

ALUMNI ACTIVITY DEVELOPMENT
Case Häme University of Applied Sciences Ltd.



Bachelor's thesis

Valkeakoski, International Business

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TIIVISTELMÄ

Tämän opinnäytetyön tavoitteena on selvittää, miten eri oppilaitokset toteuttavat alumnitoimintaa. Tutkimuksen tarkoituksena on vastata kysymykseen ”miten Hämeen ammattikorkeakoulu voi kehittää omaa alumnitoimintaansa”. Tutkimus on toteutettu yhteistyössä Hämeen ammattikorkeakoulun kanssa.

Hämeen ammattikorkeakoulu kouluttaa ammattilaisia monille eri aloille niin alemman kuin ylemmän ammattikorkeakoulututkinnon saralla. Hämeen ammattikorkeakoulussa tehdään myös tutkimus- ja kehitystyötä.

Työn tutkimusmetodina on laadullinen tutkimus. Analyysi koostettiin toteutettujen kyselyiden pohjalta. Alumnitoimintaan liittyvät kyselyt lähetettiin ennakoon valituille oppilaitoksille Suomeen sekä ulkomaille. Hämeen ammattikorkeakoulun Bachelor of Business Administration (BBA) alumneille tuotettiin oma kysely, jonka tarkoituksena oli kerätä tietoa alumnitoiminnan tilasta sekä saada kehitysideoita toiminnan parantamista varten. Toissijainen data kerättiin luotettavilta nettisivuilta, esimerkiksi oppilaitosten nettisivuja hyödyntäen.

Tutkimuksessa selvisi, että Hämeen ammattikorkeakoulu voi kehittää alumnitoimintaansa muun muassa parantamalla alumnitoiminnan näkyvyyttä, siihen liittyvää tietoisuutta sekä yhteydenpitoa alumneihin. Yhtenä kehitysehdotuksena on opiskelijoiden sitouttaminen alumnitoimintaan jo opiskelujen aikana sekä alumnienvälisten aktiviteettien tarjoamalla erilaisia etuja ja alennuksia.

Avainsanat Alumni, alumnitoiminta, verkosto, alumnitoiminnan kehittäminen

Sivut 53 sivua, joista liitteitä 16 sivua

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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this thesis is to find out how different schools have organized their alumni activity. The research aims to answer the question “How can Häme University of Applied Sciences develop its own alumni activity”. This research has been conducted in co-operation with Häme University of Applied Sciences.

Häme University of Applied Sciences educates future professionals in many different fields in Bachelor’s as well as Master’s degree levels. Häme University of Applied Sciences operates also in the research and development field.

The research method in this thesis is qualitative. Data for the analysis was collected from the surveys made. Alumni activity-based surveys were sent to the selected schools in Finland and abroad. A questionnaire for the Bachelor of Business Administration (BBA) alums of Häme University of Applied Sciences aimed to gather information about the current situation and how the alumni activity can be developed. Secondary data was collected from reliable sources including for example schools' webpages.

The research revealed Häme University of Applied Sciences can develop its alumni activity for example by increasing the visibility, awareness of the activity and communication with the alums. Some of the participating alums were not familiar with the alumni activity Häme University of Applied Sciences offers. One improvement idea is to engage students into alumni activity already during their studies and to motivate alums to participate by offering different kinds of benefits and discounts.

Keywords Alum, alumni, alumni activity, network, alumni activity development

Pages 53 pages including appendices 16 pages

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Appendix 3 Alumni activity questionnaire for HAMK alumni

1 INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background

Alumni activity is an important part of schools networking and development. The activity aims to maintain a long-life co-operation between the school and its alums and therefore create connections to work life. The importance of alums and well-functioning alumni activity has been noticed at HAMK. The alumni activity development is a part of HAMK's "HAMK vision 2030" development programme. That is why this thesis commission appeared.

1.2 Research Question

The research question that the writer aims to answer in this thesis is "How can Häme University of Applied Sciences develop its alumni activity" more closely to HAMK's School of Entrepreneurship and Business.

The research question is supported with the question "How is alumni activity organized in the selected schools". This question's meaning is to help the writer to collect information from different schools and become more aware of the different ways schools operate in the alumni activity field. In the research both UNI and UAS can be titled as "university" or a "school" in information related to both, but in more specific information schools will be separated with UNI and UAS terms.

The writer's main goal is to answer the research question. By collecting information about other school's alumni activity and comparing those with HAMK's and analysing HAMK's BBA alums opinions and ideas the research question can be answered. This study has been made to fulfil HAMK's needs for alumni activity development but other schools with same situation can find the research useful too.

1.3 Company Information

Häme University of Applied Sciences (HAMK) is a Finnish university of applied sciences operating in southern Finland area. HAMK has over 7 000 students and over 600 staff members who work and study in 7 different campuses. HAMK's main campus is in Hämeenlinna and other campuses are located in Valkeakoski, Riihimäki, Forssa, Lepaa, Evo and Mustiala. (HAMK, n.d.)

HAMK has 37 degree programmes, including 7 international programmes, the international programmes are held fully in English. HAMK also has four research units: HAMK Bio for sustainable bioenergy, HAMK Edu for

innovative expertise, HAMK Smart for intelligent services and HAMK Tech for technology for future. (HAMK, n.d.)

Internationality is important and HAMK has co-operation with over 150 schools around the world. Such co-operation enables for example straightforward student exchange and different projects between schools. From a business perspective, HAMK has 1 700 cooperation partners.

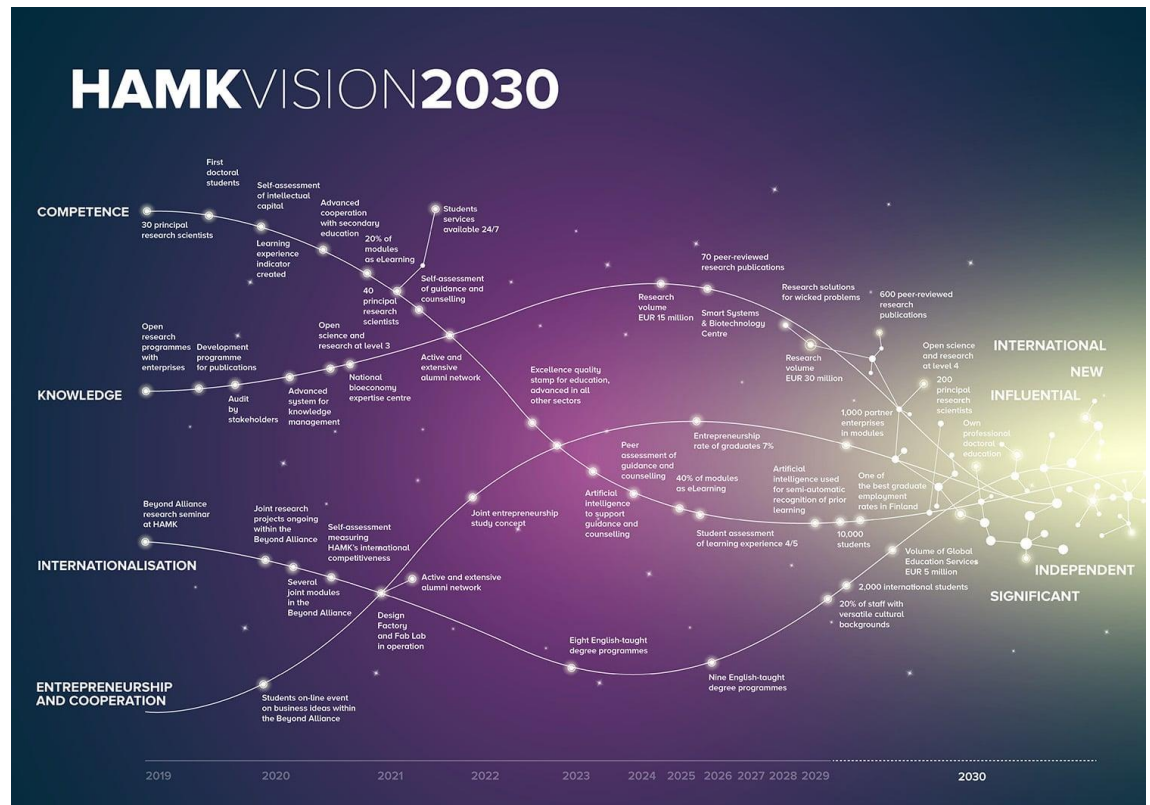


Figure 1. HAMK vision 2030 (HAMK, n.d.)

HAMK is willing to develop its alumni activity in the very near future. HAMK's general visions until the year 2030 can be seen in the figure 1. The figure shows that HAMK aims to create an active and extensive alum network between the years 2021 and 2022. This research aims to support that goal.

1.4 Methodology

This research uses qualitative method, as well as primary and secondary data. The primary data for this research was collected from the several surveys the author created. The author send an email survey to few people who are working in alumni activity field in HAMK. The separate surveys were sent to HAMK's BBA alums and 6 selected schools in Finland and abroad. The author has translated some answers from Finnish to English. The secondary data used for this study has been conducted from the various reliable sources online. The reason for the online sources used as

a secondary data is the lack of literature and adequate articles related to the topic.

1.5 Thesis structure

This thesis includes introduction, theory part, research and analysis chapter, conclusion, references and appendices. The theory part makes the reader familiar with the word alumni as well as the basics of alumni activity, its benefits for the schools and alums and the used communication channels. HAMK's alumni activity and the differences in universities alumni activity in selected schools are covered. Some information have been gained by benchmarking UNI/UAS's websites.

