

**International Students Support Services in**

**Novia University of applied sciences**

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### Abstract

This thesis explored the challenges and opportunities within international student support services at Novia University of Applied Sciences (UAS), with a primary focus on enhancing the user experience through the redesign of the university's landing page. Through the lens of Design Thinking, the research delved into the Empathize, Ideate, Prototype, and Test phases to gather insights, solutions, create a prototype, and validate proposed improvements. The key findings revealed significant issues with website navigation and accessibility, prompting the redesign proposal to address these challenges. The Moscow prioritization technique categorizes support services into Must-Haves, Should-Haves, Could-Haves, and Won't-Haves, providing a strategic framework for redesign implementation. The redesigned landing page, with distinct sections catering to essential, additional, and enhanced services, is presented as a tangible solution to improve user clarity and accessibility. The proposed changes aimed to contribute to a more inclusive and supportive environment for Novia UAS's international student community, fostering a positive academic experience. Continuous improvement is emphasized, acknowledging the dynamic nature of international student needs and promoting a user-centric approach in higher education support services.

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## 1 Introduction

In this globalization era, students are migrating from one place to another place for career development, and economic growth, and looking for better opportunities as well as better education. This is an ongoing and never-ending process. The data of students have shown that the number of students in higher education in Finland is rapidly growing. According to (Ritva Reinikka & Hannele 2018, pp.4-5), This means Finland has a world-class education system and the potential to attract international students which helps bring assets like human capital from abroad and boost economy in long run. Among the 13 universities and 22 universities of applied sciences, Novia University of Applied Sciences was founded on August 1, 2008. The university operates in five cities Vaasa, Turku, Raseborg and Jakobstad with 4,800 students. According to Novia UAS website, they provide five different courses such as Department of Technologies and Shipping, Department of Health and Welfare, Department of Business Administration, Department of Art and Culture, Department of Bioeconomy.

Although Novia UAS provides a range of support services and resources to promote student well-being, many students overlook this information and do not take advantage of these services, which has been my own experience as an international student. It is crucial for students to understand the importance of seeking support and making connections with their peers, as social interaction and a sense of belonging are important for overall wellness (Adebayo, 2013, p.1). As a result, some students may struggle to adapt to an international learning environment, which may involve navigating cultural differences, but this study focused on what kind of challenges are facing before arrival and how the students manage their daily life in Finland. It is important for universities to communicate the availability and benefits of these resources in a clear and compelling way, and to actively encourage students to make use of them when they are planning to move Finland for higher education.

International students have been more prevalent at Finland's Novia UAS in recent years. This has brought home how crucial it is to offer efficient support services in order to ensure the academic success and the integration of international students. This thesis aims to

examine Novia UAS's support services for international students, evaluate their efficacy, and pinpoint opportunities for development.

The thesis begins with a general summary of the study's background and context, including the study's justification, research questions, and significance. The study aimed to obtain understanding of the perceptions and experiences of international students at Novia UAS, the university's support services, and the difficulties and opportunities associated with assisting foreign students in a multicultural setting.

## 1.1 Problem Statement

A mix of enthusiasm and trepidation characterizes the adjustment for incoming international students who are studying in Finland. While starting this academic adventure is exciting, the difficulties of adjusting to a new environment, culture, and language, as well as navigating unfamiliar regulations and policies, make me uneasy. The purpose of this thesis was to describe the current support services that Novia UAS offers to international students and to ascertain the expectations of these students prior to their arrival. The emphasis also included the difficulties incoming international students encounter during their first week at Novia UAS. It is essential to comprehend these difficulties in order to close the gap between international students' actual experiences and their expectations.

The study also aimed to learn more about the best way for Novia UAS to fill the identified gap and effectively address it. The goal was to simplify and improve the academic experience of international students by developing a thorough grasp of the support services and difficulties. The goal is to establish an environment that not Made the study abroad experience easier and more pleasurable, but also developed a positive and confident atmosphere for international students, from the pre-application stage until graduation.

The main goal of this research was to identify the real-world issues that that international students face so that strategic solutions and services can be developed from the viewpoint of the university. The ultimate objective was to ensure that students have a seamless study abroad experience by providing them with information about the resources and assistance that are available. Armed with this information, overseas students may successfully

navigate daily life, enabling them to concentrate on their academics and produce better and more fruitful outcomes. In order to improve the general well-being and academic achievement of international students at Novia UAS, this thesis represents a proactive effort.

## 1.2 Objectives of the Study

The purpose of this study was to evaluate the current support services provided to new international students at Novia UAS, to identify the expectations of these students prior to their arrival, to examine the difficulties they encounter during their first week, and to suggest solutions to close the gap between expectations and reality. The study's objectives was to better the entire study abroad experience, increase knowledge transfer to empower students, and strengthen existing support services based on identified difficulties. The study also aimed to provide insightful information for Novia UAS's institutional policy development, ultimately fostering a more welcoming and inclusive atmosphere for international students.

## 1.3 Significance of the Study

The Novia UAS and the larger international student community should seriously take the findings of this study. First, the study tackled the unique needs of new international students at Novia UAS by evaluating and improving the existing support services, aiding in their smooth integration into the academic and cultural environment. A more positive and customized experience is ensured by comprehending and coordinating student expectations.

The institutional level is also affected by the study's importance. By identifying problems and making suggestions for solutions, Novia UAS can proactively improve the support services it offers, creating a setting that not only draws in but also keeps international students. The findings of this study contribute to the ongoing improvement of Novia UAS's strategy for supporting international students by influencing institutional policies.

In addition, the study adds to the larger scholarly discussion on efficient support systems for overseas students. Other universities encountering comparable difficulties may benefit

greatly from understanding what Novia UAS has learned. This study's ability to transmit knowledge could be advantageous to the larger international education community, encouraging best practices and innovation in support services.

The importance of this study ultimately rests in its ability to improve the study abroad experience for international students, in line with Novia UAS's dedication to offering a globalized and high-quality education.

#### 1.4 Commissioner's Details

As the prestigious commissioner of this study, Novia UAS, is the one of the university of applied sciences in Finland. Novia UAS, which is renowned for its dedication to higher education that is practical in nature, provides a wide range of degree programs in Swedish, Finnish, and English, encouraging linguistic variety among its student body.

In order to prepare professionals for expert and developmental roles that reflect the changing demands of the workplace, the institution is crucial. Novia UAS sees itself as a vital contribution to the growth of local working life and an industry with a strategic focus on gaining national and international prominence.

As the commissioner, Novia UAS has taken on the duty of comprehending and developing the experiences of its community of international students. The administration of the institution understands the value of offering thorough support services that are tailored to the various language backgrounds and needs of its students.

The choice to undertake this study illustrates Novia UAS's proactive attitude to making sure that its international students are successful and satisfied. In order to inform strategic changes in support services and support Novia UAS's continued efforts to maintain excellence in both national and international academic realms, the study aimed to reveal the difficulties and expectations faced by new international students.

## 1.5 Research Questions

The research questions addressed below.

### **To what extent do the current support structures adequately address the needs of international students?**

This inquiry is crucial because it tackles the fundamental question of whether the current support systems are beneficial to overseas students. It is also essential since it allows for an objective evaluation of the effectiveness of support services. The question "To what extent do the current support structures adequately address the needs of international students?" is crucial to ask since it has a direct impact on the success and general well-being of international students. The selected study topic to examine how well current support networks function and determine whether or not they actually address the wide range of demands of international students. By examining these issues, the study hopes to offer insightful information on the advantages and possible drawbacks of the support systems in place, enabling an unbiased assessment of the effectiveness of support services. For organizations and legislators looking to improve the general educational experience and success rates of overseas students, this investigation is essential.

### **What difficulties do international students encounter most frequently, and how are these difficulties handled by support services?**

Because it addresses the unique demands of overseas students, which may be different from those of domestic students, this question is significant. It also makes it possible to have a deeper understanding of the particular difficulties that international students encounter and how support services deal with these difficulties.

For a number of reasons, the research topic "What challenges do international students face most frequently, and how are these challenges handled by support services?" is important. First, it acknowledges that international students confront unique difficulties and that their experiences may vary from those of domestic students. In order to successfully customize support services to the unique needs of the international student population, this difference is essential.

Second, by concentrating on the challenges that are most commonly encountered, the study question enables a focused investigation of the main problems that face international

students. This method makes it easier to comprehend the particular pressures and challenges that children from different cultural backgrounds may face, which could obstruct their ability to succeed academically and socially. Finally, examining how support services address these challenges offers important information into how well-functioning current support systems are. It is easier to assess how responsive and flexible support services are to the changing requirements of the community of international students when one is aware of the tactics, interventions, and resources they use.

To sum up, this research question provides an in-depth examination of the obstacles encountered by international students, providing insight into their distinct circumstances and illuminating the effectiveness of support services in easing these burdens.

**What can be done to enhance the support services offered to international students in order to better serve this population's needs?**

This inquiry was crucial because it raised the issue of how support services for international students could be continually improved. It also enabled a discussion of possible ways to enhance support services, which could have been helpful in real-world situations. For a number of reasons, it was crucial to address the issue, "What could be done to enhance the support services offered to international students in order to better serve this population's needs?" First, it recognized that, given the potential for change in this population's demands over time, it was vital that support services for international students be continuously improved. The question, which asked how support services might be improved, started a fruitful conversation that might have resulted in workable answers. For organizations and legislators looking to put into effect concrete adjustments that had a beneficial effect on the outcomes and experiences of international students, this strategy was essential. Furthermore, this study question encouraged a proactive strategy to solve the difficulties encountered by overseas students. It promoted the discovery of novel approaches, viable treatments, and the adoption of best practices from various educational environments. This could have aided in the creation of extensive and flexible support networks that could change to meet the changing demands of the community of international students. In conclusion, the question both emphasized the need for development and opened the door to a conversation focused on finding solutions. This might have resulted in the adoption of practical policies that improved international

students' overall support services and established a setting that supported their well-being and academic achievement.

## 1.6 Thesis Structure

A foundation is laid for the study on Novia UAS's International Student Support Services in Chapter 1 of the thesis. In Chapter 2, the theoretical framework will be thoroughly examined, including ideas like acculturation theory and cultural intelligence. In Chapter 3, the approach utilized in service design research will be covered in full, along with the instruments and techniques employed. Data collection and analysis will be covered in Chapter 4, which offers helpful insights into the study procedure. Based on the data gathered, Chapter 5 conducts a gap analysis and makes suggestions for improving the services provided to help international students. The thesis will be concluded in Chapter 6, which summarizes the main findings, goes through the research goals again, and suggests possible directions for future study. This organized framework guarantees a succinct and clear description of the research process.

## 2 Theoretical background

The landscape of higher education is changing dramatically in this period of unparalleled globalization, especially in the area of the experiences of international students. This thesis is a thorough investigation of Novia UAS International Student Support Services, which is located at the nexus of cultural diversity, educational innovation, and digitization.

The successful design and execution of international student support services are crucial in the dynamic climate of higher education for assuring the success and satisfaction of students in diverse and globalized surroundings. The global education scenario, social and cultural diversity, student support and experience, education technologies and digitization, and service design principles and design thinking are the five essential dimensions that are synthesized in this thesis.

Figure 1 Shows The confluence of these theoretical components provides a solid framework for understanding the nuances of foreign student support services as this thesis develops. Beyond academic debate, the goal is to provide real-world knowledge that helps

to improve support structures and better match them to the changing needs of today's globally oriented higher education.

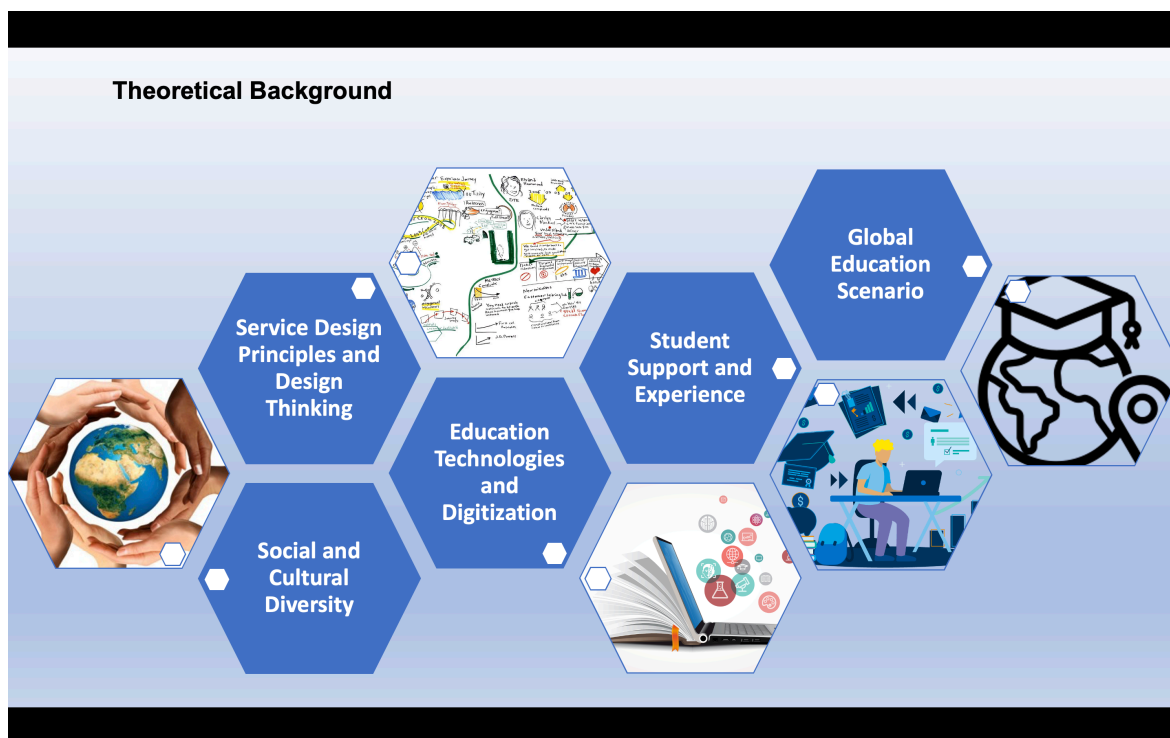


Figure 1 Theoretical Background

## 2.1 Service design Principal and Design Thinking

The integration of Service Design Principles and Design Thinking serves as an essential theoretical framework for improving International Student Support Services at Novia University of Applied Sciences. These concepts help to shape a user-centric approach to developing support services catered to the particular needs of overseas students by drawing upon Stickdorn and Schneider's foundational work, "This Is Service Design Thinking: Basics, Tools, Cases" (2010). The user journey should be understood holistically, according to service design principles, which emphasize co-creation, empathy, and iterative prototyping. This entails actively incorporating students in the design process, taking into account their varied cultural backgrounds, and iteratively improving services based on their feedback in the area of supporting international students.

Design thinking is a way of thinking that fosters original problem-solving, as described by Tim Brown in "Change by Design: How Design Thinking Transforms Organizations and Inspires Innovation" (2009). When it comes to supporting overseas students, this entails

taking a human-centric approach to problems and encouraging creative solutions that deal with the complexity of cultural adaptation, language obstacles, and academic acclimatization. The collaboration of service design and design thinking in the educational setting enables the creation of support services that go beyond meeting urgent requirements. It promotes taking a proactive approach and preparing for potential difficulties that international students might run into while pursuing their academic goals.

Practical applications of these ideas include co-design sessions with staff and students, collaborative workshops with international students, and the ongoing improvement of support procedures. Tools for service design including path mapping, persona creation, and service prototyping play a crucial role in imagining and enhancing the experience of international students. Incorporating design thinking and service design principles into Novia UAS's international student support services becomes not only a strategic necessity but also a means of fostering a warm, accepting, and flexible learning environment as the university strives to make a significant contribution to the advancement of the working world.

This theoretical foundation gives the thesis the ability to not only assess the support services that are currently offered but also to make practical suggestions based on service design and design thinking approaches. In order to ensure that international students at Novia UAS receive support services that are not only efficient but also in tune with their various requirements and aspirations, the goal is to close the gap between theoretical frameworks and practical implementations.

