



# Short Guide To International Tutoring

July 2018, Jenni Uimonen & Caelum Davies

Tutoring international students is an exciting task, and we at CISSI are sure you're going to have a great time with your new students. To help you along this journey, we've gathered some useful tips and comments from previous international students as well as their tutors – we hope this guide will help you prepare yourself for the upcoming semester with your new tutees.

## Why?

CISSI is aware that international tutoring is not the first choice for most, however there are many great reasons to be an international tutor:

- > A meaningful international experience, good for a CV
- > Enhance your language skills - English and others
- > Open your mind/prepare yourself for your own study abroad
- > Develop new friendships, opening up a world of free accommodation around the globe
- > See more of the city - the sightseeing spots, nightclubs and museums

Finally, although we cannot force any tutor to do more than the bare minimum required, we hope you do more. Moving to a new country is hard, and for some your welcome email could be the first meaningful contact they have with anyone here. Your job is important, and CISSI is here to help.

## What Have Students Said

It's obvious that international tutoring can be very meaningful to the new students:

**“The tutoring experience had its most impact in the first 1-3 weeks of the exchange, helping to know the city and people, so you felt right at home. A trip to suomenlinna was just a great addition to that! (or showing you the city in general). Showing how to navigate the uni was also very nice, showing you where all the unicafes are, where to find the menu, how to get your travel card, how the library works, and so on.”**

However- and although not required of you- it is clear that regular contact throughout the year would be welcomed by the students. When asked what could be improved, or the one thing that all tutors should do in CISSI's 2018 tutoring survey, students said:

**“In our case we had two tutors, and whereas one of them was amazing, the other one bailed out completely after welcome week. We had a back up, but some other tutor groups went through the same and basically had no one to guide them for the rest of the semester.”**

**“Tutors should keep suggesting group activities through all the semester and not in the first two weeks only”**

**“Get involved! Actually become friends with your tutees, because that way it'll be a much much more fun experience for everyone.”**

**“Try to facilitate a connection between your tutees! Make them feel at home, and be friendly to everyone. They will all appreciate it.”**

## Unique Issues - Exchange students

- > **Paperwork** - You can do little to help students with their paperwork. Rather, reassure them that many before them have had to do the same, and the University's New Student Guide offers good guidance.
- > **January Loneliness** - Students that stay a full year will lose most of their exchange student friends in December, so make an effort to include them with the groups arriving in January. Perhaps they can even help with tutoring.

## Unique Issues - Master's Degree students

- > **Paid Employment** - Some will have zero financial support when moving here, so these students will be looking for both 'full-time graduate employment' and part time work.
- > **Diversity** - A wider range of ages, work commitments, life milestones (e.g. marriage, mortgages), disciplines and aims for their studies provide additional things to consider when communicating and planning socials.
- > **Finns** - A large number of students may be Finnish, possibly from the University. Although they may not need as much of the basic information, make sure still involve them: e.g. after-orientation socials, meeting students from previous years.

## First Contact

- > **Email On Same Date** - Exchange students talk before arrival, and it can be worrying if some from their course have received and email weeks before others. Hence CISSI will suggest dates for all international tutors to email on.
- > **Master Students Come Early** - Some masters students will arrive in late July ready to take part in summer school. Plan an early August social, and first emails must be sent earlier than exchange students.
- > **Speak To Your Pair** - The earlier you meet with your pair, the earlier you can plan for the weeks ahead. Emails, missing days, socials - these can only be planned once you meet.
- > **Templates** - Email templates are on moodle. Here's an example structure:

Topic	From	Content
1 - Intro	Tutor X (Written and signed by both)	About us both // What is tutoring? // Link to University New Student Guide // Create FB or Whatsapp Group // Ask for all to reply to both * Masters, propose an 'early social' as some arrive in late-July
2 - Fun	Tutor Y	Key social dates (Freshman Adventure, Kannu Games, CISSI Welcome Party etc.) // Student organisation links // University Life // City Life
3 - Detail	Tutor X	Orientation Schedule // Key things to know now // Details about First Meeting // Phone numbers of yourself and Y
4 - Reminder	Tutor Y	Reminder about start of orientation // Map to meeting point // Phone numbers of yourself and X

## Orientation Week

- > **Start with the basics** - After participating in the Welcome Fair and figuring out some paperwork, take a few days to introduce the students to everyday uni things. Toilets, campus and building names, computers, printing, Unicafes and student discounts are all a mystery to your Helsinki newcomers.
- > **Promote various events** - Even if you won't feel like partying five nights a week, your tutees might. The first few weeks are key to friendship forming and bonding, so encouraging people to join a variety of events (from picnics to pub crawls and movie nights) is important. Letting your tutees know you'll be at the event is a great way to support them - we all like showing up to a party when we know at least one familiar face :)
- > **Alcohol** - Even though drinking can seem like the number one activity at most student events, please remember that not everyone enjoys alcohol! *Never* force people to participate in drinking games, and try to plan your get-togethers in a way that's fun for everyone, not just the drunk ones.

