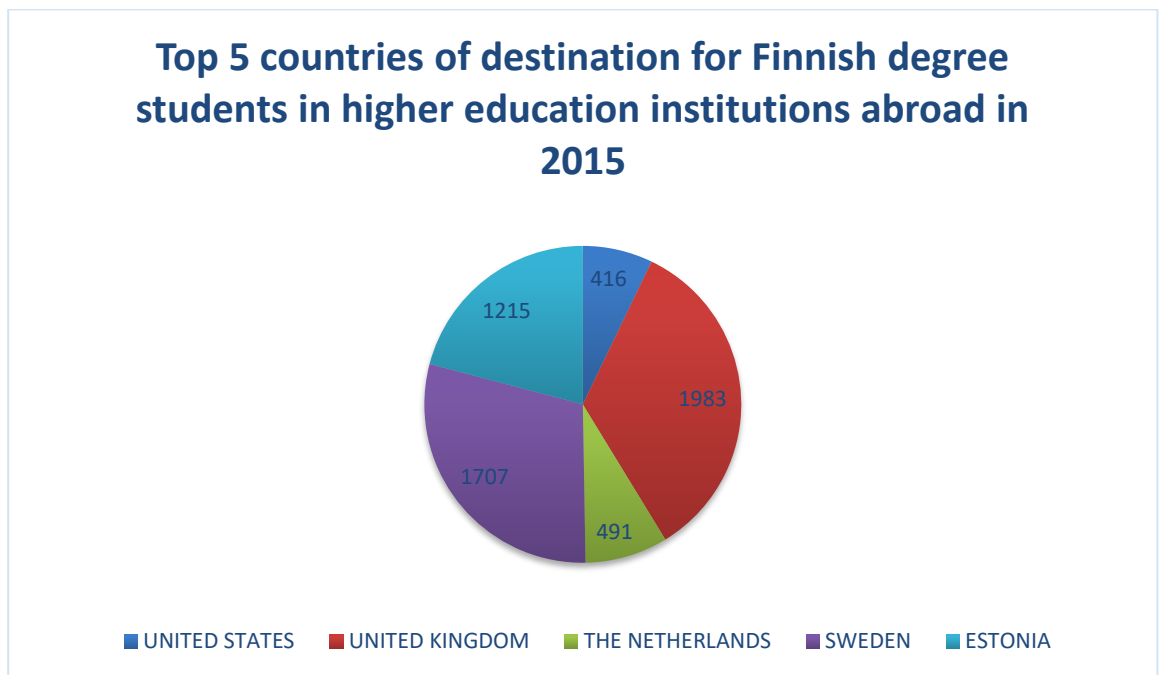


FIGURE 7. Top 5 countries of destination for Finnish higher education degree students in 2015 (CIMO, 2017)

According to figure 7, the top 5 countries that attract Finnish degree students in higher education institutions abroad the most are United States, United Kingdom, The Netherlands, Sweden and Estonia. In the pie chart, it is clearly stated that the country with the highest number of incoming students was United Kingdom and then Sweden and then Estonia. The rest is The Netherlands and United States with the lowest number of incoming Finnish degree students. (CIMO 2017)

### Top 5 countries of origin of international higher education degree students in 2015

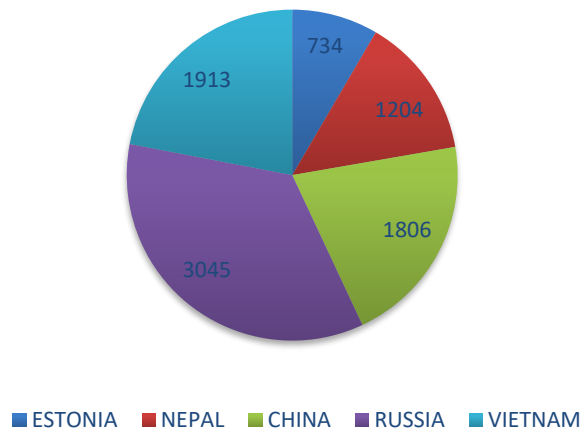


FIGURE 8. Top 5 countries of origin of international higher education degree students in 2015 (CIMO, 2017)

The figure above presents the major countries of origin of international degree students in 2015 which were Vietnam, China, Nepal, Russia and Estonia. It shows a more detail picture of the number of foreign students coming from these countries and give reader answer for where the Finnish students move to for higher education. The following figures will present the same information but from different target: exchange students. (CIMO 2017)

### Mobility of exchange students in higher education from Finland by continent in 2015

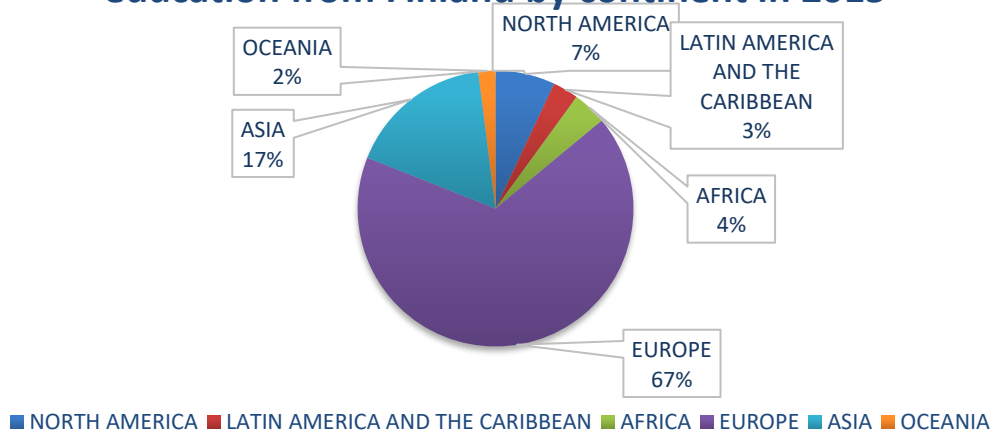


FIGURE 9. Mobility of exchange students in higher education from Finland by continent in 2015 (CIMO 2017)

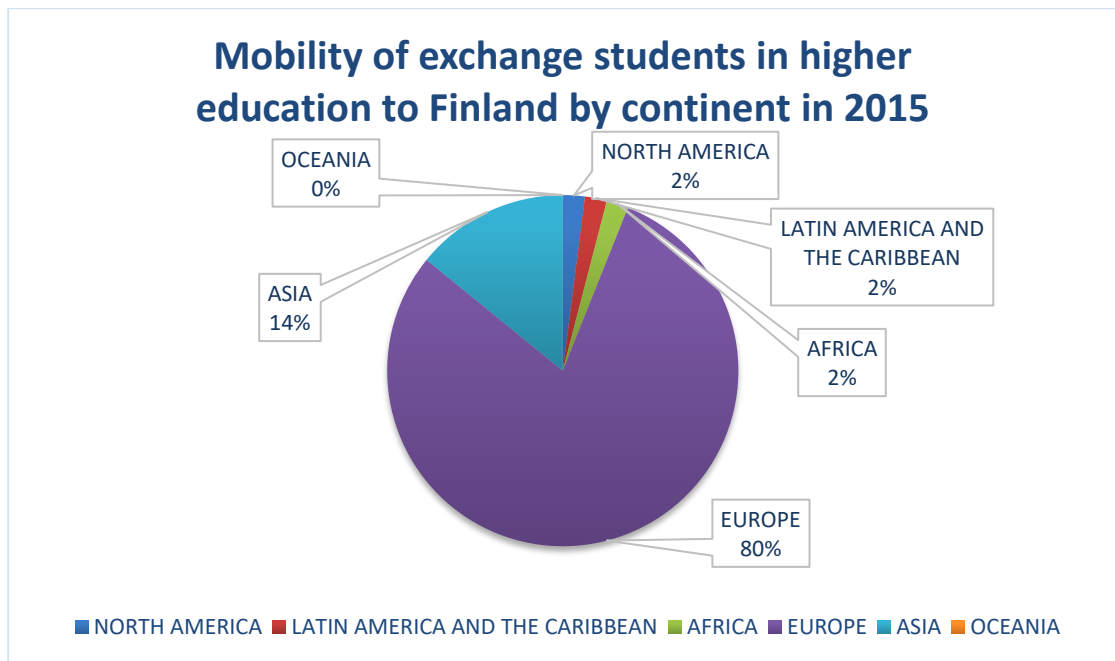


FIGURE 10. Mobility of exchange students in higher education to Finland by continent in 2015 (CIMO 2017)

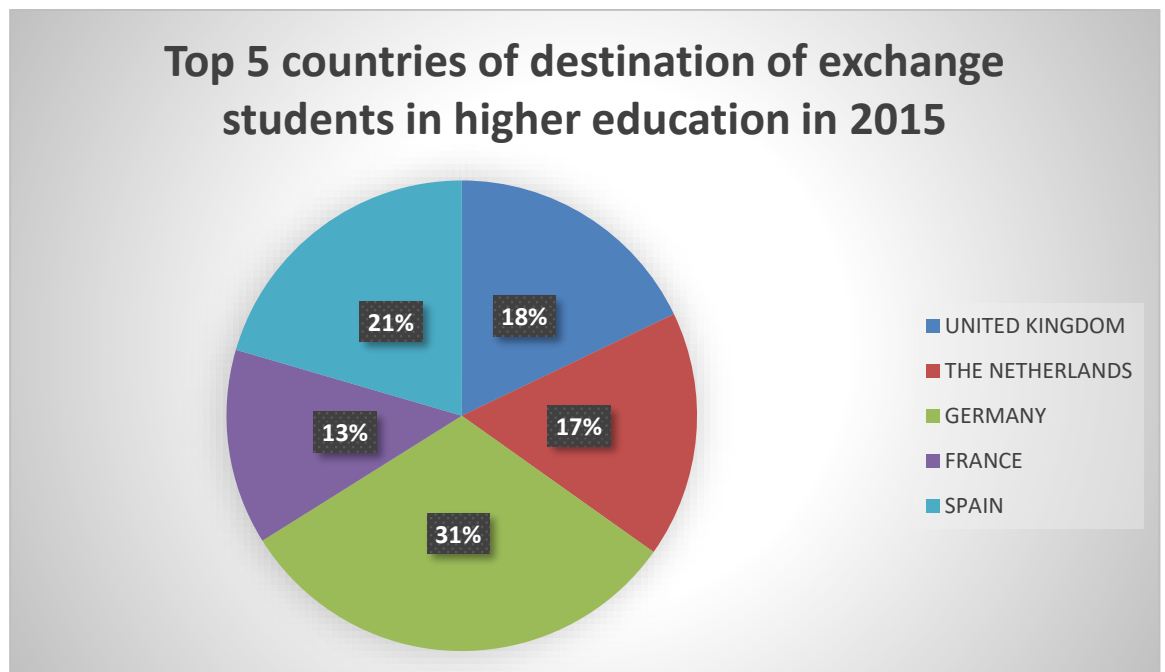


FIGURE 11. Top 5 countries of destination of exchange students in higher education in 2015 (CIMO 2017)

