



Structures of Education,
Initial Training
and Adult Education
Systems in Europe

FINLAND

1999

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If you wish to have more detailed information on education systems in Europe, we warmly recommend that you consult the EURYBASE database (<http://www.eurydice.org>) and the CEDEFOP monographs (<http://www.cedefop.gr>)

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INTRODUCTION

Europe is characterized by a very wide variety of education and training systems. In order that this diversity should be fully appreciated, EURYDICE, the information network on education in Europe and the European Centre for the Development of Vocational Training (CEDEFOP) jointly published *Education and Initial Training Systems in the European Union* for the first time in 1990. This book was updated in 1995 and then again in 1999/2000. Given the number of countries it now covers¹ and the amount of data available, this most recent update has been placed for consultation on the EURYDICE Network website (<http://www.eurydice.org>), instead of being distributed in printed paper form. In this way, it may be accessed by a maximum number of readers and updated on a more regular basis.

Descriptions relating to individual countries in turn include basic information on the administration and structure of their systems of education and initial vocational training at all levels, as well as brief accounts of their higher education and systems for initial and in-service teacher training, and of the status of teachers. EURYDICE and CEDEFOP have also used this latest update to add a chapter on adult education, which is an important topic in relation to the development of lifelong learning in Europe.

As in the previous edition, the information is structured with respect to a common table of contents to facilitate inter-country comparisons while ensuring that special features peculiar to each system are duly emphasized.

The first chapter within each country section is devoted to a short presentation of the country concerned, together with the basic principles governing its education and training, the division of responsibilities and then more specific information (relating to administration, inspection, financing, private schooling and advisory bodies). The major reforms of education systems are also considered.

The other chapters deal in turn with pre-primary education, compulsory and post-compulsory education (general, technical and vocational), the initial vocational training of young people and higher education. Here also, the way these chapters are structured depends on each national context. Where pre-primary education is not in reality separate from primary education, or where compulsory education spans different levels, no artificial division has been created. In the case of all countries, a brief description of the aims and structure of the level of education concerned is followed by further headings devoted to the curriculum, assessment, teachers and statistics.

Initial vocational training is the subject of a chapter in its own right, as it is generally provided outside the ordinary education system, whether as part of schemes for apprenticeship, the special training of young people or vocational integration. This is followed by a chapter on higher education, in which a summary description is supplemented by sections on admission, fees, the academic year, courses, qualifications and assessment.

As indicated above, this latest updating also provides for the first time a general description of the way formal systems of general education and vocational training for adults are organized. The legislative framework and financing of this kind of education are also covered.

The situation regarding teachers is dealt with in a specific section for each level of education discussed. Also provided are statistics on the number of pupils, students, teachers and educational institutions and, where figures are available, on pupil or student/teacher ratios, attendance and attainment rates or, yet again, on the choice of branches of study or areas of specialization.

The description for each country is preceded by a diagram of its education system with

¹ **The European countries taking part in the Community Programme in Education, Socrates.**

explanatory notes. Here again, the way the diagrams are presented has, as far as possible, been standardized so that common – and differing – features of the various systems can be more easily identified and compared.

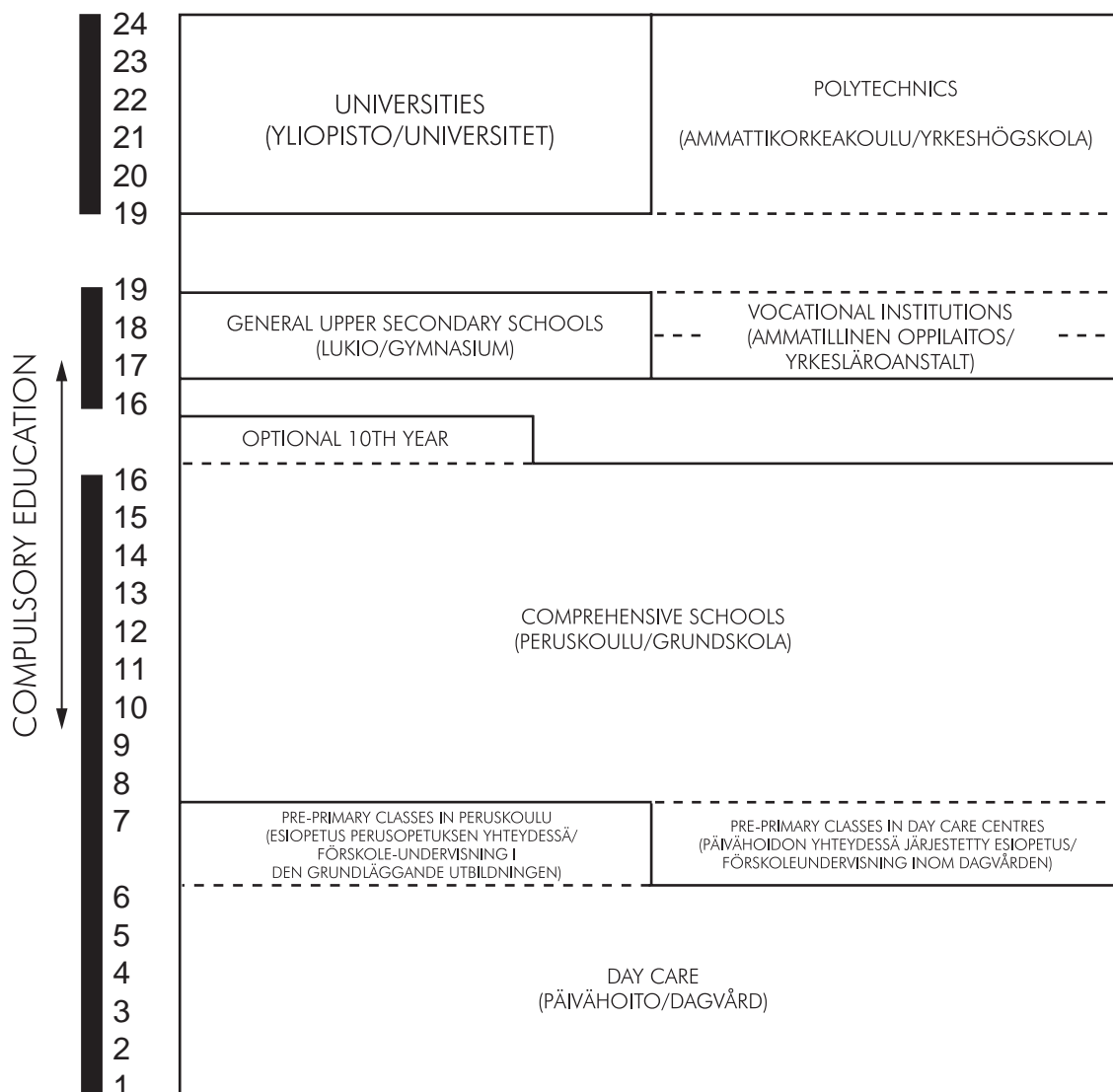
The National Units in the EURYDICE Network have drafted the descriptions for their countries, each using the same proposed outline of content as a common framework. The information on initial vocational training and on adult education has been prepared in close collaboration with members of the documentary information network of CEDEFOP (in the case of the European Union and EFTA/EEA countries) and the National Observatories of the European Training Foundation – ETF (as regards the ten countries of central and eastern Europe). We are extremely grateful to them and to all those who were involved in this project, both in the EURYDICE European Unit in Brussels and at CEDEFOP in Thessaloniki, for their invaluable contribution to this fundamental source of information which is vital to a better understanding of education and training systems in Europe.

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FINLAND



1. RESPONSIBILITIES AND ADMINISTRATION

1.1 Background

Finland has a land area of 338,000 square kilometres. Its population is about 5.2 million, 81% of whom live in centres with more than 200 people. The population of the capital, Helsinki, is about 550,000. There are two official languages in Finland, Finnish and Swedish, with 94% of the population speaking Finnish as their mother tongue and 6% Swedish. Finnish citizens are entitled to receive public services, including education, in their mother tongue. Sámi speakers, about 0.03% of the population, are entitled to receive education in their mother tongue. The state religions are Lutheran (87.7%) and Greek Orthodox (1.1%). About 10% of the population do not belong to any religious denomination.

Finland is a parliamentary republic. The 200 members of the unicameral Parliament are elected by General Election for a four-year term. Parliament enacts all legislation, and the Government must enjoy the confidence of Parliament. The President of the Republic is elected by direct popular vote for a six-year term. Local government is exercised by 6 provinces and 452 municipalities.

The employment sectors are distributed as follows: services 66%, secondary production 28%, primary production 6%. In 1998, by activity of the population aged 15-74 58% were employed, 14% pensioners, 7% unemployed, 9% students, 6% disabled and 3% homemakers.

1.2 Basis of the education system: principles – legislation

The legislative framework for the general principles of education policy are enacted by Parliament. The Ministry of Education prepares education legislation and makes the necessary decisions for submission to the Government. The National Board of Education is an expert agency responsible for the development of education aims, content and methods in comprehensive

school, upper secondary school, vocational training and adult education.

The Constitution Act of Finland (1919) stipulates that general compulsory education which is provided free of charge must be enacted by law. It also charges the Government with maintaining or subsidizing vocational education, general education, higher education in applied arts and sciences and university education. The Constitution Act further stipulates that the right to found private schools and reformatories shall be enacted by law and that home tuition shall not be supervised by the authorities. The new Constitution will come into force on 1 March 2000 with similar educational guarantees."

Every fifth year the Government approves the guidelines for education and research policy in Finland. The current Development Plan for Education and University Research approved by the Government in December 1999, covers the period 1999-2004.