Understandings from the article "The Principles of Service Design Thinking: Building Better Services" by Interaction Design Foundation (Interaction Design Foundation, 2023) are helpful in coordinating the principles of service design thinking with the necessity to improve international student support services at Novia University of Applied Sciences. The article's advocated user-centric methodology highlights the importance of adjusting support services to the particular requirements of international students, placing special emphasis on cultural factors and linguistic preferences. The implementation of collaborative workshops and co-design sessions to actively involve international students in the service design process is guided by the main principle of co-creation with users. The purpose of the thesis is aligned with the philosophy of service prototyping, which encourages iterative testing and improvement of support service concepts prior to full

implementation. The thesis embraces a comprehensive perspective of the service ecosystem and broadens its focus beyond specific services to take into account the larger context, incorporating academic programs, cultural initiatives, and community involvement. In order to ensure that support services adapt to international students' changing needs, systems for ongoing input from these students were set up. This was done in accordance with the notion of user feedback loops, which is fundamental. To prevent miscommunication, it is important to communicate effectively, especially when taking into account linguistic and cultural quirks. Last but not least, the thesis's goal to comprehend and handle the emotional components of the journey of the foreign student resonates with the incorporation of empathy into service design, which provides not only practical support but also emotional understanding and encouragement.

### Design thinking process

Enhancing International Student Support Services at Novia University of Applied Sciences necessitates the incorporation of the Design Thinking approach. The Design Thinking process unfolds as a human-centric approach to problem-solving, deeply resonant with the variety of challenges faced by international students. Design thinking is a non-linear, iterative process that teams use to understand users, challenge assumptions, redefine problems, and create creative solutions to prototype and test, according to Dam (2023) in "The 5 Stages in the Design Thinking Process" on the International Design Foundation website. Empathize, Define, Ideate, Prototype, and Test are its five steps, and it works best when applied to situations that lack clear definition or are unclear.

Empathize is the first step in the process, when a thorough comprehension of the distinctive experiences, cultural backgrounds, and difficulties faced by international students is developed. This phase is in line with the user-centric strategy that is promoted in the context of services for international students.

The Define step then entails combining the learnings from the empathetic exploration to clearly define the requirements and challenges faced by international students. The ensuing design processes might build on the strategic foundation built during this phase.

The emphasis switches to brainstorming and coming up with original solutions during the Ideate phase. This phase emphasizes the cooperative aspect of supporting international students and promotes the production of innovative solutions to particular linguistic, cultural, and academic difficulties.

The production of physical representations of suggested solutions is done during the prototyping stage, which is guided by the principles of service prototyping. Before a concept is fully developed, it can be explored practically using a prototype, allowing for incremental improvement depending on user feedback. The Test phase of the Design Thinking process is where prototypes and suggested solutions are thoroughly assessed. This repeated testing ensures that support services are improved in accordance with the principles of user feedback loops and also meets the functional needs of international students.

The theoretical framework's inclusion of the human-centered and iterative Design Thinking process enables the thesis to not only examine current support services but also to suggest practical, creative changes based on the actual experiences of overseas students. The theoretical underpinning of the thesis is given a dynamic and responsive approach by incorporating the Design Thinking method, as described in the framework of the Interaction Design Foundation (Interaction Design Foundation, n.d.). This human-centered, iterative method makes sure that Novia UAS's support services for international students not only get better, but develop along with the community's changing needs and experiences

## 2.2 Social and Cultural diversity

The theoretical foundation of the thesis goes beyond service design approaches and incorporates Social and Cultural Diversity Theory. At Novia UAS, recognizing and navigating various social and cultural situations is essential to meeting the special demands of international students. This theoretical framework incorporates ideas from groundbreaking studies and points of view in the field of social and cultural diversity.

The theoretical underpinnings acknowledge that students from other countries bring a diverse range of social backgrounds. This involves various interpersonal dynamics, societal standards, and social expectations. The significance of appreciating and valuing social

differences is highlighted in Cox's "Cultural Diversity in Organizations: Theory, Research, and Practice" (2019), an important study that sheds light on this topic.

The theoretical approach places a strong emphasis on how support services might build their cultural competence. According to Cross and Harrison's "The Relevance of Cultural Diversity Management to Global Business Practices" (2019), which acknowledges that establishing cultural. The paradigm takes into account the intersectionality of social identities. The thesis acknowledges that international students may traverse overlapping layers of identity, such as race, gender, and nationality, by drawing on Crenshaw's notion of intersectionality (2019). Support services must take these intersections into account and refrain from adopting a one-size-fits-all strategy.

Support Services That Are Culturally Responsive: The application of culturally responsive support services is informed by the theoretical framework. This covers language assistance, counseling that is sensitive to cultural differences, and focused orientation initiatives. The development of services that recognize and address many cultural viewpoints is guided by Bennett's "Towards Ethnorelativism: A Developmental Model of Intercultural Sensitivity" (2020). The importance of establishing a sense of community among international students is highlighted by social and cultural diversity theory. Insights into how people traverse cultural adaptation are provided by Berry's acculturation model (2021), which informs methods for community-building programs that promote peer support and cross-cultural interaction.

The thesis aimed to give a thorough framework for foreign student support services by including the most recent references into Social and Cultural Diversity Theory inside the theoretical framework. This strategy ensures that services not only take into account students' varied origins but also actively work to foster an inclusive and encouraging learning environment.

The thesis incorporated findings from "International Students' Perception of Adjustment Challenges and Coping Strategies in the United States" (Kitsantas & Meyers, 2016) in addition to Social and Cultural Diversity Theory. This study investigate the difficulties encountered by overseas students while pursuing their academic goals and looked coping mechanisms. It offers insightful thoughts on the psychological aspects of adjusting to life as an international student, highlighting the emotional and cultural difficulties. The

theoretical framework is strengthened by including these findings in order to better comprehend the variety of experiences that international students at Novia UAS have. The mentioned thesis by Kitsantas and Meyers (2016) explores the complex terrain of experiences of international students and unearths critical insights crucial to the creation of efficient support systems. The study highlights the complexity of the adjustment process by identifying a range of difficulties faced by overseas students that span academic, social, and cultural dimensions. The study demonstrates a variety of coping mechanisms used by international students to deal with these difficulties, from looking for social support to making use of institutional resources. The results highlight the critical part that social support plays in students' adjustment as well as the connection between academic and social characteristics. The study also acknowledges the uniqueness of international students' experiences, which are influenced by elements including language ability, cultural background, and previous academic exposure. These insights are priceless in the context of the thesis on Novia UAS's foreign student assistance services. They provide information for creating specialized support systems that place a focus on social assistance, acknowledge a range of experiences, and handle the particular difficulties experienced by the community of international students.

### 2.3 Finland's Socio-Cultural Diversity

The country of Finland, which is renowned for both its excellent educational system and its social peace, offers a particular socio-cultural setting. Due to its commitment to linguistic diversity and the inclusion of both the Finnish and Swedish speaking populations, the country is legally bilingual, with both Finnish and Swedish recognized as official languages (Constitution of Finland, 2000). This language diversity adds to the country's cultural diversity and reflects its commitment to honoring and conserving its diverse linguistic heritages. Finnish culture is strongly influenced by its history, mythology, and folklore. Significantly adding to this cultural richness is the native Sámi culture, especially in the northern parts. The vivid celebration of customs, holidays, and rituals that highlight the depth of Finland's cultural fabric is proof of the country's dedication to maintaining its cultural heritage (Culture of Finland, 2021).

Finland's educational system is unique in the world for emphasizing equality. People have equal access to educational opportunities regardless of their socioeconomic status. This dedication to achieving parity guarantees that students from different origins can study together in a socially varied atmosphere (Sahlberg, 2011). Finland's social welfare system is a prime example of inclusion, offering a wide safety net to all citizens. This dedication to social equality shows up in readily available social services, healthcare, and educational opportunities, establishing a culture where people from various backgrounds can prosper (Kangas, 2018).

Especially noteworthy is the progress Finland has achieved in advancing gender equality. Women are actively involved in a variety of fields, including as politics, business, and academia. This dedication to gender diversity not only strengthens the values of equality strongly engrained in Finnish society, but also helps to a more balanced and inclusive socio-cultural environment (World Economic Forum, 2021). In conclusion, Finland's sociocultural variety combines linguistic, cultural, educational, and social aspects in a seamless manner. Its reputation as a country that cherishes equality and inclusivity is enhanced by this complex environment, which produces a society that values and embraces diversity. The backdrop for international student support services is enhanced by combining these theoretical frameworks with Finland's sociocultural variety. The dedication of Finland to gender diversity, educational equality, bilingualism, and cultural preservation creates a distinctive cultural landscape. This ensures that the inclusive principles ingrained in Finnish society are reflected in the support services by incorporating these elements (Constitution of Finland, 2000; Kangas, 2018; World Economic Forum, 2021).

The framework is further improved by incorporating knowledge from multicultural viewpoints, such as that provided in research by Wu and Aung (2016) and Kitsantas and Meyers (2016). An approach to support services that is more nuanced takes into account the difficulties faced by international students, their coping mechanisms, and their various adjustment trajectories. These observations are consistent with the current global dialogue on the internationalization of education and the requirement for accommodating services that take into account the overall wellbeing of international students.

## 2.4 Student support services and experience

International students have contributed significantly to the intellectual, cultural, and educational environment of higher education around the world for many years. International students' invaluable insights and experiences are highlighted by scholars including Alvarez (2016), Hegarty (2014), Luo and Jamieson-Drake (2013), and Perry (2016). Diverse perspectives, abilities, and backgrounds not only enhance academic environments but also encourage innovation and help all students acquire global perspectives.

Universities around the world, particularly in the United States, Canada, Australia, and Western Europe, have gained much economically from the enrollment of overseas students in addition to experiencing cultural and intellectual enrichment. The success of overseas students in American higher education is greatly influenced by the academic and social support services available to them. Cho and Yu (2015), Hegarty (2014), and Cetinkaya-Yildiz, Cakir, and Kondakci (2011) all highlight the importance of specialized support services in addressing the special requirements of international students. Many American colleges are still committed to promoting multiculturalism, despite the difficulties brought on by recent geopolitical and policy shifts. According to Pope, Reynolds, and Mueller (2014), universities that are interested in drawing in and keeping in international students can gain knowledge from the efforts of their peers and profit from knowing how these institutions are addressing the academic success and social integration of these students.

Tillman (1990) emphasized the crucial importance of institutional commitment in helping support services to achieve their intended purpose. He underlined the importance of taking international students' academic and personal requirements into consideration while designing support services, claiming that doing so would make the services more valuable to the community of international students. Building on this viewpoint, Roberts, Boldy, and Dunworth (2015) called for a "more student-centered service structure and delivery" in a study looking at international students' perceptions of campus support services in Australia (p. 122). Earlier research by Harrybam, Guilfoyle, and Knight (2012) found that there was a "gap between service provision and utilization" (p. 3), highlighting the critical requirement for institutions to not only implement Best practices support understanding and accessibility to resources that are provided while also addressing concerns with student needs alignment and awareness.

In order to draw in quality students, efficiently manage the educational pathway for immigration, and guarantee the stability and viability of post-secondary educational institutions in the province, Colyar et al. (2023) call for coordinated efforts and overarching plans. They contend that this will increase the prosperity of all Canadians and citizens of Ontario.

The resources and services we learnt about are centered on remote campuses and at home. Numerous respondents made the observation that the dedication and consideration of campus staff are essential for the effectiveness of support programs for international students. As universities use local facilities, resources, and people, student supports are frequently linked to regional contexts as well. By integrating services into local communities, more resources are mobilized and chances for students and local residents to work together to address these issues are created.

Finland, known for its top-notch educational system, is a shining example of a country that is a great place for overseas students to study because it provides extensive support services that build an environment that is good for both academic success and cultural integration. The diversity of the international student body at Finnish universities is reflected in the availability of programs, notably at the master's level, in English (Finnish Immigration Service, 2023). The largest Swedish-speaking university of applied sciences in Finland, Novia UAS is a shining example of a higher education organization devoted to enriching the experience of international students (Novia UAS, 2023). The university's dedicated office for international students is essential in helping students succeed academically by providing advice on the admissions process, aid with obtaining residency permits, and promoting cultural integration. Finland has a strong focus on cultural diversity, which supports an inclusive environment. International students are given a sense of inclusion and value as a result of Finland's first apparent reserve being transformed into a welcoming embrace of diversity (Finnish National Agency for Education, 2023). In addition to offering academic support, Finland allows students to work part-time jobs while they are enrolled in classes, which helps international students financially and gives them significant work experience (Finnish Immigration Service, 2023). The Finnish way of life, which is distinguished by breath-taking natural scenery and an exceptional work-life balance, is also characterized by a holistic approach. The Finnish way of life incorporates nature, which supports the nation's commitment to individual wellbeing and fosters an environment

where overseas students can succeed both intellectually and personally (Visit Finland, 2023). Together, these factors highlight Finland's appeal as a study abroad location for students from abroad, with comprehensive support services demonstrating a dedication to all-around student well-being.

## 2.5 Education, Technologies, and Digitization

Integration of education technology and digitalization has emerged as a key component of the innovative and effective support systems for overseas students that are being made possible by the rapidly changing higher education landscape. Researchers like Haleem, Javaid, Qadri, and Suman (2022) emphasize the crucial impact that digital technologies have played in changing educational paradigms, with a focus on sustainability. According to the literature, there has been a shift in educational technology practices toward being more environmentally friendly, which reflects a greater social understanding of the environmental effects of using digital technologies. Additionally, the effects of digital technology on education are not limited to just external factors. The notion of professional development for educators in the digital age is clarified by Erdin (2020)'s insights. The study stresses how important it is for teachers to understand how to use digital technology for teaching and support and to fully realize their potential.

As we read more, it becomes clear that the incorporation of digital technology is a dynamic force reshaping the landscape of systems supporting international students. In order to better help international students, this evaluation will examine how these technology developments are used, taking into account both the advantages and disadvantages of this digital transition.

Modern education no longer exists without the use of digital technology, which have completely changed the way that people learn and teach. Haleem, Javaid, Qadri, and Suman (2022) did a thorough analysis of the subject and focused on sustainability and ecological concerns while exploring the complex function of digital technology in education. The study acknowledges the changing context in which academic institutions increasingly use digital resources, not only for teaching goals but also with an emphasis on minimizing environmental impact. The review includes a variety of topics, such as Erdin

(2020)'s vision of professional development for educators in the digital age. The dynamic role that educators play in effectively embracing and utilizing digital technology is highlighted by Erdin's thoughts. The study emphasizes how important it is for educators to be adept at utilizing digital resources to improve their teaching strategies and, consequently, the assistance they give to students.

Globalization of education has made it even more crucial to integrate digital tools into instruction. Although there were previously online channels for exchanging resources, managing coursework, and taking classes, the proactive adoption of these platforms during the COVID-19 pandemic became crucial. While developed countries had the necessary resources, developing nations strove arduously to fill the gap, presenting digital technologies as education's savior in this crucial period (Haleem et al., 2022).

Students' ability to solve problems, think critically, and comprehend how things work are all cultivated in large part because to digital tools. These technologies equip students for an uncertain and changing future in a time when technology will play a significant role in society. Additionally, they help develop curricula that are more flexible and individualized, allowing for the customization of instruction to meet the unique needs of each student (Haleem et al., 2022).

In the near future, the emergence of creative digital solutions will be heralded by the growth of education technology businesses that serve small, medium, and large-scale institutions. This course is expected to improve the nation's digital infrastructure and increase access to cutting-edge educational technology for more people. Language barriers will be eliminated, regional language learning resources will be more readily available online, and e-learning and m-learning programs will be more widely available Haleem et al. (2022, pp. 39–42). A new generation of teachers who appreciate the value of interpersonal interaction in the classroom are necessary for the effective use of technology, which is poised to play a significant role in determining the future of education. A hybrid teaching and learning paradigm is evolving as a response to the changing environment, seamlessly integrating both online and offline systems, and is anticipated as an effect of the adoption of Education Haleem et al. (2022, pp. 39–42).

## 2.6 Global Education Scenario

The theoretical foundation of global education scenarios is intricately braided from several scholarly viewpoints, including a significant foundation laid by "The State of Global Education: Learning with the World and Its People" (Maguth & Hilburn, 2015). The theoretical framework acknowledges the Cold War era as the origin, where programs like the Peace Corps created the conditions for promoting intercultural understanding (Maguth & Hilburn, 2015). Hanvey's dimensions of a global perspective—perspective consciousness, state of the planet awareness, cross-cultural awareness, knowledge of global dynamics, and awareness of human choices—influence the theoretical components of cognition and attitude needed for a global outlook (Hanvey, 1976). Technology is seen as a transformational factor in the theoretical environment, democratizing information and promoting connection on a global scale (Maguth & Hilburn, 2015). Progressives promote empathy-driven global citizenship, while neoliberals emphasize economic competitiveness through global education (Noddings, 2005; Ball, 2012). The dialogue extends to bipartisan positions. A sophisticated and inclusive approach is required since contemporary issues like social justice and climate change become major themes in the theoretical discourse (Maguth & Hilburn, 2015).