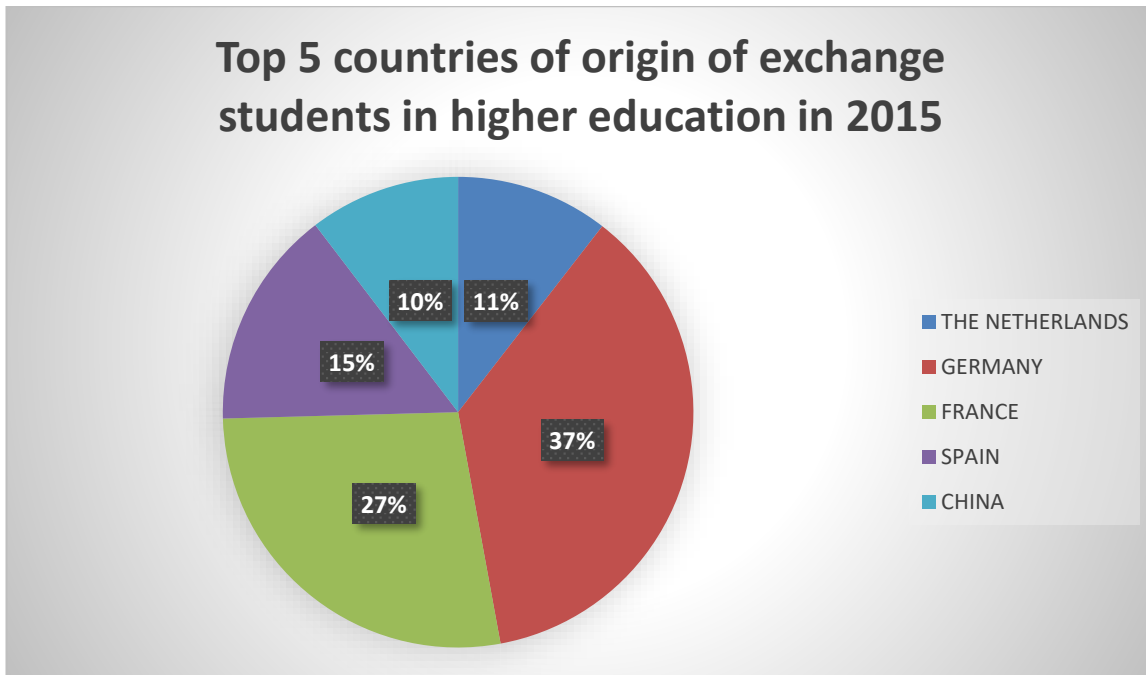


FIGURE 12. Top 5 countries of origin of exchange students in higher education in 2015 (CIMO 2017)

According to these figures above, it is clear to recognize that the continent is the most favorable for students to move around is Europe since it always had the highest number of incoming and outgoing students. They have given the numbers of students and places as well as the flows of them from countries to countries. The next two figures are about the factors that were considered important when choosing where to study. There are many things that can change one's opinion, a person might have to examine his or her personal conditions such as family funding or grants from any source to other objective reasons such as finding jobs, weather, living cost, environment, obstacles applying for visa, social life and so on. However, it is much more difficult for international students; therefore, careful consideration is necessary and cannot be done recklessly because once a student come to a place far away from their home country, they must be well prepared to be able to handle everything. (Study World Online 2017)

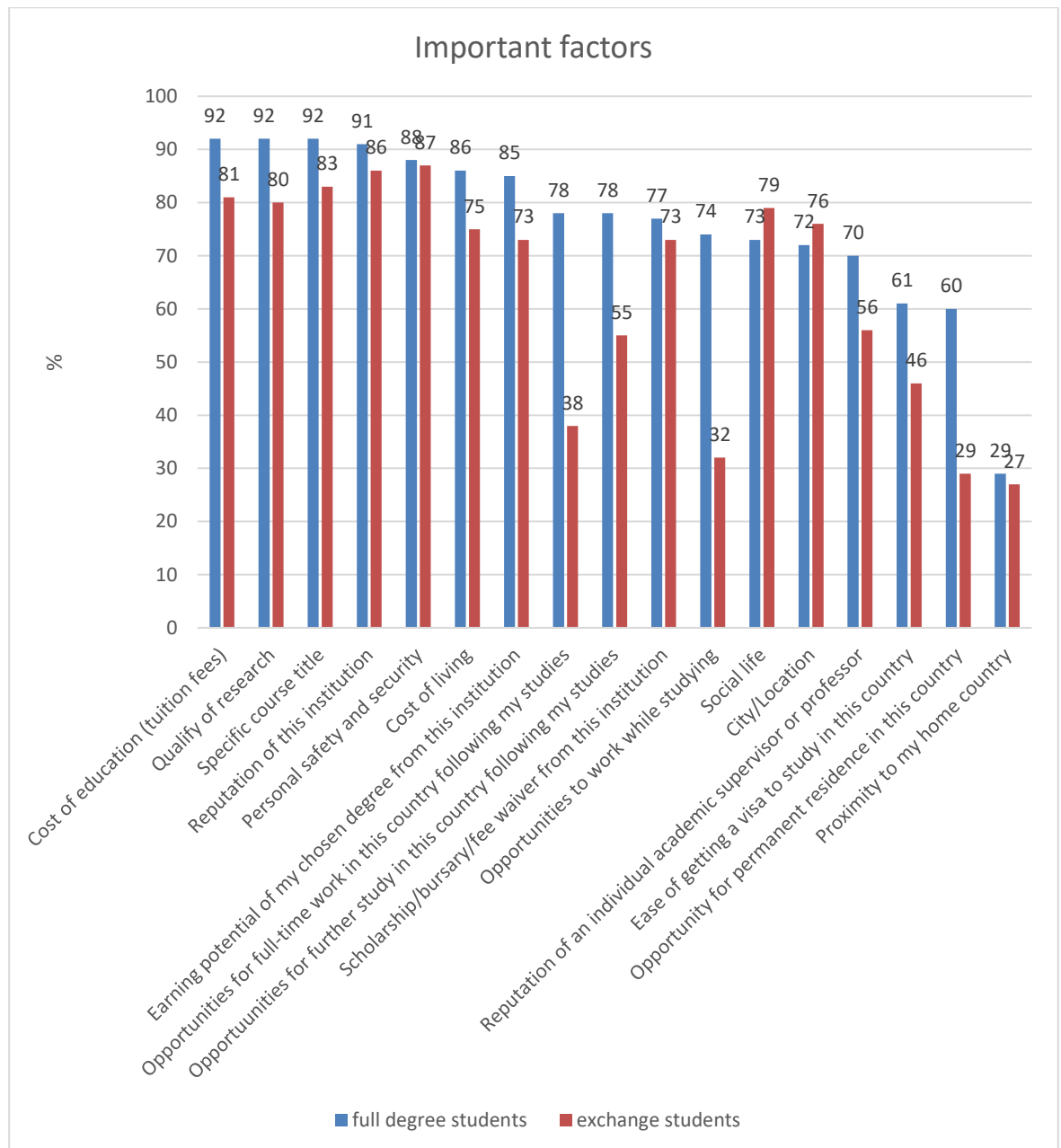


FIGURE 13. Opinions of important factors when deciding where to study (first year full degree and exchange students) (CIMO 2016)

Figure 13 can be acknowledged as objective factors since one person either cannot change any of these factors or create any by themselves. These elements affect student's choices in varied ways and each opinion is unique. As presented above, one of the most crucial things to consider definitely is the cost of education. Everyone wants to receive one of the best education, yet it is even better if it is free. The percent for this factor didn't have much change between full degree and exchange students. Along with the cost of education is the quality of the chosen education and course provided and reputation of itself. Living cost plays an important role as well since not every student has stable financial condition and that is the reason why opportunities to work while

studying or after graduation are on the top. The factor that was least important was proximity to home country with 29 percent for full degree students and 27% for exchange students.

The information above only shows one part of student’s decision-making processes before choosing Finland. Besides, the mouth-spread information and advices from acquaintances, friends and relatives also play significant role in judge the opportunity as well. Not only by that, has the international network helped user to have easier approach to varied date related to any university. The next figure will shed more light of which aspects have been favorable of students’ point of view. (CIMO 2016)

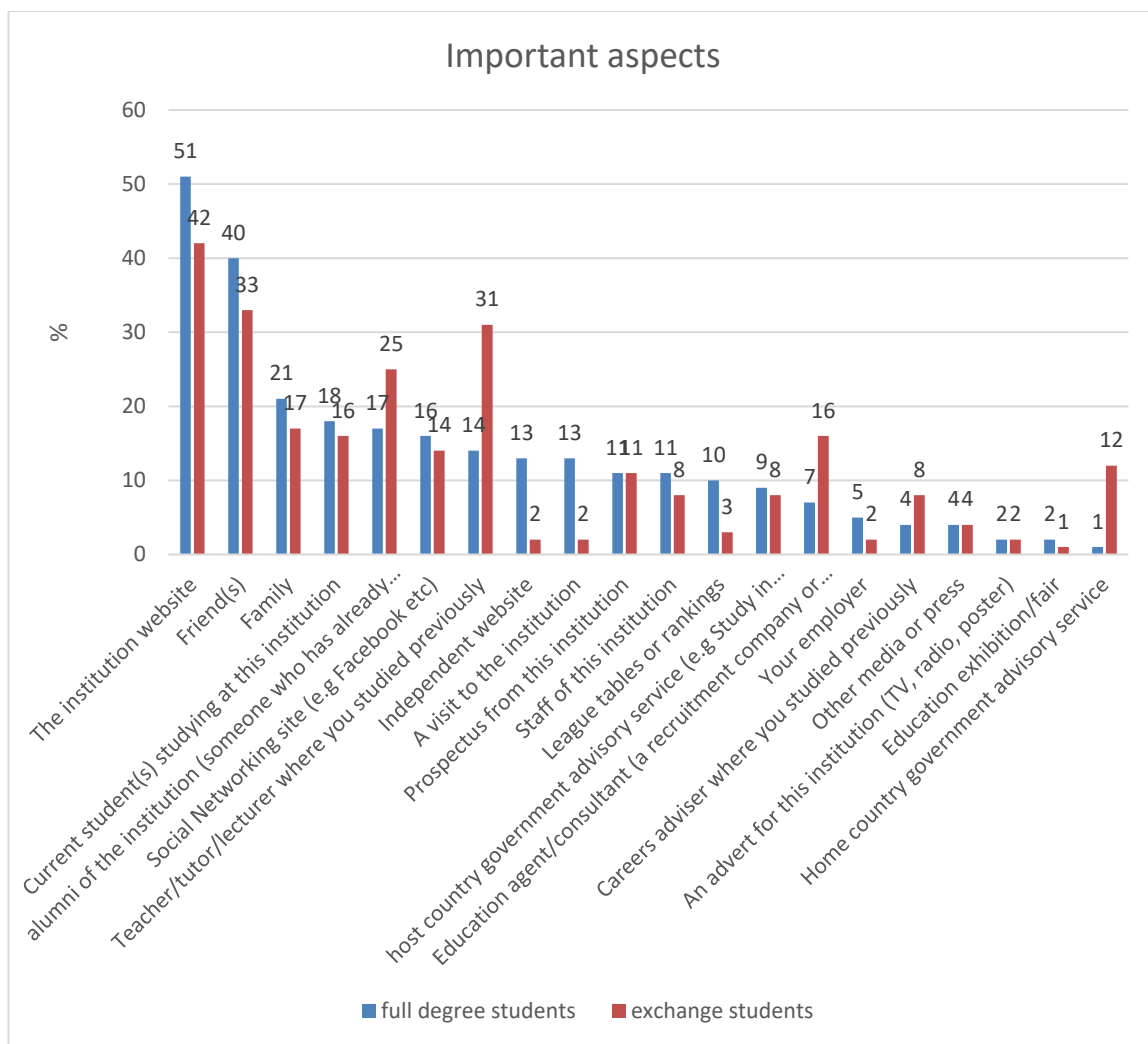


FIGURE 14. Opinions of which aspects are important when choosing where to study (first year full degree and exchange students) (CIMO 2016)

Based on the figure above, it is presented that the more information that is on one university website the stronger it can attract people. Besides, stories and experience

passed from friends to friends can be a good point to judge one institution whether it has good education or flexible programme or the chances of getting a job in that city is higher. Therefore, the Finnish higher education institution can depend on this to build a more highly constructive foundation, information on website, welcome events or curriculum in order for the foreign candidate pay more attention.

Decision-making is a long and careful process and there are many things to do, especially for students that are not European citizen. They have chosen Finland as a place to start student's life in a whole new place and as a result, Finnish higher education system has developed to become better day by day to attract new talents and build a strong workforce for the future.

## 2.4 Living in Finland

The international students decide to come to Finland because of the education is not something so surprising to everyone. However, why do students want to stay there after their graduation and participate as a part of the Finnish citizens? The following information will reveal the other facts that attract people to reside in this country.