In the post-war period, the main aim of Finland's education policy has been to raise the level of education and to offer equal education opportunities to all citizens regardless of their place of residence, wealth, mother tongue or sex. This aim has largely been attained. The network of schools and institutions covers the entire country, and there are enough pupil places to satisfy demand.

The focus of education policy has shifted from creating the infrastructure to improving quality. The present stage involves improving the efficiency of the education system, enhancing its capacity for meeting demand, increasing the number of choices available to pupils and transferring to schools the power to make decisions about the curriculum and its implementation. Educational institutions are encouraged to cooperate with each other and with the surrounding community. The aim is to produce a simple and clear, internationally compatible education structure and a study environment sensitive to the pupil's individual wishes and to the needs of society.

1.3 Distribution of responsibilities

The Ministry of Education is the highest education authority in Finland. Nearly all publicly subsidised

education is subordinate to or supervised by the Ministry.

The most important sectors of education falling outside the purview of the Ministry of Education are: children's day care (Ministry of Social Affairs and Health); military training (Ministry of Defence); and police, border guard and fire training (Ministry of the Interior).

Central level

The Government, the Ministry of Education and the National Board of Education are responsible for implementing the education policy at the central administration level.

The purview of the Ministry of Education includes education and research: comprehensive school, upper secondary school, vocational schools, polytechnics, and universities. The Ministry is also responsible for culture, church, youth and sports affairs. The Ministry of Education is divided into a Department for Education and Science Policy and a Department for Cultural Policy, and the Ministry has two ministers: the Minister of Education and the Minister of Culture.

The National Board of Education draws up and approves the national guidelines for curriculum design and is responsible for evaluating the Finnish education system. It also assists the Ministry of Education in preparing education policy decisions.

There are no other central administrative units in the education sector in Finland. National guidance of the education system is at the discretion of Government and the Ministry of Education regarding the founding of secondary and higher education institutions and the scaling (setting quotas for different sectors and regions) of vocational education. Educational institutions are guided operatively through the aims enacted by legislation and through the national guidelines for curriculum design. Feedback on the work of the education system is collected through statistics and targeted evaluations. This information in itself has a steering effect on teaching.

Regional/local/institutional levels

For the purposes of regional administration, Finland is divided into six provinces. Each province has a general administrative body called the Provincial State Office under which the Education and Culture Department is in charge of matters concerning educational and cultural aspects. In the past few years, the duties of the provincial governments have decreased; they now

manage only the national student selection system within the province and allocate certain extraordinary public subsidies.

Local administration is managed by the municipalities, which are self-governing and have the right to levy taxes. There are 452 municipalities in Finland. Decision-making power in a municipality rests with the elected Municipal Council. The Council appoints the municipal executive board and several advisory boards.

Each municipality has at least one Board for educational purposes. Most upper secondary schools and comprehensive schools are maintained by the municipalities. The municipal school authority can also be responsible for adult training centres and vocational institutions. State owned and privately owned schools do not come within the sphere of the municipal authority, but are directly subordinate to the central administration.

About 88% of all vocational institutions are maintained by municipalities (usually by two or more municipalities jointly); 1% are state owned and 11% are private.

In Finland, a municipality is obliged to organise comprehensive school education for all children living within its borders or to ensure that children of school age can receive comparable teaching in some other manner. Schools can be maintained by municipalities, intermunicipal authorities (cooperation between municipalities for certain schools), or private organisations or foundations, subject to government approval.

Each school can and usually does have a managing board where teachers, non-teaching staff, pupils/students and parents are represented. The main tasks of the managing board are developing the work of the school and promoting cooperation inside the school and between the school, parents and the local community. In some schools there is also a pupils'/students' union which, among other things, elects the pupil/student representatives to the managing board. Each municipal authority decides on the distribution of responsibilities between the municipal administration and the managing board of a particular school. Moreover, municipalities can cooperate in school administration and two or more schools can have a managing board in common.

Vocational schools usually have similar managing boards (parents are not represented), but they tend to be more independent and powerful. State and privately run vocational schools always have one. In addition to managing boards, as a rule vocational institutions have one or more advisory boards to promote training and cooperation between school and working life. These boards consist of representatives from the school, its

teachers, the main social partners in the relevant fields and other experts.

Curricula for comprehensive school, upper secondary school and vocational institutions are drawn up locally. Every school must have a curriculum decided upon by those maintaining the school or an organ appointed by them, usually the municipality or the School Board. Curricula are based on the national guidelines for curriculum design issued by the National Board of Education. Teaching materials are not inspected or defined in advance in Finland. The decision for choosing teaching material usually rests with individual teachers.

The teachers and institutions themselves are responsible for assessing student performance and for issuing reports. Only the matriculation examination, which concludes upper secondary school, is organized and marked by the Matriculation Examination Board appointed by the Ministry of Education.

All universities are maintained by the State. They enjoy a high degree of autonomy in organising teaching, research and other internal matters. At university level it falls within their autonomy to found advisory bodies. There are generally decision-making bodies at three levels: central administration, faculty (by science) and institute (by subject) levels. At each level at least professors, other personnel and students are represented.

1.4 Inspection

There is no separate school inspectorate. National guidance of the education system is at the discretion of the Government and the Ministry of Education.

1.5 Financing

Responsibility for education provision, construction and financing is divided between the State and local authorities; universities are financed directly from the state budget. A separate Act stipulates the distribution of financial responsibility for comprehensive schools, upper secondary schools and vocational education. The principles of public financing are the same irrespective of the owner of the school or

institution.

Local authorities and other parties maintaining schools and institutions are entitled to government grants for the founding and operating costs of educational institutions in addition to their own funding. State subsidies are calculated to cover from 25% to 70% of founding costs and 45% to 60% of operating costs. The main factors affecting State subsidies are the number of pupils and the financial capacity of the municipalities concerned. The subsidies are not earmarked for any particular costs. Teachers' salaries are paid by the school or the owner of the school, usually the municipality.

Basic education is completely free for pupils, inclusive of tuition, teaching materials, school meals and transport. In general, tuition is free at other levels, too. At secondary level, school meals are free and transport can be free, but pupils are usually required to pay for teaching materials.

The State supports secondary and university-level students through grants and study loan guarantees.

1.6 Advisory bodies

In conjunction with the Ministry of Education, there are currently 13 expert bodies supporting its work, such as the Advisory Council for Adult Education, the Higher Education Evaluation Council, the Vocational Training Committees, the National Sports Council and the Advisory Council for Youth Affairs. These expert bodies assist the Ministry of Education in issues of their expertise as well as evaluate and follow the educational field of their own.

1.7 Private education

Non-subsidised private education is practically non-existent in Finland. The general principles of government subsidies and curricular guidance also apply to privately maintained schools. In 1998, there were only 52 private comprehensive schools in Finland (1.2% of all comprehensive schools). The private comprehensive schools are mainly maintained by internationally recognised educational organizations. Some schools are maintained by religious organizations.

2. PRE-PRIMARY EDUCATION: Day care and pre-primary classes (*Päivähoito/Dagvård, Esiopetus/Förskoleundervisning*)

In Finland, pre-primary education is considered to include systematic education and instruction provided in a day care centre (kindergarten) or, for six-year-olds, a comprehensive school in the year preceding the beginning of school.

Children's day care is a part of the social welfare system and it is governed by special legislation. The day care system is administered by the Ministry of Social Affairs and Health. Responsibility for organising day care rests with the social services of the local authorities. By law, each child below compulsory school age has a subjective right to day care. The fees for day care vary according to family size and income as well as the time the child spends in day care. Instead of a day care place, parents can opt for a municipal child care allowance with which they can organise day care for their child the way they see fit.

In 1996, the National Board of Education together with the National Research and Development Centre for Welfare and Health (Stakes) outlined the national core curriculum for six-year-olds' pre-primary education provided in both day care centres and comprehensive schools. The basic principles for pre-primary education are recognising the child's individuality, seeing the child as an active information-seeker and learner, and promoting the child's growth as a member of the community. The aim is to create a playing and learning environment offering inspiring activities where the child is able to develop him/herself holistically together with other children. The participation of children and their parents in the planning of pre-primary education is also regarded advisable. The child's activity and learning is seen as a continuum and consequently, pre-primary education is closely integrated into both early childhood education and primary education.

The aim of day care is to support the parents in bringing up the child and to promote the balanced growth and learning of the child. The supply of day care places for children over three does not always meet demand. If there are not enough places, priority must be given to children who require day care for social or educational reasons.

The main forms of day care are the

kindergarten/day care centre (*päiväkoti/daghem*), family day care and supervised play groups.

2.1 Day care centres (*Päiväkoti/Daghem*)

Day care centres are institutions for the day care of children below compulsory school age. They are usually organized by age group (e.g. under-threes and threes-to-sixes). In large day care centres, six-year-olds have a separate pre-primary group. The sizes of day care centres and of groups of children are not regulated. However, there are regulations concerning the minimum number of staff per group, according to the number and age of the children. In practice, most day care centres have 20 to 100 places.

Day care can be full-time or part-time. The maximum daily times for full-time and part-time day care are ten and five hours respectively. Day care centres are usually open for 5 days per week, but can be open for 6 or 7 days, throughout the whole year. They are usually open between 6.30 a.m. and 5.30 p.m., but other arrangements can be made according to local needs.

2.2 Family Day care

Family day care takes place in the home of the carer or in another private home. The advantages of this form of day care are the home-like conditions and small groups. One carer is allowed a maximum of four children below school age, plus one part-time day care child who is in school or in pre-primary education. Training for private carers varies. Each municipality has a family day care counsellor who coordinates the work of the private carers.

