

**All for the future.**



# **Xamk's student guidance plan 2021**



South-Eastern Finland  
University of Applied Sciences

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## Xamk's student guidance plan 2021

The funding model for universities of applied sciences for the period of 2021–2024 directs higher education institutions to focus on graduation times and opportunities of continuous learning. Degree programme students as well as those who are otherwise completing UAS studies are going through individual phases of life, having their own individual goals and skills and experiencing the joys and challenges of their daily lives. The completion of studies on schedule is not an automated function but the result of a complex process that approximately one third of UAS students find challenging.

**A** Therefore, student guidance services at universities of applied sciences should focus on supporting students to manage these challenges and, particularly, on preventing them. (Kasurinen 2019.) Effective guidance reduces dropout rates and improves the efficiency of study completion allowing students to enter the job market or start post-graduate studies more quickly (Strategy for Lifelong Guidance 2021).

Xamk's student guidance plan describes the objectives and providers of guidance and the roles of each participant in the process. It also

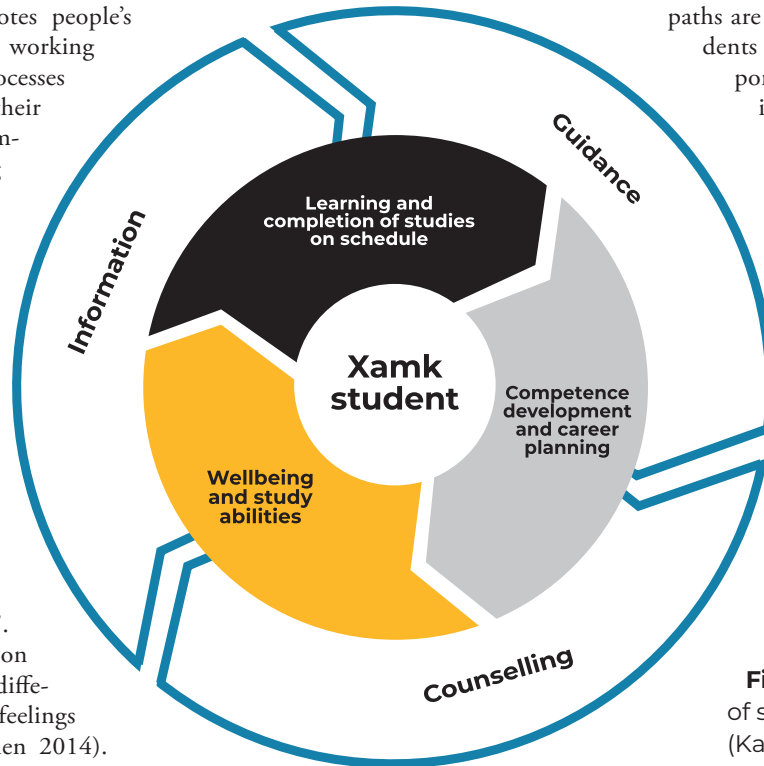
describes the evaluation and development of guidance at Xamk. The guidance plan was made in cooperation by Xamk's management, student support personnel and students in 2020–21.

The objective of this collaborative process was to create a mutual understanding concerning the operators, roles, services, indicators and development goals in the student guidance process, based on students' needs, wishes and visions for the future. (Taimela & Viljakainen 2020a; Taimela & Viljakainen 2020b; Taimela & Viljakainen 2020c.)

## The objectives of student guidance

Student guidance at Xamk comprises the aspects of communication, counselling and guidance that help degree and Open UAS students as well as students in continuation education to complete their studies on schedule, promote their wellbeing and ability to make progress with their studies, and support their career planning and competence development objectives (Figure 1).

According to Vehviläinen (2014), guidance is a form of collaboration that supports and promotes people's learning, development, working and problem-solving processes in ways that strengthen their functional capacity. Communication is sharing information through different channels and giving unambiguous answers to the questions 'what', 'where' and 'when'. Counselling is providing students with reliable data to encourage them to independently choose the best way to function. In counselling, the typical question is 'how'. Guidance is interaction with people who have different skills, knowledge, feelings and reactions (Vehviläinen 2014).



Independent construction of knowledge, social interaction and personalised learning paths are emphasised. However, students always need teachers' support, guidance and feedback in order to learn to assess the reliability and usability of information as well as their own conceptions and become aware of the learning process as a whole. (Saurén et al. 2020, 92.) The objectives of communication, counselling and guidance are described from the student's perspective in two stories presented in Figures 2 and 3.