- **Community**

Human is the root of relationships and social development; according to Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) Better Life Index, 94 percent of people living in Finland have someone they can trust and count on. This is a pretty high number to prove the fact that Finland is a country of harmonious society and strong tie between humankind. Thus, this has created a solid social network as a part contributing to the economic and social success. (OECD Better Life Index 2015)

- **Environment**

In Finland, the water quality is accounted for 93.7 percent which makes Finland stay at the third over the chart of 38 countries and the satisfaction for the water based on the population is 94 percent while the average OECD is 81 percent. (OECD Better Life Index 2015)

- **Life Satisfaction**

Life satisfaction is a method to evaluate if people are feeling positive or negative towards their life in a specific country. On a scale from 1 to 10, Finland scored 7.4 for the life satisfaction while the average score is 6.5 according to OECD. (OECD Better Life Index 2015)

- **Work & Life balance**

The OECD average of working for long hours is 13 percent, which is much higher than Finland (4 percent). Besides, people contribute more than half a day for their personal needs, leisure and family which shows the ideal work & life balance in this country. (OECD Better Life Index 2015)

- **Safety**

Many students from different backgrounds might not find it's safe to live or go out in their own countries. However, in Finland, more than 80 percent of the habitants can wander around at night without feeling scared or risky and the homicide of this country only rates 1.5. (OECD Better Life Index 2015)

According to the statistics above, it is clear to see that Finland is not only a country has one of best education in the world but also a safe place for people to work and live. Comparing to some countries of origin of the international students, the living quality is higher as well as the environment is less polluted and the society in Finland has less crime and robbery. According to Travel China Guide (2017) the tap water in China is not safe for people to drink unless it is boiled beforehand, people usually buy the water bottle since it's better for health. Moreover, many international students, especially students from developing countries – the ones in Asia – prefer to settle down in Finland since the environment is much better for them and for their next generation. In South Asia, the pollution has rung the alarm for people to be aware of mental health since it can leave disastrous effect on the brains of babies and lead to horrible disease such as Parkinson and Alzheimer (The Japan Times 2017). That's the reason why a country with high living quality and education always attracts international students to study and stay.



### 3 SKILLS AND FACTORS AFFECTING EMPLOYMENT CHANCES IN FINLAND

In order to understand clearly this study, it is necessary to start with the fundamental factors, and the systems as well as numeric data that affect the topic we are concerning. First sub chapter will present the “Internship and Exchange Experience” to give the basic understand of how the foreign students can experience the multicultural environment and experience the social international lives with new friends and knowledge. Subsequently, this part will continue with “Other Working Experience during Studies” and other components that are considered to leave big impact on chances of employment. Additionally, the statistics will be displayed to strengthen the content of this chapter.

#### 3.1 Internship and Exchange Experience

As stated in the law and decree on UAS studies, professional training is required and counted as a part of studies in the Universities of Applied Sciences (Valtioneuvoston asetus ammattikorkeakouluista, 2003). According to the decree (Valtioneuvoston asetus ammattikorkeakouluista, 2003), the structure of studies in the UAS consists of 4 parts which are 1) basic and professional studies, 2) free elective studies, 3) gaining professional experience based on practical training or internship and finally 4) writing a Bachelor’s thesis.

It depends on each UAS and the programmes the students follow that the time of the internship will vary, the contract is made between 3 parties: the company, the UAS and student. For example, in Savonia University of Applied Sciences, the internship consists of 30 credits and is offered for every student to gain practical working skills, emerge in the international environment and prepare for future career (Savonia University of Applied Sciences, 2017). Professional training can be an effective way to nurture hidden talents and create amazing opportunity to develop future career.

Aside of Internship, international students also have a chance to study in another country during their studies in Finland through the exchange programme. In Europe, it is popular to take part in ERASMUS + program which was formed in 1987 as a European funding program which offer the grants with the opportunity to study or do practical training from 2 months to 12 months in another country within one academic year. The grant may not completely cover the cost during the internship or exchange but slightly help the students finance their living cost. 2 years after the ERASMUS+ program appeared, ESN was born and after that legitimately registered in 1990 for assisting the exchange students. Since then, this has become the biggest student network in Europe, for example,

in Kuopio, there is ESN KISA which stands for Kuopio International Students Association. (Erasmus Student Network 2017)

### 3.2 Professional Working Skills

From these multicultural participation, professional working skills will be built gradually such as communication skills, presentation skills, and public speaking skills, sympathy and so on. These skills one cannot obtain directly from its own institution but gaining by practice, failure and practical training and struggling through internship or work placement. Therefore, choosing the right place to spend your time and effort is very important because it will shape up the mind-set of students and prepare them to look for stable jobs.

According to Opportunity Network, there are 10 most common professional skills that can lead a person to success which are:

- Communication skills
- Collaboration skills
- Diagnostic and problem-solving skills
- Personal management skills
- Interpersonal capability
- Computer/technical skills
- Leadership skills
- Learning skills
- Ability to read academic documents and do basic math
- Appreciate the value of the job

These skills can be achieved during the time in the university or in the workplace. In the school, students learn these skills but when they start to work practically they learn how to use these abilities effectively. Merging in the international environment is the best way to enhance oneself to be more communicative and aside of that, taking part in the extra activities with other students can boost up the team work spirit and leadership ability. As an international student, time management and scheduling are the most important things in order to put things in order and finish tasks before deadline. By doing this all these skills will be obtained gradually and then students can bring their learning into the workplace and by that, the chances to be employed by a good company is higher.

### 3.3 Other Working Experience during Studies

In Finland, most students work during their studies (Statistic Finland, 2017), especially for international students when they have to move to another country and begin a new life. According to one article on Jyväskylän ylioppilaslehti (JYLKKARI) on 25<sup>th</sup> April 2017, it is tough for foreign degree students to pay all expenses in Finland because they not only have to pay for living costs but also for the cost of moving around or travelling to experience and to discover the country they just moved in.

To be able to find a job as soon as one just come to Finland, the international fellows must be very proactive and keep in touch with any contact they could have. Sometimes, foreign degree students must work the jobs that is nothing related to their major because of lacking Finnish language. If someone is lucky, proactive and patient enough, they could find something that is suitable for them, but thing will get much easier with a little bit of Finnish vocabulary. It often happens as some international students come with the purpose of studying as first but later things get tougher and they either must discontinue their studies to work or go back to their home country. However, even though things are not that effortless to makes end meet, there are still positive statistic about the situation.

According to Statistic Finland (2017) on date of employments of student, in 2015, the number of students studying in UAS that obtained a valid contract during their studies accounted for fifty-four percent. The older the student is, the more experience and higher rate of working during student's life, for example, in 2015, there was twenty-two percent of students at the age of 18 were working while the percent of students at the age of 25 was approximately triple. These students were employed with a binding contract at the end of the year 2015 with the variation of majors which were social sciences, business and administration, health welfare and sport and finally, humanities and education. Based on the date the statistic presented, it is considered very complicated to afford living expenses and sometimes, works during studies is not related to the majors of the international students, the working experience and chances during studying still somehow create potential opportunities for them. (Statistic Finland 2017)

According to Finnish Immigration Service, there is limitation for foreign students of working hours per week. An international student can work during their academic semester if the working hours do not exceed 25 hours per week during school time. However, the working hours can be higher during summer and Christmas holiday when there is no class. (Finnish Immigration Service 2017)

### 3.4 Language Skills

In Finland, there are 88.9 percent of the citizen speak Finnish as the official language and 5.3 percent speak Swedish even though it is one of the official languages (this is Finland 2017a). It is also well known that speaking fluently Finnish and Swedish plays an important role in finding an employment and it is a must to speak this country's language to communicate with others. However, it depends on the programme that the language requirements vary, for example: for the Bachelor's degree programme in Nursing, students are required to have good communication skills in Finnish after graduation since in the future they must work not only with foreigners but also with the locals. (Finnish Nurses Association 2017)

International students can join Finnish class since it is included in most universities and UAS's. They usually offer the Finnish courses for beginners and as well as more intensive courses for students who would like to get further with this language. Besides, coming to the students' services office to ask for the advice where and when to register for the Finnish courses are possible (Study in Finland 2017f). The foreign students not only can find the language courses in their universities but also there are Finnish class held by the local authorities, it can be free or with a very low cost (this is Finland 2017b). Thanks to these supports, being able to speak and use this language is not a dream but an effort of each.

### 3.5 Employment Searching Methods Used

One of the most important things to be certain to get a job is the job search techniques, using the right technique can increase the chances of being hired. However, not all students either understand the influence of these techniques or acknowledge them. It is presented in an article on Forbes that there are 7 ways to successfully find a job which are: (Forbes 2017)

- *Make your CV short and concise:* Resume is an effective mean of finding job. However, it should not be too long or consists of unnecessary things instead of going to the main points which are your strength, achievements and abilities.
- *Have your own portfolio:* This is a great way to make your application unique and an acceptable way for hirer to examine your works and your capabilities.
- *Interview Coach:* In case someone is applying for a job in another city, Skype video interview will be in use therefore, to be well prepared for the interview is very crucial and having a coach that bring out the perfection from oneself is very decisive.

- *Using LinkedIn:* LinkedIn has been known for being one of the biggest network to attract the employer as well as searching for job posts. If the students can make use of all features in LinkedIn, they will be able to access many networks and discover the opportunities offer there.
- *Use Twitter or other social media networks:* To get more attention from the employer then this step is a must as well.
- *Limit your time on Job network:* It is written that a person should not spend too much time on one job board to look for many things and only apply for a job unless his or her resume fit 85 percent of a job post's requirement. It is better to target a smaller and regional industry.
- *Start finding job as soon as possible:* Since the process of applying for a job and receiving response can take forever, it is better to start searching for jobs and building the network and resume at the same time.

### 3.6 Situation of the Labor Market

One of the factors that can change the potential of finding jobs is the needs of the working market. In 2014, it is summarized that the workforce reached 2.8 million people and the unemployment accounted for 8.2 percent. Moreover, the number of foreign citizen settling down permanently in Finland is 195,111 while there are 100,000 to 150,000 foreigners stay temporarily each year and the oversea job hunters stayed at 30,000, which is not a small number comparing to all statistic numbers (Ministry for Employment and the Economy 2014).

In the year of 2015, the employment rate in Finland was 72.5 percent and the rate of EU is 70 percent and the size of employment in Finland change by -1.49 percent from 2011 to 2015 (Skills Panorama 2017).

According to Skills Panorama, there will be big change for future employment growth in Finland during the period 2015 – 2025 in all fields. The figure below will present the possible change expected in the next 10 years with statistics of increase and decrease in percent.

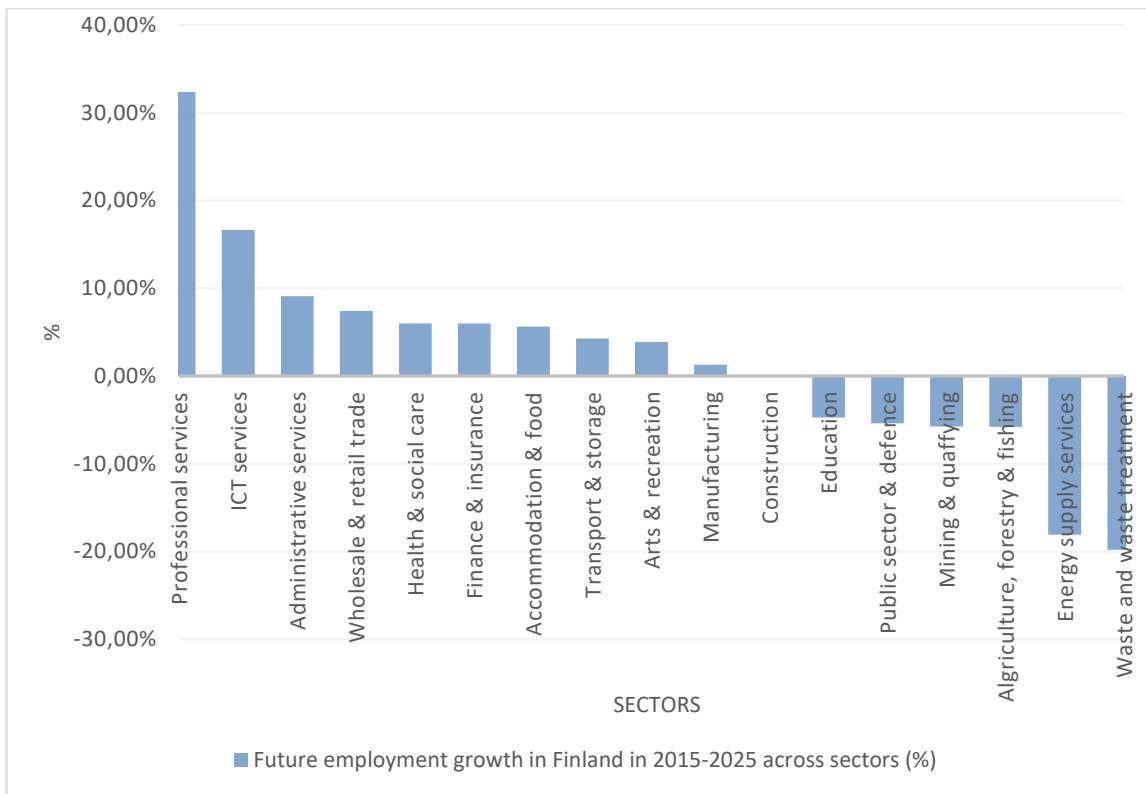


FIGURE 15. Future employment growth (in %) in Finland in 2015-2025 across sectors (Skills Panorama 2017)

