

# AUDIT OF HAAGA-HELIA UNIVERSITY OF APPLIED SCIENCES

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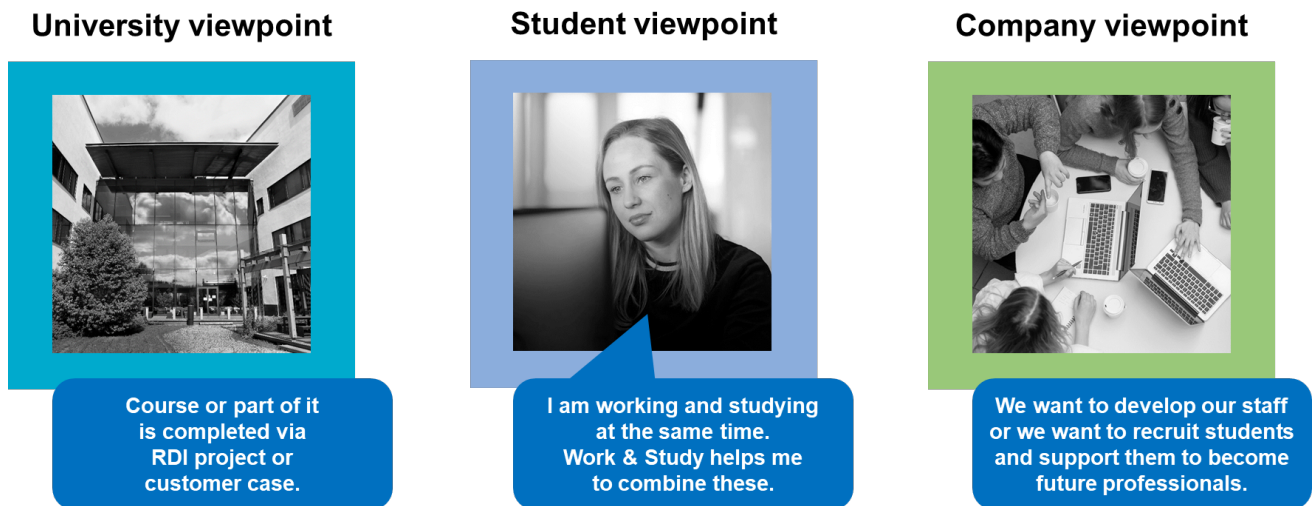
## 4.1 Work&Study model

- Korkeakoulun itsearviointi

### The challenge of combining studying and working

It is common for students to work during their studies, especially in the Helsinki metropolitan area. Most of them receive student aid, which sets restrictions on working. Recently, the threshold for student aid has risen, thereby making work a more viable option for many. Due to this, the demand for flexible studies and continuous learning options is on the rise.

According to the Alumni Survey of 2020, 82.5% answered yes to the question “Did you work during your studies (other than work placement)?”. Similarly, 67% answered yes to the question “Did your work (other than work placement) during your studies to support the growth of your expertise in your field of studies?”. Based on this information, the Work&Study model was created. It offers a way of integrating work and learning and helps students to graduate on time.

