

Finland

STRUCTURE OF HIGHER EDUCATION SYSTEM

Description:

Finland has a binary system of higher education which comprises Universities and Polytechnics. The Finnish higher education system comprises 20 universities (yliopisto/universitet) and 29 polytechnics (ammattikorkeakoulu, AMK/yrkeshögskola, YH). Ten of the universities are multi-faculty universities and ten are specialized institutions. All universities engage in both education and research and have the right to award doctorates. The polytechnics are multi-field institutions of professional higher education. They are specialized in applied research and development. Universities award first cycle university degrees (Kandidaatti/Kandidat), second cycle university degrees (Maisteri/Magister) and third cycle scientific post-graduate degrees (Lisensiaatti/Licentiat and Tohtori/Doktor). Polytechnics award first cycle polytechnic degrees (ammattikorkeakoulututkinto - AMK/yrkehögskoleexamen - YH) and second cycle polytechnic degrees (ylempi ammattikorkeakoulututkinto - ylempi AMK/högre yrkeshögskoleexamen - högre YH).

Stages of studies:

University level first stage: Universities: kandidaatti/kandidat (first cycle)

First-cycle university degrees consist of at least 180 credits (3 years of full-time study). They are called kandidaatti/kandidat in all fields except in Law (oikeusnotaari/rättsnotarie) and Pharmacy (farmaseutti/farmaceut). Studies leading to the degree provide the student with: (1) knowledge of the fundamentals of the major and minor subjects or corresponding study entities or studies included in the degree programme and the prerequisites for following developments in the field; (2) knowledge and skills needed for scientific thinking and the use of scientific methods or knowledge and skills needed for artistic work; (3) knowledge and skills needed for studies leading to a higher university degree and for continuous learning; (4) a capacity for applying the acquired knowledge and skills to work; and (5) adequate language and communication skills. Studies may include: basic and intermediate studies; language and communication studies; interdisciplinary programmes; other studies and work practice for professional development. The degree includes a Bachelor's thesis (6-10 credits).

University level second stage: Universities: maisteri/magister (second cycle)

The second-cycle university degree consists of at least 120 credits (two years of full-time study). The degree is usually called maisteri/magister. Other second-cycle degrees are diplomi-insinööri/diplomingenjör (Technology); arkkitehti/arkitekt (Architecture); and proviisori/provisor (Pharmacy). The admission requirement to second cycle university courses is a first cycle degree. The second cycle university degree title in the fields of Medicine, Dentistry and Veterinary Medicine is lisensiaatti/licentiate. In the field of Medicine and Dentistry, the university may arrange the education leading to the second cycle university degree without including a lower university degree. In Medicine, the degrees consists of 360 credits (6 years of full-time study) and in Dentistry the degree consists of 300 credits (5 years of full-time study). Studies leading to the second cycle university degree provide the student with: (1) good overall knowledge of the major subject or a corresponding entity and conversance with the fundamentals of the minor subject or good knowledge of the advanced studies included in the degree programme; (2) knowledge and skills needed to apply scientific knowledge and methods or knowledge and skills needed for independent and demanding artistic work; (3) knowledge and skills needed for operating independently as an expert and developer of the field; (4) knowledge and skills needed for scientific or artistic postgraduate education; and (5) good language and communication skills. Studies leading to the second cycle university degree may include: basic, intermediate and advanced studies, language and communication studies; interdisciplinary study programme; other studies; and internship improving expertise. The degree includes a Master's thesis (20-40 credits). The reformed university degree structure was adopted August 1, 2005. The reform created a two-tier degree structure with an obligatory first cycle degree in all fields except for Medicine, Dentistry and Veterinary Medicine. Before, students were able to pursue one-cycle Masters in five years. The degrees from the former structure are fully comparable to the new degrees and they give the same academic and professional rights.

University level third stage: Universities: lisensiaatti/licentiat; tohtori/doktor (third cycle)

Students can apply for doctoral programmes after the completion of a relevant second-cycle degree. The aim of doctoral studies is to provide the student with in-depth knowledge of his/her field of research and capabilities to

produce new scientific knowledge independently. A pre-doctoral degree (lisensiaati/licenciat) in two years may be taken before the Doctor's Degree programme. Studies for the Doctor's degree take approximately four years of full-time study beyond a second-cycle degree or two years of full-time study beyond a pre-doctoral degree. Students admitted to doctoral studies must complete a certain number of courses, show independent and critical thinking in their field of research and write a doctoral dissertation to be defended in public.

