



SEINÄJOEN AMMATTIKORKEAKOULU  
SEINÄJOKI UNIVERSITY OF APPLIED SCIENCES

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## **Information about available health services for international students in Seinäjoki**

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Bachelor of Health Care, Nursing



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## **Thesis abstract**

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As the Finnish population is ageing, the country as well needs more young individuals to enter the labour market. This opened the nation's doors to more immigrants and see a growth in employment-related as well as education-related migration. In terms of the latter, the increased number of international students also comes with a possible increased need to maintain their holistic health needs. However, there are a number of considerable factors that often interfere with meeting these people's health necessities.

The purpose of this study is to gather relevant data about the holistic health services available to international students in Seinäjoki area and develop it into a comprehensive information leaflet. The goal of this thesis is to increase the awareness of international students through offering them information about the Finnish healthcare system that can be accessed in different situations.

This is attained by compiling an information leaflet that includes a list and location of various accessible holistic health services. The leaflet is easily comprehensible because it is written in English.

The data was collected using a qualitative research method namely the Action Research methodological approach, and the Service Design model was utilised to design the end-product, which is an information leaflet. Ultimately, healthcare services available to international students were summarized into a three-fold information leaflet.

Further research studies and prospective initiatives still have a lot of possibility in the future for the purpose of continuing creating methods and materials to improve the awareness of the existence and use of healthcare services in different aspects, particularly for immigrants who are not yet familiar with the local language.

<sup>1</sup> Keywords: awareness, knowledge, health services accessibility, international students

## TABLE OF CONTENTS

Thesis abstract .....	2
TABLE OF CONTENTS .....	3
Pictures, Figures and Tables .....	5
Terms and Abbreviations .....	6
1 INTRODUCTION .....	7
2 HOLISTIC HEALTH DIMENSIONS .....	9
2.1 Physical Health .....	10
2.2 Mental Health .....	10
2.3 Social Health .....	11
2.4 Spiritual Health .....	11
3 INTERNATIONAL STUDENTS' CHALLENGES IN MAINTAINING HOLISTIC HEALTH .....	13
3.1 Physical Health Challenges .....	13
3.2 Mental Health Challenges .....	14
3.3 Social Health Challenges .....	14
3.4 Spiritual Health Challenges .....	15
4 THE GOAL AND THE PURPOSE OF THE THESIS .....	16
5 METHODOLOGIES .....	17
5.1 Qualitative Research .....	17
5.2 Action Research .....	17
5.3 Service Design Methodology .....	19
5.4 Information Leaflet Formulation .....	19
6 THE HOLISTIC HEALTH SERVICES AVAILABLE FOR INTERNATIONAL STUDENTS IN SEINÄJOKI .....	21
6.1 Physical Health Services .....	21
6.2 Mental Health Services .....	22
6.3 Social Health Services .....	23
6.4 Spiritual Health Services .....	24
6.5 Other Services .....	25
7 THE ETHICAL AND AUTHENTICITY ISSUES .....	26

8 CONCLUSION AND DISCUSSION.....	27
BIBLIOGRAPHY.....	29
APPENDICES .....	38

## **Pictures, Figures and Tables**

Figure 1. Holistic Health Model .....	9
Figure 2. Practices carried out in this action research (Zuber-Skeritt & Wood, 2019).....	18
Figure 3. Information leaflet formulation process .....	20

## Terms and Abbreviations

**FSHS** Finnish Student Health Service

**QR codes** Quick Response codes

**WHO** World Health Organization

## 1 INTRODUCTION

Statistics Finland's data show that the official total population of Finland at the end of 2022 was 5,563,970, with an overall increase of 15,729 people. In this totality, the number of people who speak a foreign language also expanded by 37,950 people—the largest increase in at least 40 years. In terms of education, statistics data present that the number of students in university of applied sciences education in Finland continued to grow in 2022. New students consist of 31.26% of the entire applied sciences university students (Statistics Finland, 2023).

The Finnish academic system has established widespread higher education for international students under the direction and encouragement of government funding and management (Kosunen, 2018). With the growing number of international students, it brings about a considerable need of understanding and appreciation of their diverse health needs (Sawir, 2013).

Research findings revealed that when foreign students attend universities and colleges, they frequently encounter a number of transitional challenges that demand an extensive amount of assistance from various parties. This as well requires time and effort to adjust and adapt in part of international students (Wu et al., 2015). Unfortunately, there are not enough resources to deal with all the special health issues that this expanding population has (Shen et al., 2020).

As immigrants, international students perceive a difficulty in accessing and using healthcare in their host country and they instead turned to alternative methods of managing their health (Tang et al., 2018). In Finland, most international students rarely avail the Finnish healthcare services in general (Huuskonen, 2018). Considering universities are typically among the initial locations where resources could be provided, these organizations could provide particular consideration to the difficulties experienced by international students and offer them supplementary assistance (Wu et al., 2015).

In the recent years, there has been a growing awareness of the importance of promoting holistic health among students and universities worldwide have already adopted this commitment to students' health (Suárez-Reyes et al., 2016). In order to attain health to the highest extent possible, it is essential that the advantages of physical, psychological, and other correlated health information be made available to all individuals (WHO, 2020).

The purpose of this study is to gather relevant data about the holistic health services available to international students in Seinäjoki area and develop it into a comprehensive information leaflet. The goal of this thesis is to increase the awareness of international students through offering them information about the Finnish healthcare system that can be accessed in different situations.

