

International House Turku Podcast – Transcript S3E2

Jonathan: Welcome to the International House Turku podcast, your guide to living, working, studying in Turku. We are your hosts, Jonathan Murphy...

Roza: ...and Roza Pambukhchyan. Hello!

Jonathan: Hi! This week we're talking about internships. Why and when should you consider one? Where can you find these mysterious positions from and how to make the most out of them? And more. And then later in the episode we will be looking at the International Voucher, a new tool designed to encourage local employers to hire international students and graduates.

Roza: Sounds great. Let's get started.

Jonathan: Let's go.

(Musiikkia)

Jonathan: Well, welcome back to a new season of the International House Turku podcast. Roza, how are you doing? It feels like a while since we've been in the studio.

Roza: Doing really well and very excited because, like you said, it's been a while and it's nice to be sitting around at the same table. Familiar or not so familiar microphones.

Jonathan: Yes, new microphones! I hope you can really hear the difference... the difference in our voices. How is your 2026 started so far?

Roza: Started well, it started... I was on a vacation actually, so it started well. I didn't have to go on Monday next thing to work, didn't have to do the early wake-up so from that perspective it was really nice. Feeling relaxed and boosted to continue the work that we're doing. How about yourself?

Jonathan: Yeah, I also came back with some, some good positive energy, positive vibes. Of course, you know, then everything gets in the way and now there's lots of work and my children were sick and everything else and it's back to being a normal, a normal working life. But I still have some, some high hopes for this year in the things that we're doing within International House. So we're really looking forward to being able to share that with our listeners.

Roza: Absolutely. And I'm pretty sure also that many of our listeners probably they have their New Year's resolution list and I'm basically sure that most of them have some kind of like a job, internship on it, which might connect with the topic that we're discussing today.

Jonathan: Yes, 'cause the topic we are doing today is internships. And I think we should say this probably is a topic, if we have any listeners who have religiously listened to every single episode of the International House Turku podcast, we have touched upon internships before in the context of, of job seeking, especially for internationals and newcomers. But we

thought we just wanted to add a little bit more detail because if you are thinking about a summer internship, actually now is the time really to apply for those.

Roza: Absolutely, yeah. Because if you miss out in winter, you're not getting that job in summer.

Jonathan: Very good way of thinking about it. And we have met so many people in the time that International House has been going who come to us, you know, in May saying they are looking for a summer internship and unfortunately everything has already closed at that point. So we just really wanted to highlight today, um, about the timeframe for applying for internships and also talk a little bit about some of the maybe the most common questions that we have received from, uh, clients at International House about internships because they can be a little bit different, um, here in Finland compared to in, in other countries.

Roza: That's a very good point because let's start from the most basic question which I have been asked by some clients. So how would you define Jonathan, what is an internship at all? How is it different from a job and who is it for? Is it for everyone, like anybody who is looking for a job, should they rather consider an internship? Or what it is?

Jonathan: Big questions and, and as my usual sort of not very helpful initial answer is: it's complicated. And it depends on the, the type of internship and the type of company. But overall, broadly speaking, I would say that an internship is kind of like a short-term contract, a short-term placement, typically lasting between three and six months. And they are a great tool for, for international students and, and really people who are maybe don't have a long working history in Finland specifically. And they are a way to work on a particular project often, they are a way to get to know a company and get to know the Finnish working life in a bit more detail without that kind of commitment from either side about, about whether the job will, will continue. Although of course one of the advantages of an internship, as we will discuss, is that you do make connections and there is a good track record of interns then later going on to work in, in that field if not for that same company.

Roza: Yes, that is very true. And I feel like it connects when we say that how do you stand out from the bunch of applicants? So maybe this internship is a way of actually showcasing your skills. Because for a lot of people you might have an amazing, uh, CV, you might have an amazing cover letter, but how can you prove that you're actually the person behind the skills? So a lot of times for the companies internships are a possibility to actually test these words in practice. And that is how a lot of people, including ourselves and a lot of our colleagues that we know, actually did get the job because the company got to see that, hey, we see a potential worker in this person, in this intern, we want to keep them. So, so it happened.