The research and analysis part tell the reader all the needed information about the research methods, researches itself and the answers. The chapter includes two different questionnaires and separate analysis for both.

The conclusion ties up the research and gives recommendations for the HAMK's alumni activity development. The references and appendices can be found in the end of the work.

2 THEORETICAL BACKGROUND

2.1 Definition of alumni

Alum, alumni, alumna, alums, alumnus and alumnae, all of them are used to describe person(s) graduated from college or university. Former students including exchange students and even those who have not graduated can be titled as alums, as well as school's staff (University of Helsinki, 2019). As there are many different forms to describe an alum, there are also specific guidelines for male and female graduates as well as for singular and plural.

A female graduate is called alumna. Alumna is used to describe one single female graduate. A group of multiple graduated women is called Alumnae. So, Alumnae is Alumna's plural and is used when talking about at least two or more women. (Merriam-Webster, n.d.)

Same as for females, males have their own forms too. Male graduate is called alumnus and group of male graduates is called alumni. Word "alumni" is also used to describe a group including both men and women. Sometimes people misleadingly call themselves alumni even the correct title for singular graduate is alumnus or alumna. Alumni is always used for plural. (Merriam-Webster, n.d.)

“You, an individual, can’t be alumni any more than you can be a students. So what are you? If you are a man, you are an alumnus. If you are a woman you are an alumna” (Todd Pettigrew, 2012).

When willing to avoid categorising people by their gender, shortened version “alum” is a neutral version to use for one single graduate. Bigger group of graduates in either gender can be called alums. In the world that we live right now, conversations about equality and gender neutrality goes on and on. (Merriam-Webster, n.d.) In the future use of alum for singular and alums for plural may slowly fade the use of alumnus and alumna as well as alumni and alumnae.

2.2 Alum activity

Alumni activity means interaction between school and their alums. The main idea is to benefit both alums and school. For schools, alums are a very valuable connection link to working life, for example offering work placements, thesis topics or other work-life related projects for current students and jobs for soon graduating ones. (Haaga-Helia, n.d; HAMK 2019)

Attending to alumni activity offers an opportunity for alums to take part into developing the better education for future alums. Activities include different activities, such as different kind of events and visiting speakers as well as opportunities in research and degree programme development tasks. As a registered alum it is possible to network easily with other alums from the same university and in the events, it is possible to get to know the current students and staff too. (Haaga-Helia, n.d; Karelia n.d.)

2.3 Activities

When talking about alumni activities, it usually brings to mind activities universities provide for their alums. Activities can be organized by the university or the alums and activities can take place at school or somewhere else, even in the different country. Universities together with their old graduates provide many different kinds of events and opportunities for the future alums too.

Each university operates in their own way with regards to their own alumni activities, but the combining factor is the aim to accomplish a positive atmosphere for interaction and learning. By attending university events current students may for example get a chance to get to know and learn from old students’ time and experiences in the university. Alums can also share their best tips related to studies, work and life in general.

2.4 Alumni network

Alums together with the university create an alumni network. An alumni network is a community where registered old students can stay in touch with their university and contact other alums.

Every university can create their own alumni network. Universities can take care of their network by themselves or it can be organized by separate alumni association. Alums can join their university's alum network by registering their contact details. Registering fees may apply but there are also schools where alumni activity is free of charge.

"The greater the alumni community, the stronger the University" (University of Helsinki, 2019).

Having an alumni network and being part of it creates positive opportunities and benefits both school and the alums. An active alumni community at its best is a worldwide network full of specialists from different fields of studies (Haaga Helia, n.d.). Networking is not only happening between the schools and their graduated students or teachers; alums communicate also together creating even stronger network.

For the universities, alums are the connecting glue between them and work life. As mentioned before, alums have a great variety of expertise which can be used for example in developing the study programmes or creating alumni activities. (HAMK, 2019.)

3 BENEFITS

The alum activity works two ways and it is important it benefits the both parties involved. Universities and alums' benefits from the alum activity differ mainly from each other. The main combining factor is the network which widens connections for both parties.

This chapter has been divided into two. The alum activity benefits for the university is handled first following the benefits for the alums.

3.1 Benefits for the university

Alums are valuable for universities in many ways. As already mentioned, alums have their own personal contacts which widen the network and can be useful in some point. Alums can share their knowledge, help the current students and even donate money for the universities and their alumni activities.

3.1.1 Speakers / Guest lecturers

Alums are often asked to come to their old school from where they graduated and give speeches for example in different events to current students about their own journeys from the beginning to the point where they are now (Haaga Helia, n.d.). These kinds of visits give the students an opportunity to hear what types of tasks or jobs their field of study could possibly lead to. Meeting “living examples” and listening to their stories can also motivate and help students dream and think outside the box when it comes to working life and the thoughts about a future workplace.

Alums’ different stories of life and their career paths after graduation are important for universities to raise awareness, attract and interact with possible new students and for marketing their different study programmes. Other than location and study programme, future students’ school applying decisions are affected also by the information they collect online, visions they have about the school and what they have heard from their friends and family (Kytönen, 2018, s.11, s. 55-56)

3.1.2 Recruiting

Alums can connect with students in multiple other ways than just lecturing or writing an article or blog post to a school’s websites. During their studies, many students find their work placements and thesis topics through their school’s alumni network. After graduation some can even find a job from that same alumni network or based on their work placement and/or thesis.

Schools have their own channels or apps to publish job opportunities, work placements and companies with thesis topics/projects available. Other than that, schools and companies may have different partnership contracts which can include for example guaranteed number of summer jobs for the students. Sometimes these contracts include that schools recommend best fitting students based on the study performance to the partner company’s employee who is responsible about the recruiting process.

3.1.3 Mentors

Alums can sign up for working as a mentor and share their knowledge with students. Mentoring gives an amazing opportunity to both share knowledge and learn in personal and professional level. (Haaga Helia, n.d.)

When alum answers to student’s question about why something is like it is or happens like it happens, student will gain information and with the right questions’ alum can get new perspective for his/her vision. Too often we keep certain things and activities crystal clear and do not bother to

think why we do them like we do and not even trying to find new ways to develop our ways of thinking or processes we do. As students rely much into the information they have gained from books or at the lectures at school, the practical examples mentors can share with them from working life is very valuable. Student can also rely on his/her mentor in the questions and concerns about the future career plans and ask help and support for the process of growing a professional (Aalto, n.d.).

Like personal and group mentoring, alums can help students with start-up projects. Creating a business requires a lot of work and extra help is often very welcomed. Mentor can help the students get the best out of their start-ups and boost their motivation towards the actual well-functioning business as well as support if the road feels rocky sometimes. As mentor's have an actual experience about work life they know details and tricks which students may not even realise to think about.

3.1.4 Clubs

As one university's alum network can cover many continents, some universities alums have established their own local alum clubs closer to where they live. Universities by themselves may also have established alum clubs for larger geographic alum audience, for example for Europe or Asia. Smaller, local alum clubs are basically university's own alum club's side clubs and operate under university's name and support. University for example from Europe may have alum clubs around the world depending where their alum networks are centralized. (University of Helsinki, 2019)

Abroad alum clubs offer alums possibility to physically get together and meet with other ex-graduates who have also changed country after graduation. Other than creating a social network between alums, these clubs can be in connect with the local businesses making the University's overall network even wider. Alum clubs can have events in their own area as travelling to their old university's events could be challenging. (University of Helsinki, 2019)

3.1.5 Development of education

Especially University of Applied Sciences' aim to respond working life's needs. The alums are an important recourse for every school for collecting the information about the current trends the upcoming needs. The alums are also valuable specialist in other way. The alums have studied in the school and may have noticed something that could be improved to make the studying, degree programme or the school organization more efficient.

3.1.6 Donations

Donations are important for schools. Received donations can for example allow school to develop their study programmes or to organize alum event. Donations benefits schools and their operation so much, that without the donors help for example development in certain parts of organization could be impossible.

Research units are usually very keen about donations. Many research projects are made possible by donations of alums, cooperation partners or other supporters. Currently many schools have for example asked donations for their research for creating a vaccine against COVID-19.

If not thinking money wise, time, networks and professionalism alum give to their old school is one kind of donation. Alums do not get paid for their acts for the school, but they still want to offer their time and help.

3.2 Benefits to Alum / motivating

Schools provide different benefits and discounts to their alums. These benefits differentiate from country to country and from school to school. Some alums get discounts when travelling, when some may get an access to the university's gym or an open university course free of choice. (Stanford, n.d; University of Helsinki, 2020)

The type of discounts and benefits obviously vary, so does the price of the membership. Some schools offer the same benefits automatically for all their registered alums with no extra fee, when on the other hand some universities may require buying an alum membership to reach the discounts and benefits which can cost for example 600 euros (for lifetime). (Stanford, n.d; University of Helsinki, 2020)

3.2.1 Library

Almost always registered alums are welcomed to use their university's library services freely and free of charge. It means alums do not have to say goodbye to the large and great source of scientific information.

University libraries are usually easily accessible due to the location and are full of different sector wise sources of knowledge. City libraries are perfect when looking for books with general knowledge, but more deep and specific professional books are usually hard to find elsewhere than campus libraries and bookstores.

3.2.2 Network

As we already know, alums and their universities interact with each other. Alum can take advantage of the school's relations and look for possible candidates for available jobs, projects, thesis's or work placements. This kind of cooperation benefits all parties; alums can find workforce and at the same time help student(s) to earn credits for studies.

