

FORESIGHT

Building the literacy of the future (Translation with AI)

Skills package- AIMLearning

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TASK 1: ASSESSMENT OF ONE'S OWN COMPETENCE

What do you know about anticipation? • What things do you try to prepare for in advance in your everyday life? • How do you follow the development of your own field?

The world is changing faster than ever before. Technology, working life and society are constantly evolving – foresight has become one of the most important skills of the future.

Foresight does not mean predicting the future. It means the ability to identify signals of change, understand alternative futures and act on them more wisely today.

This competence package will introduce you to the key concepts, methods and practices of foresight.

Foresight skills offer a competitive advantage in a rapidly changing labour market – especially for young students and jobseekers (Job Market Finland, 2026).

WHAT IS FORESIGHT?

"Identifying factors affecting the future, mapping alternative futures and defining measures to achieve the desired future. Foresight supports decision-making about the future, which inevitably involves uncertainty."

– Sitra (2025)

Foresight vs. Forecasting

Fortune-telling aims to tell us what will happen. Foresight, on the other hand, asks what can happen and how different possible futures affect our decisions.

Foresight is a systematic process aimed at learning. It does not get stuck in a single assumption, but builds a common understanding of the forces of change (Rhisiart, Miller and Brooks, 2015).

Foresight and uncertainty

Uncertainty is a basic characteristic of the future – it cannot be eliminated, but it can be better managed through foresight.

The best forecasters are those who actively update their views in the light of new information and do not get stuck in old assumptions (Schuler et al., 2025).

EXERCISE 2: Think about a decision in your own life – what kind of foresight information did you have available? How could anticipation have helped?

KEY CONCEPTS OF FORESIGHT

Trend

A long-term, recognizable direction of change in society, the economy or technology.

Weak signal

Early warning of an emerging phenomenon. It may seem marginal, but there may be a big change in the future.

Scenario

An alternative, coherent description of a possible future – not a forecast, but a tool for thinking.

Horizons

Time intervals in foresight: short (1–3 years), medium (3–10 years) and long (10–30 years) time intervals.

Megatrends

Extensive, intense and long-term change affecting several areas of life simultaneously (e.g. digitalisation, climate change).

Wild Card

An unlikely, but if it happens, highly influential event (e.g. pandemic, technological breakthrough).

Visio

The desired vision of the future – what we want the future to be like.

Futures literacy

Futures literacy: the ability to consciously understand and use the future

WHY IS FORESIGHT CARRIED OUT?

Foresight is much more than guessing about the future – it is a systematic way to improve the quality of decision-making in an uncertain world. Both individuals and organizations benefit from foresight on many different levels.

Better decision-making

Anticipation does not eliminate uncertainty, but it helps to perceive various opportunities and risks in advance. By knowing what changes may be coming, you can make more sustainable decisions – ones that will work in multiple different futures, not just one assumed one.

Anticipating skills needs

The labour market is constantly changing, and foresight helps to identify what kind of skills will be needed in tomorrow's working life. The Competence Needs Compass (2024) provides concrete foresight information to support guidance work and career planning – the information helps to make choices related to studies and careers on better grounds.

Empowerment of the individual

Foresight skills give individuals the ability to take control of their own future. When you understand which forces of change affect your own field or career, you are not just a target of change, but an active agent who can consciously shape your own path.

Strategic flexibility

Skenaariotyöskentely auttaa valmistautumaan useisiin mahdollisiin tulevaisuuksiin kerralla. Sen sijaan että lyödään lukkoon yksi suunnitelma, ennakkointi pitää oven auki muutoksille ja yllätyksille. Tämä joustavuus on erityisen arvokasta nopeasti muuttuvilla aloilla.

Common direction and learning

Foresight brings people and organisations together to work on the future. Rhisiart et al. (2015) show that scenario work develops both the individual's thinking skills and the organization's ability to detect weak signals. It is also a learning process, not just an analysis tool.

Enabling innovation

Early identification of weak signals opens up opportunities that others do not yet see. Foresight helps to find new paths, services and solutions before they are mainstream – and it is one of the most important sources of innovation for both the individual and the organisation.

There is no single right way to look at the future in foresight. Different methods are suitable for different situations, questions and needs. Some methods are best in a group, others work well alone. Some are based on collecting and analysing information, while others are based on creative imagination and perceiving alternatives.

This section introduces six key foresight methods. Each of them presents the idea of the method, its purpose of use and a concrete example that helps to understand how the method can be applied in practice – in one's own studies, career planning or working life.

01

Scenario work

Building alternative visions of the future

02

PESTEL Analysis

Mapping the forces of change in the operating environment

03

Trend Scanning

Identifying weak signals and bullish trends

04

The Delphi Method

Gathering expert insights anonymously

05

Wheel of the future

Visualize the multiplier effects of change

06

Backcasting

Planning a path from the desired future to the present



In scenario work, 2–4 alternative, coherent images of the future are constructed. Scenarios are not predictions of what will happen – they are tools of thinking that force us to think about different possible developments and prepare for them. Rhisiart, Miller and Brooks (2015) emphasize that scenario work also develops futures literacy: participants learn to identify their own assumptions and challenge them.

