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## Aiming for Top Tourism Education on the Top of the World

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Tourism is one of the most important industries in Finnish Lapland. It brings economic, social, cultural and environmental benefits and prosperity to the region (Regional Council of Lapland, 2021). Therefore, it is obvious that tourism is one of the educational areas of Lapland University of Applied Sciences. The international Degree Programme in Tourism has actively been following the latest development trends and constantly changing operating environments of the tourism and hospitality industry.

It is important to the university of applied sciences to have continuous discussions and cooperation with companies and organisations in order to be able to follow the latest trends and recognize weak signals which will have impact on the whole industry. Therefore, the curriculum must be built so that it gives tourism graduates and future experts up-to-date knowledge and necessary skills and competences to serve the tourism sector as well as possible.

The curriculum of the Degree Programme in Tourism has been in the development process since the industry has undergone massive changes, firstly due to the growing number of international visitors in the area during the past few years, and secondly because of the challenges caused by the Covid-19 pandemic and travel restrictions imposed (Statistics Finland, 2021). Before the pandemic, the growth of tourism was exponential for many years (Regional Council of Lapland, 2021). Consequently, it is necessary to develop the curriculum regularly to better meet the demands of the tourism and hospitality industry. While Experience Design is still the specialization area of the curriculum, sustainability issues and

risk management have more importance than before. Sustainable transformation as well as value creation through experiences are inevitably such elements travellers will still seek in the future, in Lapland but also on a global scale. As a matter of fact, responsible tourism business has been included in the contents of the previous curriculum but it has a more significant emphasis in the new one. As seen in the tourism industry lately, risk management has even stronger relevance than ever before. Tourism companies must be able to foresee global threats and risks and take necessary actions accordingly. Therefore, we would like to offer our students skills and competences to be able to recognise and confront these challenges.

Sustainability is a widely discussed topic everywhere and its importance in the tourism and hospitality industry is inevitable. Future travellers pay close attention to sustainability issues when making their travel or destination choices. We must be able to meet their requirements and therefore sustainability issues, nature and the Arctic region represent focal areas in the new curriculum.

It is important to get continuous feedback from tourism companies and their representatives in terms of the new curriculum and its focal areas. This is to assure high quality of the tourism education of Lapland University of Applied Sciences. We are also developing our international cooperation further in terms of common course implementations with some of our key partner universities in Europe, for instance with Kempten UAS (Germany), Breda UAS (the Netherlands) and Universitat Autònoma de Barcelona.

The Finnish working life is looking for more experts to our existing labour shortage. This concerns the tourism and hospitality industry as well and that is why there is demand for international labour force. The educational sector is also trying to increase the number of international personnel, in addition to getting the number of international students higher. This is in accordance with our contract with the Ministry of Education. Our aim is to educate innovative and creative future leaders for the tourism field.



Photo: Harri Tarvainen, House of Lapland 2021

## Sources:

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