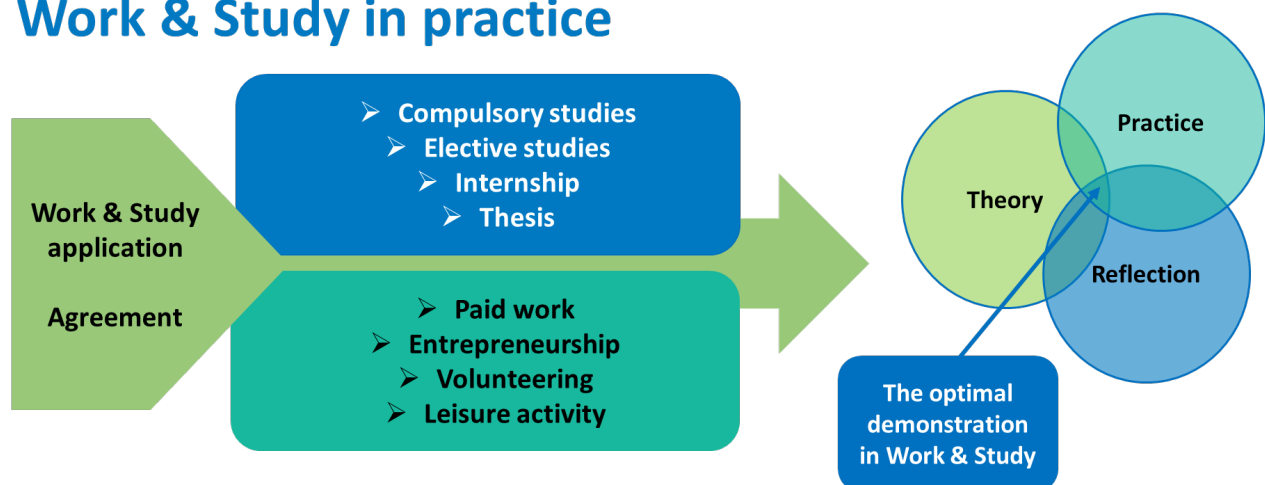


Picture 27. Works&Study benefits all stakeholders

## Recognising competences through the new model

Work&Study means that the learning goals are achieved by working and connecting the practical work with a theme-related knowledge base. In addition to paid work, entrepreneurship, volunteering or leisure activity can be applied to the model. Students can complete both compulsory and elective studies through work-based learning if the work supports their degree's learning goals.

## Work & Study in practice



Picture 28. Works&Study in practice

The development process started in 2014, and over the years it has been improved to better serve our students. Since 2017, it has been used to some extent in all degree programmes. The Work&Study model has been developed and disseminated with project funding and our model is well known throughout the UAS and higher education pedagogy community. We receive ideas and comments on the model from students, stakeholders and teachers and it is further developed based on the feedback.

## **Communication and equal opportunities need to be developed**

In 2022-2023 there will be some changes in the use of the model, due to our education reform and organisational changes. The education reform has slowed down the process during the last few years, but the new organisation and curricula will support the implementation of Work&Study.

We have identified, as key challenges, the ambiguities and misunderstandings surrounding the model, student equality, and communicating about the possibility of Work&Study. Equality relates to procedural differences between our competence areas and degrees. We need to improve the communication and dissemination of the model to both staff and students.

There are also challenges due to the revised organisation and lack of clear resources to guide the processes. Due to this, teachers have even had a negative attitude towards the model. In 2022, Work&Study is centralised to the competence areas, under the supervision of nominated teachers. Hopefully this clarifies resourcing. Currently, we do not have reliable monitoring of the credits completed through the model, as this is dependent on entries in the study administration system.

Our students feel that they do not have equal opportunities to complete studies through Work&Study, as the requirements for the same course can vary greatly depending on the teacher. Some teachers are not clear about the requirements and may demand too much from students. We aim to address this challenge by centralising the guidance to the nominated teachers.

## **Competence counselling teachers to address the challenges**

The supervision of Work&Study projects will be transferred to the competence counselling teachers during 2022. The competence counselling teacher is a new role, responsible for the recognition of learning in their competence area. Coordinating the demonstration of competences and the Work&Study process in their own competence area enables them to better address potential problems.

The communication of the Work&Study model will be improved. We will clarify what we do and how we guide students, as well as communicate in a more targeted way. Once the teachers responsible for the guidance have been identified and we know to which students and at which stage of their studies the model is most relevant, we can target our messages better.

# Work & Study – roles in 2022

| Haaga-Helia level (coordinator and assistant)   | Competence areas (teacher responsible)   | Degrees  |
|---|--|--|
| Coordination and support  | Methods and implementation   | Tracking   |
| Guidance counsellors  | Teachers   | Communications   |
| <b>Guidance</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Short meetings in the beginning</li> <li>- Orientation day (workshop)</li> <li>- Guidance meetings during the studies</li> </ul> | <b>Info on Work &amp; Study</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- In the beginning of the course</li> <li>- Whenever talking with the students</li> </ul> | <b>Helping with marketing</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- campaigns</li> <li>- ongoing communication</li> </ul> |

Picture 29. Works&Study roles

## Work&Study successfully applied in the new curricula and organisation

The strengths of the Work&Study model include our new organisation, our highly knowledgeable and experienced teachers, the group-based Work&Study approach developed in-house, and the Work&Study pathways for continuous learning.