2.3 Pre-primary education in connection with basic education (*Esiopetus/Förskoleundervisning*)

The pre-primary education for six-year-olds can also be organised in comprehensive schools (*peruskoulu/grundskola*) but a permission from the Ministry of Education is needed. It can be organised either in combined classes together with pupils of lower classes or in a separate pre-primary class. In pre-primary education provided in comprehensive schools, children receive at least 700 hours of teaching per year (about 18 hours per week).

The size of pupil groups is not regulated in comprehensive school.

About 75% of six-year-olds participate in pre-primary teaching either in day care centres (65%) or comprehensive schools (about 10%). Apart from the publicly provided services, churches and voluntary organisations provide various pre-primary teaching services.

Teaching is not organised by subject but by thematic projects in which the various subjects are naturally connected to things children do. The curriculum guidelines include, for reference only, the following subjects: language and communication, nature and the environment, mathematics, art, music, handicrafts, physical education, and ethical and religious instruction.

Teachers/Staff

The teaching and guidance staff in day care centres consist mainly of kindergarten teachers and social educators. In addition, there are child care workers, pediatric nurses and other professionals in care and educational tasks.

A class teacher's degree qualifies the holder to provide pre-primary education in comprehensive schools as does the kindergarten teacher's degree but only in a separate pre-primary class.

Development plans in pre-primary education

In the spring of 1999, the Finnish Government (Council of State) set the objective of providing pre-primary education free of charge for the entire age group of six-year-olds. The reform will be launched on 1 August 2000, and the right to pre-primary education and the nationwide obligation of local authorities to provide it will come into force as from 1 August 2001.

2.4 Statistics

	1996	1997
Day care centres		
No. of day care centres (31.12.)	2,265	2,313
Children in care (31.12.)	140,407	141,064
- In full-day care	105,336	109,732
- Children aged under 3 in full-day care	17,879	18,065
Family day care		
Children in care (31.12.), total	76,866	78,617
-In full-day care	65,777	67,443
Children in day care, total	217,273	219,681
Children in day care/ 1000 aged 0-6 years	481	493

3. COMPULSORY EDUCATION (*Peruskoulu/Grundskola*)

All Finnish citizens are obliged to obtain education for a period of nine years, beginning in the year they reach seven. The obligation expires in the year they have completed the nine-year comprehensive school curriculum. Compulsory education does not mean compulsory school attendance; pupils are free to acquire the equivalent skills and knowledge from some other source. In practice, almost one hundred per cent all Finns attend the nine-year single-structure comprehensive school (*peruskoulu/grundskola*).

The aims of the comprehensive school are to promote the development of pupils' personalities, to support their attainment of the skills and knowledge required for further study or employment, and to ensure their growth and cooperation by taking individual differences into account.

The comprehensive school provides general education for the whole age group, and is free of charge for all citizens. It is governed by the Basic Education Act and Decree (both from 1998). There are no entrance requirements. A pupil is free, within certain limits, to choose his/her comprehensive school within his/her home municipality. If it is impossible for a pupil to attend school, for health or some other reason, the home municipality of the pupil is obliged to provide comparable teaching in some other form. Comprehensive school can also provide pre-primary education for six-year-olds and an extra tenth year for those who have completed their compulsory education and wish to improve their grades.

Finnish children are provided with teaching in their mother tongue, that is, Finnish, Swedish or Sámi. Each school usually employs only one language. Special arrangements exist for immigrants and refugees. All schools are coeducational.

3.1 Organisation of the school

The school year begins in August and ends in the 22nd week of the following calendar year and is divided into two semesters. The school year consists of 190 working days; the number of hours of lessons of an individual pupil range from 19 to 30 per 5-day week, depending on the grade and the number of optional subjects.

The coeducational classes are made up of pupils of the same age.

Teachers can decide on their textbooks, teaching material and teaching methods independently.

3.2 Curriculum

Teaching in comprehensive schools is provided according to the school curriculum, which is drawn up by the local education authorities and schools on the basis of the national guidelines on curriculum design drawn up by the National Board of Education. Municipalities and schools have significant powers in deciding on the curriculum to ensure that teaching meets local needs. The guidelines essentially contain the general aims of the comprehensive school the aims and central content of the various subjects. The subjects included in the curriculum are stipulated in the Basic Education Act and Decree. The distribution of hours is decided by the Council of State. In the main, all pupils in grades 1-6 of basic education receive the same teaching, but schools are free to vary the weight and grouping of individual subjects by allocating teaching resources within the general framework of government financing. The curriculum for the grades 7-9 includes common subjects and elective subjects, as well as practical work experience and courses embracing several subjects.

The distribution of hours in the grades 1-6 of the basic education is as follows:

Subject	Minimum curriculum hours
	Over six years
Finnish/Swedish (mother tongue)	32
Language beginning in the grades 1-6 (foreign language or second national language) (A language)	8
Optional language	4
Mathematics	22
Environment studies, Biology, Geography, Civics	15
Religion or ethics	8
History	3
Arts and skills of which	44
Music	6
Art	6
Handicrafts	8
Physical education	12

Curriculum hours are the cumulative weekly hours taught over the entire six-year lower stage. The municipality or school can decide how to distribute these hours per year. The municipality or school can also decide to allocate a higher number of hours to compulsory subjects; the total minimum is 132 hours, while the total maximum is 144 hours.

The distribution of hours in the grades 7-9 of the basic education is as follows:

Subject	Minimum curriculum hours (compulsory)
	over three years
Finnish/Swedish (mother tongue)	8
Foreign language beginning in the grades 1-6 (A language)	8
Foreign language beginning in the grades 7-9 (B language)	6
Mathematics	9
Biology, geography	7
Physics, chemistry	6
Religion or ethics	3
History, social studies	6
Music	1
Art	2
Home economics	3
Handicrafts, technical work, textile work	3
Physical education	6
Pupil guidance	2
Compulsory subjects - minimum total	70
Optional subjects - maximum total	20

The above figures are the weekly curriculum taught over the entire period of the grades 7-9. Thus, the 8 hours of Finnish/Swedish work out at an average of $2\frac{2}{3}$ hours per week for three years. The municipality or school can decide how to distribute the hours per year.

Optional subjects are no longer stipulated by decree, with the exception of Sámi, which must be provided as an option in areas with a Sámi-speaking population. The number, type and form of elective subjects can be decided by the municipality or school.

In the grades 1-6 of the basic education pupil guidance is integrated (no separate hours) and concentrates on learning skills and methods. In the grades 7-9 it takes the form of individual guidance, small group or class instruction or discussions on further studies and careers. There are usually also study visits to work places, upper secondary and vocational schools.

3.3 Assessment/certification

Pupils are assessed by a report at the end of each school year; in addition, pupils are given one or several intermediate reports. Evaluation concerns the pupils' conduct and schoolwork as well as

knowledge and skills and their progress in the different subjects.

The National Board of Education can decide which subjects are assessed by giving a combined grade. According to the current guidelines, history and civics are assessed with one grade. In the first six grades of basic education, biology, geography, environmental studies and civics form an entity called Environmental Studies and Science, which is assessed with one grade. Physics and chemistry grades are given separately in the school-leaving certificate. The certificate also contains a note that the student has participated in student counselling.

In the first seven grades of basic education, the evaluation can be either verbal or numerical. Later the evaluation must be numerical, but it can be complemented with a verbal evaluation.

The evaluation in optional subjects can be made verbally, numerically or by a pass/fail mark, or in some other way that is determined in the curriculum.

The evaluation uses a scale of grades from 4 to 10, where 5 means passable, 6 and 7 satisfactory, 8 good, 9 very good and 10 excellent knowledge and skills. Grade 4 is reserved for failed performances. The verbal evaluation comments on the pupil's work at school and the progress s/he has made. The evaluation is done by the teacher of the subject in question. Conduct and schoolwork are assessed by the class teacher, or, if a pupil has several teachers, jointly by these teachers.

All pupils who successfully complete the comprehensive school obtain a leaving certificate and are equally qualified to continue their studies at upper secondary school or vocational upper secondary school. After leaving comprehensive school, pupils can choose any educational institution in the country to continue their studies. This is possible since pupils' home municipality is obliged to cover upper secondary or vocational education costs not covered by government subsidies.

3.4 Teachers

There are four kinds of teacher in comprehensive schools:

- class teachers, who teach all subjects in the grades 1-6;
- subject teachers, who teach one or two

subjects in the grades 7-9 and, in some cases, in the grades 1-6, too;

- special teachers, who teach children suffering from speaking, reading or writing disorders or other problems in normal comprehensive schools, in special classes in normal comprehensive schools or in special schools for severely disabled pupils;
- counsellors, who provide educational and vocational guidance in the grades 7-9.

The qualification requirements for teaching posts are stipulated by decree. The class teacher training programme consists of 160 credits (or 5 years of university study) and leads to a Master of Education degree. Class teacher studies include basic studies in several subjects, specialization in one or two teaching subjects, subsidiary subject studies and a period of practical teacher training (1 year).

A subject teacher must have an academic degree from the faculty to which his subject belongs and they are Masters of the actual topic they teach. A subject teacher's degree is a higher academic degree comprised of 160 or 180 credits and it can be taken in 5 – 6 years. It includes studies in pedagogics and a period of practical teacher training.

Most teachers (94%) are employed full-time as municipal civil servants. Comprehensive school teachers must participate in in-service training at least three days a year.

