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ALUMNI ACTIVITIES

– International Alumni Network for TUAS



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ALUMNI ACTIVITIES – INTERNATIONAL ALUMNI NETWORK FOR TUAS

Turku University of Applied Sciences is currently planning on creating an International Alumni Network for the former exchange students who had their exchange period at TUAS. In this thesis, alumni functions are divided into three sections, i.e. the purpose of the alumni, the activities of the alumni and the management of the communication of the alumni.

The research of the alumni functions was conducted by introduction of alumni activities in general and introducing three examples of American alumni and three examples of Finnish alumni. In addition, a survey about the potential future alumni activities of TUAS was conducted on the TUAS exchange students of the spring semester 2013. Based on the combination of the research material and the results of the survey, a proposal for the TUAS International Alumni Network was created. Proposal is a combination of the activities and communication methods. Social media and other digital communication methods are recommended to use and the activities are mainly career-related, however, there are social and cultural activities as well.

The aim of this thesis is to introduce a proposal for the future TUAS International Alumni Network in the sections mentioned above. This thesis was as a commission of the International Office at TUAS and the results will be used in the near future to create an International Alumni Network for TUAS.

KEYWORDS:

Alumni; Alumni activities, TUAS alumni, International Alumni Network

Riikka-Maria Saarinen

ALUMNITOIMINTA – KANSAINVÄLINEN ALUMNIVERKOSTO TUAMK:LLE

Turun ammattikorkeakoulu suunnittelee parhaillaan kansainvälisen alumniverkoston luomista ulkomaalaisille vaihto-opiskelijoille, jotka ovat suorittaneet vaihto-opiskelujaksonsa Turun ammattikorkeakoulussa. Tässä opinnäytetyössä alumnitoiminta on jaettu kolmeen osa-alueeseen; alumnin tarkoitukseen, alumnitoimintaan ja alumniviestinnän hallintaan.

Selvitys alumnitoiminnasta suoritettiin esittelemällä alumnitoimintaa yleisellä tasolla ja esittelemällä kolme esimerkkiä yhdysvaltalaisista alumneista ja kolme esimerkkiä suomalaisista alumneista. Turun ammattikorkeakoulun kevätkauden 2013 ulkomaisilla vaihto-opiskelijoilla tehtiin lisäksi kysely siitä mitä Turun ammattikorkeakoulun tuleva alumnitoiminta voisi sisältää. Selvityksen ja kyselyn tulokset yhdistämällä luotiin ehdotus Turun ammattikorkeakoulun kansainvälisestä alumniverkostosta. Ehdotus on yhdistelmä aktiviteeteista ja viestinnästä. Sosiaalisen median ja muuta digitaalista viestintää suositellaan käytettäväksi ja aktiviteetit ovat pääosin työelämää käsitteleviä, mutta kulttuurisia ja sosiaalisia aktiviteettejakin on myös ehdotuksessa.

Tämän opinnäytetyön tarkoituksena on esitellä ehdotus tulevaisuuden Turun ammattikorkeakoulun kansainvälisestä alumniverkostosta niiden osa-alueiden osalta, jotka mainittiin yllä. Tämä opinnäytetyö tehtiin vastaamaan TuAMK:n kansainvälisen toimiston tarpeita ja työn tuloksia tullaan lähitulevaisuudessa käyttämään TuAMK:n kansainvälisen alumniverkoston luonnissa.

ASIASANAT:

Aaumni, alumnitoiminta, TuAMK alumni, kansainvälinen alumniverkosto

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS (OR) SYMBOLS

SAMK Satakunta University of Applied Sciences

TUAS Turku University of Applied Sciences

1 INTRODUCTION

The International Office of Turku University of Applied Sciences (from now on shortened as TUAS) is planning to create an International Alumni Network for the international exchange students who have studied a short while at TUAS. The primary target for creating an International Alumni Network is to create international traineeship possibilities for the Degree students studying in international Degree programmes but also internationalisation is an important aspect as well as to offer the students more both social and cultural experiences.

In order to find out what is a good way for the International Alumni Network to function, six different alumni are introduced in this thesis. Three of the alumni are in Finland and three in the US. The key aspects of alumni functions are the purpose, the activities and the management of communication. Also a survey was conducted on the exchange students of spring semester 2013 to let them voice their thoughts on the subject since they will be the members of the future International Alumni Network of TUAS.

2 INTRODUCTION OF ALUMNI

Alumni are a plural of the nouns alumna and alumnus originally coming from Latin language and meaning former students (Oxford dictionary). Alumna means a graduated female student and alumnus means a graduated male student, whereas a group of the graduated students, from either one or both genders, is usually referred as alumni (Business dictionary).

The main objective of alumni activities in the beginning was to secure the financial and intellectual continuity of the educational institution (UTA, Alumni tavoitteet). Nowadays alumni are much more than that, even though fundraising for the educational institution has remained as an objective of alumni as well. Today alumni are to support the educational institution with its public relations

and to help the university to keep and grow a good public image. Alumni affect on the brand of the educational institution since the institution's reputation relies on the success of its graduates (Alumni of Free State University). If the graduates are very successful in their careers, there will be more new students wanting to study in the institution and the partners of the institution will have trust on the competence of the institution (Aarva, Alijärvi 2012).

One new objective of alumni activities is to create a contact network both within its own members and with the members and the university. Alumni are also to network and develop cooperation between the university and the business and industry of its area (Aarva, Alijärvi 2012). The cooperation should be beneficial to both parties as well as to help the members of the alumni to find employment. Alumni activities include offering the members of the alumni possibilities to educate themselves further and to keep them connected to the development of science and culture. By networking between alumni members, the members can be able to learn from each other and help each others' career development (Silvennoinen 2008).

2.1 Communication Methods of Alumni

The alumni communication can be linked with customer communication. The alumni are the former customers of the educational institution in question. Communication is a way to improve and create long-lasting customer relationships (Baron, Conway, Warnaby 2010). The alumni will feel more connected and loyal to the institution if they are contacted regularly.

One of the most important communication methods today is digital communication (Karjaluoto 2010). The printed media is not as popular as it used to be, therefore, the focus of alumni communication is online. Social media is a very popular method of online communication and even if an institution is not present in social media, people are still able to talk about the institution there (Forsgård, Frey 2010). Social media also engages the "users" more than other methods of communication since the "users" can comment and share

things easily (Serola 2010). In social media, news travel fast; it is a quick way to share information with the intention of reaching many people (Postman 2009). There are disadvantages in the usage of social media as well. As the accurate information spreads quickly in social media so does the inaccurate information, which can be difficult for the organisation to correct afterwards (Aula 2010). Social media is not controlled and for example transparency and security are risks that need to be taken into account when using social media (Heikkilä 2011).

Young people spend more time in social networking sites than in any other media (Wankel Charles, Wankel Laura 2011). For the communication to be successful, it needs to be directed through channels that the target audience reaches it. In the case of young alumni members, the channel to be used the most is social media.

2.2 Alumni in General in the US

Alumni activities originally come from the United States of America. They were created in the US universities in the 18th century mainly in order to raise funding for the university but also for the university to have intellectual continuity (UTA Alumni ry, Alumnistrategia). In the US, the objectives of alumni activities have also transformed from fundraising to networking, although, fundraising still has an important role in alumni activities in the US.

Alumni activities naturally vary between alumni associations of different educational institutions. They have many common features and goals but some differences can be detected in the ways of implementing the goals. Three examples of alumni activities of different universities in the US are introduced on the basis of what is the purpose of the alumni activities, what alumni activities there are and how the communication of the alumni is managed.

2.2.1 Babson Alumni

Babson Alumni is formed by the graduates of Babson College located in Massachusetts, US. The Babson Alumni Association was founded over 70 years ago and has 35 000 alumni around the Globe (Babson Alumni). The purpose of the Babson Alumni Association is to:

1. Foster pride in Babson College (the “College”) among its alumni/ae and other members of the community.
2. Promote a lifelong affiliation among its alumni/ae and other stakeholders of the College, consistent with its Mission Statement.
3. Energize the growing numbers of alumni/ae and related stakeholders who participate, and motivate each other, in active service to the College.
4. Develop and assist local groups of alumni/ae of the College in their alumni/ae activities, and to strengthen their relationship to the College and to the Association.
5. Advance the reputation of the College around the world.
6. Deliver tangible benefits to alumni/ae, to other members of the Babson community, and to the College.
7. Take such other actions and perform such other acts to accomplish the purposes of the Association, subject to the limitations imposed on the Association’s actions under its Bylaws, consistent with Section 501(c)(3) of the United States Internal Revenue Code. (Babson Alumni Bylaws)

Babson Alumni Association has a very social approach to keep the ties of alumni and the college ongoing. Babson Alumni Association has its own directory with contact information of each alumni member and also a business directory to find companies with Babson Alumni members and the members’ contact information in that company. Babson Alumni Association organises different kinds of seminars to the alumni as well as class reunions. Seminars and other events are being held all over the world and not just in the Babson College Campus. Alumni also have global alumni clubs in different countries where some alumni members currently reside, such as Switzerland and Brazil. Alumni also have its own clubs for example for the black and LGBT people.

Alumni also have activities related to education and career development, such as career affinity networks including clubs of different branches of business but also volunteering opportunities in Babson College's developing cooperation partners in Uganda and Rwanda for example. In the alumni association's website, there is also webinars on current issue with professional lecturers.

Babson Alumni Association is very visible in Social Media. It has profiles on facebook, twitter, youtube and pinterest. The Alumni Association has its own website within Babson College's website and a newsletter that is send to the e-mails of the members. The social media content of the Alumni Association is primarily to the alumni to share experiences with the alumni's activities, such as pictures of class reunions, videos of activities in Babson College and the like; but also to give information about seminars and other events happening in the future. The monthly published newsletter is slightly more official way of the Alumni Association to give information about the events organised by the association but also to give news about Babson College to the alumni.

