

# AUDIT OF HANKEN SCHOOL OF ECONOMICS

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## 4.1 Hanken International Talent (HIT) initiative

### - Högskolans självvärdering

Hanken's strategic goals include achieving an internationally competitive programme portfolio and increasing the integration of international students into the Finnish working life. [Hanken International Talent \(HIT\)](#) is Hanken's initiative to support international degree students' integration to working life and society in Finland. It was first piloted starting in 2017 as an initiative for international talent retention (HIT 1.0) and has since been developed into a more comprehensive support system to prepare the students for building a career and life in Finland (HIT 2.0). The Hanken International Talent is an initiative supporting key elements in Hanken's strategy, namely internationalisation, corporate relevance, and societal impact.

Hanken's agreement with the Ministry of Education and Culture includes a "service promise" regarding the integration of international students. The Talent Boost service promise consists of measures with which Hanken strengthens the integration of international students and researchers into Finnish society and the Finnish labour market. To be able to fulfil the service promise, strong regional cooperation between cities, public actors and the regional business community is needed. The Hanken International Talent activities include taking advantage of the SIMHE activities (Supporting Immigrants in Higher Education in Finland) and other Talent Boost related opportunities offered by the Talent Boost network. Higher Education Institutions started Talent Boost collaboration in the capital region through a project called AIKO (Talent Accelerating Growth) in 2019, and tight Talent Boost collaboration between universities and universities of applied sciences has continued ever since. The Vaasa International Talent programme and continuous dialogue with the local stakeholders ensure a continued tight collaboration in the Vaasa region.

Building a strong international brand is quite a challenge, and therefore it was clear that the topic for the evaluation area selected by Hanken should in some way concern Hanken's international brand. The Academic Council wanted to focus on the recruitment and integration of international students into society and the national labour market. The future of Hanken International Talent was chosen as the more precise topic, the transition from HIT 1.0 to HIT 2.0 being highly relevant at the time. The objectives of the evaluation process are to support the integration of international students into Finnish society and the Finnish labour market through development of the HIT support platform and its elements and finding optimal ways to take advantage of Hanken International Talent also in the student recruitment and branding of Hanken.

Hanken International Talent 1.0 was focused on supporting students' integration by matching international students and companies, with focus on a mentorship between the two. The programme also included events for networking and other valuable activities to get familiar with Finnish businesses and working life. In 2021 the transition into a more comprehensive support platform was initiated and gradually implemented during the academic year 2021-22.

From being application based and offered only a to restricted number of students, Hanken International Talent has developed into an initiative including all international degree students at Hanken. Everyone can get support according to their needs and interests and complete a study module providing support for integration into Finnish business life and society. The HIT-module consists of courses and other activities, offered by either Hanken, the Student Union or a partner. The courses and activities equip international students with tools that are helpful when integrating into Finland, such as studies in the national languages, courses in local culture and business life, working for a local organisation through an internship, engagement in career building activities and contribution to the local community, for example through volunteering or activity in the student union. During 2021-2022, 16 international students took part in the mentorship programme. In the summer 2022, 13 students applied to the virtual internship programme offered to all interested international MSc students and 6 participated - the others received paid positions elsewhere.

Hanken International Talent is intended to continuously grow to provide the best possible services for the School's international degree students. The foundation of the services is built on strong collaboration with stakeholders. The active interaction with the Talent Boost network consisting of e.g., HEIs, municipalities and TE-offices, broadens the possibilities of services to the School's students. Company collaborators also have a key role in ensuring work life interactions with students. Fundamental challenges for the initiative are that the students do not achieve sufficient knowledge of the national languages during their studies to qualify for (most of) the Finnish labour market after graduation, and that Hanken's stated mission is to prepare graduates for the global environment, not focusing on the national market.

### **Strengths**

The Talent Boost network built during HIT 1.0

### **Enhancement areas**

Being able to offer internship possibilities in Finland for all

Flexible support platform, students can choose according to individual needs  
Possibility of individual counselling in career and integration related affairs

Motivating language studies, incentives for studying Finnish/Swedish  
Recruitment of international degree students; using the full potential of HIT in marketing

## 4.1 Hanken International Talent (HIT) initiative

### - Auditeringsgruppens bedömning

The Hanken International Talent (HIT) initiative was chosen for evaluation area IV to receive external feedback on the initiative and set the stage for future learning. The HIT initiative exists at the intersection between student and specifically international student well-being and support, and societal impact. The audit team focused on evaluating the initiative's impact on students and other stakeholders, reflecting on the initiative as an example of institutional learning, and providing recommendations for the continued evolution of the initiative.

### The scope of the HIT initiative has changed over time, demonstrating learning

The current version of the HIT initiative, HIT 2.0, is described in Hanken's self-assessment as a comprehensive support platform for international students to help them integrate into Finnish society through internships and other employment opportunities. The initiative consists of a combination of supporting resources including educational content, newsletters, company events, and staff office hours. The HIT initiative also supports international students in taking advantage of other Hanken programmes offered by career services, such as the mentorship programme and internship platforms.