Taking part to the university's different events as a speaker or just showing up to have a nice time, gives an opportunity to meet new people. Depending about the event it is possible to gain new contacts for example among students or meet old friends from university years. These contacts can create new opportunities, help to find a suitable person for your company's needs and so on.

Visiting at school's events as a guest speaker teaches performing skills and gives courage. Many people feel nervous about speaking in public, but once getting used to it, it feels amazing to share the knowledge with others.

Being present among people not only create contacts but brings visibility to the company you are working for. Especially for entrepreneurs and small businesses visibility and new contacts are important. Attending to some event or maybe giving a small speech does not necessarily mean a big investment in time and money wise but can give much back.

If alum wants to get more visibility to his/her company or employer, his/her company can arrange a company visit to other alums or current students. Company visit increase the awareness about the company and its functions and can raise the willingness to interact. Interaction can mean for example applying a job or creating cooperation between businesses.

3.2.3 Spaces

Some universities offer their alums possibility to rent classrooms and other spaces for example for class reunions. What place could bring more memories about study years into mind than the old school?

Universities may even have a special area for their alums. These kind of alum spaces may include for example launch room for hanging out, computer room for work, library for data acquisition or conference room for more official meetings.

3.2.4 Events and other activities

Schools and alum associations organize a large variety of different kind of events for their alums. Alums can attend the events as a guest or then sign for giving a speech for example. Lessons and seminars help alums to stay up to date and strengthen their knowledge in various topics. Events and other activities provided for alums are excellent opportunity to network and learn from other attendees.

3.2.5 Alumni of the year

Being active and helping the university to develop their study programmes or other activities are in some schools taken into account. Every year some universities reward the most enthusiastic and assiduous alum from his/her contribution and commitment with a “alumni of the year” -award.

Giving recognition for the alum who has made a great job to help the university to become better is a one great example to show respect for all the Alums. It shows Alums are important and the work they do for the universities is very valuable and noticed.

3.2.6 Discounts and benefits

Signing up for university’s alum may give great benefits and valuable discounts. Discounts and other benefits vary but can be linked for example for travel, recreation, career, education, financial, consumer services, hobbies and on campus activities. (Stanford, n.d.)

Travel and recreation discounts can include for example hotels, cabins, flights, car rentals and specified attractions. For a lot travelling alum these discounts can save a big penny considering the person who pay full prices.

Career and education section can include anything which benefits alums career or educational level. Benefits can be for example discounts or gift cards on study courses, free access into online database of publications or meeting with a career coach for free.

Benefits in financial and consumer service field can be related into different loans for example car and home, discounts from websites or service providers, credit card deals or so on.

Hobbies and campus activity category can be anything from trips discounts to cheaper gym membership or discounted wine tasting night. Some of this category’s discounts and benefits are similar to recreation’s as the line between the categories is so narrow.

Alum newsletter keeps alums up to date what have happened and what is upcoming at their old school. Newsletter's publishing frequency depends about the school, but usually "updates" will be sent at least few times a year. Alum newsletter is probably the easiest way for alum to stay updated and in touch with the school.

3.2.7 Mentoring

Mentoring current students gives an alum a possibility to share her/his expertise. Helping and supporting students helps to network and gives a great possibility to give back to university.

3.2.8 Research projects

Taking part into different projects benefits alums by for example deepening and widening their skills. Projects are also a great opportunity to apply during the studies gained knowledge skills into real life action. During the projects, many new relationships can also be created.

4 COMMUNICATION CHANNELS

Today, year 2020, it is hard to think about life without mobile phones, computers, internet, or social media. People carry phones everywhere they go, and have access to the internet easily with their phone. Going back into our grandparents youthhood it was a luxury to have a phone or computer with internet access, nowadays it is extraordinary if someone does not have them.

Not many people send letters or post cards anymore, maybe just for a birthday or for Christmas. Why? Because life now a days is too hectic to wait many days or weeks for a reply when there are so many quicker, and cheaper, alternatives available. People can communicate with their friends, family and colleagues so easily by email or phone, or then by using different apps such as WhatsApp, Facebook Messenger or Skype which will deliver the message basically in real time even to the other side of the world.

This chapter different communication channels, which can be used in alum activity. Social media platforms are introduced more closely as understanding the differences in their functions helps to understand why some platform works better for some function than the other.

4.1 Social media

According to the time and the world we live in interaction between universities, their alums and partners happens mostly online in different channels. Communicating through the internet is effective as alum networks are so wide and spread around the world. Because of internalization for example not all the alums cannot come to the UNI/UAS, schools must build their way to them.

Social media does not have a one clear definition now a days, but earlier it was called the combination of technology, communities, and contents. (Kortesuo, 2018, p. 15) Social media is a common name for online platforms and apps where people can interact with each other and share different contents to others (Hintikka, n.d.). Social media platforms and apps offer a different alternative for interaction. People who are the most interested about a visual content will most likely use Instagram than for example LinkedIn.

4.1.1 Facebook

Facebook, after all the scandals it has faced, is still the most popular social media platform in the world in 2019 (Aydin, 2019; Ahmad 2019). At the first quarter of 2019, Facebook had about 2.37 billion monthly active users. From that 2.37 billion monthly users, 1.56 million use Facebook daily. (Hutchinson, 2019)

In Facebook, people build their own network by sending friend requests to other registered users. Users can post texts, pictures, videos etc to their own timeline and choose if they want the post to be public to everybody who may view the profile or private when it will be visible just for the friends in the network (GCF Global, n.d.).

Users can join to groups of different interest and share content as well as read other people posts. Groups can be public when everybody can see the posted contents, or private when only members of the group can see the posts from other members.

For private and group conversations Facebook has its own instant messaging platform Facebook Messenger which is for registered Facebook users. It is similar to normal text messages, but messages do not pay anything.

Many Universities have their own Facebook profile to update their news, connect and some have group's for their study classes, groups and alums. Schools can use Facebook for Business effectively for marketing and monitor their posts and ads coverage.

4.1.2 LinkedIn

LinkedIn is a network for professionals (LinkedIn, n.d.). Its basic idea is similar to Facebook, but conversations and posts are much more professional. LinkedIn users focus on producing professionally interesting content and often opinions and advices are wanted.

Like in Facebook, users can create their own network by connecting or following interesting people (LinkedIn, n.d.). Messaging platform is available for personal conversations. Groups can be created, and for example some universities use this feature to bring their alums together. Companies are also active in LinkedIn updating the latest news related to them and introducing new products to their audience for example. Companies can be followed the same way as people.

By updating professional details and interests, user can search for a job through LinkedIn and get notifications if his/her profile match to job available. Some jobs can be applied as easy as with the user profile without needing to fill any other information or forms.

LinkedIn offers a large variety of different courses, articles, and trainings to the users to develop their professional skills. Users can complete courses for example about Microsoft Office in LinkedIn to confirm their skills and get a “badge” if they succeed well enough in the “exam”. (LinkedIn, n.d.).

Hashtags are often added to the post to gain more visibility as people following that specific hashtag are more likely to see the post and it is easier to find when someone is searching for posts with that same hashtag.

4.1.3 Twitter

Twitter has about 321 million active users monthly (Jacob Castrenakes, 2019). Twitter’s most recognizable feature is the way of communication – tweets. Users can post tweets which can be up to 280 characters. Photos, videos, links, gif’s and emojis can be included. (Twitter, n.d.)

Differentiating for example from Facebook, Twitter shows its users tweets in chronological order the newest on top. Twitter users follow the happenings around the world closely and when something happens quite quickly someone has already made a tweet about it. Twitter has also been used for sharing a false news, which sometimes spread very effectively around the country or even the world.

Tweets are public for everybody, for those who does not have registered account also. So, depending on user’s interest and the accounts they follow, users basically have the whole world in front of them. Sharing the same interest lead people together, user from Europe can for example see

and react to tweet made by someone living in United States or India. Users can also communicate privately with each other. (Twitter, n.d.)

Like many other social media platforms, hashtags are hugely popular and used in Twitter too to make your own tweet to get more publicity and same category tweets are easily reachable by just clicking the hashtag in the post. (Wire, 2018)

Companies use Twitter for example to announce new products, share interesting news and take part into conversations. For schools Twitter is a one option for sharing news and events and to network with people.

4.1.4 Youtube

YouTube is video sharing platform, to where everyone can upload their video contents. Monthly, YouTube has 1,5 milliard registered users (YouTube Ads, n.d.).

This kind of video platform is obviously not used for a real daily communication purposes, but it is handy platform for uploading and sharing videos. Marketing material videos are often uploaded to YouTube from where they are easily accessible for people interested. Videos are also insertable for example to school's websites or Facebook. Other than marketing purposes, schools use YouTube for saving and sharing lecture videos for their students, or other interested, depending on whether the video is set private or public.

4.1.5 Instagram

Instagram has over 1 billion active account users every month (Instagram, n.d.). Instagram is focused on visual contents and it gives its users a possibility to publish and share their pictures videos to the online platform for free.

Users can follow their friends and interesting celebrities or companies and interact with them by commenting or giving a heart (=like) to their post. Live videos are possible to do as well as 24 hours lasting stories, which can be either photos or videos. (Instagram, 2020).

Because of the popularity especially among the young people, companies with favourable customer segment have started to use Instagram for marketing purposes too along for example with Facebook. For universities, Instagram gives a possibility to reach especially their younger "customers" – students in marketing purposes. Schools also have Instagram accounts for networking and communicating for example with their alums or cooperation partners.