**Figure 1.** The objectives of student guidance (Karvo 2021).



Jarkko has almost completed his first year of studies. All academic year, he has been studying online. Jarkko started studying to pursue a new career direction. Therefore, his choice of degree programme was greatly influenced by career opportunities.

For Jarkko, it is very important to create networks, learn new skills and apply these skills in a real-life environment. Jarkko is balancing between studies, work and family. Despite careful planning, it is challenging to find time for everything, especially if the assignments and deadlines of a particular course are not clearly communicated.

By means of networking, Jarkko has received encouragement that has helped him tackle challenges during his studies. He has also consciously reminded himself of the importance of trusting his abilities and making choices that suit his life situation. Good enough is enough.

### Studying and study progress

In order to make steady progress with his studies, it is important for Jarkko to know the content of studies and the available options for completion, as well as the learning environments and the basics of the related systems. Jarkko wants to have access to all information at once after being admitted, and he also wants accurate information at the beginning of studies. In order to properly plan his studies, it is important for Jarkko to know the options for creating a personal study path, and the means and channels of student support.

### Competence development and career planning

Jarkko appreciates the practical nature of his studies and likes to test his new skills in real-life environ-

ments; the content of studies must be transferable to a modern work environment. Learning from others and creating contacts and networks are important elements of studying. Jarkko wants to keep his skills up-to-date and finds continuous learning very important.

### Wellbeing and study abilities

Jarkko thinks that a balance between home, work, leisure activities and studies is essential for his wellbeing and study abilities. Realistic goals, organisational skills and efficient time management help to keep this balance and have assignments done by the deadline, or, preferably, slightly in advance. Networking, asking questions and seeking for help also improve one's study abilities.

**Figure 2.** The objectives of communication, counselling and guidance from the student's (Jarkko) perspective (Karvo 2021).

Satu is studying in a bachelor's degree programme at Xamk. Prior to her current degree studies, she followed a specified study path in the open UAS. Satu chose her degree programme on the basis of her personal interests and values.

For her, inspiration, enthusiasm and an open mind are important elements of studying. Satu is easily absorbed in course assignments and projects and may forget to look after her personal wellbeing. Satu is also aware that she doesn't fully trust her own competence, even though she receives good feedback from the teachers and other students.

Her personal network and the student community have helped Satu to tackle challenges. She has also participated in various events and projects.

### Studying and study progress

The important elements for Satu in making steady progress with her studies are the learning environments and systems, timetables, content of studies, scheduling and practical matters, personal wellbeing and discussions concerning the planning of studies and career planning.

### Competence development and career planning

Satu thinks that it is important to set goals for competence development and career objectives at the beginning of studies. Active participation plays an important role in the achievement of these goals. During studies, competencies and skills must be reviewed by means of self-evaluation, but Satu also finds it important to receive feedback from others. Participation in projects and development

Satu, 22



assignments during studies supports career planning objectives and helps to improve professional competence. The content of studies must provide opportunities for participation in different development assignments.