3.5 Statistics

Schools by teaching language		
	Finnish	3,887
	Swedish	334
	Other	7
	Total	4,228
Pupils		
	Finnish	554,957
	Swedish	34,624
	Other	2,098
	Total	591,679
Teachers*		
	Finnish	37,377
	Swedish	2,374
	Other	-
	Total	39,751

* Figures from 1997
1998: Compulsory education

4. POST-COMPULSORY SECONDARY EDUCATION

Post-compulsory education in Finland is divided in general and vocational upper secondary education. The former is provided by general-upper secondary schools and the latter by vocational institutions. Approximately 94% of each age group start general or vocational upper secondary studies and about 82 % complete their education. The remaining 6% either entered the optional 10th year or the labour market.

One of the main principles of Finnish education policy is to make post-compulsory education available to the entire age group and the completion of upper secondary education is regarded as being the minimum requirement with regard to performance in working life and lifelong learning

Upper secondary education is progressing towards a highly decentralised system. The responsibility for teaching arrangements, course content and the selection of teaching material have been passed to the local level, giving upper secondary schools the opportunity to cooperate with each other and to increase the educational resources needed in their respective areas and meet the pupils' individual needs.

Vocational education and training are described in Chapter 5.

General upper secondary education (*Lukiokoulutus/ Gymnasieutbildning*)

The general upper secondary school (*lukio/gymnasium*) provides general education for students aged 16 to 19. It continues the teaching functions of the comprehensive school and qualifies the student for all higher level studies. Those wishing to enter an upper secondary school must have completed the comprehensive school syllabus or have otherwise deemed to have the necessary capabilities to perform at the general upper

secondary school.

The language of instruction of an institution providing general upper secondary education is either Finnish or Swedish. Other possible languages of instruction are the Sámi language, the Romany language or sign language. Moreover, it is also possible to provide instruction primarily or entirely in a language other than those mentioned above (foreign-language instruction) in separate teaching groups or institutions.

Several regulations govern upper secondary education; these regulations were thoroughly revised in 1999. Maintenance of an upper secondary school is subject to approval by the Ministry of Education. The maintaining body can be a municipality, a federation of municipalities, state or a private body. Previously, the supply of upper secondary schools was regulated by decisions concerning student numbers, but this principle was abandoned in 1993, and student numbers now follow demand.

Traditionally, classes have been organized by age with students allocated on the basis of their subject choices each year. Now virtually all general upper secondary schools function as non-graded, which means that the students' progress in their studies is not tied to year classes. Students have the freedom of choice as to when they take courses provided by the school. Students must complete the school within a maximum of four years, and it is only possible for a student to be granted a continuation period for the completion for well-grounded reasons.

4.1 Organisation of the school

Since 1982, teaching in upper secondary schools has been organized into courses, each course consisting of 38 lessons of 45 minutes each. The usual practice is to divide the school year into sections of five or six periods each. Each section has a different study plan and concentrates on a selection of subjects. It is

completely up to the individual school how teaching is distributed; even the traditional practice of teaching all subjects throughout the school year can be followed.

Providers of general upper secondary education must function in co-operation with providers of general upper secondary education, vocational upper secondary education and other forms of education within its area. An education provider may purchase part of its services from another provider of general upper secondary education or from other organisations or foundations. The education provider is responsible for the organisation of the services it has purchased in accordance with the General Upper Secondary School Act.

The **distance general upper secondary school project** develops a self-study channel where students can, regardless of their domicile, complete the entire general upper secondary school syllabus or individual courses in general upper secondary schools for adult students. The project involves twelve educational institutions, the majority of which provide general upper secondary education for adults. Students can register in one of the institutions involved in the project, which will also register the completed examinations. The distance general upper secondary school project has received funding in 1997-1999 develops study material (radio study tapes, WWW sites and TV programmes for the project) in co-operation with the Finnish Broadcasting Company (YLE). The distance general upper secondary school project is funded in 1997 - 1999 as a project of the Finnish Ministry of Education and the European Social Fund.

4.2 Curriculum

The syllabus of the general upper secondary education contains mother tongue and literature, the other national language and foreign languages, studies in mathematics and natural sciences, studies in the humanities and social sciences, religion or ethics, physical and health education, as well as arts and practical subjects. In addition, the syllabus may include vocational studies, as either partially or entirely voluntary or optional subjects, and other studies suitable to the general upper secondary education's task in accordance with what is stipulated in the curriculum. The students must also be provided with student counselling.

The Government decides on the allocation of the time to be used for instruction in different subjects and subject groups and for student counselling ('allocation of classroom hours').

The National Board of Education decides on the objectives and core contents of the different subjects, subject groups and thematic subject modules and on those of student counselling (national core curriculum).

The latest national core curriculum for the general upper secondary school was issued by the National Board of Education in 1994, and the current curricula used in general upper secondary education have been prepared on the basis of this core curriculum. The curriculum shall be drawn up so as to provide a student with an opportunity for individual choices concerning studies by also utilising instruction given by other education providers, where necessary. In order to arrange the schoolwork in each school year, an overall school schedule is drawn up, based on the curriculum.

In the Council of State Decision on the Time Allocation in the General Upper Secondary School (1993), the general upper secondary school studies are divided into compulsory, specialisation and applied courses. Each student must complete the compulsory courses. The specialisation courses are primarily follow-up courses directly connected with the compulsory courses, and the schools must provide them for the students to choose from. The applied courses are integrating courses, including elements from various subjects, methodological courses, other school-specific courses or those provided by other educational institutions. The maintaining body of the school decides on the inclusion of applied courses in the curriculum, and they are optional to the students.

The time allocation for the general upper secondary school is given in the following table. The average scope of one course is 38 lessons. Consequently, in order to get the number of lessons, the number of courses in the time allocation table will have to be multiplied by 38. In such general upper secondary education for the young that is provided in the form of contact instruction, the duration of a lesson must be at least 45 minutes.

The distribution of hours in upper secondary school is as follows:

Subject or subject group	Compulsory studies	Advanced courses - minimum offered by the school
Finnish/Swedish	6	2-
Foreign languages		
Language begun in the grades 1-6 of comprehensive school (A language)	6	2-
Language begun in the grades 7-9 of comprehensive school (B language)	5	2-
Other languages		16-
Mathematics		
Basic course	6	2-
Advanced course	10	3-
Environment and natural sciences		
Biology	2	2-
Geography	2	2-
Physics	1	7-
Chemistry	1	3-
Moral subjects		
Religion/ethics	3	2-
Philosophy	1	2-
Psychology		5-
History, Social Studies	5	3-
Arts	3	
Music	1-2	3-
Art	1-2	3-
Physical and health education	3	3-
Student counselling	1	
Compulsory subjects	45-49	
Advanced courses minimum (from those offered)	10	
Applied studies courses (to make up the total minimum)		
Total minimum	75	

4.3 Assessment/certification/guidance

According to the Upper Secondary Schools Decree, the students and their guardians shall be provided with information concerning the individual students' schoolwork and progress of studies on a sufficiently frequent basis. This

provision of information is determined in more detail in the curriculum.

Assessment is based on the objectives defined in the curriculum. A course is assessed, or graded, after it has been completed. The purpose of assessment is to give students feedback on how they have attained the objectives of the course and on the progress of studies in that subject.

According to the General Upper Secondary School Decree, the student's knowledge and skills in each subject or subject group are assessed by the student's teacher or, should there be several teachers, jointly by the teachers concerned. The final assessment is decided by the rector together with the student's teachers.

The scale of grades used in numerical assessment is 4 - 10. Grade 5 indicates pass, 6 fair, 7 satisfactory, 8 good, 9 very good and 10 excellent knowledge and skills. Grade 4 is reserved for a failed performance.

According to the national core curriculum given by the National Board of Education, the following subjects shall be assessed with the numerical grades determined in the General Upper Secondary School Decree:

- all compulsory subjects with the exception of physical and health education and subjects where the syllabus completed by the student consists of only one course;
- psychology, if the student's syllabus consists of at least two courses;
- optional foreign languages, if their syllabi consist of at least three courses each.

Student counselling is assessed with a pass mark. Physical and health education, compulsory subjects that consist of only one course and psychology are assessed with numerical grades if the student so wishes, otherwise with a pass grade. Optional courses defined in the curriculum and optional languages including a maximum of two courses are assessed according to the provisions of the curriculum.

If a student gets a fail grade or his/her course performance is otherwise failed, the student must be given an opportunity to take a separate examination to complete the course.

When a student has completed the required number of courses, a leaving certificate is awarded. In addition, students take a national matriculation examination at the end of general upper secondary schooling after which, if the completion is successful, a separate certification, the matriculation examination certificate

(*ylöppilastutkintotodistus/studentexamensbetyg*), is awarded. The matriculation examination is held in the spring and in the autumn, and a student may complete the examination either in parts within a maximum of three successive examination periods or entirely in one examination period.

The examinations include:

- 1) mother tongue examination (Finnish/Swedish);
- 2) other national language examination (Swedish/Finnish);
- 3) foreign language examination;
- 4) mathematics examination; and
- 5) general studies examination (the humanities and natural sciences).

A candidate must take the compulsory examinations in his/her mother tongue, the other national language and a foreign language and, according to the candidate's choice, either in mathematics or general studies. In addition to the compulsory examinations, the candidate may participate in one or more optional examinations.

The matriculation examination uses a separate assessment system. The examinations are preliminarily checked and assessed by the school's teacher of the subject in question, and finally by the National Matriculation Examination Board. The Latin grades and the corresponding points given for the examinations are: *laudatur* (Latin for 'praised', 7), *eximia cum laude approbatur* ('passed with exceptional praise', 6), *magna cum laude approbatur* ('passed with much praise', 5), *cum laude approbatur* ('passed with praise', 4), *lubenter approbatur* ('readily passed', 3), *approbatur* ('passed', 2), and *improbatur* ('failed', 0).