4.2 Traditional ways

Even taking into account the fact that social media and online communication tools are hugely popular, not all traditional ways of communication have disappeared. Obviously, schools still somewhat rely on post when sending different kind of information; diplomas, invitations, and some still even publish printed journals and send them for example to their alums and partners.

4.2.1 Email

Electric mail, more familiarly email is like a traditional letter but in electric form. Emails are quick, easy, and widely used way of communication. More than a basic text, attachments can be added. Attachments can include for example photos, videos, links, records or calendar invitations.

Newsletter subscription is universities way to offer alums up to date information about what is happening in the university now and in the future. At most cases newsletter comes once a month to make sure alums stay aware of the latest news, but the frequency of course depends about the university. Sometimes there are multiple different subscriptions from which alums can choose the most relevant and interesting ones for themselves. (Stanford, n.d.)

4.2.2 Calls and text messages

Some schools find text messages and calls useful for connecting their alums. Text messages can be easy for example for spreading an urgent information or agreeing a meeting or so on. Calls can be used for example for personal contacting and interviewing.

5 ALUMNI ACTIVITY AT HAMK

Currently HAMK has about 100 registered alums around the world. This relatively small number of alums can be explained with the fact that alumni activity has earlier been organized by alum association. HAMK is willing to develop its operations in alum field, and vision about HAMK in 2030 (Figure 1) includes two mentions about active and extensive alum network.

Registering to HAMK alum is free and it does not obligate to anything. Registering can be easily done by filling the signing form which's link can be found from HAMK's website. At the same time when filling the registration form alum can decide if he/she wants to receive HAMK's newsletter which offers monthly updates from what is happening inside the walls of HAMK. (HAMK, n.d.)

This chapter focuses on alumni activity and how it is operated at HAMK. HAMK's alum activities, networking, communication, and motivating methods are elaborated. Some information has been conducted by the survey for HAMK's alumni activity related employees.

5.1 Activities

This part focuses on alum activities at HAMK. Some examples of HAMK's events are given with short details and descriptions.

At HAMK alum meetings are often arranged among the other events. Degree programmes carry responsibility about the events and how often they organize gatherings for their alums. Some get-togethers have been arranged abroad by the alums themselves.

5.1.1 HAMK Alumni Event

HAMK Alumni Event is a yearly event for alums, and it is organized by HAMK. Event takes place at HAMK's Hämeenlinna Campus.

In 2019, the event included inter alia rector's speech, awarding HAMK's first ever alum of the year and the opportunity to attend Nordic Business Forum through the stream was offered.

5.1.2 Career Days

Career Days is a 2-day networking event which takes place at HAMK's Valkeakoski Campus. The organizer of the event is HAMK's Go Strong - project. (HAMK, 2020)

The event's main idea is to help international students become employed; create connections between people and especially with companies operating nearby. Different workshops for example give students a possibility to refine their CV's or LinkedIn profiles with someone who knows what is appealing and what is not professional. Students can gain valuable tips for job hunt from alums and hear them sharing their personal career stories. (HAMK, 2020)

5.1.3 BitFest

BitFest is organized at HAMK's Hämeenlinna campus by HAMK's Business IT degree programme. BitFest is a "multidisciplinary IT-seminar". The event's focus is in e-sports, but for example automation, entrepreneurship, design, and business topics are represented too. (HAMK, 2020)

The event has a free entry and it is organized fully in English. The target group includes HAMK's students, local businesses and everyone interested about the event's topic. (HAMK, 2020)

5.1.4 Maalispäivä

Maalispäivä is targeted for HAMK's design students and alums. The event is organized by HAMK's Design degree students and it takes place in the HAMK's Hämeenlinna campus. (HAMK, 2019)

The event is all about design, career stories and branding your skills. The old students, alums, tell current students what they have been up to after graduating from the HAMK's Design degree and how they have achieved all that they have now. (HAMK, 2019)

5.2 Networking

If alums are titled as a school's link to the working life, HAMK Talents is a link between employers and employees. HAMK Talents brings employers and HAMK's students and graduates together. HAMK Talents can be used by app or web browser of choice. Service is free for all users – both companies and job seekers.

Students can register to the platform and express their personal talents. Creating a profile gives students possibility to tell possible future employers their expertise and profile can be updated when new skills or knowledge are achieved. Open jobs can be applied easily with the existing profile. (Tiitus, n.d.)

Companies can publish their open jobs including for example thesis topics, projects, work placements and summer jobs to HAMK Talents from where registered job seekers can find company's job advertisement. Companies can define what kind of person or skills they are looking for. Employers can set a selected school's job seekers in their target. Companies can contact students and graduates directly also if they so wish. (Tiitus, n.d.)

5.3 Communication

5.3.1 Email

HAMK uses email to contact alums in informative purposes. Depending on the choice's alum has made, in addition to newsletter for alums he/she may also receive HAMK's general newsletter once a month.

The registered HAMK alums get contacted three times a year by alum newsletter. The newsletter's idea is to update alums and give them the latest information from the inside of HAMK. The alum newsletter is only available in Finnish language at the moment.

5.3.2 LinkedIn

In LinkedIn HAMK has a group for its BBA/MBA alums. Languages used in the group are Finnish and English.

HAMK uses the group to share information about the events, job opportunities and other news about the topics concerning the alums. For alums, the group offers an opportunity to communicate freely with each other, network and share information with each other.

5.3.3 Facebook

HAMK uses Facebook in many different ways. Of course, Facebook is one of the channels where potential new students or partners can be reached. HAMK has its own main Facebook page and study programmes may have their own pages'. The different degree programmes have their own Facebook groups for their students and some even set up private groups for each grade.

HAMK's main Facebook page is for informing all the students, staff, partners and everyone somehow connected or just interested about HAMK's news. The degree programme's own pages are more specific, and information is mainly highly related to the degree. Class groups however can contain basically anything from the news to questions what classroom the lesson will be held in.

5.3.4 Blog

In HAMK's blog alum stories are shared for others. Alums get an opportunity to speak up about their experiences, how they found their first job after graduation and so on. Shared alum stories are great example for the future students what their life could be at HAMK and after the graduation.

5.4 Motivating

There are two main ways of motivating HAMK have at the moment; the newsletter three times a year, which is as earlier mentioned only in Finnish, and awarding the alum of the year. The study programmes may have their own degree specific discounts or other motivating ways for their alums but

HAMK does not have any concerted discount or benefits. Basically, all the motivating part rely on the alums themselves. Alums must find their inner motivation to take part into alum activities and give back to the school without getting too many benefits from HAMK.

5.5 Co-operation

HAMK co-operates in alum matter with the other schools. At the moment HAMK is part of a project called “AMKista uralle – uraseurantatiedot käyttöön” which roughly translated means from UAS to work and getting information about how alums have placed to working life after their graduation from HAMK. This project should help HAMK to follow their alums career paths more closely.

6 RESEARCH AND ANALYSIS

In this chapter the data collection methods, research groups and surveys' contents will be introduced. The collected data will be explained following the analysis of the results.

6.1 Data collection methods

This research uses qualitative method. Structured interview was chosen as there were specific questions wanted to be answered. Both surveys included ready answer options and open questions. The surveys were available in Finnish and English. The participants could choose the favourable language for themselves. The writer has translated some answers from Finnish to English.

6.2 Alum activity in Finland

In Finland, the universities have started the alumni activity in 1970s. UAS's have followed behind in the beginning of 2000 (Linko, 2016, s. 10). As the Finnish universities have a longer history in the alumni activity field than alternative UAS's UNI's alumni activity is still more advanced. Many University of Applied Sciences are still struggling to make their alumni activity efficient and extensive.

As in Finland both UAS' and UNI' aim to achieve the quite similar goals with their alumni activity. An active communication and a diverse co-operation between the alum and the UNI/UAS is one of the main targets for both. For UAS' alums are also important source of information by transmitting the newest information about the needs. The UAS' can develop their operation and degree programmes to reflect the working life's needs.

6.3 Alum activity abroad

In the USA the alumni activity has started in 1700 (Linko, 2016, s.10). In the countries where alumni activity has been organized for a long time the alumni activity has been developed into a different level than for example in Finland. As for some schools the alumni activity is just a networking tool, for some it is for example a very important way to collect funds from the previous students for the school and so on to make sure the school can operate in the future too (Linko, 2016, s.11).

Depending on the school, registering as an alum and getting the access to the benefits and discounts can cost money. Basically, the main idea is the same as for example the gym membership, you pay to be a member and gain an access into everything fun. The discounts and benefits vary from the special alumni credit cards to the discounts from insurances and much more.

6.4 Questionnaire for alums

The alumni activity questionnaire for HAMK alums focused on the current opinions about HAMK's alumni activity and how alums would like it to be developed. The questionnaire was shared mainly through the HAMK's social media channels. The questionnaire targeted BBA alums, this specific group was chosen because the larger audience would have required a wider scale of answer options which would have been too massive a task with the resources available. The survey was available both in Finnish and English. The questionnaire included the background information questions and the actual questions related to the alumni activity.

6.4.1 Background questions

The background questions asked participants gender, graduation year, study history, degree programme, study mode, work situation, job title, employer's sector of business and demographical location, and how the studies at HAMK have supported their career. The actual alumni activity questions asked and measured the satisfaction about HAMK's alumni activity in general but also about events, discounts and benefits, communication. Alums were also asked if and how they would like to co-operate with HAMK and what time of the year would be the best for organising an alumni event. Mostly alums were first asked to rate their experience about the specific topic from 1-10, following the open question about their development ideas.