How does it work?

1. Choose a topic or question (e.g. "What will the working life of my field be like in 10 years?")
2. Identify key uncertainties (e.g. technological developments, legislation)
3. Build 2–4 different visions of the future by combining different factors
4. Consider: what would each scenario mean for me or my organisation?

Practical example

You are graduating as a practical nurse and you are thinking about your future. You build three scenarios:

Scenario A: Artificial intelligence automates recording work – nurses have more time for patient work. Need: technology skills.

Scenario B: The population is ageing rapidly – the demand for care services explodes. Need: leadership skills.

Scenario C: Remote care becomes more common – work becomes digital. Need: remote control skills.

Conclusion: in all scenarios, technology skills are useful – you should start studying them now.

PESTEL is a systematic way of mapping the forces of change in the operating environment from six perspectives. The abbreviation stands for Political, Economic, Social, Technological, Ecological and Legislative. The method helps to see which external factors may affect one's own field or career – and to prevent so-called shocks where a big change comes as a surprise.

Example: An IT student conducts a PESTEL analysis. In the T-point, he identifies artificial intelligence as a threat to routine programming tasks – and decides to direct his expertise towards the application of artificial intelligence.

P

Political

Amendments to Government Programmes, Tax Policy, International Agreements

E

The economy

Economic growth or recession, inflation, wage development in the sector

S

Social

Ageing of the population, values, change in educational attainment

T

Technological

Artificial intelligence, automation, new digital tools

E

Ecological

Climate change, circular economy, environmental legislation

L

Legislative

Labour legislation, GDPR, industry certifications

Trend scanning refers to the systematic collection of information about what is happening in the world – especially at the edges, before the phenomena have risen to mainstream awareness. The goal is to identify weak signals in time. Horizon scanning expands the gaze further into the future and less likely but significant changes.

What sources to scan from?

Professional publications and news feeds in the field

Podcasts and conference speeches

Futures reports (Sitra, ETLA, EU Foresight)

Social media discussions and special communities

International examples

Scientific publications and preprint articles

Practical example

A student in the field of commerce regularly follows blogs in the field and already in 2021 notices a weak signal: a small number of grocery stores are experimenting with autonomous cashless stores in the United States.

He recognises that the phenomenon may become more common. Alongside her studies, she will start studying the design of digital services.

Three years later, the first cashless stores are opened in Finland – and he is already ready for his new role.

The Delphi method collects experts' views on the future anonymously in several rounds. After each round, participants can see the answers of others and can revise their own position. The process strives towards a common vision without the strongest personalities or hierarchy distorting the end result.

1

Round 1

Open-ended questions are sent to the experts:
"What will be the biggest changes in the industry in the next 10 years?"

2

Round 2

A summary of the responses is compiled. Experts comment on each other's views anonymously and justify their positions.

3

Round 3

Views begin to converge. Both consensus and permanent disagreements emerge – both are valuable information.

✓

The bottom line

A structured picture of what experts consider probable, possible or unlikely – with justifications.

Practical example

The Finnish National Agency for Education wants to find out what kind of skills will be required of teachers in 2035.

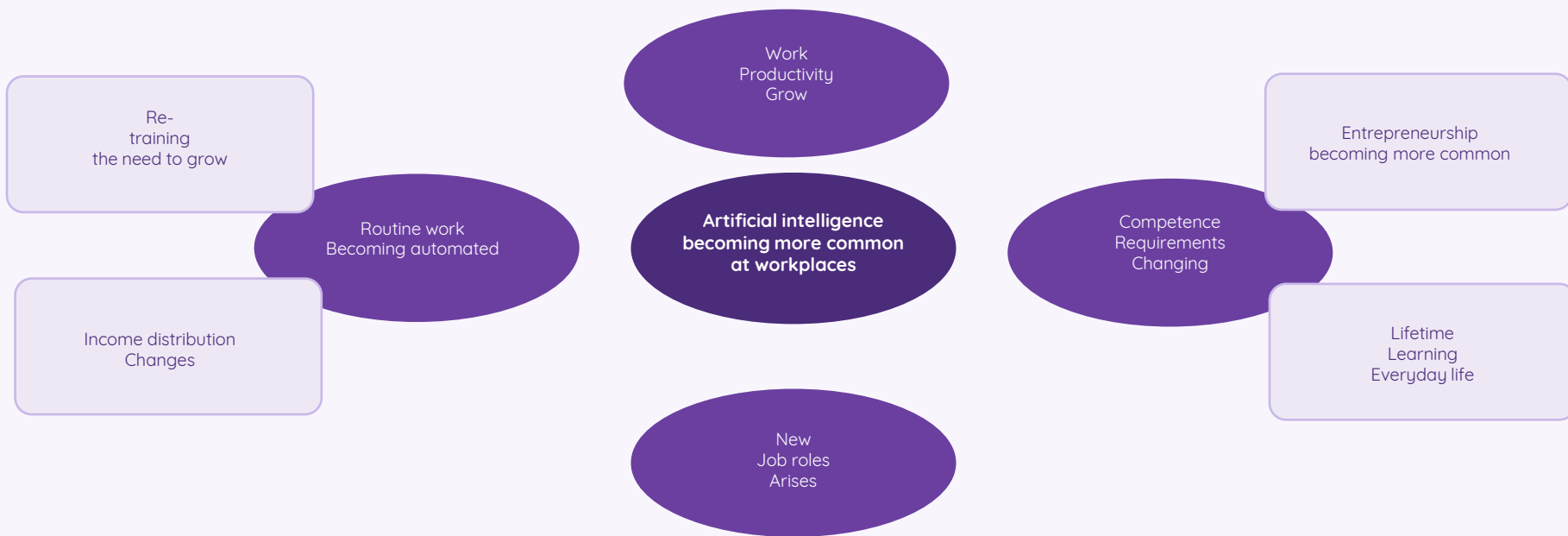
It invites 40 experts – teachers, researchers, employers – to respond to the survey anonymously.