About 30 schools are currently involved in the experiment concerning the structure of the matriculation examination. In the experiment, candidates must participate in the mother tongue examination, in addition to which they must choose three compulsory examinations from those in the other national language, foreign language, mathematics and general studies. In addition to the compulsory examinations, candidates may take optional examinations. This structural experiment will continue until the end of 2003.

4.4 Teachers

General upper secondary school teachers usually have an academic degree like comprehensive school subject teachers (see Chapter 3, Teachers). The majority have full-time posts and are municipal civil servants. A teaching post can be shared with another educational institution, such as a comprehensive school or vocational institution. Upper secondary school teachers are obliged to devote three days a year to in-service training.

4.5 Statistics

Schools	
Finnish	409
Swedish	34
Other	4
Total	447
Pupils	
Finnish	105,652
Swedish	6,617
Other	657
Total	112,926
Teachers*	
Finnish	6,072
Swedish	419
Total	6,491

* Figures from 1997
1998: General upper secondary education

5. INITIAL VOCATIONAL EDUCATION AND TRAINING

Vocational upper secondary education (*Ammatillinen peruskoulutus/Grundläggande yrkesutbildning*)

5.1 Organisation

According to the new act governing vocational education, effective as from the beginning of 1999, vocational institutions are no longer divided into forms of institution according to the field of education they provide. Most institutions provide instruction in several different fields of vocational education, which means that they are now larger and more diverse educational units than previously.

In recent years, the responsibility for providing vocational education has been almost entirely transferred from the State to municipalities and federations of municipalities. The objective of initial vocational education is to provide the students with the knowledge and skills necessary for acquiring vocational expertise and with the capabilities for operating as self-employed persons. Its further objectives are to promote the students' development into good and balanced individuals and members of society, to provide the students with the knowledge and skills necessary in further studies, personal interests and in the versatile development of personality, and to promote lifelong learning. The aim is to secure the opportunity for each applicant to obtain one vocational qualification.

Vocational education has been grouped into fields of education, which are divided into fields of study and further into qualifications and study programmes.

The sectors of education and study are as follows: **natural resources** (agriculture, horticulture, fishery, forestry and other fields), **technology and traffic** (textiles and clothing, graphic industry, mechanical engineering, heat, water and ventilation, vehicles and transportation, electrical engineering, construction, surveying, woodworking, surface treatment, paper and chemical industry, food

processing, seafaring and other fields of technology and traffic), **administration and commerce, hotel catering and home economics** (hotel, restaurant and large-scale catering services, home and institutional economics and cleaning services), **health and social services** (social and health care, beauty care), **culture** (crafts and design, art and media, theatre and dance, music), **leisure and physical education sector** (leisure time activities, physical education).

Education in leisure time activities, physical education, some of the dance education and music education is provided in institutions which belong to the adult education system in Finland (see Chapter 7).

The completion of upper secondary level vocational education takes 2 - 3 years. The provider of education decides on the provision of courses, and the students can proceed in their studies either as a group or individually. For the time being, the education is primarily organised in year classes. In the future, however, the increase in options will demand more instruction which is not tied to year classes. In vocational upper secondary education the students are 16 years or older.

The general educational requirement for acceptance in the vocational upper secondary education is the completion of the compulsory basic education, or corresponding education achieved abroad. However, those who have not completed their compulsory education but are at least 17 years of age (extremely few in number) may be approved for special reasons. It is required in all forms of education that the student's state of health is such that it does not form an obstacle to his/her participating in the education concerned. The field of social and health care also requires that the student is 17 years of age by the end of the year s/he starts the studies.

Students predominantly apply for vocational

education through the national joint application system. The main selection criteria for vocational education is success in previous studies, work experience and other factors comparable to these. Various entrance and aptitude tests are often organised for the applicants. According to the present objectives of social and education policy, young people and applicants with no vocational education are given priority in the selection.

5.2 Education/training establishments

Educational institutions providing initial vocational education are primarily owned by municipalities or federations of municipalities. Some vocational institutions are also owned by private organisations and foundations.

Apprenticeship

All upper secondary level vocational qualifications available in institutions may also be obtained through **apprenticeship training**. Apprenticeship training is also available in those fields where institutional training is not possible or purposeful. In addition, it is possible to complete further vocational qualifications and specialist vocational qualifications in accordance with the act governing vocational adult education.

The practical training period in apprenticeship training takes place in the workplace in connection with ordinary work assignments. This is complemented by theoretical education periods, which may be arranged in institutions providing vocational education, at vocational adult education centres or in other educational institutions, where necessary.

Apprenticeship training is based on an employment contract of definite duration between the employer and the trainee of not less than 15 years of age. An apprenticeship contract can be concluded if the employer and the provider of education have agreed on organising apprenticeship training.

A further requirement for approving the contract is that the training place is engaged in production and service activities of sufficient size

and that the work equipment is adequate to fulfil the requirements of the training in accordance with the curriculum or the guidelines for the relevant competence-based examination. Moreover, the personnel must also be qualified in terms of the vocational skills, education and work experience in order to be assigned as responsible instructors of trainees.

5.3 Financing

Vocational education and training is co-financed by the government and the local authorities. Teaching and meals are free for students (**apprentices**).

5.4 Curriculum

The curriculum system of vocational education is formed by the national core curricula, each institution's individual curriculum and personal study plans.

The National Board of Education approves the qualification-specific core curricula. They are drawn up in co-operation with representatives and social partners in different fields, other representatives and experts of economic life as well as teachers and students.

The core curricula provide the norm for institutions. Their purpose is to reflect the education policy objectives, to determine the requirements for nationally uniform vocational expertise and the capabilities for functioning as a citizen. Moreover, the core curricula must also function as the basis for the evaluation of national learning results.

The core curricula for initial vocational qualifications and the guidelines for competence-based examinations are primarily common to education for young and adult students. According to the above-mentioned new legislation, the National Board of Education decides on the objectives and core contents of studies for each qualification. Moreover, the core curricula determine the assessment criteria for study performance in order to demonstrate a uniform vocational expertise and to form a basis for student assessment, as well as for the planning of

competence-based examinations to demonstrate vocational skills.

The study programmes leading to vocational qualifications include:

- vocational studies and on-the-job training supporting these studies;
- studies in the mother tongue, the other national language and foreign language, mathematics and natural sciences, the humanities and social studies, physical and health education and arts and practical subjects necessary for acquiring vocational expertise and complementing vocational expertise;
- free-choice studies.
- these studies include at least 1.5 credits of student counselling.

The detailed contents and methods of studies are not defined in the core curricula. They are defined in each institution's individual curriculum, which is drawn up by the institution on the basis of the core curricula. The core curricula provide a loose framework for the institutional curricula. The institutions themselves decide how to organise their teaching, and they can take local and changing needs into account. The aim is that the institution designs its education together with other local institutions so that the student can also include study modules from other fields and from the general upper secondary school in his/her qualification.

Another aim is to provide the students with personal study plans, on the basis of which they can decide partially themselves as to when, how and in which order they study. Creating opportunities for individual advancement has in recent years been the aim of the development of curricula.

The scope of the common studies is 20 credits (21 in instruction given in Swedish). One credit is analogous to 40 hours of the student's work (independent work or leaded instruction or lectures). Of these, 12 credits have been defined as follows:

Mother tongue (Finnish, Swedish) and communication	alternatively 4 or 3 credits
Other national language (Finnish, Swedish)	alternatively 1 or 2 credits*
Foreign language	2 credits
Mathematics	3 credits
Social studies and working life	1 credit
Physical and health education	1 credit
Total	12 credits

*However, in education given in the Swedish

language the share of mother tongue and communication is always 4 credits and that of the other national language 2 credits, altogether 13 credits.

In addition to these, the student must choose studies worth at least two credits from each group of subjects below (altogether 6 credits) as well as an additional two credits of any of the subjects below:

Mathematics and natural sciences:

- Mathematics
- Information technology
- Physics and chemistry
- Environmental studies

The humanities and social studies:

- Social studies and working life
- Mother tongue
- Foreign languages/Other national language
- Introduction to entrepreneurship
- Psychology

Culture and ethics:

- Physical and health education
- Art and cultural education
- Ethics
- Other cultures

The rest of the studies are defined for each field and qualification in the national core curricula. Subjects mentioned above can also be included in other studies defined in the relevant curriculum.

All study programmes include at least 4 credits of practical studies/training, the aims and scope of which are outlined for each qualification in the core curriculum. As from 1 August 1999, all three-year qualifications will also include an on-the-job training period of at least 20 credits. All fields have also adopted a final project co-ordinating earlier studies and backing up the instruction. At the upper secondary level, the minimum scope of the final project is 2 credits.

5.5 Assessment/qualifications

The National Board of Education issues guidelines concerning student assessment and certificates of qualification.

The students knowledge and skills and their progress are to be evaluated on a sufficiently frequent basis both during the studies and at the end. The students' acceptable performances are graded on the following scale: excellent (5),

good (4-3) and satisfactory (2-1). Free-choice studies may, with the consent of the student, be given a pass mark without indicating a grade. The assessment is conducted by the teachers and (for on-the-job training period) a representative of the employer. In vocational institutional education the student receives a certificate of qualification after completing all the subjects included in the study programme and passing the competence-based examination. After apprenticeship training the student receives two certificates: 1) a certificate for participation in training and 2) a certificate of qualification, which is the actual certificate of vocational skills and which the student is awarded after passing the competence-based examination.