22 alums answered the survey. Nine of the participants were women, 12 were men and one preferred not to tell. The figure 2 shows 8 of the participants graduated in 2019. Years 2020, 2018 and 2016 had 3 participants each. The two participating alums had graduated in 2013, and

the rest 3 participants have finished their school in the years 2015, 2014 and 2011.

2. Year of graduation

Number of respondents: 22

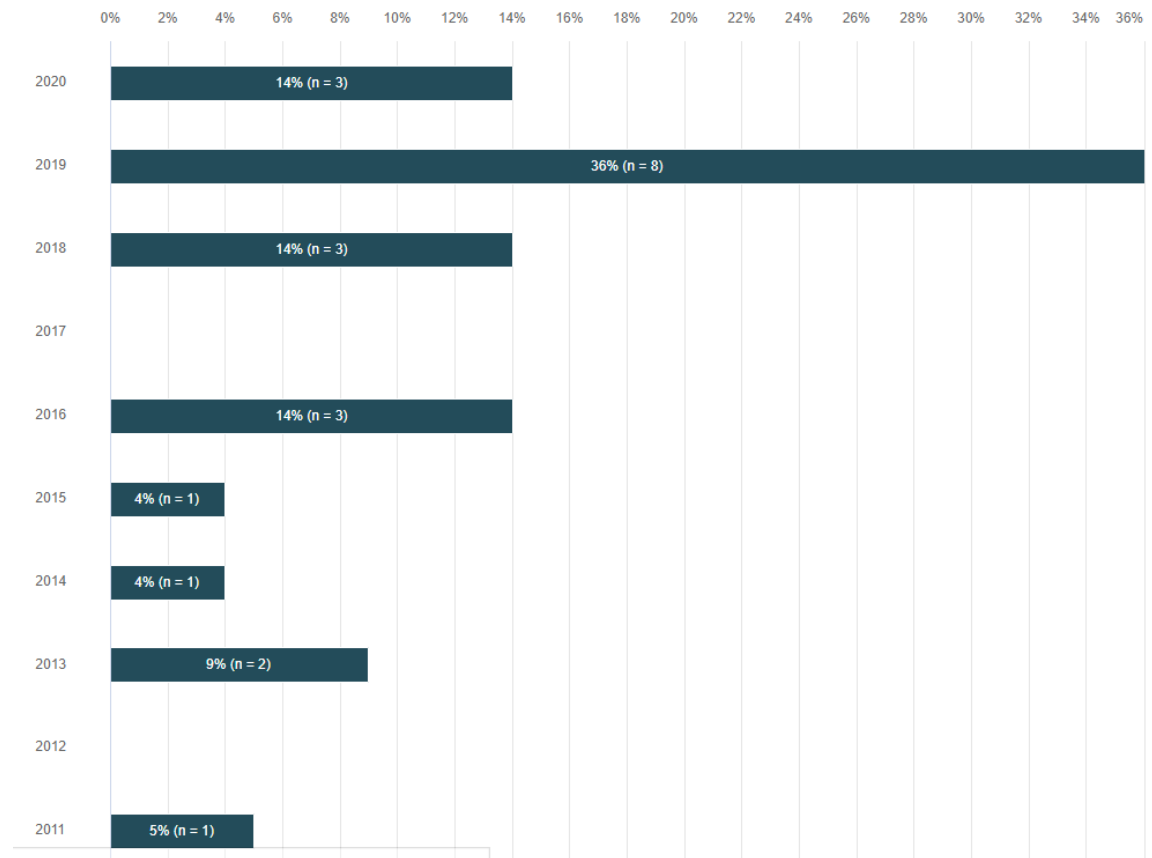


Figure 2. Year of graduation

Every alum who participated to the survey had done their studies in bachelor level. The 86% (19) studied full-time and 14% (3) part-time. The figure 3. shows that 55% had completed International business -degree, 9% were alums of the Liiketalous (Business) and 36% graduated from the Tietojenkäsittely (IT) degree.

4. Degree programme you studied at HAMK

Number of respondents: 22, selected answers: 22

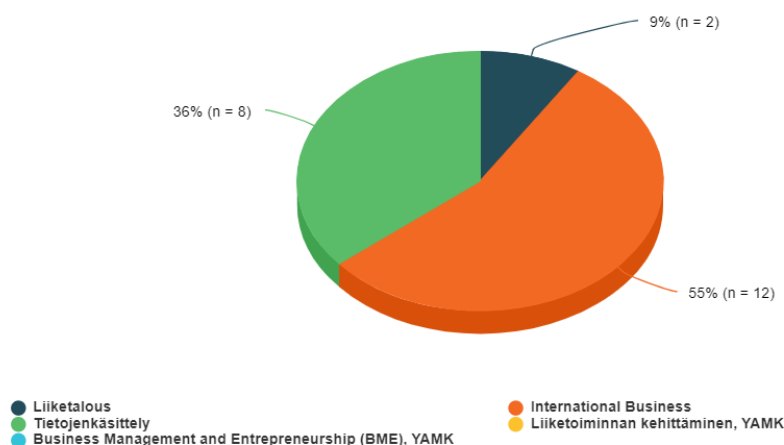


Figure 3. Degree programme studied at HAMK

When asked about the current employment status, 21 (95%) of the participants signed up as an employee and only 1 (5%) is currently unemployed.

The figure 4 shows the employer's sector in business varied from the IT to consultation and coaching. The majority's employer operated in the IT sector, which is obvious as the 36% percent of the participants studied in Tietojenkäsittely (IT) at HAMK. Spread of the answers in the Figure 4 can be easily explained as the field of business has a wide variety of the different sector options. The fields of businesses with 0 answers have been removed from the diagram to make it easier to read.

7. Employer's sector in business

Number of respondents: 22

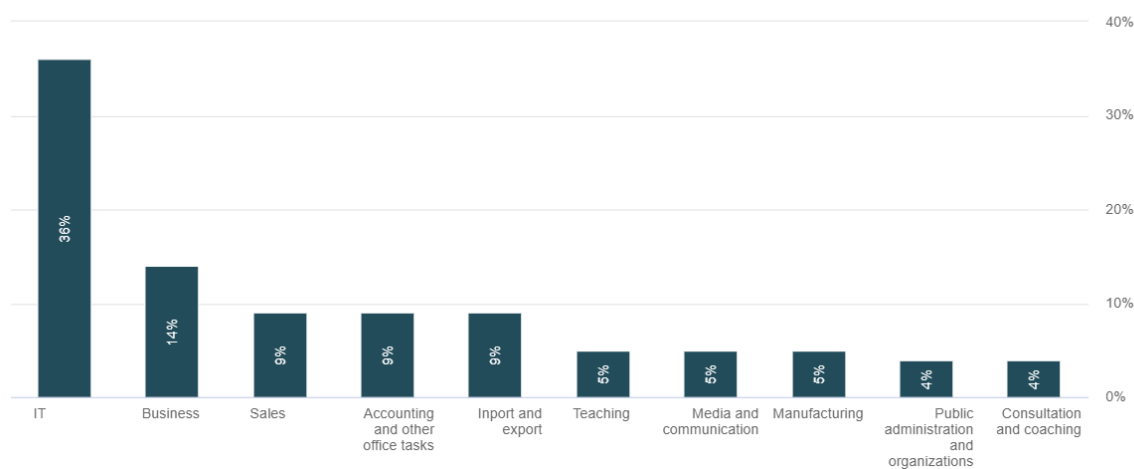


Figure 4. Employer's sector in business

Alums job title's varied from the software developer to document controller and to the global mobility advisor. The question about the employer's demographical location revealed that the most of the alums work either in Uusimaa (32%), Pirkanmaa (23%) or Häme (27%) region, 5% work at Central Finland, 4% at Satakunta, 4,5% works at Vietnam and 1 (4,5%) participant answered "abroad" and continued telling "the head office in Finland, offices around the Europe and in India."

15 out of 22 alums studied in high school before attending HAMK. 6 had vocational school background. 1 had studied University of Applied Sciences before HAMK as well as 2 participants have had attended university. 2 alums had chosen "something else, what?" option, but the question followed did not work and so on the answers could not be analysed.

Alums were asked how the studies at HAMK have supported their career. Majority of the alum's answers were positive and the rest were neutral. Many alums mentioned studies at HAMK have gave them the basic knowledge which has supported their career and personal growth. Some mentioned the connections they have created during the studies and one participant mentioned she/he got her/his first job of her/his field of study after the work placement. Some of the answers can be found below.

"Major studies, business intelligence and analytics has supported the job I have now"

"Marketing-orientated studies and international environment helped me succeed in customer service export tasks in logistics company"

"Gave me basic knowledge and business functions overview"

"There was no significant support apart from diploma"

"Gave me the possibility to apply further education"

"For me study program itself was as important as the additional factors that came with studying in Finland.

1. Gave me my first leadership experience
2. Full ownership over study process and extracurricular activities
3. Helped to move away from parents and learn to live by myself
4. Studying in a multicultural environment is very useful
5. Lots of speaking opportunities - realized this is something I genuinely enjoy doing"

"I have had a basic understanding of my current working field as well as improving my professional work performance"

"Helped to understand professional vocabulary better which has made working easier. Advanced special studies were helpful also."

6.4.2 Questions about HAMK's alumni activity

After the background questions participants were asked their opinions and thoughts about HAMK's alumni activity. At first, their overall satisfaction to HAMK's alumni activity was measured with the scale from 1 to 10, 1 meant very unsatisfied and 10 meant very satisfied. Average of all the 22 answers was 5,5 (figure 5).