## 2 HOLISTIC HEALTH DIMENSIONS

Defined by the World Health Organization (WHO), the concept of health is not the absence of disease, but a state of complete physical, mental and social well-being. It is important to note because a healthy individual, also makes a healthy society. Holistic health acknowledges the vitality of viewing health from a whole person perspective, it is the association between mind, body and spirit (Zamanzadeh et al., 2015). In order to provide holistic healthcare, the WHO emphasized that spiritual aspects of care should be integrated (Herlianita et al., 2018). As summarized by Thompson (2014, p.1), in different definitions of health, there are physical, mental, social, and spiritual components which are the significant elements for a comprehensive health assessment.



Figure 1. Holistic Health Model

The holistic health of international students includes mental, physical, and spiritual components of well-being (Almallah, 2023). Furthermore, the health habits of international students are essential to their overall wellbeing when studying overseas. Studies have suggested that positive perceptions of health among international students are linked with physical nutrition, coping with stress, spiritual growth, and interaction with others (Citak Tunc et al., 2021). In order to achieve academic performance and overall well-being on part of the international students, it is crucial to learn to adapt to the new social and physical settings (Sibley et al., 2015).

## 2.1 Physical Health

Being physically fit means being able to handle work-related responsibilities and leisure time. An individual that have a positive outlook and perception of their health is more likely to adopt healthy lifestyle practices that prevent health damage and diseases (Thompson, 2014). A healthy, balanced diet, regular exercise, socializing with friends, taking breaks, and low-cost travel are all components of self-care. Sleep is also essential for mood enhancement and for reinforcing learning and memory (Mesidor & Sly, 2014).

According to a study that involved foreign students from 97 different countries, the following factors encouraged them to get involved in physical activity: maintaining a healthy weight, promoting one's health, strength building and stamina, and preventing disease (Cho & Beck, 2016).

## 2.2 Mental Health

Mental health is a state of wellbeing in which a person recognizes their strengths; is able to manage life's typical stressors; can work effectively; and can contribute to their community. Throughout life, mental health has a fluid quality that shifts and adapts through changes rather than a fixed attribute (Lehtinen, 2008). Furthermore, mental health is beyond just the absence of mental illnesses. It is perceived differently by each individual and lies on a complex continuum with varying levels of struggle and distress as well as possibly and significantly distinct social and therapeutic effects (WHO Mental Health Action Plan 2013–2020). The significance of mental health to well-being as a whole, sustainable development, and the health of the planet is becoming progressively acknowledged nowadays (Congress, 2022).

In order to comprehend the context of international students' mental health, it is crucial to remember that, in comparison with local students, overseas students typically score lower on tests measuring depression and awareness of mental health difficulties (LaMontagne et al., 2023). International students are vulnerable to burnout in unfamiliar learning environments, according to research (Jin et al., 2021; Rönkkönen et al., 2022). As an effect, burnout has been positively associated with various factors, including stress, feelings of unpreparedness, inadequate socialization, lack of self-compassion (Edwards-Maddox, 2023) and negative emotions

(Xie et al., 2021). Practices involving gratitude journaling, physical activity, sound sleeping patterns, meditation, and spirituality are important in overcoming the mental health obstacles that affect overseas students (Almallah, 2023).

### **2.3 Social Health**

Social wellbeing is the belief that a person can depend on friends or family for support during difficult times and at the same time the perception of being a valuable source of support for others. It is a key component of social health. Social support is essential in order to maintain good health or well-being and to rehabilitate from sickness and injury. It is the ability to engage with others to develop meaningful relationships that improve the lives of all parties involved—including the individual (Thompson, 2014).

Cross-cultural adjustment was positively correlated with social support (Baba & Hosoda, 2014). A positive correlation was established between the adaptation process of international students and their involvement in social events and sports-related leisure activities. Engaging in recreational pursuits and creating a social circle were noteworthy indicators of how well international students coped with college life (Gómez et al., 2014).

### **2.4 Spiritual Health**

Thompson (2014, p.5) defined spiritual health as a faith in a unifying force between the mind and body. A person's capacity to create values, live according to a set of beliefs, and define and achieve valuable lifetime objectives are all aspects of spiritual wellness. Furthermore, these strong belief systems may increase a person's likelihood of pursuing objectives that promote physical and mental well-being.

Researchers have been examining the connections between spiritual health and discovering meaning and fulfillment in life for the past few decades (Deb et al., 2020). It has been concluded that spiritual needs are essential to humans. As seen in the examined relevant literature, well-being and health are positively affected by a sense of spirituality (Balboni et al., 2017). Similarly, life quality and well-being were increased by spiritual care (Balboni et al., 2010; Kim & Oh, 2022). It was concluded that the person's interpretations of their ailments were correlated with spiritual wellness (Herlianita et al., 2018).

Spirituality had a mixed impact on changes in health-related behavior, functioning as both a positive and a negative component (Isaac et al., 2016). A research by Philip et al. (2019, p.37) concluded that a significant role for religion and spirituality played in the international students' coping mechanisms. Religion and spirituality not only increased their faith in themselves but also assisted them in developing long-term techniques for coping. Moreover, for these international students, spirituality and religion are important because they have positive effects on mental health, cognitive function, and academic performance when practiced (Philip et al., 2019).