2.2.2 Ross Alumni

The Ross Alumni consist of about 45 000 graduates of the Ross School of Business (Ross Alumni). The Alumni are spread to 88 countries all over the Globe. The primary goal for the Ross Alumni are to network with each other and the school, to gather funds for both the alumni and the school, branding the school, career development of the alumni and further education of the alumni.

A great aspect of all activities is to keep the alumni connected to each other via alumni clubs located in numerous countries. These alumni clubs help build and support a global Ross community by providing opportunities for networking, cultural activities and lifelong learning. Clubs also represent the Ross School of Business and brand the school. Clubs are to partner with corporations as well. The Alumni are kept more connected to their school through participating the activities of alumni clubs.

Ross Alumni have an alumni dictionary to search alumni members. The Ross Alumni organise class reunions for the alumni annually with structured programme. The Alumni is also welcomed to participate the Ross School of Business' events.

Ross Alumni have special career services for alumni members. They have a special site for the career services and an alumni member needs to pay for it unless she or he is unemployed. The site provides job postings, career counseling, career focused podcasts, short-term health benefits and other minor reductions and workshops.

Ross Alumni do not have its own representation in social media but it is combined with the Ross School of Business' accounts in facebook, twitter, linkedIn and youtube. However, Ross Alumni have its own magazine that is published twice a year. Ross Alumni have its own website within the school's website. The social media is to let the "followers" and "likers" to be informed about the social events happening in the school, having some educational content as well. Whereas the magazine has slightly more serious topics, but also information about the events and success stories of the alumni members.

2.2.3 Harvard Alumni

The Harvard Alumni are the oldest one in the world, although, the current Harvard Alumni Association was established in 1965 (Harvard Alumni). It consists of over 370 000 Harvard graduates representing 200 different countries. The purpose of the Alumni Association is to promote welfare of Harvard University and to establish a mutually beneficial relationship between the university and its alumni. The Alumni Association helps the alumni to connect with the university and with the other members of the alumni through many club activities, education programmes, online services and alumni events organised in different parts of the world.

The Harvard Alumni have its general alumni association and every faculty of Harvard has their own alumni association within the general alumni association

as well. The different faculty alumni associations have their own events and ways of communication but all of them are connected to the general Harvard Alumni Association and function under it. There are also 186 Harvard Clubs in almost 80 countries and 40 Shared Interest Groups functioning under Harvard Alumni Association.

The Harvard Alumni are financially connected to the Harvard University; it receives many donations and raises funds for the university. For example, today 60 percent of Harvard undergraduate students receive financial help raised by the Harvard Alumni. The Harvard Alumni has several different funds that they manage and promote in order to receive more donations to the funds that are used for the benefit of the Harvard University. Managing the donations is an important feature of the Harvard Alumni Association.

Other features are creating on and off campus events to the both alumni and the current students; keeping the alumni connected; providing education possibilities; and offering volunteering opportunities. The alumni events are held all around the world, however, mainly in the US. The purpose of the events vary a lot, there are educational, career-related and social events organised. Social events include organising class reunions. The Harvard Alumni Association organises trips that both alumni and current students may attend.

The Harvard Alumni manage alumni directory where all the alumni are listed and making it easy for the alumni members to search for the contact information of each others. The alumni are encouraged to make a professional network with one and other in LinkedIn as well. Besides LinkedIn, the Harvard Alumni Association utilises other social media as well including facebook, twitter and e-mail. However, the Harvard Alumni Association does not have its own accounts in social media, except linkedIn, sharing the accounts with Harvard University. Alumni is able to use the Harvard University's intranet, Crimson Compass, which is a networking tool mainly aimed for professional purposes.

A graduate is also able to have a lifelong alumni e-mail address that can be used for all communication purposes. The Alumni Association also has several

mailing lists for different causes; one may receive information about certain events and activities of the alumni directly to the inbox or to follow the website and social media. However, the website is the primary channel for all information regarding the alumni, the different Alumni Clubs and Faculties' Alumni have their own channels of forwarding information too. Besides forwarding current information, the website includes personal success stories of members of the Harvard Alumni and information about Harvard Alumni Awards and the receivers of the Awards. The intranet and LinkedIn is mainly utilised for professional networking, whereas other social media is more about forwarding the Harvard University news and information about upcoming events.

2.3 Alumni in General in Finland

Alumni are a relatively new phenomenon in Finland and unknown for the majority of people (Häkkinen, 2008). In Finland, Alumni activities have begun in the 90s and in some universities even in the 21st century. Finnish alumni activities focus on cooperation between the graduates and the universities and social and economical development of the area. The recruitment of new students is a common alumni activity in Finland as well.

Some Finnish institutes for higher education have very active alumni association and some Finnish institutes for higher education has barely any organised alumni activities, however, there are variations between alumni. Compared to the alumni associations functioning in the US, the Finnish alumni associations seem rather disorganised. Three examples of alumni activities of different universities of applied sciences in Finland are introduced on the basis of what is the purpose of the alumni activities, what alumni activities there are and how the communication of the alumni is managed.

2.3.1 Metropolia Alumni

Helsinki Metropolia University of Applied Sciences (from now on Metropolia) has a separate Metropolia Alumni Association to manage the alumni related

issues (Metropolia Alumni). The purpose of the association is to be the link between the alumni members and Metropolia; to improve and maintain the students and Metropolia's connections to work life and to improve the quality of the education; to promote and support the management of public relations of Metropolia; to develop international cooperation of Metropolia; and to improve the social status of the holders of a Degree from Metropolia and other Universities of Applied Sciences.

Metropolia Alumni Association organises events with both professional and social agendas. All Metropolia staff, students and alumni are invited all the events. The Alumni Association organises seminars with professional speakers from the alumni. Fieldtrips to companies are organised as well. An Entrepreneur Club is managed by the alumni and targeted to the alumni members and current students that are working as an entrepreneur or considering about it. The Club is to support entrepreneur to make their business a success and thus it organises seminars about entrepreneurship and visits to organisations helping entrepreneurs. The Alumni Association has a mentoring programme for the alumni to come to the campuses to tell about their career after graduation and to inspire the current students. Metropolia alumni receive reductions in some commercial services in Helsinki area.

The Alumni Association uses social media and a magazine for the communication purposes. The Alumni Association has profiles in LinkedIn, Facebook and Twitter, however, in Twitter the Alumni Association has last shown activity in November 2011. The LinkedIn group is rather inactive too, although, there is some activity in the group by the alumni. However, the Facebook group is very active having information about current events organised both the association and other parties. The Alumni members receive both the magazine for the students of Metropolia and the magazine for the alumni specifically. Both forward information regarding Metropolia, different kinds of events, Alumni Association and the like.

2.3.2 Samk Alumni

Satakunta University of Applied Sciences (from now on Samk) does not have a separate alumni association but the alumni affairs are managed within the institution (Samk Alumni). The purpose of the alumni activities is to create stable connection between the alumni and Samk; to offer partnerships and services for the alumni; and to develop Samk's education and research activities with the help of the alumni.

Samk has created an alumni directory to keep contact with the alumni and for the alumni to keep contact with each other. Samk does not organise events solely for the alumni, however, the alumni is welcomed to join the events organised for the current Samk students. The events are predominantly held in Satakunta area.

Samk forwards information to the alumni via e-mail, Facebook and magazine. The magazine, Agora, is not created for the alumni alone but also for the stakeholders. Agora is published four times a year. The Facebook is the channel of the current information. The Samk Alumni informs its members of all Samk events and some of the local events as well. Job adds; news about Samk; and further education possibilities are also posted in the Facebook.

2.3.3 Haaga-Helia Alumni

Haaga-Helia University of Applied Sciences (from now on Haaga-Helia) does not have a separate alumni association; however, it is a part of Haaga-Helia's functions (Haaga-Helia Alumni). The purpose of the activities of the Haaga-Helia Alumni is to function as a link between the educational institution and professional life; a network of the graduates; promote the success of Haaga-Helia; maintain the high level of respect towards the Haaga-Helia Degrees; and help with the development of the Degrees.

Currently Haaga-Helia has approximately 20 000 alumni. Haaga-Helia alumni have a mentoring programme for the current students. A member of alumni and

a student of Haaga-Helia form a mentoring relationship where the member of the alumni helps the student to find her or his place in work life. Haaga-Helia Alumni organises an Alumni Gala once a year (Haaga-Helia Alumni Gala). Alumni may have class reunions and other social things organised in the Alumni Gala, however, the Haaga-Helia Alumni do not organise specifically any class reunions. Alumni are welcomed to participate other events organised by Haaga-Helia, which are primarily organised for the current students of the institution. Some events are organised specifically for the alumni as well. The focus of these events is mainly social; however, there are some business related events as well.

An alumni member can volunteer for a guest speaker's role in graduation ceremonies held in campuses and leaver her or his career story for the Haaga-Helia alumni so that the career counselors of Haaga-Helia may use them as examples for the students. In the Haaga-Helia Alumni website, there is also a section where alumni can post job advertisements, however, that seems to be rather passive section.

The Haaga-Helia Alumni has its own webpages within the Haaga-Helia's website. The website is to forward more official information. Haaga-Helia Alumni used to have its own profile in facebook to forward information about events and Haaga-Helia news. However, Haaga-Helia Alumni facebook profile is now inactive and combined with Haaga-Helia's facebook profile. The content was not affected by the change and Haaga-Helia's facebook profile mainly shares news and advertises events. Haaga-Helia alumni have two groups in LinkedIn, other one is administered by Haaga-Helia and other by a private person. Haaga-Helia Alumni has a newsletter for the alumni that is published once a month and sent to the e-mails of the alumni members. The newsletter contains information about many different events, social media groups and education possibilities.

3 RESEARCH METHODS AND IMPLEMENTATION

3.1 Research Method and Approach

The research was conducted utilising a quantitative method, however, since the target group consisted of only 166 students, the result is only an enumeration survey (Kananen 2008). The data collection was conducted by an online survey, which primarily consisted of structured questions and one open question. Some of the structured questions included an open answer option with structured answer options as well. The purpose of the survey was to find out what kind of alumni activities the students would be willing to participate in the future as a member of TUAS International Alumni Network and what would be an ideal channel for communication for the alumni.

