



Introduction to University Studies

Studying the Perspectives of International First Year Students

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<p>Developing ways to identify and support students as they are transitioning into university studies (transition pedagogy) has been the focus of much research and continues to be an important factor in maintaining a healthy academic environment. This thesis explores the following questions. First, what types of challenges or questions do students have during their transition? Second, what perceptions or expectations do students have with regard to university studies? Third, what are the different types of support mediums and conditions that lead to student success? To help answer these questions, self-completion questionnaires and face-to-face interviews have been utilized. The setting is a university campus located in Helsinki, Finland. The subjects are freshman international students. A focused sample of sixty-four students volunteered to participate out of a possible eighty-nine students. (Overall participation rate = 72%) The methodological approach used in this paper is mainly qualitative with some quantitative elements. At first glance, the overall satisfaction rates among students are reported high. However, studying students' perspectives through open-ended questions and interviews seems to generate more in-depth data as to the "true" feelings of students. For example, some students voice feelings of confusion and disorientation while others seem to focus on the importance of quickly establishing relationships with other international students. Interestingly, the majority of students seem to dwell on topics relating to information. Hopefully, the transparency and courage shown by students in sharing their views will lead to the development of effective outcomes for students and benefit the institution as a whole. The reader should bear in mind that this is a single-campus study with the aim that the individual needs of students might be identified and addressed. The desired final outcomes of this dissertation are represented in the completion, acceptance and implementation of the guidebook and to promote awareness concerning the needs and wishes of the international students studying at Arcada.</p>	
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FOREWORD

The writing of this paper was like going on a treasure hunt. Once the pieces of the puzzle were found, they were spread out and a picture began to emerge. It was as if the different elements had minds of their own. Each piece seemed to lead the writer, to where on the canvas they wished to be placed. In the end, what was created looked quite different than the discoverer could have imagined. It is the writers' hope that the reader will be taken on their own adventure and at the end of the journey, will have experienced the great-unbridled mystery that is sometimes revealed when searching for truth.

The completion of this thesis would not have been possible without the assistance of many different individuals at Arcada.

We would like to express our sincere appreciation to the Study Bureau and to various departments and staff, without whom, this guidebook for international first year students would not be possible. We are also indebted to the first year international students whose valuable feedback provided critical information as to content. The writer would like to thank the language department at Arcada for scrutinizing the text so conscientiously. Heartfelt appreciation goes to those responsible for the financial support. Also, to the communications department for the many hours spent in preparing and printing the guidebook.

Lastly, the writer would like to thank Gun-Britt Lejonqvist for her patience and encouragement and for the valuable suggestions throughout the many months of constructing this text and guidebook. Her vision, belief, unending support, and attention to detail were the essential keys in the development and completion of this work.

The writer believes, the ultimate reward for all will be revealed in the autumn 2012 when each new international first year student holds a copy of the guidebook in their hands. A field guide specifically designed for students to help them navigate their individual academic adventures at Arcada University of Applied Sciences.

1. INTRODUCTION

Beginning university studies can be a challenging time for international students both for those just arriving and for those who have lived in Finland for longer periods of time. During the first few days of orientation and throughout the first period, large amounts of information are presented. It is common for students to feel overwhelmed. At times, students may experience feelings such as frustration and confusion while trying to navigate their new environment. It is common knowledge that increased levels of stress for short periods of time can improve overall performance but an overabundance of stress for prolonged periods can be a cause for decreased individual effort or engagement from students. Understanding student's perspectives during this fragile time is an important factor in meeting the individual needs of new international students as they transition into the academic environment. The sooner the new students acclimate, the sooner learning can take place and faculty members can then concentrate on the issue of teaching instead of spending valuable time answering redundant questions or helping students navigate the system itself. Also, "knowing the current levels of student satisfaction is regarded as critical for good university management, and in fact for the sole continuity and survival of an institution in an increasingly competitive environment" (Nair et al. 2011 p. 587).

1.1 Aim

This thesis focuses on the perceptions of freshman international students' as they are transitioning into the academic environment at Arcada. Also, as an extension to this study, a guidebook has been created. [See appendix 1] The aim of the guidebook is to act as a type of map or bridge for new international students to aid them in accessing the appropriate resources to meet their individual needs. The desired final outcomes of this dissertation are represented in the completion, acceptance and implementation of the guidebook and to promote awareness concerning the needs and wishes of the international students studying at Arcada.

1.2 Research questions

There are three research questions that the writer attempts to address in this paper.

1. What are the different types of support mediums and conditions that lead to student success?
2. What perceptions and expectations do international freshmen students have with regard to University Studies?
3. What types of conflicts or questions do students experience as they are transitioning into the academic environment at Arcada?

1.3 Audience

The writer hopes this paper will be useful to a number of individuals (e.g. students, teachers, programme directors administrators as well as additional staff) to be used for the development of curriculums, policies and programs that target first year international students studying at Arcada University.

1.4 Theoretical framework

“First year higher education students attract an inordinate amount of interest and attention from researchers, administrators and practitioners. As a consequence, an impressive body of research, practice and policy designed to enhance the first year experience (FYE) of students has been generated, generally with the underlying aims of improving student success, retention and engagement” (Kift, S. et al. 2010 p. 2). A term often times used to describe the above statement is transition pedagogy. “ It is suggested that transition pedagogy provides the optimal vehicle for dealing with the increasingly diverse commencing student cohorts by facilitating a sense of engagement, support and belonging” (Kift, S. et al. 2010 p.1).

Considered to be some of the first pioneers, Kenneth Feldman and Theodore Newcomb first published their work in 1969 entitled, “ The Impact of College on Students.” Later, encouraged by Kenneth Feldman and Theodore Newcomb’s work, Ernest Pascarella and Patrick Terenzini entered into this empirical arena in the 1970’s. They published their first edition in 1991, entitled, “How College Affects Students.” Their work encompassed 2,600 separate studies and represented about eight person years of intensive work. They wrote, “ we assumed at the time of its publication that the volume would be something of a summary statement on the field or college impact research. We soon realized, however, that we had just concluded an intellectual task that was roughly the equivalent of painting the Golden Gate Bridge from one end to the other. By the time you are finished at one end, you have to start all over again at the other” (Pascarella & Terenzini 2005.)

“For more than 30 years, these two theorists have studied the effects of college on students learning and development, persistence and educational attainment, and low-income and first-generation students” (Pascarella & Terenzini 2005).

Pascarella & Terenzini (2005 p. 61) also state in their text, “the transition to college provides a form of culture shock requiring significant social and psychological relearning in the face of beliefs, new freedoms and opportunities; and new academic, personal and social demands.” Many of the theorists reviewed for this paper seemed to agree that this transition of “relearning” occurs during the freshman year. Another researcher, Mawad (2008 p.10) found that first year university students, “wished that they had a better orientation into what the university environment would be like. They all came with their own expectations, but there was nothing that really spelt out to them what they should expect in relation to teaching and learning but also the whole of campus experience.” Also Treisman (1992) found that, university students were failing classes due to the lack of ability to navigate the academic environmental not lack of motivation as originally thought. Some researchers feel, “the single best predictor of student satisfaction with college is the degree to which they perceive the college environment to be supportive of their academic and social needs” (Kuh et al. 2006 p.45). Thus it stands to reason, “Creating the conditions that foster student success in college has never been more important (Kuh et al. 2006 p.1).

2. METHODS

This thesis was written in the narrative form. Hopefully, this method of writing or approach to language will facilitate ease of reading and understanding for a variety of individuals from different socio-economical, cultural and academic backgrounds. (e.g. students, educators and administrators). The choice of mainly using a qualitative research method for this dissertation was made due to the nature of the study. New primary data was generated in an attempt to answer the research questions. The writer feels the descriptive research design used in this paper, helped illuminate issues that otherwise might have gone unnoticed. An inductive coding process was used to analyze the empirical material generated from the questionnaires and interviews. The coding process consisted of: transcription, open coding, axial coding and selective coding. This study represents the blending of both empirical and theoretical material. Hopefully these choices will add color and depth to the overall work.

2.1 Participants

Volunteers in this focused sample were international first year students studying at Arcada.

2.2 Justification of choice

According to Pascarella & Terenzini (2005 p. 599), “environmental factors that emphasize intrinsic motivations, student involvement in classroom discussions and course decision making, and overall student involvement with faculty in an academic community appeared to maximize overall psychosocial adjustment and maturity and minimize authoritarianism among students.” Understanding how students perceive and navigate their environment is viewed as essential in meeting the individual needs of students. “One way many universities have approached the process of better understanding and meeting the needs of their students is through student evaluations. The evaluation data not only provides diagnostic feedback but also useful information in terms of

the quality of the learning and teaching experience” (Bennett et al. 2006 p.57). A recent study conducted at an offshore campus of an Australian University uses the results of their student experience questionnaire because, “it represents an important way in which the university can systematically identify areas of the student experience that require attention” (Nair et al. 2011 p.588). But ultimately, “for evaluation data to be of value an important prerequisite is that response rates are sufficiently high to be representative of the student cohort” (Bennett et al. 2006 p.58). Therefore, student participation is necessary.

As stated earlier, this project represents a marriage between theory and practice. The writer feels that the triangulation of the qualitative and quantitative methods in assessing the current situation allows for a more comprehensive perspective of the complex issues discussed in this study. Pascarella & Terenzini (2005 pp. 636-637) state, “although quantitative approaches provide a powerful set of tools for estimating the impact of college on students, these tools are probably most useful in painting the broad outlines of the portrait. Rendering tone, tint, texture, and nuance may require the finer brushstrokes characteristic of qualitative approaches.” In other study similar in nature, “it was decided that a mixed quantitative/qualitative survey instrument would provide the school with both a direct comparison [...] and ensured students had the space to comment on both the good aspects of the unit, as well as raise their own concerns” (Harris 2006 p.93).