Distance higher education:

Open university and open polytechnic education is organized according to university syllabi by Universities and Polytechnic Centres for Continuing Education. There are no formal education pre-requisites for entering. Although open universities and open polytechnics do not award degrees, students may have their studies recognized as part of degree studies upon admission at a higher education institution..

ADMISSION TO HIGHER EDUCATION

Admission to non university higher education studies:

Name of secondary school credential required: Ammatillinen perustutkintotodistus/ Betyg över yrkesinriktad grundexamen

For entry to: Polytechnics/Universities of Applied Sciences

Name of secondary school credential required: Ylioppilastutkintotodistus/Studentexamensbetyg

For entry to: Polytechnics/Universities of Applied Sciences

Alternatives to credentials: Certificate for the International Baccalaureate; European Baccalaureate, Reifeprüfung; Vocational (3 years) Qualification Certificate (Ammatillinen perustutkintotodistus/Betyg över yrkesinriktad grundexamen); Foreign equivalents.

Admission requirements: Various types of entrance examinations.

Numerus clausus: Restricted entry in all fields of study.

Admission to university-level studies:

Name of secondary school credential required: Ammatillinen perustutkintotodistus/ Betyg över yrkesinriktad grundexamen

For entry to: Universities

Name of secondary school credential required: Ylioppilastutkintotodistus/Studentexamensbetyg

For entry to: Universities

Alternatives to credentials: Lukion päättödistus/Avgångsbetyg från gymnasiet; Certificate for the International Baccalaureate; European Baccalaureate, Reifeprüfung; Vocational (3 years) Qualification Certificate (Ammatillinen perustutkintotodistus/Betyg över yrkesinriktad grundexamen). Foreign equivalents.

Admission requirements: Various types of entrance examinations.

Numerus clausus: Restricted entry in all fields of study.

Foreign students admission:

Definition of foreign student: The term foreign student usually applies to students, regardless of nationality or native language, who have completed their secondary education in any country other than Finland.

Admission requirements: Students must have completed secondary education. Enrolment or eligibility to enrol in a higher education institution of corresponding level in the country of origin. Higher education institutions select their students independently. Entrance examinations are applied and there is a numerus clausus in all fields of study.

Entry regulations: Depending on the nationality and the length of stay in Finland, a visa or a residence permit may be required.

Language requirements: In most cases, students must have good working knowledge of Finnish or Swedish. In international degree programmes, the teaching language can be English or some other foreign language in which case the applicants must show proof of their good knowledge of the foreign language.

RECOGNITION OF STUDIES

Quality assurance system:

The Finnish degrees of higher education are listed in the Decree on the structure of higher education degrees. The field-specific national decrees on university degrees define the objectives, length and overall structure of university degrees. The national decree on polytechnics defines the objectives, length and overall structure of polytechnic degrees. The Ministry of Education confirms the degree programmes of the polytechnics.

Universities and polytechnics are obliged by legislation to evaluate their activities systematically. The Finnish Higher Education Evaluation Council is an independent expert body assisting universities, polytechnics and the Ministry of Education in matters relating to evaluation. The Finnish Higher Education Evaluation Council (FINHEEC) has been conducting audits of the quality assurance (QA) systems of higher education institutes (HEIs) since autumn 2005, with the aim of auditing all Finnish HEIs by the end of 2011. Auditing assesses the comprehensiveness, performance and effectiveness of the QA system and focuses on two levels: the HEI's QA system as a whole and the quality assurance related to the HEI's basic mission (education, research/R&D, interaction with and impact on society and regional development).

In 2003, the five Nordic ENIC/NARIC offices (Denmark, Finland, Iceland, Norway and Sweden) established a regional network named Nordic National Recognition Information Centres (NORRIC) to initiate joint Nordic projects to learn from each other and reduce barriers to the recognition of foreign qualifications in the Nordic region (www.norric.org).

The academic recognition of qualifications is the responsibility of the higher education institution to which the holder of a foreign qualification is applying for admission. The institutions decide independently on matters related to student selection and the recognition of previous studies.

Bodies dealing with recognition:

Opetushallitus (Finnish National Board of Education)

PO Box 380

Helsinki 00531

Tel: +358 40 348 7555

Fax: +358 40 348 7865

E-Mail: opetushallitus@oph.fi

WWW: <http://www.oph.fi/>

Special provisions for recognition:

For exercising a profession: The National Board of Education decides on the competence for civil service posts conferred by qualifications taken abroad. -Decisions on the right to practise a profession are made by the competent authority in the respective field. The right to practice a profession in Finland is required from, e.g. health-care professionals and seafarers.

The recognition of professional competence of citizens of EU/EEA countries, who have gained their professional competence in another EU/EEA country, is regulated by law (1093/2007). Recognition decisions concerning other foreign qualifications are made in accordance with law (531/1986) on the professional competence foreign qualifications confer.

