

LIFELONG GUIDANCE IN FINLAND

To the reader

GUIDANCE experts and practitioners from abroad are often impressed by the provision and quality of Finnish guidance and counselling services. They have identified a number of factors contributing to the positive outcome.

One is the level and nature of education and training of guidance professionals. To begin with, all teachers in Finland need a master's degree. Guidance practitioners at schools need a teacher's qualification, which secures a firm professional and theoretical basis for the job. Additionally, fieldwork and theory come together in the guidance counsellors' education and training. Standards of staff training are similarly high at the Employment and Economic Development Offices, which serves to enhance the quality of their guidance services, too.

A second factor often highlighted by foreign experts and practitioners is the strong research base in the Finnish guidance services, which is seen to ensure their high quality. For example, research reports make straightforward recommendations which are feasible to implement in everyday work.

Thirdly, the way in which policy-makers at every level support the implementation of guidance is seen as essential for the provision of successful guidance policies and services. Finland is a small country; the policy-makers and practitioners know each other well. The infrastructure helps cooperation between the different sectors, and there are committed people who want to develop guidance services further. Finland also has good connections with the international guidance community. This broad perspective plays an important role in improving the Finnish guidance services, say our colleagues from abroad.





The fourth characteristic feature in the Finnish guidance services is the way in which the public employment services complement the work of guidance counsellors within the school system. The guidance services in public employment offices are widely used by young people and adults alike.

What is, then, the current state of play in the Finnish guidance services behind such positive impressions? This brochure seeks to answer this question, giving insights both into the challenges these services are facing and to the reality of the Finnish guidance practitioners when delivering these services.

■ In the context of lifelong learning, guidance refers to a range of activities that enables citizens of any age and at any point in their lives to identify their capacities, competences and interests, to make educational, training and occupational decisions and to manage their individual life paths in learning, work and other settings in which these capacities and competences are learned and/or used (EU Council Resolution on Guidance, 2004).

Facts about Finland

Finland in Finnish: Suomi
Finland in Swedish: Finland

Independent republic since 1917
Member of the European Union since 1995

■ Official languages

Finnish 90%
Swedish 5.4%
In addition, Sami and sign language

■ Climate

Four distinctive seasons; cold winters and fairly warm summers.

■ GDP

EUR 192 bn in 2011, approximately EUR 35,000 per capita.

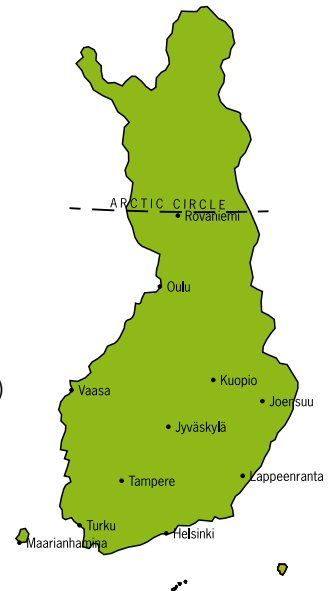
■ Population

5.4 million
About 183,000 foreign nationals living in Finland (2011)
Capital Helsinki (population 595,000)

■ Education

64,000 pupils completed comprehensive school in 2010.

- 50 % went on to general upper secondary school
- 41 % went on to vocational upper secondary-level education
- 3 % went on to 10th grade and additional voluntary education
- 5.7 % did not continue studying
- 0.3 % (or about 190 pupils) did not complete comprehensive school