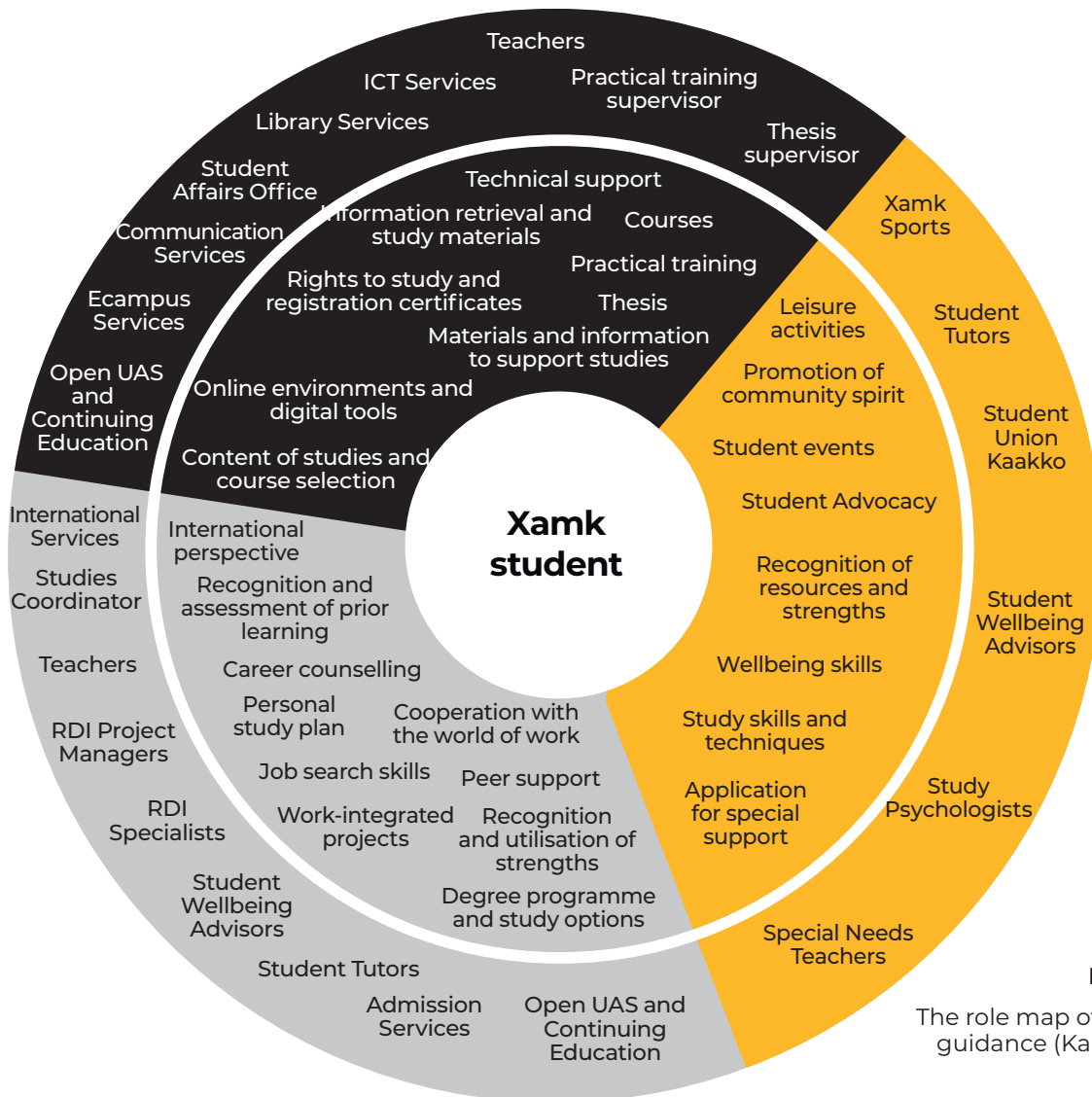
### Wellbeing and study abilities

Satu thinks that it is essential to allow herself sufficient time for rest and recovery, remain open to new ideas and maintain a balance between workload and functional ability. Satu's wellbeing is increased if she can work in a group and help others whenever possible.

**Figure 3.** The objectives of communication, counselling and guidance from the student's (Satu) perspective (Karvo 2021).

## Student support and guidance services

At Xamk, counselling and guidance services are provided by a multi-professional network whose members work in close cooperation. Figure 4 describes students' needs for guidance and the roles of the support services personnel.



**Figure 4.**  
The role map of student guidance (Karvo 2021).

### Support during programme studies

The Studies Coordinators in each field of study provide guidance in the completion of studies, career planning, making of personal study plan and recognition and evaluation of prior learning. Teachers guide students during courses and work-integrated projects and also in the recognition and evaluation of prior learning. Thesis supervisors help students during the thesis writing process, and practical training supervisors during work placement periods.

### Student wellbeing

The Study Psychologists provide individual guidance and counselling. In addition, they provide all degree students with information on matters related to wellbeing, learning, study skills and workplace skills, for example by offering a course Using wellbeing skills for promoting study ability. The course is available to all Xamk students, also in English, and focused on finding means to promote each participant's learning and wellbeing. Student Well-

being Advisors also guide and support degree students in matters related to wellbeing, study skills and workplace skills. Degree students can contact Student Wellbeing Advisors whenever they feel that they cannot cope on their own or need help in making decisions, or, in general, when they need support but are not sure who to contact. Special Needs Teachers help degree students to evaluate and improve their study skills and techniques and guide students following specified study paths if they need to apply for special support. The Physical Exercise Specialists of Xamk Sports provide guidance and counselling for all Xamk students (degree students, students following specified study paths and exchange students) aiming to comprehensively promote their wellbeing and study abilities, as well as help strengthen the sense of community among students.