3.2 Population and Sample

The survey was conducted on the exchange students of the spring semester 2013 of Turku University of Applied Sciences. The population consisted of 166 exchange students from partner institutions of TUAS who studied at TUAS in the spring semester 2013. The International Office of TUAS was responsible of distributing the link to the survey to the population.

Since the purpose of the research was to find out which kind of activities the future International Alumni Network should have in order to be attractive and pleasant for the alumni, it was important to ask the exchange students themselves about their opinions. There has not been a survey about the topic conducted on the exchange students at TUAS.

The population is very small and the survey cannot be analysed quantitatively, in this case, the enumeration method can be applied. When the population is very small, there is no need to take a sample of the population but simply to survey the whole population (Kananen 2008).

3.3 Data Collection

A survey was conducted with an online poll programme called Webropol, the public link for the survey was sent to the exchange students by the International Office of TUAS. The survey was answered anonymously.

The survey was sent to the population of 166 exchange students on Tuesday 26.3.2013. 24 answers were received so the reminder was sent on Saturday 6.4.2013 and 17 more answer were received. The survey was closed on Wednesday 24.4.2013. The total amount of answer received was 41, therefore 24,7 percent of exchange students answered the survey. The survey was opened 31 times without sending an answer.

The percentage of exchange students who did not answer the survey was 75,3 meaning that the collection of data from the sample was not successful (Kananen 2009). In this case the answer rate of 41 of 166 is not enough to make valid interpretations; however, general opinion of the students can be obtained from the data.

There were three different kind of data in the survey. The survey included a section of basic information, future plans and the future alumni activities. The first part of basic information included general background information such as age, home country and other fact-based questions. The second part of future plans handled the issues of future location of residence of the student and plans about further education. The third part of the survey consisted of questions about the alumni activities and also the ways of communication of the future International Alumni Network.

3.4 Reliability and Validity

The reliability of quantitative research lays on the consistency and repeatability of the results of the research (Kananen 2008). The validity in the other hand refers to the correctness of the object and measurement of the research. Validity is divided to many sub-groups. External validity refers to the

generalisation of the findings to the population meaning that the results of the survey are valid in comparable situations. Content validity refers to if the measuring used actually measures what it is intended to measure. Theoretical validity refers to how well the concepts of the research have been derived from existing theories. Criterion validity is based on the use of other researchers' research results to support one's own results.

In this case the survey was conducted with Wepropol, which gives statistical and accurate data. TUAS has paid the license to use Wepropol, therefore, Webropol was an obvious choice to utilise when conducting a survey. It is a reliable programme and it can be used to make very different kind of surveys. Before conducting the survey the International Office of TUAS examined the survey and it was successfully tested before the survey was sent out.

The validity of the research is affected by the selection of the target group as well. The target group was determined to be the exchange students of TUAS in the spring semester 2013 due to the easy access of the whole target group. The former students of TUAS could have been included in the target group, however, the access of valid e-mail addresses would have been more difficult and one term of students do represent the future member of International Alumni Network well since they come from various partner institutions and study in different programmes in different campuses of TUAS.

However, since the answering rate was only 24,7 percent, the result itself in this case is not valid for quantitative survey, but general ideas of the results can be made. Also 31,7 percent of those who answered were French which could indicate that French students are either more enthusiastic filling in surveys, or developing school services is close to their hearts or it could mean absolutely nothing.

4 SURVEY ON EXCHANGE STUDENTS

4.1 Basic Information

The basic information section of the survey consisted of questions about gender; age; home country; length of exchange programme; campus at TUAS; whether she or he would recommend others to have their exchange at TUAS; and level of Degree.

There was no great difference between the genders of the answerers of the survey, which was an expected result. The great majority of correspondents were between 20 and 24 years of age (Table 1). 9,8 percent answered they are 25-29 years old and the same amount of people answered other. The other responses were a few 19-year-old students and one 37-year-old student. The result was expected since students of Bachelor and Master levels in general are young people.

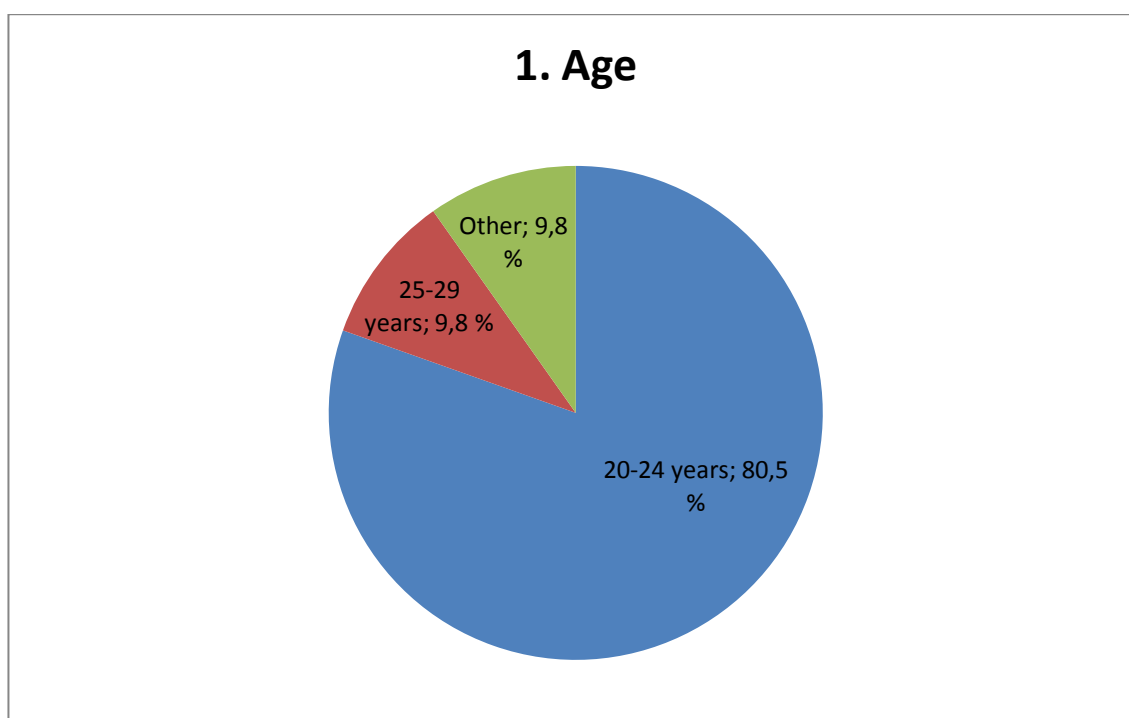


Table 1 What is your age?

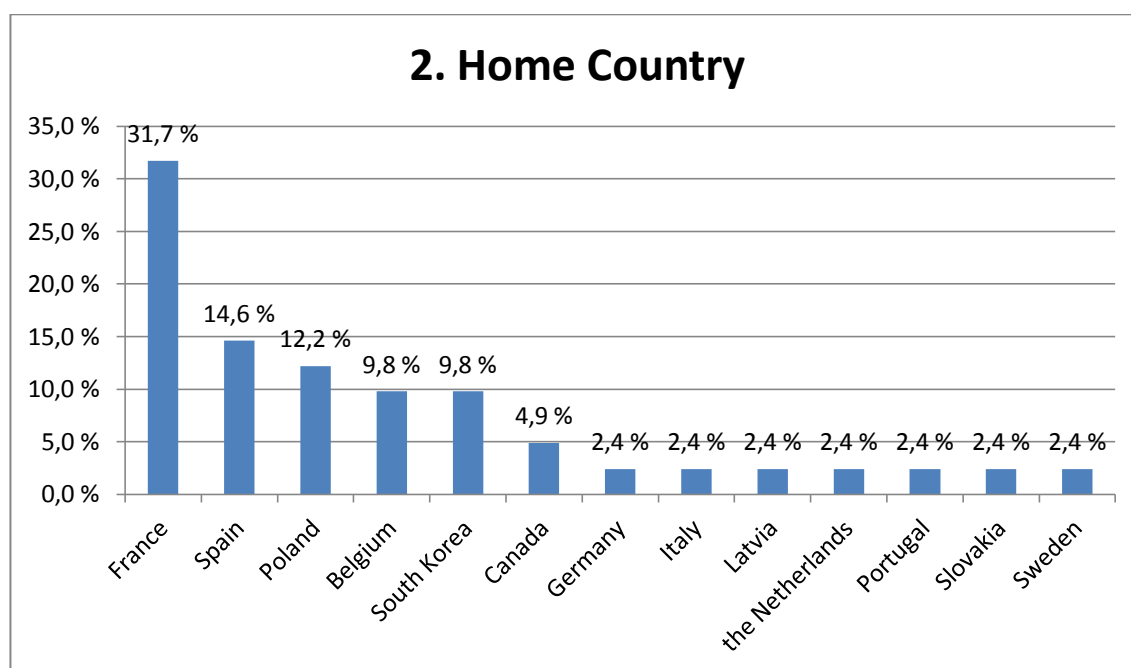


Table 2 What is your home country?

Most of the correspondents were French students (Table 2). There were correspondents only from 13 countries although; there are partnership institutions in 47 countries and in Palestine. However, since there were only 41 correspondents, them representing 13 different countries is quite good average. 14,7 percent of the correspondents came from outside EU, which reflects well the reality as the great majority of exchange students come to TUAS from European countries.

The majority of correspondents are staying at TUAS for one semester (Table 3). 34,1 percent were having a two-semester-long exchange programme. 19,5 percent answered other and specified that their exchange was 3 months long or that they were having one semester of exchange programme and then also traineeship and the like. 3-month-long exchange programme is very common for the healthcare students. All in all, the result was expected and reflects the reality well.