### **3 INTERNATIONAL STUDENTS' CHALLENGES IN MAINTAINING HOLISTIC HEALTH**

Research findings showed that foreign students faced several difficulties. In order to become accustomed to the new environment, these international students must deal with the people, society, school, psychological state, and behavioural changes (Wu et al., 2015). A conducted study found out that in general, the majority of international students never made use of Finnish medical services. Students cited a justification that it was too costly or complex for them to do so, while a few expressed their confusion about where to go (Huuskonen, 2018). The same findings were determined for international students in the US, where the foreign students characterized American health care as less accessible, more costly, and filled with communication errors, in contrast to how convenient and economical they found healthcare in their own countries (Martin & Dyer, 2017).

One study suggests that male foreign students in particular, are more likely to experience a number of negative health consequences and are also less likely to seek necessary assistance for mental health issues and associated matters. It demonstrates that the vulnerable population of international students' needs accessible, focused, culturally aware wellness promotion and early intervention initiatives (Skromanis et al., 2018). A study by Yan and Sendall (2016, p.49) highlighted that a customized first-year experience course program for international students was found to be beneficial in helping them become acquainted with academic resources and standards, comprehend culture, make more local friends, and further develop language skills.

#### **3.1 Physical Health Challenges**

International students sometimes find it difficult to find the products to cook nutritious meals because the food that is available in their host country is typically different from that which is available in their home nations, which leaves them feeling unsatisfied (Yan & FitzPatrick, 2016). Poor dietary habits led to bad health status (Hsieh et al., 2018). In that sense, dietary acculturation might impact the health of the students if continued for longer time periods (Almohanna et al., 2015). It has been found out by Huuskonen (2018, p.35) that the oral health practices of exchange students in Finland is inadequate. At the same time, rarely did one-third of the students participate in physical activity during their free time.

Some of the challenges endured by international students as they transition to a new nation have a detrimental effect on their physical well-being (Mesidor & Sly, 2016). One of which is delaying obtaining medical attention, it can potentially have negative consequences on one's health and the general public's health, particularly in instances of transmissible illnesses (Masai et al., 2021).

### **3.2 Mental Health Challenges**

Forbes-Mewett (2019, p.4) mentioned that one of the major issues of today's international students is mental health. It has been observed that there is a higher prevalence of mental health problems in immigrants (Pampati et al., 2018; Von Werthern et al., 2018). Academic results of these international students are also significantly impacted by high rates of poor mental health (Auerbach et al., 2018).

Recently, a Productivity Commission Inquiry Report on Mental Health in Australia (Productivity Commission, 2020) brought attention to specific issues and necessities pertaining to foreigners studying in their country. These included possible increased levels of distress and other mental health issues, an increased risk of suicidal thoughts and actions and their obstacles to receiving mental health services.

Some of the barriers aside from stigma and financial difficulties that prevent immigrants' access to mental health services are language, lack of information and lack of knowledge on how the local health system works (Kiselev et al., 2020; WHO Europe, 2018a). While all students need access to quality services, international students are especially susceptible due to challenges related to acculturation and adjusting to the demands of studying abroad (Minutillo et al., 2020). These people could additionally be less inclined to use the programs that currently exist, partly because of cultural differences in attitudes but also because identification and referral procedures may not be tailored to this group of students (Minutillo et al., 2020).

### **3.3 Social Health Challenges**

A finding corroborated that students from non-European nations interacted less with classmates from their host nation and more with peers from their own country (Glass et al., 2014). Moreover, when compared to local students, international students generally reported fewer

social supports, as well as lower awareness and use of health services (Jamieson, 2019). Functioning in a different cultural context and educational system might be included in the experience of an international student. Being at a great distance from family and social support networks are additional challenges (van Horne et al., 2018).

A research finding presented that anxiety and depression were quite common among international students and that sociocultural adjustment was a major factor in determining the mental health of these students (Razgulin et al., 2023). It is important for foreign students to form new cross-cultural friendships with both host citizens and other international students because studying abroad can put them in danger of losing their own sense of self and the regular support of their families (Chuah & Singh, 2016). International students experience more difficulties when they lack social support. It is challenging to establish a social network in a foreign nation, which raises the possibility of social isolation and its detrimental impacts on mental health (Razgulin et al., 2023).

Ryder et al., (2013, pp. 502-506) explored how effectively acculturation impacted social adjustment. They claimed that social adaptation, despite being fundamental to the adaptation procedure, has been substantially disregarded. Foreign students who come from a similar sense of culture find it easier to collaborate with one another than with students from host nations (Rienties et al., 2013). In the USA, according to Hotta and Ting-Toomey (2013, pp. 550-566), international students claimed that local students disliked socializing with other foreign students particularly while working on group projects.

### **3.4 Spiritual Health Challenges**

There is an indicated positive correlation between spiritual values and intrinsic goals, it may enhance their wellbeing and it assist international students in discovering their life's purpose and meaning. Additionally, integrating spiritual values and cultural elements into college curricula can enhance international students' learning and development (Zhang et al., 2017). Higher degrees of both positive and negative religious coping were linked to higher levels of acculturative stress (Sanchez et al., 2015).

For international students, obstacles particularly when it comes to religion still remain. One survey participant claimed to have experienced prejudice based on their religion in a classroom setting (Philip et al. 2019).

## **4 THE GOAL AND THE PURPOSE OF THE THESIS**

The purpose of this study is to gather relevant data about the holistic health services available to international students in Seinäjoki area and develop it into a comprehensive information leaflet. The goal of this thesis is to increase awareness of international students through offering them information about the Finnish healthcare system that can be accessed in different situations.