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10		Total	Average
Very unsatisfied	1	0	2	1	8	3	4	3	0	0	Very satisfied	22	5,5
	4,54%	0%	9,09%	4,55%	36,36%	13,64%	18,18%	13,64%	0%	0%			
Total	1	0	2	1	8	3	4	3	0	0		22	5,5

Figure 5. Satisfaction to HAMK's alumni activity in general

The previous question was followed by the open question, "what would you like to develop in HAMK's alumni activity?". Answers varied from the no opinions to multiple development ideas. Many alums mentioned the lack of communication between HAMK and its alums, some mentioned not receiving a single email from HAMK after graduation. HAMK's alumni activity field was also uncertain for many. Alums would like the communication to be more active and more informative. Communication wise it was also mentioned that graduating and already graduated student would like to get more help from HAMK for finding a job. Some alums feel the current situation with the alumni activity is not well organized and the international alums are also missing the information in English.

Alums would increase the number of alumni events organized, develop the event's concepts more interesting and inform the alums about the upcoming events earlier than previously have informed. The social alumni gatherings were mentioned as an interesting event option. One idea was to set up a specific date when the alumni event would take place every year, that way it would be easy for alums to book the day from their calendar for the event early enough.

One of the alums said she/he has not registered as an HAMK alum as he/she does not know what benefits it would create. The participant asked if HAMK could inform better why, how and how alums could benefit from the co-operation. She/he also wished that HAMK would organize more networking events which would include the school, students and alums. She/he also feels HAMK does not highlight its alums and their career paths enough and is so on losing many potential applicants.

When asking the factors HAMK's alums are satisfied related to HAMK's alumni activity, the feedback was quite brutal. Most of the answers were blank, which means the participants could not find anything worth of mentioning. Those who wrote something mostly highlighted they have nothing nice to say or the only positive thing is the alumni activity exists at some level at least. The few positive answers mentioned "positive

reputation”, “nice events, such as BitFest, ”active and well organized” and “at least the information comes through”.

The figure 6 shows an average satisfaction regarding HAMK’s benefits and discounts for alums was 4,4 on the scale from 1 (very unsatisfied) to 10 (very satisfied). The open question “what kind of benefits and discounts you would like to receive as HAMK alum?” confused many. Everyone understood the question, but the 11 out of 22 participants asked if HAMK really has some discounts or benefits and how the information could be found. The most often mentioned discount and benefit ideas were training courses (for example Udemy) and lectures for maintaining and developing the skills. The cultural discounts were mentioned by one participant, and for some all kind of benefits and discounts would be welcome. One alum also mentioned that HAMK could contact alums and ask ideas regarding work placements and final thesis topics, “this would benefit both parties”.

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10		Total	Average
Very unsatisfied	4	1	2	1	8	2	3	1	0	0	Very satisfied	22	4,41
	18,18%	4,54%	9,09%	4,55%	36,36%	9,09%	13,64%	4,55%	0%	0%			
Total	4	1	2	1	8	2	3	1	0	0		22	4,41

Figure 6. Satisfaction to HAMK’s benefits and discounts for alums

On the scale from 1-10, alums average satisfaction to HAMK’s alumni activity related communication was 5,05. The 86% of the participating alums would like to be contacted by email. The 50% find social media a good channel to communicate, 23% would choose traditional mail, 9% would be ok with phone contacting and 5% would use instant messaging apps too. The instant messaging apps that 5% (1 person) would choose were WhatsApp and Facebook Messenger. From those 50% (11 people) who would like the communication to happen in social media, 100% would choose Facebook. The 7 out of 11 would prefer LinkedIn and 5 out of 22 would accept contacting in Instagram and 3 in Twitter.

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10		Total	Average
Very unsatisfied	2	2	3	2	3	2	3	5	0	0	Very satisfied	22	5,05
	9,09%	9,09%	13,63%	9,09%	13,64%	9,09%	13,64%	22,73%	0%	0%			
Total	2	2	3	2	3	2	3	5	0	0		22	5,05

Figure 7. Satisfaction to HAMK’s alumni activity communication

Alums were asked how satisfied they are with HAMK’s alumni events. The alum’s answers average was 5,18 (figure 8.). The open question asked what kind of events alums would like to participate. Alums answers gave many ideas for the future events. Alums answers mentioned job fairs, parties, class reunions with teachers, recruiting events, networking lunches and events focused on the newest trends of working life/field of business. Some also asked if it would be possible to organize events and

get together totally online, and for non-online events give the remote access for those who live too far away or are unable to attend physically.

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10		Total	Average
Very unsatisfied	2	1	0	0	11	3	3	2	0	0	Very satisfied	22	5,18
	9,09%	4,54%	0%	0%	50%	13,64%	13,64%	9,09%	0%	0%			
Total	2	1	0	0	11	3	3	2	0	0		22	5,18

Figure 8. Satisfaction to HAMK's alumni events

The best time of the year for the alumni event was also asked. Alums could choose more than one option. The alumni event organized at Spring or Autumn would fit for the 64% of the 22 alums who participate to the survey. The 50% would prefer Summer and 32% would prefer Wintertime.

The surveys last question (figure 9.) aimed to examine what kind of co-operation alums would like to do with HAMK. The participants could choose several options fitting to their interests. The 77% were interested about postgraduate education and the 64% show interest to continuing education. The 50% could see themselves visiting HAMK as a visiting lecturer. The option of offering work placements and thesis topics for the current students got 41% support. One also mentioned mentoring as an interesting option outside the ready answers for him/herself. One answered, "good ideas", but it is unsure if the participant would like to get good ideas from HAMK or just wanted to comment the possible co-operation options listed in the question.

28. Please choose the the interesting co-operation options:

Number of respondents: 22, selected answers: 70

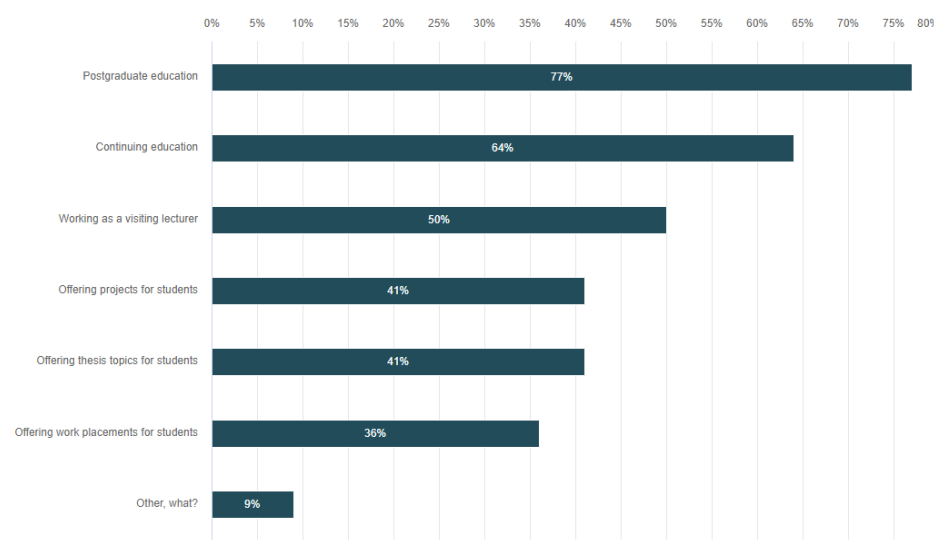


Figure 9. Interesting co-operation options

Lastly, free word was given to alums. The comments are listed below:

- Quite uninspiring, newsletter hardly offers any value for me
- Hoping there are more alumni activities in the future
- I would like the alumni communication to be more catchy
- Not much experience about alumni activity but I find the topics interesting. Alumni activity could be introduced more during the studies already, I heard about alumni activity first time after graduation by email
- Would like to receive in the future info related to alumni events
- If it will be organized in a place easily reachable by everyone, and more actively advertised in social media
- The more job search help-the better
- Please do not stop doing the alumni events, I really want to visit at least one
- I hope it could be improved more
- More activities and communication, now it is too minor and coincidental

6.5 Questionnaire for the universities

The questionnaire for the universities aimed to figure out how these selected schools operate in the alumni activity field and what thoughts they have for the future implementations. The questionnaire was sent to the 6 universities including 3 UNI/UAS from Finland and 3 from abroad (Germany, USA, UK). The universities alumni activity representatives were reached by email including the link into the survey. All the three selected UNI/UAS from Finland answered the survey. The university from the USA tried to answer but due to the server problems and lack of time, their answers did not save and so on are not available for the analysis. The two other universities never reacted to the author's emails. For the easier approach for the reader, the participating UNI/UAS have been named as school A, B and C. Some answers have been translated into English by the writer.

6.5.1 Background questions

The two out of three participating schools (school A and C) were universities. The participants roles in their organization were described as follows: alumni engagement manager (school A), relationship manager (school B) and alumni and stakeholder manager (school C). The question "how does your role in the organization relate into alumni activity?" was understood differently by every responder, so the question will be left out from this analysis.

All the participants work full-time related to the alumni activity. One of the participants (school B) is the only alumni activity employee the school has, the other two schools told that they have 6 (school C) and 7 (school A) employees for their alumni activity. As the schools A and C have multiple

employees, they also have different tasks and titles for them including for example coordinator, fundraiser and alumni-, recruiting- and career manager.