5.6 Combination studies at upper secondary level: Pilot Projects

Since 1991, Post-comprehensive school (upper secondary) education in Finland has been developed nation-wide level pilot projects to give all young people the opportunity to combine courses in general education with vocational courses.

In the level pilot projects, the institutions form local or regional co-operation and working networks, where the vocational institutions and general upper secondary schools organise teaching together. Students can include in their study programme studies from different institutions in a larger scope than in traditional upper secondary education. The basic idea is to enable both the general and vocational education to enrich each other and the study programmes of the students.

In the projects, it is possible to complete the normal general upper secondary school syllabus and the matriculation examination, vocational upper secondary qualifications or different combinations of these. In addition, the students can complete what are called combination studies consisting of vocational and general upper secondary studies.

The youth-level pilot projects are drawing to a close. The educational legislation effective as from the beginning of 1999 contains separate provisions on general upper secondary education and vocational education; contacts between these two sectors are built by means of regional networking. The practical manifestations of these contacts primarily include students' subject choices and the joint

development of instruction.

5.7 Teachers

The teaching staff in vocational institutions and in polytechnics may include:

- teachers of common studies;
- teachers of vocational studies;
- teachers giving special education;
- vocational institution student counsellors;
- rectors, who are also regarded as belonging to the teaching staff.

The teaching staff in vocational institutions and in polytechnics is required to have:

work experience in the field of at least 3 years; completed pedagogical studies of at least 35 credits; and

either 1) an appropriate higher academic degree, that is, a Master's degree (160-180 credits, duration about 6.5 years); 2) an appropriate polytechnic degree of 140-160 credits (length 3.5-4 years); or 3) the highest possible qualification in their own field.

5.8 Statistics

New Students in vocational upper secondary education in 1998	
Educational segment	
Natural resources	3,839
Technology and traffic	21,907
Administration and commerce	12,175
Travel, catering and home economics	8,911
Health and social care	9,890
Culture	3,185
The humanities and education	688
Other fields	1,048
Total	61,643

Students in apprenticeship training in 1997	
Natural resources	1,365
Technology and traffic	13,810
Administration and commerce	8,668
Travel, catering and home economics	4,112
Health and social care	6,742
Culture	843
The Humanities and education	734
Other fields	15
Total	36,289

6. HIGHER EDUCATION

Higher education is offered in university (*yliopisto/universitet*) and in non-university higher education institutions, polytechnics (*ammattikorkeakoulu/yrkeshögskola*);

6A Non university higher education

Polytechnics (*ammattikorkeakoulu/yrkeshögskola*) have been formed from institutions that earlier provided vocational post-secondary education. They are either municipal or private, co-financed by the government and local authorities. They usually offer teaching in a number of different fields. Students in polytechnics complete higher education degrees with a professional emphasis: the starting points for the development of these degrees are the requirements and needs of working life, and the degrees qualify for different expert functions. The minimum scope of polytechnic degrees is mainly three years and the maximum four years. For a special reason, the scope may be longer than four years.

On 1 August 2000, there will be 29 polytechnics in Finland. They will be formed from a total of about 200 institutions that earlier provided vocational post-secondary education. The Government grants permanent licences to the polytechnics. In order for an institution to gain a permanent operating licence, there has to be an educational need for the institution, and it also has to meet the quality and other requirements of higher education.

In addition to education leading to a polytechnic degree, the polytechnics organise adult education. They can also carry out research and development work supporting polytechnic education and working life.

6A.1 Admission requirements

The general requirement for admission to a polytechnic is a successful completion of general or vocational upper secondary education. In other words, the following applicants qualify for polytechnic studies: those who have taken the matriculation examination (*ylioppilastutkinto*) or completed the general upper secondary school, or have a vocational qualification (or post-secondary qualification), or a corresponding international or foreign qualification.

6A.2 Fees

The Polytechnics Act (1995) specifically states that teaching leading to a polytechnic degree is free for the students. Thus, an equal situation has been created with regard to students at the universities who also enjoy free studying.

6A.3 Academic year

An academic year in polytechnics as well as universities consists of time between 1 August and 31 July. During this time, the student can only accept one place of study leading to a higher education degree. This new regulation only came into force for the beginning of the academic year 1999-2000.

6A.4 Courses

Polytechnics organise education in the following fields of study:

- natural resources;
- technology and communications;
- business and administration;
- tourism, catering and institutional management;
- social services and health care;
- culture sector;
- humanities and education.

Polytechnics are usually multifield institutions. Their operating licence defines the fields in which the institution is allowed to organise education. The majority of polytechnics have planned and are implementing degree programmes that cross different fields of study. In terms of quantity, the largest fields of study are technology and communications, business and administration, as well as social services and health care.

Studies leading to a polytechnic degree are organised in degree programmes, which may include different specialisation lines. The degree programmes are designed and organised by the institutions, and they are oriented towards some field of working life where professional expertise is required. The Ministry of Education confirms each programme, but the institutions themselves design the curricula.

The polytechnic degree programmes consist of basic and professional studies, optional studies, practical training to boost occupational skills and a thesis.

The Ministry of Education has usually confirmed the scope of the degree programmes as 140 or 160 credits (3½ - 4 years of full-time studying). One credit is equivalent to about 40 hours of student work; one academic year comprises approximately 40 credits. A full-time student must complete his/her studies within one year from the standard duration of the studies, unless the institution makes an exception for a specific reason.

The compulsory practical on-the-job training, worth a minimum of 20 credits in each degree programme, enables many students to combine their thesis with hands-on job experience and apply their theoretical knowledge in practice. Topics for theses come primarily from real problems in working life, and often they are also commissioned.

Polytechnics have in recent years strongly developed their teaching methods. The aim has been to increase the students' independent and self-motivated studying. There are various forms of project and teamwork, and studies have also

increasingly been transferred outside the institution. The role of the teacher has clearly become more instructor-oriented.

6A.5 Assessment

Polytechnics grant the student a degree certificate for a completed degree. On request, the student may also be granted a certificate for the studies s/he has completed while still continuing in the study programme.

On request, the institution can give a diploma supplement intended especially for international use to a person who has completed a degree or studies in a polytechnic. The supplement includes the necessary information on the institution as well as studies and completed courses and their level and status in the education system.

6A.6 Teachers

Lecturers are required to have a Master's degree and senior lecturers a post-graduate degree. Teachers, on the other hand, must have completed their pedagogical studies and must have three years of work experience behind them.

6A.7 Statistics

Number of students and student intake in polytechnics

Year	Number of students	Student intake
1996	37,000	15,000
1997	50,000	20,000
1998	64,000	21,500

Intake by sector of education in the year 2000

Natural resources	780
Technology and communications	7,925
Business and administration	6,640
Tourism, catering and institutional management	1,320
Health care and social services	5,030
Culture	1,845
Humanities and education	465
TOTAL	24,005

Teaching staff 1998

Full-time teachers	Part-time teachers
3,118	1,261

6B Universities (Yliopistot/Universitet)

There are 20 universities in Finland, and the total number of university students is over 147,000. Ten of the universities are traditional multidisciplinary universities and ten are specialised institutions. Three of the specialised universities are schools of economics and business administration, three are universities of technology and the other four are art academies. Art academies include Sibelius Academy (music), the University of Art and Design, the Academy of Fine Arts and the Theatre Academy (theatre and dance).

University-level education in the military field is provided by the National Defence College, which comes under the Ministry of Defence.

6B.1 Admission requirements

The Finnish matriculation examination gives general eligibility for university education. The same eligibility is also given by the International Baccalaureate (IB), European Baccalaureate (EB) as well as the *Reifeprüfung*. In addition, those with a Finnish polytechnic degree, a higher vocational diploma, a post-secondary level vocational qualification or at least a three-year vocational qualification also have general eligibility for university education. Universities

may also admit an applicant who has completed the open university studies required by the university in question or who is otherwise considered by the university to have the knowledge and skills necessary for the studies. The majority of new students have completed the matriculation examination.

A person who has received his/her school education in another country can be admitted if his/her qualification gives eligibility for corresponding university studies in that country. Finland has ratified the European Convention on the Equivalence of Diplomas Leading to Admission to Universities and its Protocol and signed the Nordic Convention on Admission to Universities.

Starting from the student selection for the academic year 1999-2000, one applicant may only accept one student place leading to an academic degree per each academic year. A student place leading to an academic degree means a student place leading to a lower or higher academic degree at universities or a student place leading to an polytechnic degree (see also 6.1.3.: Academic year).

Universities select their students independently, and they decide on the field-specific student intake according to agreed target number of degrees. The numbers are determined in the performance negotiations with the Ministry of Education. There is a restricted entry, *numerus clausus*, to all fields of study. Because the number of applicants is manifold compared to the student intake, universities use different kinds of selection criteria. Students can be ranked according to:

- the grades given in the matriculation examination (and in the general upper secondary school leaving certificate) together with the results of an entrance test;
- the results of an entrance test only; or
- the grades given in the matriculation examination and in the upper secondary school leaving certificate only.

In addition, some fields may grant additional points for work experience, studies, practical training, etc.

Entrance tests are designed by an institution, faculty or department to assess the applicant's interest, suitability and talent in the field concerned. The tests are often based on required reading. There may also be an interview or material-based examinations, and students can be required to demonstrate their skills (e.g., in art academies). Non-matriculated students are usually selected on the basis of the

entrance test.

Once a person has been accepted into a university, she/he must register with the university within a certain period of time. If this is not done, his/her right of study can be cancelled. The standard duration of completing degrees has been defined in decrees on degrees, but so far there are no actual time limits.