Research question:

What are the different health services available to international students in Seinäjoki area?

## **5 METHODOLOGIES**

The action research and service design methodology, which are both forms of qualitative research method were utilized to create this thesis. This choice was made because of the thesis' concrete objective, which is to process a tangible product, specifically an information leaflet after thorough data collection.

### **5.1 Qualitative Research**

Qualitative research is a descriptive technique of gathering and analyzing data that focuses on the interpretations people make of the social world and the implications they ascribe to their experiences within it. Both qualitative methods of data collection and qualitative methods of analysis are utilized in qualitative research. This analysis can provide deep and detailed insights to understand some facets of health care and services which quantitative research often struggles with (Pope & Mays, 2020).

In the practice of healthcare, qualitative research methods are becoming progressively recognized. It is useful for establishing healthcare theories, characterizing disease experiences, developing health interventions, and comprehending trends in health behavior. The diverse nature of the data, as well as the descriptions and depth of exploration it provides, are the qualitative research approach's greatest advantages. Thus, qualitative research is regarded as the most person-centered and humanistic means of learning about and understanding human ideas and habits (Renjith et al., 2021).

### **5.2 Action Research**

Action research is the study of health and social care systems with a goal of creating resolution to identified problems. When conducting action research, a researcher will use a range of research techniques while collaborating with individuals who are already a part of the systems they are researching (Callaghan, 2015, p.360). This idea is supported by Coghlan and Shani (2018, p.4), which concluded that action research is focused with improving organizations, helping members of the organization acquire self-help skills, and expanding scientific knowledge all at the same time. Ultimately, it is a dynamic process that is carried out with an atmosphere of cooperation and joint investigation.

Based on a review of the literature, an analysis of the definition of Action Research in the field of nursing yields the following conclusion:

Action research methodology is a systematic research process that can be articulated by the researcher, involving data collection and analysis as well as reflection and discussion with co-researchers or others for the purpose of making change in a situation over time. (Moch et al., 2016)

Accordingly, the ability of healthcare professionals to collaborate toward the shared objective of enhancing patient care is compatible with the action research strategy. Identical to the nursing process, action research includes recognizing and assessing patient-centered problems, action planning, executing the plan, and analyzing the results. Furthermore, it allows nurses as a group to actively engage in shaping and enhancing their practice by integrating research into the healthcare environment (Bellman, 2012).

The notion is further explained by Zuber-Skerritt & Wood (2019) that stated, for the purpose of having an impact to the future, action research builds on the past and occurs in the present. Three sets of practices are carried out simultaneously when conducting this kind of study. Accordingly, this means that conducting action research includes difficulties with self-learning and produces subjective data in the present tense (first-person); collaborating with others to complete the task and therefore producing data in the present tense about working together (second-person); and lastly, making a contribution to future action by others as well as to important knowledge (third-person) (Zuber-Skerritt & Wood, 2019).

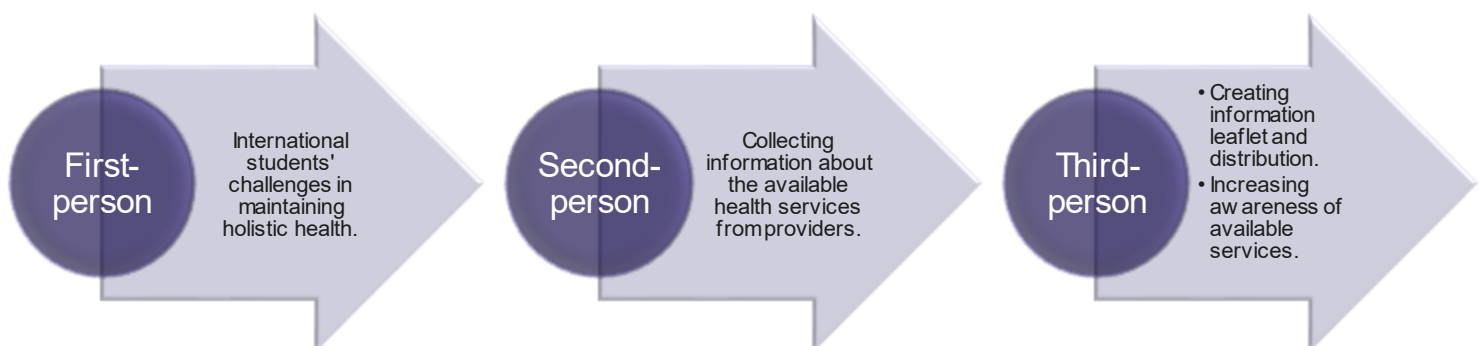


Figure 2. Practices carried out in this action research (Zuber-Skerritt & Wood, 2019)

Zuber-Skerritt and Wood (2019, p.87) explained that the key elements of the methodology that make up action research are encapsulated in this definition: that it is an emergent inquiry process which engrosses in an evolving narrative aimed at tackling a practical issue, which information shifts as a result of what is responded, accomplished, or not done, and that it is impossible to foresee or modify the outcomes.

### **5.3 Service Design Methodology**

Service design methodology research is a user-focused, collaborative, multidisciplinary, sequential approach design that utilizes research, developing prototypes, a series of simple activities, and visualization tools to orchestrate interactions that satisfy the necessities of the individual, organization, and other involved stakeholders (Stickdom, 2018).