According to Giddens (2000), globalization is characterized by the spreading, deepening, and accelerating of international connectivity across the economic, political, social, and cultural domains. Due to their interconnection, global problems like forced migration, conflict, inequality, and climate change are now understood to have local effects as well. A change in educational objectives is necessary to address these issues, and it calls for people to develop complex abilities, knowledge, and dispositions, such as critical thinking, communication, intercultural understanding, and a commitment to social justice (Banks, 2004; Oxfam, 2015).

Higher education institutions address these issues by working to become more internationally minded. This entails luring a diverse student body and faculty, conducting research with a global impact, and creating curricula that have both domestic and global resonance (Maringe and Foskett, 2010). Intentionally employed as a triangle, the phrases international, intercultural, and global emphasize the connections across nations, the diversity of cultures within nations, and a global perspective (Beelen and Jones, 2015;

Knight, 2004; Leask, 2015). This deliberate triangle highlights the need for education to cover a broad and deep global viewpoint (Knight, 2004). Learning about global citizenship, which is frequently referred to as global education, encourages students to take an active role in resolving global issues and fosters a sense of responsibility for a more equitable, peaceful, and sustainable world (Oxfam, 2015; UNESCO, 2014). Although the idea of global citizenship is debatable, it challenges conventional ideas of citizenship by placing an emphasis on participation, activity, and membership that transcend national boundaries (Clifford & Montgomery, 2011).

International education, which is frequently used synonymously with global education, refers to concerted attempts to bring together researchers, instructors, and students from other countries for interaction and mutual learning (Epstein, 1992). Beyond national borders, it fosters respect for one another, peaceful coexistence amongst nations, and cultural exchanges (Crossley and Watson, 2003; Thompson and Hayden, 2004).

The experiences of international students in higher education are thoroughly examined in Bista, K.'s book *Global Perspectives on International Student Experiences in Higher Education: Tensions and Issues*, published in 2019. Using a thematic approach, the author discusses four important scholarly topics: social identities, academic experiences, personal well-being, and post-study experiences. The book delves into complex facets of living as an international student through numerous chapters written by many authors, including David H. K. Nguyen, Hugo Garcia, Jon McNaughtan, Dustin Eicke, Xin-yang Li, Mi-Chelle Leong, Barry Fass-Holmes, Allison A. Vaughn, and Steve Nerlich. It covers cultural acclimatization, difficulties with academic writing, retention techniques, problems with mental health, and international interactions. Each chapter offers distinct insights into these varied experiences, illuminating the difficulties faced by international students throughout their travels from admission to post-graduation. The study emphasizes the need for a more comprehensive understanding of international students, one that goes beyond deficit viewpoints and acknowledges the diversity of this student community. By providing a rich tapestry of narratives that contribute to a more nuanced understanding of the experience of the foreign student, Bista's book considerably adds to the body of research already done

on international education. The information offered can help international students in a variety of higher education settings by informing and improving support service.



Figure 2 Global Education (Source: Council of Europe – LISBON 2008)

A transformative learning process, shifting from dominant cultures to partnerships based on conversation and collaboration, is represented by the move from global education to global citizenship. This process challenges conventional attitudes. With the introduction of reflective learning, multiperspectivity, and critical thinking, global education arose to solve the shortcomings of traditional education. It encourages connectivity, opening up opportunities for equality, social justice, and international cooperation. The four key phases are: assessing the state of the world; imagining alternatives; building democratic culture competencies; and promoting responsible global citizenship. Global education encourages critical analysis of the current situation and encourages participatory decision-

making. It combats inequality by promoting collaboration and solidarity over rivalry, conflict, fear, and hatred. Global education supports both formal and informal education by combining a variety of agendas, including citizenship education, human rights education, and development education. This empowers people to create a shared vision for a more just and sustainable society.

### 2.6.1 Overview of Finland education

The global learning issue is highlighted in the Finland education review, along with the difference between educational access and quality. The United Nations' Sustainable Development Goals, especially SDG-4, which directly tackles education quality, show that while access has made substantial progress, the emphasis on education quality has not kept up (Ministry for Foreign Affairs of Finland, 8). The report emphasizes the learning problem in the poor world, where kids lack fundamental literacy and numeracy abilities despite spending years in school. Internationally, Finland's outstanding K–12 education system is frequently praised for its equitable principles, qualified instructors, and educational trust (Ministry for Foreign Affairs of Finland, 8). The research does note, nevertheless, that Finland has not completely tapped into its educational know-how in development cooperation. As the main theme for Finland's expanded worldwide position in education, it suggests strategic leadership and thematic priorities, focusing on education quality and learning (Ministry for Foreign Affairs of Finland, 8). Supporting systemic coherence throughout the educational system, enhancing school leadership and teachers' professional development, collaborating on teacher education programs, promoting learner-focus in basic education, and exchanging Finnish experience in educational reforms are just a few of the sub-themes covered (Ministry for Foreign Affairs of Finland, 8). The report urges further involvement in the EU and international financial institutions and highlights the significance of Finland's participation in significant multilateral educational forums, such as the Global Partnership for Education (Ministry for Foreign Affairs of Finland, 8). The Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Finland's study also stresses the significance of Finland's participation in significant multilateral educational fora, like the Global Partnership for Education, and urges increased involvement in the EU and international financial institutions. The Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Finland views bilateral cooperation as a key strategy for addressing the learning problem, particularly through projects in the

education sector. The report exhorts Finland to prioritize education with longer-term and larger efforts that include a research component, notably programs focusing on the learning issue (Ministry for Foreign Affairs of Finland, 8). The Ministry for Foreign Affairs of Finland asks for improved Finnish human resources in the field of education for worldwide development, urging institutions to conduct research on global education and provide development-oriented programs. In order to effectively strengthen Finland's global position in education, the report advises financial commitment, recommending an increase in funding to 100 million euros per year in the following four years (Ministry for Foreign Affairs of Finland, 9). Overall, it highlights the necessity for Finland to deliberately address the global learning crisis by utilizing its experience, knowledge, and skills.

### 2.6.2 Action plan of Finland

The Action Plan for Global Education in Finland is a comprehensive and strategic project designed to increase Finland's international standing in the education sector. This forward-thinking strategy highlights the country's dedication to raising the standard and global competitiveness of its educational system. It outlines important subject topics with an emphasis on improving learning outcomes, encouraging teacher quality, and embracing digitalization in education. Finland's educational know-how will be promoted globally, with a focus on partnerships, collaborations, and knowledge exchange with other countries and educational institutions. This is a key component of the plan. Finland wants to establish itself as a pioneer in educational innovation by emphasizing complete learning outcomes, encouraging teacher excellence, and incorporating cutting-edge digital tools into the classroom. With this innovative and cooperative strategy, Finland will become a center of excellence in education and a trustworthy associate in global educational projects.

Finland's Action Plan, as described in the OECD's "Education Policy Outlook: Finland" (2020), acts as a strategic road map to improve the nation's standing in the world of education. The main goals of this extensive strategy are to improve Finland's educational system's quality and competitiveness abroad. One of the thematic areas of focus is Learning Outcomes, which places a high value on effective teaching methods for the overall development of students' critical thinking abilities. One of the pillars is Teacher Excellence, which seeks to develop a group of outstanding teachers who will make a

substantial contribution to Finland's educational success. The significance of integrating state-of-the-art technologies into teaching approaches is underscored by the emphasis on the integration of digital technologies.

According to the Action Plan, Finland will become a global showcase of expertise, promoting cooperation, alliances, and information sharing with other countries and organizations (OECD, 2020). With a focus on holistic student development and instructional strategies that encourage critical thinking and holistic development, it aims to achieve a Holistic Approach to Learning Outcomes.

In addition, the strategy demonstrates a collaborative and synergistic approach, with the goal of establishing Finland as a center of innovation in education and a trustworthy partner for global partnerships. According to the OECD Education Policy Outlook study (2020), Finland's flexibility and dedication to equipping pupils for the challenges of the modern world are exemplified by this progressive effort. Finland hopes to improve its educational system and make a major contribution to the global conversation on educational excellence with these strategic goals (OECD, 2020).

### 3 Research Method and tools

A developing field called service design has earned prominence for its customer-centric methodology and all-encompassing approach to developing and improving services. The fundamental tenets of service design are co-creation, empathy, and user experience, with an emphasis on understanding and solving user needs throughout the entire service journey. In order to offer the best experiences, this entails mapping client touchpoints, identifying pain points, and collectively ideating solutions. According to Stickdorn and Schneider's (2010) seminal work "This Is Service Design Thinking: Basics, Tools, Cases," service design is a multidisciplinary practice that integrates various design methodologies to create services that are not only functional but also meaningful and enjoyable for users. This strategy places a strong emphasis on a human-centered viewpoint, which ties in perfectly with the larger principles of the design thinking methodology. The use of service design principles becomes essential for addressing issues in service-oriented domains in the specific context of an MBA thesis in service design. This is especially important in fields like education, where the best use of resources, like International Student Support

resources, requires a nuanced comprehension of the unique requirements and expectations of international students. The thesis seeks to provide insightful analysis and useful suggestions to improve the entire service experience for international students at Novia University of Applied Sciences by utilizing service design approaches.

The Service Design Thinking process, a strategic strategy, is used in this MBA thesis' research technique to identify and address difficulties faced by international students at Novia University of Applied Sciences (Novia UAS). A thorough grasp of the problems to be solved is made possible by the Service Design Thinking method, which includes several crucial elements.

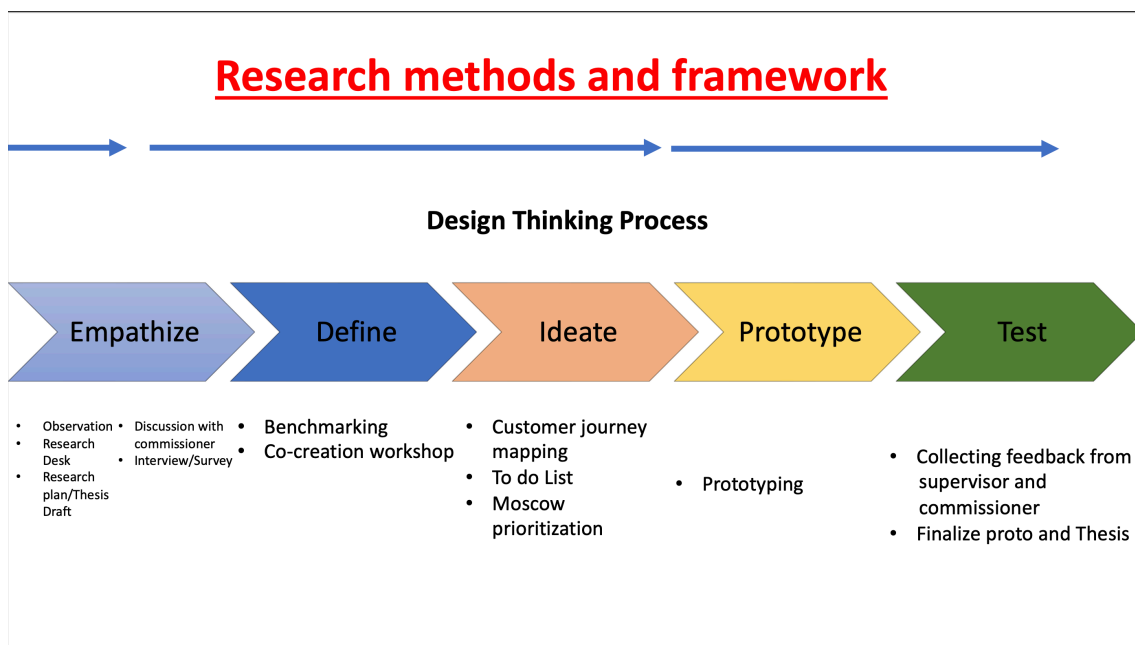


Figure 3 Research Methods and Tools Framework

### 3.1 Empathize:

The initial level entails a thorough immersion and comprehension of the experiences of the international students through techniques including observation, interviews, and surveys. This is in line with the service design movement's sympathetic premise (Brown, 2008). This thesis is driven by a personal connection and a genuine desire to address the real-life challenges faced by international students, a path I treaded myself. Having

experienced the intricate journey of obtaining a study visa and navigating through the educational landscape, I realized the multifaceted nature of the challenges encountered by international students at Novia UAS. Through firsthand observations and interactions, I witnessed the diverse spectrum of experiences – some students having a robust support network of friends and family, while others grappled with the absence of any local connections in Finland.

Motivated by these observations, I consciously chose to delve into the pivotal topic of "International Student Support Services in Novia UAS" for my thesis. This decision was grounded in the belief that understanding and enhancing the support structures for international students is vital for a holistic educational experience. As I progressed, the initial concept evolved into a well-defined thesis framework, shaped by the insights gained during the drafting phase.

To gather comprehensive data, I meticulously formulated 17 interview questions that were shared with Novia staff, teachers, and various teams associated with international student support services. Simultaneously, a survey comprising 13 questions was meticulously designed and distributed to the diverse community of international students at Novia UAS. This dual-method approach, integrating qualitative insights from interviews and quantitative data from surveys, aimed to provide a nuanced understanding of the challenges and needs of international students.

### 3.1.1 Interview with Novia staffs

The interview for this study was conducted on Wednesday, August 30, 2023, with staff members, teachers, and the head of the degree program at Novia UAS. The questionnaire was distributed through the Novia email system using a Microsoft Form. Access to email was facilitated by the Novia UAS support team, who provided the necessary permissions. The questionnaire was sent to a total of 24 staff members, and subsequently, 10 responses were received.

Participants were asked to respond to the questions provided in Appendix 1, and the interview process took an estimated time of 10 to 15 minutes per participant. The responses gathered from this interview process are integral to understanding the perspectives of Novia staff, teachers, and the head of the degree program on the support services offered to international students and identifying potential areas for improvement.

In an effort to comprehensively understand the experiences, challenges, and support systems for international students at Novia UAS, a structured interview was conducted with staff members closely involved in facilitating the academic journey of these students. The interview's goals were to learn more about the support services that are already provided, pinpoint the difficulties that overseas students encounter, and comprehend the tactics that Novia UAS uses to guarantee an atmosphere that is supportive of both academic and personal development. The interview comprised a series of 17 questions, covering topics ranging from the existing support services and challenges faced by international students to the initiatives and changes made to enhance their experiences. A total of 10 responses were obtained, offering valuable perspectives from staff members directly engaged in shaping the international student experience at Novia UAS. The following analysis encapsulates the key findings and reflections drawn from their responses, shedding light on the university's commitment to providing a holistic and enriching environment for its diverse student community.

The exchange student program is particularly emphasized, indicating a structured approach to assisting international students.

#### Challenges Faced by International Students:

One of the challenges, particularly among degree students. Engaging study buddies and addressing integration and communication issues are identified as areas of improvement. The lack of engaged study buddies is acknowledged as a recurring challenge.

## Important Support Services

The importance of having a living person to turn to, guidance for studies and city life, positive attitude promotion, and integration with other students are emphasized. The role of international coordinators supported by study buddies is recognized as critical for student well-being.

### Support for Starting Studies

Initiatives include introduction days with comprehensive information, tutoring, regular meetings, and stress management. This multifaceted approach aims to ease the transition into academic life.

### Navigating the Curriculum

The International Office organizes Peppi/Tuudo sessions and library introductions, ensuring that international students receive good information through various channels.

### Effective Communication

Strategies involve presentation rounds during orientation days and team-building activities. These initiatives contribute to cultural competence, fostering effective communication and interaction among students.

### Information for Academic Success

Providing information through emails, guest sessions, and involvement of student counselors is essential. Regular communication channels ensure that international students are well-informed about academic requirements, Finland life, and available resources.

### Common Challenges During the First Weeks

Challenges include feelings of being lost and lonely, housing issues, and overwhelming information, particularly for those arriving mid-academic year. Economic issues and account problems also surface as notable challenges.

## Specific Support Services of Utmost Importance

Initiatives such as getting to know each other, support from tutors and staff, study counselors, and involvement in activities and parties are identified as critical for international student success.

### Feedback and Guidance

The provision of feedback through various channels, including face-to-face interactions and email, ensures that international students receive personalized guidance for academic enhancement.

### Ensuring a Welcoming Environment

Initiatives like offering international tutors and introduction projects aim to create a welcoming atmosphere for international students, promoting inclusion within the campus community.

### Recent Initiatives or Changes

The International Office has taken increased responsibility, showcasing a proactive approach to enhancing support services.

### Staying Informed about Needs and Experiences

Regular meetings and maintaining open communication channels, such as during contact teaching classes, ensure that staff is well-informed about the needs and experiences of international students.