## Keeping In Touch

- > **Don't ditch 'em** - Hopefully, at some point the group has developed into a bunch of friends, and they'll go on to do things without you. However, this doesn't have to mean you're out of their lives - you can always keep on promoting events or inviting them over for hang out. Your tutees can join you in whatever you like to do in your daily life, be it ice hockey games, museums, saunas or partying.
- > **Facebook & WhatsApp groups** - Creating one even before your tutees have arrived in Finland is a great idea, as this allows people to get to know each other and helps with the stress of moving to a new city. Facebook groups are usually good for sharing events and uni-related content, whereas a WhatsApp group is perhaps more helpful in daily communication, for example on a night out, when people have to figure out details like buses and meet-up spots.

## Words From Past Tutors/CISSI

“Try to get to know your students on an individual level, not just as a group. Get coffee with them, have fun with them, get to know them outside of just giving them advice. Making lasting friendships is not just great for the students, it’s great for tutors” - Mimi Burgan

“Being an international tutor is not just giving advice, making friends and partying. It is about being the first contact for a foreign person in your own country. You get the possibility to mould a person's perception of your culture from the very start, and you actually are able to participate and discover your own backyard through completely new lenses. The restaurant you order your pizza after every night out? Coolest place on earth. The sauna you bathe at every summer? Never seen anything like it. You get the point - everything ordinary is suddenly the best ever. Think of the feeling when showing a new song to a friend and seeing them smile while they realize that this song is the shit. Now picture seeing and sharing those smiles every. Single. Day” - Alec Hölttä

“Tutoring is the best activity there is! You get to know new friends, whether among the new students or fellow tutors, while meaningfully contributing to the integration of students in the university and local communities. If done with positive attitude and devotion, it’s a fantastic experience to all involved.” - Ran Goren

“Being an international tutor for new joiners has been the experience of my life. I had the opportunity to introduce them to the university life, volunteer life and city life, which are vibrant. The best advice i can give is to get involved in as many projects as possible in and outside university.” - Anamaria Staniloae

## Don't Know The Answer?

Finally, the University has produced a website to help all students navigate their way through both the University and Helsinki life: residency permits, digital skills, bank accounts, orientation week summaries, and much more. If you don't have the answer for something, or don't feel comfortable/confident providing an answer to them, signpost them to the **For New Students webpage: [guide.student.helsinki.fi/en/new-students](https://guide.student.helsinki.fi/en/new-students)**

Other pages to use/promote:

- > Facebook                      Social Sciences At The University Of Helsinki (Year)
- > CISSI                              [blogs.helsinki.fi/internationalcissi/new-here/](https://blogs.helsinki.fi/internationalcissi/new-here/)
- > Kannu's Fresher's Guide      [fuksit.kannunvalajat.fi/en/](https://fuksit.kannunvalajat.fi/en/)
- > My Helsinki                      [myhelsinki.fi](https://myhelsinki.fi)

## **Just Incase: What Is CISSI?**

The below text is lifted from our website, hence some of this may well be obvious to you. We chose to share this with you, as not only does it explain us, it also shows how you could share information in a clear, structured and (hopefully) non-patronising way.

Are you international or internationally minded? A social scientist? If yes, then CISSI- the Organisation of International Social Scientists- is for you! We organise exciting and cultural events to: further encourage Finnish and International students to get to know one another, to highlight the most unique parts of Finnish student life, and to make living in Helsinki as smooth as possible.

CISSI- the Organisation of International Social Scientists at the University of Helsinki- is an organisation that operates under the Student Union (HYY). We are one of many social sciences organisations, however we are the only ones focused on the needs of international students specifically. We often work in partnership with other organisations. Kannunvalajat is the largest and most general social sciences organisation. Do get involved with us, but also get involved with everyone else too... nothing is stopping you from embracing as much as possible.

CISSI allows for half-year board members, meaning exchange students can (and have) join the board of CISSI. If you want to find out more, go to our facebook page, [www.blogs.helsinki.fi/internationalcissi](http://www.blogs.helsinki.fi/internationalcissi), or reach out to one of our board members.

CISSI does not have authority over tutoring, simply we offer support to those who do.