Teso et al. (2013, p.46) described that by using service design methodology many aspects can be successfully monitored, this includes a wide range of components, such as the patient's journey, consumer and interactions mapping (environment-citizen-services), services that are offered, and the recognition of focus (perceptions and expectations). Additionally, the methodology serves to nurture relationships and improve communication between the public and healthcare authorities, which in response serves to foster credibility and maximize satisfaction with the available health services. This makes it easier to determine possibilities for service creation and/or modification.

Therefore, for formulating an information leaflet, this method was applied.

### **5.4 Information Leaflet Formulation**

With the help of the gathered information from different student healthcare and support providers together with the previously discussed databases, enough data to collate was completed and systematized according to respective health dimension. The collected data including an address was included to the information leaflet.

During the development of this the information leaflet, data is acquired only from official websites of different health providers indicated. All significant information and contact details were assembled and summarized into the leaflet according to respective health component. QR codes or Quick Response codes was profoundly utilized because it offers a convenient and

efficient way to access information by the use of mobile phone cameras, making them a valuable tool for the creation of the end product. QR codes attached to the information leaflet were double checked and are all working as shortcuts to important healthcare service information and booking pages.

Additionally, opinions regarding the amount and caliber of the data are solicited from thesis advisers, the service providers included on the pamphlet, and a few international students. Fleenoret al. (2020, p.8) emphasized that feedback is crucial for the reason that it can promote progress by pointing out areas that still require improvement but also emphasize the existing strengths. After making the necessary adjustments according to the feedback and suggestions collected, the finished product is presented, printed and distributed to the students. The final information leaflet could be found in Appendix 2.

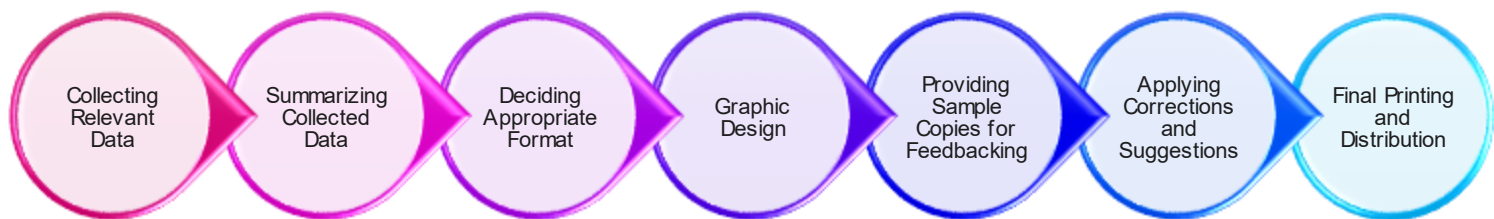


Figure 3. Information leaflet formulation process

## **6 THE HOLISTIC HEALTH SERVICES AVAILABLE FOR INTERNATIONAL STUDENTS IN SEINÄJOKI**

Based on the WHO health principles, an individual's race, religion, political affiliation, economic status, or societal position should not be a factor in determining one's ability to exercise their fundamental right to health (WHO, n.d. [a]). In order to guarantee that everyone has the opportunity to obtain health, as is their right, public health works at the population level. Public health's goal is to give health to everyone by organizing efforts toward early detection and treatment of diseases, encouraging healthy behaviours, and preventing diseases through improvements in sanitation and education (Skolnik, 2016). Government and educational institutions should play a role in helping foreign university students to integrate into Finnish society (Wu, 2021).

According to Huuskonen (2018, p.35) one of the existing problems is that not all international students have enough knowledge about how and where to seek health care services in case of illness here in Finland. In order to attain better health practices to non-local students, it needs to be addressed. Moreover, according to Mesidor and Sly (2016, p.273), the host institution or university may promote an international student's smooth transition from their home country to the host country by setting up a website with timely and accurate information available. Healthcare treatments could be better experienced in a clear and understandable manner by providing tools and language support to international students so that linguistic obstacles will be surpassed (Koponen, Skogberg, et al., 2015).

### **6.1 Physical Health Services**

Four categories of health maintenance were identified by the international students in a study by Martin and Dyer (2017, p.651): self-care for mild diseases, annual examinations, exercise, and nutrition. As a student in higher education, an international student have an opportunity to receive general health, oral health, and mental health services from the Finnish Student Health Service (FSHS), the main authority in student health care that also works to improve the well-being of study communities. A student that have paid Kela the health care cost and is pursuing a bachelor's or master's degree is eligible to access FSHS services, which has a booking appointment page a student could check (SeAMK, 2024-b).

When the services of FSHS are not available, the health center of Seinäjoki or the Wellbeing services county of South Ostrobothnia's care evaluation at 116 117 could be contacted. The general emergency number in life-threatening situations, for ambulance, police and fire brigade is 112 (SeAMK, 2024-b).

Research demonstrates the health benefits of regular exercise, including stretching, weight training, and aerobic activities (Miller et al., 2016). In order to address these needs, a SeAMK indoor gym is open for all enrolled students. Moreover, for all Seinäjoki residents and students, an outdoor gym is also free to use 24/7 and is located between SeAMK's buildings F and H (SeAMK, 2024-a).