2.3 Process and materials

The author feels this paper is written from a unique perspective as the writer is an international first year student studying at Arcada. The first-hand information gathered from the observations and experiences during the first period of study, was useful in formulating the initial self-completion questionnaire and first draft of the guidebook. In short, gathering data from the “inside” gave early clues as to how students perceived the new environment and how they overcame the early challenges presented during their transition into university studies. For an in-depth look at the different materials and processes used during the data collection phase with regard to both the questionnaires

and individual interviews with students, please see appendices 2-7 in this study.

2.3.1 Literature Review

A literature review was conducted which generated a theoretical base for this paper. Literature was reviewed from October – March 2011. In this study, the writer attempted to cast a wide net and thus reviewed literature covering the time period from the 1990(s) – 2011. The author did this for several reasons. First, the older research was used to form a framework or support structure for then comparison with more recent literature.

During the literature review phase, searches of various documents and databases were conducted. (e.g., Academic Search Elite, SAGE and ERIC among others). Keywords such as transition pedagogy and student success were used in the initial stage of the literature review. The author also reviewed conference proceedings from the Australian Universities Quality Outcomes and Diversity Forum held in Perth Australia, July 2006. To include relevant nonacademic work, the Google search engine was used. The author also consulted with Arcada library personnel to inquire as to additional options for obtaining resource information.

Several criteria were helpful in filtering relevant material from the different types of literature.

- The information found in the material was sufficient to help answer the research questions(s) posed.
- Full text articles from primary sources were used.
- Peer reviewed articles were preferred.
- The study used qualitative or quantitative methodology.
- For qualitative interviewing studies/material, the data had to be transparent.

Studies meeting the above criteria were included in the final report. A total of 27 articles, 4 books and one lecture quote were used in this paper. This strategy allowed the writer to obtain studies both past and present from a variety of scholarly and

professional associations and organizations.

2.3.2 Questionnaires

“One way in which universities have approached the process of determining the needs of their students was through the collection of student perceptions via surveys” (Nair et al. 2011 p.586). In Australia, Monash University has been using surveys and questionnaires to gather student feedback concerning its courses, units and services over the past decade (Bennett et al. 2006). Also, Queensland University of Technology believes setting the context, “is important and in terms of the First year experience, individual institutional context is a vital component in constructing a fit-for-purpose framework that evidences commitment to student learning and engagement” (Kift et al. 2010 p.3).

Self-completion questionnaires were used at the beginning of 2012 to gather preliminary student opinion concerning a range of issues. In the questionnaires were found two questions using the Likert-type scale which contained five alternatives of excellent, very good, satisfactory and less than satisfactory, undecided and conversely strongly agree, agree, undecided, disagree and strongly disagree. Also, two open-ended questions were used for a total of four questions.

2.3.3 Interviews

“A study of responses to verbal (or open) questions will often provide useful pointers to the types of issues it may be worthwhile to follow-up in interviews [...] Referring to such responses is often a way of starting an interview” (Bell 2005). Also, “According to Piippo (2011) qualitative analysis is a process consisting of the identification coding and categorizing of basic patterns or themes in empirical material.”

Interviews were then conducted during the month of February 2012. The interviews were recorded and later transcribed. A qualitative approach using inductive content analysis was used in identifying and isolating common themes. Data from the questionnaires and interviews was collected and then grouped into items of particular signifi-

cance. First-thought categories started the process of collating findings.

Deep analysis of existing data concerning transition pedagogy and student success through a literature review, along with observations, questionnaires and interviews with students aided in the completion of this work and the development of the guidebook.

2.4 Critical appraisal of materials and methods

By no stretch of the imagination does the writer feel an exhaustive search was performed. Nevertheless, given the time frame, the author believes the review of literature and methodology has been thorough enough to yield some interesting results. Some may argue that a purely quantitative approach would be more effective when analyzing this type of data. Despite this opinion, the writer did not employ a purely quantitative approach, but instead, a more qualitative approach was used in this study. One reason for this choice was this study simply did not have adequate information for computing and reporting meaningful results using a quantitative approach as a methodology. Having said this, the reader will note the various figures throughout the text. These figures are utilized to aid in the ease of reading, not as a platform for quantitative methodology.

In short, due to the nature of the research questions and the need for new original empirical data a more qualitative research method was used in this dissertation.

3. RESULTS

This paper reports on the experiences of students based on the feedback received from both questionnaires and interviews. The main focus in both the questionnaires and interviews reflects the students' individual experiences and perceptions. Descriptive information found in the questionnaire is shown in the figures that follow.

3.1 Questionnaires

The self-completion questionnaires were paper based. [See appendices 2-4] The survey included first-year international business students, nursing students and plastics technology students. Students completed the questionnaires during one of their lectures in the winter of 2011. Of the 89 students represented in the different classrooms, 64 students chose to participate in the study. Thus, the survey response rate was 72%.

3.1.1 Services provided

Question number 1 asked the student to rate the orientation services provided for them during the first period of study at Arcada. A Likert type scale was used with the options of excellent, very good, satisfactory, less than satisfactory and undecided. Based on the analysis of responses to question #1 of the questionnaire, students appeared to be generally satisfied with the orientation services provided at Arcada during their first period of study.



Figure 1. Satisfaction rates based on student responses to question #1 in 2011 (%)

There are several points to consider when evaluating the results of question #1. Firstly, 60 students out of a possible 89 students answered this question. Thus, 68% of the total student cohort answered this question. (Total student cohort referred to here is 89 students) Therefore, out of the 60 students who answered this question, 32 students or 53% answered, satisfactory.

Limitations:

- Only 68% of the total student cohort answered this question.
- The other 32% of the students did not participate, thus we do not know their views.

3.1.2 Students expectations

Question number 2 asked the student if they would agree with the statement; I consider the services provided for me during the first weeks of study at Arcada sufficiently met my needs. A Likert type scale was used with the options of strongly agree, agree, undecided, disagree and strongly disagree. Based on the analysis of responses to question #2 of the questionnaire, students generally agreed with the statement.

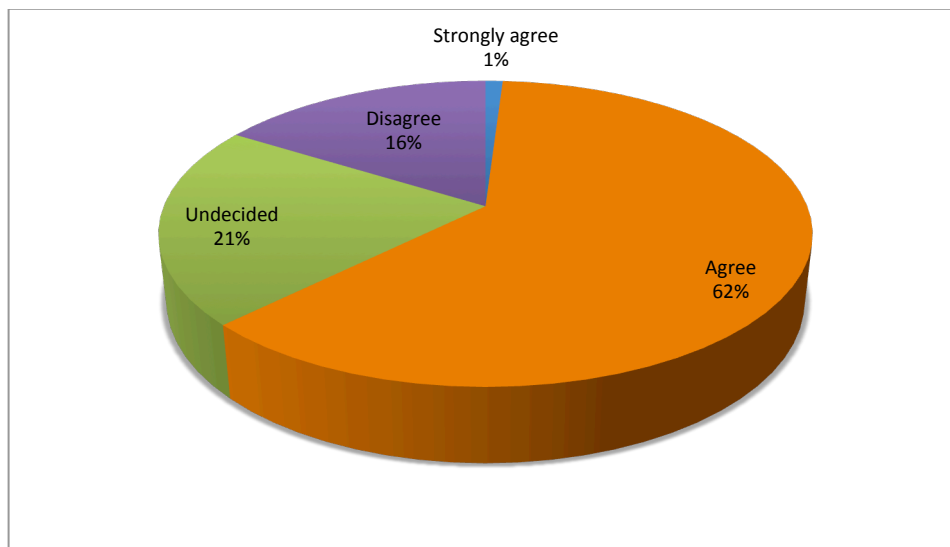


Figure 2. Satisfaction rates based on student responses to question #2 in 2011 (%)

The points to consider when evaluating the results of question #2 are as follows. Firstly, 61 students out of a possible 89 students answered this question. Thus, 69% of the total student cohort answered this question.

(Total student cohort referred to here is 89 students) Therefore, out of the 61 students that answered this question, 37 students or 61% answered, agree.

Limitations:

- Only 69% of the total student cohort answered this question.
- The other 31% of the students did not participate, thus we do not know their views.

3.1.3 Orientation process

Question number 3 asked the student what they especially liked about the orientation process at Arcada. This question was open ended and thus qualitative in nature. The students were given the opportunity to write their thoughts and feelings in the space provided. An inductive coding process was used to isolate common themes in the statements students provided. The categories identified include; friendly atmosphere, teachers and faculty, tutors, courses and curriculum, information and workload, E-services, cultural, missed the orientation and effectiveness of the orientation.

Without exception, the comments that relate to the first topic were perceived to be positive. For example one student wrote,

“Friendly atmosphere. Giving all the details and answering all the questions in a very friendly way.”

The teachers and faculty category received very few comments, but the comments were generally positive.

“Nice staff” and “ The tutors and teachers are friendly.”

Interestingly, tutors received quite a few comments from students. Over all the comments were perceived to be positive. For example, one student wrote,

“I got help from tutors and guided around Arcada campus to get familiar with the place.”

Several students expressed a desire for more English speaking tutors. The courses & curriculum categories received only three comments but were perceived again as positive.

“Came late during the first period but was really satisfied with the school’s curriculum.”

The information and workload topic received two comments. Both are included here.

“Quite good but need more specific information and clearer for new students.”

“I liked that they gave us an easy start, no heavy work loads.”

The students generally liked the E-services provided at Arcada. Some students found these services easily accessible and others seemed to struggle navigating them as reflected in these two statements.

“ Everything available online and easily accessible.”

“More information [is needed] about the Arcada network.”

Interestingly, the cultural category received many comments. The students seemed very happy to meet new students from different backgrounds. Students wrote,

“Getting to meet other international students.”

“ I got to communicate with all the international students.”

Several of the students enrolled in one of the degree programmes who missed the three-day orientation period wrote,

“The classes had already started when I came but the teachers and all the staff were very helpful and understanding.”

“I was not in Finland during the orientation process since my visa was late.”

Some students seemed to enjoy the orientation process while others stated they were

confused or that the orientation was ineffective.

“I think I pretty much liked the first 3 introduction days. After that it was all confusion, as we didn’t actually have a tutor to guide us.”

“It was helpful to some extent but being new to the program and the college, it was not that effective.”