3. Length of Exchange Programme

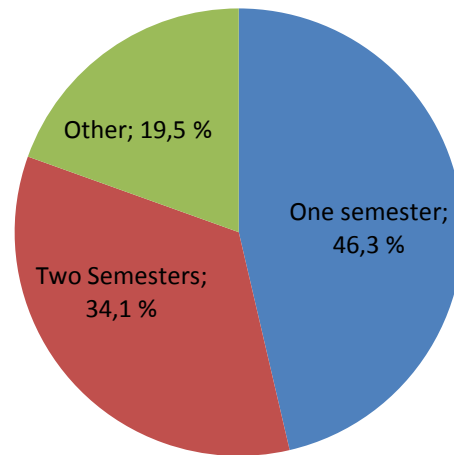


Table 3 How long is your exchange programme?

4. Campus

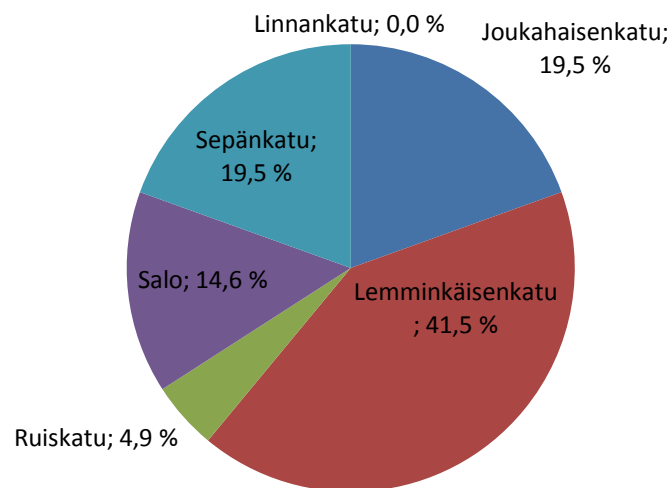


Table 4 In which campus are you studying at TUAS?

Most of the students answering the survey were studying at Lemminkäisenkatu (Table 4). There were quite many correspondents studying in Joukahaisenkatu, Sepänkatu and Salo; and a few in Ruiskatu and none in Linnankatu. The result was expected because there are many English-taught courses in

Lemminkäisenkatu, and therefore, there are more exchange students in Lemminkäisenkatu as well.

The great amount of the correspondents were willing to recommend their exchange period at TUAS to others (Table 5). A few correspondents were a little bit hesitant to recommend, however, no one answered no. The willingness to recommend is important in alumni's point of view since the purpose of the alumni associations in general is to promote the educational institution in question. Naturally that purpose is met more easily if the alumni are happy with how their exchange turned out to be and even willing to recommend the exchange at TUAS to others.

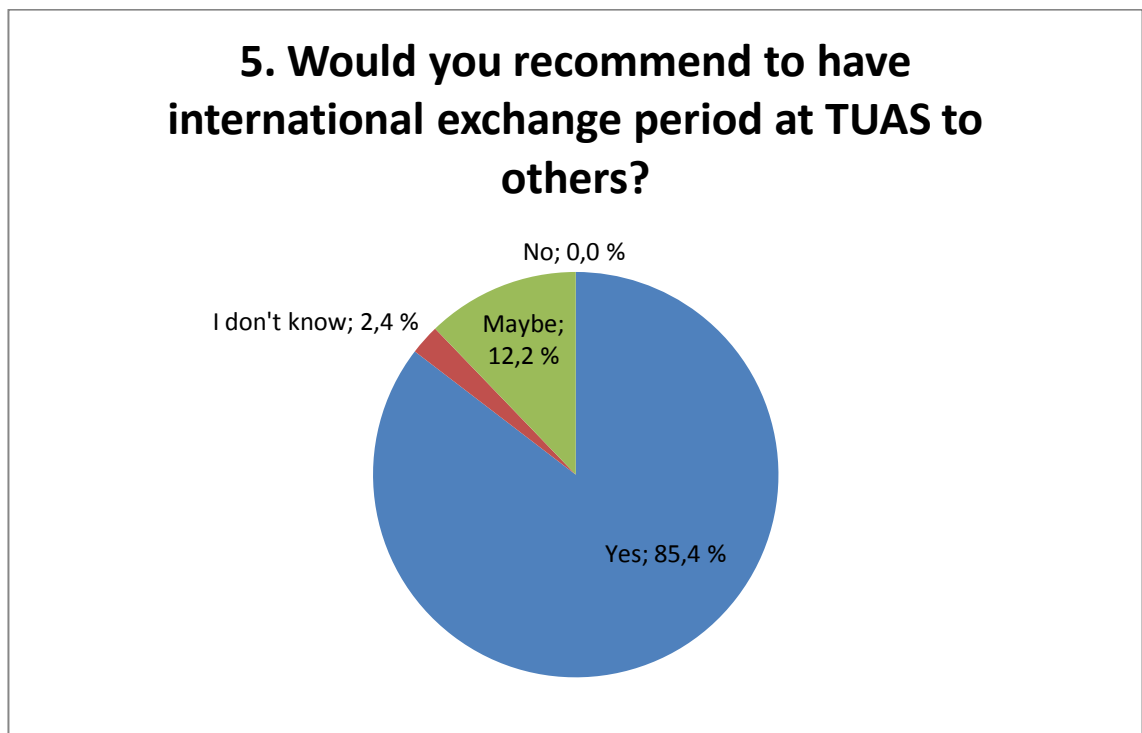


Table 5 Would you recommend others to have their international exchange period with TUAS?

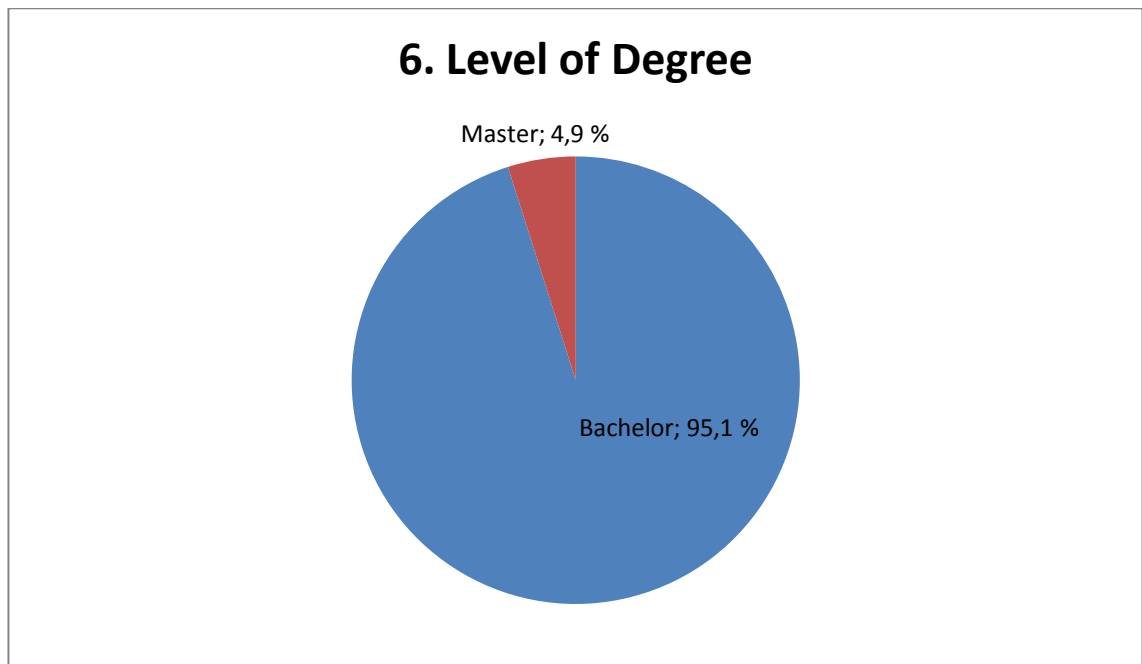


Table 6 Which is the level of the Degree you are currently studying?

95,1 percent of students answered that they are studying for Bachelor's Degree (Table 6). The rest were Master level students. The result reflects well the actual numbers.

4.2 Future Plans

The future plans section of the survey consisted of questions about willingness to work in other countries and continents, and willingness to study abroad in the future. The aim of this section is to find out how mobile the future members of TUAS International Alumni Network will be. Over three quarters of the correspondents answered that they are interested in working abroad in their future and only 2,4 percent stated that they have no interest in working abroad (Table 7). The rest answered that they may have interest in working abroad. Therefore, the majority of the students are interested in working abroad in the future, however, how many will actually make this interest a reality, is another thing that remains yet to be undefined. Although, the students are already studying abroad; which increases the chance of them working abroad in the

future by 15-20 percent compared to those who have not studied abroad at all (Saarikallio, Hellstén, Juutilainen 2008).

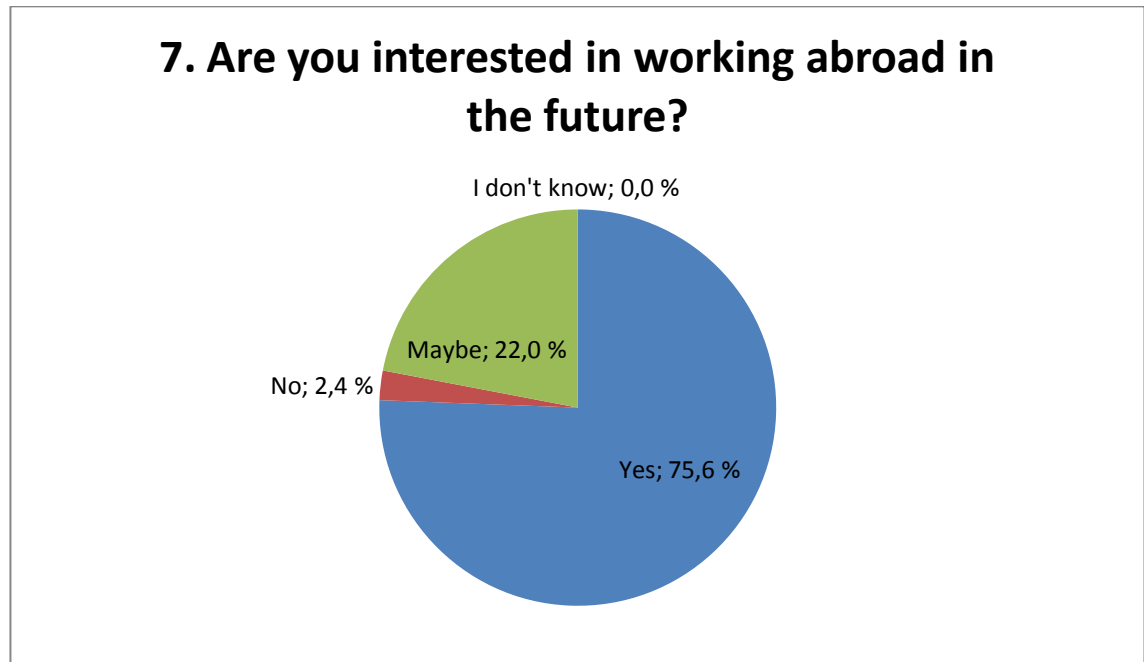


Table 7 Are you interested in working abroad in the future?