Jonathan: Absolutely. And I think again, we don't need to go into so many detail about our experiences from, we've talked about them in the podcast on the, in the past on the podcast. But of course if you do have any questions then we're, we're very open and, and

happy to share our, our journeys. And I think really that's what I wanted to highlight, um, or one of the things I wanted to highlight today is that kind of pathway. So again, I get asked a lot, you know, "why should I apply for internships that aren't happening till the summer when I could be applying for part-time work now?", for example, if I'm a student and I need some money soon. Um, and of course my answer is: well you can apply to both. Certainly applying to internships does not mean that you can't apply to part-time work. But I think for internships and international students in particular, um, there is a clear pathway there in a sense of the companies are kind of expecting applications from international students. Some internships are only open to international students, again, depends on, on the company. But there is a clear kind of, again, progression there where you're an international student and you apply for the internship or maybe a thesis project in a way that when you are an international student with no working history or, or very little working history in Finland and you apply for part-time work, then again you are sort of competing with a huge pool of, of different applicants, both Finnish and international, different backgrounds and experience and expertise. So maybe in a kind of, depending again, it's a very generalized statement, but in some ways actually applying for a part-time job can be more difficult than applying for an internship if you are a student with a certain set of skills and a certain set of, of kind of background experiences.

Roza: Yes, that is very true. And I think also one advantage that especially international students also get above, uh, applying as a part-time job, uh, for part-time job positions is, uh, some universities might also have subsidies for the internship. So this indicates to the, uh, employer that actually if I get these people, uh, I might get support in paying the salary. So it might be a little bit more attractive. Anytime we're talking about money.

Jonathan: Yes, absolutely. And well, hold that thought for financial incentives for companies because we will have some more news on that later in the episode. Um, but I wanted to ask, have you ever in your experience of applying for internships, have you ever been told that you are overqualified? Because of course you had a history of working in your home country full-time, and other countries as well. And then you move to Finland and you apply to an internship, like how did you kind of, uh, deal with that application process? Were you upfront with the, with the, um, internship provider about your background?

Roza: That's a very good and a complicated question at the same time because I would say it's based on the situation and you have to be able to read the situation well. Absolutely many of us come already with a background of working, having done the job that is described in the position. So you would think that "oh, I'm overqualified, why would I apply?" But at the same time, in my opinion, we just have to remember that this is a chance to experience the Finnish working life, to get that practice in here. Because basically many of us that's what we're lacking, that's why our maybe job search process is not as successful because you do not have the local experience. So I would say, uh, yes, being overqualified is a big issue, but on the other hand, uh, base of what, what the job application says, you

might still be able to bring something. What do you think? What has your experience been like?

Jonathan: Yeah, I think, I think quite similar. It really does depend. It was a hard question, I know, um, to give a, a short answer to, um, but yes it really does depend on what on what the, the company is looking for, on the kind of role of the internship. But I mean my advice is, is always if something looks interesting to you to apply for it. Because it's difficult to predict or kind of guess what the employer is looking for before you contact them. I think I've told the story maybe before, but I did have an internship where I was looking at the job description and thinking that actually I am quite overqualified for this. I've done a role very similar to this in my home country and got a full-time salary for it for four years and now I'm applying in an internship position. But you know, I, I needed, um, an internship and I needed the, um, money and I needed the, um, kind of contacts. So I just applied for the job and then I discussed this with them kind of during the interview and, and they just told me they're looking for the best person for the job. They're not so concerned about overqualified or underqualified, but they just want to know that the, the thing that I was hired to do, the particular project that I was hired to work on would be a success. And they, they took my previous experience into account, which I was quite happy for.

