



HOW TO FIND A JOB IN FINLAND

The game and maybe how to play it

In this session

Contents:

- Understanding the Finnish labour market
- How to play the game: strategies for job hunting
- Preparing your cv and cover letter for the Finnish labour market
- What if it doesn't work?
- Short Q&A (if time allows)
- You will get the slides afterwards if you have registered for the session.

Goals:

- To raise awareness of the Finnish job market culture and introduce strategies for navigating it.
- To critically reflect on assumptions of education-to-work transitions and imagine alternatives

NOT goals for this session:

- To promote cruel optimism.
- To make promises I can't keep.
- To hear me blabber on about my career.

The Finnish labour market: Facing the facts

- Finland has now the highest unemployment rate in Europe ([Yle/Eurostat 8.1.2026](#))
 - Also the unemployment of HE graduates has increased ([UH, 18.11.2025](#))
 - Ethnic discrimination looms large in Finnish recruitment, though it has slightly decreased in recent years ([Finnish Government, 27.1.2025](#))
 - Finnish recruiters tend to overlook experience gained abroad and maintain (unreasonably) high standards for Finnish language skills ([TEK, 23.9.2021](#))
- Non-Finnish (especially non-EU) HE graduates often pushed to precarious labour market situations, difficulties in advancing career beyond "the bad first job" (Ndomo, 2024)
- However, Finnish universities craft cruelly optimistic model stories of education-to-work transitions in their international student marketing (Immonen, 2024)

What can you do, i.e. how to "play the game" in the Finnish LM?

The game could be called "Use the Side Door"
(also in academia, to an extent):

- **Hidden jobs:** 70–85 % of available positions are not advertised. People recruit people they know / have met.
 - *to avoid heavy recruitment processes.*
 - *Social proof / familiarity*
 - *Valuing fit over achievements (person over cv)*
- **Open job ads** are scarce and prone to "unicorning"
(listing impossible standards to scare off applicants)
 - *Only reading open job ads can be disheartening.*
 - *They give you a very narrow view of what's going on in recruitment in any given sector.*
 - *Not hearing back? Due to the recession, the number of applications to any position is huge.*

Entrance



Photo: Renjith V S / Unsplash

What can you do, i.e. how to "play the game" in the Finnish LM?

Jarkko's tips (more to follow on each point)

1. Find the side door

- *Find information: who are the players?*
- *Critically analyze org. cultures: where to put your efforts?*
- *Create social proof: talk to people inside interesting companies and orgs first, send open applications second.*

2. Edit your application documents for the Finnish recruiter

- *Highlight the person behind the paper.*

3. Raise critical awareness, nurture radical hope

- *Stop, breathe, and reflect: see the full value of your education.*
- *Raise critical awareness of career development: what are we silently assuming?*
- *Get imaginative, get organized: coops as a viable option?*

Entrance



Find the side door

- **Find information:** Who are the big players? Are there smaller companies / startups operating in the field / sector?
 - [UH career monitoring surveys](#), labour union websites, existing networks related to the field
 - For further tips and support, [check out our Tools for career planning material bank](#).
- **Critically analyze organizational cultures:** Who's working there? What might the language policy be? How do people there talk about their work?
 - *LinkedIn, company/org. websites, relevant events...*
- **Create social proof:** Find (also Finnish) people who are doing interesting things and reach out to them simply to learn more about them and their work.
 - [Good tool for doing this: information interviews](#)
 - **Pro tip:** as long as you study at UH, you can say it's part of your career counselling at the university.
 - *LinkedIn: People tool (in company profiles), Alumni search (in university profiles);*
 - *Great way of teasing out information about company cultures*
 - *Leaving marks of yourself in interesting places, inviting positive chance*
 - *One way of overcoming prejudice*
 - *Something to mention in your open application*

If have time & energy, get other Finnish nudges on your belt (student orgs, volunteering...)

Edit your documents – the non-academic cv

- Main goal: Make visible the person behind the paper (≠ listing achievements).

- Finnish recruiters value motivation and fit to company culture (Duunitori National Recruitment Survey, 2023)

- How to do it?

