

Finland

Demographics for Finland

Population:	5,223,442 (July 2005 est.)
GDP (by PPP method):	US\$151.2 billion
Currency (inc code):	Euro (EUR)
Language(s):	Finnish (official), Swedish (official), others (small Sami- and Russian-speaking minorities)
Internet country code:	.fi

Primary and secondary education

Basic education[1]

Compulsory education in Finland starts with comprehensive school, which generally starts in the year children turn seven. Comprehensive school is a nine-year system and it ends once a person has completed the curriculum of the comprehensive school or when ten years have passed since the start of their compulsory education.

Post-comprehensive school education[1]

Post-comprehensive school education is given by general upper secondary schools and vocational schools.

The upper secondary schools offer a three-year general education curriculum, at the end of which the pupil takes the national matriculation examination, which is the general eligibility criterion for higher education. Candidates may take it in three consecutive examinations, over a period of 18 months.

Individual schools can cultivate a more distinct image; some upper secondaries have a specialized curriculum, giving emphasis to the arts or some

other field. Upper secondary school has traditionally constituted the main channel to university education.

Finnish vocational education and training is institution-based to a very large extent. Taught courses form the core of the programs. In order to create closer cooperation between vocational education and training and the world of work, efforts are being made to increase the proportion of apprenticeship training to some 10 percent of all entrants.

Upper secondary vocational education covers some 75 qualifications. The study programs take three years to complete. They are designed for comprehensive school leavers and lead to basic vocational qualifications. All three-year study programmes provide eligibility for institutions of higher education.

Higher education[1]

The Finnish higher education system is made up of two parallel sectors: universities and polytechnics. The universities rely on the connection between research and teaching. Their basic purpose is to perform scientific research and to provide higher education connected with it. Students at universities may take a lower (Bachelor's) or higher (Master's) academic degree and also further academic qualifications, consisting of licentiate and doctoral degrees. Universities also arrange further education and open university teaching.

The polytechnics are usually regional higher education institutions, which provide instruction in subjects from several sectors, and which emphasize a connection with working life. The degrees they provide are higher education degrees with a professional emphasis. There are universities and polytechnics all over Finland, and the ultimate aim is to ensure that all prospective students have equal opportunities for study, regardless of where they live.

Altogether there are 29 permanent polytechnics. Most of these institutions are multi-sector establishments. The polytechnics provide instruction in the following sectors: technology and transport, business and administration, health and social services, culture, tourism, catering and institutional management, natural resources, the humanities and education. Degrees have a professional emphasis and take between three-and-a-half and four years to complete. In addition to theoretical studies, polytechnic degrees also require practical training in the workplace and a diploma project.

There are 20 universities in Finland, ten of which are multi-faculty institutions and ten specialist institutions. Of the specialist institutions three are universities of technology, three are schools of economics and business administration, and the remaining four are art academies. In addition, university-level education is provided at one military academy under the Ministry of Defense. All universities engage in both education and research and

have the right to award doctorates. The first university degree, which roughly corresponds to a Bachelor's, can generally be attained in three years of full-time study and the higher, Master's degree in five years, i.e. an additional two years after the Bachelor's degree.

Finland is implementing the Bologna structure 3+2 from the beginning of August 2005. New students will follow the new structure totally and existing students have a three-year period for transition to the new structure if they have not graduated before then.

There is also an optional pre-doctoral postgraduate degree of licentiate, which can be completed in two years of full-time study after the Master's degree. Full-time studies for a doctorate take approximately four years following the Master's degree.

Admission/application requirements[2]

The Finnish matriculation examination provides general eligibility for university education. The same eligibility is also provided by the International Baccalaureate (IB), European Baccalaureate (EB) and Reifeprüfung examinations. In addition, those with a Finnish polytechnic degree, post-secondary level vocational qualification or at least a three-year vocational qualification also have general eligibility for university education. Universities may also admit applicants who are otherwise considered by the university to have the necessary knowledge and skills to complete the studies. Most new students have completed the matriculation examination.

Accreditation structure and authority

Finnish HEI's are considered to be accredited by legislation. Quality assessment and evaluation is performed by the Evaluation Council (FINHEEC, www.kka.fi).

Degree titles:

- Bachelor of Science in Economics and Business Administration.
- Master of Science in Economics and Business Administration.
- Licentiate of Science in Economics and Business Administration.
- Doctor of Science in Economics and Business Administration.

General curriculum structures[2]

University degrees are regulated by the Government Decree on the System of University Degrees. The scope of degrees is stipulated in the decree pertaining to degrees and the university degree regulations. Universities and their faculties decide on degree regulations and curricula.

The Bachelor's degree consists of basic and subject studies in the main subject (or degree programme), including a Bachelor's thesis, and studies in one or more subsidiary subjects. For the Master's degree, students must complete advanced studies in the main subject and prepare a Master's thesis, in addition to the Bachelor's program.

All students must complete studies in their native language (Finnish or Swedish), in the other national language (Swedish or Finnish) and in one or two foreign languages. Degrees may also comprise either compulsory or optional practical training. In addition to the compulsory studies, students may include extra courses in their degree.

Universities also organize courses and modules in foreign languages (usually English).

Cycle times:

- Bachelor's: three years.
- Master's: two years.
- Licentiate's and Doctor's no limit, except doctorate programmes (usually four years).

General student numbers, demographics:

- Over 18,000 students in business and management education.
- Female/male: 45/55.
- Average time of studies: 5.5 years.
- Average age at graduation: 28.7 years.
- 49 percent settled themselves in Southern Finland after graduation (46 percent in Helsinki metropolitan area).

Authorizations (licensing, accreditations, associations):

- By legislation, additional (and volunteer) accreditations possibly acquired by EQUIS, AMBA.

Governance and financial structure

A university is governed by a rector with vice rectors, the rector also chairs the executive board. The board consists of three factions: professors; teachers and other staff; and students. Any of these factions cannot have more than one-third of the seats. In addition, there is the possibility to have an external member (a city mayor, business representative etc.).

Universities consist of faculties, which in turn consist of departments. All these bodies have boards of their own with similar structures to those of the executive board.

State funding is appropriated to universities as a whole and since business and management education is mostly a part of a university (faculty, department) it is difficult to quantify specific funding for the area:

- Number of institutions with undergraduate business degree programs: 12.
- Number of institutions with business Master's degree programs: 12.
- Number of institutions with business Doctorate degree programs: 9.

Most important issues facing business schools in the country

As business schools are part of universities – some of them quite a small part – the issues facing universities are also issues for business schools.

University funding is opening up gradually. In the near future universities will be able to commercialize their research activities more efficiently. Universities will be allowed to hold shares of companies and set up companies of their own more freely. State funding is lagging behind soaring student intakes and performance demands (Figure 1). As the student intake grows, the entry standards required to gain admission to university courses are dropping. This has a knock-on effect on the quality of students and programs.

There is much political discussion about the differences between the universities and the polytechnics but in reality, the two sectors are getting closer together, with a corresponding overlap in education and research. This has the effect of dispersing resources (funds and staff).



Figure 1.

Free education remains a constitutional right , but there has been some discussion about tuition, especially for non-EU/ETA students. That discussion has spread to concern all students.

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References

1. Ministry of Education (www.minedu.fi).
2. Eurydice database (www.eurydice.org/Eurybase/frameset_eurybase.html).