The original HIT initiative, referred to as HIT 1.0, was an internship and mentorship matchmaking initiative that supported a limited number of students. The HIT initiative staff reported that Hanken found itself to be poorly positioned to curate internships and match students to them. Hanken also found itself lacking the resources to offer HIT 1.0 to all international students. HIT 2.0 is indeed, as indicated in the self-assessment report, a more comprehensive support platform, but ultimately a less comprehensive initiative overall. HIT 2.0 now leverages external job posting networks such as TalentBoost by Business Finland and Vaasa's Vaasa International Talents to collect internship opportunities, a development which allows Hanken to use its resources in a more targeted way. Within the support platform, the HIT initiative also demonstrated learning based on feedback received in terms of setting the target of engaging

with international students earlier in their studies, including before they arrive in Finland.

## The HIT initiative is relevant, addressing an important societal need in Finland

The need for the HIT initiative was clearly articulated across multiple interviews. Many international students and alumni were in agreement about the need for assistance with integration into Finnish society and help with getting an internship or a job, in line with the service promise that Hanken has made to the Ministry of Education and Culture. Similarly, Hanken stakeholders at various levels, from heads of departments all the way up to the board of directors and rector, recognise an increasing need for this type of support, particularly as the population of international students at Hanken is likely going to increase in line with the government's target to triple the number of international students in Finland. The HIT initiative has been designed to address this societal and institutional need.

## The HIT initiative has succeeded in winning over both internal and external stakeholders

International Hanken students who participated in the student workshop provided positive feedback on the resources available for international students with respect to integration into Finnish society and as a front-end interface between the international student community and existing Hanken career support services. The HIT initiative staff was perceived as accessible and helpful. The HIT initiative serves to inform international students about events and other resources that are available to them. International students also felt they can provide feedback to the HIT initiative. Alumni who previously participated in the initiative provided similarly positive feedback, leaving the impression that the mentorship provided by Hanken was particularly useful for subsequently finding internship opportunities. External stakeholders who had directly interacted with the initiative as mentors or potential employers were similarly positive about their experiences as well as the need for international student support.

The audit team noted during the audit visit that there is meaningful confusion among different stakeholders about what the HIT initiative actually is. Some of this confusion is understandable since the initiative has been iterating significantly over the last several years, and individual interviewees may have interacted with an older version of the HIT initiative. However, the HIT initiative has also chosen not to advertise the initiative to stakeholders in order to avoid differentiating between international and Finnish students.

## Recommendations for future evolution of the HIT initiative

The HIT initiative is an example of Hanken's exemplary societal impact and laudable levels of support for its students. The evolution of the HIT initiative is an example of how Hanken's institutional culture supports learning through the launch and iteration of new, impactful

initiatives. However, it appears to some extent like the evolution of the initiative was driven by addressing individual issues, such as a desire to include more students and limitations on available resources, without a higher level strategic approach. The audit team was not able to uncover any key performance indicators or other quantitative targets for the HIT initiative. Although the self-assessment report does indicate a future target of offering internships for every international student, this no longer appears to be part of the HIT initiative and is more of an overall institutional goal than a HIT level goal. Hanken is planning a bachelor's programme in English with a compulsory internship, and there are plans to create partnerships with a number of companies to offer these internships.

Quantitative targets are important because the HIT initiative has a particularly expansive mandate. Interviewees at all levels of the organisation were aware of the broader societal need in Finland to integrate foreigners. Hanken has already experienced the need to focus within this large mandate due to resource constraints. The lack of specific targets for the initiative makes it difficult to evaluate if the correct choices are being made either due to limited resources or competing mandates. It is also difficult to compare the effectiveness of different versions of the initiative with respect to institutional and stakeholder expectations, as well as areas that fall short of these expectations. Although quantitative targets can be difficult to set and may need to be revised, they also represent a specific balance between competing priorities. Without such targets, it is not possible to evaluate whether the evolution to HIT 2.0 allows Hanken to achieve its strategic goals better than HIT 1.0 because the link between strategy and the initiative is not that well established.

A further improvement area is how the HIT initiative engages with external stakeholders such as potential internship employers or mentors. While the stated goal of not calling attention to the fact that international students are different is a laudable goal in general, it is not very applicable in this specific context. International students are very identifiable based on their different language skills, names, and CVs. By not explicitly marketing Hanken's international talent, Hanken is missing out on the opportunity to spur change in the surrounding business community by encouraging companies to open their corporate culture and hiring practices to be more friendly to international talent. The audit team recommends that the HIT initiative is more visible externally as a way of highlighting the talent pool that the business ecosystem is potentially missing out on. Notably, most interviewees, with one exception, indicated that this type of influence on the broader society is outside of Hanken's capabilities or mandate. The audit team encourages Hanken to re-evaluate this position and recommends the use of the HIT initiative as a vehicle for realising this type of societal impact.