## **6.2 Mental Health Services**

Forbes-Mewett and Sawyer (2016, pp.673-674) concluded that identifying and obtaining professional help for mental health issues is a crucial component of international students' mental health. Increasing the availability of online mental health services, enhancing international students' health insurance coverage for mental health services, and mandating that all colleges and universities to have a student mental health and wellbeing policy were among the suggestions made by the Australian Productivity Commission (2020) after conducting their study. Forbes-Mewett (2019, p.12) recommended to examine and compare the mental health resources offered to international students, as well as the ways in which students view these services.

One of the studies about an effectiveness of psychological workshop concluded that to improve the chances of better adaptation and coping in the new cultural and academic environment, learning skills that boost psychological flexibility should be incorporated into the curriculum and counselling services that are aimed at international students in the future (Brandolin et al., 2023). In times of mental crisis or if something psychologically-related bothers a SeAMK students, they can avail of an appointment with the study psychologist on an individual basis; sessions are private, optional, and cost-free. The 45-minute consultation gives the student the chance to see the study psychologist one to three times. During business hours, the study psychologist can be contacted at Frami-building A, 4th floor, room A410.2 (SeAMK, 2024-d).

Another option is the Finnish Central Association for Mental Health which is a non-profit organization that provides assistance to individuals experiencing challenging circumstances and suffering mental health problems. The organization could be reached out when someone is looking for information, help, peer support or hope. Additionally, an active chat-box wherein any person can discuss a certain topic with a professional on specific schedules could be accessed (Mielenterveyden Keskusliitto, n.d.). The same services could be acquired from another organization called MIELI Mental Health Finland (MIELI, n.d.).

### **6.3 Social Health Services**

University administrators who want to better assist international students in their academic and social adjustment is suggested to offer program and policy initiatives related to it (Glass et al., 2014). Alternatively, a study by Wu (2021, p.54) supports the notion that, in order for international students to become accustomed to Finnish culture and enhance their academic performance, they should actively learn to integrate into Finnish society, this develop adaptive coping mechanisms to lessen or eliminate the stress that comes with being in a foreign culture. Forbes-Mewett (2019, p.12) recommended that the significance of basic necessities like food, shelter, and social networks for international students requires additional attention.

In brief periods, social contact has been shown to be the most effective kind of intervention for improving awareness and mindsets associated to stigma (Thornicroft et al., 2016). Similarly, social support is a partial mediator in the connection between stress factors and cultural adaptation for international college students (Baba & Hosoda, 2014). International students may feel more comfortable and able to adjust better to their new surroundings in a warm and hospitable atmosphere (Razgulin et al., 2023).

Active participation in leisure activities such as sports, and social activities can bring positive acculturative processes. It develops inter-social networks where social adjustment to students can be improved (Gomez et al., 2014). Different student organizations are available for students to join in order to have some inter-social connectivity while studying in Seinäjoki. One example, the student union SAMO at Seinäjoki University of Applied Sciences serves as a conduit and spokesperson for its members on a local, regional, and national scale (Pollari,

2024). Furthermore, SAMO hosts a plethora of activities that students can participate in, providing them with a variety of experiences and information during their study term (SeAMK, 2024-e).

Another good opportunity to socialize with the local Finns and other migrants is going at Kismus (address: Kalevankatu 12), where a get-together gathering every Tuesday evening between 1700 – 1900 hours takes place. It is open to Finns and international students who wanted to chat and catch-up with their daily activities while having coffee and tea for free. Another social activity happens every Wednesdays at 3:30 in the afternoon along Kampustalo area, there is a leisure walk with the dog alongside with anybody who wants to join (Pollari, 2023).

#### **6.4 Spiritual Health Services**

Philip et al. (pp.38-39, 2019) emphasized that, it's critical to respect the diversity of religious backgrounds, lessen the marginalization and discrimination of people based on their beliefs, and integrate these findings into counseling practices for campus counselors in order to help international students feel more included. Spirituality has the potential to strengthen the bond between patients and providers while also enhancing everyone's experience with healthcare (Isaac et al., 2016). The spiritual health services of Seinäjoen ammattikorkeakoulu (SeAMK) could be availed by the students through contacting the university pastor through email and online booking, wherein a free-of-charge 45 minute-appointment could be scheduled, free of charge (Pollari, 2023).

Christianity is the most widespread denomination in Finland. Approximately 70% of people belong to the Lutheran church (Religions in Finland, 2020). Several overseas students have a preference for utilizing culturally appropriate forms of mental health therapies such as folk medicine, religion, and faith healing (Almallah, 2023). Additionally, as mentioned on the SeAMK Pastoral services, there are also church worships in English language once a month first Sunday of the month at 6 pm in the chapel of Lakeuden Risti church for anybody who wants to take part in (Pollari, 2023).

## 6.5 Other Services

The City of Seinäjoki (2022) provides a comprehensive array of services tailored to address all types of emergencies. Basically, the 112 emergency number has the widest coverage, as does the 116117 service, which can also be called if the caller is unsure if the circumstance qualifies as an emergency.

Kela offer several kinds of financial aid programs to qualifying students during academic period. However, the different social services and assistance available from Kela is subject for background clarification and approval before an international student could benefit (Kela, n.d.).

Student housing in Seinäjoki is managed by Sevas Kodit Oy where students could apply and avail affordable student homes according to their choice and availability (Sevas Kodit Oy, n.d.). In times when availability is not pertinent in Sevas, another organization called Asumisneuvonta could be communicated for apartment information and assistance (Asumisneuvonta, n.d.).