One of the background question's was "how many registered alumni do you have". The school A estimated the number to be around 40 000 registered alums, the school B answered 36 500 and the school C has a little over 35 000. These school's network of registered alums is much wider comparing to HAMK's 100 registered alums. It is good to keep in mind that HAMK's certainly small number of registered alums can partly be explained by the change from the separate alumni association to the HAMK's own alumni activity.

6.5.2 Actual alumni activity questions

The survey asked how the selected schools engage their students during the studies to become alums. The school A invites students to the alumni portal already during the studies. The alumni activity is visible in the student- and career events. The participant also mentioned mentoring and in career services they invite alums to tell their career/studying stories and so on. The school B mentioned their students, staff and alums get to meet each other in the events, alums career stories are shared with students, alums mentor students, and alumni activity-based thesis topics are offered to the students. The school C's strategy is to communicate actively about the alumni activity with the students and co-operate with the student union, alums take part into the career courses and mentor the students and different events with relaxed atmosphere bring alums and current students together. The different faculty's also co-operate extensively to bring the students and alums together.

Related to the previous question, the schools were asked how they engage their students to become alums after the graduation. The school A mentioned they have a common university level graduation ceremony in addition to the school's own graduation ceremonies. The student registering and the leaving certificate application form include an option, if the student's contact details can be transferred into the alumni register. The school B trust for example to their large variety of the events, mentoring and visiting lecturer opportunity and the company visits as an engage tool. Some of the school C's engagement tools for the graduated students are listed below:

- Joining made easy
- Alumni greetings (for example in the graduation ceremony)
- Networking event for new alums, where other alums can be met
- Course (for alums graduated maximum of 5 years ago) where alums can ponder their own life through a several workshops
- Faculty level communication

- Active social media campaigns
- Encounters for example in fairs
- Highlighting an interesting events and courses offered in a variety of ways through different communication channels - also in co-operation with different operators.

When asking about the benefits and discounts offered to the alums school B told they have none because they feel it would require too much time and effort to maintain. The answer is understandable as the school B has only one alumni activity employee. The school A offers for example a separate alumni/networking portal for their alums and students. Their alums also get discounts from sport activities, university's bookstore and space rents (free spaces for alumni association). The alums also gain an access into the portal from where they can use email and search for jobs. Help for organizing a class reunion is also available.

The events are a big part of the alumni activity, that is why the amount of the events was also in the question list. The school A organises 6 to 7 common alumni events a year, in addition schools have their own alumni events. The school B has 40 study programmes so there are at least 40 events every year + other education- and mentoring events as well as ad hoc seminars. The school C usually have several events a month but now Covid-19 -virus and the restrictions it has caused have forced to cancel/move the events.

All the 3 schools organize and offer their alums a large range of different events. The events include alumni days, webinars, science sauna's, concerts and much more. The combining factors are networking, life-long-learning and current themes (for example in working life) just to name few. When asking about the other kind of activities, the school B states they have quit organizing the gala and cocktail events and focus in now on learning – not partying. The school A mentioned they have around 700 open events at their university, different workshops, seminars, courses, and they market exhibitions and other opportunities that support life-long-learning. The school C lists for example the alumni association's more unofficial events, university museum offers different contents and degree programmes organize more relaxed career nights and mentoring opportunities.

The figure 10 tells all the three schools use social media, email, newsletter, and alumni webpage for contacting and connecting with their alums. 2 out of 3 contact and connect with alums through their home page or use phone calls. Text messages and member's magazine got only 1 vote each. Blog and instant messaging apps did not collect votes. It is possible that for example WhatsApp and Facebook Messenger are used but included in the text messages in participant's answers depending how the word "instant messaging apps" have been understood. The "Something else" option collected answer "university's stakeholder magazine and personal

meetings”. The used social media platforms where supposed to be asked but there was a mistake in the questionnaire’s settings and due to that the participants did not see the additional question.

16. Which channels do you use to contact and connect with your alumni?

Number of respondents: 3, selected answers: 19

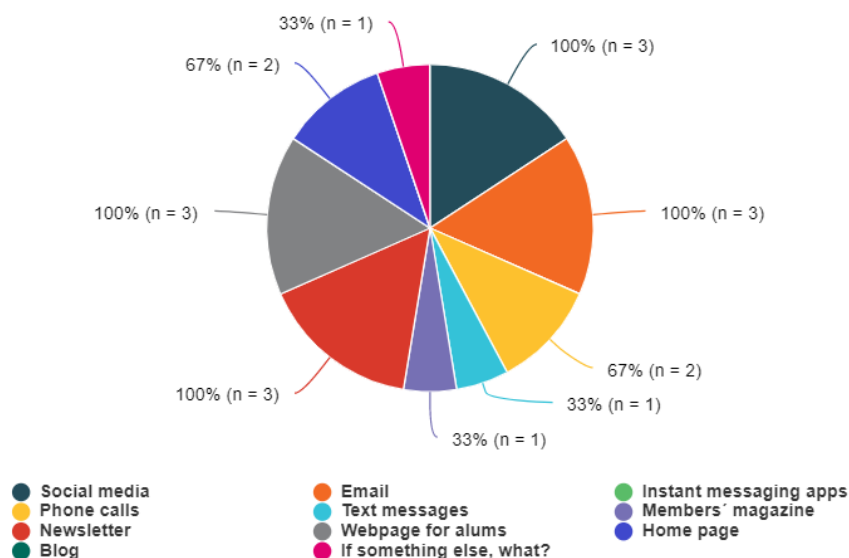


Figure 10. Channels used to communicate with alums

When asking about the channels that have worked the best, school B named Facebook and LinkedIn and mentioned that sign up’s for events work smoothly with newsletter. The school C prefers Facebook, Twitter, text messages and newsletters (especially targeted). Emails work if those are targeted, LinkedIn is a bit challenging. The school A have made a survey which told that newsletter and other emails reach their alums the best, the 29% wants to hear about the alumni activities through the magazine. Their LinkedIn for alums did not reach alums and require too much resources to update. University’s communication team are asked to publish information especially for LinkedIn (the most popular channel based on their survey) alums if needed. The participant adds “Facebook tend to be effective but not anymore, I suppose now it would require money?”

What are the factors that differentiate your alumni activity from the other UNI/UAS?” The school A has long alumni tradition from the 90’s for example organizing the graduations. The students are invited to the alumni portal during their studies. The participant aims their school have a bigger recourse of employees than many other schools have. The school B answered they differentiate with the long tradition and with their automated alum registering process (permission in the beginning of studies). The alumni activity has been operated in their school for 15 years, and the participant have been in charge for 5 years. The participant adds

that the alumni activity field is challenging and slowly developing scene where it is rare to do the work so persistently. The school C differentiates from the others by operating their alumni activities in Finnish, English and Swedish. The school C's old and current staff are calculated as alums as well and are so on warmly welcomed to take part into the alumni activity.

The school A takes part into the several alumni activity conferences. Once a year in the national meetings sharing the knowledge and the best tips with the others through conversations and presentations. They have had a specific co-operation working committee before but not anymore. The school B is part of the 6 UAS co-operation ring, where they share their knowledge and develop participating school's alumni activity. Other than that, they attend actively in the UAS alumni operators' conferences and events.

The schools were asked what kind of new implementation ideas they have for their alumni activity. The school A is planning together with the career services a program which would connect the student's and alum's lifecycle of the life-long learning. An alum volunteering concept and support, restart the international alumni activity, move alumni activity more online, and supporting and integrating the alumni associations and -networks to one place were also mentioned. The school B's participant tells the alumni activity develops under the surface all the time and the best practices are actively shared with the others. They are developing for example a portal and different activities to support it. The participant adds that functional CRM is a must, they have been careful when building their own and are sharing their knowledge to others too. The school C is developing a server for alums needs including networking, activating and discounts and benefits easily in one place. Strengthening the international alumni activity and multilingualism in activity were also on the development list.

7 CONCLUSION

Based on the outcomes of the questionnaires made, the conclusion including the recommendations for HAMK's future alumni activity development is presented below.

HAMK's network of registered alums is certainly small when comparing to other schools selected for this research. For achieving the vision about the active and extensive alum network would need actions for example in alumni recruitment. HAMK's advantage for increasing its registered alums number is that registering as an alum is free of charge, participating is so made possible for every alum without looking the financial status. Alums contact details should be conducted in the one register from where those could be easily found and maintained.

The alumni activity should be made more visible and more motivating. Now, the problem is that the alums does not know much about HAMK's alumni activity and how registering as an alum would benefit them. Many schools invite their students to join the alumni portal during the studies instead of asking the willingness to participate during the last steps of graduation. The writer recommends HAMK would consider automating the registering process and making it a common policy.

The alumni activity survey for the HAMK BBA alums revealed there are hardly any engagement during the studies to the alum activity. The writer herself admits that HAMK's alumni activity was a mystery for her too before starting the thesis writing process.

Many alums had noticed the lack of communication, some have not received a single email from HAMK after the graduation. HAMK sends alumni newsletter to its alums three times per year but it is only available in Finnish which means the international alums miss out the information. The international alums should be treated and taken into account with the same interest as the Finnish speaking alums. The communication channels between the alums could be develop by creating a separate alum portal, which some schools already have in use. All the alumni activity related information could be conducted more specifically into the existing HAMK's webpage's alumni activity page.

HAMK's alumni events collected praises but also criticism. Some find the events very interesting and successful when on the other hand some find the contents uninteresting and the number of the events too minor. The research revealed many alums have been unable to attend the events as the information about the event have not reach them early enough. Some of the alums suggested the possibility to attend the events online as some live abroad or are other ways unable to attend. HAMK should think if it could set up an event streams or even organize some events and alumni get together completely online.