“I really appreciate the orientation process, because it really allow[s] students to know what they will expect during their studies.”

According to the results, generally the students seemed to enjoy the orientation process at Arcada with very few exceptions.

3.1.4 Suggested improvements

Question number 4 asked the student how the orientation services at Arcada could be improved. This question was also open ended and thus qualitative in nature. The students were given the opportunity to write their thoughts and feelings in the space provided. The categories identified include; atmosphere, teachers and faculty, tutors, courses and curriculum, information and workload, E-services, cultural, missed the orientation, effectiveness of the orientation and housing & transportation.

The comments that relate to the first topic were perceived to be positive with a few exceptions.

“By involving all the second year students to participate so that its new student will enjoy the friendly atmosphere in Arcada!”

“Some decoration”

“Can make all students participate compulsory and get their views and address them.”

“Encouraging students to open up and talk.”

The teachers and faculty category received only two comments. Both are listed here

“More interaction among students and teachers.”

“By the co-operation with the students.”

Interestingly, tutors received quite a few comments from students. Over all the comments were perceived to be in need of improvement. For example, one student wrote,

“Actual tutors should be in contact with the class.”

“More English speaking tutors.”

“Better follow-ship of the students by the assigned tutors. Most of the tutors are only active for the first two weeks.”

The courses and curriculum categories received only three comments but were perceived as needing improvement.

“I think if the courses details are provided more clearly then it would be better.”

“Fixed timetables at the beginning of each period.”

The information and workload topic received a large amount of comments from students. The general desire was for more information, or information specifically designed for new international degree students.

“More information about what courses you can take as a first year student.”

“Give more information about the study plan.”

“The first time it was difficult to understand how to find the teacher and so on.”

The students had many different ideas on how improvements could be made with regard to E-services. Some of them are as follows,

“Making some guidelines of using all the Internet services [ASTA, ARBS,

Itslearning, Blackboard] in writing. Not only explaining it one time.”

“The computer services were a bit complicated at first, but eventually it was quite simple to learn how we use the services.”

Here, the cultural category received minimal attention. One interesting comment was,

“By performing different cultural activities of [a] different country.”

Several of the students enrolled in one of the degree programmes missed the three-day orientation period. One wrote,

“Well, I couldn’t be here at orientation so I don’t have much suggestions. I got help from my classmates since I didn’t have other means to know about process in Arcada.”

Again, the effectiveness of orientation category received the most attention by students. There were many ideas on how to improve the effectiveness of the orientation services at Arcada. A few ideas were,

“It seemed quite disorganized, some tutors didn’t show up and even teachers were not aware sometimes of who was sitting in their class. There could be lots of improvements made about that.”

“Enhanced organization, language barrier problems should be resolved.”

“I need a brief guidebook.”

The housing and transportation topic received three comments. Generally students would like to have more support in finding housing and transportation. One student wrote,

“I feel the university could help us more with accommodation or finding part time jobs for foreign students.”

According to the results, students had many interesting ideas on what improvements could be made with regard to the orientation services at Arcada.

3.2 Interviews

A letter of invitation was handed to students during a lecture after submitting their questionnaires. [See appendices 5-7] The purpose of the letter was to invite students to participate in individual interviews. Face to face interviews were conducted during the month of February 2011. The interviews were recorded and later transcribed. The quota was decided beforehand and the limit was set to five. Thus, five interviews were reported in this paper. A semi-structured guided interview was used to help facilitate the meeting. Four main questions were used with follow-up questions. Each session began the same way, by explaining to the informant the technique that would be used during the interview. Also, the participant was instructed that he/she could end the interview at any time, for any reason. When each participant stated they were ready, the interview began.

3.2.1 Studying at Arcada

Question number 1 asked the student [What does it mean to be a first year student at Arcada?] The categories identified were, great opportunity/apart of a community, confusion/organization.

The comments related to the first category were perceived to be positive as seen in the following statements.

“[...] it was an opportunity for me not only [to] get the skills that I need to go out into the market but also to be able to give back to the community.”

“I think it is awesome to have the opportunity to be here when there is a bunch of other people that would like to be in my position [...]”

“[...] it means for me that I am apart of this Arcada community. Because of that I also feel apart of the Finnish community. Especially, the Swedish speaking Finnish community.”

The second category dealt with confusion/organization. The statements here seemed to suggest students had difficulty navigating the academic environment during the first period of study.

“Particularly with the I.T. things, I was not use to these portal based learning systems. It was very confusing because there are different portals, ASTA, ARBS, and MyArcada.”

“[At first] everything seemed organized [...] later on, it was different than what I thought from the beginning. My ideas of the school changed, 180 degrees, all the way around.”

“I was confused about the food. I can remember for five months I did not go to the cafeteria.”

3.2.2 First-period experiences

Question number 2 asked the student [How did you experience your first period at Arcada?] Students spent the majority of the time answering this question. Though the comments were individual in nature, two main categories were identified which were high expectations and confusion/lack of information.

One comment related to the first category was,

“I have never been in a university or in a professional school before [...] I really had expectations of what school was really going to be like.”

The category, confusion/lack of information was identified again in question number 2. Although the source of confusion was different for each student the direct effect of confusion and disorientation with the environment as a whole remained the common denominator in each of these statements.

“Initially it was not that easy. It comes with its own challenges. For

example, you don't know the directions; you don't know where to get what."

"[...] the timetable changed a lot; we could not plan anything ahead because we didn't know what was going to happen."

"But what I want to point out about the first period is, everything turned out to be really disorganized and it was a mess. We didn't know where to go. We didn't know how to do it and we didn't know and people didn't even explain to us where the classes are."

"Disorganization and a lot of changes, which makes you confused."

"I feel this is a bit personal but some of us were still finding our way around even after the period of introduction."

"A few weeks of orientation was not enough to integrate and get to know each other. In going back to the point on accent, I remember specifically myself, I was paired with some people who I couldn't even first of all, understand, yes, we were speaking in English, but I couldn't hear. I had to listen over and over and had to ask them for clarification."

"There, in the library, was also some confusion of where things were on the shelf."

"Lastly, the library work, it was a bit confusing trying to figure out how to navigate the library."

Actually, the orientation was quite confusing, I was lost actually."

"Also, the fact that we are in an English program, still we struggle to hear the accent. Sometimes we struggle to hear the accent of the teacher."

“Yes, one more thing. I didn’t know how to find the classes, D4, E4 and I was confused.”

“[...] we realized we don’t really have anyone to guide us. We don’t have anybody who is our tutor [...] We don’t know how to use any of the systems of the school. There is no body here to show us [...] but we didn’t have anyone who would show us how to do anything.”

The writer feels that the confusion students experienced then led to feelings of frustration, mistrust and even abandonment as seen in these statements.

“XXX [the tutor] never showed up on our class. XXX never did anything for us. XXX never came to ask how were doing and so on and a couple of days ago we saw XXX. XXX came to our class after we are in the end of January and the school really started in September. That makes almost 6 months, almost half of the school year later.”
“XXX [the tutor] said it, but I don’t believe it.”

“Be alone or feel alone.”

3.2.3 Innovation & Development

Question number 3 asked the informant [Do you have any ideas on how we can help facilitate new students as they transition into the academic environment at Arcada?].

The main categories identified were caring and information.

Students seemed quite passionate when answering this question as seen in the following statements addressing the first category of question #3.

“It is really basic. It is about being around and caring about the new students.”

“[...] just to try so the new students don’t feel the same way as I felt.”

“I want to try, so they [the new students] won’t feel alone, that is it.”

The second category identified seemed to focus again on the same theme of information as seen in these statements.

“Or if you have a personal problem and you would like to talk to someone, who should you talk to? I think this should be [explained] done in the introduction days.”

“For example the booking of the course, everyone should book their courses together in like ten minutes or fifteen minutes. Then people don’t have to be stressed at home thinking, is it the right course? At least the first time that you have to enroll in the courses.”

“And I am also thinking that these new students who are new to Finland, it must be difficult for them to know for example, how the library works [...]”

“A guideline, where there is specific instructions of where to get what.”

“It would help if there was a guidebook.”

“So I think it would be good to give out a handout in the beginning about this [different portal systems] so we could study at home.”

“Yes, we can help them [students] in many ways. Like, we can help them making library cards, printing cards, assisting them in using those computer thing...Also, with their studies, if they come and ask for something.”

3.2.4 Possible solution, guidebook

Question number 4 asked the informant [Do you think a guidebook would be useful?]. The students unanimously agreed that a guidebook would be useful as seen in these statements.

“Well it must be useful. It is very natural. There are students coming from many different countries and there is no trace of these portal systems. Everything is manual. Most of the assignments are done by handwriting. There are many countries [...] where these portal systems are far, far away [...] so, a guidebook is really needed.”

“It [a guidebook] would be very good. It would absolutely help.”

“I think it [a guidebook] would be really useful. I think it would be really useful if you can get it at home with the same letters so that you can be reading beforehand. Coming having already an idea of what to expect.”

“Yes, a guidebook would totally be useful for that goal, that target.”

“That [a guidebook] would be very helpful. I wish I had gotten one before I came here.”

3.2.5 Observations

Several observations were made during the interviews. In the beginning, the informants seemed quite relaxed and answered the questions clearly and without hesitation. During the middle of the interview, usually the informants became expressive and passionate and a few seemed to express feelings of true anxiety when answering question number two. The students seemed to relax again toward the end of the interviews. Afterwards, some of the participants stated they felt as though a weight had been removed. All the participants expressed appreciation concerning the topic of this study. They seemed hopeful that the time and energy spent participating in these interviews would then be translated into something meaningful for future students.

3.3 Summary

Based on the analysis of responses to question number one and two of the questionnaires, students seemed to be generally satisfied with the services provided during the first period of study. However, interestingly enough the qualitative data generated from the questionnaires and the interviews seemed to paint a different picture. The common thread or main theme seen throughout the data was identified as relating to information. The perception from students that there was a lack of information or disorganization concerning the different services spilled into many areas and effected students individually as seen in the different categories. As time progressed, feelings of confusion arose. Further into the first period as students attempted to navigate the environment themselves, feelings of frustration, isolation and even abandonment seemed to arise.