## **7 THE ETHICAL AND AUTHENTICITY ISSUES**

On the subject of ethical issues, Ethical Recommendations for Thesis Writing at Universities of Applied Sciences (October 2019) was strictly observed, the data that was added to the product material is only limited to the official contact information collected from the official websites of the healthcare and service providers. The theoretical foundations upon which the study's challenges were based were established by prior researches carried out by multiple authors from various universities and documented in scholarly publications.

Moreover, additional emphasis was placed on protection measures of personal information of the people in-charged. A final draft of the information leaflet was provided to the healthcare service providers, the thesis advisers, schoolteachers and other organizations whose details are included in the leaflet. Lastly, feedback from the abovementioned individuals were also collected using a Google form to implement necessary adjustments before distribution to international students. The feedback form used can be found in Appendix 1.

In terms of evaluating any source of information for the thesis, the authors considered a significant importance on its credibility and authority. It has been corroborated that the sources are not biased or that contain outdated information before using it in the study. Through the use of these parameters, it can be ascertained that the cited researchers have also taken into account every ethical concern raised by their own research. Lastly, usage of proper application of citation methods to document the sources in the thesis by means of APA 7th edition template was utilized.

## 8 CONCLUSION AND DISCUSSION

Generally, it is incontestable that Finland offers universal access to a high-quality, efficient, all-inclusive healthcare system and the country has attained remarkable health results because of that. Regardless of the existing healthcare system, international students still encounter a number of obstacles that impede their ability to maintain optimal health in different aspects as well as to obtain healthcare treatment. It is therefore acknowledged that effective support is necessary for a smooth transition for students generally (Hughes & Smail 2015). One problem is that health promotion programs may not reach individuals from different countries due to linguistic limitations (Koponen, Skogberg, et al., 2015). When promoting or preventing health among international students, this needs to be considered (Huuskonen, 2018).

It has been established that implementing culturally-specific health promotion programs increase knowledge of accessible health services and support networks. For that motivation and with the hope to lessen the healthcare services awareness gaps, creating an information leaflet in an easily comprehensible language is the authors' little way of addressing healthcare concerns of international students in Seinäjoki who are still struggling with the Finnish language. It is furthermore based on the knowledge that, the use of traditional health promotion materials like leaflets and posters are still considered beneficial even in today's modern age (Lailatul Barik et al., 2019).

The leaflet was created through collated information from different resources, summarized data, formatted optimally through graphic designing and adjusted according to feedback information received. It was thoroughly fashioned to provide awareness support about health services offered to newcomers from abroad in case of necessity but as well as for the purpose of health maintenance.

Nevertheless, these information leaflets will be useless, if not introduced and disseminated to international students or even to local Finnish university students. As authors of this thesis and as nurses that recognize health promotion as a powerful health preservation and disease prevention tool, we do hope that these leaflets could be effectively utilized for future references and innovated by future researchers when updated well-being services will be made available to migrant students in Seinäjoki.

Additionally, through the assistance of the theoretical background presented on Chapter 3 about the challenges that international students have encountered, may the healthcare providers find beneficial inspiration from it in developing future approaches for improved health among international students. In parallel to that, may the student affairs professionals of universities utilize it by generating a more inclusive and supportive environment, which are regularly reinforced throughout the academic year, for the diverse needs of international students.

Finally, it is imperative to accentuate the gratitude we have towards different organizations, our thesis advisers, university professors, and all the individuals who provided essential knowledge, feedback and suggestions to improve the whole research paper including the final finished product. Despite the fact that thesis writing can be a challenging and demanding undertaking, it offered us a singular learning opportunity which ultimately equipped us with additional knowledge along the process. In academic discourse, although this thesis paper is not devoid of imperfections, the experience of finishing a comprehensive, original research endeavor with the potential of assisting future international students is invaluable.

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## **APPENDICES**

**Appendix 1. Feedback Survey Form**

**Appendix 2. Information Leaflet**

# Appendix 1. Feedback Survey Form

4/27/24, 2:32 PM

Information about the available health services to international students in Seinäjoki Feedback Form

## Information about the available health services to international students in Seinäjoki Feedback Form

On a scale of 1 to 5, how would you rate the following statements about the information leaflet? (1- Strongly disagree, 5- Strongly agree)

\* Indicates required question

1. 1. The information leaflet is appealing. \*

Mark only one oval.

1 2 3 4 5

2. 2. It is easy to read (font/size). \*

Mark only one oval.

1 2 3 4 5

3. 3. The leaflet is easy to understand. \*

Mark only one oval.

1 2 3 4 5

4/27/24, 2:32 PM

Information about the available health services to international students in Seinäjoki Feedback Form

4. 4. It contains useful information about different health services. \*

Mark only one oval.

1 2 3 4 5

5. 5. The use of QR codes as quick links is very convenient. \*

Mark only one oval.

1 2 3 4 5

6. In your opinion, what additional useful information should be included to the leaflet? \*

\_\_\_\_\_

7. Other suggestions or comments to improve our information leaflet. \*

\_\_\_\_\_

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Google Forms

**Appendix 2. Information Leaflet (page 1)**

• Gym/ Kuntosali (Frami F)  
• Kampusranta 11, Seinäjoki  
• To all SeAMK students and staff.  
• Open for students every day at 7.00-21.00

Outdoor gym (between buildings F and H)  
The outdoor gym is free for all SeAMK students and staff as well as Seinäjoki residents to use 24/7.

