



# FINLAND

**Brief Background:** Finland is consistently rated highly as a study destination by international students who value the many perks that Finnish institutions offer including quality education, academic freedom, and student-centered support services. Finland attracted nearly 31,000 international students in 2015-16, with the majority enrolled in degree programs, according to the Finnish National Agency for Education.

A national education policy focused on quality, efficiency, equity, and internationalization; excellent basic education; and competitive student admission underpin the high standards of Finnish higher education. The country boasts a world-class knowledge community, and is frequently rated as one of the most innovative countries with first-class higher education and training programs, according to the World Economic Forum's *Global Competitiveness Report*.

Students who complete their bachelor's at a university are automatically admitted for a master's degree program upon completion of the undergraduate degree, without needing to apply again. With a UAS bachelor's degree, students must apply for admission to a master's degree and are not automatically granted a place in the program.

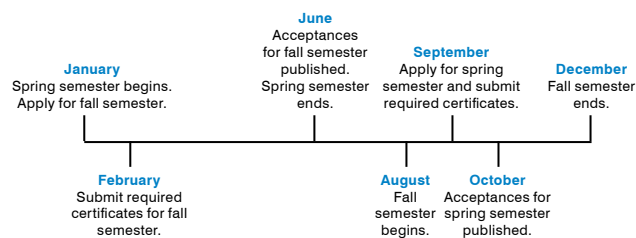
Finland has 24 universities of applied sciences (UAS), formerly known as polytechnics, and 14 universities. At UAS institutions, research and development form the basis for teaching, and the curriculum addresses the needs and expectations of both industry and commerce. A UAS bachelor's degree typically takes between 3.5 and 4.5 years, and consists of core and professional studies, optional studies (similar to electives in the US), practical training, and a thesis. At universities, a bachelor's degree consists of basic and intermediate courses, language studies, and a thesis. It is typically completed in three years.

**Good to Know:** English is considered Finland's third, unofficial language, and most Finns speak it fluently. Finnish higher education institutions provide over 400 full-degree programs taught in English. Most of the bachelor-level degree programs taught in English are offered at universities of applied sciences.

If students are fluent in Finnish or Swedish, they can pursue a degree in one of these national languages tuition-free. Advice on how to apply to these programs can be found on the [Finnish National Agency for Education's Study in Finland website](#).

The Finnish attitude toward education follows an approach that benefits the individual: Students are challenged and encouraged to think for themselves. Courses offered at Finnish universities are research-based and align with the institution's specialization. These high-quality study programs combine in-depth research with the needs of a student's future working life.

**Academic Calendar:** Finnish universities and universities of applied sciences usually follow a two-semester calendar. The first semester typically begins at the end of August, and the second semester in January. Summer break occurs between June and August, when some institutions offer courses, with a two-week winter break taking place in December and January.



**Search:** The [Studyinfo website](#) is the official source for information on Finland's degree programs.

The Study in Finland website also links to the admission webpages for the [14 universities](#), as well as all [24 UAS](#).

**Apply:** Applying to Finnish higher education programs takes place either through a joint application or a separate application. Applications for bachelor's degree programs are primarily completed through a joint application. Students should always check with the program to which they are applying to ensure they are applying in the correct way.

With a joint application, students use one application to apply to up to six study programs, placing the programs in order of preference on the application form. The six options may include degree programs from one or several different institutions.

Some programs may require students to apply through a separate application, though this is not common at the bachelor's degree level, and there is no limit on the number of programs a student can apply to. Separate applications are typically submitted either through Studyinfo or an institution's own website.

#### Steps to Applying through a Joint Application:

1. Find program options using [Studyinfo](#).
2. Add programs to a [shortlist](#) and compare study options.
3. Select up to six study programs.
4. Fill in the application form.
5. Submit the application along with a copy of the high school diploma or official statement of upcoming graduation.
6. Participate in the entrance examination, if required.

The universities will instruct students about the type of document needed to verify their upcoming graduation. For example, institutions often accept an official academic transcript as an official statement of upcoming graduation.

**Deadlines:** For fall admission, there are two application periods. The first period typically runs for two weeks beginning in early January, and the second runs for two weeks beginning in the middle of March. Dates are adjusted annually. If seeking admission to UAS bachelor's degree programs, most students apply during the first period in January.

If applying during the first period, a copy of the high school diploma or official statement of upcoming graduation must be submitted to the higher education institutions by early February. Student selection results are published in late June, and students have approximately two weeks to accept an offer of admission.

For spring admission, there is only one application period that typically runs from early- to mid-September. Required certificates must be submitted by the end of September. Shortly following that date, student selection results will be published, and students have until early December to accept. Again, all deadlines are updated annually.

If all places are not filled during the primary application rounds, a supplementary application round is held. For fall admission, this takes place between July and August, and for spring it happens between November and December.

**Application Fees:** Universities and universities of applied sciences do not require application fees.

**Admission Requirements:** Student selection is usually based either on grades, an entrance exam, or a combination of the two. Students can learn about entry requirements and eligibility criteria by reading program descriptions on the [Studyinfo website](#). Students can also find this information on the institutions' admission websites.

In most cases, students are eligible to apply for bachelor's degree programs in Finland if they have a high school completion certificate (e.g., a US high school diploma), which would allow them to apply to a college or university within that country. Programs also recognize the International Baccalaureate (IB) diploma.

Generally, applicants must have already completed high school for a copy of their diploma to reach the relevant university by the application deadline. For universities of applied sciences, the qualification will be sent to the admission office of the UAS marked as the first choice on the application form. That institution will determine the applicant's eligibility for all UAS programs selected. Note that universities and universities of applied sciences provisionally admit students who apply and have not yet graduated. Once available and prior to enrollment, these students are asked to submit a copy of their diploma.