1. Show your true motivation.
2. Tell a full, coherent story of you as an (emerging) expert.
3. Link your skills & competencies to your experiences.

→ Let's dig deeper into these...



How to show the person behind the paper in a non-academic cv?

1. Show your true motivation:

1. Give yourself a title – a brief explanation (a few words) of your unique expertise. Consider e.g. 'Master's student in biology' vs. 'Emerging biologist with a communications twist'
2. Education: show what interests you! Thesis topic, interesting courses/themes, specialization...

2. Tell a full, coherent story of you as an (emerging) expert

1. Use your profile text to craft a coherent, personal career narrative that expands on the title. Answer three questions:

1. Where am I coming from (your ed. and career background),
2. What am I already good at (your experience and evolving expertise) and
3. **Where do you want to be headed (your deeper motivation)**

Eg. 'I am a biology student with experience in communications and customer service work. I am analytical, active, and creative. Environmental ethics are my passion, and my career goal is to combine my biology and communications expertise to fight for the environment.'

Be careful with AI! You can e.g. ask how it would describe the expertise of someone who has taken all the same courses as you (no personal details!). However, **NEVER use AI text as such.** Use your own words, they are a big part of the person behind the paper.

How to show the person behind the paper in a non-academic cv?

3. Link your skills & competencies to your experiences: Use the [STAR model](#) (with most relevant entries at least)

" XX-XX Research Assistant, Employer XYZ

- I independently planned and carried out experiments that required using various methods of analysis.
- I collaborated with co-workers to reach the deadlines.
- I received positive feedback from my co-workers and my supervisor for my organizational and teamwork skills."

★ **S** = Situation

★ **T** = Task

★ **A** = Action

★ **R = Result** (often missing, but the most important one for the reader).