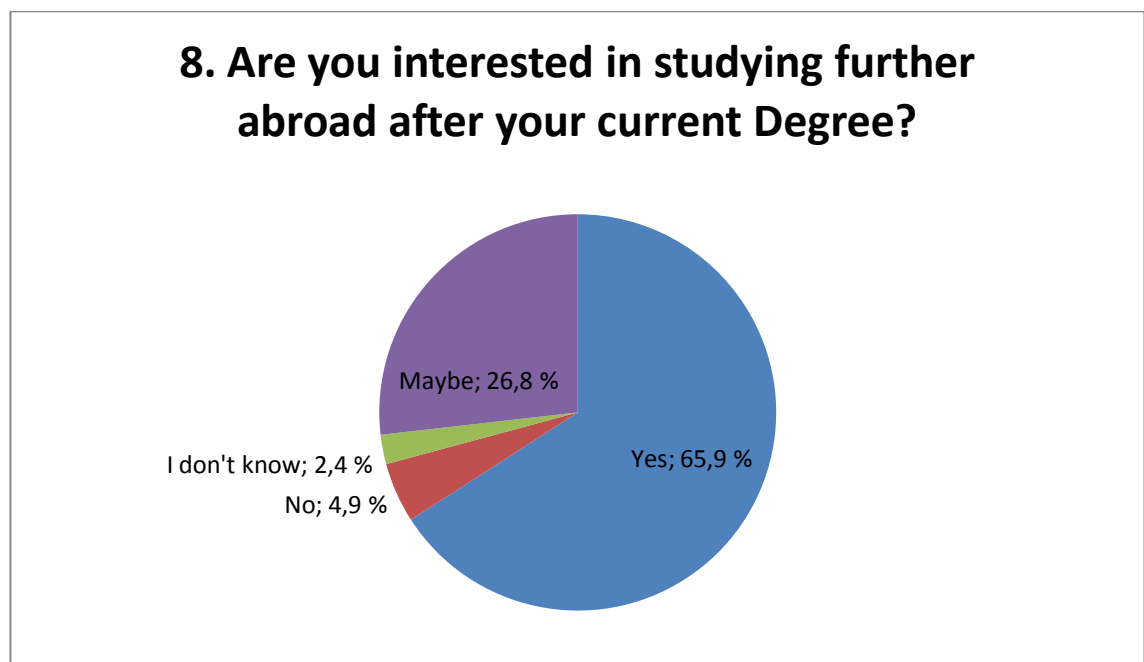


Table 8 Are you interested in studying further abroad after finishing your current Degree?

The majority of correspondents answered that they are interested in studying abroad after finishing their current Degree (Table 8). Only 4,9 percent answered

no, which is the same percentage as Master level students answering the survey. Slightly over one quarter answered they may be interested and 2,4 percent said they do not know whether they are interested in studying abroad after finishing their current Degree or not. Some of the correspondents may have answered “maybe”; “I don’t know” or “no” because they do not intend to study any further after finishing their current Degree.

The majority of the students were not sure whether they are interested in working in Finland in the future or not (Table 9). 39 percent answered “maybe” and 17,1 percent answered “I don’t know”; whereas 36,6 percent said that they are interested in working in Finland in the future and 7,3 percent stated that they are not interested. This means that some of the future members of the TUAS International Alumni Network might primarily reside in Finland and not only abroad.

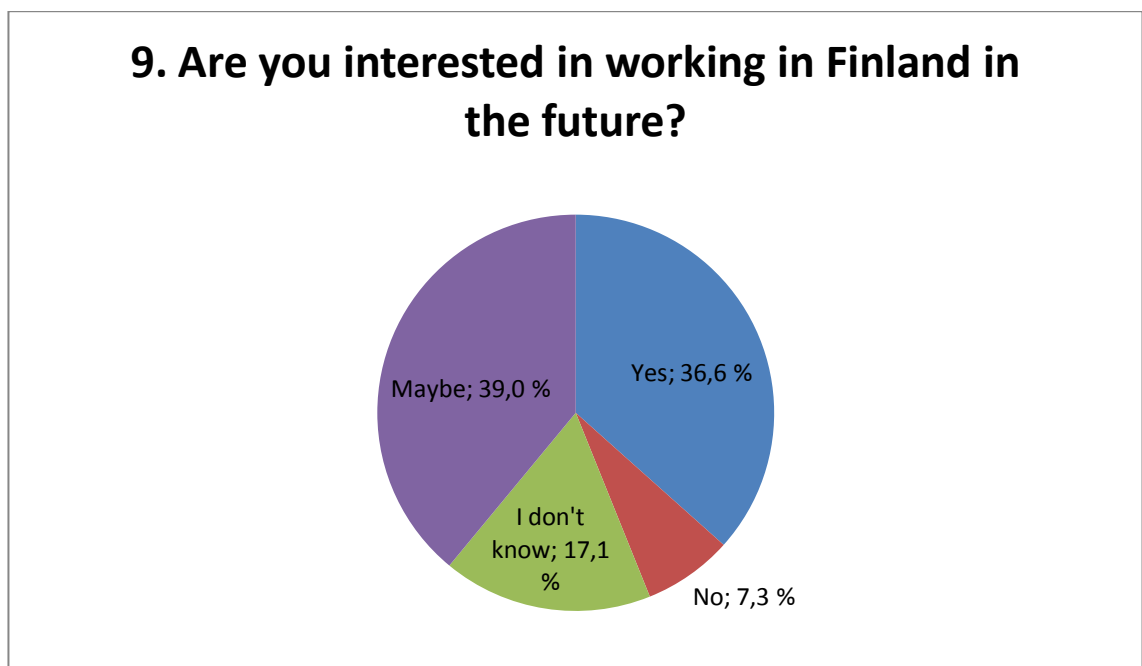


Table 9 Are you interested in working in Finland in the future?

10. Are you interested in working in another continent than your home continent in the future?

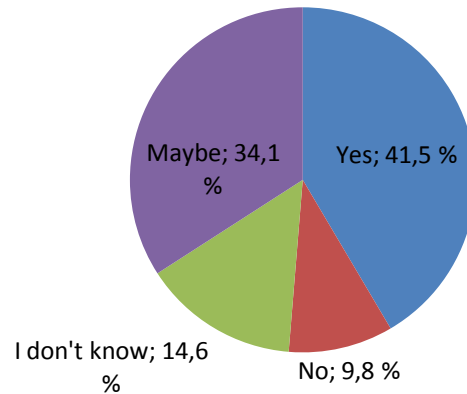


Table 10 Are you interested in working in another continent than your home continent in the future?

41,5 percent answered that working in another continent than her or his home continent in the future interests them (Table 10). Slightly over one third answered that they may be interested in that and 14, percent did not know. 9,8 percent answered that working in another continent does not interest them.

4.3 Alumni Activities

The alumni activities section of the survey consisted of questions about communication channels, interest towards alumni activities and what kind of activities would be interesting enough to participate.

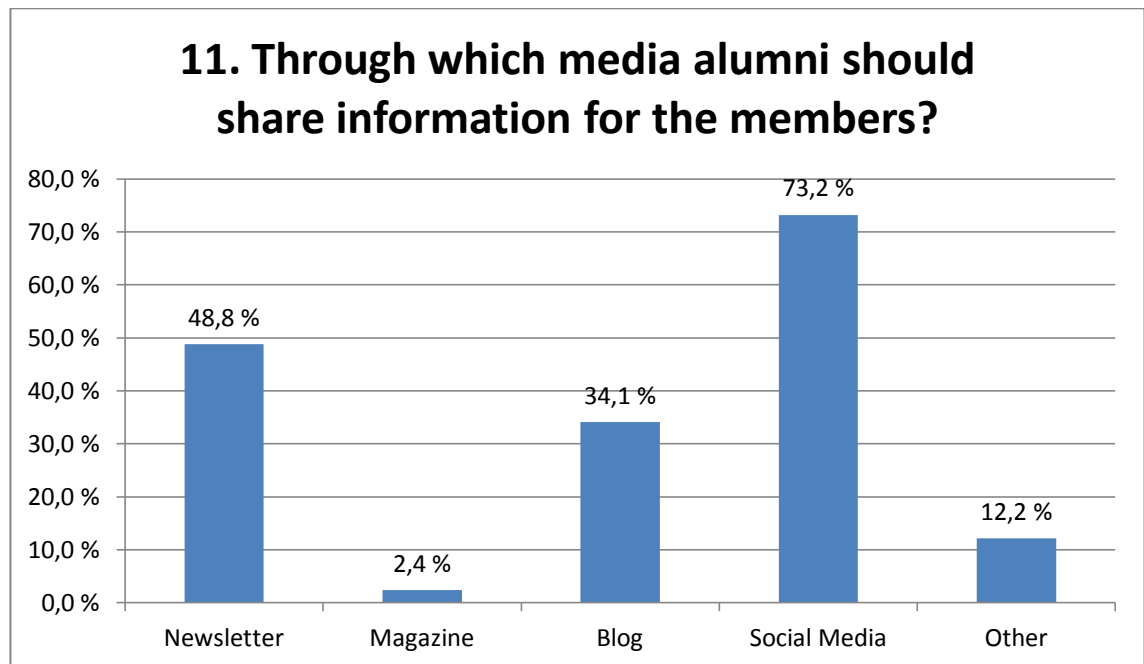


Table 11 Through which media alumni should share information for the members?