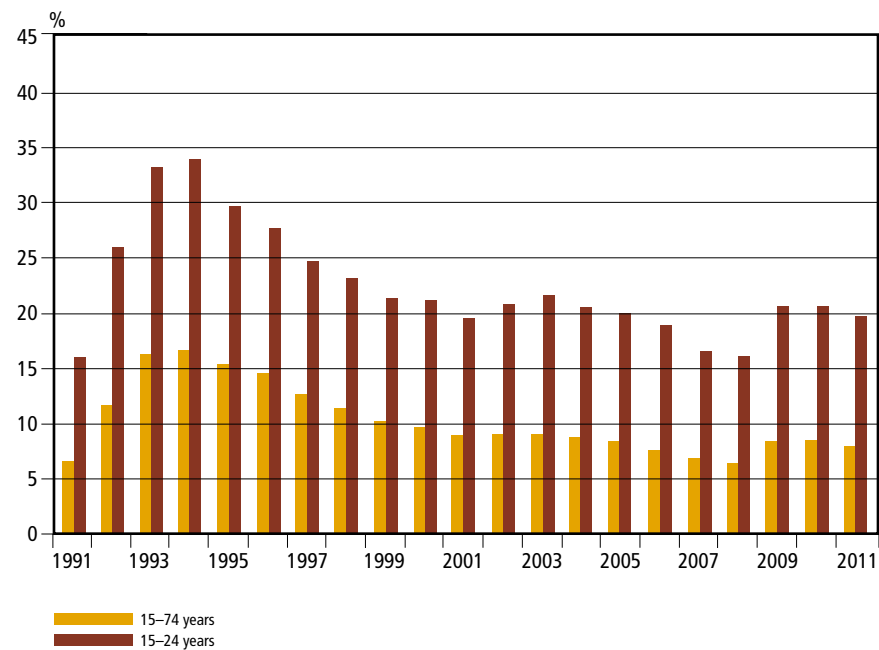


Drop-out rates in academic year 2009/2010

- 4 % of students (young people) in general upper secondary education; some transferred to another education sector
- 9.1 % in vocational education (young people)
- 8.6 % in polytechnic education
- 5.9 % in university education

■ Labour market

The development of the unemployment rate in 1991–2011, %



Sources:

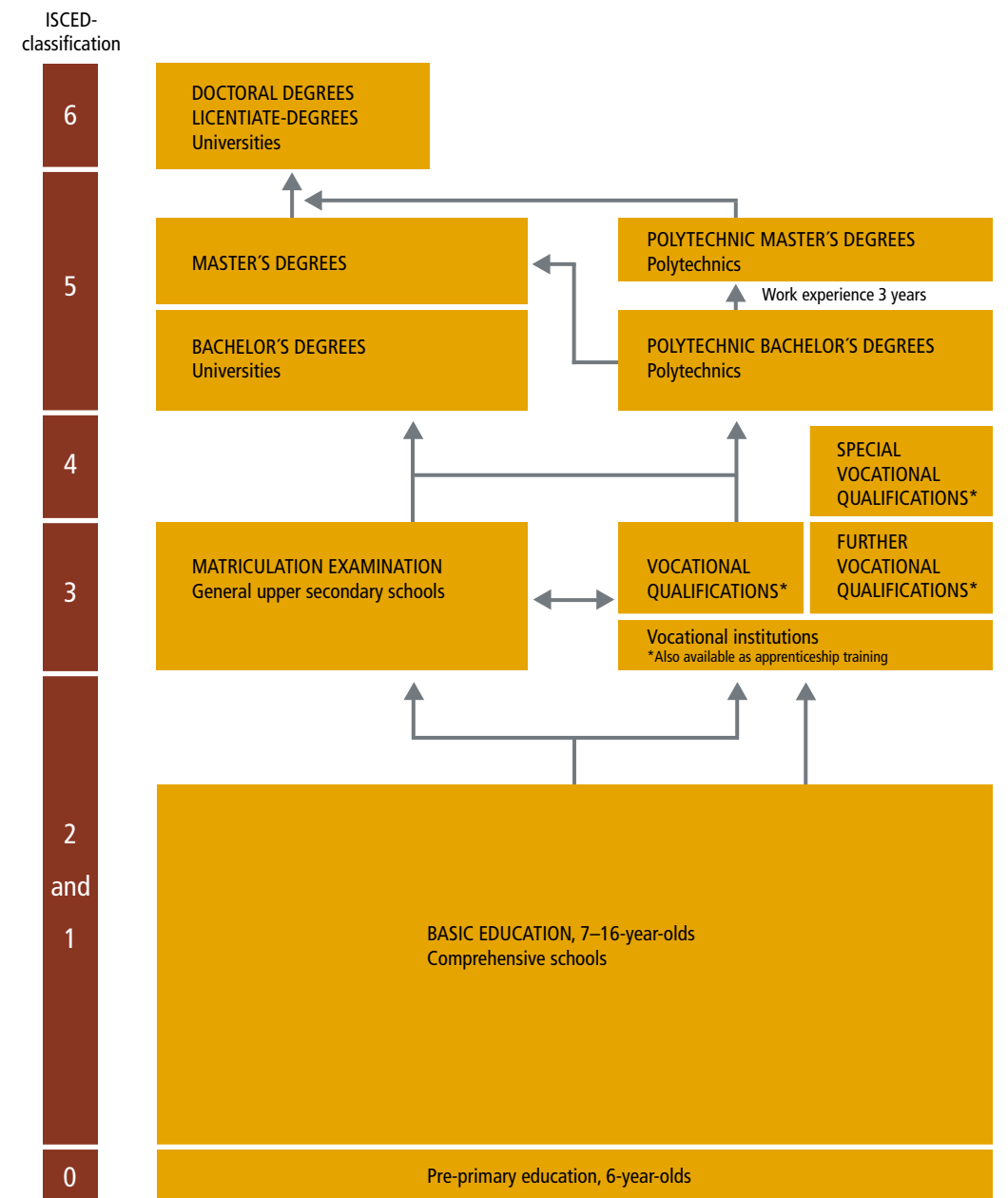
Statistics Finland www.stat.fi

This is Finland by the Finland Promotion Board and the Ministry for Foreign Affairs of Finland <http://finland.fi>

Finnish immigration service www.migri.fi

Ministry of Employment and the Economy www.tem.fi

Formal education in Finland



Source: Ministry of Education and Culture, www.minedu.fi

ISCED-classification 1997

0 Pre-primary education

1-2 Primary education or lower secondary education

3 Upper secondary education

4 Post-secondary non-tertiary education

5 First stage of tertiary education

6 Second stage of tertiary education



Guidance at different educational levels

FINNISH EDUCATION POLICY seeks to provide a high level of education to the whole population, promote their well-being and ensure that the skills and competences match the needs of the changing society. Finnish qualifications and degrees allow students a great deal of freedom and choice. Credits from previous study can also be transferred. This requires plenty of individual guidance and counselling.

Pre-primary education

All children are entitled to pre-school education at the age of six, one year before they start their compulsory education. While participation is voluntary, about 97 per cent of the children take part.

Pre-school education is given either in day-care centres or comprehensive schools. The aim is to observe the child's development and learning, and to foster his/her social skills and ability to learn.

Basic education

Children in Finland begin their compulsory education in the year they turn seven. Compulsory education finishes at the completion of the comprehensive school syllabus or 10 years after the start of compulsory education.

Basic education seeks both to educate and nurture the children. The aim is to help the pupils grow as human beings and members of society and give them the necessary knowledge and skills. Comprehensive schools teach in Finnish and Swedish, but also in sign language, Sami and Romany.

Special needs education and remedial instruction

Pupils with study and learning difficulties are provided with remedial teaching and special needs education in accordance with their individual needs. Other support measures are also available, including interpreters, teaching assistants and special aids.

Preparatory training for immigrants

If children with an immigrant background lack sufficient Finnish or Swedish skills to follow mainstream teaching, they can attend preparatory classes for basic education.



■ JARI LAUKKANEN,
GUIDANCE COUNSELLOR,
PATALUOTO SCHOOL, JOENSUU

1. What does your guidance and counselling work entail?

I work in a comprehensive school which encompasses grades 6–9, mostly guiding 7th to 9th graders. I also talk to 6th graders about studying in the secondary cycle. My job is mostly teaching, providing information, attending meetings and giving guidance about studying, working life and further education.

2. What else do you do?

For my part, I talk to students about optional subjects, compile brochures about them, and organise the relevant groups with my colleague. Together with the school welfare officer, we divide the pupils into classes. I arrange visits to educational institutions and companies and organise parent–school meetings. I follow the students’ progress and graduation.

Also part of my remit is the joint application process, guidance and counselling following the process and keeping statistics. I’m a member of a student welfare team, which helps to address problems on, for example, studying.