Key successes include embedding the recognition of learning and Work&Study model in the new curricula and organisation. It is crucial that the model is implemented in a meaningful way as part of our activities, while being clearly presented to students as a way of completing their studies.

The model has been developed and implemented for several years. We have highly experienced teachers who have counselled many Work&Study projects and are qualified to do the assessment. We are pioneers in learning by doing in higher education, reflected in the fact that other HEIs in Finland and abroad have purchased our training sessions on the recognition of learning and Work&Study.

In the group-based Work&Study model, students undergo the process in small groups, mentor each other and share their learning diaries. Even when the participants are from different fields, group work is useful in giving general peer support.

The Work&Study Continuous Learning pathway brings together experienced professionals without a higher education degree. The pathway enables them to complete the first year of their degree studies smoothly, using evidence-based learning and the Work&Study model. The idea is to use their own work as a way to proceed in their studies.

### Strengths

### Enhancement areas

|  |   |
|--|---|
| The new organisation supports Work&Study             | Implementing the model across the organisation                                    |
| Many active teachers who are experts in Work&Study   | Equality among students through offering the same possibilities in all programmes |
| New variations: Work&Study Group and Work&Study Path | Raising awareness of the model  |

## 4.1 Work&Study model

### - Auditointiryhmän arvio

#### 4.1 The basis of the Work&Study model is the wide-ranging recognition of competence

The Work&Study model is the process for recognizing and validating work-integrated learning at Haaga-Helia. The model was created based on the fact that the majority, i.e., more than 80%, of Haaga-Helia's students both study and work. The aim of the model is to facilitate students' opportunities to combine work and study, and to facilitate the managed transition from studies into the world of employment as well as offering work-based learning options. With this model, the competences required for the degree are acquired by working alongside studies, and by linking practical work to the related knowledge base. Besides a paid job, Work&Study can also be applied when working as an entrepreneur, as a volunteer, or based on experience derived from a hobby.

#### **Work&Study is linked to Haaga-Helia's strategic objectives and the model of competence recognition in a purposeful way**

The Work&Study model of Haaga-Helia is an important and highly innovative concept and obviously plays an important role in the implementation of Haaga-Helia's strategy. The Work&Study model was seen as a relevant part of Haaga-Helia's profile throughout the audit interviews. Based on the audit material, the model meets the goal of making students acquire work-life competences such as critical thinking, teamwork, and time management. The model is related to Haaga-Helia's work-oriented approach, which is part of their pedagogical vision and action plan. The management sees that by creating better recruitment opportunities, the model helps to increase the employment rate of recent graduates. Work&Study complements Haaga-Helia's profile as a business and application-oriented HEI. Additionally, the model creates opportunities for expanding recognition and cooperation within Haaga-Helia's networks. The audit team also sees the model as an opportunity to increase Haaga-Helia's visibility in working life networks and strengthen cooperation with working life.

#### **The Work&Study model offers good conditions for expanding cooperation internally**

## **and externally**

Haaga-Helia communicates about Work&Study towards the students in several ways. The model is introduced during the orientation days and at the beginning of courses. Furthermore, competence counselling teachers share information about the model, and it is displayed on Haaga-Helia's website as well. These practices were praised during the audit visit. However, the audit team recommends that Haaga-Helia supplements its website with detailed and updated information. This might reduce the confusion of students that was reported during the site visit to sometimes occur. Some of the students were unsure about the interpretation of the instructions related to the model and on what basis they were applied.

The operating methods included in the model also increase the internal cooperation of the organisation. For example, teachers support each other in finding appropriate companies for their students. Based on the interviews, the model provided significant contributions to all degree programs as well. From the student workshop, the audit team got the impression that participating in Work&Study courses results in students getting more motivated to work and finding working more meaningful. Because students, teachers and workplaces are involved in the implementation of the model, it offers an opportunity to intensify this three-dimensional cooperation. The audit team encourages Haaga-Helia to continue strengthening collaboration on the model. In general, Haaga-Helia could increase awareness of the model among wider groups in working life by more actively promoting it to the business community as a way of updating an organisation's skills potential and of developing staff competences.