### Collaboration with Other Departments or Organizations

The International Office collaborates closely with teachers, departments, and other programs to support international students effectively.

### Support for Housing and Essential Services

Information from the International Office, international coordinators, and relevant departments ensures that international students receive necessary details about housing and essential services upon their arrival in Finland.

#### Success Stories and Positive Experiences:

Positive experiences include the happiness of students during exchange programs and the recognition that learning the language is key to success in working life.

#### Ensuring High-Quality Education

Exchange students receive services from International Coordinators, ensuring that they are treated similarly to local students. Personal guidance and well-planned studies are emphasized, demonstrating a commitment to academic success.

These insights provide a comprehensive overview of the efforts and initiatives undertaken by Novia UAS to support and enhance the experiences of their international student community. The responses underscore the importance of continuous improvement and adaptation to meet the evolving needs of diverse student populations.

The interview findings from Novia UAS staff members provide valuable insights into the university's efforts to support international students. The presence of dedicated International Coordinators, orientation days, and language teachers highlights a proactive approach to offering comprehensive support services. Acknowledgment of challenges, such as feelings of being lost and communication issues, demonstrates an awareness of student struggles. The importance of having a living person to turn to, promoting a positive attitude, and integrating with other students showcases a holistic perspective on student well-being. Initiatives like introduction days, tutoring, and stress management strategies indicate a multifaceted approach to helping students start their studies effectively. However, providing concrete examples and assessing the effectiveness of these initiatives could further enhance the understanding of their impact. The recognition of challenges during the first weeks, such as housing issues and account problems, calls for a deeper exploration of systematic solutions. The acknowledgment of the importance of getting to know each other, support from tutors and staff, and involvement in activities underscores a commitment to fostering a supportive community. To strengthen these findings, future interviews may delve into specific success stories and outcomes resulting from the mentioned support services, contributing to a more nuanced understanding of their effectiveness. The inclusion of such a compulsory orientation class aligns with best

practices in supporting international students, contributing to a more inclusive and well-prepared student community.

### 3.1.2 Survey of international students

The survey for this research was conducted on Wednesday, August 30, 2023, and was aimed at Novia University of Applied Sciences (UAS) international students currently enrolled in the academic year 2023. The survey, comprising a total of 13 questions as outlined in Appendix-2, was developed using Microsoft Forms for ease of administration.

To ensure a comprehensive response rate, the survey was distributed to all Novia international students via the official Novia UAS email system. The email addresses were obtained from the Novia UAS support team, who granted permission for their use exclusively for research purposes. In total, the survey reached 48 groups of students through Novia UAS, resulting in 18 responses from the student body.

The estimated time required to complete the survey was approximately 5 to 10 minutes. The gathered responses from this survey contribute valuable insights into the perspectives and experiences of international students at Novia UAS, aiding in the evaluation of current support services and potential areas for enhancement.

The Appendix 2 survey conducted among international students at Novia University revealed key insights into their awareness, expectations, and experiences. A notable 53.8% of respondents discovered Novia University through its website, emphasizing the institution's robust online presence. Expectations varied, spanning from residence permit assistance to career guidance, indicating a broad spectrum of needs among international students. However, only 46.7% felt adequately informed about the available support services before arrival, suggesting room for improvement in communication.

Utilization of support services demonstrated a diverse range, with 53.3% accessing facilities such as the clinic, language courses, and guidance. The effectiveness of these services varied, with 40% finding them very helpful, indicating a positive impact but leaving room for enhancement. Challenges in adapting to life at Novia UAS included navigating the environment and adapting to e-learning, highlighting potential areas for targeted support.

Concerns related to housing were voiced by 17.6% of respondents, citing issues such as high prices and long queues. Notably, only 17.6% received support from Novia UAS in addressing challenges, suggesting a gap between needs and available assistance. Nevertheless, a majority of respondents, 61.1%, expressed a willingness to recommend Novia UAS to other international students.

Satisfaction levels varied, with 27.8% being very satisfied, pointing to a generally positive experience but leaving room for improvement. Suggestions for enhancement included the provision of a comprehensive brochure detailing available support services and increased support personnel for improved networking opportunities. The overall average rating of 4.00 indicated a positive international student experience at Novia UAS but flagged areas requiring attention and development. These insights provide a foundation for refining support services and ensuring a more tailored and satisfactory experience for future international students at Novia UAS.

The survey results shed light on the satisfaction levels of international students regarding the support services at Novia UAS. Notably, 27.8% of respondents expressed being very satisfied, showcasing a positive sentiment towards the support services provided. Another 27.8% reported being somewhat satisfied, indicating a generally favorable perception, but with room for enhancement. The middle ground, where 40% neither expressed satisfaction nor dissatisfaction, suggests a neutrality in the opinions of a significant portion of respondents. A minimal 6.7% indicated somewhat dissatisfaction, while a mere 6.7% reported being very dissatisfied with the support services. These nuanced satisfaction levels underscore the need for targeted improvements in specific areas to address the varying needs and expectations of the international student population at Novia UAS.

The survey delved into the specific challenges faced by international students in the domains of housing, airport pickup, transportation, and the arrangements for their initial days in Finland. A noteworthy 18% of respondents highlighted the formidable challenge of securing accommodation, citing issues such as high demand and a first-come, first-served system. Another 18% faced challenges related to the academic calendar, arriving mid-year and encountering difficulties in securing housing and accommodation. Concerns were raised regarding high prices, long queues, and the professional handling of housing services. A notable theme emerged around difficulties in navigating administrative processes related to grades, course clearance, and the impact of visa designation on arrival

timelines. This detailed breakdown of challenges emphasizes the multifaceted nature of hurdles faced by international students, emphasizing the need for tailored support services in these specific areas to enhance the overall student experience at Novia UAS.

In conclusion, the survey outcomes suggest a generally positive experience among international students at Novia UAS, yet they reveal crucial areas for enhancement. The institution's robust online presence and word-of-mouth recommendations have proven effective in attracting students. While some support services have been well-utilized, there is room for improvement in communication and the provision of pre-arrival information.

Challenges related to housing, administrative processes, and arrival logistics underscore the need for a more comprehensive and responsive support infrastructure. Addressing these challenges could significantly enhance the overall satisfaction levels and contribute to a more seamless integration of international students into the Novia UAS community.

The insights gained from this survey serve as a valuable foundation for refining and tailoring support services, fostering a more inclusive and supportive environment for international students at Novia UAS. The institution has an opportunity to build upon its strengths and address specific pain points to create an even more positive and enriching experience for its diverse student body.

### 3.2 Define

By carefully outlining the issues and requirements discovered during the empathy stage, the unique difficulties faced by international students at Novia UAS are articulated. This phase uses methods like co-creation workshops and benchmarking to characterize the present services offered and comprehend the issue (Stickdorn & Schneider, 2010)

Based on the information gathered in the Empathize stage, I will work on defining the key problems and opportunities related to international student support services at Novia. To do this, I will use a variety of tools, including persona development, benchmarking against other universities, and co-creation workshops with stakeholders such as faculty members, administrators, and support staff. By developing a clear understanding of the needs and

goals of these stakeholders, This Research able to identify specific pain points and areas for improvement in the university's current support services.

### 3.2.1 Benchmarking

Benchmarking is a strategic research approach employed to comprehensively assess and improve Novia University of Applied Sciences' (Novia UAS) international student support services. Benchmarking, as defined by Camp (1989), is a process of comparing one's practices and performance with those of others, typically organizations or institutions, to identify best practices, gaps, and areas for improvement. In the context of this study, benchmarking becomes a critical tool for understanding how Novia UAS's international student support services compare with those of peer institutions.

Benchmarking serves multiple purposes in the enhancement of international student support services. As stressed by Zairi (1998), it allows for the identification of best practices and the subsequent adaptation or adoption of these practices to improve the quality of services. Additionally, benchmarking helps Novia UAS align its practices with international standards, as highlighted by Andersen et al. (2015). In an increasingly globalized world, where international students play a pivotal role in enriching campus diversity and fostering global perspectives, it is paramount for Novia UAS to meet, and ideally surpass, international standards for student support. The pursuit of higher education abroad is a transformative experience for international students, offering a wealth of opportunities for personal and academic growth. Finland, known for its high-quality education system and vibrant cultural environment, has become an attractive destination for international students seeking to broaden their horizons. Novia University of Applied Sciences (UAS), situated in Finland, welcomes a diverse student body from various corners of the globe. While the prospect of studying in a foreign country is filled with excitement and anticipation, it is also accompanied by the challenges of adapting to a new place, culture, language, and the intricacies of host country rules and policies.

The successful integration of international students into the academic and social fabric of the institution is a multifaceted endeavor. It involves providing comprehensive support services that address the unique needs and concerns of these students. Such services play

a pivotal role in ensuring that international students not only excel academically but also have a positive and enriching experience during their time at Novia UAS.

Recognizing the importance of facilitating a seamless transition for international students, Novia UAS has been proactive in offering a range of support services. These services encompass academic guidance, language assistance, orientation programs, housing support, counseling, and more. However, as the international student landscape evolves and diversifies, it is imperative to continually assess and enhance the effectiveness of these support services to meet the evolving needs and expectations of the student body.

The aim of this thesis is to comprehensively evaluate the current state of international student support services at Novia UAS. This assessment will involve a thorough analysis of the existing services provided to international students. Moreover, it seeks to understand the expectations of prospective international students before their arrival and the challenges they encounter during the first week of their academic journey. By bridging the gap between reality and student expectations, this research endeavors to make the international student study abroad experience as smooth, enjoyable, and productive as possible, from the pre-application process to graduation.

To achieve this objective, benchmarking against other higher education institutions is a critical methodology. By comparing Novia UAS's support services with those of benchmark institutions such as Metropolia UAS, Vasa UAS, LAB UAS, Turku University, and Oulu University, this thesis aims to identify best practices and areas that require improvement. Through this benchmarking process, Novia UAS can gain valuable insights into how to enhance its support services, learn from successful models implemented by other institutions, and tailor its offerings to better serve its international student community.

Methodology and Data Collection:

For this benchmarking study, a rigorous and systematic approach was employed to assess the international student support services provided during the first week at Novia University of Applied Sciences (Novia UAS) in comparison to other higher education institutions. The methodology encompassed the following key components:

#### Selection of Benchmark Institutions

The selection of benchmark institutions was a critical step in ensuring a comprehensive assessment. It was decided to benchmark Novia UAS against a diverse set of institutions, including both University of Applied Sciences (UAS) and traditional universities. This choice was made to gain insights into the varying support structures and services offered by different types of higher education institutions in Finland.

#### Data Collection Methods

Data collection primarily relied on a thorough examination of the official websites of the selected institutions. Each institution's website served as a valuable source of information regarding their international student support services during the first week.

#### Data Collection Aspects:

A standardized set of aspects related to support services was identified and systematically reviewed on each institution's website. These aspects included pre-arrival information, orientation, language support, academic support, counseling and health services, housing assistance, employment and career services, direct chat, feedback mechanisms, new student guidebooks, visa and immigration support, airport pickup and guidance, contact information, and IT guides.

#### Data Analysis:

The collected data were meticulously analyzed to compare the availability of support services across institutions. A clear and consistent approach was followed to record the presence or absence of each service, denoted by checkmarks (✓) and crosses (X) in a comprehensive table.

#### Limitations of the Approach:

It is important to acknowledge certain limitations associated with this benchmarking approach. While the information gathered from institutional websites offers valuable insights, the completeness and accuracy of the data are contingent upon the content

available on the websites at the time of data collection. Additionally, qualitative aspects of service quality or user experiences were not within the scope of this study.

This benchmarking study represents a snapshot of the support services provided during the first week for international students at Novia UAS and benchmarked institutions. The selection of a diverse group of institutions ensures a multifaceted understanding of the landscape of support services in Finnish higher education. However, it is essential to recognize that further research, including user feedback and in-depth interviews, could provide a more holistic assessment in future studies.

By delving into the experiences, needs, and expectations of international students and by conducting a thorough benchmarking analysis, this research seeks to contribute to the ongoing enhancement of international student support services at Novia UAS. Ultimately, the goal is to create an educational environment where international students can thrive academically and personally, building their confidence and preparing them for success in an increasingly globalized world.

### 3.2.2 Key Benchmarking Aspects

As Novia UAS endeavors to optimize its international student support services, it is imperative to conduct a comparative analysis against peer institutions, including Metropolia UAS, Vasa UAS, LAB UAS, Turku University, and Oulu University. This comparison, enabled by benchmarking, allows for the identification of best practices and gaps in Novia UAS's current support framework. It offers insights into the comprehensiveness, accessibility, and uniqueness of services provided by these institutions and aids in aligning Novia UAS's practices with global standards.

This thesis delves into a comprehensive analysis of Novia UAS's international student support services, drawing comparisons with the websites and resources of Metropolia UAS, Vasa UAS, LAB UAS, Turku University, and Oulu University. It evaluates these critical support aspects against international standards and industry best practices to inform

improvements and enhancements, ultimately fostering an educational environment where international students can thrive academically and personally.

The transition into a foreign educational environment represents a momentous juncture in the lives of international students. Beyond academic endeavors, their journey is replete with intricacies that extend into the realms of cultural adaptation, practical logistics, and well-being. Recognizing the multifaceted nature of this voyage, institutions of higher education are entrusted with the responsibility of providing comprehensive support services. In the context of Novia University of Applied Sciences (Novia UAS), this chapter embarks on a meticulous comparative analysis of international student support services. Our investigation casts a discerning eye on a spectrum of crucial aspects, including pre-arrival information, orientation programs, language support, academic assistance, counseling and health services, housing facilitation, employment and career provisions, direct chat platforms, feedback mechanisms, new student guidebooks, visa and immigration support information, airport pickup and guidance, contact resources, and IT guides. This holistic examination aims to unravel the intricacies of Novia UAS's support services while benchmarking them against those of peer institutions, including Metropolia UAS, Vasa UAS, LAB UAS, Turku University, and Oulu University. By scrutinizing these vital dimensions, we endeavor to glean insights that will pave the way for improvements, ensuring that international students at Novia UAS embark on a transformative educational journey that is not only academically enriching but also seamlessly supported in every facet of their experience.

In our quest to comprehensively assess international student support services, we have employed a systematic benchmarking approach, meticulously evaluating the offerings of six prominent institutions: Novia University of Applied Sciences (Novia UAS), with competitive intuitions with Vassa University of Applied Sciences (Vassa UAS), Metropolia University of Applied Sciences (Metropolia UAS), LAB University of Applied Sciences (LAB University), Oulu University, and Turku University. Our comparative analysis, summarized in the table below, provides a snapshot of the availability of key support services, denoted by checkmarks (✓) for available services and crosses (X) for unavailable ones:

N O	Service Offering	Novia UAS	Vassa UAS	Metropolia UAS	LAB University	Oulu University	Turku University
	Pre-arrival Information	✓	✗	✗	✓	✓	✗
	Orientation	✓	✓	✗	✓	✓	✓
	Language Support	✓	✗	✓	✗	✗	✓
	Academic Support	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
	Counselling and Health Services	✗	✗	✗	✗	✗	✓
	Housing Assistance	✓	✗	✗	✓	✓	✓
	Employment and Career Services	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
	Direct chat	✗	✓	✓	✗	✓	✗
	Feedback Mechanisms	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
	New Student Guidebook	✗	✓	✗	✗	✓	✗
	Visa and Immigration Support info	✓	✗	✗	✗	✗	✗
	Airopt Pickup and guidance	✓	✗	✗	✗	✓	✗
	Contact information	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
	IT Guide	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓

Figure 4 Table of Benchmarking

#### Comparative Analysis of International Student Support Services

From the above figure shows that, we delve into a comprehensive comparative analysis of the support services offered to international students during their first week in Finland. The aim is to critically evaluate the services provided by Novia University of Applied Sciences (Novia UAS) in comparison to benchmarked institutions, which include Vassa University of Applied Sciences (Vassa UAS), Metropolia University of Applied Sciences (Metropolia UAS), LAB University of Applied Sciences (LAB University), Oulu University, and Turku University. The analysis focuses on key aspects of support services, shedding light on both commonalities and disparities.

#### Health Services

One encouraging trend that emerges from the comparative analysis is the general availability of health services across Novia UAS and benchmarked institutions. This demonstrates a shared commitment to ensuring the physical and mental well-being of international students during their first week in Finland.

#### Direct Chat

A noticeable observation is the limited availability of direct chat assistance services during the initial days of international students' arrival. This feature appears to be a less common offering across institutions, including Novia UAS. The absence of real-time chat support raises questions about immediate assistance for newcomers.