### **Student Affairs Office and Admission Services**

Xamk Admission Services provide those who are planning to apply for degree programme studies at Xamk with information and guidance concerning the various degree programmes that are offered. Student Affairs Advisors help students in a wide range of matters related to the organisation and completion studies.

### **International Services**

International Affairs Specialists assist degree students in their exchange application process, particularly if they are going to Asia or Russia. International Services Advisors provide guidance and counselling for degree students who are applying for a work placement abroad or Erasmus programme exchange studies and support the wellbeing of international degree students and exchange students by providing practical advice and guidance.

### **Student Union Kaakko**

Student Union Kaakko aims to support the wellbeing of all Xamk students and ensure that they make progress with their studies. The student tutors of the student union provide Xamk's degree students with guidance and advice related to the completion of studies and the various learning environments at Xamk. The tutors also guide students with regards to their career planning and leisure interests. Student tutors, in turn, receive guidance and advice from the Counselling and Tutoring Specialist. Advice and guidance on matters related to student cards and membership benefits is provided for all Xamk students by the Student Union Kaakko Member Services Specialist. The Student Advocacy Specialist provides advice and guidance for all Xamk students on various aspects of comprehensive wellbeing, ranging from the campus restaurants and learning facilities to non-discrimination. Students who have experienced harassment or bullying are encouraged to contact a Xamk Harassment Contact Person for support. The Harassment Contact Persons work under an obligation of confidentiality and will not take any action without the consent of the person who has experienced harassment. This channel of confidential communication is important to lower the threshold for talking about sensitive matters. The person who has experienced harassment may choose not to demand any further action but only seek support in the form of conversation by the Harassment Contact Person. The students can contact Harassment Contact Persons by phone or email after any incident that they felt they were bullied or harassed. It is

also possible to contact a Harassment Contact Person later if it is not possible to report the incident at once.

### **ICT Services**

Tietohallintopalvelut tarjoavat kaikille Xamkissa opiskeleville koko opintojen ajan tukea ja ohjausta teknisissä ongelmissa Xinfo-helpdesk-palvelun avulla. Xinfon kautta opiskelija voi lähettää palvelupyynnön tai tehdä vikailmoituksen osoitteessa <https://xinfo.xamk.fi>, sähköpostitse [xinfo@xamk.fi](mailto:xinfo@xamk.fi) tai akuuteissa tilanteissa soittamalla kampuksen omaan helpdesk-numeroon.

### **Communication**

Communication Coordinators, Community Managers and Graphic Designers support the completion and progress of studies by marketing work-integrated projects and study-related events, publishing news on the intranet and open networks, producing videos and podcasts and posting information via Xamk's social media channels. The aim is to maintain all communication within the immediately recognisable visual look of Xamk. Community Managers also provide guidance and advice on communication, event marketing and presentation for students who under a specific agreement produce Xamk marketing materials as part of course completion.

### **Library services**

Information Specialists provide advice for all Xamk students on the use of library services and materials. Degree students can also request individual guidance, particularly on information retrieval during the thesis writing process. In addition, various instructions and self-study materials made by Information Specialists are available via LibGuide, Learn, Open Learn, Lux and Tuudo to help students improve their information retrieval skills. The basic information retrieval training is provided by Information Specialists as part of the degree programme curricula.

### **Ecampus Services**

Ecampus Experts provide guidance and advice for all Xamk students on matters related to the use of network environments and support all Xamk students in the use of digital tools and platforms by offering instructions and self-study materials on Learn, Open Learn and Lux.

### **Open University of Applied Sciences and Continuing Education**

The Training and Education Coordinators and Assistants of the Open UAS and Continuing Education provide readily available and up-to-date information and answer questions concerning registration and completion of studies.



## Evaluation and development of guidance

According to the Finnish Government's Lifelong Guidance Strategy for 2020–2023, the accessibility of guidance will be improved, lifelong career planning skills will be strengthened, and recognition and acquisition of skills as well as career planning in the workplace will be promoted (Lifelong Guidance Strategy 2021).