According to the figure above, there will be possible growth in these sectors: professional services, ICT services, administrative services, wholesale and retail trade, health social care, finance and insurance, accommodation and food, transport and storage, art and recreation and lastly manufacturing. There is one sector which has relatively stable change which is construction. Besides, these fields which has the negative change which are education, public sector and defence, mining and quarrying, agriculture, forestry and fishing, energy supply services and water and waste treatment. With the statistics shown in the figure, the potential growth focuses mainly on human needs and health care and innovative technology that serve the daily lives. (Skills Panorama 2017)

### 3.7 Government's Support and Policies

According to Finnish Immigration Service (MIGRI) and CIMO, when the students finished their studies and they have found a job, they can apply for a new residence permit (RP) on the ground of employment. A student might work without being restricted to the labour laws applied on students while waiting for the new residence permit application to be checked. The permit is granted only in the case where the students have the em-

ployment contract which satisfy the collective labor agreement in that working field. (Finnish Immigration Service 2017b)

On the other hands, according to the Finnish Immigration Service (2017b), if the residence permit expires and the graduates still have not found any employment, they can apply for one-year extended RP to look for a job. The income requirement is the same as the student's application, only you need to submit your qualification certificate. This way, students will have higher chance to make their way to the professional lives in Finland with the extra time granted and they can have time to figure out the good choices on employment.

## 4 SITUATION OF FOREIGN STUDENTS AFTER GRADUATION IN SAVONIA UAS

In Finland, among the international students, there were 76 percent of them and 79 percent of first year's foreign students came from outside EU/EEA. Moreover, nearly half of the international graduates – which is approximately 44 percent of graduation - remain employed after 5 years of graduation. These statistics have support the point that foreign students study in Finland not only because of the free education, they also wish to contribute to the society and possibly stay in Finland as potential immigrants (CIMO 2016). The next two sub chapters below will present the employment status and type of employment by profession groups.

### 4.1 Employment Status

Where the alumni are and what they are currently working for living are big questions. Thanks to Vipunen (2017a), the statistics of Savonia's graduates from period 2009 to 2015 have been collected and conducted into a table to present the reality with specific numbers. The table below displays the status in employment of Savonia UAS's graduates after one year of graduation from 2009 to 2015 according to each sector.

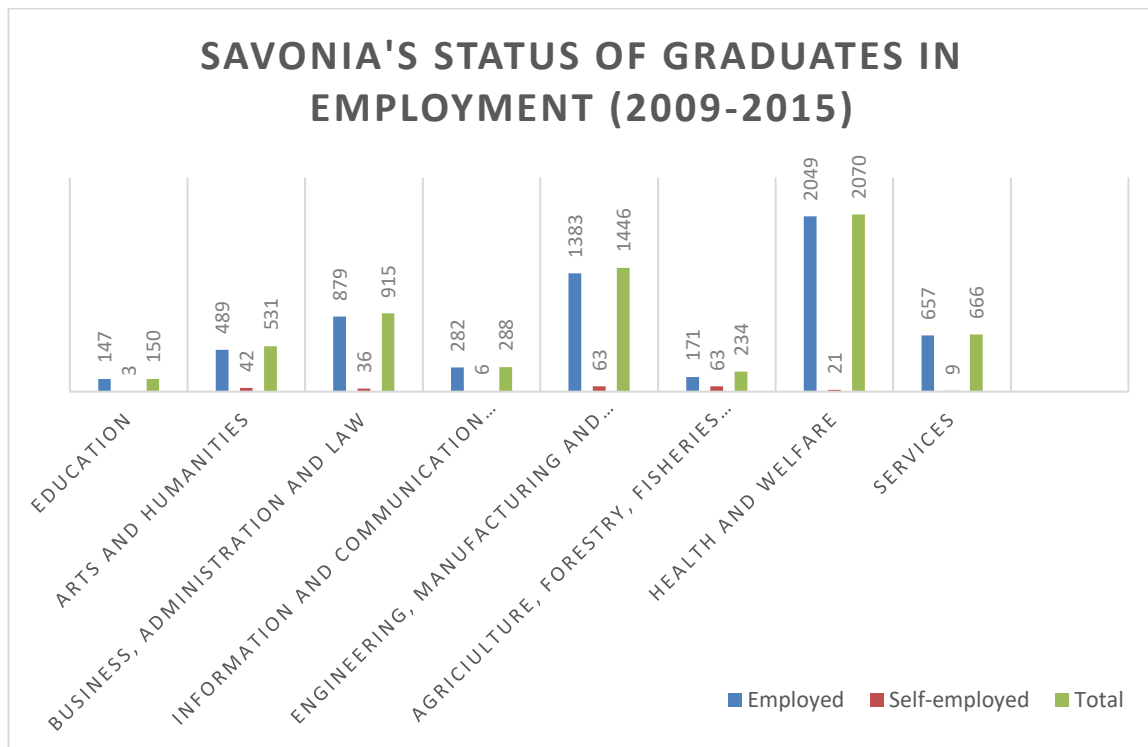


FIGURE 16. Savonia education graduates' status in Employment (2009-2015) (Vipunen 2017a)



As presented in the chart, the graduates' number from 2009 to 2015 was 6,297 and among of that, there are 6,057 are employed and 240 of that are self-employed. The fields of working that most graduates participate are engineering, manufacturing and construction with 1,383 over 6,057 for employed graduates and 63 over 240 for self-employed; Health and welfare took the first place with 2,049 for employed type which is the highest comparing to the rest, however, there were only 21 for self-employed graduates. It has also shown that the sector that has the least number was education with only 147 over 6,057 for employed type and only 3 over 240 for self-employed one. It looks like the recent graduates prefer to work in such dynamic and active fields which requires the precisely calculation and flexible adaptation in different environments.

The next concern is that whether all graduates remained in the same city or they chose another region where they can find more opportunities of employment? The table below will reveal the facts of student's flows during period 2009-2015 in Finland after graduation.

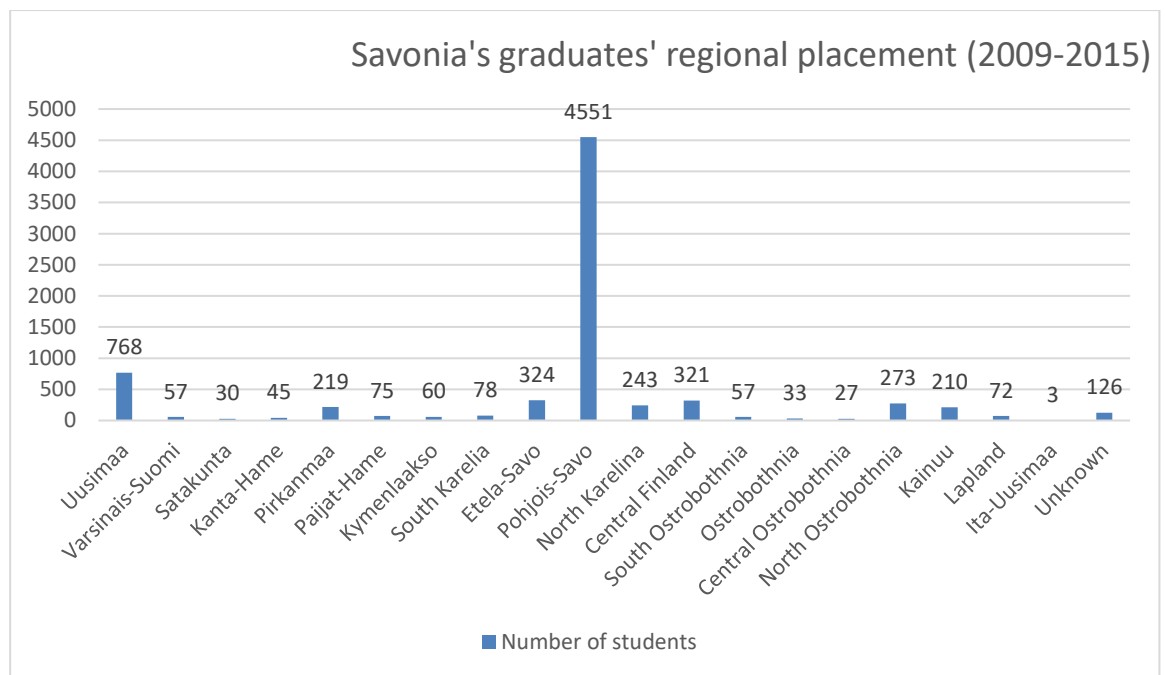


Figure 17. Savonia's graduates' regional placement (2009-2015) (Vipunen 2017b)

According to figure 17, there were a big number of graduates which were over 4500 students moving to be employed in Pohjois-Savo region, next region that receive a big flow of graduates is Uusimaa with nearly 1000 students. These two regions are the most stand-out in the figure, for other regions, there was not much change. The other regions that go after the top 2 were Pirkanmaa, Etela-Savo, North Karelia, Central Finland, North Ostrobothnia, Kainuu and Lapland with less than 500 recent graduates. However,

these statistics were only collected 1 years after these students finished their studies; therefore, the limitation of this figure is limited and cannot be used to measure the student's flow after 2 or 3 years after that.

## 4.2 Type of Employment

For recent graduates, the position in the workplace of the alumni is always a big question for the university to know if their students succeed in their life or if they have anything to struggle with. According to Vipunen (2017c), figure 18 presents the entry into employment by profession group for the old graduates from 2009 to 2015. There were 8 main professions which were education, arts and humanities, business administration and law, information and communication technologies (ICT), engineering manufacturing and construction, agriculture forestry fishery and veterinary, health and welfare, services. As it is clear in the figure, the numbers focus mostly these positions which are professionals, experts, clerical support workers, service and sales worker.

It's surprisingly hard to understand why the level of managers was so little comparing to other levels. Education, arts and humanities, ICT, agriculture forestry fishery and veterinary possessed fewer numbers in all positions comparing to other majors. The group of professions that stood out in the figure includes business administration and law, engineering manufacturing and construction, health and welfare and services. Among these statistics, the number of professionals and experts in health and welfare profession is significantly outstanding with the highest number in both sections, which was considered as a success of this programme of Savonia UAS throughout the years. On the other hands, the rest of the group had the number of students divided equally for different levels.

However, the number remained unknown occupied most of the graduates, if there could be a way to easily connect to all the missing ones, the situation could have been clearer. Totally, these numbers have proved that Savonia UAS with its education system have successfully created many generations of students with professional working skills.

## Entry into employment by profession group (2009-2015)



	Education	Arts and humanities	Business, administration and law	Information and Communication Technologies (ICT)	Engineering, manufacturing and construction	Agriculture, forestry, fisheries and veterinary	Health and welfare	Services
Managers	3	3	6	0	12	0	9	3
Professionals	66	72	30	75	375	42	111	36
Experts	3	33	138	27	261	18	966	120
Clerical support workers	3	9	183	15	24	6	12	54
Service and sales workers	12	84	123	9	30	12	153	174
Skilled agricultural, forestry and fishery workers	0	3	12	3	9	72	6	3
Craft and related trades workers	0	21	3	3	87	3	0	0
Plant and machine operators, and assemblers	0	6	6	6	42	3	9	3
Armed forces	0	0	0	3	6	0	0	3
Elementary occupations	3	12	9	18	27	3	15	12
Unknown	63	294	408	138	573	78	789	258

Figure 18. Savonia's graduates' entry into employment by profession group (2009-2015) (Vipunen 2017c)

## 5 SURVEY DETAIL

There are many sections shown above which present not only the main reasons why students consider Finland as an ideal place to study and even stay after graduation but also the difficulties finding the jobs and updated information of former students one year after graduations. However, that are just the surface of the ice, we cannot know what the current situations are for those who already finished their studies 2 or 3 years ago or even more. Besides, the alumni's network between Savonia UAS and their alumni is an important thing to develop in order to create a stronger bond between schools and students. These are the reasons why a quantitative research was carried out in the form of a questionnaire sent to groups of alumni who graduated 1 to 3 years ago to collect their opinion, their experience and to see if their current employments are corresponding to their studies.

