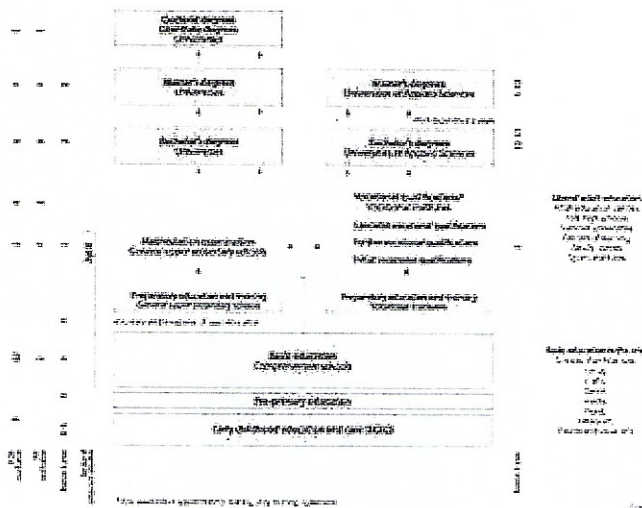


The Finnish education system

Education is one of the cornerstones of the Finnish welfare society. We pride ourselves on an educational system that offers equal opportunities for education for all. Education from pre-primary to higher education is free of charge in Finland. Finnish teachers are highly educated and strongly committed to their work.

EDUCATION SYSTEM IN FINLAND



The Finnish education system consists of:

- early childhood education and care which is provided for children before the compulsory education begins,
- pre-primary education which is provided for children in the year preceding the beginning of compulsory education,
- nine-year basic education (comprehensive school), which is compulsory,
- upper secondary education, which is either general upper secondary education or vocational education and training, and
- higher education provided by universities and universities of applied sciences.
- Furthermore, adult education is available at all levels.

[Bigger picture of the Finnish education system](#)File opens in a new tab PDF_163kB .

Early childhood education and care supports the development, learning and wellbeing of a child

Early childhood education and care (ECEC) combines education, teaching and care in a systematic and goal-oriented manner. The goal of ECEC is to promote children’s development, health and wellbeing as well as to improve children’s opportunities for learning.

Local authorities, i.e. municipalities, are responsible for providing ECEC for children under school age. A client fee is charged for early childhood education and care. The fee is

determined on the basis of the family's income and size and the time that the child spends in ECEC.

The National Curriculum Guidelines on Early Childhood Education and Care in Finland, approved by the Finnish National Agency for Education, guide the planning and implementation of the contents of ECEC and function as the basis for drawing up the local ECEC curricula.

Pre-primary education improves children's opportunities for learning

The goal of pre-primary education is to improve children's opportunities for learning and development. Pre-primary education plays an important part in the continuum stretching from early childhood education and care to basic education. Since 2015, participation in pre-primary education has been compulsory for all children in Finland. Pre-primary education is provided free of charge.

The person who has custody of a child must ensure that the child participates in pre-primary education or other corresponding activities meeting the objectives set for pre-primary education. The National Core Curriculum for Pre-Primary Education, approved by the Finnish National Agency for Education, guides the planning of the contents of pre-primary education and functions as the basis for drawing up the local curricula.

Compulsory education starts with comprehensive school and ends at the age of 18

Comprehensive school education (basic education) consists of school years 1 to 9 and is meant for all children aged between 7 and 17 (whole age group). Compulsory education generally starts in the year in which children turn seven. All children who reside permanently in Finland must attend compulsory education.

Comprehensive school education is free of charge. Comprehensive schools are maintained by the local authorities (municipalities) and other education providers. Less than two per cent of comprehensive school pupils go to a private or state school.

At the end of the comprehensive school, each young person must apply for post-comprehensive school education. Compulsory education ends when the person reaches the age of 18 or when they complete an upper secondary qualification (a general upper secondary qualification or a vocational qualification)

Choosing general or vocational upper secondary education after comprehensive school education

After comprehensive school, students continue to the upper secondary level and choose between general and vocational education.

General upper secondary education (lukio in Finnish) provides, as its name suggests, general education. It does not qualify students for any particular occupation. At the end of general upper secondary school, students take a national school-leaving examination known as the Finnish matriculation examination. Those who pass the examination are eligible to apply for further studies at universities, universities of applied sciences and vocational institutions. General upper secondary education usually takes three years to complete.

Vocational qualifications include upper secondary qualifications, further qualifications and specialist qualifications. Vocational upper secondary qualifications provide the basic skills required in the field. Further and specialist vocational qualifications enable people to develop their skills at different stages of their career. The scope of vocational upper secondary qualifications is usually 180 ECVET points, further qualifications 150 points and specialist qualifications 180 points.

At the beginning of vocational education and training, the student and the institution draw up a personal competence development plan for the student, outlining the content, schedule and methods of study. Vocational education and training can also be delivered in workplaces through an apprenticeship agreement or a training agreement. Prior learning acquired in various ways can be recognised as part of the studies. Both young people and adults can apply for vocational education and training.

Graduates are eligible to apply for further studies at universities or universities of applied sciences.

Finnish higher education system comprises universities and universities of applied sciences

The mission of universities is to conduct scientific research and provide education based on it. Universities of applied sciences (UAS) provide more practical education that aims to respond to the needs of the labour market.

Universities, offering higher scientific and artistic education, award Bachelor's and Master's degrees as well as postgraduate degrees, i.e. licentiate and doctoral degrees. Universities of applied sciences award UAS Bachelor's degrees and UAS Master's degrees.

The target completion time for a Bachelor's degree at a university is three years and for a Master's degree two years on top of that. The completion of a UAS degree takes usually between 3.5 and 4.5 years. The requirement for Master's studies at a university of applied sciences is a UAS Bachelors' degree or another suitable degree and at least two years of work experience after the completion of the previous degree.

Education and training in the spirit of lifelong learning

Adult education and training encompasses education leading to a qualification, degree studies, training preparing for competence-based qualifications, apprenticeship training, further and continuing education updating and extending the professional skills, studies in subjects relating to citizenship skills, working life skills and society, and studies in different crafts and subjects on a recreational basis.

Adult education and training can either be paid for by the student himself or herself or it can be apprenticeship training, labour policy education, or staff-development and other training provided or purchased by employers. Adult education and training is provided by educational institutions mainly providing education for young people, educational institutions providing only adult education, private companies, and workplaces (staff-development).

Liberal adult education offers non-formal studies. It promotes personal growth, health and well-being by offering courses relating to citizenship skills and society and in different crafts and subjects on a recreational basis. Liberal adult education institutions include adult education centres, folk high schools, learning centres, sports training centres and summer universities. An essential aspect of liberal adult education is that everyone has the right to apply to take part in it. The education does not provide a degree or qualification, and its content is not governed by legislation.

Basic education in the arts is goal-oriented education in different fields of art, progressing from one level to another. It teaches children and young people skills in self-expression and capabilities needed for vocational and higher education in their chosen art form.