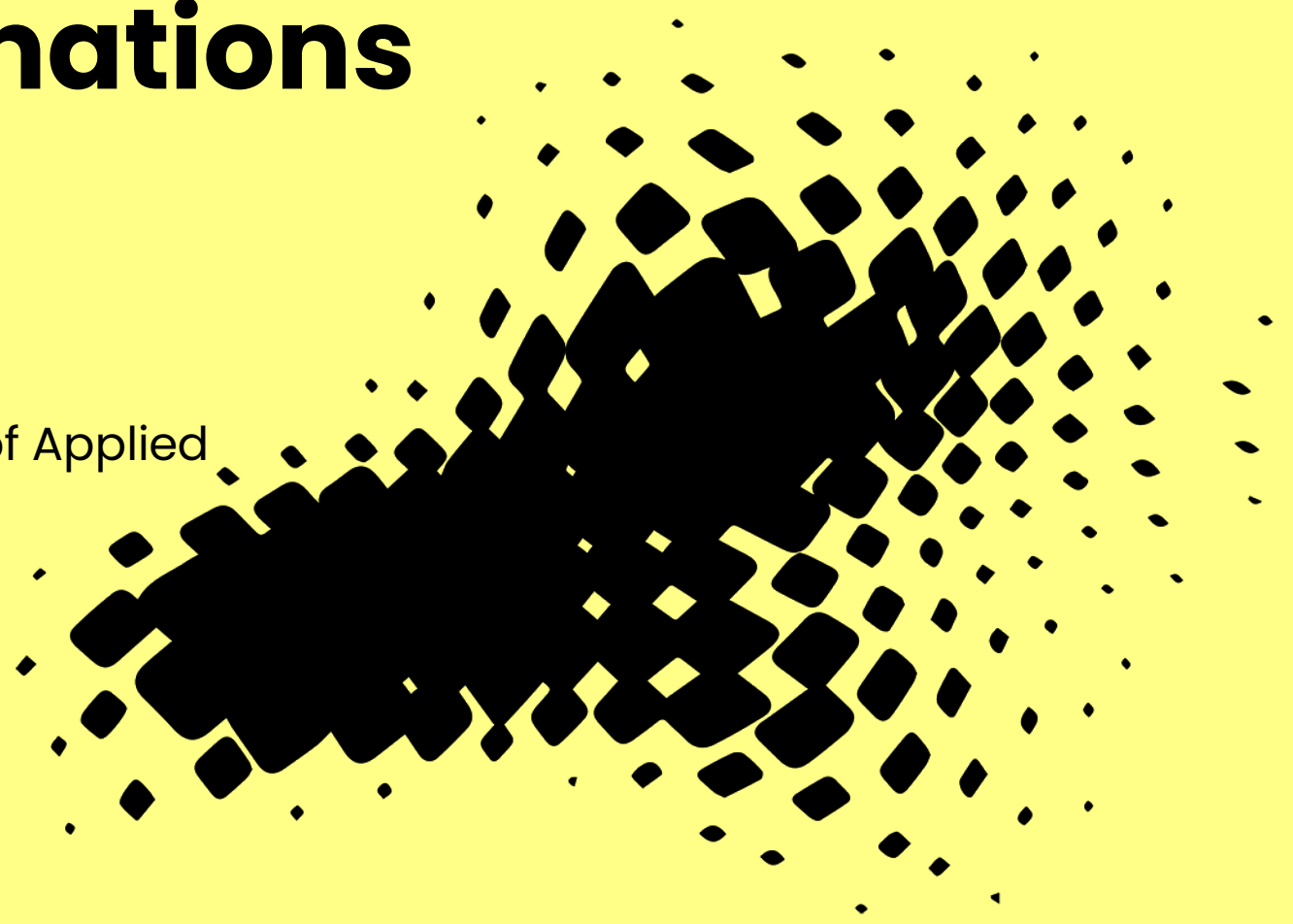


Student admission and entrance examinations study

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Student admission and entrance examinations – partial implementation

Purpose and goal

- The Digivisio 2030 project has identified a need to approach the system of student admissions and entrance examinations, especially from the perspective of digitalisation and co-operation across different sectors of higher education. ***The aim of the project is to anticipate and form a view of how admissions / entrance examinations in higher education institutions will change as 2030 draws closer, and what measures will be required of higher education institutions because of this change.***
- The aim is also to describe especially ***the current situation of admissions and entrance examinations in universities of applied science and universities, using work done or in progress in both sectors of higher education, avoiding any overlapping work.***
- The study will yield ***a proposal for the role of the Digivisio 2030 project in the development of admissions and entrance examinations.*** At the same time, the potential position of the admission process in Digivisio's target architecture and the planned contents of these services must be described in the learning ecosystem.
- Scope: examining student admissions in education leading to ***a bachelor's degree.*** The study concerns education in both ***the languages of Finland*** (Finnish and Swedish) and ***English.***