6B.2 Fees/Student finance

University education is provided free of charge for the students. In addition, students can apply for financial assistance from public funds. The granting of assistance is coordinated by the Social Insurance Institution of Finland (KELA).

Three forms of financial assistance are available to university students: grants, housing allowances and loans. There are also a variety of scholarships available, but the number of them is limited. Study grants and housing allowances (which are paid to students to compensate living costs) do not have to be repaid. Student loans are granted by banks and guaranteed by the State.

Financial assistance is guaranteed for one academic year at a time. Students can receive assistance for a maximum of 55 months toward a higher academic degree.

6B.3 Academic year

The academic year is from 1 August to 31 July but in practical terms studies usually begin in September and end in May. The academic year is divided into two semesters. Most universities are active throughout the year and offer summer courses and extra examinations.

6B.4 Courses/Qualifications

University education is divided into twenty basic fields of study, each of which have their own decrees pertaining to degrees: theology, the humanities, law, social sciences, economics and business administration, psychology,

educational sciences, natural sciences, agriculture and forestry, sport sciences, engineering and architecture, medicine, dentistry, health sciences, veterinary medicine, pharmacy, music, art and design, theatre and dance as well as fine arts.

In universities the **Bachelor's Degree** takes at least three years to complete and can be taken in all fields except engineering and medical sciences. A **Master's Degree** takes at least five years of full-time study (or two years after Bachelor's Degree). In the fields of medicine, dentistry and veterinary medicine the higher academic degree is called **Licentiate Degree** (*lisensiaatin tutkinto/licentiatexamen*) and it takes 5-6 years of full-time study. The Licentiate Degree is in other fields an optional pre-doctoral degree taken after the Master's Degree. Full-time study for this degree lasts about two years. The **Doctor's Degree** requires approximately four years of full-time study after the Master's Degree (or the Licentiate's Degree in the fields of medicine, dentistry and veterinary medicine) or approximately two years after the Licentiate's Degree in other fields of study. A **specialised higher degree** (*erikoistutumistutkinto*) may be taken in the fields of medicine, dentistry and veterinary medicine by students who already hold a Licentiate Degree. This degree is awarded at the end of 3 to 8 years of specialised study.

Degrees are usually taken according to subject but in some fields there are also multidisciplinary degree programmes. The Bachelor's Degree (*kandidaatin tutkinto/kandidatexamen*) and the Master's Degree (*maisterin tutkinto/magisterexamen*) usually include studies in one main subject and in one or more minor subjects. In some fields there may be specialisation lines.

There are no tuition fees at universities in Finland. The education materials are generally not free of charge but books and other study materials are widely available through the university libraries.

6B.5 Assessment

Student evaluation is based on continuous assessment. In most cases, students are assessed on the basis of written examinations at the end of lecture series or larger study units. Oral examinations are also used. In addition, students write seminar and other papers. For the

Bachelor's degree and Master's degree, students write a thesis. In art academies, the thesis can take the form of an artistic production, such as a concert, a theatre performance or an artistic study, which also includes a written part.

The examiner is usually the lecturer of the course or teacher responsible for the study unit, but the final responsibility for assessment remains with the professor of the subject. The thesis is assessed by two or more impartial examiners appointed by the university or faculty.

The Universities Act and Decree include statutes on the legal protection of students, in addition to which universities usually have more specific regulations concerning examinations, legal protection of students and the assessment of study achievements. The student must also be given the opportunity to obtain information on the general evaluation criteria and the way they have been applied in his/her case as well as to ask for rectification and after that appeal to the relevant faculty's (or a corresponding unit's) legal protection board.

Graduate Schools

At the beginning of 1995, a new graduate school system was launched in Finland to complement the traditional researcher education. The system includes 105 graduate schools working in conjunction with universities; they have a total of almost 4,000 graduate

students, of whom nearly half receive a four-year scholarship granted by the Ministry of Education or the Academy of Finland for completing their doctoral thesis. The graduate schools are linked with centres of excellence, high-quality research projects, or nationally comprehensive and scientifically wide-ranging co-operation networks. In addition to universities, research institutes and enterprises participate in the programmes. An important part of the instruction, which is organised jointly, is formed by national and international intensive courses. The graduate schools offer improved opportunities for full-time studying. This intensified researcher training is hoped to lower the age of doctoral candidates, which would, among others, promote job placement in the private sector. In 1998, the operations of the graduate schools were evaluated and deemed to function well. The aim is to expand the system so as to make graduate schools the primary channel to doctoral degrees.

6B.6 Teachers

The teaching staff at universities (calculated hours of teaching excluded) comprises 6,393 persons in 1998. This number consisted of 2,011 professors, 649 senior assistants, 1,530 assistants, 1,891 lecturers and 312 full-time untenured teachers.

6B.7 Statistics

Fields of study in 1998	New students		All students		Degrees, total		Bachelor's degrees		Master's degrees		Licentiate's degrees		Doctor's degrees		Other* degrees	
		%		%		%		%		%		%		%		%
Theology	247	1.3	2,254	1.5	191	1.2	5	0.2	164	1.4	9	1.1	13	1.3	0	
Humanities	3,027	15.6	24,857	16.9	2,201	13.3	561	21.4	1,436	12.7	119	14.5	85	8.6	0	
Art and design	251	1.3	2,153	1.5	302	1.8	119	4.5	165	1.5	6	0.7	4	0.4	8	1.1
Music	155	0.8	1,422	1.0	151	0.9	23	0.9	120	1.1	4	0.5	4	0.4	0	
Theatre and dance	41	0.2	363	0.2	58	0.4	13	0.5	44	0.4	1	0.1	0		0	
Educational sciences	2,143	11.0	13,237	9.0	2,224	13.5	507	19.3	1,437	12.7	64	7.8	51	5.2	165	22.7
Sport sciences	80	0.4	663	0.5	132	0.8	26	1.0	96	0.8	4	0.5	6	0.6	0	
Social sciences	1,817	9.4	14,772	10.0	1,603	9.7	382	14.6	1,071	9.4	83	10.1	67	6.8	0	
Psychology	191	1.0	1,767	1.2	231	1.4	5	0.2	175	1.5	31	3.8	20	2.0	0	
Health sciences	327	1.7	2,639	1.8	416	2.5	11	0.4	359	3.2	22	2.7	24	2.4	0	
Law	500	2.6	4,497	3.1	481	2.9	40	1.5	399	3.5	32	3.9	10	1.0	0	
Economics	1,884	9.7	14,158	9.6	1,557	9.4	120	4.6	1,341	11.8	49	6.0	47	4.8	0	
Natural sciences	3,308	17.0	20,994	14.3	2,259	13.7	506	19.3	1,388	12.2	156	19.0	209	21.2	0	
Agriculture and forestry	373	1.9	3,290	2.2	301	1.8	13	0.5	228	2.0	19	2.3	41	4.1	0	
Engineering	4,182	21.6	30,555	20.7	2,489	15.1	0		2,131	18.8	207	25.3	151	15.3	0	
Medicine	430	2.2	6,993	4.7	1,284	7.8	0		536	4.7	0		219	22.2	529	72.8
Dentistry	68	0.4	531	0.4	129	0.8	0		94	0.8	0		18	1.8	17	2.3
Veterinary medicine	48	0.2	428	0.3	65	0.4	0		50	0.4	0		7	0.7	8	1.1
Pharmacy	298	1.5	1,467	1.0	371	2.2	266	10.1	80	0.7	13	1.6	12	1.2	0	
Fine arts	32	0.2	223	0.2	56	0.3	28	1.1	29	0.3	0		0		0	
TOTAL	19,402	100	147,263	100	16,501	100	2,625	100	11,343	100	819	100	988	100	727	100

* specialist degrees in medicine, dentistry or veterinary medicine, separate studies in educational sciences
Source: KOTA

7. ADULT EDUCATION (Aikuiskoulutus/Vuxenutbildning)

7.1 Specific legislative framework

Adult education in Finland has expanded and diversified especially during the past two decades. Although the educational needs of the adult population have been recognised for over one hundred years, adult education did not become a part of systematic education policy until the 1970's. In 1978, the Government made a decision in principle on the planning and development of adult education. The decision was based on the principle of continuing education, the aim of which was a flexible education system where all citizens would have the opportunity to develop their personalities at all stages of life through studying.

Finnish adult education has traditionally been divided into two main areas: general adult education and vocational adult education and training. Earlier, adult education was primarily general or leisure-oriented, and the general adult education expanded strongly until the 1970's. Since then, the emphasis in the development of adult education has shifted to vocational adult education, although general adult education also plays an important role with respect to citizens' working life skills and use of spare time.

The increase in the provision of adult education has been influenced by the changes that have taken place in society, such as a rise in the standards required in work assignments, a change in the economic structure and migration from rural to urban areas. Adult education has been used as a means to improve job placement. Educational provision has been increased, simultaneously with developing forms of financial aid for adult students.

The act (630/1998) issued on vocational education, effective as from the beginning of 1999, governs the organisation of curriculum-based initial vocational education for both young and adult students. The act (631/1998) governing vocational adult education provides

for the vocational qualifications, further vocational qualifications and specialist vocational qualifications to be taken in skills demonstration tests irrespective of the method of acquiring the vocational skills, as well as for the preparatory training leading to these qualifications. The new legislation also includes an act (632/1998) governing liberal adult education, according to which institutions of liberal adult education are adult education centres (*kansalaisopisto/medborgarinstitut*), folk high schools (*kansanopisto/folkhögskola*), study centres (*opintokeskus/studiecentral*), physical education centres (*liikunnan koulutuskeskus/idrottsutbildningscenter*) and summer universities (*kesäyliopisto/ sommaruniversitet*). The act determines that the purpose of liberal adult education is to support, based on the principle of lifelong learning, the development of individuals and the realisation of democracy and equality.