Roza: Yes, absolutely. And I do feel like workplaces are not as rigid, there is a lot of flexibility. So you might bring prior experience, but a lot of things you can still develop and learn at the company. So a lot of things are kind of like connected with your motivation and interest what you have, that is negotiable also later with the employer. Right, but um, if we just generally think, so, um, how or where can you find this internships from? Do we have any advice?

Jonathan: We do! And of course, again, we always recommend checking out a lots of different kind of websites and jobs boards and I think many internships are often posted in the same place that you would normally find full-time jobs. I'm thinking about, uh, Job Market Finland website, Duunitori. If you are an international student at the University of Turku, you can sign up to the JobTeaser platform, which is where I found my internship. If you are thinking about an internship, um, in the public sector, there's the municipal employment website kuntarekry.fi, um, which lists jobs, um, in here for example if you want to be an intern, um, at the City of Turku. But one really good place to find internship opportunities in Southwest Finland is actually through a new campaign, the Summer Traineeship Campaign led by Business Turku and the City of Turku. And you can go to the website careerinsouthwestfinland.fi. Again, we can add the link, uh, maybe to the episode description. And currently they do have a lot of, uh, local internships offered by, by larger companies in Southwest Finland.

Roza: Yeah, there are actually quite many companies again that if you get started working with them, they have multiple opportunities in the future to maybe even continue that internship into a working relationship.

Jonathan: Yeah, definitely. And again, I think the, the traineeship campaign is going to be regularly updated, so if you go on and you don't see the internship that suits you, then do keep checking it quite, quite regularly. And I think there's also for engineering students, um, if we have any listeners outside of the Turku region, um, hopefully we do, and if you are looking at a, an internship here in Turku, then actually if you're coming from outside as an engineering student, then there are additional support and subsidies available for you to cover kind of housing and

Roza: Oh wait, so you're saying that if you're somebody who lives outside of Turku, then they would want to move to Turku to do the internship.

Jonathan: Absolutely! Of course. And of course if you are a Turku student and feeling left out about this, then I think one of the other pieces of advice we do have for you for internships is that you can look outside. As much as we love, uh, Turku and Southwest Finland of course, for a short internship we would highly recommend looking in Helsinki, looking in Tampere, looking around Finland. Because again, much like we in Turku have the campaign to attract in engineering students, other cities in Finland do have similar campaigns for similar, um, backgrounds and disciplines where they do want, um, Turku students to go and spend three months, for example, in the capital region. And I think now again post-COVID, hybrid, remote working is very, is very common as well, so it's possible even if you don't fancy, um, paying for, for housing in Helsinki for three months, then maybe you could just visit, um, on-site a few days, um, a week potentially for an internship.

Roza: Yeah, I think that's actually a brilliant advice in a way not sticking only to the region, but exploring further and wider into the all of Finland. Because like you said, there are a lot more opportunities and also it's a chance to see how things are done elsewhere. So maybe later you might bring that knowledge and skills with you, which might be an asset when you're being employed here in Turku, hopefully.

Jonathan: Absolutely. As long as you please do come back to us in Southwest Finland. We need you here. Finish, finish your degree and, and find the job. Um, but of course if you have any, I think this is a very brief overview of internships, but I think the key things to note are if you're looking for summer internships, now is the time. And of course if you have any questions about particular positions or about the application process, if you want us to look through a CV for example, then please do contact us here at International House Turku. As always you can email talent.advisor@turku.fi. You can book a time, um, with one of our advisors through our website or you can visit our customer service point Monitori in the city center as well.

Roza: Yes, we'll be very happy to share both our experience and also give you all the links and everything where you can actually more concretely find these places from.

Jonathan: Definitely. So, now let's take a quick break and when we come back, we will turn our attention to a new initiative from the City of Turku to help with the employability of international talent.

Roza: Sounds very good.