The empirical evidence suggests that students have high expectations from the institution. Also, perhaps students are not prepared to navigate the academic environment. There might be some confusion as to the students' role in learning and what part the institution plays in facilitating freshman students as they attempt to navigate their new environment. It is surprising to the author that a seemingly small issue of navigation or lack of information can then lead to more worrisome issues such as feelings of true frustration, anxiety, isolation and abandonment on behalf of students. The most confounding piece to this puzzle is the fact that support services for students do exist at Arcada.

In fact, an instruction pamphlet along with other information was mailed to students several weeks prior to the beginning of the academic year. The writer feels that this is a clear example of how perceptions play an important role in how we view and engage our environment. A person can be a few meters from water and still die of thirst if they don't know that the water exists and how to access it. Perhaps we have hit on the true nature of the problem or the core issue. If students perceive the academic environment as unsupportive, it is reasonable to surmise success rates among students and the academic environment as a whole may be affected. After much consideration, the writer believes that the creation of a quick-reference guidebook for students from their point of

view might help solve this dilemma. The author believes that faculty and students working together toward a common goal can reverse negative perceptions such as feelings of powerlessness, aloneness and hopelessness on behalf of students.

3.4 Limitations

There are several points to consider when evaluating the different responses represented in the questionnaires and interviews. First, to what degree did the students write or voice their “true feelings” concerning the orientation process? Also, the questionnaire was administered in January 2011 and the interviews conducted in February 2011. Approximately five months had passed since the students actually experienced the orientation and first period. Thus, has their perceptions changed since their arrival? Do they accurately remember their experiences or has the new experiences replaced some of the initial thoughts and feelings. The reader should bear in mind that this was a single-campus study with the aim that the individual needs of students might be identified and addressed. Lastly, the task of finding common threads among the qualitative data requires a certain level of expertise that the writer lacked.

3.5 Ethical considerations

Before the empirical study was implemented, an application was submitted to both Ethical Committees represented at Arcada (Etix & Etiska rådet). The request to conduct an empirical study at the University was granted on December 12, 2011. During the process, students were informed that participation in the study was voluntary and that they would remain anonymous. In other words, steps were taken so that the data collected could not be traced back to the individual participants. A person other than the academic responsible for the particular lecture carried out the distribution and collection of the questionnaires; thus ensuring confidentiality and integrity of the data. The participants placed the completed questionnaires in a sealed container. The interviews were conducted in a location where privacy was ensured. An informed consent was signed by each of the students participating in the interviews. Steps were taken to ensure each student signing the informed consent knew what the form was and why their signature was required. A time for questions was given during the questionnaire and interview

process. The different types of data were stored in a locked compartment where only the writer had access.

4. DISCUSSION

There are many different factors related to student success. One of the main issues in this report “is that students’ feelings of being encouraged and supported play a large part in the learning they think they achieve” (Smith 2010 p.280). It seems, “almost regardless of family background, the educational expectations of today’s traditional-aged students are uniformly high” (Goldrick-Rab 2010 p. 452). Indeed, “student satisfaction with the institution is an important but sometimes overlooked variable in determining the quality of the under graduate experience” (Kuh et al. 2006 p.44). As seen in this study, if students’ expectations are not reasonably met they may perceive the academic environment as unsupportive. Therefore, “learning more about how students make sense of and navigate the college environment has greater potential to reveal aspects of the organizational structure that support and hinder student success” (Kuh et al. 2006 p. 104). It stands to reason, “without this information (student feedback) institutions cannot act intelligently because they are at a loss to know first whether such a problem is significant and for whom” (Kuh &Hu 2001 p.230).

In their paper, Shah & Nair (2006 p. 139) write, “a key element of any quality assurance process is evaluation and improvement. It is critical to ensure that student views are collected and translated into actions or improvement. This process of ‘closing the loop’ is probably the most demanding aspect of seeking student feedback.” During the proceedings of the Australian Universities Quality forum, Bennett (2006 p. 60) reported, “clearly the marriage of evaluations and quality is here to stay, but most importantly the Faculty of Education has taken the view that feedback from students is not only important and integral to the quality cycle but such feedback provides reliable and valuable information on which the faculty must act to meet the needs of their students.”

The writer feels if a purely quantitative approach were used in this study a completely different picture would have been formed as to students’ perceptions. Deeper issues seem to emerge from the data collected from the open-ended questions and inter-

views.

“Having an incomplete picture of student pathways through college may lead analysts to draw unsupported conclusions” (Goldrick-Rab 2010 p.458). Thus, “an important part of enhancing the quality of teaching and learning is enhancing the measures on which quality judgments are made” (Coates 2006 p.71).

One category that received much focus from students was the orientation process at Arcada. Some students said the orientation was too short, or that it was ineffective. Queensland University of Technology seemed to be facing the same situation. They wrote, “ we came early to the evidence-based realization that Orientation should be conceptualized as a process that occurs over time, both independent of the curriculum and mediated by it” (Kift et al. 2010 p.6).

According to Engstrom & Tinto (2008 p. 50), “Access [to university studies] without support is not opportunity. That [just because] institutions do not intentionally exclude students from college does not mean that they are including them as fully valued members of the institution and providing them with support that enables the to translate access into success. To promote greater success, institutions have to take seriously the notion that the failure of students to thrive in college lies not just in the students but also in the ways they construct the environment in which they ask student so learn.” One study found, “students who find something or someone worthwhile to connect to in the postsecondary environment are more likely to engage in educationally purposeful activities, persist, and achieve their educational objectives” (Kuh et al. 2006 p. 95). Thus, it is reasonable to conclude, if students perceive the environment as supportive from day one; their chances of successfully navigating their studies improve.

Another main category in this study was the lack of preparedness on the part of some students. Several students stated they had difficulty navigating the portal systems at Arcada. This lack of skill, would surely affect students accessing important information. Goldrich-Rab (2010 p. 451) claims, “one of the most widely accepted lessons from research on college success is that all students, regardless of what type of college they plan to attend, need to be academically prepared.” Engstrom & Tinto (2008) suggest student preparation is a key element in student success. Underprepared students lack basic skills required to succeed in the academic environment. Therefore, unless these

students find the support they need, many cannot take full advantage of the opportunity given them to study and are less likely to complete their degree program. “Postsecondary institutions can address shortcomings in students’ academic preparation and increase the chances that students will succeed by adapting demonstrably effective policies and practices” (Kuh et al. 2006 p. 97).

Guilfoyle & Thair (2006 p. 83) speak about the importance of resources to aid new students as they transition into university studies by the alignment of the students’ expectations. Clear orientation is given to new students as to their role as a student and what is expected from them and also what the student can expect from the faculty. However, even if the educational institution has all the necessary policies and institutional conditions in place, “it is important to recognize that postsecondary institutions are limited in what they can do to help underprepared students overcome deficiencies in their educational preparation and other risk factors” (Kuh et al. 2006 p. 89). Also, “a substantial number of new students may not fully understand and appreciate their role as learners” (Kuh et al. 2006 p. 94). In another study, “students reported that their commitment and motivation to pursue their studies increased because of the validation they received through the mastery of key skills.” These students remind us that it is not enough to be competent in class; students also have to believe in their competence.” (Engstrom & Tinto 2008 p.49) Therefore, “setting high expectations and then supporting and holding students accountable for reaching them is an effective strategy for encouraging student success” (Kuh et al. 2006 p. 67).

In this study, students surveyed stated they were generally satisfied with the courses and curriculum though they had difficulty finding course descriptions. Also, students reported feeling confused about knowing which staff member to contact concerning different questions. Many, felt uncertain about the proper procedures when contacting different teachers and faculty members. Queensland University of Technology started a slogan, “the first year experience is everybody’s business.” [This phrase was used,] “to bring awareness of the shared responsibility in bridging the gaps that existed in their educational institution with regard to the first year experience of students” (Kift et al. 2010 p.8).

There is a common expression often used, all hands on deck, which suggests the full

cooperation of everyone working together for a common purpose.

It would then, “be reasonable to conclude that it would be difficult to achieve a quality outcome for the student if multiple organizational sections in the university were not acting in harmony. Depending on the university’s organizational structure it would be likely for at least six major organizational divisions to be involved and the students experience may span some years. Consequently, it requires concerted organizational coordination and attention over an extended period to achieve even a reasonable standard of student experience” (Peach 2006 p. 136.) Thus, “determining reasonable institutional indicators of student success must involve a variety of groups: policymakers, administrators, faculty, staff and students” (Kuh et al. 2006 p. 102). In short, it is crucial, different departments and faculty work together in supporting students and their needs.

4.1 Conclusion

Indeed, “if as it appears, individual effort or engagement is one of a critical determinants of the impact of college, then it is important to focus on the ways in which an institution can shape its academic, interpersonal and extracurricular offering to encourage student engagement” (Pascarella & Terenzini 2005 p.602). Taking this into consideration it is believed that, “knowing the current levels of student satisfaction is critical for good university management.

Universities owe a duty of care to their students and their own institutional longevity to take an active interest in this domain. Dissatisfied students can have powerful affects on reputations income streams and the realization of institutional mission” (King & Nair 2006 p.96.) In a paper presented at the Australian Universities Quality forum, Gluett & Skene (2006 p. 62) state, “an essential element for institutions to increase the size of their student cohort is by understanding how these students can best be served.” They also suggest student feedback and student satisfaction surveys could be used to help communicate the students’ experiences. Another point to consider is that, “higher education is a labor-intensive industry, and investments in instruction are particularly

expensive. [...] We need to know what works and why” (Goldrick-Rab 2010 p.458.)

According to Carnevale & Desrochers (2002 p. 6), “the costs of delivering the education we need will be high, even with successful reforms. But the costs of failure will be even higher. Failure will jeopardize our future competitiveness in the global economy.” By utilizing an ongoing student experience questionnaire an Australian University, “received significant additional funding. [They said the results,] provide information concerning further development of the campus, and assist in future planning and benchmarking processes in relation to other local institutions, other university’s campuses and also internationally” (Nair et al. 2011 p.588.) According to recent study conducted in the Unites States if current trends continue, “shortages of workers with some college-level skills could increase to more than 12 million by 2020” (Carnevale & Desrochers 2002 p. 5).

