



From Internships to Insights: How International Students Are Shaping Their Futures in Joensuu

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Internships are more than just work experience—they're a chance to learn, grow, and connect. As part of my own internship with Talent Hub Eastern Finland project, I set out to interview three international students about their journeys to working with local companies in Joensuu. The goal was not only to understand their experiences, challenges, and what they've learned but also to inspire future talents who want to start their careers in the Joensuu region.

In this article, I'll share the stories of these three students—two from Industrial Management degree program and one from International Business—each of whom had unique journeys through their internships. Not only was it amazing to hear about their experiences, but it was also a reminder of how far we've come together as students.

One thing all these stories have in common is how small steps can lead to big opportunities. Personally, I found my own internship at Karelia University of Applied Sciences through a simple **school email**. Maksim and Zahra also discovered their internships the same way. It's a reminder for all students: **check your school email regularly—it works!**

Aurelia's journey, on the other hand, shows how powerful **networking and making friends** can be. Let's dive into their inspiring stories and see how they're shaping their futures!

Maksim's Story: A Month of Meaningful Work

Maksim Shastin, an Industrial Management student from Russia, is wrapping up his studies and just completed a one-month internship with **Cordial Communication**. It all started with a school email—yes, that inbox you may have been ignoring—and Maksim quickly applied and got the opportunity to showcase his skills.



Interview with Maksim Shastin, 2024. Photo: Foyjunnaheer Akter

“It went smoothly,” Maksim shared, crediting great communication and support from his supervisor. The internship was a game-changer for him. By applying **VSMA standards** to improve processes at Cordial Communication, he realized how much he enjoyed tackling project-based work. “I liked the structured approach and problem-solving that came with this task,” Maksim shared. It gave him clarity about his career direction: “I realized I want to focus more on project work rather than engineering.” This experience not only boosted his confidence but also confirmed his passion for project-oriented roles, setting a strong foundation for his future career.

His advice for others? **“Be patient and keep trying. The job market might seem small, but real skills always find a way.”**

Zahra’s Story: A Balancing Act of Internships and Growth

Zahra Abbaspour, a second-year International Business student from Iran, recently started her journey as a **Marketing Intern** in **Karelics Oy** while balancing her studies and another internship as a **Future Talent Team member** with **Talent Hub Eastern Finland**. Like Maksim (and me!), she found her internship opportunity through a school email and got selected after a quick Teams interview. These open positions are mainly sent by Talent Hub Eastern Finland Project. This project has increased the number of opportunities for students incredibly.



Interview with Zahra Abbaspour, 2024. Photo: Veikko Tahvanainen

Although she's just started, Zahra is already feeling more confident. "I'm learning how to send newsletters and use different tools and connecting different local companies," she explained. She is enjoying the learning process. For her, the supportive and helpful work environment in Joensuu has been a highlight.

Her advice to other students? **"Don't apply for jobs that don't match your profile, and always keep learning!"** Zahra believes that targeting jobs aligned with your skills and qualifications increases the chances of being selected and sets you up for success in the role. As a student, she emphasizes the importance of continuous learning: "This is the best time to learn as much as possible and prepare yourself for future opportunities."

Would she do these internships all over again if she could go back? **"1,000 times yes!"** she replied.

Aurelia's Story: Multitasking Her Way to Success

Aurelia Valencia Heredia, a fourth-year Industrial Management student originally from Peru, started her internship with **Ecoaims oy** two months ago. Unlike Maksim, Zahra, and me, Aurelia didn't find her internship through emails. She got it through **networking and making friends**. A classmate who worked at Ecoaims referred her, proving how valuable connections can be.



Interview with Aurelia Valencia Heredia, 2024. Photo: Foyjunnaher Akter

While the **language barrier** was a challenge at first, Aurelia learned to adapt and thrive in the Finnish work environment. “I feel more proactive and confident enough to act without asking,” she said.

Her favorite part? **Multitasking!** Aurelia’s role isn’t limited to production controls. She collaborates with the communication, marketing, and warehouse teams, which has prepared her for a variety of roles in the future.

Her advice? **“Don’t stay in your comfort zone. Go out, network, and make friends!”**

These stories highlight two key takeaways for students: **keep checking your school email for opportunities and build your networks by making connections and friendships.** For example, actively participating in company visits, mentoring programs, the Future Talent team, project work, and volunteering can open doors to exciting opportunities. Internships, as a compulsory part of UAS degree programs, provide students with essential skills like confidence, multitasking, and networking while preparing them for employment after graduation.

Whether it’s building confidence, mastering multitasking, or finding clarity in their career goals, these students are proof that internships in Joensuu can open doors to a brighter future.

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Talent Hub Eastern Finland (2023-2027) is ESR+ funded joint project of six educational institutions across different levels of education in the North Karelia and North Savo regions. The project’s participants are the University of Eastern Finland, Karelia University of Applied Sciences, Savonia University of Applied Sciences, North Karelia Municipal Education and Training Consortium Riveria, Savo Vocational College and Ylä-Savo Vocational College. The

project supports international students in finding employment and internships, to develop their entrepreneurship skills and to integrate and employers in finding, hiring and orientating a new worker to the workplace. RDI- Project Trainee positions aim to promote universities' RDI work as one available career option for international students in Eastern Finland and at the same time support the growth of international staff in the local educational institutions.

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