(Musiikkia)

Jonathan: And we are back. So, when thinking about internships, uh, one concern of international applicants is that they are always kind of competing with, with Finnish students and Finnish applicants as well. Who of course probably have more local connections and, um, the language skills I guess, um, are maybe a little bit, um, stronger as well, um, in Finnish or Swedish as well as English. So Roza, what incentive do companies have to consider hiring an international over a similarly qualified local applicant?

Roza: That's a very good question and an essential one I would say. But that is why the City of Turku has decided to step in and offer this kind of incentive, like you mentioned, to companies. So it's an initiative to help internationals, international students and give them the opportunity, the chance to get hired, get noticed by companies. Because it's a financial grant that is called International Voucher of the City of Turku. So basically any local company who is ready to hire an international who has just graduated, an international student, uh, may get this grant by the City of Turku for hiring somebody.

Jonathan: Sounds great. Um, and, uh, to explain more about the voucher, we are delighted to welcome someone much more qualified than us to talk about it. Um, today's guest, um, Sari Sainio, employment specialist here with us at the City of Turku. Welcome to the International House Turku podcast.

Sari: Thank you. Great to be here.

Roza: Nice to have you here, Sari.

Sari: Thank you.

Jonathan: Yeah, thanks so much for, for taking the time, um, out of your busy schedule to talk to us today. So, um, or maybe you could for the listeners you could briefly introduce yourself, um, who are you? What do you do here? At the City of Turku? A personal question.

Sari: Okay. So, my name is Sari and I work in industrial and construction sector as a employment specialist for companies. I help, uh, companies to find worker for them, so they can grow and be better.

Jonathan: Hmm, great. And I think again, because Roza and I, um, of course often work a lot with, with job seekers directly and clients and students. So maybe it's good for our listeners to kind of realize that also we do have a big, sort of comprehensive, um, employer services and we have people in the city who are speaking to employers and again trying to help them, especially regarding the hiring of international talent.

Roza: Yeah, that is very true because we know that there is always, um, the need to find the job and people are thinking like "oh what is being done or how are companies and employees or people who are looking for job being connected?" But as we mentioned, so the city has started this initiative of helping the companies hire more, um, internationals. Can you explain a little bit Sari, what is this International Voucher?

Sari: It's a voucher that City of Turku will offer for companies and value of the voucher is, uh, either 3,000 or 5,000 euros. So it's not the, so it's a big money.

Jonathan: Yeah. Yeah, more than just a, a small grant again I think when you hear the term "International Voucher" it's maybe not immediately clear exactly what it is. So it's good to know that actually it's, it's a good sum.

Roza: Yeah. It sounds like a dowry, you know, you're coming with a sum with you. You have a value as an international, you bring with you to the company.

Sari: Exactly. And I think again companies regardless of their, their size they're often interested in, in the bottom line and what, and what you can bring. But, um, I assume there's quite a lot of our listeners will be interested in this voucher. But maybe Sari you could explain exactly who is eligible to apply for this?

Sari: The voucher may be used to hire a higher education student or job seeker with foreign background who has graduated within the past 12 months. And if the applicant is still a student, they must graduate within one year.

Jonathan: Okay, so really designed for kind of graduates and, and finalists, let's say.

Roza: Yeah, and I think it again kind of aligns with what we were talking that if you want to apply for the summer jobs, do it now in winter. If you know that you're graduating within a year, it's already good to put this in your cover letter, in your CV, that you know, there is this voucher and start hunting the companies.

Jonathan: Yeah, absolutely. And you know, I think listeners, if they might some listeners might be wondering, "okay, but this is like from the city to companies, so how can I kind of use this, this voucher?" But again, it is a tool and when we have a lot of, of clients who both make applications but also kind of open applications as well to different companies then I guess this is something that they can take with them. Um, but Sari, of course if a applicant was kind of looking to use this tool, I guess where can they find out more information about the voucher?

Sari: All information can be read in a City of Turku webpage. And if the employers wants to know more, there is at the moment there is a link in for the information session that can be, so you can set yourself in.