7.2 Administration

The overall responsibility for the development of adult education rests with the Ministry of Education. The Ministry is assisted by the Adult Education Council consisting of representatives of various interest groups. The Ministry's domain includes the preparation of legislation and general decisions concerning education. The National Board of Education, which is an expert body subordinate to the Ministry of Education, assists the Ministry in preparing education policy decisions.

The Ministry of Education and the National Board of Education regulate certificate-oriented adult education: the Ministry of Education confirms the study programme structure, which includes the definitions of qualifications. The responsibility of the National Board of Education is to draw up national curricular guidelines for vocational qualifications. These qualifications guidelines and their qualification requirements form the basis for the skills required in each individual qualification. Adult students irrespective of their backgrounds can take part in the competence-based

examinations organised according to the same guidelines in all parts of the country.

7.3 Funding

Funding for the operating costs of adult education is granted on the same grounds as for the corresponding education for young people. Municipalities participate in the funding of certificate-oriented adult education on the same grounds as in youth level education.

State funding for the operating costs of adult education without fixed objectives is granted according to the specific funding criteria for each institution type. Municipalities have no statutory obligation to participate in covering these costs. It is also possible for the institutions arranging adult education to receive a discretionary state subsidy for investments upon the decision of the Ministry of Education and within the limits of the state budget.

7.4 Organisation

General adult education

General adult education includes general upper secondary schools for adults (*aikuislukio/vuxengymnasium*) and liberal adult education (*vapaa sivistystyö/fritt bildningsarbete*). General upper secondary schools for adults follow the national core curriculum and they are institutions mainly for gainfully employed adults who wish to complete an earlier interrupted basic or general upper secondary education syllabus or parts of these. In a general upper secondary schools for adults (*aikuislukio/vuxengymnasium*), students can study the mother tongue, the other national language, foreign languages, religion, ethics, history, social sciences, mathematics, physics, chemistry, biology and geography as well as philosophy and psychology (the last two can only be studied at the general upper secondary level). In addition, the institutions provide student counselling. The curriculum of a general upper secondary school for adults may also include other subjects as well as thematic subject modules combined from several different subjects (entrepreneurship training, international understanding, etc.). An institution may also specialise in certain educational contents and/or the instruction of certain target groups, if educational needs so require. Foreign students

can be taught their native language as mother tongue or they can study Finnish or Swedish as a foreign language. In addition, separate study programmes may be drawn up for foreign students.

Liberal adult education offers non-certificate-oriented studies, which provide adults with opportunities to develop themselves without qualification- or vocation-specific aims. There is a number of general, social and leisure-oriented studies, which can be studied in institutions such as adult education centres (*kansalaisopisto/medborgarinstitut*), folk high schools (*kansanopisto/folkhögskola*), study centres (*opintokeskus/studiecentral*), summer universities (*kesäyliopisto/sommarhögskola*) and physical education centres (*liikunnan koulutuskeskus/idrottsutbildningscenter*). Subjects in liberal adult education may include the mother tongue, foreign languages, data processing, arts, physical education, social skills as well as aesthetic and ethical self-enhancement. In social adult education, the focus is on learning the principles of democratic activities. Courses on aspects concerned with the quality of working life, such as shop-steward training, occupational safety and terms of employment are also organised. Studies at folk high schools (*kansanopisto/folkhögskola*) are usually based on long-term study lines, whereas those at adult education centres, study centres (*opintokeskus/studiecentral*) and summer universities (*kesäyliopisto/sommaruniversitet*) usually offer short-term courses.

Vocational adult education

Vocational adult education can be divided into initial and additional vocational education, which are discussed separately in the following. The education can be certificate-oriented or liberal training. Initial vocational education is certificate-oriented, whereas additional vocational education can be either. Certificate-oriented education is nationally regulated.

Initial vocational education for adults is always certificate-oriented. The qualifications in vocational adult education are taken in the form of competence-based examinations. Adult students may demonstrate their vocational skills in the examination regardless of how and where they have acquired the skills. The qualifications guidelines determine the vocational skills which have to be demonstrated in order to acquire the certificate of qualification. They also define the elements constituting the qualification and the

methods of demonstrating the vocational skills.

There are three levels of competence-based qualifications: vocational qualifications, further vocational qualifications and specialist vocational qualifications. The vocational qualifications correspond to vocational qualifications taken in vocational education intended for young people. The further vocational qualifications and specialist vocational qualifications are primarily intended for adults - mainly for persons skilled in different fields to demonstrate their competence and practical vocational skills. Participation in an examination is subject to a fee.

Although taking part in competence-based examinations does not require formal preparation, a large part of participants acquire preparatory training, in which the students are provided with personal study plans. Initial vocational education provides preparation for vocational qualifications and additional vocational education prepares for further vocational qualifications and specialist vocational qualifications.

Initial vocational education for adults is organised

a) in vocational adult education centres and in vocational institutions.

Initial level vocational qualifications are obtained by demonstrating vocational skills in competence-based examinations. Preparatory training for the examinations is regulated by vocational skill requirements defined in the qualifications guidelines. At the beginning of the education, the institution and the student together draw up a personal study plan, which gives compensation for previous studies as well as skills and knowledge learnt on the job. Preparatory training for the examination can be arranged during the day, in the evenings or as multiform teaching. The duration of study is individual.

b) as apprenticeship training.

Apprenticeship training is initial vocational education, which leads to the same qualifications as institutional education. The duration of the training varies from one to three years, depending on the trainee's previous education and work experience. Training is aimed both for adults and young people.

c) in vocational institutions on initial vocational education study lines for young people.

This training leads to a vocational qualification. The duration of education varies from two to three years. There is no maximum age limit for training, and adults study either in the same groups with the young or in specific adult groups.

Additional vocational training for adults is preparatory training leading to a further vocational qualification or a specialist vocational qualification. It may also be some other type of post-initial vocational education needed for working life assignments.

a) Additional Vocational Training in Institutions

The primary objective of additional training is to provide citizens with opportunities for self-motivated improvement of their vocational expertise independent of the employer. Educational purchases are especially targeted to education preparing for studies leading to qualifications or their sections, but other, short courses to promote vocational skills are also arranged. Participants of additional training are usually others than those who have recently completed initial vocational education for the young, because additional training aims at maintaining and improving acquired vocational skills.

b) Additional Vocational Training as Apprenticeship training

Additional vocational training arranged in the form of apprenticeship training lasts from 4 to 12 months and leads to a vocational qualification. It may also be other supplementary training, which promotes the maintaining of vocational skills and helps to acquire special skills needed in an occupation. This type of training builds on initial vocational training and/or work experience.

c) In-service Training

In-service training organised by companies is mainly provided in accordance with the requirements of the job. In-service training has traditionally been short-term supplementary training either on the job or in some educational institution. However, in the last few years there has been, to some extent, a tendency towards certificate-oriented in-service training. Some large companies have trained their personnel, e.g., from technicians to engineers, engineers to masters of technology, and from masters of technology to doctors of

technology. Conversely, in recent years a new form of certificate-orientation has also been introduced in in-service training, providing the personnel with the opportunity to take further or specialist vocational qualifications.

d) Adult Employment Training in Adult Education

Adult employment training (labour market training) is intended for adults and financed by the Ministry of Labour. Under 20-year-olds may only participate in this type of training in exceptional cases. Adult employment training is of relatively brief duration. The majority of training is further and supplementary training. The primary target group consists of the unemployed and those at risk of losing their jobs. Adult employment training is also increasingly certificate-oriented. Students are selected by employment authorities, and applications for participation are submitted to the employment offices.

Adult education at universities

Adult education provided by universities is primarily arranged at universities' continuing education centres with an annual number of 220,000 students. Of these, 140,000 attend continuing education courses, whereas 80,000 are open university students. Each university has a continuing education centre.

Open university

Open university education corresponds with universities' undergraduate education in respect of course contents and requirements. However, there are no formal admission requirements to this education. Open university education provides forms and models of studying which diverge from the traditional; the teaching methods used make it possible to study irrespective of domicile. Open university education is provided by continuing education centres and various institutions of adult education. One third of all open university education is in the form of distance learning, which utilises electronic communications complemented by tutoring to ensure the efficient progress of studies.

It is not possible to take degrees at the open university, but students are entitled to get credit for the studies they have completed at the open

university, provided that they are granted the right to study a corresponding field at a university.

Continuing Education

The main purpose of continuing education is to provide academically educated people with an opportunity to update their knowledge and skills or acquire new professional skills or qualifications. This education also focuses on the application of the knowledge obtained through the latest academic research, and of the methods and models based on the most recent scientific ideas. Moreover, the provision of education and training arranged on the basis of labour policy considerations is one of the major tasks of continuing education centres.

7.5 Statistics

Participation in adult education 1980, 1990 and 1995 according to sex (population aged 18-64)						
	1980	%	1990	%	1995	%
Men	400,000	27	698,000	43	706,000	43
Women	540,000	37	829,000	52	850,000	53
Total	940,000	32	1,527,000	47	1,556,000	48

Participation in adult education in 1980, 1990 and 1995 according to education (population aged 18 - 64)			
	1980	1990	1995
Primary or lower secondary level education	23%	31%	53%
Upper secondary level education	39%	53%	50%
Higher level education	53%	78%	75%

Adult employment training in 1996 and 1997			
	1996	1997	Change (%)
Participation instances	122,700	125,000	1.8%
Qualifications	96,500	104,700	7.8%

Source: Statistics Finland