73,2 percent of correspondents thought that social media is the best communication channel for the alumni (Table 12). The correspondents were able to choose all of the options if they wished, almost half of them thought that a newsletter would be a good communication tool. A little bit over one third of correspondents thought that a blog would be a good channel of communication. 12,2 percent answered “other” and specified that the alumni’s communication tools could include e-mail, Facebook and website which is included in social media. One corresponded stated that an office in the campus would be a good for the information flow. 2,4 percent answered magazine would be a good communication channel.

4,9 percent of the correspondents said that they are not interested in joining TUAS’ International Alumni Network (Table 12). 39 percent said that they are interested and the same amount of correspondents said that they may be interested in joining the alumni network. 17,1 percent did not know if they are interested or not to join the International Alumni Network.

12. Are you interested in joining alumni network for former TUAS exchange students?

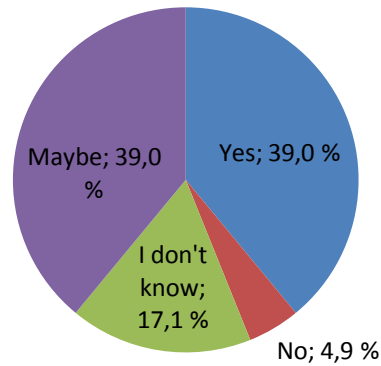


Table 12 Are you interested in joining alumni network for former TUAS exchange students?

A little over half of the correspondents thought that a mentoring programme between alumni and the students would be worth participating (Table 13). The correspondents were allowed to choose as many answers as they liked. A little less than a half of them chose that they would like to participate in social gatherings such as class reunions and 46,3 percent of them would like to form and participate a TUAS club in their own home institution between other ex-TUAS exchange students and current TUAS students having their exchange programme in their home institution. 4,9 percent of the correspondents optioned “other” and specified that they would like the social activities to include parties and expert projects. The first is included in social gatherings and the latter is more relevant for the professional activities – section.

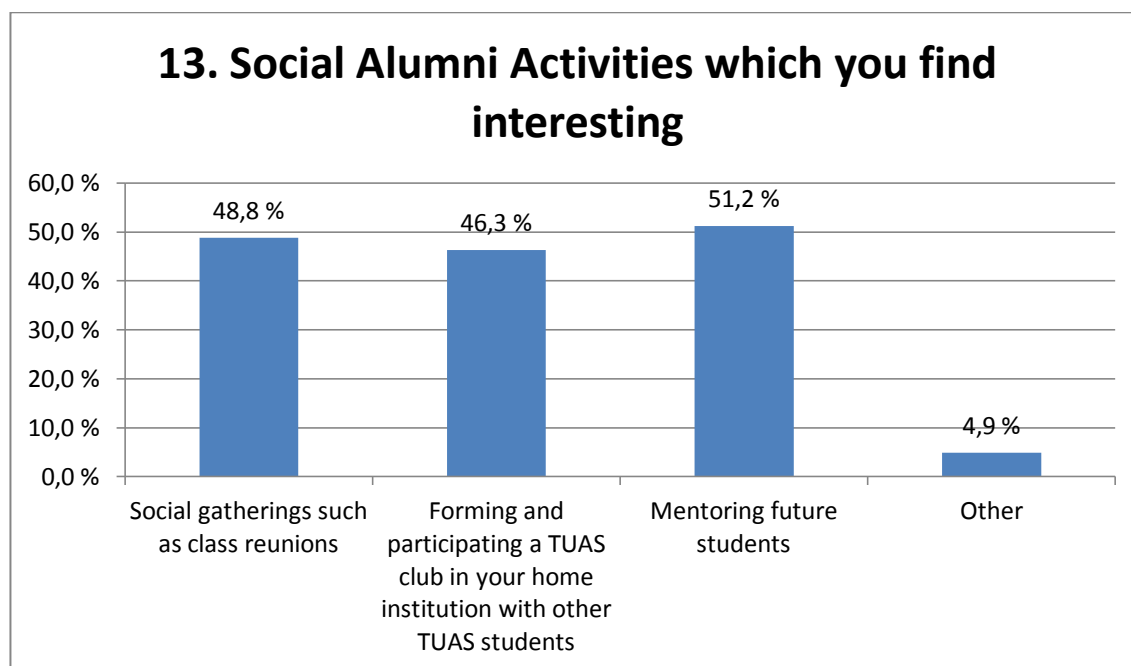


Table 13 Which of the following social activities would be that kind of alumni functions that you would be interested in participating? (You may choose as many as you like)

The correspondents were mostly interested in job advertisements in career-related alumni activities (Table 14). The correspondents were able to choose as many options as they wished; 73,6 percent of them answered that they were interested in traineeships and jobs offered by the other alumni members. A little bit less than half of the correspondents were interested in offering traineeships and jobs themselves. 46,3 percent were interested in participating recruiting events and 43,9 percent were interested about getting information about thesis and practical training possibilities at TUAS and at other alumni member's companies. 31,7 percent were interested in including a scholarship programme for future studies at TUAS for foreigners in alumni activities and the same amount of correspondents were interested in attending seminars with professional speakers at TUAS. 24,4 percent were interested in speaking in seminars at TUAS as a professional speaker. 26,8 percent of correspondents wished for the future alumni members to have reductions of price in TUAS summer school courses and the same amount also viewed including career counseling in services for alumni members a good thing. No one answered "other".

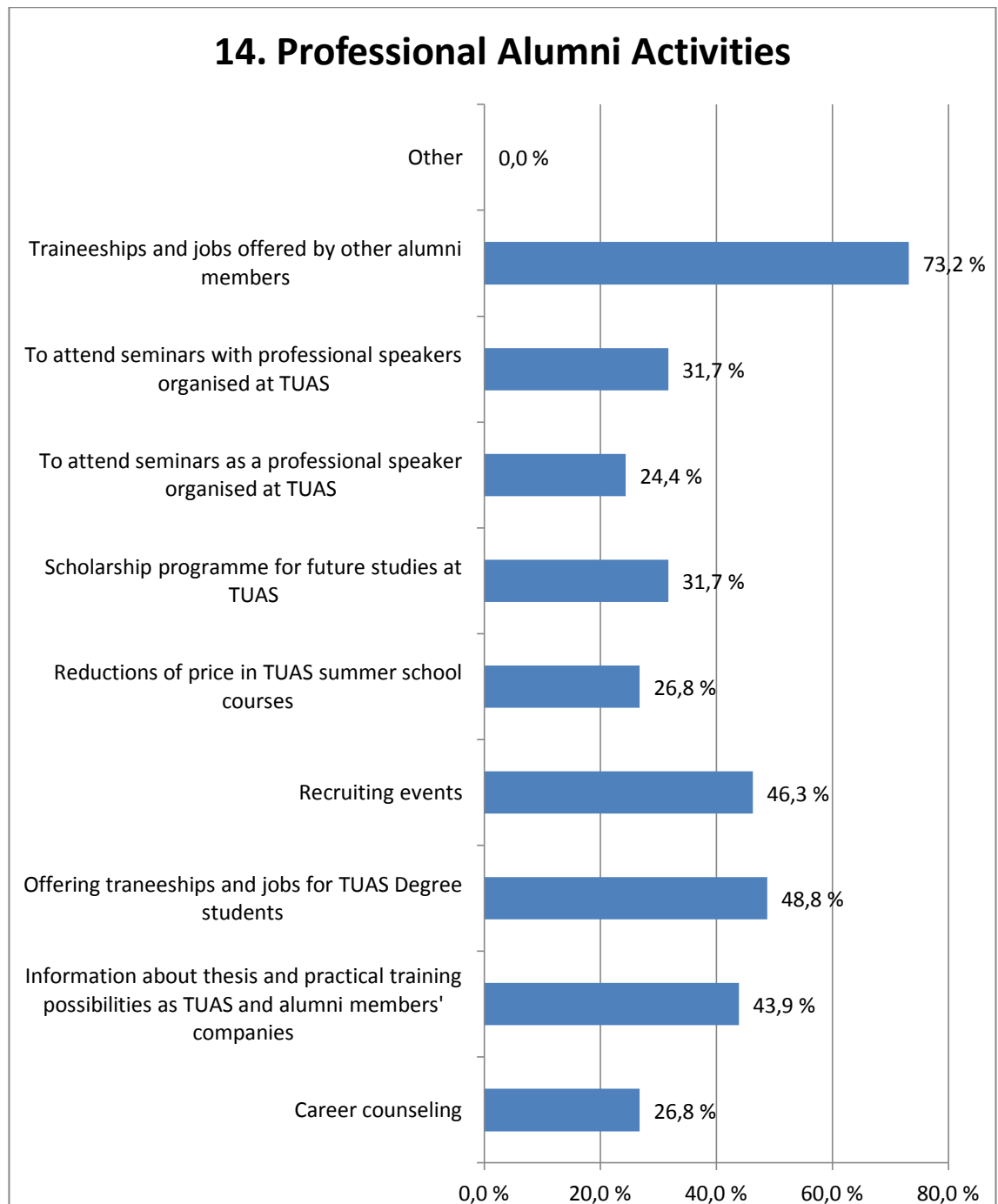


Table 14 Which of the following career related activities would be that kind of alumni functions that you would be interested in participating? (You may choose as many as you like)

In question 16 in the survey, the correspondents were to answer maximum three social media tools that they use most often (Table 15). 95,1 percent of them answered facebook and the second most popular social media tool was e-mail, which was answered by 78 percent of correspondents. The third popular

option was youtube with 39 percent of correspondents choosing that. 31,7 percent answered TUAS Intranet and 17,1 percent answered twitter. LinkedIn gathered 9,8 percent of the answers and 14,5 percent answered google+. 4,9 percent answered blogs and no one answered “other”.