**I**n Xamk's strategy, the objectives of future-oriented education are defined as follows: 'We recognise the potential in our students and provide them with individual learning paths. We prepare our students for entrepreneurship and inspire and encourage learning, studying and trailblazing. We are a student- and learning-oriented university of applied sciences. We utilise digital learning environments that are independent of time and place, together with solutions based on new learning technologies. Our campus is the whole world!' (Strategy of South-Eastern Finland University of Applied Sciences for 2020–2030).

In the performance agreement signed between Xamk and the Ministry of Education and Culture, Xamk undertakes to improve the accessibility of guidance and the monitoring of student's progress, and implement an action model to connect students to the world of work at an early stage of their studies (performance agreement between the Finnish Ministry of Education and Culture and South-Eastern Finland University of Applied Sciences for 2021–2024).

Feedback from students is used to improve guidance practices in the degree programmes. Degree students can give feedback through various surveys: arrival survey at the beginning of their studies, education development survey after the second year of studies, and the nationwide AVOP survey upon graduation. In addition, students can participate in joint feedback and discussion sessions and development forums arranged each academic year. Also, different support services regularly collect student feedback on their operations.

Four scenarios are used to illustrate alternative future trends to help in the planning of services based on data collected from student support services staff's co-development workshops and related research (Tuulaniemi 2011.) The student's active role and participation and strong multidisciplinary cooperation between various support services operators are highlighted in the development of guidance models and practices. The scenarios examine alternative trends using opposite approaches: the student in the

centre vs. Xamk in the centre, and cooperation vs. no cooperation. The scenarios are illustrated in Figure 6.

As a result of the examination of the general guidance model, guidance practices at Xamk in 2021–2023 will be developed primarily by strengthening guidance skills, developing multi-professional low-threshold guidance services and online guidance, improving the utilisation of systems and data, and developing the evaluation of guidance to match the recently defined objectives.

### Strengthening of guidance skills

The Career Guidance for the Work of the Future 2019–2021 (ESF Project). Career guidance training, 2021. Update of the PSP instructions and the Pedagogies webinar on PSP guidance, 2021. A toolkit for career and future guidance and a counsellor's guide, 2021. Induction training programme for study coordinators, 2022. (Career) Guidance training for the entire guidance staff, 2022.

### Promotion of students' wellbeing through online tutoring and other low-threshold guidance

Hyvinvointia verkossa - HyVe ('Wellbeing on the Web'), project, 2021 (Ministry of Education and Culture).

### Systems and data to support guidance

Älykäs ohjaus ('Smart Guidance'), 2019–2021 (ESF Project), AI-aided guidance pilot projects, 2021. Development of the monitoring of study progress, Max Bot Report, 2021. Development of the recognition of prior learning, the eAHOT function on Peppi, 2022.

### Development of evaluation to match the objectives of guidanceohjauksen tavoitteita

A survey of the indicators currently in use, 2022. Specification of indicators, 2023.



# Evaluation and development of guidance

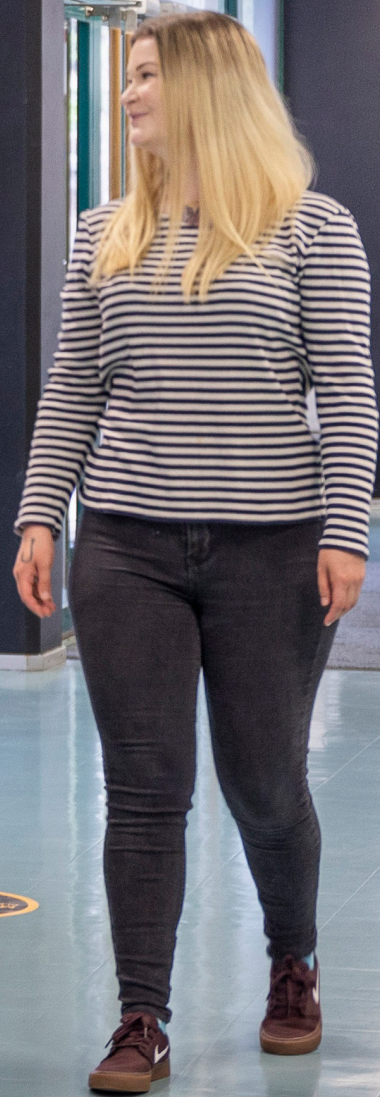
Figure 6.



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