Roza: Yeah, I think it's good because like in a way you know, there is the information, but then you have an individual situation or some things are still very unclear and the city is offering that support, we have contacts that you can ask specific questions.

Jonathan: Yeah, absolutely. And, and, um, again I'm sure not every listener has read all of the City of Turku's website, although of course we have a nice new website that came in last year, but we will, um, share the link to, uh, the International Voucher page on the website in the episode description. Um, and, and Sari maybe you could share a little bit about kind of why is the city offering the voucher? Of course it sounds great connecting students and employers but, but kind of I guess from your perspective, what is the city kind of hoping to achieve with the voucher?

Sari: I think City of Turku wants to keep all talents in town, which help companies grow. And my personal opinion is that diverse teams create better products than services, which make companies grow and more workplace, more places to work.

Roza: I think that's a very good insight, this bringing this diversity and all the skill that we already have locally, recognizing that skill I think is something also that we are fighting for at International House Turku. So that's another step of companies recognizing that the universities are also providing good enough education and skills to these internationals that then can be put in practice in companies.

Jonathan: Very true. Very true. And I think again it's so great to hear that from, from the kind of, the local side, the Finnish side as well. Because I think again as internationals and we've seen the international talents that we work with and, um, sometimes I think it's fair to say that on the whole, you know, employers in Finland do not always appreciate maybe what an international can bring to a team, particularly if they don't have any other internationals, they've never hired an international before, it's a big step for them. I kind of understand that, but the, to my mind, the value of an international is, is so obvious, so it's also great to hear from the, the kind of city's Finnish-language employer services that internationals are, we're valuable.

Roza: Absolutely. And I think it kind of connects nicely also the university work also that the universities are doing, investing all this skill, knowledge in internationals. So that's another step of companies recognizing that the universities are also providing good enough education and skills to these internationals that then can be put in practice in companies. Very true.

Roza: Right, but Sari, probably you were also once a student, struggling trying to find a job, internship. So if you were to give yourself a piece of career advice to your younger self, AKA, what would that be?

Sari: Well, actually... hmm... I would say that don't wait, wait until you feel ready to take opportunities. Say yes and learn as you go.

Jonathan: Wise words. I think that we can all relate to.

Roza: Yeah, that's very good. I agree with you Sari and maybe like to reiterate also, when I'm reflecting personally I always think like maybe I should wait for that perfect moment when I'm ready or when the situation is better, but sometimes you don't have the time to wait, so sometimes it's good just to act.

Jonathan: Yeah, and I think again we've spoken before on the podcast about, um, you know, seeing a job description and thinking "okay well that's kind of maybe 80% of it is for me, but maybe not the last 20%, so maybe I won't bother applying", but there might not be anyone who is fully 100% for that role, so I think it's always good to, as you said, to act and to be bold and brave. Um, good, good solid advice to, to end on I think.

Roza: Yes, thank you Sari so much for being here and thank you City of Turku for starting this initiative. We're happy that that it is happening, it is available.

Jonathan: Yeah, and, and again best of, of luck with the voucher campaign and, um, well maybe we'll hopefully have you back on again in the future to check in and see how things are going.

Sari: Thank you very much. This has been my pleasure to be here.

Jonathan: Okay, so, another episode of the International House Turku podcast. Um, what have we learned today Roza? I always throw this to you because of your education background. What have we learned today?

Roza: Like AI, I will try to sum up in several bullet points, but I will fail miserably unlike AI. But yeah, I guess like one important thing that we learned today again is that there are opportunities, so it's good not to look only into applying for solid positions or part-time jobs because there are also internships. And to support that, there is also let's say if for some reason there are no internships or you're also looking for a job, there is support there as well, for example the International Voucher. So it's good to look all around and like Jonathan already very nicely listed all the places that you could check for example the internships from, those are one things. Another thing is to be connected, the word of mouth, you know, asking around, letting people know that you're looking for opportunities. So all of these and maybe to add also what was kind of like a pinch of salt by our guest Sari is like don't wait for perfect chances, act now and maybe something comes up your way.