### 5.1 Survey for Alumni

The questionnaire contains 13 questions which vary from the basic background of when the students graduated and from which programmes they were studying. After that, the questionnaire continued with giving out questions about employment's topic to collect their points of view as well as which services of employment that they might need or use. Along with that, for closed questions, when the alumni have more to say, they can also explain their opinion to clarify their choice. After the topic of employment, it was the part where the research gathered the data of alumni's activities which they have participated or would like to join. Finally, these former students will give their sincere pieces of advices for the current students who wish to find a job and remain as a citizen in Finland.

### 5.2 Result Analysis and Findings

The total number of responses is 34 due to the low response rate of alumni. Figure 19 below describes the graduation year of the respondents. 20% of the respondents are recent graduates in 2017 while the group of respondents graduated in 2015 and 2016 both equally occupies 18%. The group of respondents graduated in 2012 covers 17% of the respondents and the group of respondents graduated in 2014 covers 15% of all answers. 9% of the respondent are former students finished their studies in 2013 and finally the smallest group of respondents graduated in 2011 cover only 3%.

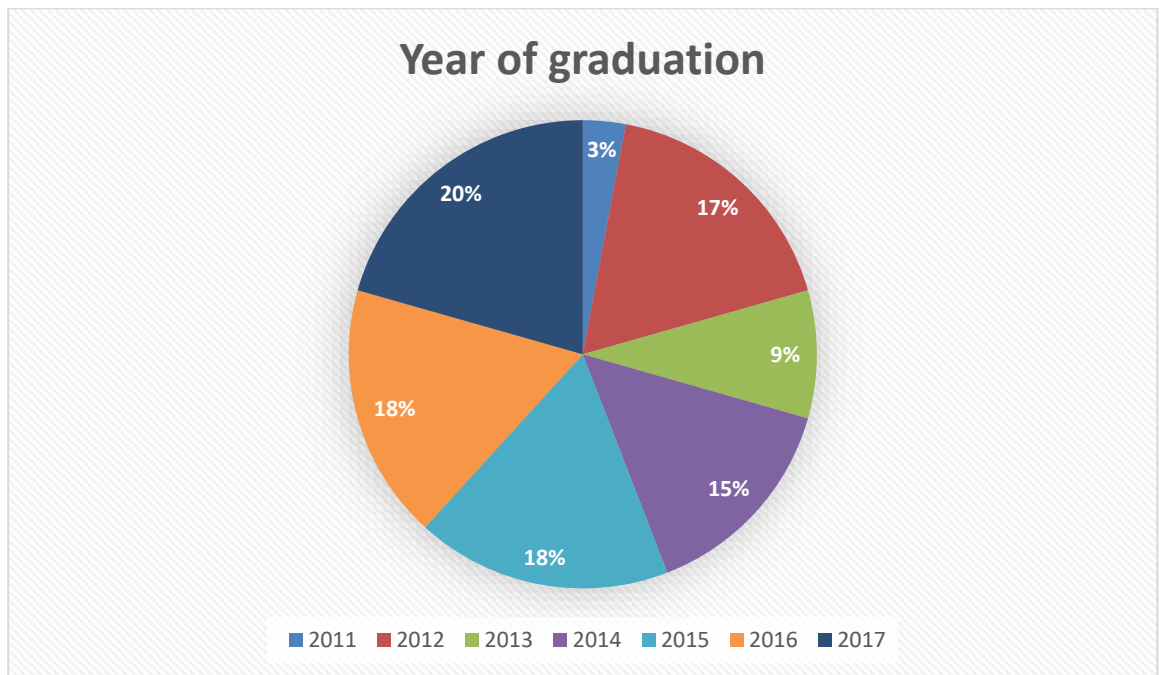


FIGURE 19. Year of graduation of the respondents (n=34)

The programmes that the respondents used to study was BBA which is International Business/ Business Administration and Industrial Management. There is 88% of the respondents graduated from BBA programme while there is only 12% of the respondents were from Industrial Management. There is no answer from former students studied Engineering and IT.

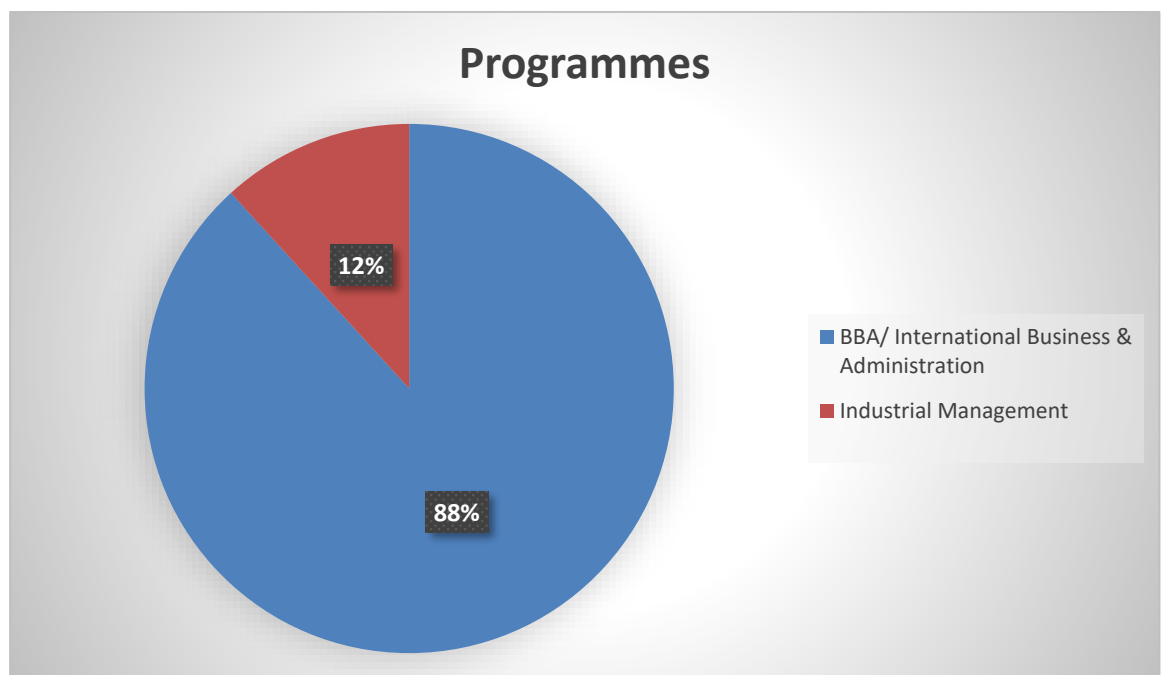


FIGURE 20. Programmes the respondents studied (n=34)

As reported by the answers, figure 21 presents the situation of employment after graduation and among 34 respondents, there is 50% who have found a job immediately after graduation while 18% of the respondents struggled from 3 months to 7 months to successfully be employed. Besides, the group of alumni who continued to master programme cover 26% of the total number, some of them chose to study master in Estonia, Sweden and even in Kuopio such as University of Eastern Finland. The last group of respondents who couldn't find a job cover 6% of all respondents.

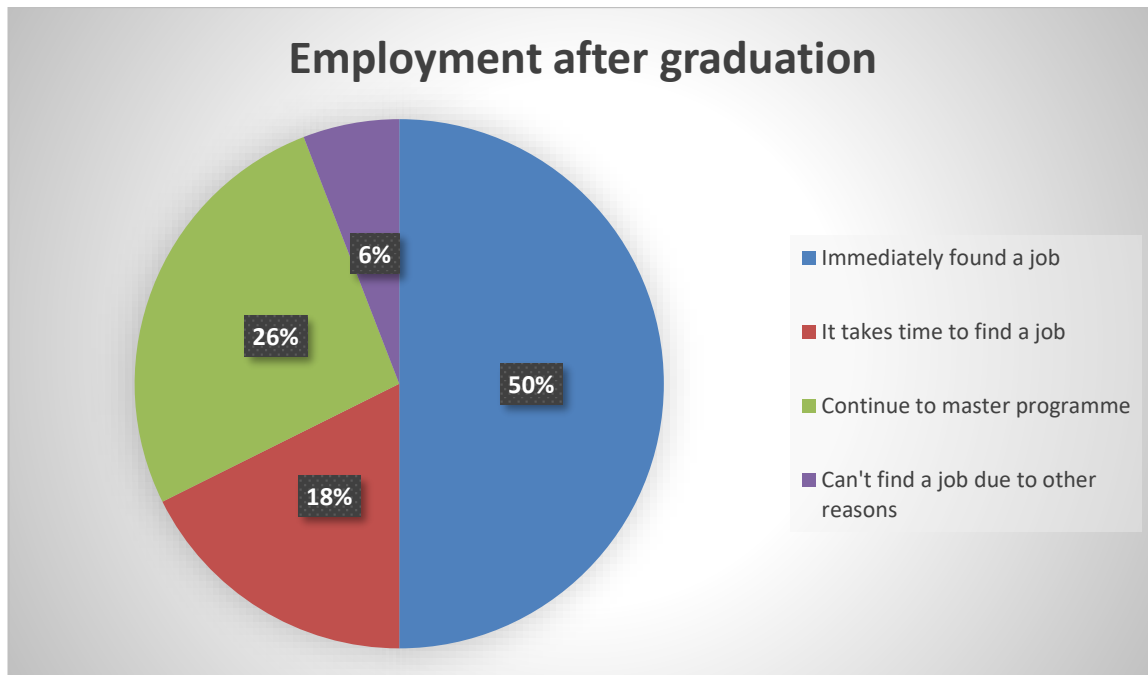


FIGURE 21. Employment situation after graduation of the respondents (n=34)

The questionnaire has two questions about the respondents' opinion about employment services to see whether they had any employment services when they graduated or whether they would have needed to benefit from. As presented in the figure 22, most of the respondents used the employment services such as TE-service, PES and other job seeking websites.

*“TE-service contacted me after graduation to ask about employment plans; then we crafted a plan for the following months which they would be following closely.”*

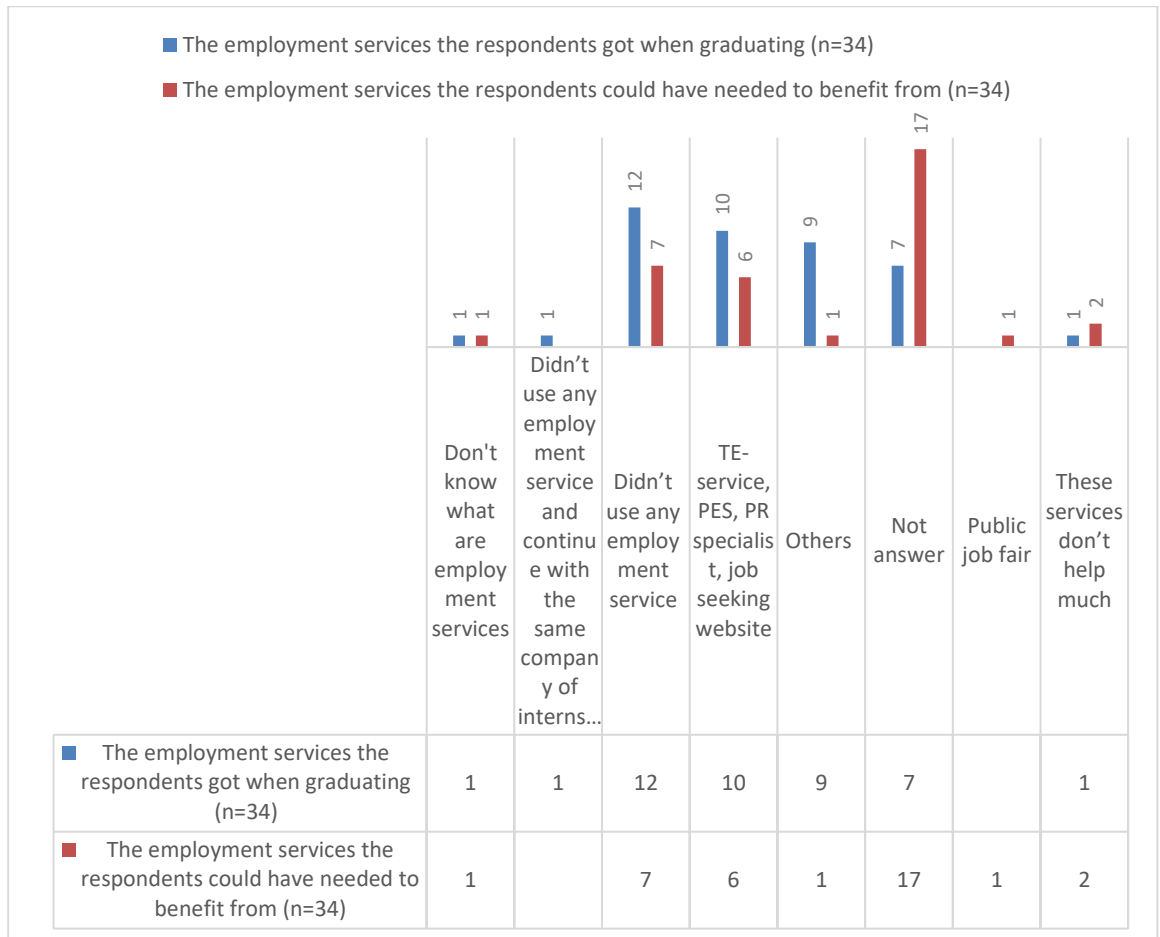


FIGURE 22. The employment services the respondents got when graduating and could have needed to benefit from (n=34)

On the other hand, many respondents believe that the employment services didn't help them in finding a job and it requires something else to get a job. The rest remained with the same company of their internship, didn't understand what an employment service is and responded with answers unrelated to the question.