It is widely agreed that, “an array of educational policies, student characteristics, institutional condition, and other factors are associated with student success in college (Kuh et al. 2006 p. 89). Thus, “in order to meet the challenges of building on and sustaining good practice in learning and teaching, we propose that a whole of institution, integrated, learning focused and evidence based approach is essential” (Harpe & Radloff 2006 p. 75).

“It is possible for policy makers to serve all kinds of students while achieving greater levels of success. But doing so will require the coordination of proven educational practices that work together, and not at cross-purposes, toward the common goal of increasing academic momentum. Colleges and universities should be active participants in (rather than the objects of) such efforts and should be allowed autonomy to achieve these ends while being held accountable for making sure goals are met” (Goldrick-Rab 2010 p. 459.)

The bottom line is, “colleges and universities are limited in terms of what they can do to encourage student success. An institution of higher education cannot change the lineage of its students. Campus cultures do not change easily or willingly. Too many long-held beliefs and standard operating practices are tightly woven into an institution’s ethos and embedded in the psyche of faculty leaders and senior administrators, some of which

may be counterproductive. That said, most institutions can do far more than they are doing at present to implement interventions that will change the way students approach college and what they do after they arrive. The real question is whether we have the will to more consistently use what we know to be promising policies and effective educational practices in order to increase the odds that more students get ready, get in, and get through” (Kuh et al. 2006 p.106.)

4.2 Final word

“ It is argued that, when first generation co-curricular and second generation curricular approaches are integrated and implemented through an intentionally designed curriculum by seamless partnership of academic and professional staff in a whole-of-institution transformation, we have a third generation approach labeled here as transition pedagogy. It is suggested that transition pedagogy provides the optimal vehicle for dealing with the increasingly diverse commencing student cohorts by facilitating a sense of engagement, support and belonging” (Kift et al. 2010 p.1.)

“Colleges and universities have two nonnegotiable obligations to their students. The first is to establish high performance expectations, inside and outside the classroom, appropriate to students’ abilities and aspirations. To do this, a school must first understand who its students are, what they are prepared to do academically, and what they expect of the institution and themselves [...] The second obligation institutions have to their students is to give them prompt, frequent feedback as to how well they are meeting these expectations” (Kuh et al. 2006 p. 94.)

“But most importantly, we need to capitalize on the talent, energy and passion of the people across the institution since in a devolved context, each of us has a role to play in ensuring that good practice in learning and teaching is located everywhere” (Harpe & Radloff 2006 p. 77). “We still know far too little about what works, but what evidence we do have indicates a need for a multifaceted approach that is flexible enough to accommodate the variety of student needs and ambitious enough to create meaningful change” (Goldrick-Rab 2010 p. 459).

An important component in identifying and addressing the individual needs of students is found in the feedback institutions receive. In the future one important question will be, what criteria will be used in assessing, monitoring and evaluating the needs of future international first year students studying at Arcada. The writer feels that evidence-based decisions are essential in maintaining a healthy academic environment and therefore, ongoing study is needed.

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APPENDIX 1.

Arcada University

Student Guidebook

2012-2013

1st edition

Learning for Life

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Dear New Student,

Welcome to Arcada University of Applied Life!

At Arcada we see your years as a student as far more than courses that lead to a degree. Your student years are also about growing and learning for life, finding your professional role and learning to function in a culture of multi-professionals.

As a new student at Arcada, you join an already existing academic community that includes about 170 members of staff and 2900 students. A good 10 per cent of our students are of foreign origin and represent more than 50 nationalities.

Beginning studies is a challenging time for international students just arriving to Finland. During the first few days of orientation, large amounts of information will be presented. At times this may feel overwhelming. But don't worry!

Many student support services already exist at the University. The aim of this guidebook is not to improve or replace any of these excellent resources but to act as a type of map or bridge for new international students to aid them in accessing the correct department/person to meet their needs during the initial transition period.

This guidebook is designed by international first year students for international first year students. In other words, this resource was designed

JUST FOR YOU!

It is our desire to support you in your studies. We hope you find this guidebook, along with the other services provided, useful in navigating the academic environment at Arcada.

Enjoy your studies!

Sincerely,

Members of the Study Service Team.

Mission Statement

The mission of universities of applied sciences is to provide professional higher education geared to the requirements and development of working life, to support professional development, and to carry out research and development that serves the education, the work life, regional development and industry and commerce of the region.

Also, Arcada is dedicated to the mission of supporting and benefiting the Swedish language minority in Finland.

Studying at Arcada

At Arcada we believe that there is more to studying than taking courses. During your student years you will grow as a person and learn responsibility, you will find your professional role and learn to function in a culture of multi-professionals. At our growing modern campus located just outside Helsinki city centre, with approximately 2,900 students (approximately 20% of which are of non-finnish origin) we offer Bachelor's degree programmes, Master's degree programmes, further education, an environment with students from over 50 countries, exciting learning environments, student apartments, leisure activities... In other words, all the possibilities of a large city campus in combination with the flexibility and charm of a small university. At Arcada you are not alone. Should you wish to go on student exchange, there is a worldwide network of partner institutions to choose from.

On the following pages we have summarized some useful information about studying at Arcada. The Study Guide at <http://studieguide.arcada.fi/en/> and <http://intro.arcada.fi> both contain important information concerning your studies.

It is important to begin reading these pages as soon as possible as doing so will aid in navigating the academic environment here at Arcada.

5.1 The Study Path

Your curriculum tells you what courses are compulsory for your degree.

The courses you should take, during the ongoing academic year, can be found in ASTA.

NOTE: For information on ASTA and other E-Services provided, please see section 9 in this guidebook.

Read the course descriptions well!

Note how much individual work the course requires and what the general requirements are.

Enroll for the courses you aim to take.

Also remember to enroll separately for courses using Itslearning.

If you decide **not** to take a course that you have enrolled in, please **cancel** your enrollment!

The study plan and curriculum indicate which courses you are supposed to take.

If you do not manage to pass the course during the first examination, check in ASTA when you can take a re-exam and sign up for it one week in advance at the latest!

For each course there are two possibilities for re-examination during one year.

If you still do not manage to get through the examination you will need to retake the entire course. This can easily delay your schedule in the future.

Make a plan each year where you can clearly see what courses you have passed and those you have ahead.

If you get stuck, please contact your tutoring teacher, student counselor, teacher or someone else who can help you.

NOTE: For information on how to contact different faculty members, please see section 12.6 in this guidebook.

5.2 Orientation/Introduction Days

Introduction days

The first days of the autumn term are designed to give all new students an easy and relaxed start to their studies. Information about the time, dates and places will be sent when you have accepted your study place. During the orientation days you will receive information that is necessary for your studies as well as meet your fellow students in your degree programme. **Be prepared that the first days will be busy with lots of new information to take in.**

If you are unable to attend the introduction days, useful information can be found online at <http://studieguide.arcada.fi/en/> and <http://intro.arcada.fi>

Also, should you have questions you can always turn to your peer tutor and of course, members of staff.

Note: For help on contacting members of staff, please see section 12.6 of this guidebook.

5.3 Registration for the academic year

All students need to register for the entire academic year. As a new degree student, you registered for the academic year 2012-2013 at the same time that you accepted your study place. Next year however, you need to register for the academic year 2013-2014 in the way announced in mid April.

If you do not register as present or absent during this time you risk losing your right to study!

You are required by law to register for each academic year. Therefore, you shall register as either present or absent by September 15th each year. If you neglect this, you will lose your right to study at Arcada.

If needed, you may change your registration for periods 3-4 on January 15th, at the latest. You can find the paper form on www.arcada.fi or outside the Student Affairs Office from November.

NOTE: Location/contact information for the Student Affairs office can be found in section 13 of this guidebook.

If you have registered as absent you cannot:

- * take courses and achieve credits.
- * do work placements.
- * be an exchange student.
- * receive counseling for your thesis.
- * receive study allowances.

5.4 Checklist for managing your studies

1. Remember to continuously check which courses in your curriculum you have passed and which ones you have left.
2. In order to graduate within your study time you should achieve 60cr/academic year
3. Make a LIST of the courses you are missing.
4. Check **WHETHER** and **WHEN** they will be offered again and **WHAT** you need to do in order to pass them.
5. Contact your Programme Director if you intend to apply for accreditation of courses.
6. Make a detailed **PLAN** for your remaining courses. Contact the teachers regarding unfinished courses and check the dates for your re-exams. Remember to enroll for courses and re-exams in ASTA!

In order to get credits registered, you must have registered for the course!

7. When you register for the course, remember to **print out or save** the course descriptions on your computer. The course descriptions will not be available later as the courses change each year. If you plan on studying in future years, in order to transfer credits especially abroad you will need a course description. Please do not call your Programme Director or Arcada and ask for old course descriptions, they will not be able to provide them for you. Course descriptions that are available can be found online.
8. Frequently read your Arcada e-mail and the MyArcada pages, as staff will mainly use these sections when contacting and communicating with you.

Start package checklist

6.1 Student Keys

In order to have access to the Arcada building and classrooms, as well as the computer networks and equipment you will need to have a key, user ID and password for the Arcada network.

Degree Students: During the first days you may obtain keys against a **CASH** deposit (electronic key 20€, locker key: small 5€/big 10€) and user accounts against valid identification (passport/driver's license) at the Big Square. The Big Square is located inside the Arcada building just up the stairs at the main entrance. The office used for issuing the keys is next to the cafeteria. Look for the signs.

Note: Deposit prices for keys and lockers may vary each academic year.

Exchange students: Electronic keys and computer passwords for Arcada will be handed out upon arrival. Remember to bring 20€ **CASH** for the deposit. Please contact the IT-center for other computer related matters.

NOTE: The location of the IT-help desk can be found under section 13 in this guidebook.

If you loose your key immediately inform the janitor in C1 so that your key can be cancelled. Until your key is cancelled, you are still responsible for it!