Members of the working group:

- Marko Borodavkin, Metropolia University of Applied Sciences
- Susanna Tarkiainen, University of Helsinki

Student admission and entrance examinations – partial implementation

- The study has been carried out between August and December 2022
- In the scope of the study, a written document has been produced. It examined the following:
 - I. *The current situation of admissions and entrance examinations and development in the short and medium term (2022–2025) (development of the contents of entrance examinations, scoring in certificate-based admission, the entire open path system)*
 - II. *Development outlooks for entrance examinations in the longer term (2026–2030)*
 - III. *Entrance examination systems (digitalising entrance examinations, system needs, description of the system landscape and outlooks for the future)*
 - IV. *Co-operation potential between universities of applied sciences and universities in the area of admissions and entrance examinations in the future*
 - V. *The role of the Digivisio 2030 project in the development of admissions and entrance examinations*

The current situation and the future of admissions and entrance examinations

- Universities of applied sciences and universities are currently developing their student admissions in a systematic manner
 - The 'AMK-opiskelijavalinnat' consortium (in English: UAS student admissions) is responsible for development carried out in the UAS sector. Metropolia is the co-ordinating higher education institution.
 - The development project for university student admissions 2022–2025 and its steering group (a core group for decision-making) are responsible for development related to entrance examinations and certificate-based admission carried out in universities. The project is located in the University of Helsinki. The core group for decision-making is faced with a set of choices, even outside the scope of the project (e.g., digitalising the entrance examinations). Development is also carried out in other co-operation between universities (e.g., the open path and communicating with applicants), for example, in the Admission Services network and by the National Admissions Coordinator.
- Admissions are currently being developed under the assumption that in the future, certificate-based admissions and entrance examinations will remain the main admissions methods to higher education institutions.
- Schedule
 - Universities of applied sciences have made an agreement on the development of student admissions until 2024.
 - The development project for university student admissions will end at the end of 2025.

The current situation and the future of admissions and entrance examinations

– universities of applied sciences

- Co-operation in the development of student admissions has been very important and valuable to universities of applied sciences.
- They have found development needs related to both certificate-based admission and entrance examinations on several levels. This agreement is valid until 2024. To continue the operations after this in the most seamless manner, universities of applied sciences will start planning the further development of student admissions from 2025 onward in 2023.
- Student admissions to universities of applied sciences are currently developed on several layers:
 - I. Co-ordinating development
 - II. Researching and developing certificate-based admission
 - III. Researching and developing the contents of entrance examinations
 - IV. Developing the operations and implementation of entrance examinations
 - V. Developing the Vallu entrance examination service
 - VI. Communications related to student admission (ammattikorkeakouluun.fi & UASinfo.fi)

The current situation and the future of admissions and entrance examinations – universities

- Admissions are developed based on research and dialogue (upper secondary education, other stakeholders, internal dialogue in universities).
- Student admissions to universities are currently developed on several layers
 - Researching and developing the scoring systems used in certificate-based admission
 - Reducing the number of entrance examinations, i.e., increasing the number of joint entrance examinations
 - Researching and developing the contents of these new joint entrance examinations
 - Developing a co-operation model for the new joint entrance examinations
 - Assessing the functionality of admission methods and creating a model for further development
 - Co-operating with upper secondary education actors
 - Making the schedule for admission lighter
 - Communication on student admission (yliopistovalinnat.fi/en, joint webinars, joint education descriptions in Studyinfo, etc.)
 - Creating and developing an open path application to universities
 - Developing the contents of the open path

The current situation and the future of admissions and entrance examinations – universities

- In 2024–2025, universities should decide how, when and with what kind of resources they will assess the results of the development project. This assessment allows them to decide on the implementation of any further development needs (incl. development resources).
- They have also identified development needs that will not be co-developed for now:
 - **The IT infrastructure and data flows** related to admissions. The data are decentralised and hard to merge, which limits the development of admissions, knowledge-based management and knowledge-based decision-making. This concerns many actors, not only universities.
 - There has been no co-operation between universities or across sectors on the admission methods to **bachelor's degree programmes in English** other than in certificate-based admission. It would be beneficial to create national recommendations on admission methods to support the organisation of education. Universities do not currently plan to conduct such study or to create recommendations.

Developing certificate-based admission

There are different development targets in different sectors

- **Universities of applied sciences:** Developing the equality and functionality of scoring systems.
- **Universities:** Making the scoring systems clearer, reducing the number of different scoring systems and mitigating negative steering effects.