At the moment HAMK does not have a general benefits or discount for its alums. For the future it could be good to think if the alums could receive some sort of discount or benefits. The survey revealed all kind of benefits and discounts would be welcome but especially discounts to the educational courses interest many. The free entries and discounts to event tickets and to cultural activities were mentioned. The writer believes gym and other sport activity discounts would be highly used among the alums too.

Even this research revealed many development points, HAMK's alumni activity situation is very developable. This thesis's observations and development ideas can be used to achieve HAMK's vision about the active and extensive alumni network, but the research may also give the other

schools ideas for the alumni activity development. This handled topic could be continued with the more detailed research for example about the alumni events or the benefits and discounts.

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QUESTIONNAIRE FOR HAMK'S ALUMNI ACTIVITY RELATED EMPLOYEES

1. How many registered alums does HAMK have?
2. What does HAMK's alum activity include at the moment?
3. What kind of events there are for HAMK alums?
4. How HAMK motivates/engages its alums to take part into alum activity?
5. What benefits HAMK offers for its alums? For example, discounts, free entrances etc.?
6. What channels are used for communication? What/Which are the most popular/ channels or ways? How often things are posted to each channel?
7. Is it free to register as a HAMK alum?
8. Do schools do any kind of cooperation with alum activity field?

ALUMNI ACTIVITY QUESTIONNAIRE FOR UNI/UAS

Alumni activity questionnaire

This questionnaire is a part of thesis which purpose is to find out how alumni activity is organized around the world.

Questionnaire takes about 5-10 minutes. Answers will be handled anonymous.

1. School represented... *

- ☐ University (UNI)
- ☐ University of Applied Sciences (UAS)

2. Name of the school you are representing... *

3. Your role/job title in the organization... *

4. How does your role in the organization relate into alumni activity? *

5. How are you resourced for alumni activity? *

- ☐ Full-time
- ☐ Part-time

6. How many hours of your work relates to alumni activity? *

7. How many people in your organization are involved in alumni activity? *

- ☐ 1
- ☐ 2
- ☐ 3
- ☐ 4
- ☐ 5
- ☐ 6
- ☐ 7
- ☐ 8
- ☐ 9
- ☐ 10
- ☐ 11
- ☐ 12
- ☐ 13
- ☐ 14
- ☐ 15
- ☐ >15

8. Please describe the roles of the other alumni activity related people: *

9. How many registered alumni do you have? *

10. How do you engage your students during the studies to become alumni? *

11. How do you engage your students after graduation to become alumni? *

12. What benefits and discounts your alumni get from the co-operation with your UNI/UAS? *

Appendix 2/4 (page 4)

13. How often do you arrange event to your alumni? *

14. What kind of events there are for your alumni? *

15. What kind of other activities there are for your alumni? *

16. Which channels do you use to contact and connect with your alumni? *

- ☐ Social media
- ☐ Email
- ☐ Instant messaging apps
- ☐ Phone calls
- ☐ Text messages
- ☐ Members' magazine
- ☐ Newsletter
- ☐ Webpage for alums
- ☐ Home page

Appendix 2/5 (page 5)

☐ Blog☐ If something else, what? **17. Choose the instant messaging apps used: ***☐ WhatsApp☐ Facebook Messenger☐ Kik☐ Snapchat☐ Viber☐ If something else, what? **18. Choose the social media platforms used: ***☐ Facebook☐ Instagram☐ Twitter☐ LinkedIn☐ YouTube☐ Snapchat☐ If something else, what? **19. What channel(s) has worked the best? ***

Appendix 2/6 (page 6)

20. What are the factors that differentiate your alumni activity from other UNI/UAS? *

21. What kind of co-operation do you have with other schools regarding alumni activity and implementation of it? *

22. What kind of new implementation ideas you have for your alumni activity? *

ALUMNI ACTIVITY QUESTIONNAIRE FOR HAMK ALUMNI

Alumni activity questionnaire for HAMK alumni

Purpose of this questionnaire is to figure out how satisfied HAMK alumni are about HAMK's current alumni activity. Answers will give valuable information about how HAMK could develop its alumni activity. Answers are anonymous and will be used for creating an improvement plan for future.

"Alumni" in this questionnaire means those people who have studied or worked at HAMK.

1. Gender *

- ☐ Woman
- ☐ Man
- ☐ Other
- ☐ I prefer not to tell

2. Year of graduation *

- ☐ 2020
- ☐ 2019
- ☐ 2018
- ☐ 2017
- ☐ 2016
- ☐ 2015
- ☐ 2014
- ☐ 2013
- ☐ 2012
- ☐ 2011
- ☐ 2010
- ☐ 2009
- ☐ 2008
- ☐ 2007
- ☐ 2006
- ☐ 2005

Appendix 3/2 (page 2)

- ☐ 2004
- ☐ 2003
- ☐ 2002
- ☐ 2001
- ☐ 2000
- ☐ 1999
- ☐ 1998
- ☐ 1997
- ☐ 1996
- ☐ 1995
- ☐ 1994
- ☐ 1993
- ☐ 1992
- ☐ 1991

3. Level of the degree *

- ☐ Bachelor's degree
- ☐ Master's degree

4. Degree programme you studied at HAMK *

- ☐ Liiketalous
- ☐ International Business
- ☐ Tietojenkäsittely
- ☐ Liiketoiminnan kehittäminen, YAMK
- ☐ Business Management and Entrepreneurship (BME), YAMK

5. Study mode *

- ☐ Full-time
- ☐ Part-time/Mature students

Appendix 3/3 (page 3)

6. Your current work situation *

- ☐ Employee
- ☐ Entrepreneur
- ☐ Unemployed
- ☐ Student
- ☐ Something else, what?

7. Employer's sector in business *

- ☐ Construction
- ☐ Customer service
- ☐ Human resources and recruiting
- ☐ Hospitality
- ☐ IT
- ☐ Public administration and organizations
- ☐ Beauty and wellness
- ☐ Real estate
- ☐ Consultation and coaching
- ☐ Culture
- ☐ Teaching
- ☐ Pharmacy
- ☐ Law
- ☐ Transport and logistics
- ☐ Agriculture and forestry
- ☐ Media and communication
- ☐ Sales
- ☐ Purchase
- ☐ Bank and finance
- ☐ Architect
- ☐ Accounting and other office tasks
- ☐ Engineering

Appendix 3/4 (page 4)

- ☐ Manufacturing
- ☐ Health care and social services
- ☐ Research and development
- ☐ Business
- ☐ Import and export
- ☐ Entrepreneurship

8. Your current job title? *

9. Your employer's demographical location *

- ☐ Uusimaa
- ☐ Varsinais-Suomi
- ☐ Satakunta
- ☐ Häme
- ☐ Pirkanmaa
- ☐ Päijät-Häme
- ☐ Kymenlaakso
- ☐ South Karelia
- ☐ Etelä-Savo
- ☐ Pohjois-Savo
- ☐ North Karelia
- ☐ Central Finland
- ☐ South Ostrobothnia
- ☐ Ostrobothnia
- ☐ Central Ostrobothnia
- ☐ North Ostrobothnia
- ☐ Kainuu

Appendix 3/5 (page 5)

- ☐ Lapland
☐ Åland
☐ Abroad, where?

10. If abroad, in which country? *

11. What studies you had before HAMK? *

- ☐ High school / upper secondary school
☐ Vocational school
☐ University of Applied Sciences
☐ University
☐ Something else, what?

12. If vocational school studies, what? *

13. If University of Applied Sciences studies, what? *

Appendix 3/6 (page 6)

14. If University studies, what? *

15. How studies at HAMK have supported your career? *

16. How satisfied are you with HAMK's alumni activity in general? *

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	
Very unsatisfied *	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	Very satisfied

17. What would you like to develop in HAMK's alumni activity? *

18. What are you satisfied about HAMK's alumni activity? *

19. How satisfied are you about the benefits and discounts HAMK's offers for its alumni? *

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	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	
Very unsatisfied *	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	Very satisfied

20. What kind of benefits and discounts you would like to receive as HAMK alumni? *

21. How satisfied are you with HAMK's communication about alumni activity? *

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	
Very unsatisfied *	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	Very satisfied

22. How would you like to be contacted in alumni matters? *

- ☐ Email
- ☐ Mail
- ☐ Phone
- ☐ Social media
- ☐ Instant messaging apps
- ☐ Something else, what?

23. Pick the favourable instant messaging apps for you for communication with UNI/UAS *

- ☐ WhatsApp
- ☐ Snapchat
- ☐ Viber
- ☐ Kik
- ☐ Facebook Messenger
- ☐ Something else, what?

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24. Pick the favourable social media channels for you for communication with UNI/UAS: *

☐ Facebook

☐ Instagram

☐ Twitter

☐ LinkedIn

☐ Snapchat

☐ YouTube

☐ Something else, what?

25. How satisfied are you with HAMK's alumni events? *

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

Very unsatisfied * ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ Very satisfied

26. What events you would like to be organized for alumni? *

27. What time of the year would be the best to organize an alumni event? *

☐ Spring

☐ Summer

☐ Autumn

☐ Winter

28. Please choose the the interesting co-operation options: *

☐ Postgraduate education

☐ Continuing education

Appendix 3/9 (page 9)

- ☐ Working as a visiting lecturer
- ☐ Offering projects for students
- ☐ Offering thesis topics for students
- ☐ Offering work placements for students
- ☐ Other, what?

29. Free word related to alumni activity *
