

Johanna Kärki, University of Turku:

Supporting international master applicants (Workshop)

During the workshop it became clear that the challenges the universities face are the same everywhere. The following problem areas were identified during the workshop:

Overall issues

- The language barrier can create problems with information getting lost
- Cost! Scholarships
- Applicants not accepting no for an answer
- Expectation management, expectations regarding service level
- The student would like detailed answers to all their questions, which is not always something we can help with
- How to get applicants to choose us?
- Internationals are not one homogenous group
- Insecurity of students – hard to make plans

Challenges on the staff level

- Lack of information about the programme when counselling
- Lack of collaboration between administration and counsellor's (unclear information & communication to students)
- Academics lacking information about the programme and hence share incorrect information with potential students
- Central Admissions Unit makes other decisions regarding eligibility than the department
- No focus on recruitment – challenge with retention after graduation
- Provide the “right” info to every individual applicant
- The faculty has divided the service in administrative support and study and career guidance
- The responsibility lies in two places: the guidance and the international intake. That can be confusing to both students and employees.
- Not helping the student in the admission-process, which makes it confusing

Issues before applying

- English language requirement
- Admission requirements, “Am I qualified?”
- What do the applicants need to know before applying?
- Tuition
- Scholarships
- Can the student get a refund?

Issues during application

- Getting their supporting documents (certified copies), before advertised deadline. The review and evaluate their diplomas and transcripts

Issues with migration

- Visa/migration: answering questions about the requirements of the Immigration Office
- EU vs. Non-EU students

Issues during/after arrival

- How to make the students part of the local uni-family already before arrival?
- How to include new master’s students to the other new students (bachelor’s level)
- Small university campus with few students on master’s degree level in English
- Many accepted students do not come
- Academic expectations
- Course structure
- Not realistic expectations to life in a specific country/studies at the faculty, which leads to disappointment

Issues during/in the end of the studies

- Starting up a new programme makes me lack information on career aspects etc.
- Faculty forgets to follow-up on master’s students

Communication issues

- What channels to use in applicant information?
- The information on the website is very important and not difficult to explain, but the student doesn't look at our website/links.
- The web does not fit "the process"
- How to best use social media?
- What are the most important social media channels?
- The content is first in our local language and then translated according to it, which does not always make the clearest translations

Practical everyday-life issues

- Sometimes the students expect more help with getting settled in the country than we are able to give them.
- Housing
- Explaining the weather and the darkness during winter
- Giving good and accurate information about housing and cost of living

The problems and solutions to them were discussed in groups, however the results were not written down.