There are different development needs in different sectors

- **Universities of applied sciences:** As of now, no clear development needs regarding scoring systems. Development needs may be identified in the future through research. Certificate-based admission concerns both matriculation examinations and vocational qualifications.
- **Universities:** Clear development needs have been recognised, e.g., due to criticism of certificate-based admission. Certificate-based admission only concerns matriculation examinations.
- **In both sectors,** development needs are assessed based on research.
- The current scoring systems are very different.

Developing entrance examinations

There are different short-term development targets in different sectors

- **Universities of applied sciences:** The aim is to implement the UAS entrance examination and the International UAS Exam in a more applicant-friendly and cost-effective manner, from the perspective of both the applicant and the university of applied sciences.
- **Universities:** The aim is to greatly reduce the number of entrance examinations by combining them and developing their contents.

There are different development needs in different sectors

- **Universities of applied sciences:** The development of the contents, structure and operative implementation of the UAS entrance examination and the International UAS Exam are central. This development also affects the development needs of the Vallu entrance examination service.
- **Universities:** conserving the resources of the applicant and the university
 1. To applicants, a genuine opportunity to participate in the admission process of several study programmes, as it will be possible to apply to several fields with the same exam and there will be no overlapping examinations.
 2. Those selected with certificate-based admission will not need to prepare for the entrance examination, as it will be possible to organise the exams clearly after certificate-based admission.
 3. Less resources will be needed for creating, reviewing, co-ordinating and organising entrance examinations, as there will be fewer examinations and the applicants will not need to participate in several examinations.

Developing the open path

Universities of applied sciences

The open path is used by universities of applied sciences in student admissions to education leading to a degree, but there are no common operating models in the sector and a wide variety of solutions are used. The open path is currently not an entity coordinated and developed by the 'AMK-opiskelijavalinnat' consortium.

Universities

- Since 2023, universities use a joint open path admission that covers everything but the joint admissions to pedagogy.
- Since 2023, the joint admissions to pedagogy have uniform selection criteria on the open path.
- After 2025, we should examine the entity of all the different admission methods, how **the open path** has been developed in co-operation between universities, what is the position of the open path in the admission system, and what kind of strategic mindsets do universities have for the development of the open path.

Digitalising entrance examinations

- **Universities of applied sciences:**
 - The first steps towards digitalised entrance examinations were taken by Metropolia in 2016, when it developed the SOTELI system.
 - During a special grant project supported by the Ministry of Education and Culture, universities of applied sciences developed a joint digital entrance exam (UAS Exam) in 2017–2020. During this project, Metropolia University of Applied Sciences developed an entrance examination system service (Vallu entrance examination service) for the implementation of the UAS Exam. Since autumn 2019, entrance examinations have been practically digital.
- **Universities:** digitalising entrance examinations began in spring 2020 because of the coronavirus pandemic.
 - Universities surveyed the entrance examination systems in 2020. Based on the system survey, they found that the Vallu entrance examination system would be the recommended system for written entrance exams.
 - The number of digital entrance examinations has increased each year. In 2023, around half of the entrance exams (i.e., around 60 exams) will be organised digitally, including almost all major joint admissions. The aim is to digitalise all university entrance examinations. Hinderances to digitalisation include costs and the lack of certain types of exercises in the digital systems.

Entrance examination systems in use

- The **Vallu entrance examination service** owned by Metropolia is currently used the most in higher education institution's entrance examinations.
 - In addition to the UAS Exam and the International UAS Exam, the Vallu entrance examination service has been used in over 120 university entrance examinations since spring 2020.
 - Almost **328,000** applicants have participated in an entrance examination using the Vallu entrance examination service between autumn 2019 and autumn 2022.
 - Universities have not managed to conclude an agreement on the use of the Vallu entrance examination service with Metropolia directly, since the Act on Public Procurement and Concession Contracts (1397/2016) prohibits direct procurement.
 - The procurement has been made as a service subscription under a framework agreement concluded between universities and CSC. CSC has concluded a service agreement with Metropolia on the use of the Vallu entrance examination service in university entrance examinations. The service subscription between universities and CSC contains services as specified in the service subscription and the use of the Vallu entrance examination service.
- Universities also organise around five entrance examinations per year in the **TIM learning environment system** owned by the University of Jyväskylä (one joint admissions exam, the rest are JYU's own exams).