## **4.2 Equal application of the model is not always reached in practice**

Students are responsible for the process and the documentation of learning as a part of Work&Study. The employer's role is to offer a suitable setting for working and learning and to guide the students. If possible, they join the demonstration and give feedback afterward. Employers supervise students in acquiring key competencies in the process. It was not possible for the audit team to gather the opinions of the employers due to lack of participants in the interviews and workshops.

There are no formal criteria for companies participating in the Work&Study programme other than the general requirement that they must offer the opportunity to achieve the competences defined for the course. The decision on the company's suitability is made by the responsible teacher. Concerning the working environment, it was mentioned during the interviews that 'Students come to us and tell us what they have learned. It doesn't matter to us where they learned their skills.' The audit team recommends defining more concrete criteria for the type of work and work environment suitable for applying Work&Study. Some students work in a different field than what they are studying, which raises questions regarding the applicability of Work&Study.

Regarding the implementation of the Work&Study model as an entrepreneur, as a volunteer, or in the framework of a hobby, students are offered a wide range of flexibility. This flexibility is one of the advantages of the model. Many students are engaged in volunteer work and Work&Study

provides an additional motivation for students to do this. However, as was mentioned in the teachers' interviews, students start their studies with different backgrounds and competences. The audit team had the impression that it is sometimes very challenging to determine what the needs of students at the different levels are and what kinds of recommendations teachers should provide to their students. The audit team recommends standardizing the counselling of students with respect to Work&Study, wherever this is possible. The introduction of competence counselling teachers is an important contribution towards that direction.

### **The practices and instructions related to the application of the model need systematization**

The Work&Study courses have a competence-based curriculum and the opportunity is given to the students to combine theory and practice. Teachers facilitate the process by guiding and giving hints to the students through the courses. Teachers and students decide on the recognition of competence together. Based on the interviews, students choose the format of their learning documentation, such as videos and PowerPoint presentations. Even though the audit team finds this flexibility to be a strength of the model, it may also create inequality regarding students' workloads. Thus, giving clear guidelines about the ways of proving the required competencies would provide systematization.

Based on the information provided to the audit team, responsible teachers should have meetings with the companies and the students once a month. However, it was stated in the interviews that the responsible teachers visit the workplaces only in some degree programs. The audit team recommends that clear rules for visits should be established, in order to treat students in an equal way. This would not only increase communication with employers but would also allow to monitor students learning progress.

Obviously, not all students decide to take advantage of the Work&Study model or hesitate to take the initiative of verifying whether Work&Study could be an option. In addition, the teachers mentioned that fulfilling the requirements of the model requires responsibility, self-organisation and self-reflection, which some students are not able to accomplish this until the end of the course. The audit team assumes that having clearer instructions and a better guided process might help students to successfully complete a Work&Study course.

## **4.3 Haaga-Helia is developing the model actively based on feedback**

Feedback collected from different groups is effectively used to further develop and enhance the model. Teachers are getting feedback from written reports by students and surveys filled by companies and use this feedback to improve students' Work&Study experiences. On the other hand, model developers make improvements based on the information they receive from advisor reports and meetings with student representatives. Haaga-Helia has also boldly started developing new applications of the model, such as Work&Study Group and Work&Study Path.

As a result of the feedback gathered from the staff, Haaga-Helia learned that there were significant differences in Work&Study course workloads between teachers. Since the competence



counselling teachers have the best overview, it is their responsibility to monitor and supervise the model. In the interviews the staff members saw that this solution works.

Apart from competence counselling teachers, there are so-called responsible teachers who are responsible for a specific course within the Work&Study model. Responsible teachers are supported by the competence counselling teachers of their area. Competence counselling is calculated to have a workload of 60 hours during the whole study year, but it was mentioned in the interviews that in many cases some extra time is needed, and the workload is bigger than expected. The audit team finds the inclusion of competence counselling teachers into the model a great advantage. The audit team recommends allocating sufficient resources to counselling activities and also encourages Haaga-Helia to continue its active and continuous monitoring and reviewing of the model.