3. What is your own educational background?

I’m a class teacher originally and a Master of Education. I’ve completed a supplementary programme in guidance and counselling.

4. What do you find challenging in guidance and counselling work?

The biggest challenge is the limited time available for guidance and counselling, which seems to be restricted even further by other important tasks. We want to meet each student as an individual, and in a counselling situation we should give him/her enough time.

These aim to support the children’s balanced development and to help them to integrate into the Finnish society, giving them the necessary skills to attend mainstream classes in basic education.

Before and after school groups

The municipalities can provide supervised groups before and after school hours to pupils in their first and second year at school and to all pupils with special needs. Guided by specifications from the Finnish National Board of Education, the activities emphasise the importance of play, creativity and positive experiences.

GUIDANCE AND COUNSELLING IN BASIC EDUCATION

Pupils can receive guidance and counselling all through their basic education. All teachers contribute to the provision of guidance. The goals and division of labour between the various providers are set in the national curriculum. Guidance and counselling serves to support those children in particular who have study difficulties or who are in danger of being excluded from education or working life following basic education.

The pupils are entitled to both individual and group-based guidance and counselling. The national curriculum affords 76 hours of guidance and counselling during grades 7 to 9 or the last three years of basic education. Class-based lessons are usually given by a guidance counsellor. Guidance and counselling covers study skills and school life, self-knowledge, education and training options, occupations, occupational sectors and the world of work.

The pupils and their parents/guardians are invited to meet with the teachers and the guidance counsellor to discuss the pupil’s progress and educational choices.

What guidance counsellors do

Comprehensive school guidance counsellors usually have a teacher’s training, supplemented by a 60-credit guidance qualification or a master’s degree with an equal amount of study in guidance and counselling.



Crucially, comprehensive school guidance counsellors are to provide individual guidance and counselling as a means of discussing the pupil's progress, educational choices and post-comprehensive school plans for education and training. To this end, the guidance counsellors also arrange work experience modules and excursions to educational institutions and the world of work.

Guidance counsellors work in tandem with class teachers, subject teachers, parents/guardians, staff in other schools and with different authorities. While subject teachers guide learning in their own subjects, guidance counsellors help the pupils in the various career and life path options.

What has gained more attention lately is pupil welfare and support of study. Comprehensive schools have pupil welfare teams, made up of the head teacher, guidance counsellor and specialists in social services and health care. Legislation on pupil welfare stipulates that all schools have set procedures in the event of an accident or crisis.

Transition from basic education to upper secondary level

About 95 per cent of the age group go on to secondary-level education after completing their basic education, either to general upper secondary schools or upper secondary vocational education and training.

Applications to secondary-level education are submitted through a joint nationwide online system. Students may apply to any institution regardless of their domicile. Most of the students are accepted on the strength of their qualifications and grades, but work experience and individual factors may also be taken into account. Entrance exams and aptitude tests may apply, too. Admission into a vocational education programme aimed at general upper secondary school graduates is based on the upper secondary school-leaving certificate. Basic vocational training programmes are open to young people and adults alike.

Those school leavers and young people not admitted to secondary education are eligible to take part in additional basic education or preparatory training for basic vocational education and training.

ADDITIONAL BASIC EDUCATION

Additional basic education (or the 10th grade) is primarily aimed at those young people who have not gained entry into a secondary-level institution or who need more time to plan their career choices and improve their grades. Both the teaching and guidance available at additional education seek to help the students with career planning and to improve their chances of entering further education. The curriculum may include study at a secondary-level institution and on-the-job learning. Additional education can also include guided leisure activities.

PREPARATORY TRAINING

Preparatory training is to help students to improve their skills and competences or to prepare them to get basic vocational qualifications. These programmes include preparatory training for basic vocational training and home economics for immigrants, as well as preparatory and rehabilitative teaching and guidance for the disabled. Specific education is also available for young people who have not yet made their career choice or who for some other reason are not able to go on further education immediately after completing comprehensive school.

■ YOUTH WORKSHOPS AND OUTREACH YOUTH WORK

Career plans can also be tackled in youth workshops arranged by a range of associations and societies in co-operation with social services, education administration and the authorities in employment and the economy. The youth workshops are not a part of the official education system.