#### Student Guidebooks

The absence of readily available student guidebooks during the first week is another noteworthy finding. Both Novia UAS and benchmarked institutions exhibit a gap in this area, suggesting room for improvement in providing comprehensive resources to guide international students.

#### Website Accessibility

An interesting observation arises from the comparison of website accessibility. Oulu University's user-centric approach, featuring the "Welcome to New Students" page on the landing page, stands out as an exemplary practice. Novia UAS may consider adopting a similar strategy to enhance the ease of access to critical information.

#### Orientation Classes Before Moving to Finland

An intriguing possibility is the introduction of orientation classes or information sessions before international students' relocation to Finland. Novia UAS and benchmarked institutions do not commonly offer this service during the first week. However, the potential benefits of such preparatory sessions for students' smooth transition warrant consideration.

#### □ Visa and Immigration Services

Novia UAS demonstrates a commendable commitment to providing visa and immigration support during the first week. This contrasts with many benchmarked institutions, which do not prioritize this service. Novia UAS's provision of support in this area can be viewed as a substantial advantage.

#### □ Airport Pickup and Guidance

A shared observation among Novia UAS and benchmarked institutions is the absence of airport pickup and guidance services during the first week. This aspect highlights a common gap in offering this level of support to arriving international students.

#### □ Comparison: Universities vs. UAS

An overarching distinction emerges in the comparison of universities and UAS. Universities tend to offer a broader spectrum of support services, potentially influenced by their broader academic scope and available resources. Novia UAS, as an UAS, may consider aligning its support services with the specific needs of its international students.

In summary, the comparative analysis reveals both strengths and areas for improvement in the provision of support services during international students' first week in Finland. Novia UAS excels in certain areas, such as health services, visa and immigration support, and airport pickup and guidance. However, opportunities for enhancement exist, particularly in direct chat assistance, student guidebooks, website accessibility, and the exploration of orientation classes before students' relocation. Learning from Oulu University's website accessibility can provide valuable insights, and addressing these opportunities can significantly enhance the first-week experience for international students.

### 3.2.3 Sample Recommendations for Novia UAS

Novia UAS is commended for its commitment to providing several key support services during the first week for international students. However, there are areas where improvement and refinement can further enhance the overall experience for newcomers.

#### 1. Website Accessibility and User-Friendliness

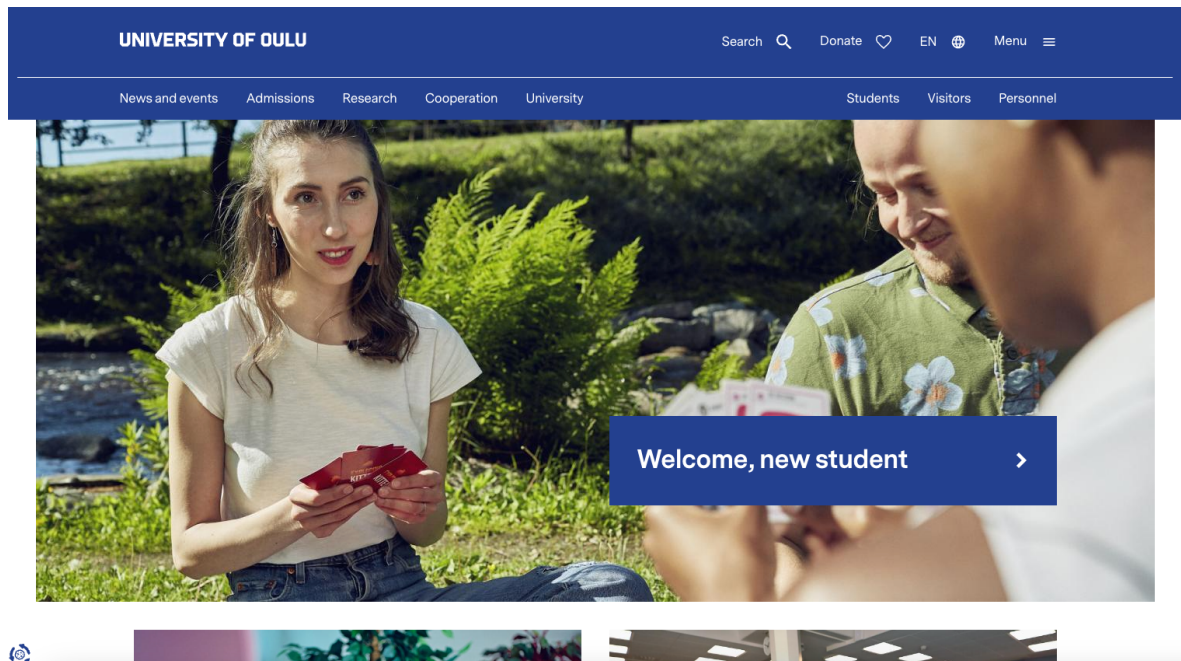


Figure 5 Example of Website Landing Page (Source: University of Oulu)

Novia UAS should consider emulating the user-centric approach adopted by Oulu University, which prominently features the "Welcome to New Students" page on the landing page. This would significantly improve the ease of access to essential information, making it readily available to international students without the need for extensive navigation.

#### 2. Introduction of Orientation Classes Before Moving to Finland

Exploring the possibility of organizing orientation classes or information sessions before international students move to Finland can be highly beneficial. This proactive approach would help students become better prepared for their journey, acclimating them to academic, cultural, and practical aspects before their arrival.

### 3. Student Guidebooks

Novia UAS should consider developing comprehensive student guidebooks that cover essential information and resources for new international students. These guidebooks can serve as valuable references, aiding in the students' transition to life in Finland and at the university.

### 4. Direct Chat Assistance

Recognizing the absence of direct chat assistance services during the first week, Novia UAS may contemplate introducing real-time chat support. This would address the need for immediate assistance that international students may require when they first arrive.

### 5. Continued Focus on Health Services

Novia UAS's commitment to health services is commendable and should be maintained. Health and well-being support is of paramount importance during the first week, and this focus should persist.

### 6. Capitalize on Strengths

Novia UAS should continue to capitalize on its strengths, such as the provision of visa and immigration support. This service is a valuable asset and should be further emphasized to assist international students in navigating the administrative requirements associated with their stay in Finland.

### 7. Strategic Planning for Additional Services

Novia UAS can explore strategic planning to bridge gaps identified in the benchmarking results. Collaborative efforts with relevant stakeholders and resource allocation may be necessary to introduce these services effectively.

Incorporating these recommendations into Novia UAS's support services strategy can lead to a more seamless and comprehensive experience for international students during their first week in Finland. By addressing these opportunities for enhancement, Novia UAS can reinforce its commitment to supporting the diverse needs of its international student community, fostering a welcoming and inclusive environment.

#### 3.2.4 Co-creation workshop

The data collection for this study involved a co-creation workshop conducted with international students at Novia University of Applied Sciences (UAS). The workshop took place on Wednesday, October 25, 2023, and was attended by six participants, all of whom were affiliated with Novia UAS. Communication for the workshop was facilitated through Novia UAS email, Microsoft Teams, WhatsApp, and a common platform, Miro board. These platforms were chosen to ensure effective and seamless communication between the participants and the facilitators. The workshop spanned a total duration of 2.5 hours, providing ample time for in-depth discussions, collaborative activities, and the generation of valuable insights. The use of various communication tools and a collaborative platform aimed to foster active engagement and participation among the international student participants during the co-creation workshop.

Co-creation workshops are essential to the service design process because they provide dynamic forums for users and service providers to actively collaborate. These workshops are distinguished by their capacity to promote empathy and guarantee human-centered design by facilitating in-depth investigation of user views, pain spots, and expectations (Sanders & Stappers, 2008). To generate creative ideas and original solutions, participants participate in interactive exercises, role-playing, and brainstorming (Manzini & Rizzo, 2011). Rapid prototyping and iterations are also encouraged in co-creation workshops. This lets participants test and hone their ideas, leading to actionable insights and better service designs (Young, 2008). These workshops ensure that the design process matches services with actual customer needs and preferences by bringing together experts from many disciplines, hence offering a varied variety of perspectives and knowledge (Stickdorn & Schneider, 2011). Consequently, user-centered solutions in service design benefit greatly from the outputs of co-creation workshops (Sangiorgi & Prendiville, 2019).

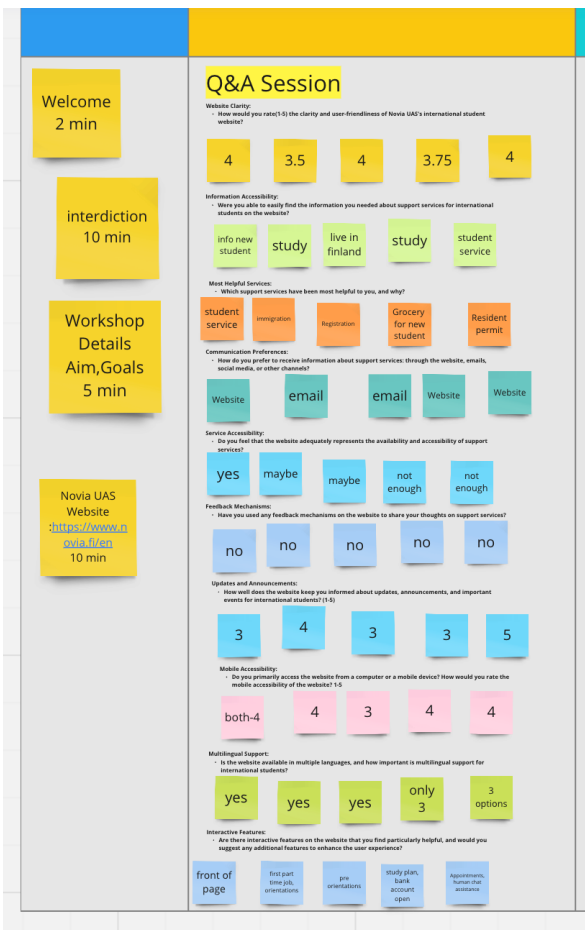


Figure 6 Co-Creation Workshops

In Figure 6, we outline the structure and key components of the co-creation workshop conducted with Bachelor's and Master's students from Novia UAS. The workshop, which spans a total of one and a half hours, commences with a 2-minute welcome session, creating a warm and inclusive atmosphere. Participants then engage in a 10-minute introduction, allowing them to become acquainted with each other and establish a sense of community. The subsequent 5 minutes are dedicated to presenting the workshop's purpose and its goals, ensuring that everyone is aligned with the objectives.

The core of the workshop involves a 10-minute session where participants delve into discussions related to Novia UAS's website. This segment provides valuable insights into website information and its clarity. During the 30-minute Q&A session that follows, participants respond to a set of 10 questions. The first question pertains to the clarity of the website, revealing that 60% of students rated it as 4 out of 5, while 40% rated it below 4, underscoring room for improvement. The second question focuses on the accessibility of information, with findings indicating that both existing and prospective students require

additional information on the website. The third question revolves around the most helpful services, with student services, registration, and immigration information emerging as common areas of importance. Additionally, fourth questions shows participants' communication preferences reveal that 60% prefer using the website, while 40% favor email. The workshop emphasizes the need to enhance service accessibility to better meet student needs and expectations.

Regarding service accessibility for student support, the fifth question's findings provide important new information. The analysis shows that participants have a variety of viewpoints. While 40% of respondents said they were unhappy with the accessibility of the services as they are now, another 40% expressed ambivalence and suggested that changes could be needed. The remaining 20%, however, said that the accessibility of the current services is sufficient.

The range of answers shows how important it is to cater to the different requirements and expectations of the student body. It indicates that a significant percentage of students are not happy with the way services are currently accessible, which highlights how urgent it is to improve this area. Additionally, the replies show that there is a subset of students who are happy with the current services but are amenable to modifications, suggesting that positive adjustments that suit their preferences may be made.

In conclusion, the examination of the answers to the fifth question highlights the need for a more thorough approach to service accessibility for student assistance, accounting for the various levels of satisfaction and indicating that advancements in this field are in reality necessary. When asked about the feedback mechanism in the sixth question, 100% of the respondents said they didn't use the service. This shows that the current feedback method is being used far less than it should be, indicating the need for a redesign that takes student preferences into account.

The answers differed when it came to the seventh question about announcements and updates. Students gave this service an average rating of three out of five, with sixty percent giving it a score of three, twenty percent giving it a score of four, and twenty percent giving it a score of five. This range of answers emphasizes the necessity of improving announcements and updates' accessibility, relevancy, and clarity in order to successfully

accommodate students' differing preferences. Students typically found the website to be user-friendly when viewed via mobile devices, as seen by the website receiving a commendable rating of 4 in the eighth question about mobile accessibility. This implies that the website is adaptable and adjustable, making it easier for students who prefer mobile access to utilize it overall.

But when asked if they were satisfied with the current multilanguage alternatives, 60% of respondents said "yes" in response to the ninth question about multilanguage support. However, 40% of participants said it would be restrictive to have just three language options. This implies that although the majority of students are satisfied with the language support that is offered, a significant segment of the student population continues to demand a wider variety of language options. In order to improve the website's accessibility and inclusion for a larger group of international students, it could be a good idea to think about adding other languages in the future. Participants were questioned about their preferences for interactive elements and any other suggestions for improvement in the survey's closing questions. Their answers provided insight into their priorities and worries.

initial off, the participants' emphasis on "orientation" and "first part-time job" emphasizes how crucial career support and coaching are for overseas students. This suggests that students want easy access to job placement and career development resources and information on the website. It also emphasizes how important it is for them to have an easy transition from school to the workforce.

Second, the focus placed on the landing page of the website implies that students view it as an essential point of entry for information and services. They want the most important and relevant information to be shown prominently on the landing page for prospective students. Information about support services created especially to help incoming students succeed academically is included in this.

Additionally, "study plan support" and "human chat instant services" are crucial topics for students to learn. The former suggests that academic planning, which is essential for academic achievement, calls for tools and advice. The latter highlights the value of real-time, customer-focused chat help, demonstrating a preference for engaging and responsive communication channels. In summary, the feedback provided by students

reveals their top priorities regarding career help, the content of the landing page, guidance on study plans, and interactive human chat services. The effectiveness of Novia UAS's international student support services as well as the overall student experience can be greatly improved by attending to these issues and making these adjustments.

### 3.3 Ideate

In the ideation phase of the service design thinking process, which serves as the primary research method in this thesis focused on international student support services at Novia UAS, the objective is to generate innovative and viable solutions. This phase builds on the insights gained during the empathize stage, where a deep understanding of the challenges faced by international students was established.

The ideation process leverages various creative methodologies, including customer journey mapping. This visual representation of the student experience allows for a holistic view of their interactions with support services, helping to identify pain points and areas of improvement. By adopting a user-centric approach, the ideation phase aims to address specific needs and enhance the overall student experience.

To structure the ideation process, tools such as the "To-Do List" and Moscow prioritization are employed. The To-Do List assists in organizing potential solutions based on their feasibility and impact, while Moscow prioritization categorizes ideas into Must-haves, Should-haves, Could-haves, and Won't-haves. This systematic approach ensures that the generated ideas align with the overarching goal of improving international student support services.

The ideation phase is characterized by collaboration and creative thinking, fostering an environment where diverse viewpoints contribute to the generation of impactful solutions. By combining empathy, creative brainstorming, and structured decision-making, this phase sets the foundation for the subsequent stages of the service design thinking process, ultimately guiding the development of a comprehensive and effective international student support framework at Novia UAS.

### 1.1.1. Customer Journey map

The journey of international students in Finland is a multifaceted adventure, encompassing academic pursuits, immigration procedures, and cultural immersion. This comprehensive journey map is built upon extensive research, drawing insights from trusted sources such as [studyinfo.fi](http://studyinfo.fi), [migri.fi](http://migri.fi), [enterfinland.fi](http://enterfinland.fi), and the Finnish National Agency for Education. As we navigate through the various stages of this journey, our goal is to provide a holistic guide that not only outlines practical steps but also captures the essence of the experiences that define an international student's sojourn in Finland.

#### The Finnish Education Context

Finland's commitment to providing a top-tier education system is fundamental to the international student journey. The Finnish education system is celebrated for its learner-centric approach, emphasis on equality, and innovative teaching methodologies. Understanding the distinctiveness of this system is pivotal in comprehending the opportunities and challenges that international students encounter.

#### The Significance of International Education

International students play a vital role in enriching the academic and cultural tapestry of Finnish universities. This research delves into the broader context, exploring how international students contribute to the diversity and global perspective within Finland's higher education landscape. By recognizing this significance, we contextualize the journey within the larger narrative of internationalization in education.