Further information from the National Board of Education, www.oph.fi/recognition.

Recognition for non-university level studies: Polytechnics make the decisions concerning admissions and credit transfer independently. The Finnish National Board of Education (ENIC/NARIC) supports the work of polytechnics.

Recognition for university level studies: Universities make the decisions concerning admissions and credit transfer independently. The Finnish National Board of Education (ENIC/NARIC) supports the work of universities.

For access to advanced studies and research: Recognition decisions concerning studies and research for access into Finnish higher education are passed in the higher education institutions. The Finnish National Board of Education supports the work of the higher education institutions.

Further information from the National Board of Education, www.oph.fi/recognition - or directly from the higher education institution in question.

NATIONAL BODIES

Opetusministeriö (Ministry of Education)

Minister: Henna Virkkunen

Permanent Secretary: Harri Skog

Director: Jaana Palojärvi

PO Box 29

Helsinki 00023

Tel: + 358(9) 16004

Fax: + 358(9) 135 9335

EMail: opmkirjaamo@minedu.fi

WWW: <http://www.minedu.fi>

Role of national body: Responsible for the development of educational, science, cultural, sport and youth policies as well as international cooperation in these fields.

Opetushallitus (Finnish National Board of Education)

Director General: Timo Lankinen

PO Box 380

Helsinki 00531

Tel: + 358 40 348 7555

Fax: + 358 40 348 7865

EMail: opetushallitus@oph.fi

WWW: <http://www.oph.fi/>

Role of national body: Development, evaluation and information services related to education; Finnish ENIC-NARIC; competent authority for the professional recognition of foreign higher education qualifications.

Korkeakoulujen arviointineuvosto (Finnish Higher Education Evaluation Council - FINHEEC)

Chairwoman: Riitta Pyykkö

Secretary-General: Helka Kekäläinen

P.O. Box 133

Helsinki 00171

Tel: + 358(9) 1607 6913

Fax: + 358(9) 1607 7608

EMail: finheec@minedu.fi

WWW: <http://www.finheec.fi>

Role of national body: Independent expert body assisting universities, polytechnics and the Ministry of Education in matters relating to evaluation.

Kansainvälisen henkilövaihdon keskus CIMO (Centre for International Mobility - CIMO)

Director: Ulla Ekberg

Assistant Director, Higher Education: Juha Ketolainen

PO Box 343

Helsinki 00531

Tel: + 358(0) 207 868 500

WWW: <http://www.cimo.fi>

Role of national body: Services and expertise in cross-cultural communication; promotion and administration of scholarship and exchange programmes; implementation of EU education, training, culture and youth programmes at national level.

Suomen yliopistojen rehtorien neuvosto (Finnish Council of University Rectors)

Chairwoman: Krista Varantola

Secretary General: Liisa Savunen

PO Box 3

University of Helsinki

Helsinki 00014

Tel: + 358(9) 1912 2335

Fax: + 358(9) 1912 2194

EMail: rectors-council@helsinki.fi

WWW: <http://www.rectors-council.helsinki.fi/>

Role of national body: Development of the university sector of higher education; a common forum for universities.

Ammattikorkeakoulujen Rehtorineuvosto - ARENE (Rectors' Conference of Finnish Universities of Applied Sciences)

President: Ritva Laakso-Manninen

Secretary General: Timo Luopajarvi

Rikhardinkatu 4 B 22

Helsinki 00130

Tel: + 358(9) 612 9920

Fax: + 358(9) 6129 9230

WWW: <http://www.arene.fi>

Role of national body: ARENE ry. is the Rectors' Conference of Finnish Universities of Applied Sciences.

It's main functions are influencing on the development of the Finnish higher education system and promoting closer cooperation between the universities of applied sciences.

Research and Innovation Council

Secretary-General: Esko-Olavi Seppälä

P.O. Box 29

Helsinki 00023

Fax: + 358(9) 1607 7136

Role of national body: The Council is responsible for the strategic development and coordination of Finnish science and technology policy as well as of the national innovation system as a whole.

European Association for Quality Assurance in Higher Education - ENQA

President: Bruno Curvale

Secretary-General: Emmi Helle

Unioninkatu 20-22 / Havis

Business Center

Helsinki 00130

Tel: + 358(9) 2522 5700

Fax: + 358(9) 2522 5710

WWW: <http://www.enqa.eu/>

Role of national body: ENQA was established in 2000 to promote European co-operation in the field of quality assurance.

Data for academic year: 2008-2009

Source: IAU from Opetushallitus, National Board of Education, 2008