The youth workshops are both a physical environment and a multi-professional guidance method, where work and work-based training enable an individual to apply to education or seek a job. The youth workshops also teach everyday life skills, and they use the learning-by-doing method in their day-to-day activities.

The participants attend the workshop for six months on average. Finland has around 260 youth workshops, with 21,000 participants of different ages each year.

Another method to reach at-risk youth is the outreach youth work, which closely cooperates with the youth workshops. The changes in the Youth Act (2011) also enact on outreach youth work. The primary objective of the outreach youth work is to help young people under the age of 29 years, who are not in education, training or employment and thus run the risk of social exclusion. Moreover, the outreach activities target youngsters who need support for using the services provided by the public sector and/or for becoming better attached to these services.

In 2010, some 200 out of the more than 300 municipalities in Finland were involved in outreach youth work and during that year were in contact with some 11 000 young people.

Secondary-level education

GENERAL UPPER SECONDARY SCHOOLS

The general upper secondary school ('lukio') provides an all-round education leading to a matriculation exam and qualifying students for further studies. Not tied to year classes, the students follow individual study plans in doing the courses and exams.

The upper secondary school curriculum of compulsory courses is complemented by advanced and applied courses. The range of these optional courses varies from institution to institution.

It takes on average three years to complete the upper secondary school syllabus. Students can also integrate modules from other upper secondary schools or vocational institutions in their course pack. The general upper secondary school concludes with the national matriculation exam. Students who pass the exam are eligible to apply to all post-upper secondary school institutions.

Almost half of the matriculated students go on to university or polytechnic (university of applied sciences). The other half will take up other studies or employment.

GUIDANCE AND COUNSELLING IN GENERAL UPPER SECONDARY SCHOOL

Students in general upper secondary schools receive guidance and counselling about further study, careers and other life plans. They are also guided in their current studies, choice of subjects, study skills and future plans.

In accordance with the national curriculum, upper secondary schools offer one compulsory class-based course in guidance and counselling (38 h) and an optional, advanced-level course (also 38 h). These courses cover issues on the planning of the study programme, learning techniques, self-knowledge, further education, occupations and work. In addition, new students will learn about study methods and approaches in their new schools, as well as about the necessary study skills and how to draw up a study plan.



Upper secondary school leavers have a wealth of educational and occupational options ahead of them. To clarify these, the students receive careers guidance and life-path counselling. This will give the students insights into the educational tracks and enable them to find the necessary information. They will also learn about guidance and counselling services available at the Employment and Economic Development Offices.

What guidance counsellors do

The guidance counsellor helps students in drawing up their individual study programmes and discusses with them how their subject choices affect their study prospects after upper secondary school. He/she will therefore need to keep up-to-date about the syllabi and curricula in other educational institutions.

While the guidance counsellor is in charge of upper secondary school guidance and counselling, the group advisers are teachers who tutor their own designated groups. Also, all the teachers are expected to instruct their students in study skills in particular. The upper secondary school guidance counsellors are usually trained teachers with a 60-credit supplementary training in guidance and counselling.

VOCATIONAL EDUCATION AND TRAINING

Vocational education and training is available practically in all vocational sectors and in a range of institutions. These include vocational institutions, adult education centres, vocational special education institutions, folk high schools, music schools, and sports education and training centres.

All three-year initial vocational degrees awarded by vocational institutions give eligibility to higher education. Professional skills are maintained and updated through supplementary education offered by the vocational institutions.

There are three ways of completing an initial vocational degree: in initial vocational education and training, through apprenticeship training or as a competence-based qualification. Competence-based qualifications are part of vocational adult education and training, to be described further in the chapter on Adult Education.



■ **SANNA VUORINEN,**
GUIDANCE COUNSELLOR,
SAVO VOCATIONAL AND
ADULT EDUCATION COLLEGE, KUOPIO

1. What does your guidance and counselling work entail?

I give guidance and counselling to Business and IT students of all ages. It's vital to guide the students as individuals in their choices. I credit the students' prior skills and competences toward their current degree, follow their individual study plans and guide them to further education and training. I'm in charge of the planning and development of guidance and counselling together with other actors in our school. I provide both individual and group-based guidance, also in small groups. Some of this takes place in a web learning environment, as with students completing a double qualification.