*“Students were not really granted any support by the University, there are some governmental support programs in Finland, but I believe they do not work very effectively. Plus, all the best positions could be only obtained directly from the employer.”*

*“Before graduating, I got an internship in a company called Management Events. After the internship I continued in the same company as a Project Manager and still working in the same place. So, no special services.”*

For the question about which employment services the respondents could have needed to benefit from, many of them didn't give their answers, 7 of them didn't use any em-

ployment service while 6 of them use the TE-service, PES and other job seeking website. There is one opinion that the respondent could have made use of the public job fair in order to find a job easily and for people who think the employment services are not really effective, there are some interesting opinions.

*“Not sure, I don't think these services help much to find a job that is actually related to your degree (not just any job like cleaning). But I may be mistaken.”*

*“I think I would have benefited from more active jobseeker services than TE-services which does not actually help you find a job; it only assists in listing you available for any job. TE-services could have assisted in job search, but it is not in their immediate services, so it was harder to find a normal job having health issues.”*

The next question is about the first job of the respondents to see if they are on the professional level of them. The figure 23 present 3 groups of answers the respondents have submitted: 1) yes 2) no and 3) other opinions. The group that answered Yes cover 38% of total response while there is 27% answered No. The rest has given the unrelated answers to the question such as stating their job's position instead of comparing the professional level. However, there is one opinion that express the problem of getting the job.

*“I had a remote job since I was a student, which is relevant to my degree, but I am having a problem getting employed in Finland (as mentioned above, there are always cleaning, housekeeping, post jobs, but it's hard to start a professional career in Finland if you are not a Finn, if you don't speak fluent Finnish or if you are not an IT graduate)”*

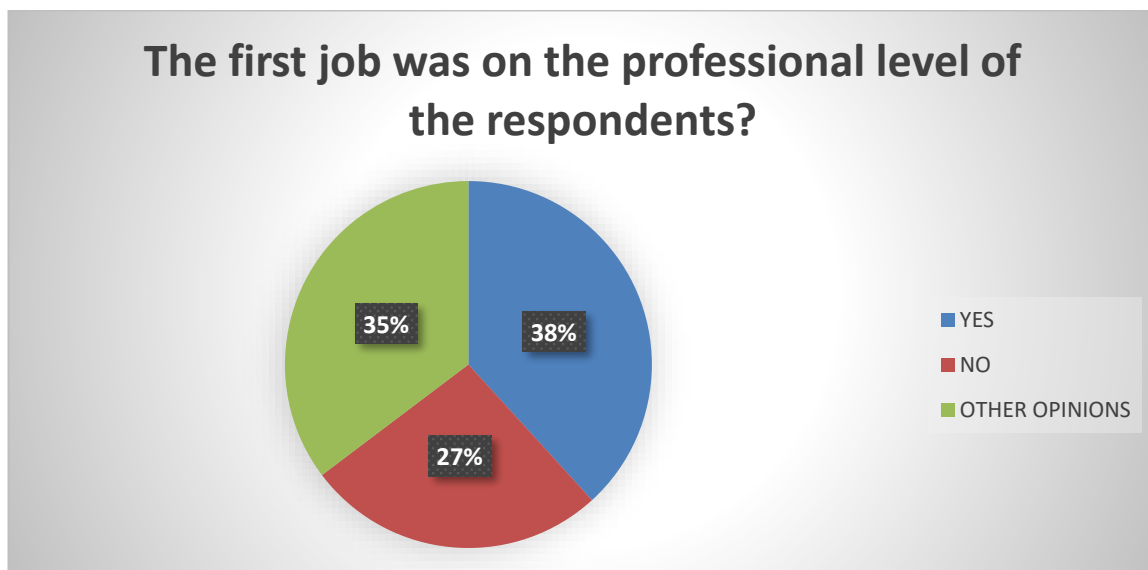


FIGURE 23. Level of the respondents' first job (n=34)



The pie chart below presents the number of jobs that the respondents had since their graduations. The group of students who had only one job ever since their graduation covers 38% of all respondents and for the group that had two jobs, it is 23%. However, there is a big number of the respondents who didn't have any idea about this and that is 21% of all answers.

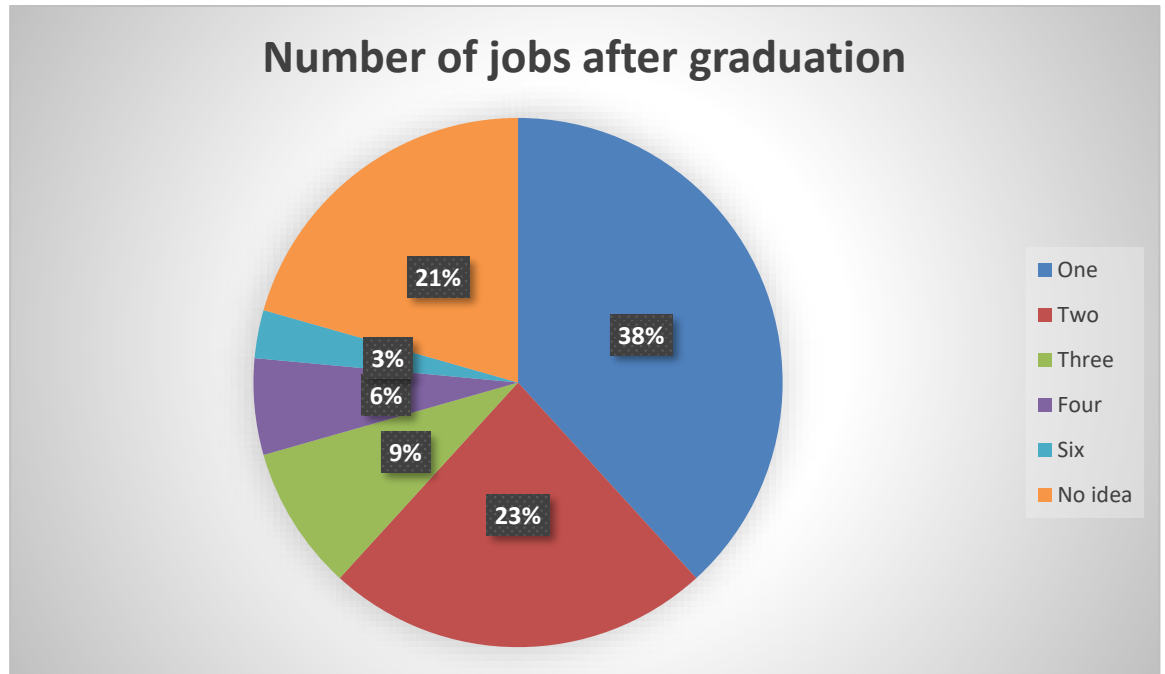


FIGURE 24. Number of jobs after graduation (n=34)

Besides, the respondents who had three jobs after graduation occupy only 9% of all while the ones with four jobs cover 6% and finally 3% for the respondents who had six jobs after graduation.

Next, regarding the correspondence of current job's professional level, 65% of the respondents stated that for them, their levels are equivalent perfectly with their ongoing employment while 12% have the job with lower level than their ability and 3% of the alumni are carrying on a higher position than their professional level. However, the group of people who didn't give the exact reply is 20%, they perhaps are pursuing another degree instead of working.

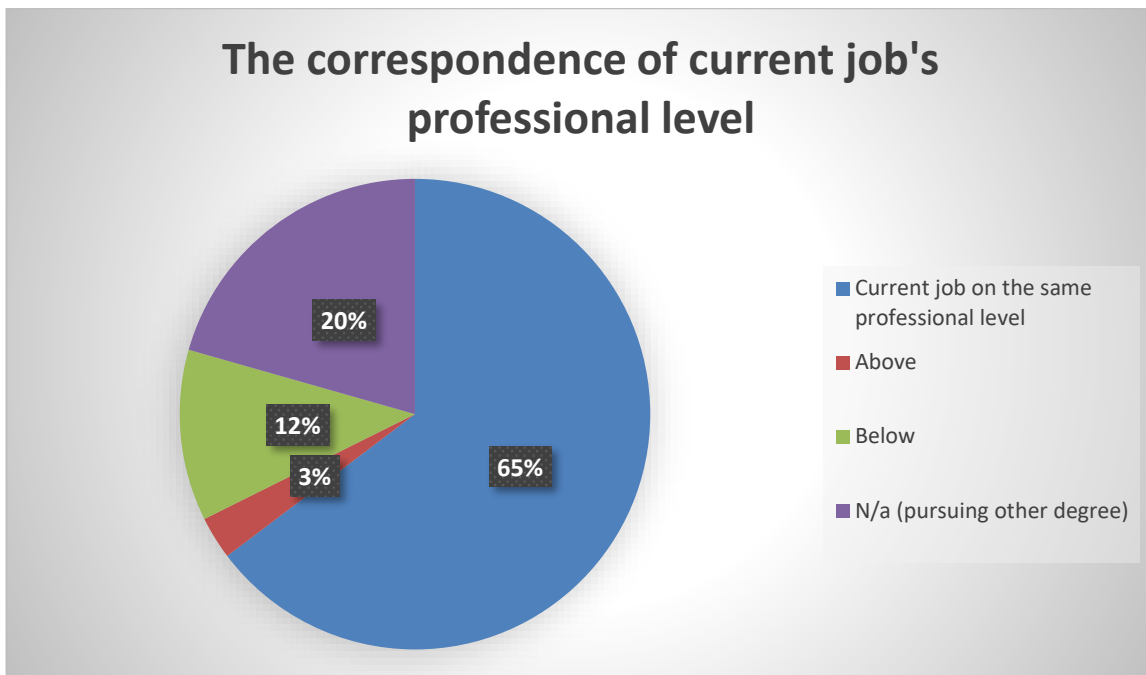


FIGURE 25. The correspondence of current job's professional level (n=34)

When asked about the alumni possibilities, most of the alumni don't have idea that there is the possibility to register as an alumnus in connection with Savonia UAS, and the amount of these people cover eventually 85% of all responses. There is 6% of them are acquainted with this possibility to some extent while only 6% notice about this.