6.2 Computer password/user ID

During the first week of studies you will receive your user name and password for accessing all IT-services at Arcada.

**Never give anyone your password or user ID!
If anyone asks for your password or user ID, please report it as soon as possible.**

NOTE: For more information on this subject please see section 12.4 of this guidebook.

6.3 Meal Subsidy Card

Your meal subsidy card can be picked-up from the Student Affairs office located in C3.

This Card entitles a student to get a discount on the meals at student restaurants both at Arcada and in the city center. Just present the meal card along with your ID at the register to receive the discount.

Discounts in the Metropolitan-area busses, trains, trams and metro for students are available. For detailed instructions and regulations please visit: <http://www.hsl.fi/EN/ticketsandfares/Pages/default.aspx>

Discounts for the long distance trains and buses (VR and Matkahuolto) are available to students. For detailed instructions please visit, <http://www.vr.fi/en/index/junaliput/liput/opiskelijalippu.html>

Members of ASK (the student union) can substitute these three separate cards with the student union card. You get the same benefits and more.

NOTE: For more information please see section 11 of this guidebook or visit www.asken.fi

6.4 Register for classes:

For help in first time class registration, Please contact your peer tutor.

NOTE: For information on peer tutors please see section 7.2 of this guidebook.

Normally students' register for:

- 15 credits a period (usually 3 classes)
- 4 periods/year
- 60 credits/year

Please follow the curriculum created just for you carefully to see when to enroll for a course. Watch the deadlines!

If a student enrolls in a course and then decides not to take the course it is essential that you cancel the enrollment!

6.5 Good Scientific Practice in Studies at Arcada.

Read/sign and submit the form *Good Scientific Practice in Studies* at Arcada.

NOTE: For information concerning this form please see section 12.7 of this guidebook.

For more information on managing your studies, see sections 5 and 9 of this guidebook.

Tutors

7.1 Tutoring teacher

When you commence your studies you make up a study plan that you evaluate and update every year. All students have a tutoring teacher within his/her programme to consult regarding their study progress. Progress sessions are held yearly in order to support the students' progress, make the studies worthwhile and promote professional and personal development.

Here are some points to consider when evaluating your studies:

- How have my studies gone so far?
- What are my expectations for the coming term?
- How well have I adjusted to student life?
- Is my study plan detailed enough and realistic?
- Is something obstructing my studies?
- What can I do about it?

7.2 Peer tutoring

Peer tutors are those who are tutors for first year students that study for a degree at Arcada. Students that already have studied some time at Arcada are tutors for the group of new students that study on the same degree programme as the tutor.

The tutors are a chosen group of students whose main purpose is to help new students. The tasks of the tutors include everything from familiarizing the new students with Arcada, their studies at Arcada, student life and everything in between.

The tutors are here for the new students and for the university. The tutors help during different happenings like fairs, introduction days and in the daily school environment.

The tutors are students that already have studied at Arcada a while, so they already know a thing or two about studies and can help you with almost any question you may have.

In addition to the practical help the tutors offer they also organize a lot of different happenings for the new students to get to know each other and the student life. In the fall the tutors organize *gulis* and *gulis sitzes*. During the rest of the year they organize everything from sauna-and game-evenings to different kinds of parties and excursions.

7.3 International tutoring

The international tutors take care of the exchange students that come to Arcada. The i-tutors help them with different kinds of practical arrangements such as picking them up from the airport, showing them their apartment and showing them around in Helsinki.

NOTE: For more information on how to become a tutor, please see section 12.11 in this guidebook.

Student Representatives

During the first few weeks of study, each class will elect two class representatives.

8.1 Election guidelines

The students and teacher tutor will agree on a day for the election in advance.

The teacher tutor will be present for the election to help facilitate the election process and answer any questions the students might have.

The candidates can be either female or male.

The candidates standing for election must be nominated first by their fellow classmates and accept the invitation to stand for election. Any classmate who is nominated who does not wish to stand for election may decline the nomination.

Each student will cast one vote for class president and one vote for class vice-president.

Each student submits his or her election ballot; the teacher tutor will have the student sign next to his or her name on the student list as having voted. Each student must be prepared with proof of identification on the Election Day.

Once all the students who wish to participate have voted and the votes have been calculated, the results will be announced.

In order for the election to be valid, a sufficient student body must vote. (The minimum threshold for a student cohort is 70% of the student class. Therefore, 70% of the students must cast a vote in order for the election to be valid).

Tampering with or attempting to manipulate the election process in any way is considered a breach of the general rules of conduct/student code of conduct for Arcada.

8.2 The election process

1. The students and teacher tutor will agree on a day for the election in advance.
2. The date will be announced so that as many students as possible can attend the election.
3. Time will be given at the beginning of the election process for questions.
4. Minutes will be taken during the election for future reference.
5. The election will be called to order.
6. Candidates standing for nomination will be announced.
7. The names of the candidates and the office they are nominated for will be written on the board to help facilitate name spelling and decrease potential confusion.
8. Each candidate nominated will either accept or decline the invitation to run as class representative.
9. The voting ballots will be distributed one to each student by the teacher tutor.
10. Each student present will vote for one student to act as president and one student to act as vice-president.
11. The peer teacher will collect the ballots.
12. After the last ballot is collected the election will be adjourned and the minutes will end.
13. The results of the election will be announced, once the ballots are counted.

8.3 Student representative duties

The responsibilities of the class representatives include:

1. Act as the spokesperson for the entire class with regard to issues, that may arise during the study process as Arcada.
2. Contact the appropriate programme director and schedule regular meetings.
3. Attend meetings with different faculty members as needed.
4. Endeavor to find creative solutions to the academic challenges they and their fellow classmates may experience during the study process.
5. Support and abide by the Student Code of Conduct/General rules of conduct for Arcada.
6. Exhibit behavior that will support the highest ethical standards of this institution and of the community as a whole.
7. Conduct themselves in ways that support the academic environment at Arcada.

E-Services

There are many electronic services in use at Arcada which function for study and administrative purposes, both for students and staff. The most extensive of them all, when it comes to information on studies, is the study guide.

9.1 The Study Guide

The online study guide (<http://studieguide.arcada.fi>) is a compilation of all information related to your studies. In the study guide you will also find links to the e-services listed below.

9.2 MyArcada

MyArcada is your personal news site. On MyArcada members of staff and the student union post information about what is going on at Arcada, about interesting projects and events, but also about cancelled classes or sudden changes in schedule. On MyArcada you can also find contact information for staff members.

9.3 ASTA

You register for your courses here. In ASTA you can find your curriculum, course descriptions, course registration, the re-examination system, and eventually also tools for planning and following up your studies.

9.4 ARBS

Your study schedule is found here. ARBS is an electronic room booking – system. Here you can see where your courses are given and search bookings for specific student-groups and teachers. This gives you a general view of everything going on in Arcada.

9.5 Itslearning

Itslearning is a learning management system used in many courses at Arcada. It provides tools and facilities for online course management, content management and sharing, assessment management, and online collaboration and communication. You can reach Itslearning from any computer.

You will know from the course description when Itslearning is used in a course. Note that when you have enrolled in a course through ASTA, a separate enrolment is required in Itslearning. A link to Itslearning can be found in the study guide. Also be sure to **check with the teacher** of the course to ensure your enrollment is completed correctly.

NOTE: For more information on each of the above topics, please refer to section 12.5 in this guidebook or visit the IT-service department.

Library

The library provides services for the students and staff of Arcada. It is also open to the public.

Opening hours

Monday, Tuesday, Thursday 9am – 5 pm,
Wednesday 10 am – 6 pm,
Friday (the day preceding holidays) 9 am – 4 pm.

NOTE: When the library is closed, books can be returned in the box outside the library's main entrance.

Library cards

In order to check out materials from the library you must have a library card. Library cards can be obtained by visiting the library front desk during opening hours. (Please remember to bring some proof of identification with you).

Library services

Library services include interlibrary loans and electronic publications.

A wealth of information/E-materials can be accessed outside Arcada through the Nelli Portal.

A reading room and two rooms for teamwork are available during the library's opening hours.

Photocopying is possible in the library, using the copy credit system attached to your key. Copy credit can be purchased at the Student Union ASK in the Cor-house.

Note: For more information on obtaining your key please see section 6.1 in this guidebook. For information concerning copy credits please see section 12.9 in this guidebook.

In the library there are four computers with MS Office and ten computers for retrieving information from the Internet.

Library help

You are welcome to ask for help and advice when looking for literature or information in our databases and Internet resources.

Individual consultation is also possible by making an appointment with a librarian.

Student Union-ASK

The Arcada Student Union- ASK is the interest and service organization for all students at Arcada. It is your voice in Arcada as well as nationally.

ASK's own building, the Cor-house built in 2007, is located about 500 meters from Arcada, behind the shopping mall. In the Cor-house there is a cafeteria, a sauna and offices for the Student Union and the Student Associations. The café is operated by ASK's joint stock company ASK Ab. In the cafeteria you can buy cheap coffee and other refreshments at student friendly prices.

The Cor-house is open every weekday between 11 am and 7 pm.

The ASK office is located in the Cor-house on the second floor behind the first door on your left hand side when going up the stairs.

Three of the four student associations, Commedia, HanSe SF and HoSK are located there as well. TLK has its office about 100 meters from the Cor-house at the Corner.

The ASK office is opened Monday-Thursday 11am-1pm. If the office is not open, and you have an urgent matter, you can call the Secretary General or send her an email.

NOTE: For contact details see section 13 in this guidebook.

We want you to feel welcome at Arcada. Whether you have questions about about getting your grades registered, improving the courses, getting better food, better counseling or any other study related matters that concern you as a student, please feel free to contact us. We are delighted to be at your service.

**Don't suffer in silence
ASK**

NOTE: For more information on how to become a member of ASK please see section 12.10 of this guidebook.

Frequently Asked Questions:

12.1 Immigration

1. **I just arrived to Finland, What do I do now?**

The Arcada Practical Information Guide is specifically designed for new International Students. In this guide you will find valuable information concerning Residence Permits, Insurance, Accommodation and more.