2. What else do you do?

I teach a compulsory module on study skills, where the students seek to recognise their own ways of learning. I'm involved in multiprofessional student welfare work, which supports students in need of special support. I train tutoring students and contribute to student recruitment. I'm also involved in an active regional network with other guidance counsellors, social services and the Employment and Economic Development Centre.

3. What is your own educational background?

I graduated as a class teacher to begin with and went on to complete studies in guidance and counselling.

4. What do you find challenging in guidance and counselling work?

In the vocational sector, the student group is really heterogeneous in comparison with general upper secondary school students, for example. We have both comprehensive school leavers and adult students who already have other qualifications or work experience. We have talented students and those who need particular support. It is challenging to meet the needs of these very different students and plan suitable individual study paths.

Initial vocational education and training

Initial vocational education and training comprises vocational modules, which entail on-the-job learning, a final project and studies in entrepreneurship. Also included are supplementary vocational modules and elective studies (for example, additional language studies). Optional modules can incorporate modules in other educational fields, supplementary vocational units or modules from general upper secondary school.

Students can also complete an initial vocational qualification and the national matriculation exam in parallel or two initial vocational qualifications at the same time. It usually takes three years to gain an initial vocational degree.

All initial vocational qualifications entail on-the-job learning. Responsibility for organising on-the-job learning places rests with the educational institution, which signs a written contract with the employer. Together with the student, the teachers and employer's representatives will plan, implement and assess on-the-job learning in response to the goals set in the curriculum.

Closely linked with on-the-job-learning are skills demonstrations, which serve to show how well the students have mastered the various professional skills of their qualification. Skills demonstrations are organised throughout the degree.

Apprenticeship training

Apprenticeship training is intended for both young people and adults as a means to initial vocational qualifications. It can also be a form of preparatory training for initial vocational qualifications or further and specialist qualifications completed as a competence-based qualification.

Apprenticeship training is mainly organised in the workplace, where the education and training will be given by a workplace instructor. This on-the-site education and training is supplemented by a theoretical education provided by the vocational institution. The employer pays the apprentice's wages according to the relevant collective agreement for the period of workplace training.



Special needs education

Various pedagogic means and arrangements are used to support the vocational education and training of special needs students.

In accordance with the equality principle, special needs students are educated in regular vocational institutions in the first place: they will be part of mainstream classes or special needs groups or both.

Vocational special education institutions provide education and training, preparatory and rehabilitative education and guidance for students with severe disabilities.

GUIDANCE AND COUNSELLING IN VOCATIONAL EDUCATION AND TRAINING

Vocational students draw up an individual study plan, which will support their commitment and motivation to study. Guidance and counselling is to help students with educational and career choices, developing their study and social skills and enhancing their self-knowledge. The students will also assess their own learning and progress.

An initial qualification in vocational education includes about 60 hours of guidance and counselling, co-ordinated by guidance counsellors. These guidance practitioners also play a key role in the planning and implementation of guidance and counselling as a whole. Throughout their degree, the students are guided by their teachers, who will also assist in the planning of study and help the students to improve their learning skills. In the workplace, guidance is co-ordinated by a qualified workplace instructor.



■ ERKKI HÄRKÖNEN,
HEAD OF OFFICE, Educational
Development and Counselling Services,
UNIVERSITY OF TURKU

1. What does your guidance and counselling work entail?

I work to develop working-life orientation training with, among others, the different academic subjects and also work as a trainer myself. In addition, I give guidance to individual clients. This is when we focus on their individual circumstances – hopes and wishes, needs and interests and which direction they'd like to take their skills and competences. We'll also address more general issues, such as the labour market situation and how the clients could improve their employability already while studying.

2. What else do you do?

As the Head of Educational Development and Counselling Services, my job entails plenty of administrative work, planning and policy work together with my colleagues. I've been involved in the planning and implementation of a national continuing professional development programme for careers advisers. I'm also active in various national and international networks.