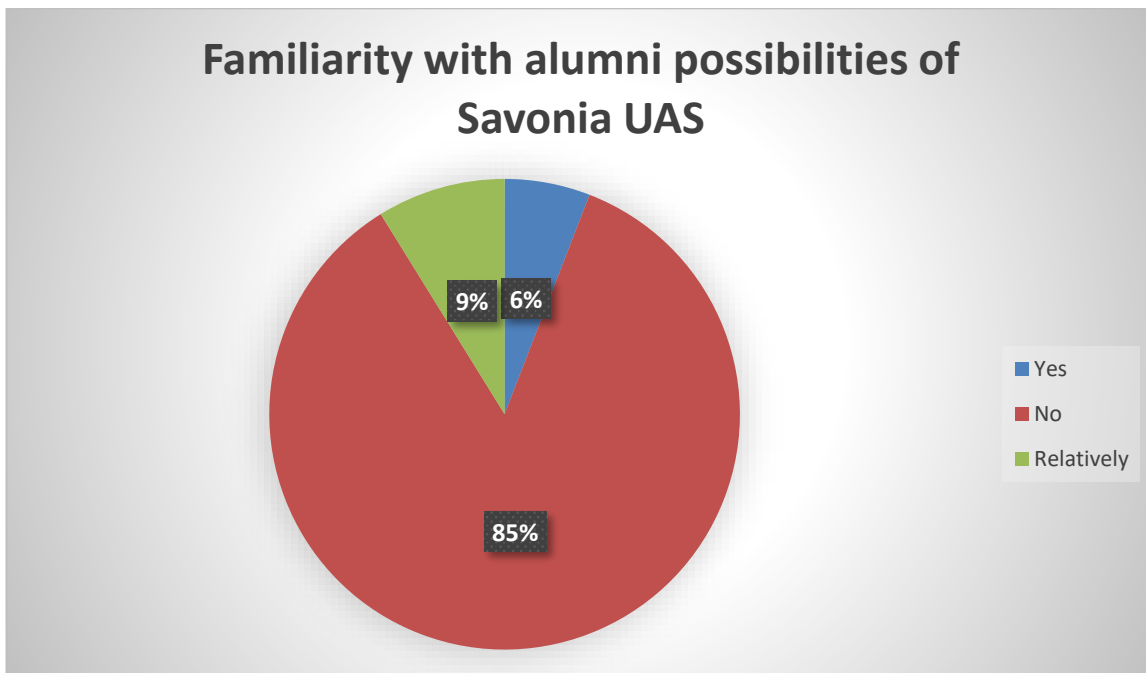


FIGURE 26. Familiarity with alumni possibilities of Savonia UAS (n=34)

Since the alumni are not very much used to the possibilities of being alumni, the rate of participation, as a result, is quite low with only 13% of the respondents experienced the related activities while 87% never had a chance with this network.

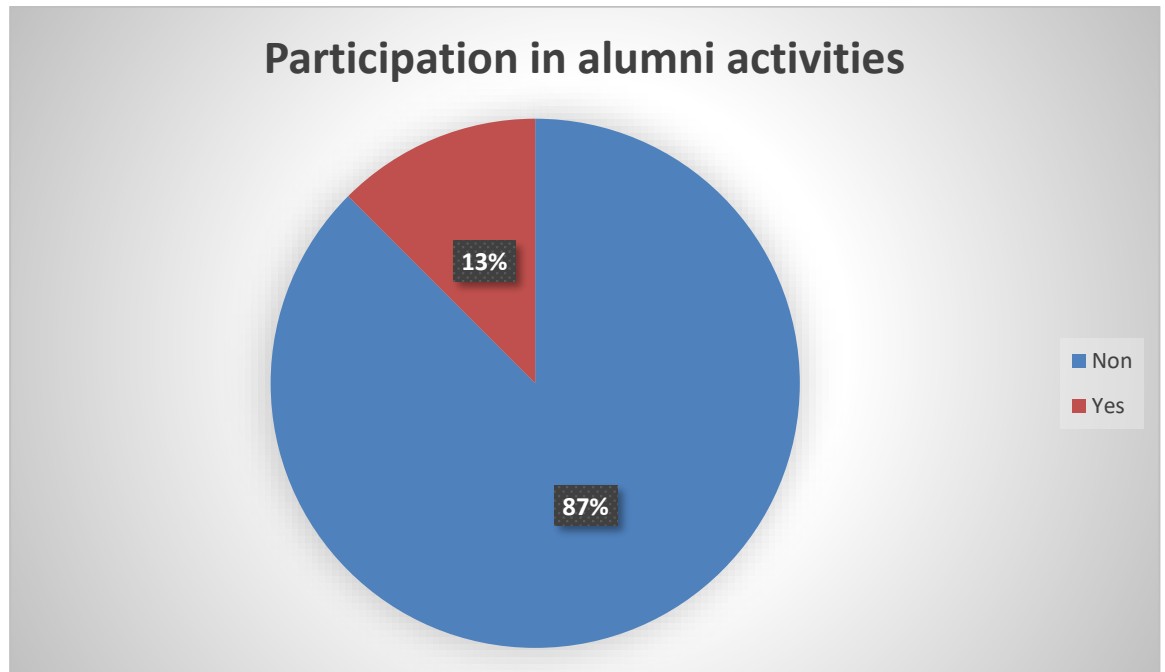


FIGURE 27. Participation in alumni activities (n=34)

Moreover, the figure below will present the interests of our beloved alumni in these proposed activities below. Among many choices, there are outstanding answers with the most votes such as inform the alumni with recent developments within the same field they had studied as well as Savonia's update. Next, since employment is an important matter for the former graduate, guidance and advice on finding employment is most voted choice, this can be cooperated very well with letting the alumni use the network for their recruitment purposes, which is a win-win relationship. Besides, the respondents are interested in exchanging professional experience with other graduates which can help them build a strong network within the same field of education. Last but not least, if Savonia UAS can organize the events or meeting more regularly, that would catch more attention of not only the former graduates but also other international students as well.

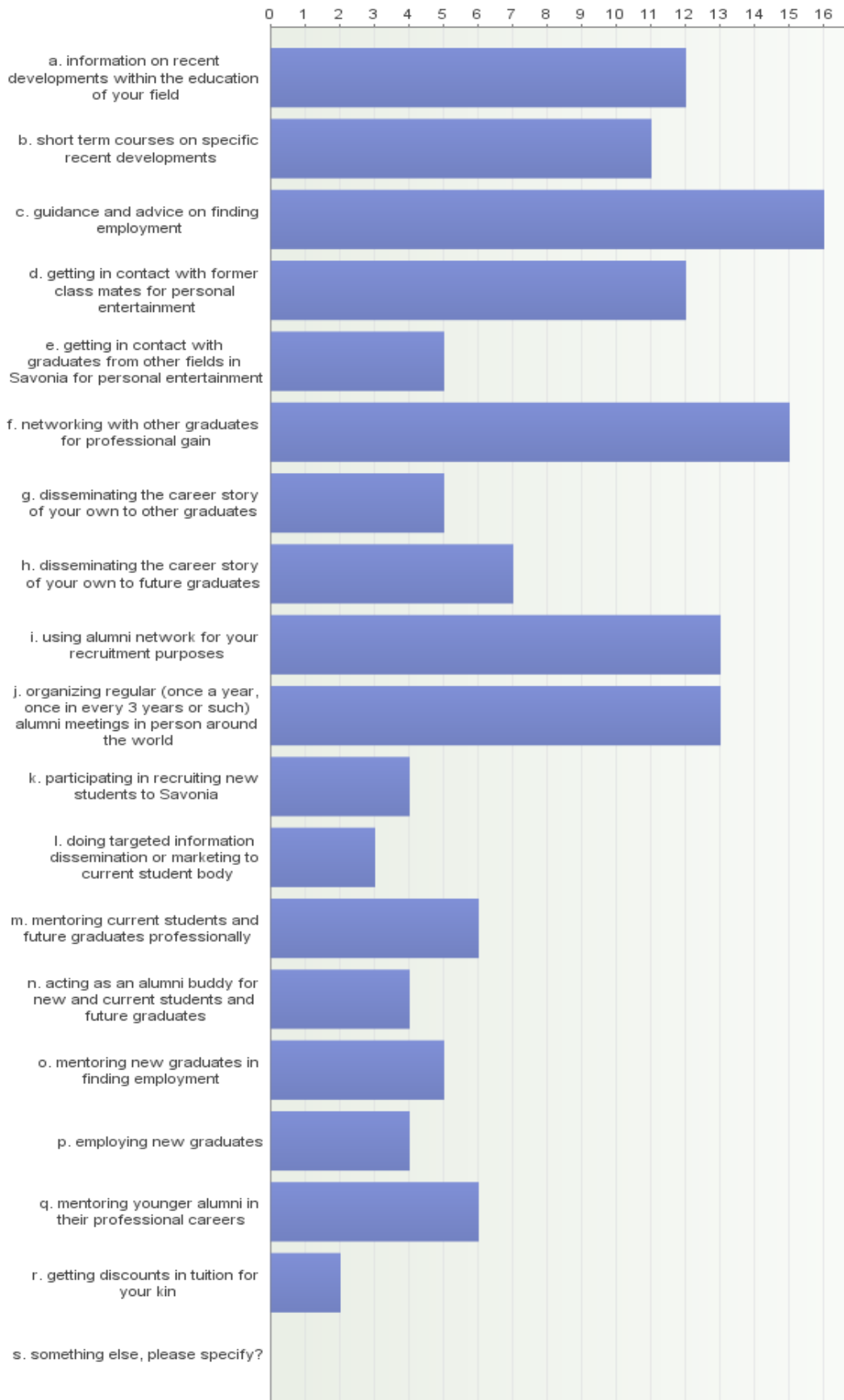


FIGURE 28. Type of activities that can attract the alumni (n=34)

About the obstacles the old grad had to face to get used to Finnish daily lives, it is optimistic that only a few people had some problem with emerging themselves in another environment which is 76% of the respondents. The group of people who struggled with their lives is 12% which is the same with the group of whom who are no longer living in Finland. According to their opinions, the problems they had to encounter were the social life with the communication and difficulty speaking the same language with others.

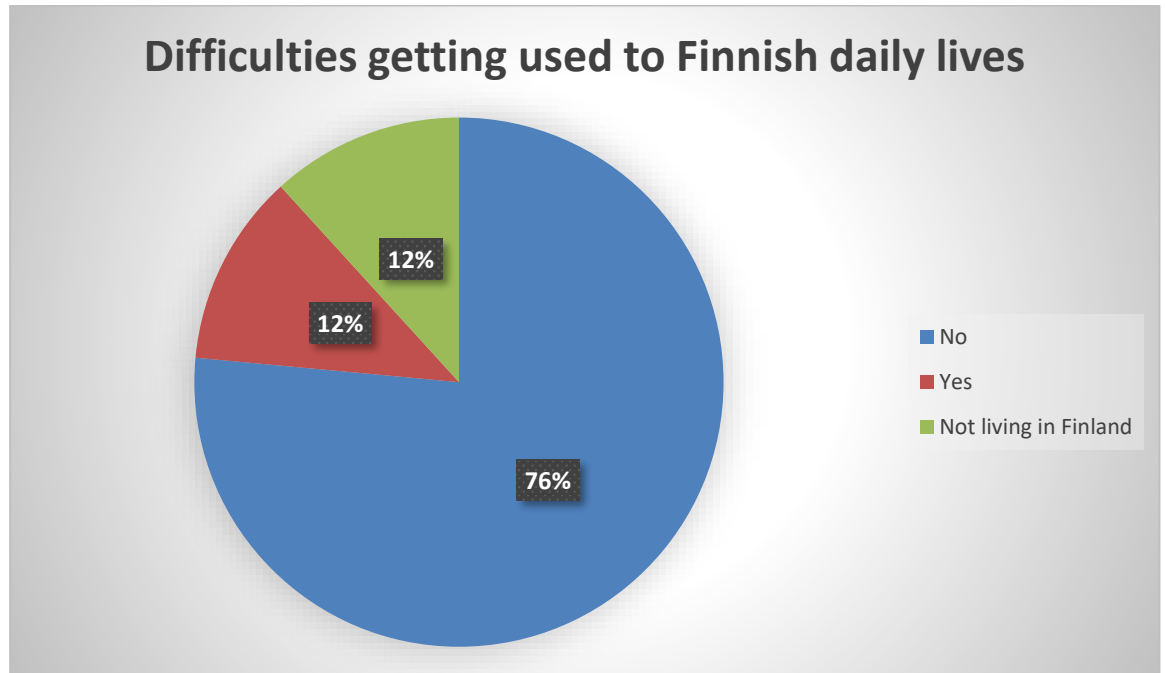


FIGURE 29. Difficulties getting used to Finnish daily lives (n=34)

Lastly, there are three main advices that are repeatedly said by the former students which are “go to Helsinki”, “improving Finnish skills” and “get more experience”.