**Entrance Examinations:** The entrance examination process is primarily a domestic system and used as part of student admission when applying to bachelor's degree programs, though some universities and UAS institutions are moving away from this process. International students should check with the individual programs to see if entrance examinations are being used. In some cases, institutions may require SAT subject tests in lieu of an entrance examination.

Many universities of applied sciences cooperate in the design and administration of entrance examinations, meaning that a student will take one examination and the results will be shared with multiple institutions. Exam types vary by field of study. In some cases, a student is invited to take the entrance examination of his or her highest ranked institution, with the results transferred to cooperating degree programs. If institutions require separate entrance examinations, a student must sit for all the necessary exams to be considered for admission.

Some entrance exams are offered only in Finland, while others may be offered abroad through the [Finnish Network for International Programmes \(FINNIPS\)](#). Students will be able to access a list of countries where entrance examinations will be held at the time of applying. Some entrance examinations include multiple phases, with only some applicants continuing after each phase of the process.

**Upon Acceptance:** After the application and any required entrance exams have been completed, the university will process the student's application and make a final admission decision. Results are usually announced by the end of June.

If accepted, students will receive an official letter of admission from the university or UAS. They must follow the steps provided by the institution to confirm their placement.

As soon as a student has received the official letter of admission, they should start making arrangements to study and live in Finland.

Photo courtesy  
of Oksana



Finland

**“Finland’s student culture is unlike any I’ve seen. Growing up in the US I always had a picture in my head of what university would be like. In Finland the opportunities to be out and about with not only your classmates, but with students from all over the country are endless. There are always different events going on and clubs and associations for every interest under the sun.”**

—Oksana Mitchell, Maryland, Aalto University,  
School of Business, Mikkeli Campus

**Tuition and Fees:** Non-European Union (EU)/European Economic Area (EEA) students applying to an English-taught bachelor's degree program are required to pay tuition. Fees range from 4,000 to 11,000 euros, depending on the program. Students should confirm details about tuition or scholarships with the university to which they are applying. Tuition exemptions do exist. For example, fees may be waived if a student is an EU/EEA citizen, a citizen of Switzerland, or is related to an EU/EEA citizen. Visit the [Studyinfo website](#) for more information.

Each university and UAS has its own student union. At universities, students are required to pay an annual student union fee, which is approximately 80 to 100 euros. Student union membership is optional at universities of applied sciences. Students who join a local student union receive a card they can use to access several benefits. Student unions often organize services like student housing or tutoring, and routinely plan sports events or cultural excursions.

Finnish higher education institutions offer scholarship options for gifted non-EU/EEA students who are admitted to fee-charging degree programs. Often based on academic performance, these scholarships may include full or partial fee waivers or performance-based refunds. Typically, students apply for scholarships at the same time they apply for admission.

**Housing:** Students are encouraged to inquire about housing options directly from the institution where they will be studying. Housing organizations work closely with the institutions to provide on-campus housing, which is offered widely, but many students live in local flats. These apartments, which have been designed for students, are located near campus and are generally easily accessible via public transportation.

The Finnish Association of Student Housing Organisations (SOA) maintains a list of SOA members that provide student apartments.

Choosing student housing through the local student housing foundation is often the most cost-effective option. The average monthly rent for a single room in a shared student flat ranges from approximately 160 to 400 euros per month, and typically includes internet, electricity, and water. Single apartments or family flats are also available, but the rent is higher. Monthly living expenses are around 600 euros, depending on where a student is studying. Costs are typically higher in the Helsinki metropolitan area and other large cities.

There may be long waiting lists for student flats, especially in the autumn term when many new students start their studies. Students should apply for housing well in advance of their arrival to Finland.

**Visas and Other Permits:** US citizens do not need to obtain a visa for visits or studies lasting less than 90 days, but their passport must be valid for a minimum of three months after the trip. Therefore, a US citizen would not need a visa to travel to Finland to take an entrance examination.

When staying in Finland for a longer period of time, for example to pursue a degree program, non-EU/EEA citizens need a student residence permit. A student residence permit is a long-term temporary permit issued by the Finnish Immigration Service that is typically granted for two years at a time. In order to apply for the residence permit, students will need a valid passport and an official admission letter.

Additionally, students have to show that they have enough funding to cover the cost of their studies and living expenses. Valid health insurance is also required. Detailed information on the health insurance requirement and residence permits for non-EU/EEA nationals can be found on the Finnish Immigration Service website.



**“Keep in mind that if at first you feel isolated or homesick, Finns really are extremely considerate people. Don’t be discouraged by the lack of small talk, or the occasional silence. Finns are good at knowing when it’s necessary to speak and when not to, which is something I took some time getting used to.”**

—Oksana Mitchell, Maryland, Aalto University,  
School of Business, Mikkeli Campus

Part-time employment during the academic year is allowed on a student residence permit if the work is practical training required by the degree, or does not exceed 25 hours a week. Outside the academic terms, such as during summer and winter break, students may work unlimited hours. However, students who don't speak Finnish or Swedish may have difficulty finding a job.

Non-EU/EEA students who lived in Finland on a student residence permit can apply for an extended residence permit for up to a year after graduation to search for work. Students must apply for this extended residence permit before their valid student residence permit expires. If a graduate finds a job, they can then apply for a new residence permit based on their employment.

**Advice from the Field:** Use the Steps to Finland checklist.

Universities and universities of applied sciences are currently considering changes to the admission process for many bachelor's degree programs. Check the StudyInfo website for updates.