#### 4.4 Students and teachers have a positive attitude towards the model, but adopting the practices requires support

Students appreciate the many opportunities the model brings, but also ask for active guidance and teachers' presence

From the perspective of the students, turning work experience into part of their studies is a great opportunity. The students mentioned during the interviews that their teachers actively supported them. They were pleased that the model connects them directly to working life and prepares them for their future careers. For some of the students, the implementation of the model had been challenging, but they appreciated the flexibility provided by Haaga-Helia.

Another advantage of the model is that it can also be used by Haaga-Helia's students that have spent some time abroad. Students can for example combine an internship abroad with Work&Study. The audit team sees that this is a great opportunity for students and an additional motivation to gather international experience. The audit team sees that Haaga-Helia could encourage students to use this attractive option more frequently.

The most common suggestion of the students for developing and enhancing the Work&Study model was to increase the frequency of the discussions with their responsible teachers. The efficiency of the model could be increased by tightening communication between teacher and student. Improvements should be made by organizing meetings in a more formal and systematic way, such as dedicated office hours and scheduling meetings at certain intervals. The teaching staff are also supported to improve and to develop methods and pedagogy for Work&Study. The audit team considers that listening to students is very important in the process. As the communication between the teacher and the student increases, the process becomes easier, and thus it is essential to systematize communication. Teachers need to be able to take immediate action when students have any problems.

**The model offers teachers a way to strengthen their work-life connection and at the**



## **same time requires the adoption of new ways of teaching**

According to the self-assessment report and the staff interviews teachers were initially critical about the model. During the interviews teachers mentioned that they did not receive extra resources and that the available resources were insufficient. The assessment was perceived as being difficult and endangering students' equality.

For some of the teachers, the Work&Study model seems to be more challenging than a traditional course, because every case is different, and teachers have to manage contracts and verify the development of skills. Teachers feel more like a coach than a teacher in the process and they have to deal with every participating student individually which increases their workload. Since the beginning, several improvements have been made and according to several interviewed groups positive improvement can be confirmed.

The audit team had the impression that the process of implementing the model also helped teachers to understand their students' needs. Work&Study provides a way to maintain connections to working life and thus improves their teaching. As stated in the workshops, teachers want their students to acquire competences for the future. Teachers see the model as a support for students' needs with respect to knowledge and practice, combined with theory. At the same time, the importance of theory was also underlined in staff workshops. Teachers determine the tasks for the theoretical part of the course and balance theory and practice in students' learning. Teaching staff members regularly attend RPL trainings and info sessions (credit transfer, demonstrations, Work&Study).

As a major challenge of the Work&Study model, the teaching staff point out lack of time and resources. For example, some of the teachers said there was not enough time for creating and maintaining the communities and networks that support the model. With regard to expanding connections with working life, they find the curricula inflexible in the case of larger working life projects even though cooperation with companies already exists. The interviewed teachers wished for more cooperation and exchange of ideas with companies so that they could provide their students with a better understanding of the abilities they need in working life.

## **Conclusion**

The Work&Study model created by Haaga-Helia is innovative and addresses the needs of future education, working life and continuous learning. It is in principle applicable to the majority of students at Haaga-Helia since more than 80% work in parallel to their studies. The interviews confirmed the functioning and the benefits of the model. However, both students and teachers see an urgent need for the systematization of the model, which would probably also lead to a higher acceptance of the model by both teachers and students. The audit team supports the initiative to define new roles such as competence counselling teachers and responsible teachers in order to support both students and companies and also to harmonize the Haaga-Helia standards for Work&Study. The latter issue, i.e., transparent and equal criteria for the recognition of competences, was a main weakness from the perspective of the students. It is recommended to invest in the development of personnel skills to ensure equal and uniform application of

Work&Study. Finally, it should be considered that alumni could be a great source for developing Work&Study at Haaga-Helia.