Student housing in Seinäjoki is managed by Sevas Kodit Oy.  
Matti Visannin kuja 10, 60100 SEINÄJOKI  
Office open weekdays 10.00 - 15.00  
STUDENT HOMES : 06 420 3311


Asumisneuvonta  
You may contact asumisneuvonta if there is no available student apartment in SEVAS  
<https://www.hyvaep.fi/palvelu/asumisneuvonta/>  
Toni Suominen tonisuominen@hyvaep.fi

The Health Centre of Seinäjoki  
<https://www.seinajoki.fi/en/health-and-social-services/>

Private Clinics  
There are various private clinics in Seinäjoki and in other towns and municipalities. It costs about 70 euros to consult a private doctor. Check the coverage of your insurance!

First Aid Service Clinic  
At night (20.00-8.00), contact the first aid service clinic at the Central Hospital (=keskussairaala).  
Address: Koskenalantie 18  
Phone: +358 6 415 4555

Only patients whose treatment cannot be delayed without inflicting mortal danger or a serious deterioration of health caused by disease or illness, are treated at the first aid service clinic. It is not possible to make an appointment to the first aid clinic.



## SPIRITUAL HEALTH SERVICES

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UNIVERSITY CHAPLAIN SERVICES  
The university chaplain Aila Jaakkola works at the individual and organisational level in preventive work. Her job is pastoral counselling, coaching and mentoring.


Online booking calendar for SeAMK students in Intra:  
Student well being University Chaplain.  
<https://outlook.office365.com/owa/calendar/SeAMKPappi@epedufi.onmicrosoft.com/bookings/>

Lakeuden Risti Church  
<https://www.seinajoenseurakunta.fi/lakeuden-risti>

OTHER SERVICES  
KELA  
The social insurance institution of Finland  
<https://www.kela.fi/main-page>

### HOLISTIC GUIDE TO HEALTH SERVICES AVAILABLE IN SEINÄJOKI FOR INTERNATIONAL STUDENTS

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## PHYSICAL HEALTH SERVICES

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### STUDENT HEALTH INFORMATION ONLINE

You can find health information in the FSHS Health Information Resource, where a wide range of articles related to student health, illness, mental health and oral health have been compiled.



**Appendix 2. Information Leaflet (page 2)**

**PUBLIC HEALTH CARE SERVICES, FIRST AID AND EMERGENCY SERVICES IN SEINÄJOKI**

When the services of FSHS are not available, in urgent matters, contact the health center of your home municipality or the Wellbeing services county of South Ostrobothnia's care evaluation at 116 117.

In life-threatening situations, always call the emergency number 112.

The emergency numbers for emergency care of the Wellbeing services county of South Ostrobothnia can be found here.

General emergency number for ambulance, police and fire brigade: 112

First aid and on-call health care: Patients in need of urgent care can be taken to the on-call service at the Seinäjoki health and social services centre (=sote-keskus), Koskenalantie 18, 1st floor (Y-building, next to the Seinäjoki Central Hospital), Seinäjoki, tel. +358 6 425 5311 (Mon-Fri at 8-18, weekends 10-16)

When the Seinäjoki health and social services centre is closed, first call to the care evaluation number 116 117, or go to the First Aid Service Clinic at the Central Hospital, address Koskenalantie 18 (Y-building), Seinäjoki, tel. 116 117 (24h).

**MENTAL HEALTH SERVICES**

**STUDY PSYCHOLOGIST SERVICES**  
 The study psychologist Anne-Mari Maunumaa works at the individual and organisational level in preventive work. Her job is to help students and staff enable a smooth learning path. Online booking calendar for SeAMK students in Intra: Student well being Study Psychologist.

Contact information:  
 Maunumaa, Anne-Mari  
 E-mail: anne-mari.maunumaa@seamk.fi  
 Tel. +358 40 830 0370.

**The Finnish Central Association for Mental Health**  
 Here are the schedules:  
 Weekdays 12:00-15:00 - you can discuss any mental issue that is bothering you.  
 Thursdays 9am - 12pm - discuss your situation with a social work specialist  
 Wed and Thurs from 18 - 20 Peer support and sharing experiences with a volunteer peer.

Website: <https://www.mtkl.fi/mtkl-in-english/>

**MIELI**  
 The main mission of MIELI Mental Health Finland is to promote mental health and prevent mental health issues. MIELI defends the universal right to a good mental health.

**SOCIAL HEALTH SERVICES**

Student Organizations / SAMO  
<https://epedufi.sharepoint.com/sites/SeAMK-Students/SitePages/en/SAMO.aspx>

Contact:  
 Seinäjoki University of Applied Sciences student union SAMO  
 Kampusranta 11 (Frami F, 1st floor)  
 PL 412  
 60101 Seinäjoki

Opening hours between  
 Mon - Wed 9:00-15:00 | Thu 9:00-18:00 | Fri 9:00-14:00

Information about student organizations  
<https://epedufi.sharepoint.com/sites/SeAMK-Students/SitePages/en/Opiskelijajarjestot.aspx>

On Tuesday, a Student Evening at Kismus (Kalevankatu 12) from 17:00 to 19:00. In the Student Evening, we talk about the things that are topical and on the mind.

A leisure walk at the end of the school day. Departure from the yard of the Kampustalo. You may come with or without a dog.