#### Methodological Framework

This journey map is not merely a compilation of facts but is grounded in a robust research methodology. The information has been thoughtfully curated through the analysis of official documents, policy guidelines, and educational resources sourced from [studyinfo.fi](http://studyinfo.fi), [migri.fi](http://migri.fi), [enterfinland.fi](http://enterfinland.fi), and the Finnish National Agency for Education. The research design blends qualitative and quantitative elements to ensure a comprehensive and accurate representation of the international student journey.

### 3.3.1 Constructing the Journey Map

Our journey commences with the pre-application phase, where prospective students navigate the wealth of information on [studyinfo.fi](http://studyinfo.fi) to make informed decisions about programs and admission processes. Subsequently, the map delves into the intricacies of immigration procedures, guiding students through residence permit applications via [migri.fi](http://migri.fi) and [enterfinland.fi](http://enterfinland.fi). Beyond administrative aspects, the journey extends into the realm of cultural integration, addressing language learning opportunities, community engagement, and the extensive support services offered by Finnish universities.

As we traverse through the contours of this journey map, our aim is not only to provide practical guidance but also to shed light on the broader context of the international student experience in Finland. The ultimate objective is to empower prospective students, academic institutions, and policymakers with a nuanced understanding that transcends procedural steps, fostering an environment conducive to a thriving and inclusive international student community.

This research and the accompanying journey map stand as a valuable resource, illuminating the path for those embarking on the transformative adventure of international education in Finland.

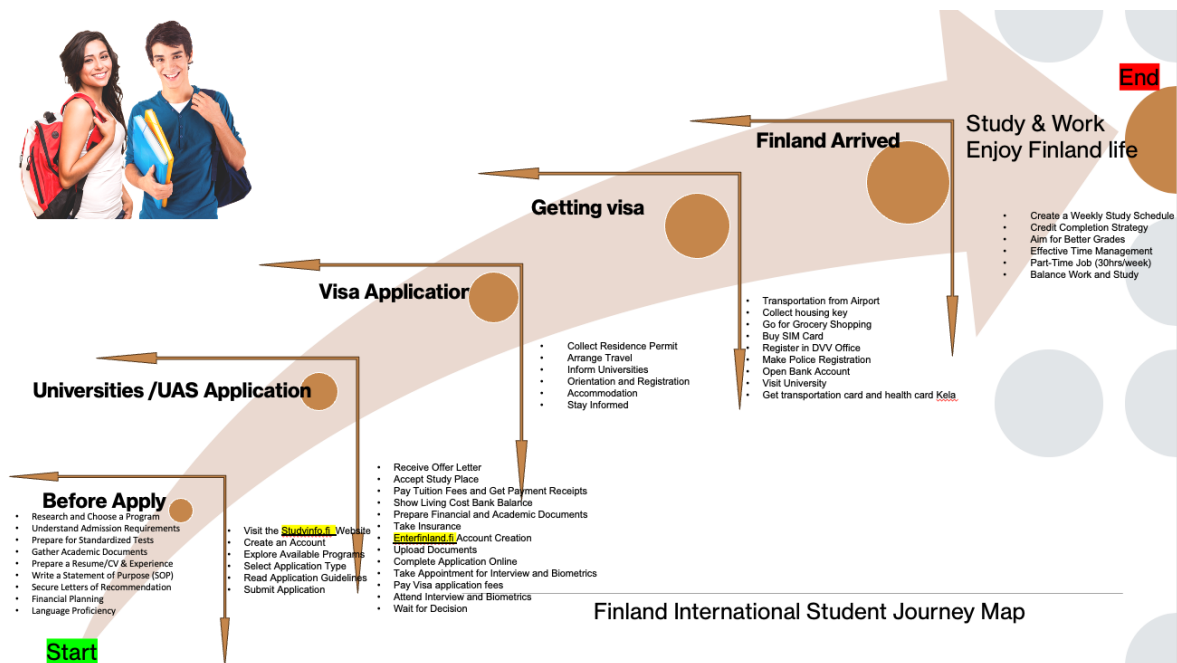


Figure 7 student journey map and to do list.

### 1.Pre-Application Stage: Research and Choose a Program

Prospective international students initiate their journey by meticulously researching and selecting a suitable program. This stage involves understanding admission requirements, preparing for standardized tests, gathering academic documents, creating a comprehensive resume, and articulating a Statement of Purpose (SOP). Financial planning and assessing language proficiency are crucial aspects as students lay the groundwork for their academic pursuits.

### 2.University Application Stage

Building on the preparatory work in the pre-application stage, students delve into the [studyinfo.fi](#) website. Here, they create accounts, explore available programs, and select their preferred application type. With a discerning eye, students submit their applications, ensuring adherence to specific guidelines. This stage marks a critical transition from research to active engagement with the chosen educational path.

### 3. Visa Application Stage

Upon receiving an offer, the third stage unfolds with practical and administrative tasks. Students accept their study place, pay tuition fees, and gather payment receipts. Demonstrating financial readiness, they showcase their living cost bank balance and

undertake necessary insurance processes. The creation of an enterfinland.fi account initiates the visa application process, involving document uploads, interviews, and biometrics.

#### 4. Arrival Stage

With the visa approved, the fourth stage commences with the collection of the residence permit. This stage is characterized by travel arrangements, orientation sessions, accommodation setup, engagement in important civic processes like police registration, and registration at the local government's office (DVV). It serves as the bridge between administrative formalities and the student's physical presence in Finland, marking the beginning of their academic journey.

#### 5. Post-Arrival Stage: Balancing Study and Work Life

The final stage focuses on the student's ability to maintain equilibrium between academic commitments and part-time employment. Creating a weekly study schedule becomes paramount, and students strategize their credit completion to achieve better grades. Effective time management becomes a skill to master as they navigate a part-time job of 30 hours per week, demonstrating resilience and adaptability in a foreign academic setting.

Each stage contributes to the holistic experience of international students in Finland, intertwining administrative processes, cultural adaptation, and academic achievements. The sequential nature of these stages ensures a well-rounded and transformative journey for students pursuing education in a foreign land.

The analysis underscores the holistic nature of the international student journey, acknowledging challenges beyond the online realm. Language proficiency is a recurring theme, not only in the pre-application stage but throughout, emphasizing the importance of linguistic support. The process demands adaptability to a new education system, cultural environment, and the intricacies of administrative procedures.

#### Conclusion

The international student journey at Novia UAS is a comprehensive process requiring support beyond the digital realm. Language proficiency, adaptability, and understanding of

academic and civic processes are key components. Continuous efforts to address these challenges can enhance the overall experience and contribute to the successful integration of international students into the academic and cultural fabric of Novia UAS.

### 3.3.2 Moscow prioritization

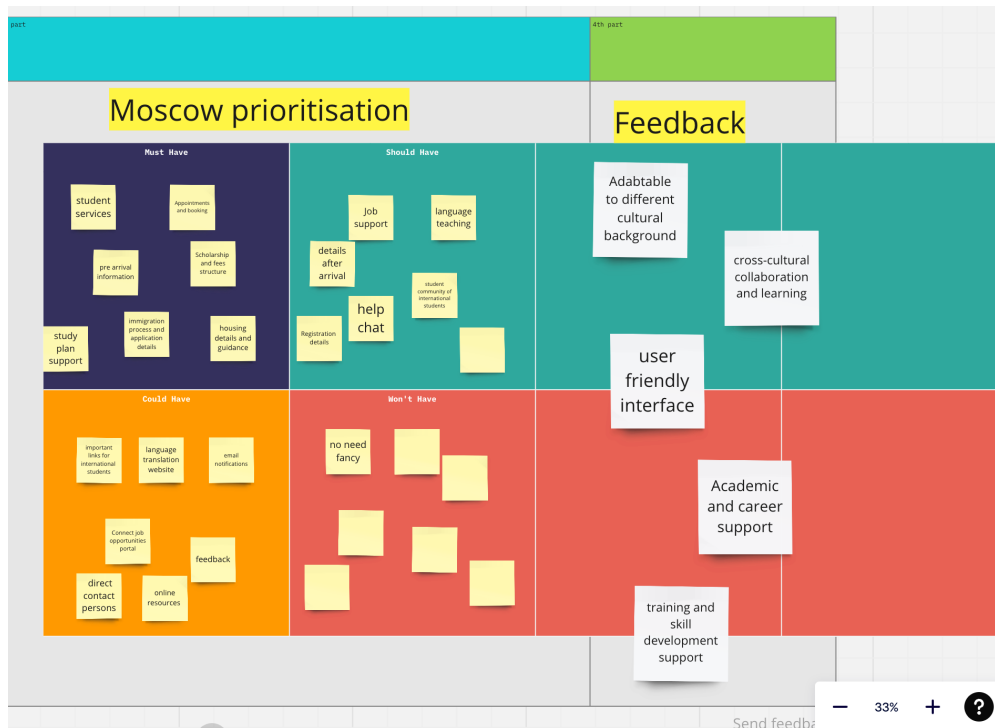


Figure 8 Moscow Prioritization and Feedback

The Moscow prioritization workshop served as the culminating step of the co-creation workshop for Novia UAS international students. Both workshops were conducted concurrently on Wednesday, October 25, 2023. With six participants engaged in the co-creation workshop, communication was facilitated through various platforms, including Novia UAS email, Microsoft Teams, WhatsApp, and the collaborative Miro board.

As the final phase of the co-creation process, the Moscow prioritization workshop became essential in navigating through the multitude of ideas generated during the co-creation session. The wealth of insights and suggestions produced in the co-creation workshop needed systematic organization and evaluation. Through the Moscow prioritization technique, participants were able to classify and prioritize ideas based on their importance and feasibility.

This final step ensured a strategic and focused approach to distill and prioritize concepts, providing a clear direction for further consideration and potential implementation. The Moscow prioritization workshop played a crucial role in refining the outcomes of the co-creation process, contributing to the development of actionable strategies and solutions that align with the needs and preferences of the Novia UAS international student community.

Classifying project features or requirements into four priority groups—Must-haves, Should-haves, Could-haves, and Won't-haves—is a useful application of MoSCoW prioritizing, a project management and requirements prioritization strategy (Bovermann & Heckman, 2019). Applications of MoSCoW prioritizing can greatly improve the efficacy and quality of Novia UAS's foreign student support services (Uluçay & Uluçay, 2018).

**Must-Haves (M):** These are the basic elements that any service providing support to overseas students must have. Essential components are deemed non-negotiable. For instance, offering orientation sessions, basic academic help, and advice on immigration and visas are essential for overseas students. These services guarantee that students have the necessary resources to excel academically as well as the legal right to live and study in Finland.

**Should-Haves (S):** Features that are significant but not essential are considered should-haves. Although they can be included at the next stage of service development, these features improve the educational experience for students. For example, providing extra language instruction, career counseling, or cultural integration events can all have a big impact on how happy and successful overseas students are overall.

**Could-Haves (C):** These are the things that, while desirable, are not essential to the basic operation of services for international students. This could include, for instance, developing a mobile application that provides quick access to support resources or providing tailored services for particular populations of international students.

**Won't-Haves (W):** These are the attributes or specifications that are specifically left out of the project's or service's existing scope. It's critical to be explicit about what will and won't be included in order to prevent scope creep and successfully manage expectations from stakeholders. Novia UAS is able to concentrate its efforts and resources on the most

important aspects by using the MoSCoW priority for foreign student support services (Fitzgerald & Stol, 2019). It guarantees that the fundamental needs are satisfied while leaving space for future improvements and expansions. This strategy is in line with the ideas of service design thinking, which prioritizes an iterative, user-centered process that can adjust to the changing needs of international students.

Novia UAS can efficiently continue to enhance and modify its offerings for international students by periodically reevaluating these goals in light of student input and evolving conditions. Meeting the varied and changing demands of international students and fostering their academic and personal success depend heavily on this responsiveness and flexibility.

The MoSCoW prioritization results for international student support services at Novia UAS clearly define what aspects should be included in the landing page of the university's website. By categorizing the features into "Must-Have," "Should-Have," "Could-Have," and "Won't-Have," Novia UAS can efficiently redesign its landing page to better cater to the needs of international students (Fitzgerald & Stol, 2019).

#### Must-Have (Priority 1):

The landing page should prominently feature the essential services that are crucial for international students. These include pre-arrival information, study plan details, immigration process guidance, housing information, scholarships and fees details, and appointment and booking services. These aspects ensure that students have immediate access to vital information required to start their academic journey smoothly. Placing them in this section reflects their non-negotiable importance (Uluçay & Uluçay, 2018).

#### Should-Have (Priority 2):

The "Should-Have" section on the landing page should focus on aspects that are important but not as critical as the must-have services. Here, elements like part-time job support, after-arrival details, registration procedures, language support, help chat options, and student community information should be included. These services enhance the student experience by providing additional support beyond the essentials.

#### Could-Have (Priority 3):

In the "Could-Have" section, features that are nice to have but not necessary for the core functionality of the landing page should be placed. These might include links to relevant resources, email notification options, online reading sources, and feedback mechanisms. While these elements add value, they can be implemented in subsequent phases or based on student feedback and evolving needs.

The "Won't-Have" section, which includes the exclusion of unnecessary fancy website information, aligns with the principle of simplicity and ease of access. By eliminating elements that do not add significant value to international students, Novia UAS can maintain a clean and user-friendly landing page.

#### 3.4 Prototype:

A prototype is a tangible representation of a design concept that allows designers and stakeholders to visualize and interact with a product or service before it is fully developed. In the context of service design, prototypes are crucial for testing and refining service concepts, as they provide a means to simulate the service experience and gather valuable feedback from users and stakeholders. Prototypes can take various forms, including paper sketches, digital wireframes, interactive mock-ups, or even role-playing scenarios. By creating prototypes, service designers can iterate on their ideas, make improvements, and ensure that the final service meets the needs and expectations of users (Buchenau & Suri, 2000).

The landing page redesign follows the principles of service design thinking, where the focus is on providing the right information to the right users at the right time (Stickdorn, Lawrence, & Schneider, 2011). This approach ensures that international students can easily find the essential details they need for a successful start in their academic journey. Moreover, the landing page's layout with clear divisions for must-have, should-have, and could-have services makes it user-centric and user-friendly, reflecting a thoughtful and empathetic approach to design. The landing page for new international students at Novia UAS can be divided into three distinct sections to enhance usability and provide a seamless experience. Each section can cater to specific needs and information, making it easier for students to find what they are looking for.

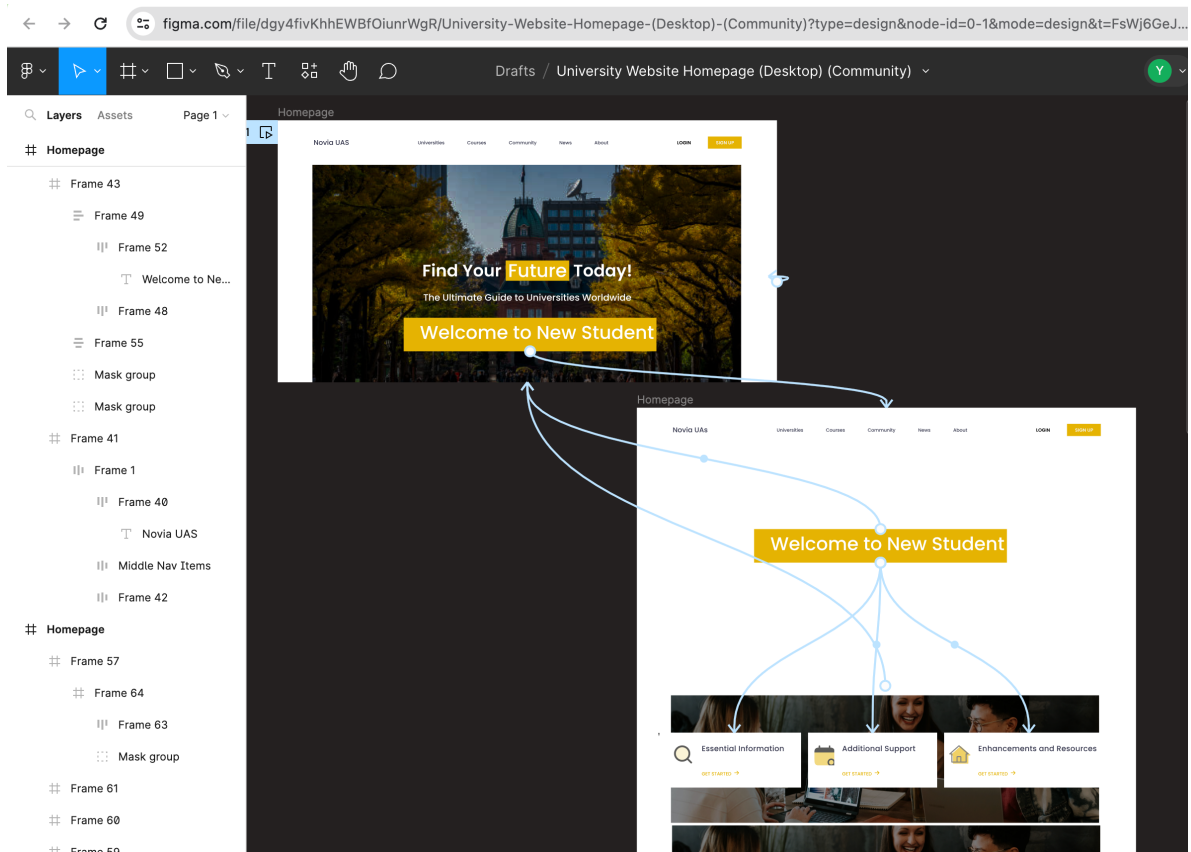


Figure 9 Sample Prototype

(Source: [https://www.figma.com/file/dgy4fivKhhEWBfOiunrWgR/University-Website-Homepage-\(Desktop\)-\(Community\)?type=design&node-id=0%3A1&mode=design&t=Fswj6GeJGxUpU1yr-1](https://www.figma.com/file/dgy4fivKhhEWBfOiunrWgR/University-Website-Homepage-(Desktop)-(Community)?type=design&node-id=0%3A1&mode=design&t=Fswj6GeJGxUpU1yr-1))

#### Section 1: "Essential Information" (Must-Have Services):

This section, placed prominently at the top of the landing page, will house the "Must-Have" services, such as pre-arrival information, study plan details, immigration process guidance, housing information, scholarships and fees details, and appointment and booking services. These are critical pieces of information that international students require for a smooth transition into their academic journey.