In the first round, artificial intelligence, digital skills and multicultural competence will be highlighted. In the second round, experts notice that many have rated "guiding critical thinking" as more important than technology skills.

The end result will guide the curriculum reform and teacher education.

05 Foresight method: Wheel of the future

The Wheel of the Future is a visual thinking tool in which the multiplier effects of a single change or phenomenon are mapped out radially, layer by layer. The method reveals how a single change can set off a chain of surprising consequences – and force you to think more broadly than you are usually used to.



Try it yourself: choose a change in your field and draw your own wheel of the future – first the immediate effects, then the multiplier effects.

Backcasting is the opposite of forecasting: instead of starting from the present situation and looking ahead, you start from the desired future and plan a path back to the present. The method is particularly suitable for situations where current trends do not lead to the desired outcome and active changes are needed.



Practical example

Goal 2035: I am an expert in sustainable construction. → 2032: I graduate from a master's programme in the field. → 2029: I will complete a professional certificate in the field. → 2026: I'm applying for an internship at a green building company. → Now: I find out what studies I need and contact operators in the field.

The educational and career choices made at a young age are no longer final – everyone must be prepared to face changes and transitions throughout their lives. Foresight skills are a key tool in this continuous adaptation (Competence Needs Compass, 2024).

Sitra's (2025) megatrends will shape the future of work

Ecological reconstruction

Climate change, biodiversity loss and the scarcity of resources are fundamentally changing the economy and business. The green transition does not only mean an increase in renewable energy – it changes the entire logic of production and consumption. In some fields, completely new professions are emerging, while in other fields, competence needs are changing radically. It is important to identify which side your field is on.

Redistribution of well-being

Health, mental health and social equality are becoming increasingly important social issues. There is a growing demand for professionals in the care, health and social services sectors. At the same time, support for well-being will expand into new areas: technology, the education system and urban planning.

The pervasive power of technology

Artificial intelligence, automation and digitalisation are changing the job description of almost every industry. Routine tasks are becoming automated, but at the same time, new types of tasks are being created that require creativity, critical thinking and the ability to work together with machines. The key is not to be afraid of technology, but to learn to understand what it can and cannot do – and to develop the human skills it cannot replace.

Networked power

Power and influence are increasingly dispersed from traditional institutions to networks, communities and individuals. This means that networks in your own field, professional communities and even global networks of experts can be just as important as the employer organisation. Networking skills and the ability to build trust in different communities are emphasized.

The ability to anticipate develops through practice – everyone can learn it!

1

Monitor your surroundings

Read the news, follow professional publications, and pay attention to weak signals. What are we talking about at the edges?

2

Question assumptions

Challenge yourself: "Why do we believe that things will continue as they are?" Change often starts with questioning the assumption.

3

Build scenarios

Practice imagining 2–3 different futures: the best, the most challenging, and the most likely.

4

Update your insights

A good forecaster changes his or her mind in the light of new information. A flexible mind is at the core of the ability to anticipate (Schuler et al., 2025).

5

Act on information

Anticipation is only valuable if it leads to action: what you study, what network you join, what skills you develop.

TASK 8: Make a brief foresight analysis of one area of your life. What trends will affect it in the next 3 years? What steps could you take to prepare?

SUMMARY



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- 1 Foresight is about identifying factors affecting the future – not forecasting
- 2 Key concepts: trend, megatrend, weak signal, scenario, wild card
- 3 Purpose of foresight: better decision-making, knowledge of competence needs, strategic flexibility
- 4 Methods: scenario work, PESTEL, trend scanning, Delphi, the wheel of the future
- 5 Megatrends (Sitra, 2025): ecological reconstruction, technology, well-being, networked power

Assignment: Choose one megatrend – how will it affect your career and what will you do about it?

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