Entrance examination systems – outlooks for the future

- The Vallu entrance examination service needs to be developed in the future, through the development of both UAS entrance examinations and university entrance examinations.
- **Universities of applied sciences** consider the Vallu entrance examination service a workable solution for organising the UAS Exam and the International UAS Exam even in the future. Still, both entrance examinations have functional and technical development needs and development needs related to principles, which would also affect the development of the Vallu entrance examination service.
- **Universities**
 - The requirements imposed on the system by the new joint entrance examinations will be clarified in 2024.
 - Universities plan to conclude an agreement on the use of the Vallu entrance examination service until 2025.
 - Universities need to make a long-term decision in 2023–2024 on what system to use to organise entrance examinations in the future. No decision has been made yet, more specific pre-decision check marks.
- Metropolia has considered the future outlooks of the Vallu entrance examination service and stated that Metropolia owns the service and wants to continue offering high-standard services to higher education institutions in the future. Metropolia is ready to improve its services and produce entrance examination services for extensive national needs.

Future opportunities for co-operation between universities of applied sciences and universities

- Universities and universities of applied sciences are currently in very different positions regarding the development of student admissions. Both sectors plan to develop their admissions from their own starting points in the coming years.
- There are no concrete areas of co-operation at the moment. Even though there are currently no concrete areas of co-operation, it would be important to co-operate and communicate actively and regularly on the development of student admissions. It would be important to share common knowledge and insights on the situation of student admissions development to recognise any synergies and areas of co-operation in time.
- Universities plan on developing certificate-based admission, entrance examinations will change in 2025, and universities of applied sciences continue developing their joint entrance examination (UAS Exam & International UAS Exam) and certificate-based admission. Concrete opportunities for co-operation might form in the long term once we see how, e.g., the development of entrance examinations progresses in both sectors.
- In 2023, universities of applied sciences will begin the planning of continued development of student admissions after the current deadline of 2024. Between 2023 and 2025, universities should clarify what kind of development will be carried out after 2025, and what resources should be reserved for the development of student admissions in the future.
- Cross-cutting target themes in both sectors include the organisation of entrance exam in a more applicant-friendly manner and more cost-effectively and resource-efficiently from the viewpoints of both the applicant and the higher education institution. Even though they share a goal, the development situation is currently different in these sectors, and their development measures planned for the near future are different. In the long term, there seems to be a trend toward a scenario seeking more uniform solutions instead of increasingly different operating, development and implementation methods between the sectors.

The role of the Digivisio 2030 project in the development of admissions and entrance examinations

- In our opinion, Digivisio cannot currently have a concrete role in the development of student admissions to higher education institutions, with regard to Digivisio's goals and current plans, considering the development of student admissions carried out by higher education institutions.
- More precise definition of entities and services to be developed in Digivisio (especially in 2025–2030) and the progression of the development of student admissions by higher education institutions may, in the future, highlight entities and cases where Digivisio could play a role in the student admission to higher education institutions.
- At this stage, it would be important to identify the key actors that develop the student admissions to higher education institutions at different levels and consider possible forms of co-operation between Digivisio and the actors developing the student admissions to higher education institutions in order to promote dialogue and the recognition of any synergies in time.
- As Digivisio progresses towards the next stage, and as the plans for 2025–2030 and the long-term plans for student admissions to higher education institutions become clearer in 2023–2024, it would be important to review the position student admissions to higher education institutions in Digivisio.

Summary and conclusions

- I. Universities of applied sciences and universities are currently in very different positions regarding the development of student admissions. Universities of applied sciences have made significant changes to their entrance examinations, and they are currently developed further. Universities, on the other hand, are conducting a project to develop certificate-based admissions and entrance exams (changes in 2025/2026). Higher education institutions' long-term plans on the development of student admissions will be clarified in 2023–2024.
- II. Digivisio cannot currently have a concrete role in the development of student admissions to higher education institutions. More precise definition of entities and services to be developed in Digivisio (in 2025–2030) and the progression of the development of student admissions by higher education institutions may, in the future, highlight entities and cases where Digivisio could play a role.
- III. The relationship between student admissions to higher education institutions and Digivisio should be defined and repositioned when Digivisio's roadmap and plans have been decided for 2025–2030 and higher education institutions have clarified their plans for the development of student admissions in the long term in 2023–2024.
- IV. To recognise synergies, needs and the roles of any new actors in time, it would be important to actively maintain a situational picture of the development among those developing student admissions to higher education institutions and Digivisio during 2023 and 2024.
- V. Future outlooks for entrance examination systems
 - Metropolia owns the Vallu entrance examination service and is willing to continue offering and developing high-standard services for extensive national needs in the future.
 - Universities do not currently have any long-term plans concerning digital entrance examination services. In the scope of Digivisio, universities wish to have a cross-sectoral discussion on whether higher education institutions could have a joint student admissions service package in the future.

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