#### Section 2: "Additional Support" (Should-Have Services):

The second section of the landing page will be dedicated to the "Should-Have" services. These include part-time job support, after-arrival details, registration procedures, language

support, help chat options, and student community information. Placing these services in a separate section ensures that students can easily access valuable supplementary information.

### Section 3: "Enhancements and Resources" (Could-Have Services):

The third section will be designated for the "Could-Have" services, which are nice to have but not immediately essential. It will include links to relevant resources, options for email notifications, online reading sources, and feedback mechanisms. These enhancements and resources can be further tailored based on evolving student needs and feedback.

This division into three sections aligns with the principles of service design, providing a user-centric and intuitive layout that caters to different needs and priorities of international students. It ensures that students can quickly locate essential information while also offering additional support and resources for those seeking more in-depth guidance. Furthermore, it reflects a student-oriented approach, emphasizing ease of access and the provision of relevant content.

By implementing this three-section structure, Novia UAS can create a landing page that is both welcoming and functional for its international students, facilitating a smoother transition and a positive start to their academic journey.

## 3.5 Test

The service design approach's tasting phase is an important step when the target audience uses or interacts with the suggested solutions or prototypes in real life to test them. In this stage, user input and real-world observations are used to test, improve, and validate the intended services or interventions (Stickdorn et al., 2011).

During this stage, any shortcomings or restrictions in the service design can be found and fixed, allowing for an overall better user experience. According to Mager and Sung (2011), it is a crucial part of the iterative service design process.

All research results and the completed prototype will be given to Novia UAS as part of this thesis. To improve their system for supporting international students, Novia UAS is urged to take into account the research findings and put the prototype into practice.

In the tasting phase that follows, Novia UAS assesses and applies the suggested prototype and study findings. To make sure the changes meet their needs and preferences, Novia UAS is urged to aggressively solicit input and insights from international students throughout this phase. This thesis will work with Novia UAS as a researcher to supervise the tasting stage. By working together, we can make sure that the modifications are in line with the needs and goals of international students, which will improve their time at Novia UAS. This iterative process demonstrates Novia UAS's commitment to delivering a top-notch educational experience and highlights the commitment to continuous development in foreign student support services.

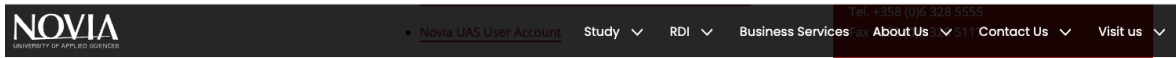
#### 4 Research questions and answers

Novia UAS, like many educational institutions, has a plethora of support services and information available on its website for international students. However, the effectiveness of these resources hinges on the accessibility and clarity of the instructions provided. Despite comprehensive details being available, the study finds that some students face challenges in accessing and understanding the information due to difficulties with the website's landing page. This paper aims to analyze the current support systems and propose improvements, particularly in terms of website design and accessibility, to enhance the overall experience of international students at Novia UAS.

##### 4.1 Current Support Systems

The interview, survey, and research findings reveal positive aspects of the current support systems, including the presence of dedicated International Coordinators, comprehensive orientation programs, efficient registration processes, clear information on fees and scholarships, accessible healthcare services, and various other resources available on the website. These initiatives contribute to a structured support framework for international

students. Additionally, insights from Figure 10 indicate the availability of support services, while Figure 11 illustrates a clear pathway for international students within Novia UAS. However, the study identifies that there are areas for potential improvement.



User Account	Acceptance of Study Place	Registration of Attendance or Non-Attendance
Confirmation of Grades and Certificates	Immigration	Student Health Care
Student Health Insurance	Financial Aid and Scholarships	Adult Education Support
Student Union Novium	Glossary for New Students	Appeal
Tuition Fees	Language of Instruction	Information for Students whose Residence Permit is Delayed

Figure 10 Available Support Services of Novia UAS (Source: Novia UAS)

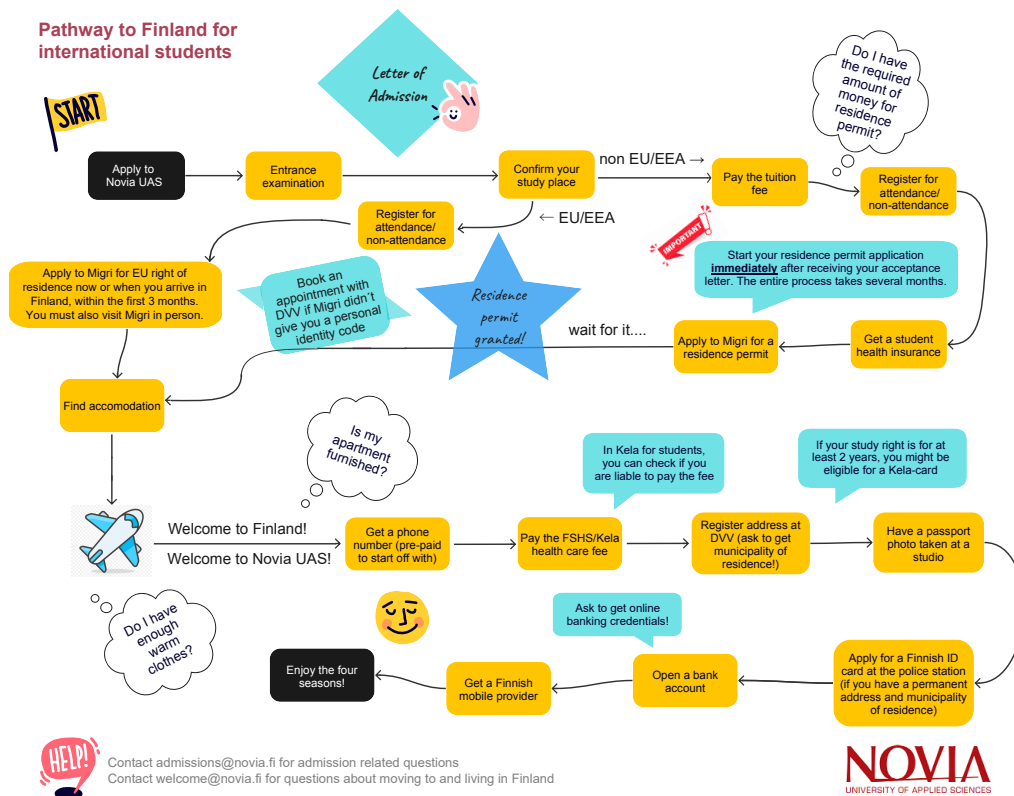


Figure 11 Pathway of International Student (Source: Novia UAS)

## Website Accessibility and Clarity

One critical aspect affecting the effectiveness of support services is the accessibility and clarity of instructions provided on the university website. Despite detailed information being available on various aspects, ranging from pick-up instructions to financial aid, the study identifies a gap in the ease of navigation due to challenges with the website's landing page. The clarity and simplicity of the landing page significantly impact how students access and understand crucial instructions.

## Proposed Improvements

To address the identified challenges, this paper proposes enhancements to the university website, focusing on the landing page. The goal is to make the landing page more user-friendly, intuitive, and accessible to international students. This includes reorganizing information, improving navigation, and implementing visual cues to guide students to the relevant sections. Moreover, the paper suggests the incorporation of multimedia elements such as videos and infographics to make instructions more engaging and comprehensible.

## Impact on Student Experience

By improving website accessibility and clarity, the proposed enhancements aim to positively impact the overall student experience. A user-friendly landing page ensures that international students can easily find and understand crucial information related to their journey at Novia UAS.

In conclusion, this paper highlights the pivotal role of website accessibility in optimizing support services for international students at Novia UAS. While acknowledging the positive aspects of current support systems, the study emphasizes the need for targeted improvements to enhance the clarity and ease of access to instructions. The proposed enhancements to the university website's landing page aim to create a more user-friendly and supportive environment for international students, ultimately contributing to an enriched overall student experience. As universities increasingly rely on online platforms,

ensuring the effectiveness of website design becomes paramount in delivering comprehensive and accessible support services to a diverse student body.

## 4.2 Findings and result

The findings from the study conducted at Novia UAS provide valuable insights into the challenges and preferences of international students. It is evident that the current state of the university's support services, particularly its website, falls short of meeting the needs and expectations of these students. International students express difficulties in navigating the website, with a significant percentage rating its clarity below satisfactory levels. Access to crucial information is a persistent issue, leading to challenges during the entire student journey, from pre-arrival to academic life. Communication preferences vary, but a significant portion of students prefer website-based interactions, emphasizing the need for improved online accessibility and responsiveness.

The survey results indicate the importance of certain support services, including pre-arrival information, study plans, immigration processes, housing details, scholarships, and appointment booking. These are considered essential by international students and addressing them can significantly enhance the overall student experience.

To address these findings, the study suggests a multi-pronged approach to improving Novia UAS's international student support systems. This encompasses a landing page overhaul that categorizes support services into three sections: Essential Information, Additional Support, and Enhancements and Resources. This categorization enhances the accessibility and user-friendliness of the landing page. Furthermore, it highlights the need for website clarity, mobile optimization, diversified communication options, enhanced part-time job support, community-building initiatives, expanded multilanguage support, and efficient feedback mechanisms. By addressing these areas, Novia UAS can create a more inclusive, accessible, and supportive environment for its international student population.

## 5 Conclusion and recommendation

This thesis has delved into the realm of international student support services at Novia UAS with a focus on the redesign of the institution's landing page to enhance user experience. The journey of this research began with a personal connection, as I, too, have been an international student and witnessed the challenges faced during the study visa process and the academic journey. This personal experience provided the motivation to investigate and improve the services offered to international students.

The research followed the Design Thinking process, which proved to be a valuable methodology for understanding and addressing the pain points and needs of international students at Novia UAS. Through the stages of Empathize, Ideate, and Prototype, valuable insights were gathered and analyzed.

The Empathize phase involved gathering data from interviews, surveys, and co-creation workshops, where the challenges faced by international students were discussed. The research highlighted key issues such as a lack of clarity on the website, accessibility concerns, limited communication options, and the need for better service accessibility.

The Ideate phase was instrumental in generating creative solutions and ideas to address these challenges. The process involved prioritizing the identified services based on the Moscow prioritization technique. Must-Have services, Should-Have services, and Could-Have services were distinguished, reflecting the criticality of each service.

The Prototype phase led to the creation of a redesigned landing page concept. This prototype featured three distinct sections, each catering to a specific set of international student support services. The Must-Have section, including services such as pre-arrival information and scholarship details, was prioritized. The Should-Have section addressed valuable but non-essential services, and the Could-Have section featured supplementary resources.

The data collection and analysis clearly indicated that the proposed redesign aligns with the feedback received from international students. The restructured landing page offers a more organized and accessible platform that directly addresses their support service requirements. It is expected to significantly improve the user experience and facilitate the smooth integration of new international students into Novia UAS.

In essence, this thesis presents a practical solution for Novia UAS to better serve its international student community. It demonstrates how the Design Thinking process can be a powerful tool for problem-solving and innovation. By paying attention to the voices of international students and tailoring services to their needs, Novia UAS can create a more welcoming and supportive environment, fostering a positive academic experience for all international students.

This research also emphasizes the importance of continuous improvement in university services to adapt to the evolving needs of the diverse international student population. By considering the feedback and experiences of international students, educational institutions can become more inclusive and student centric.

To sum up, this thesis clarifies important findings from a thorough analysis of the foreign student support services offered by Novia UAS. The study revealed difficulties related to website accessibility and navigation, especially on the landing page, which affects how clear the instructions are, which is important for the student journey. The requirement for flexible online interactions was highlighted by the diversity of communication choices among international students. There was recognition of the good things about the current support systems, like orientation days and assigned coordinators, but there was also room for development. Design Thinking and Moscow prioritizing serve as the foundation for the proposed redesign of the landing page, which is a workable way to improve user experience. Reorganization, enhanced navigation, and multimedia integration are the main features of the makeover, which is anticipated to help international students move more easily. The focus on ongoing development highlights how changing the needs of overseas students are. This project seeks to serve the diverse international student community at Novia UAS by establishing a more inclusive and welcoming atmosphere that is in line with user input and enhances their academic experience.

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## Appendix -1

## Interview questions for Novia UAS staffs

1. Can you describe the current support services available for international students at Novia UAS?
2. What kinds of challenges do international students typically face when they first arrive at Novia UAS, and how do you address these challenges?
3. In your opinion, what are the most important support services for international students to have access to, and why?
4. How do you support international students to get started with their studies and integrate into the academic environment at Novia UAS?
5. How do you assist international students in navigating the curriculum and understanding the academic requirements of their respective programs?
6. What strategies do you employ to facilitate effective communication and interaction among international students and local students within your first classes or meet?
7. How do you ensure that international students receive the necessary Information for Finland life, academic support and resources to excel in their studies and first time at Novia UAS?
8. Based on your experience, what are some common challenges that international students often face during their first weeks at Novia UAS? How do you assist them in overcoming these challenges?
9. In your perspective, what specific support services are of the utmost importance for international students? Why do you believe these services are critical to their overall success and well-being?
10. In what ways do you provide feedback and guidance to international students to help them enhance their academic performance and achieve their goals?
11. How does Novia UAS work to ensure that international students feel welcome and included in the campus community?
12. Can you describe any recent initiatives or changes to support services for international students at Novia UAS?

13. How do you stay informed about the needs and experiences of international students at Novia UAS, and what steps do you take to address any concerns or issues that arise?
14. How do you collaborate with other departments or organizations within the university or the local community to support international students?
15. How does Novia UAS support international students in finding housing and other essential services when they first arrive in Finland?
16. Can you describe any particular success stories or positive experiences that you have seen among international students at Novia UAS?
17. How does Novia UAS work to ensure that international students receive a high-quality education and have the resources they need to succeed academically?

## Appendix -2

### International Student Support Services at Novia UAS Survey questions

1. How did you find out about Novia University?
2. Before arriving at Novia UAS, what support services did you expect to be available to international students?
3. Have you been informed about the support services available to international students at Novia UAS?
4. Have you utilized any of the support services provided to international students at Novia UAS? If so, which ones?
5. How helpful have the support services at Novia UAS been in addressing your needs and challenges as an international student?
6. What challenges have you faced in adapting to life at Novia UAS, especially during your first week?
7. Did you face any challenges regarding housing, airport pickup, transportation or arranging for your first day in Finland? If so, please describe.
8. Have you received any support from Novia UAS in addressing these challenges?
9. Would you recommend Novia UAS to other international students based on your experience?