FIGURE 30. How to stay in Finland after graduation for international students

Through the responses, the people all want to transmit one message: if the international undergraduates dream of living in Finland after graduation, they'd better study well the Finnish language for a better communication and go to Helsinki or somewhere that is more proactive with more job opportunities and garnish the CV with as much as experience they could earn. This is the only way to achieve the path of working in Finland.

## 6 DISCUSSION

The key of success for this thesis is that the proposed questions at the beginning are satisfactorily answered. All processes that were done above which were to collect the firsthand information through conducting the questionnaire and combine with the secondary data in other chapters only with one purpose: to develop the most appropriate answers. The validity and reliability of the secondary data is assured since all the information is taken from certified websites. Nonetheless, since the response rate of the questionnaire is quite low, the firsthand data are not suitable for the case of other universities of applied sciences rather than Savonia. The answers for these questions could have been better if there were more alumni in other programmes rather than BBA for more varied responses. This chapter will present the solution for each question to recapitulate everything.

### **What is the situation of foreign students after graduation?**

According to the collected answers, the current situation of all the respondents are quite positive. By evaluating the number of jobs that they have had until now along with the correspondence between the level of the employments and their educational levels, it can be concluded that the alumni have successfully managed to handle the obstacles as well as deal with the challenges of finding job. However, only half of the respondents found their first job immediately after graduation while other half either spent from 3 to 7 months to get a job or continue their studies with master programme. One of the main problems that prevents these former students from successfully having found a job is the language: Finnish.

One factor which helped students earn a chance of employment is the employment services, the respondents answered that for most of them, this type of service was not effective enough that they can rely on and they had to work primarily with the company. In their perspectives, if there would have been a more useful and efficient tool that work more actively, the chances of being employed could have been higher.

### **How can the international students can increase their chances of employment based on alumni's experience?**

According to the alumni, after summarizing the responses, there are two crucial things that international students must stay focus on:

- *Level of Finnish language*

This is one of the factors that critically decides if one person can get a job. There are always priorities in everything, for example if a company has to choose between an international student with an excellent grade of degree and a Finnish with the same degree but with lower grade, they would choose the Finnish over the foreign one. Since they can discuss in Finnish in a more sophisticated way concerning difficult problem while they have to struggle sometimes for the communication with the foreign students, the priority is so obvious. The international students can make use of their time and the surrounding environment to master their Finnish skills to be able to compete in the market with other native speakers if they want to stay legally and of course get a promotion in their job.

- *Experience*

*“No doubt the reason is that character cannot be developed in ease and quiet. Only through experience of trial and suffering can the soul be strengthened, vision cleared, ambition inspired, and success achieved”*

*(Helen Adams Keller, 1936-1937, 60)*

To look more competitive and confident in the war of getting job, experience is one of the crucial factors that makes the employers sign a contract. The alumni responded in the questionnaire that the foreign students should be always proactive when seeking for job regardless which tools or employment services they use. After graduation, while foreign students still have time to stay in the European zone, they should garnish their CV by finding as much job as possible to gain as much experience as they could. That would give them the strong competences to compete with other European students.

### **Are the alumni familiar with the alumni network?**

Unfortunately, the respondents are not completely familiar of the alumni network, only 1 or 2 people out of 34 respondents relatively heard about the network. This is one of the result why the response rate for the questionnaire is so low since they don't really have a strong bond with school after graduation. As a result, the rate of participating of the alumni in the alumni's activities hosted by Savonia UAS was pretty low and it is necessary to acknowledge this as a core problem that Savonia must work on to attract more and more alumni.



## **How to strengthen the connection between Savonia UAS and both current and former international students?**

Currently, the alumni network between Savonia UAS and its alumni is not really well known among the students and it has not been yet a tool of communication or ideally a community only for Savonia's international students. Therefore, the questionnaire was conducted to There are three suggestions that are conducted from the responses of the alumni and the amount of answers:

### *1. An employment system for all international students*

Savonia UAS can improve the alumni network by combining two purposes of current and former international students which are finding job and recruiting employee. There will always be alumni who work as a human resources manager and where else can be a better place to find the future workers with the desired professional skills and knowledge? They can easily find what they need within the school's connections and the eligible applicants can contact them directly to discuss this topic. From this, the author believes that Savonia UAS can create a strong and wide community with the shared benefits and values, it is also a good way to collect the testimonials to gain more reputation and attract more students to come.

### *2. More active programmes*

People usually say: "out of sight, out of mind" which signifies the situation in which a person are no longer in touch with someone or something else, they will soon forget it, this is actually the case for the alumni network at the moment. In this circumstance, the best solution is to create more and more interesting events regularly and keep on informing alumni with the new developments of Savonia UAS. This way will not only attract more students to participate and creatively organize another event themselves but also maintain the strong bonds with the graduates.

### *3. Personal email required*

There is one problem concerning the response rate which is the contact emails in the alumni list. Instead of leaving their personal email, they left their educa-

tional email which were already deactivated after their studies ended. Perhaps it could be better if Savonia UAS states clearly in the alumni registration form that their private emails are for which purposes and which benefits they would have such as easy access to the alumni network when they are in need... and so on. Besides, for graduates who returned to China, there is a intervention their access to the link of the questionnaire, thus that will also cause the same problem with the entry to the alumni network, if this is the objective reason, then it is such a waste that these students cannot receive the profit of being alumni of Savonia UAS.

## 7 CONCLUSION

To briefly summarize, the main objectives of this study is to discover alumni's lives after graduation as well as their connection and familiarity with the alumni network of Savonia UAS. The results for the questions stated above were delivered by both theoretical information and empirical data. The theoretical part includes Finnish higher education system and Savonia UAS introduction and other things related to the benefits of living in Finland along with the skills and factors affecting the chances of employment and the update of situation of employment of international students from 2011 until 2015. By combining these materials with the analysis of empirical findings from the questionnaire, the results were explored to answer the important questions.

Quantitative research was used to collect the firsthand experience as well as the perspectives of the alumni on different topics with 13 open-ended questions.

This research shows that the former students strongly managed to handle their lives with the obstacles of finding job and from that, earn the chances to personally and professionally improve themselves. In addition, they took their own points of view and their own stories to produce the valuable advices for the following generation of international students who wish to stay and contribute to Finland. Even though the international students are not familiar with the alumni network, there are also many ways to make it work, the core solution is to transfer the network into a tool that serves both alumni and international students with employment purposes, from that make it a community with shared benefit and values for Savonia's international students.

### **Suggestions for future research**

As mentioned earlier in the Introduction section, the scope of this thesis was only limited to all the international students who have already graduated from the English programmes offered by Savonia UAS. The story after graduation of Savonia's alumni in all English programmes is an interesting topic to concentrate on since many former students neither keep in touch with the university nor keep being active with the alumni's activities. One more thing that limits this research to be more accurate and to have more detail answers is the low response rate the questionnaire; however, all the information and data collected are advisory enough to generate the suggestions for Savonia UAS. Thus, future researches on this topic are recommended to take place to learn more about what the students have earned, what were the most useful things they have achieved and most importantly, to verify the practicality and efficiency of the curriculum.

Moreover, the author believes that if the research is carried out for international students who recently graduated, the information collected will be more valuable to Savonia UAS and the validity will last longer. Besides, alumni's network is an interesting topic and it can be such a useful tool not only to help the international students, connect both new and former students but also make use of the alumni's connection if they participate actively in the alumni's activities.

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## 8.1 Appendix 1: Survey Questionnaire

### Survey Questionnaire

#### **Survey on Alumni's Life after Graduation and Help for Recent Graduates and International Students**

*This questionnaire is carried out in order to collect material for the thesis of My Van Vu from Savonia University of Applied Sciences on the purpose of discovering Alumni's life after graduation and which impact they can create for recent graduates and international students to integrate Finnish daily lives. Be assured that all answers you provide will be kept in the strictest confidentiality. Please click "Next" to begin.*

1. **Year of your graduation?**

---

2. **From which programme did you graduate?**

---

**3. Did you find employment immediately after graduation?** Yes If not, how long did it take? If not, did you continue to master? If not, other possible reasons (such as maternity leave, military service etc)**4. What kind of employment services did you get when graduating? Please list.**

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**5. What kind of employment services would you have needed or wanted and benefited from? Please list.**

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---

**6. Was the first job after graduation on your own professional level?**

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**7. How many different jobs have you had since graduation?**

---

**8. Is your current job on your professional level?** Yes If no, is it above or below? \_\_\_\_\_**9. Are you familiar with alumni possibilities of Savonia?**

---

---

**10. What kind of alumni activities have you taken part in? Please list.**

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**11. What kind of alumni activities do you think would be useful or otherwise interesting to you?**

- Information on recent developments within the education of your field
- Short term courses on specific recent developments
- Guidance and advice on finding employment
- Getting in contact with former classmates for personal entertainment
- Getting in contact with graduates from other fields in Savonia for personal entertainment
- Networking with other graduates for professional gain
- Disseminating the career story of your own to other graduates
- Disseminating the career story of your own to future graduates
- Using alumni network for your recruitment purposes
- Organizing regular (once a year, once in every 3 years or such) alumni meetings in person around the world
- Participating in recruiting new students to Savonia
- Doing targeted information dissemination or marketing to current student body
- Mentoring current students and future graduates professionally
- Acting as an alumni buddy for new and current students and future graduates
- Mentoring new graduates in finding employment

- Employing new graduates
  - Mentoring younger alumni in their professional careers
  - Getting discounts in tuition for your kin
  - Something else, please specify?
- 

**12. Did you encounter any difficulty integrating to the daily Finnish lives?**

- No
- If yes, in which aspects?

**13. Which advice would you give to the international students who wish to stay in Finland after graduation?**

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*It is the end of the survey. Thank you a lot for taking your time to finish these questions. If you can, please join this network hosted by Savonia UAS in order to create a stronger tie between the university, alumni and current international students. The link to access: <https://www.linkedin.com/groups/12047151/profile>*

## 8.2 Appendix 2: Questionnaire Email

### Initial Message

Dear Savonia's Alumni,

I am a senior BBA student at Savonia. I am writing my thesis on Alumni's Life after Graduation and Impacts on recent Graduates. My thesis contributes to the discovery of the professional life of Savonia's students after graduation and which possible impacts left on recent graduates from the alumni's experience.

To collect the practical data for my thesis, I have conducted a questionnaire to figure out the alumni's point of view on the field of finding employment and activities that can at-

tract more students to join as an alumnus. Since you are part of the Alumni, the key factor to learn from your experience, I send this email to all the alumni involved in the international programme. Your responses will not only fulfil my thesis but also help me find the influences you can leave on recent graduates and future international students as well as Savonia UAS in improving the teaching quality.

The questionnaire contains thirteen (13) questions from your experience. I appreciate if you can take part in this survey. I will only take around 10 minutes to finish.

Be assured that all answers you provide will be kept in the strictest confidentiality. Currently, Savonia has created the Savonia International Alumni on LinkedIn to connect and get more information from students after graduation. You can find the link to this LinkedIn group at the end of the questionnaire.

Please follow the link below to access the questionnaire. I am grateful if you can answer and submit it by Thursday 16 November 2017.

Thank you for your participation.

Sincerely,

Van M Vu

International Student, LI13SM

Savonia University of Applied Sciences, Kuopio

International Business Programme

Email: [Van.M.Vu@edu.savonia.fi](mailto:Van.M.Vu@edu.savonia.fi)

Link to the questionnaire: <https://goo.gl/VUPR84>

### 8.3 Appendix 3: Reminder Message

Dear Savonia UAS's Alumni,

The survey "Alumni's Life after Graduation and Impacts on recent Graduates" still need more answers. I deeply appreciate if you could spend 5 minutes on answering the questionnaire. The questionnaire contains thirteen (13) questions from your experience.

Be assured that all answers you provide will be kept in the strictest confidentiality.

Please follow the link below to access the questionnaire.

Sincerely,

Van M Vu

International Student, LI13SM

Savonia University of Applied Sciences, Kuopio

International Business Programme

Email: [Van.M.Vu@edu.savonia.fi](mailto:Van.M.Vu@edu.savonia.fi)

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