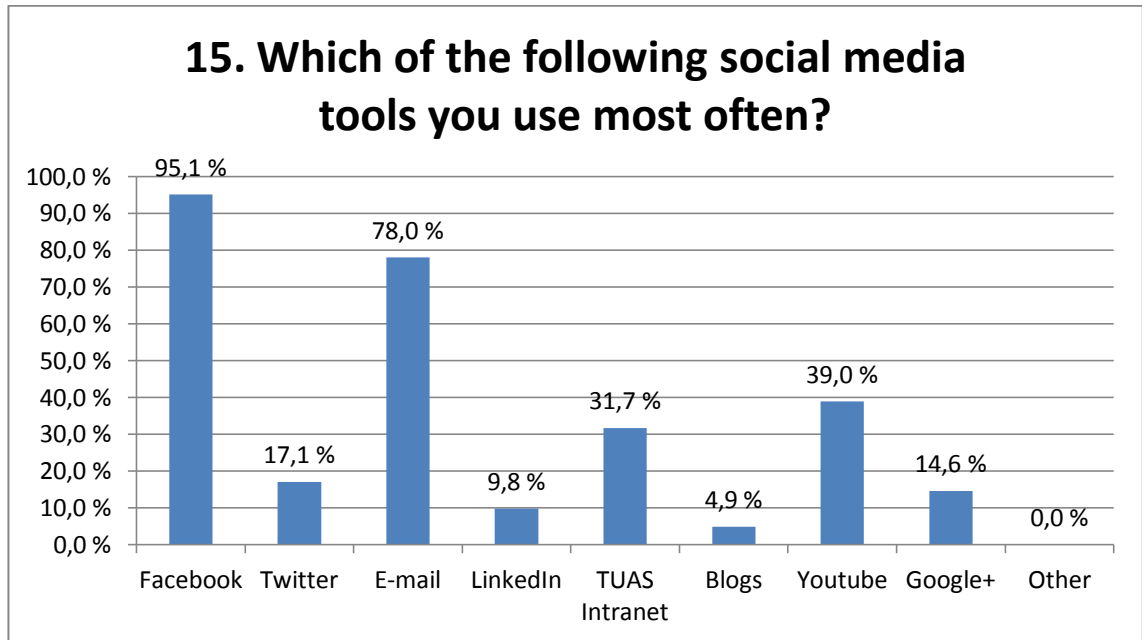


Table 15 Which of the following social media tools you use most often?

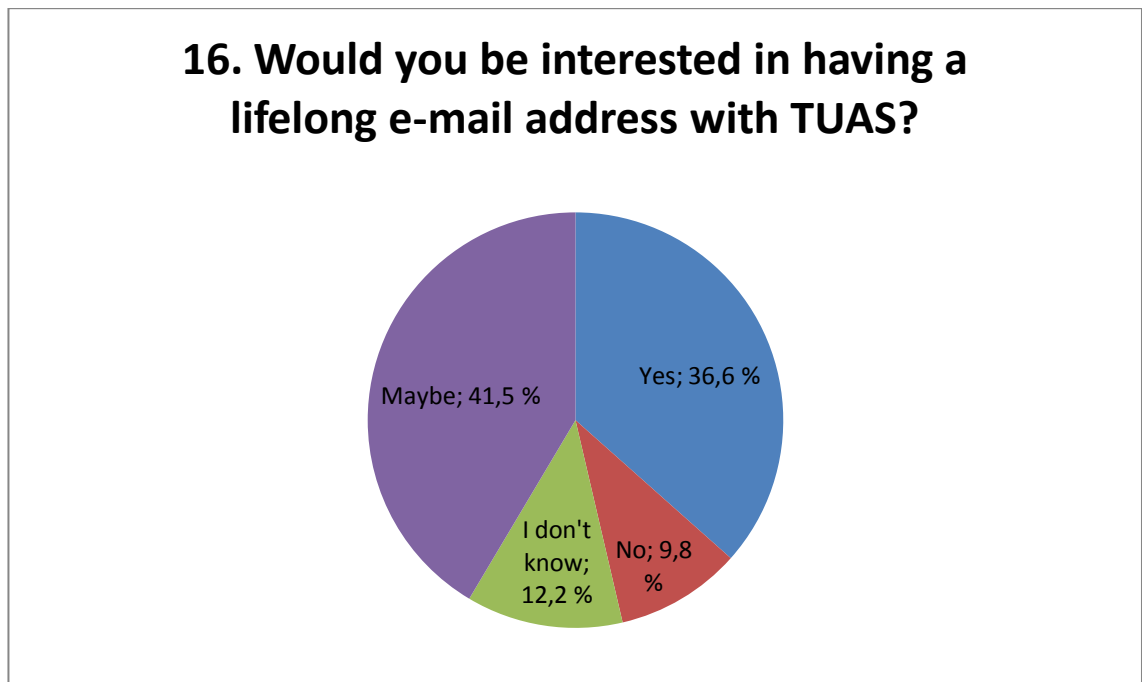


Table 16 Would you be interested in having a lifelong e-mail address with TUAS?

The majority of 41,5 percent of the correspondents answered that they may be interested in having a lifelong e-mail address with TUAS (Table 16). 36,6 percent is interested in having a lifelong e-mail address with TUAS and 9,8 percent were uninterested. 12,2 percent did not know if they were interested in having a lifelong e-mail address with TUAS or not.

17. Would you be interested in working as an international consultant to a Finnish company in your own country?

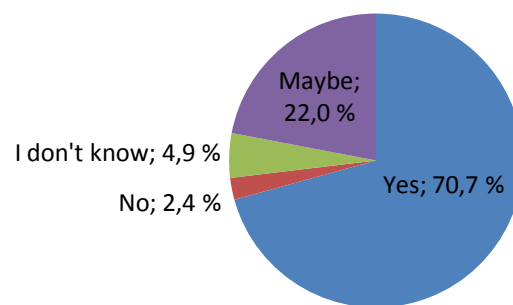


Table 17 Would you be interested in working as an international consultant to a Finnish company in your own country?

70,7 percent of correspondents were interested in working as an international consultant to a Finnish company in their own countries (Table 17). 22 percent answered “maybe” and 4,9 percent did not know if they are interested or not. 2,4 percent answered that they are not interested in working as an international consultant to a Finnish company in their own countries.

5 PROPOSAL FOR THE INTERNATIONAL ALUMNI NETWORK FOR TUAS

TUAS welcomes roughly 300 exchange students each year (TUAS internationalisation). The exchange students cannot join in Turun ammattikorkeakoulun alumnit ry (in English= TUAS Alumni Association) since

the rules of the Alumni Association state that only those who have graduated from TUAS or worked in TUAS are allowed to join the alumni association (TUAS Alumni Association). Therefore, there are currently no alumni for the former exchange students of TUAS.

The proposal is in three parts as were the introductions of six different alumni in the beginning of this thesis and the survey was divided to three sections also. The first part handles the purpose of the International Alumni Network, the second one handles its activities and the third and final part is about the management of the communication of the International Alumni Network.

5.1 The Purpose of the International Alumni Network

In short, the key aims for alumni activities in general is to boost the image of the educational institution; to connect the current students of the institution with the work life; and to connect the former students with each other and the institution. This can be achieved in several different ways as the six examples of alumni activities showed. However, none of the example Alumni Associations had a special alumni activities for the exchange students of the institution, although, the example Alumni Associations in the US had an International Alumni Network for the Degree students residing in various different countries all around the Globe.

One of the key purposes of the TUAS International Alumni Network is to find traineeship placements for the International Degree students at TUAS. This can be achieved by offering career related activities to the alumni members and encouraging them to both post and seek traineeship and employment advertisements through the Alumni Network. There must be other kind of activities as well to engage the alumni members with TUAS and each other so that they feel connected both with TUAS and each other.

5.2 The Alumni Activities of the International Alumni Network

The alumni members will be living in various different locations throughout the world, although the majority of students do come from European countries, however, many of them have interest in working in other continents (Table 2; Table 10). To include the alumni residing in different countries, the Alumni Associations of the US universities had created Alumni Clubs in the locations where the alumni members live. This could be applied in the International Alumni Network of TUAS as well. The exchange students come from partnership institutions and students of TUAS go to have an exchange period primarily to the same institutions. The former exchange students of TUAS and the TUAS students having their exchange in the other institution can form a TUAS club. This club could help the TUAS students to get comfortable with the local culture and their new school. For the alumni members, it would give a connection with TUAS and former and current students of TUAS. The TUAS Clubs' programmes could include local and Finnish cultural activities and general socialising. There could be a TUAS club amongst the alumni members and new exchange students in all partnering institutions that there are a sufficient number of participants of such a club. The participants of the TUAS Club would make the programme of the Club themselves. The programme could include for example cooking evenings where the participants cook both Finnish and local dishes together; visits to local museums and attractions; experiencing local holidays together and the like. The activities of TUAS Clubs would appreciate the cultural differences of the alumni; which is an important aspect in alumni activities as well. The Clubs would make it easier for the Finnish students to adjust and learn about the culture of their host country and the local alumni could feel that their own cultural traditions and values are given a role in Alumni activities. This would increase the cross-cultural understanding of both parties. The Clubs should fund their activities independently. The Clubs could be a part of promoting TUAS as a good place to have their exchange in and mentor the future TUAS exchange students and help them in the application process and give them tips for the exchange. Promoting TUAS could

include taking part of international days of the local institution and going to speak about exchange possibility at TUAS to events for the students who will have their exchange abroad.

As the result of the survey, the exchange students of the spring semester 2013 were very interested in the career related activities that the International Alumni Network could offer them. A section dedicated to posting traineeship and employment possibilities could be put to the online content of the alumni. The alumni members could be able to post about traineeship and employment possibilities in their own companies and TUAS could do the same about its own organisation and also to inform about thesis possibilities within TUAS.

One of the example alumni associations takes part on the institution's projects in developing countries. They have volunteering programme that the member of alumni can participate. TUAS has projects in developing countries as well. For example, there is a programme that the TUAS' students may have their traineeship in Swaziland. Perhaps, volunteering opportunities for the willing alumni members could be assessed.