You can find these Guides in the Student Affairs office located at C3.

Also, you can visit www.migri.fi, study for important information concerning for example:

- Submitting a residence permit application
- Livelihood
- Health insurance
- Application form and appendices
- Processing times

Also, visit studyinfinland.fi and infofinland.fi for additional help. The personnel at intro Finland can be met in person and have been reported to be very helpful and friendly.

12.2 First Year Registration

1. **This is my first year as a degree student at Arcada, do I need to register for the Academic year?**

As a new degree student, you registered for the academic year 2012-2013 at the same time that you accepted your study place. Next year however, you need to register for the academic year 2013-2014 in the way announced in mid April.

NOTE: Exchange student! Please see the international coordinator for instructions.

12.3 Induction ceremony

1. **What is the enrolment/induction ceremony?**

There is an enrolment ceremony in the Big Auditorium for all new students. The Rector/President of Arcada will give the enrolment speech. The ceremony is a festive opening of the academic year. There are no classes during the ceremony.

12.4 User name & password information

1. **When will I get my user name/password for accessing IT-services at Arcada?**

During the first week of studies at Arcada you will be provided with your user name and temporary password.

Be sure to change your password!

2. **What is considered a good password?**

A good password is one that includes both capital and lower case letters and numbers.

- Is used only here at Arcada and nowhere else.
- Is not a real word, (ex: cannot be found in a dictionary of any language).
- Is not next to each other in the key table. (e.g. ASDFGH12345).
- Is 8-10 characters in length.

3. **How do I change my password?**

You can change your password at <https://my.arcada.fi/en>.

Choose; *change user password*, then the *Edit* or *Redigera* tab near the top of the page. If you need help changing your password, please visit the IT-helpdesk.

NOTE: For IT-helpdesk contact information see section 13 in this guidebook.

4. **Can I change my user name?**

No, your user name will be used throughout your studies here at Arcada. Combining your last name and the first initial of your first name creates your user name.

IMPORTANT: Your user name is personal and you are personally responsible for its usage. Your password is to be **kept private** and it should not, **under any circumstances** be given to anyone. Do not give it to students or faculty. Keep a strong password and change your password frequently!

5. **What is the IT-helpdesk at Arcada?**

The IT-helpdesk at Arcada can help you with anything from email, your own space on our server, personal webpages, printers and E-tools. There is an article called, "The little IT-guide" in the Arcada wiki to help you get started. It can be found at: https://wiki.arcada.fi/index.php/The_little_IT-guide/.

12.5 E-Service

All these e-services will be available once you have obtained your username/password.

1 What is MyArcada?

MyArcada is an electronic service where you can find the latest news up dates. When you log in it is the page through which all other computer interactive and non-interactive programs/systems can be accessed.

Read it daily! The staff expects students to be aware of information/events and last minute changes at Arcada.

2 What is ASTA?

ASTA is where you can:

- register for your courses.
- enroll and un-enroll for classes
- view grades
- view what period(s) you are enrolled in
- enroll for a re-exam

3. What is ARBS?

ARBS is where you can

- Locate your study schedule.
- View what room your teacher has reserved
- Check for room reservations

4. What is Itslearning?

Itslearning is an interactive learning site where teachers post assignments. Login information to Itslearning will be e-mailed to you using your Arcada email account during the first weeks. Simply follow the directions provided. If you have difficulties, visit the IT-helpdesk.

NOTE: For the IT-helpdesk contact information please see section 13 in this guidebook.

5. What is Web-mail?

Web-mail is where you can receive your email and send email. Remember to read your arcada email at least daily. The staff uses it as the main communications channel.

6. What is Nelli?

Nelli is a site to view e-materials necessary for your studies at Arcada.

7. What is Wiki?

Wiki is a platform where individuals can post information. (Not necessarily reliable).

12.6 Contacting Staff

5. How do I contact my programme director, teachers and different members of staff at Arcada?

Communicating with faculty at Arcada is quite simple. You have many different options. Just a few are as follows.

You can approach the staff member before or after class or contact them via E-services to make an appointment.

Step-by-step process

- Log into MyArcada using your user name and password
- Under the main heading, on the right side of the screen you will see "search staff".
- Type the part of the name or first name of the person you wish to contact.
- Choose from the selection by clicking on the name.

On this page you will see the

- Name
- Title/Position
- E-mail address
- Telephone number(s)
- Open reception times

6. What are open reception times?

Reception times are times set aside for faculty to meet with students. Contact the faculty member via email or call them several days in advance to schedule a meeting.

NOTE: When you email a faculty member, be sure to check your email for their reply. If the faculty member attempts to contact you and does not receive a timely reply from you, they may elect to schedule an appointment with another student, so **remember to confirm the appointment.**

Please be considerate! If you book an appointment, but decide not to go, cancel the appointment by email so the staff person does not waste time waiting for you to show-up.

12.7 Forms/Applications/Accreditation

3. **Where do I find the form, “Good Scientific Practice in Studies at Arcada”?**

- Login to the Arcada pages using your username and password
- Select, “studyguide” at the top of the screen
- Select English
- Select *Rules & Guidelines* under the main heading *Regulations*.
- Select the attachment named, “Good Scientific Practice in Studies on the right hand side of the screen.

2. **How and to whom do I submit the form, Good Scientific Practice in Studies at Arcada, once I have read it and filled it out?**

Once the document has been read, the form should be properly filled and only then should the form be submitted to your programme director. If you have any questions please contact your teacher tutor or programme director.

Staff members each have a type of mailbox located outside their office. Each mailbox has a corresponding name.

The form may be left in the designated mailbox of your programme director located outside his/her office or by submitting it in person before or after a scheduled class.

3. **How do I receive accreditation of study attainments?**

If you have taken courses that are not part of your curriculum at Arcada you may apply for accreditation. This also concerns informally acquired competence. Please read more about this in the Study Guide (www.studieguidе.arcada.fi).

Please note: New students should apply for accreditation **immediately** when they begin their studies. Preferably even earlier!

12.8 Studying at Arcada

1. **What is the right to study and what does that mean for me?**

Right to study (see the degree statutes article 4)

Your right to study starts as soon as you accept your study place at Arcada. The length of your studies depends on how many credits your degree requires, but the general estimation is that you should complete 15 cr. per-study period. After that you have one more year to conclude your studies. When you are registered as absent you cannot take courses and therefore that time is not included in your right to study.

If for some special reason you are not able to conclude your studies within the prescribed time you can apply for the right to complete your studies. It is important that you do this while your right to study is still valid and that you attach an individual study plan to the application signed by your Programme Director.

2. **How do I find out when the Academic Year begins and ends?**

The exact dates of each academic year at Arcada University of Applied Sciences can be found online. The academic year is divided into four periods, which are paired into an autumn and spring term.

NOTE: Lectures start in the middle of August and end by the end of May.

The beginning and ending dates of each period can be found in the Arcada Practical Information Guide or by logging in to MyArcada and clicking the *Study Guide* tab.

3. **What is a re-examination and how do I register?**

The re-examination system (exams, directions and registration) can be found in ASTA. In order to attend an examination on a reexamination day, you must sign up at least one week in advance according to the ASTA instructions.

Re-examinations are arranged about once a month, usually on Fridays between 3pm and 6pm.

You can also write your maturity test on these occasions if your supervisor has registered it in ASTA.

12.9 Copying machines/copy credits

1. **Where do I purchase copy credits to print out material at Arcada?**

Copy credit can be purchased at the Student Union ASK in the Cor-house.

NOTE: For information concerning location of the Cor-house
please see sections 11 & 13 in this guidebook.

Your key acts as a type of card for using the copying machines.

2. **Where are the copy machines located?**

Copy machines are located throughout the facility.

During the orientation days you will be shown where the machines are located. (e.g. E3).

Also, during the first period you will be taking an ICT drivers course that will aid you in using all of the electronic services at Arcada.

3. **How do I make copies?**

Simply follow the detailed instructions provided for you. Usually these are posted just above the machine on the wall. At times you will see a small folder just next to the machine.

Also, students at Arcada are happy to help you during your transition into the academic environment. Don't be afraid to ask for help!

12.10 Student union/organizations

2. How do I become a member of ASK?

a You have two options for becoming a member of ASK. You can either fill out paper form or go to www.asken.fi and fill out an application online.

Step-by-step instructions:

Online:

- Go to www.asken.fi and click on the link for membership applications.
- Fill out the membership form thoroughly with accurate information.
- Note that you need an electronic picture of yourself to finish your application!
- Pay your membership fee right away or print out an invoice.
- Print out a proof of payment of your payment and bring it with you when you pick up your student card.
- Remember to pick up your student card! At the start of the academic year, the delivery time is a bit longer due to many applicants, so order your student card as soon as possible!

Paper form:

- Fill out the application with the accurate information and remember to sign it.
- Attach a photo of yourself to the application.
- Pay your membership fee according to the instructions on the application form and attach the proof of payment to your application.
- Post the application using the E-services at Arcada or bring the application to the ASK office located in the Cor-house.

NOTE: For information on the location of the Cor-house please see section 11 & 13 in this guidebook.

For more information or questions please don't hesitate to contact us at www.asken.fi . We are more than happy to help.

2. How do I find a schedule of events at the Cor-house?

Check out the homepages for opening hours and more information about what's going on at: www.asken.fi or www.corhuset.fi.

12.11 Peer Tutoring

1. **How do I become a peer tutor?**

We want YOU for a tutor!

Do you want to help the new students at their school start? Do you want to plan spectacular happenings for them? Do you want to help the students with everything and nothing that has to do with their studies at Arcada?

If you answered yes to any of these questions, fill in an application and become a tutor.

For applications or for more information e-mail tutor@asken.fi or int@asken.fi.

12.12 Graduation

1. **When are the graduation days?**

The graduation is a festive ceremony at which the President/Vice-rector gives a speech and the graduates are congratulated with a rose. After the ceremony the graduates and their guests are treated to a glass of bubbly (non-alcoholic option available).