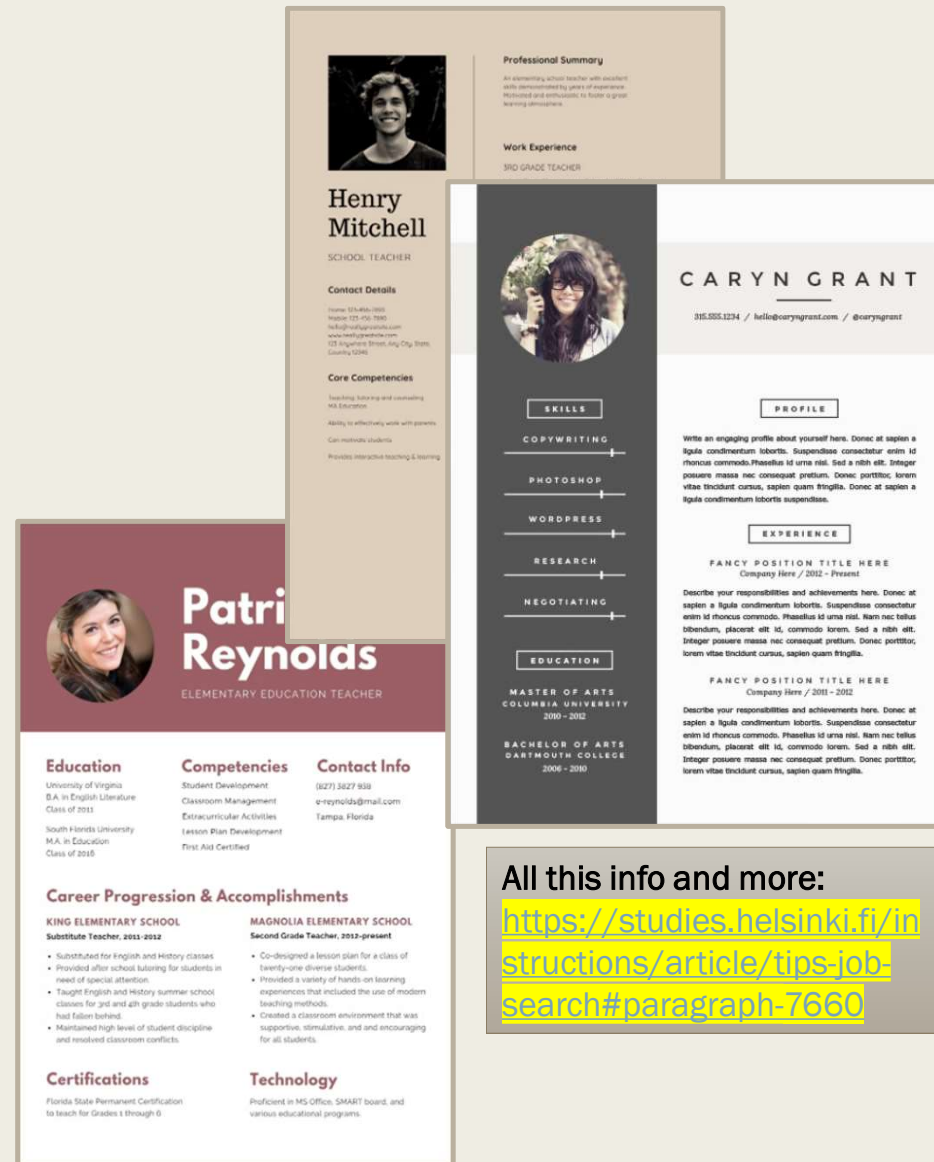


Nb! This can be surprisingly hard. Start with easier exercises ([see here](#)) and gradually progress to STAR stories. You can use a meta-cv to document your progress.

Disclaimer: An academic cv is a different beast, largely incompatible with the STAR model and other cv tips provided here. If you need an academic cv to use in Finland, make one according to the TENK template: <https://tenk.fi/en/advice-and-materials/template-researchers-curriculum-vitae>

The sections in a non-academic CV

- Name, (photo), and contact details
 - *Updated and correct contact details!*
- Headline
 - *Brief explanation (a few words) of your expertise*
- About / Briefly / Introduction / Profile
 - *A bit longer explanation (a few sentences)*
- Work experience & education
 - *Latest or the most relevant first*
 - *No need to include everything*
 - *Recent graduates and students: education goes first.*
- Skills
 - *Use categories: language, IT, and whatever fits you*
 - *Always include language skills. Finnish: let them know if you are on the path!*
 - *You can choose ca. 2-5 key skills, don't make a long list. Recognize similarities in your skills and bundle them.*
- (Positions of trust, voluntary work etc.)
- (Publications, projects, awards, certifications etc.)
- (Hobbies)
- (References, or "Happy to share references' details upon request". **Finnish references?**)



COVER LETTER



WHY?

Catch the attention of the reader.

Introduce yourself.

Show your motivation and what you know about the position / company.

You can also mention previous contacts with employees.

Keep it brief and to the point.

WHAT?

Highlight the links between your skills and experiences (this section most clearly discusses with your cv).

Give concrete examples.

Remember STAR stories!

WHO?

Who are you as a person?

What is your working style like?

Feedback you have gotten



What if it doesn't work?

Critical awareness and
radical hope

Stop, breathe, and reflect

- **Finding employment that matches your education is a process:** the first few years usually include employment gaps, fixed term and part time work and changing employers also for Finnish graduates ([UH career monitoring survey, 2024](#)).
- **Take a step back and think what no one can take away from you:** current policy framing the value of HE only as enabling successful education-to-work transitions 'portrays an impoverished idea of what students expect and gain from the HE experience. It deflects attention away from ... the positive life-changing impact the experience can have on students and in the years post-graduation.' (Leach, 2019, p. 159). Reflect on the following questions:
 - *Who am I becoming through this education?*
 - *Who would I be without this education?*

[You can use the Kudin.fi self-assessment tool](#) to dig deeper into this thematic.

Get imaginative, get organized – Cooperatives as an option?

- Starting a coop in Finland is not limited by citizenship or amount of starting capital.
- A good option for individuals to come together, organize democratically, and sell their expertise to customers as a joint business.
- Learn more: <https://startcooperative.pellervo.fi/should-we-start-a-cooperative-and-do-business-together/>
- The UH Ruralia Institute offers network studies on cooperatives and social economy: <https://www.helsinki.fi/en/ruralia-institute/education/co-op-network-studies-cns>





This was:

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Learn more on Moodle:

<https://moodle.helsinki.fi/course/view.php?id=67491>