10. How satisfied are you with the support services provided by Novia UAS to international students?
11. Are there any additional support services that you would like Novia UAS to provide to international students?
12. How can Novia UAS improve its support services to better meet the needs and expectations of international students?
13. Overall, how would you rate your experience as an international student at Novia UAS, from the pre-application process to the arriving at Novia UAS period

## Appendix -3

## List of interview and survey data source

**International Student Support Services at Novia UAS Survey questions**

YS Yadu Shrestha  
 To: AT19H-V@groups.novia.fi; AT21HP-V@groups.novia.fi; +46 others  
 Wed 30/08/2023 12:30 AM

Dear Novia UAS Students,

You are invited to participate in a research study examining the support services available to international students at Novia University of Applied Sciences. The purpose of this study is to identify the support services currently available and to understand the expectations and experiences of international students before and during their first week at the university. The results of this study will be used to improve support services and make the international student study abroad experience as easy and enjoyable as possible.

Participation in this study is voluntary. You may refuse to participate or withdraw from the study at any time without penalty or loss of benefits to which you are otherwise entitled. Participation involves completing a questionnaire that will take approximately 5-10 minutes.

Please click the link \* <https://forms.office.com/Pages/ResponsePage.aspx?id=GUjiPPqpSkmlQ4a2kn1OIH09zeGQuBNuHwATQo7KsIUk40TEhSQk9SODdZU1RORTVOTUFJWUVKMS4u>

The questionnaire includes questions about your experiences and expectations related to support services available to international students. Your responses will be kept confidential and anonymous.

If you have any questions or concerns about the study, please contact the researcher, at yadu.shrestha@edu.novia.fi. The study has been approved by the Novia University of Applied Sciences Committee.

Thank you for considering participation in this study.

Sincerely,  
 Yadu Nanda Shrestha  
 Researcher

**Interview questions for Novia UAS staff members working with international students, teaching staff and head of degree programs,**

YS Yadu Shrestha  
 To: Staff; Staff-Raseborg; Staff-Jakobstad; Staff-Abo; Staff-Vasa; +20 others  
 Wed 30/08/2023 12:19 AM

Dear Novia UAS Novia staff members working with international students, teaching staff and head of degree programs, You are invited to participate in a research study examining the support services available to international students at Novia University of Applied Sciences. The purpose of this study is to identify the support services currently available and to understand the expectations and experiences of international students before and during their first week at the university. The results of this study will be used to improve support services and make the international student study abroad experience as easy and enjoyable as possible.

Participation in this study is voluntary. You may refuse to participate or withdraw from the study at any time without penalty or loss of benefits to which you are otherwise entitled. Participation involves completing a questionnaire that will take approximately 10-15 minutes. The questionnaire includes questions about your experiences and expectations related to support services available to international students. Your responses will be kept confidential and anonymous.

If you have any questions or concerns about the study, please contact the researcher, at yadu.shrestha@edu.novia.fi. The study has been approved by the head of research at Novia University of Applied Sciences.

The Interview Questions link is <https://forms.office.com/e/jj84iRmphN>

Thank you for considering participation in this study.

Sincerely,  
 Yadu Nanda Shrestha  
 Researcher

Appendix -4

28/09/2023, 12:36 Interview questions for Novia UAS staffs

### Interview questions for Novia UAS staffs

10 Responses      26:56 Average time to complete      Active Status

1. Can you describe the current support services available for international students at Novia UAS? (0 point)

9 Responses

Latest Responses  
 "For exchange students: two International Coordinators who...  
 "studentservices is helping students a lot - very good. Stud...  
 "Our international coordinator is the main source of support..."

6 respondents (67%) answered Student for this question.

<https://forms.office.com/Pages/DesignPageV2.aspx?tr=evrvgimshb&origjam=NovPntaIPgokshpgepdngs&id=GUJJPgSkniQ4z2x10B99wCQ4BN...> 1/9

28/09/2023, 12:36 Interview questions for Novia UAS staffs

### Interview questions for Novia UAS staffs

10 Responses      26:56 Average time to complete      Active Status

1. Can you describe the current support services available for international students at Novia UAS? (0 point)

9 Responses

Latest Responses  
 "For exchange students: two International Coordinators who...  
 "studentservices is helping students a lot - very good. Stud...  
 "Our international coordinator is the main source of support..."

6 respondents (67%) answered Student for this question.

<https://forms.office.com/Pages/DesignPageV2.aspx?tr=evrvgimshb&origjam=NovPntaIPgokshpgepdngs&id=GUJJPgSkniQ4z2x10B99wCQ4BN...> 1/9

28/09/2023, 12:36 Interview questions for Novia UAS staffs

2. What kinds of challenges do international students typically face when they first arrive at Novia UAS, and how do you address these challenges? (0 point)

10 Responses

Latest Responses  
 "Degree students are often a bit lost when they arrive as the...  
 "studentservices is helping students a lot - very good. Stud...  
 "We tend to have a lack of engaged study buddies."

5 respondents (50%) answered students for this question.

3. In your opinion, what are the most important support services for international students to have access to, and why? (0 point)

10 Responses

Latest Responses  
 "A living person to turn to"  
 "Guidance to studies and living in the city, integration with ...  
 "The international coordinators supported by study buddies..."

4 respondents (40%) answered studies for this question.

<https://forms.office.com/Pages/DesignPageV2.aspx?tr=evrvgimshb&origjam=NovPntaIPgokshpgepdngs&id=GUJJPgSkniQ4z2x10B99wCQ4BN...> 2/9

28/09/2023, 12:36 Interview questions for Novia UAS staffs

4. How do you support international students to get started with their studies and integrate into the academic environment at Novia UAS? (0 point)

10 Responses

Latest Responses  
 "See above"  
 "Tutors, information, regular meetings - but difficult when ...  
 "Introduction days with a lot of info. Support along the way ..."

3 respondents (30%) answered students for this question.

5. How do you assist international students in navigating the curriculum and understanding the academic requirements of their respective programs? (0 point)

10 Responses

Latest Responses  
 "The International office organise a Peppi/tuudo and a librar...  
 "regular and personal meetings"  
 "In my programs, the curriculum is short and rather easy to ..."

3 respondents (30%) answered Answering for this question.

<https://forms.office.com/Pages/DesignPageV2.aspx?tr=evrvgimshb&origjam=NovPntaIPgokshpgepdngs&id=GUJJPgSkniQ4z2x10B99wCQ4BN...> 3/9

28/09/2023, 12:36 Interview questions for Novia UAS staffs

6. What strategies do you employ to facilitate effective communication and interaction among international students and local students within your first classes or meet? (0 point)

8 Responses

Latest Responses  
*"A presentation round during the Orientation day and a co..."*  
*"We run quite extensive teambuilding activities and highlight..."*

2 respondents (25%) answered **answer** for this question.

28/09/2023, 12:36 Interview questions for Novia UAS staffs

8. Based on your experience, what are some common challenges that international students often face during their first weeks at Novia UAS? How do you assist them in overcoming these challenges? (0 point)

9 Responses

Latest Responses  
*"The often feel a bit lost and lonely. I encourage the Internat..."*  
*"accommodation is one - cna't do anything about that. Many..."*  
*"Housing, int. coordinator"*

2 respondents (22%) answered **Student Services** for this question.

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7. How do you ensure that international students receive the necessary information for Finland life, academic support and resources to excel in their studies and first time at Novia UAS? (0 point)

9 Responses

Latest Responses  
*"By sending informative emails before the exchange (to exc..."*  
*"information, guest from different organisations, Novia info"*  
*"international coordinator with her team"*

4 respondents (44%) answered **students** for this question.

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9. In your perspective, what specific support services are of the utmost importance for international students? Why do you believe these services are critical to their overall success and well-being? (0 point)

9 Responses

Latest Responses  
*"To get to know each other, tutors and staff and of course t..."*  
*"Studies are working fine in our programme, what needs to ..."*  
*"-."*

4 respondents (44%) answered **student** for this question.

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14. How do you collaborate with other departments or organizations within the university or the local community to support international students? (0 point)

8 Responses

Latest Responses  
*"The international office is all the time in touch with the tea..."*  
*"Not with other departments, but with other programmes"*  
*"-."*

2 respondents (25%) answered **departments** for this question.

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16. Can you describe any particular success stories or positive experiences that you have seen among international students at Novia UAS? (0 point)

8 Responses

Latest Responses  
*"Many students are very happy with their exchange"*  
*"To learn the language is often the key to working life and l..."*  
*"-."*

4 respondents (50%) answered **student** for this question.

28/09/2023, 12:36 Interview questions for Novia UAS staffs

15. How does Novia UAS support international students in finding housing and other essential services when they first arrive in Finland? (0 point)

8 Responses

Latest Responses  
*"They get info from the international office (exchange stude..."*  
*"Don't know"*  
*"int.coordinator"*

3 respondents (38%) answered **international office** for this question.

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17. How does Novia UAS work to ensure that international students receive a high-quality education and have the resources they need to succeed academically? (0 point)

9 Responses

Latest Responses  
*"Exchange students get service from the International Coor..."*  
*"Personal guidance and well planned studies. High demand..."*  
*"in the same way we work with local students."*

6 respondents (67%) answered **student** for this question.

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<https://forms.office.com/Pages/DesignPageV2.aspx?prevo=igimshelkorigim=NovPmtalPpgr&subpage=design&id=613JPPgSk6wQ4z2u1018B9wGQ48N...> 59

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10. In what ways do you provide feedback and guidance to international students (0 to help them enhance their academic performance and achieve their goals? (0 point)

9 Responses

Latest Responses  
*"By answering their questions"*  
*"Personal guidance"*  
*"F2F and e-mail"*

4 respondents (44%) answered **student** for this question.

11. How does Novia UAS work to ensure that international students feel welcome (0 and included in the campus community? (0 point)

9 Responses

Latest Responses  
*"By offering international tutors. They should be much more..."*  
*"must be improved and Novium and the student organisat..."*  
*"once again introduction by the international team and stud..."*

3 respondents (33%) answered **students** for this question.

28/09/2023, 12:36 Interview questions for Novia UAS staff

12. Can you describe any recent initiatives or changes to support services for international students at Novia UAS? (0 point)

6 Responses

Latest Responses  
*"The international office has started to take more responsib..."*  
*..."*

1 respondents (17%) answered **student services** for this question.

13. How do you stay informed about the needs and experiences of international students at Novia UAS, and what steps do you take to address any concerns or issues that arise? (0 point)

9 Responses

Latest Responses  
*"They stay in touch"*  
*"Regular meetings"*  
*"In the contact teaching classes and feedback outside class..."*

2 respondents (22%) answered **students** for this question.

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## Appendix-5

28/09/2023, 12:35 International Student Support Services at Novia UAS Survey questions (2) (Preview)

### International Student Support Services at Novia UAS Survey questions (2)

**18**  
Responses

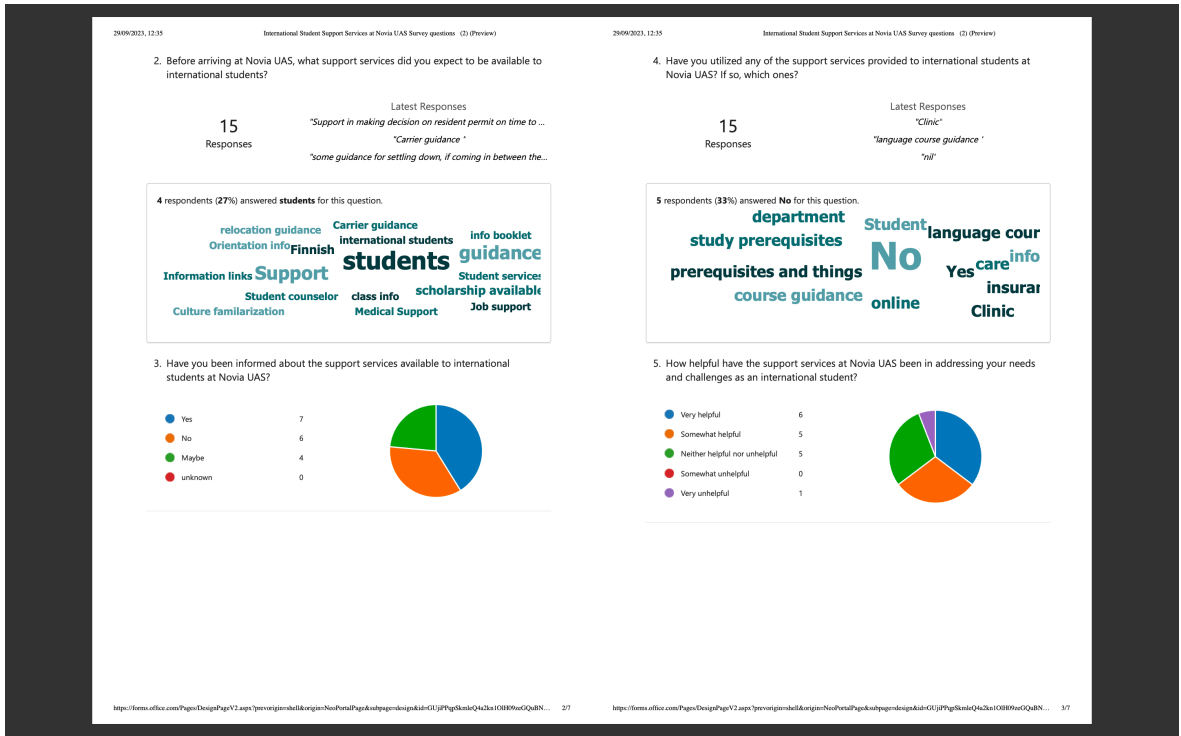
**05:55**  
Average time to complete

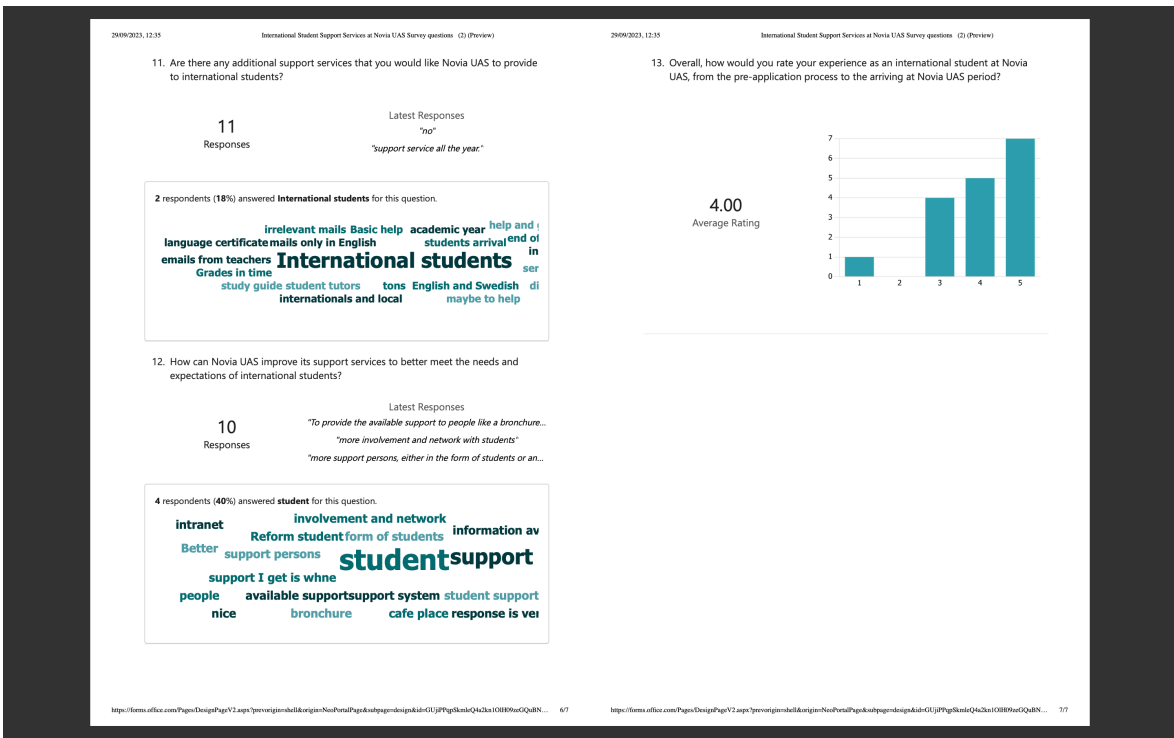
**Active**  
Status

1. How did you find out about Novia University?

<span style="color: blue;">●</span> search engine	2
<span style="color: orange;">●</span> Social media	2
<span style="color: green;">●</span> websites	7
<span style="color: red;">●</span> Recommendation	5
<span style="color: purple;">●</span> others	2

<https://forms.office.com/Pages/DesignPageV2.aspx?preverigin=del&origins=NovPortalPage&shpgm=design&id=C1JfPpSskQ4k3x10B89wCQ4bN...> 1/7





Appendix-6