Graduation ceremonies are arranged 2 times a year. During the academic year you can also graduate on other days, no ceremony will take place. The students who graduate on days other than during the ceremonies will receive their degree certificate by mail or they may pick it up from the Study Office.

For more graduation dates and an in-depth look at the graduation day please visit <http://studieguide.arcada.fi>

Click, English (upper right corner of the page)

(Under the heading STUDIES in the middle of the page) Click, Study at Arcada. On the left-hand side of the page you will find the sub-heading of Graduation, Click and the page will open for you.

Campus contacts

Concerned with	Where to go	Who to see	Contact info
Academic Problems/ Counseling Center	C3	Mia Ekström Study Counselor	studyguidance@arcada.fi 0207 699 517 050 368 4606
	C3	Kàtia Torres Airava Study Counselor	studyguidance@arcada.fi 0207 699 468 040 553 6525
Address/Telephone Change	C3	Student Affairs help-desk	studyoffice@arcada.fi
ASK (Student Union)	Cor-house http://www.asken.fi	Jenny Tabermann Secretary-General	gs@asken.fi 0207 699 407 050 469 7407
Audio/Visual Services	C1 (C-wing; 1 st floor)	IT-help desk	helpdesk@arcada.fi 0207 699 555 040 553 5958
Career Services	C3	Sara Åström Career Services Coordinator	careerservices@arcada.fi saraa@arcada.fi 0207 699 514
Studying abroad/ Exchange studies/ International Coordinator	C1	Christa Holm	international@arcada.fi holmchri@arcada.fi 0207 699 670
Copy Credits	Cor-house 1 st floor	Cashier	www.asken.fi
Financial Aid	C3	Sara Holmberg	sho@arcada.fi
Housing	F1	Majstranden & HOAS	www.majstranden.fi www.hoas.fi

International Coordinator Degree Students	C3	Michael von Boguslawsky michael.vonboguslawsky@arcada.fi 040 828 0018	
IT-help desk	C1	IT help-desk	helpdesk@arcada.fi 020 7699 555
Library	C2 (next to the Info. desk)		biblioteket@arcada.fi 0207 699 690
Lockers	C1	IT-helpdesk	helpdesk@arcada.fi 020 7699 555
Lost & found	C2	information desk	info@arcada.fi 0207 699 699
Keys	C1	IT-helpdesk	helpdesk@arcada.fi 0207 699 555
Meal subsidy card	C3	Student Affairs front desk	studyoffice@arcada.fi
Restaurant	2 nd floor	Marina Dufvelin-Harju Cafeteria Manager	arcada@amica.fi 0207 699 561
School Nurse	E4	Petra Virkki	petra.virkki@arcada.fi 0207 699 554
Student Affairs office	C3	help-desk	studyoffice@arcada.fi
Study Psychologist	C344	Susanne Tiihonen	susanne.tiihonen@arcada.fi 0503 185 242
Transcripts	C3	Student Affairs front desk	studyoffice@arcada.fi
Tutoring Teacher	4 th floor	Each programme has an assigned individual.	See section 7.1 in this Guidebook.
Withdrawal from Classes/university	C3	Student affairs front desk (Notify your Programme Director as well)	studyoffice@arcada.fi
Writing assistance	Language Block 4 th floor	Jan-Anders Ray Nigel Kimberley Martina Tefke	rayjanan@arcada.fi nigel.kimberley@arcada.fi martina.tefke@arcada.fi

Basic Phrasebook

Enclosed is a list of basic phrases that could be useful when starting your studies at Arcada. Don't be afraid to try them out during the introduction days. Have fun!

Swedish	English
Hej	Hello
God morgon	Good morning
God kväll	Good evening
God natt	Good night
Tack	Thank you
Tack så mycket!	Thanks so much
Var så god	You're welcome
Ursäkta	Excuse me
Bra	Good
Vad heter du?	What is your name?
Jag heter _____ (your name)	My name is _____ (your name)
Hej, hur mår du?	Hi, how are you?
Jag mår bra, tack, och du?	I am fine thanks, and you?
Jag är lite trött.	I'm a little tired.
Varifrån kommer du?	From where do you come?
Jag kommer från _____ (Country of origin)	I come from _____ (Country of origin)
Jag talar engelska.	I speak English

Jag talar inte svenska.

I don't speak Swedish

Talar du engelska?

Do you speak English?

Jag förstår inte

I don't understand

Jag förstår

I understand

Jag studerar på Arcada.

I study at Arcada.

Hej då

Good bye

Vi ses

See you later

Ta det lugnt

Take it easy

Student code of conduct

In any democratic society it is assumed that individuals do not require countless rules/regulations and laws to govern behavior but that the individuals' own moral integrity/character will guide them.

Arcada University is an academic institution dedicated to the pursuit of educational excellence and is committed to creating and maintaining an environment that encourages and supports personal and intellectual growth.

Arcada University regards all students as responsible individuals. Therefore, as members of this academic community, it is the responsibility of **each student** to conduct him or herself in a manner, which will:

- Encourage the maximum development of their fellow students.
- Uphold the highest ethical standards of this institution and of the community as a whole.
- Comply with all laws, university regulations and policies

In short, students are expected to conduct themselves in ways that support the academic environment at Arcada.

Some examples of unacceptable behavior include:

- Academic dishonesty
- Physical, psychological, racial, sexual and other forms of harassment.
- Abuse of drugs and alcohol is strictly prohibited.
- Disturbance in the classroom or at Arcada.
- Smoking is only allowed in the designated areas.
-

Failure to adhere to the above mentioned student code of conduct could result in disciplinary action.

For more information, please see Supplement 7: General rules of conduct for a complete listing of general rules of conduct for Arcada.

Revision Schedule

Yearly revisions will be conducted by the cooperation of students and different staff members to aid in the ongoing development of Arcada's degree programmes for international students studying in English

APPENDIX 2.

Thesis Supervisor:
Gun-Britt Lejonqvist
gbl@arcada.fi
0207 699 646

Letter of Introduction Questionnaire

Hello!

We would like to take this opportunity to share with you some exciting news.

As you know, Arcada has students from a variety of different backgrounds. We would like to ask your help by filling out a questionnaire.

The purpose of this study is to collect feedback from international first year students concerning the orientation services provided by Arcada.

This is voluntary meaning you don't have to participate if you don't want to.

The participants will remain anonymous.

The results of the questionnaire will help us in the development of a guidebook for first year students and will also be included in a thesis project.

Each of us brings a unique perspective being we are from different countries and have lived in Finland for different periods of time. Simply put, our needs/expectations may be different.

In conclusion, please join us in helping to develop this Guidebook so that others who follow can benefit from our experiences.

For more information/questions, please contact us at:

Denise F. Villikka
villikkd@arcada.fi
(0)404 179 819

Thank you!

APPENDIX 3.

Questionnaire Instructions

Dear Participant,

Please place the completed questionnaire in the sealed container.

If you have any questions, please don't hesitate to ask.

Thank you for your participation

Denise F. Villikka

APPENDIX 4.

Questionnaire

The orientation services provided for me during the first period of study at Arcada were:

(Circle one choice)

excellent	very good	satisfactory	less than satisfactory	undecided
1	2	3	4	5

I consider the services provided for me during the first weeks of study at Arcada sufficiently met my needs.

(Circle one choice)

strongly agree	agree	undecided	disagree	strongly disagree
1	2	3	4	5

What I especially liked about the orientation process at Arcada was:

I think the orientation services at Arcada could be improved by:

APPENDIX 5.

Thesis Supervisor:
Gun-Britt Lejonqvist
gbl@arcada.fi
0207 699 646

Letter of Introduction Interview

Hello!

As international first year students, we each have a unique perspective.

We are seeking volunteers who would be willing to share their experiences concerning their first period of study as new students at Arcada University.

We are interested in what you have to say!

The interviews will be no longer than 30 minutes in length.

The interview will be recorded for accuracy and later transcribed.

A pseudonym will be used at all times to maintain confidentiality of the participant.

The results of this study will be included in a project being conducted here at Arcada.

After the study is completed, all materials related to this study will be surrendered to Arcada for proper disposal.

Please join us in helping make the orientation experience for international new students at Arcada the best it can be.

If you feel you would like to participate or if you have any questions please contact us at:

Denise F. Villikka
villikd@arcada.fi
0404 179 819

Thank you!

APPENDIX 6.

Informed Consent

By signing this document, I agree to allow Denise F. Villikka to use the information collected during the interview for the purpose of conducting a study as part of an Arcada project.

Name of voluntary participant: _____

Signature: _____

Date: _____

APPENDIX 7.

Student Interview (A semi-structured guided interview will be used)

Topic:

Introduction to University Studies: Student Perspective

Statement of biases:

Because the interviewer is also a first year student at Arcada, she must be careful not to impose her thoughts, feelings and/or opinions while conducting the interviews. She will endeavor to check her biases.

Explanation of technique:

The interviewer will discuss with the informant the technique that will be used during the interview. She will state, she is here to learn from the informant and that she sees the informant as a co-researcher.

Also, the interviewer will state she is not here to make judgments only to listen and learn.

Finally, the interviewer will ask permission to record the interview and explain why. If the informant feels uncomfortable, the interviewer will take notes.

A predetermined time frame for the interview will be established prior to the actual meeting. Example: 30 minutes.

There will be time for possible questions from the informant.

When the informant states he/she is ready to proceed, the interview will begin.

Body of interview:

The interview will begin with the first question.

What does it mean to be a first year student at Arcada?

How did you experience your first period at Arcada?

Do you have any ideas on how we can help facilitate new students as they transition into the academic environment at Arcada?

Do you think a guidebook would be useful?

Responses from the questionnaires will be used to formulate additional interview questions. (The interviewer will refrain from using sensitive topics).

Follow-up questions:

1. Is there anything more you want to say about that?
2. Did you mean?
3. So you felt.....is that right?

Body of the interview will go here once it has been transcribed.

The end of the interview will take place once the predetermined time has been reached or when the informant asks to end the interview.

Post-check:

The protocol will be given to the informant to read/review.

(Note: a pseudonym will be used at all times to maintain confidentiality if the informant.)