The member of the alumni could be invited to attend all the professional seminars and events and the like organised at TUAS. The willing members of the alumni could be invited to such events as speakers as well. Class reunions could be organised at TUAS for the International Alumni Network as well. Although, it should be considered that the members will be scattered in several countries and continents, therefore, class reunions should not be organised too often so that the members would take part on reunions. For example, a person living in South Korea probably is not willing to travel to Turku every other year to meet with old friends from her or his exchange period.

Some of the correspondents of the survey were interested in living in Finland in the future (Table 9). These alumni members could have their own TUAS Clubs as well in the towns they will locate in the future, although, it must be taken into consideration that interest in working in Finland does not mean that the correspondents will actually live in Finland in the future. The programme of the

clubs could include travel, networking, spending Finnish holidays together and the like.

Recruiting events could be organised at TUAS and the international alumni could be invited to partake those. The international alumni members could also be invited to recruit future trainees and employees for their companies in such events. The recruiting events could be promoted to the companies in the process of internationalisation that there will be alumni members from various countries that may be able to help them and consult them about the business culture of the target country and other matters that need to be taken into consideration in the internationalisation process. Many of the correspondents of the survey would be willing to work on such consulting (Table 17).

Reductions in further education at TUAS could be offered to the alumni members. This is a normal practice in the US for the alumni of the institution to offer financial assistance for the students and alumni members. Reductions could be given in the summer school courses and if tuition fees will become mandatory for the non-EU students in the future, a scholarship programme could be created for non-EU students. The scholarship programme could benefit both the alumni members and the new students of TUAS. The majority of exchange students at TUAS are studying for Bachelor's Degree and some of them might be interested in applying and studying their Master's Degree at TUAS as well. If the alumni member is a non-EU student, then she or he could apply for the financial assistance to cover the tuition fees. The same could be applied to the new students as well. In the US Alumni Associations the funds for the financial assistance of the students are primarily received by donations. This model could be applied at TUAS as well. A section about donating money for the scholarship programme could be added to the online content of the International Alumni Network. Although, Finland does not have a strong "donation culture" like for example the US has, therefore, a lot of money cannot be expected to come from donations at first. However, many of the foreign alumni members might be interested to donate to such a fund.

The alumni of institutions generally have e-mail addresses with the institution. All the members of the alumni could have their e-mail addresses with TUAS. The address could be `firstname.lastname@alumni.turkuamk.fi`. On the survey, this was asked from the correspondents and less than ten percent answered that they would not be interested in having a lifelong e-mail address with TUAS. Most of the correspondents were unsure about the issue and a bit over one third would be interested in having a TUAS alumni e-mail address.

5.3 Management of Communication of the International Alumni Network

The communication of the International Alumni Network should be managed by using a variety of different online tools. The International Alumni Network could have its own website within the TUAS website, which is how it is managed in all six example institutions introduced in this thesis. The website could include all information possible about the International Alumni Network; a section dedicated to the career-related issues; a section about all events and seminars; a member directory and the like. The member directory could include the contact and professional details of all the members and visible to all the alumni, with the permission of individual members. An alumni directory is used in most Alumni Associations in order for the alumni members to connect with each other both for social and professional purposes. The alumni directory is often private and visible for the alumni members.

The TUAS International Alumni Network could use facebook to forward information. Facebook was used often by the correspondents of the survey (Table 11). The Alumni could have its own group in which the alumni could be informed about upcoming events, traineeship possibilities, news of TUAS and alumni and the like. Pictures and other material of the events and the like could be shared in the facebook group as well. The different TUAS Clubs around the world could have their own facebook groups, where they could share information about their programmes and the like.

Many of the example alumni's had a presence in both LinkedIn and Twitter, however, the amount of users of those networking sites in the conducted survey was quite low (Table 15), therefore that material published on those sites would not have many viewers compared to facebook. This could be reassessed after some time if the usage of social media sites have changed and then change the presence in social media according to that.

Many institutions use a newsletter as a communication channel for the alumni. This is applicable for the TUAS International Alumni Network as well. The newsletter could be published quarterly and sent to the e-mail addresses of the alumni members and published on the website also. The content of the newsletter could include news of TUAS and alumni; remind of upcoming events and share information about how past events went; reminders of applying periods of summer school at TUAS; information about upcoming seminars and how to attend them; and the like.

All in all, the communication of the alumni could be conducted via a website within the TUAS' website; facebook and newsletter send to personal e-mail accounts of the members. Communication regarding private matters could be through TUAS e-mail.

6 CONCLUSIONS

Several aspects need to be taken into account when designing an alumni network. The key aspects that must be considered are the purpose of the alumni; activities of the alumni; and how the communication of the alumni is managed. In the case of TUAS, the alumni will be living in various different countries all over the world; which is an important aspect as well. That means that the communication should be managed so that it is reached by the whole alumni, the best way to do that is using channels that are provided in internet. The cultural differences of the alumni members need to be noted; although, since all of the members have studied in Finland, they have been accustomed to Finnish culture. Even though, it is polite to be considerate about cultural

differences. A way of doing that is through TUAS Clubs in the locations of partnership institutions. TUAS Clubs are formed by the alumni and TUAS students on their exchange periods getting together and exploring the culture of the country in question.

The purpose of the alumni is to provide traineeship options for the international Degree students at TUAS but also the internationalisation of TUAS and to offer intercultural experiences of TUAS students and alumni. Offering career related activities to the alumni members and engaging them with TUAS will help to achieve the goal of finding traineeship possibilities for the TUAS students. The activities need to be formed so that they fit the purpose of the activities. Engaging the alumni with TUAS can be done in several different manners. The key aspects of the manners are to keep in contact with the alumni and to offer them activities that they are happy to participate and feel that the activities are beneficial to them. In the survey, the exchange students of spring semester 2013 wished to participate especially to the career related activities. Therefore, the career related activities should be offered and this is a good way to promote offering traineeships and employment to the current students of TUAS as well and not only to the alumni.

Social Media plays a big part in the communication of the alumni nowadays. This is what most alumni associations have realised and every day alumni news are first updated in social media and not on the websites. People generally spend a lot of their time in social networking sites, therefore it is important for the alumni to be present there as well. It is important to direct the communication to the channels that the target audience is using, currently for the alumni those would be facebook and e-mail; however, this may change in the future. Quarterly published newsletter send to the e-mail of the alumni members is a good add to the communication channels. The content of the newsletter would be alumni and TUAS related news; advertisements of different events and small reports of recent alumni events both at TUAS and at TUAS clubs.

All in all, alumni are to enhance the image of the institution and to benefit all the stakeholders. It is beneficial for the institution to have active alumni that are proud of having their education in the institution and to promote their good experience. For the alumni members is it important to network with other professionals of their field and alumni is a good way to do that as well as to have a platform that they can hire trainees or employees knowing that they have received a high quality education.

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Appendices

Appendix1. Alumni Network for Exchange Students - Survey

Alumni Network for Exchange Students

Basic Information

1. What is your gender? *

Female

Male

2. What is your age? *

20-24

25-29

30-34

Other, please specify

3. What is your home country? *

4. How long is your exchange programme? *

One semester

Two semesters

Other, please specify

5. In which campus are you studying at TUAS? *

- Joukahaisenkatu
- Lemminkäisenkatu
- Linnankatu
- Ruiskatu
- Salo
- Sepänkatu

6. Would you recommend others to have their international exchange period with TUAS? *

- Yes
- No
- I don't know
- Maybe

7. Which is the level of the Degree you are currently studying? *

- Bachelor
- Master

Future Plans

8. Are you interested in working abroad in the future? *

- Yes
- No
- I don't know
- Maybe

9. Are you interested in studying further abroad after finishing your current Degree? *

- Yes
- No
- I don't know
- Maybe

10. Are you interested in working in Finland in the future? *

- Yes
 No
 I don't know
 Maybe

11. Are you interested in working in another continent than your home continent in the future? *

- Yes
 No
 I don't know
 Maybe

Future Alumni

TUAS Alumni network is created for the graduated students of the University of Applied Sciences in question. TUAS is planning on creating a separate alumni network for the former exchange students of TUAS. The purpose of this survey is to find out which functions of the future alumni network would be ideal for the future member's point of view.

12. Through which media alumni should share information for the members? *

- Newsletter
 Magazine
 Blog
 Social Media
Other, please specify

13. Are you interested in joining alumni network for former TUAS exchange students? *

- Yes
 No
 I don't know

Maybe

14. Which of the following social activities would be that kind of alumni functions that you would be interested in participating? (You may choose as many as you like) *

Social gatherings (such as class reunions)

Forming and participating a TUAS club in your own home institution with former TUAS exchange students in your school and TUAS students having their exchange in your home institution (programme focusing on social and cultural experience)

Mentoring future exchange students in TUAS

Other, please specify

15. Which of the following career related activities would be that kind of alumni functions that you would be interested in participating? (You may choose as many as you like) *

Traineeship and job advertisements offered by other members of alumni

Offering traineeships and jobs in your future work for TUAS degree students

Reductions of price in summer school courses at TUAS

Possibility to attend seminars with professional speakers organized at TUAS

Possibility to attend seminars as a professional speaker organized at TUAS after alumni member is a professional

Recruiting events

Scholarship Programme for future studies in TUAS (Finnish institutions may introduce tuition fees for non-EU students in the future)

Career counseling

Information about thesis and practical training possibilities at TUAS and at alumni members' companies

Other, please specify

16. Which of the following social media tools you use most often? (Please choose 1-3 answers) *

Facebook

Twitter

- E-mail
- LinkedIn
- Turku University of Applied Sciences Intranet
- Blogs
- Youtube
- Google+
- Other, please specify

17. Would you be interested in having a lifelong e-mail address with TUAS?
(firstname.lastname@alumni.turkuamk.fi) *

- Yes
- No
- I don't know
- Maybe

18. Would you be interested in working as an international consultant to a Finnish company in your own country? *

- Yes
- No
- I don't know
- Maybe