Jonathan: Very nicely summarized. Much better than AI or ChatGPT in my opinion.

Roza: You never know if I'm reading it off AI, do you?

Jonathan: Well, this is true. Who knows, we ourselves could be just digital avatars.

Roza: Hopefully that never, they never arrive. See I made a mistake there so you know I'm not an AI. I just saw Marco taking a photo so there will be evidence that we are real people

here in the studio. Um, but, is there anything else happening in, at the moment that listeners should be aware of? It's late January 2026, what's going on in Turku?

Roza: Yes, I think one favorite that you can, you should never miss on is, uh, the coffee mornings or our so-called "Bisbis perjantai" that we have. And just a reminder to our listeners that now you can visit our "Bisbis perjantai" at the last Friday of every week, uh month, sorry, as an

Jonathan: Yes! Last Friday of every, uh, week, and, um, the location, uh, remains the Art House Turku, again a great location that I did not ever really visit before we started doing Bisbis there. But we're on the fifth floor, the staircase, there's a lift, but it's very slow. The staircase is very long, but at the top you get a great view of the, the Aura River.

Roza: You get the reward!

Jonathan: You do get the reward. And of course you get the Bisbis, the donut. Um, so yes, you can look again on our website, uh, for the dates for that. But we will also be organizing, uh, along with the Turku employment region, different kind of workshops in English this spring. There are workshops if you are interested in starting your own business, there are, um, workshops about kind of general job seeking, um, and some of these will be for students, some of these will be for registered job seekers. But you can go to the, uh, Turku employment region event calendar, again we'll share the link, for the full details. And the event calendar is one of those websites that has the kind of three language options, but I think all three of them currently default to Finnish language at the moment, but there are certain events that are in English or that do say that they are welcome, um, they do welcome internationals. So again, um, as Sari said, be, be bold and, and if you see something that looks interesting to you, a workshop or an event or, um, a jobs fair for example, then please do, please do be brave and, and check it out. I think that's the best way to, even if you don't find the job, but you might find people who can help you find the job.

Roza: Yes, and keep us posted how is it, how it is going. If you need any advice, you can always find our advisors at International House Turku who can sit with you and go through the process or if you have any questions, you can contact us at the talent advisor email. But other than that do we have anything else to share Jonathan?

Jonathan: I think, I think that's most things.

Roza: Other than maybe if we get one Runeberg pie, is that how you would translate that? Do you like it? Because that's the time of the year.

Jonathan: It is! It's happening, um, is it the 5th next week or couple of weeks' time? The 5th of February. Um, so we should have said at the start and then you could have listened to the podcast with, uh, a Runeberg torte or a Runeberg pastry I guess is the closest translation.

Roza: I guess, yeah, it's probably not a pie, it's a pastry.

Jonathan: It's like a little cake with, with almond. Actually quite like them, my wife hates them so we never normally have them at our house, but, um, I don't mind them.

Roza: They're pretty nice, I like them, especially the ones that has a bit of rum, it's like soaked in rum or something. So make sure you go to store, get one and then make tea or coffee and then turn on the podcast.

Jonathan: That sounds, very good. Or at least maybe the start of the next, they can start the next episode, um, or at least you know with one of Runeberg's, of course he's one of Finland's national poets, so, um, you can, you can find online quite easily his epic poetry and you can read with them and, and then listen to the podcast. Why not? Whatever, whatever the listeners want to do. But, um, this sounds really good. Please do follow the International House Turku on, uh, social media: Facebook, Instagram, and LinkedIn. Please let us know if you have any questions or comments about the podcast. If there's any topics you would like us to cover in future episodes. Um, and again a huge thanks to Sari, our guest, a huge thanks to producer Marco, the unsung hero of the podcast. Um, and to you Roza of course, thanks for being here.

Roza: Thank you Jonathan and thank you everyone. See you next time.

Jonathan: Take care.