3. What is your own educational background?

I have a degree in social sciences. In this job, I've learnt a great deal on-the-job. I was involved in introducing careers and recruitment services in Finland, and there was no training available in those early days. I've also learnt a lot from international colleagues and I've studied general counselling theories.

4. What do you find challenging in guidance and counselling work?

The constant wrestling with feelings of inadequacy. At some point you have to accept that in the end it's the client who bears the responsibility for the process.

Higher education

The Finnish higher education system comprises two complementary sectors. The universities give research-based teaching at the highest level, while the polytechnics, also known as universities of applied sciences, are more professionally-oriented. The polytechnics are mostly multi-field institutions of higher education, training professionals in response to labour market needs.

Students can apply to higher education after completing upper secondary education. They are eligible to apply if they have passed the national matriculation exam or they have a three-year initial vocational qualification or similar qualifications from abroad.

The main application route to polytechnics and universities is through a national joint application system. Both sectors have their own joint application systems. Most university fields require an entrance exam. National or institutional entrance exams are also used in many polytechnic fields.

GUIDANCE AND COUNSELLING IN HIGHER EDUCATION

Both polytechnics and universities provide general **student counselling services** to both applicants and existing students. The organisation of the services varies somewhat between the institutions. Various student welfare services, such as financial aid, often have their own personnel. Some institutions also employ counselling psychologists.

In addition, higher education institutions have **study affairs secretaries or counsellors** in charge of the planning, co-ordination and development of guidance and counselling, editing of study guides and training of tutors in a given field or programme. Subject-related guidance is given by teaching personnel and other staff members. Tutoring groups help students to learn more about their institutions and higher education study.

All polytechnics and universities have their own **careers and recruitment services** providing guidance and information to students, recent graduates and employers. The aim is to improve the skills and competences required in working life with the help of career planning services, information about the labour market and training to improve working-life skills. The students will learn to make labour market contacts also through, for example, traineeships and commissioned final projects. Employers are offered information and practical help in recruiting trainees and new employees.

Guidance and counselling services in Employment and Economic Development Offices

■ Educational and vocational information services

In charge of guidance and counselling:

- education advisers

Methods:

- individual guidance
- information and guidance in groups
- self-study facilities

■ Vocational guidance and career planning

In charge of guidance and counselling:

- vocational guidance psychologists

Methods:

- individual guidance
- in groups
- psychological assessments
- work and education try-outs

■ Employment service

In charge of guidance and counselling:

- employment advisers and counsellors

Methods:

- individual employment service
- jobseeking information
- self-study facilities
- in groups

■ Vocational rehabilitation

In charge of guidance and counselling:

- special employment advisers
- rehabilitation advisers (for disabled jobseekers)
- vocational guidance psychologists (for all individual clients)

Methods:

- individual guidance on employment and rehabilitation
- individual vocational guidance and career planning
- health checks and aptitude tests
- specialist consultations
- work and education try-outs

Guidance and counselling services in educational institutions

■ Comprehensive school (9 years)

In charge of guidance and counselling:

- class teachers
- subject teachers
- guidance counsellors

Methods:

- in classes
- study excursions
- workplace visits
- individual guidance
- web-based and distance guidance

■ (Upper) Secondary education (3 years)

General upper secondary school

In charge of guidance and counselling:

- teachers
- group advisers
- guidance counsellors

Vocational college

In charge of guidance and counselling:

- teachers
- group advisers
- guidance counsellors
- workplace instructors

Methods:

- workplace visits and study excursions (general upper secondary school)
- in groups
- integrated into teaching
- individual guidance
- web-based and distance guidance
- on-the-job learning (vocational institution)

■ Higher education (polytechnics and universities) (3–5 years)

In charge of guidance and counselling:

- specialist counsellors
- teachers

Methods:

- individual guidance
- integrated into teaching
- careers and recruitment services
- study affairs guidance
- web-based and distance guidance

■ Adult education institutions

In charge of guidance and counselling:

- teachers
- guidance counsellors

Methods:

- individual guidance
- integrated into teaching
- web-based and distance guidance

Adult education

The Finnish adult education system has three main branches:

- liberal adult education
- general adult education
- vocational education and training for adults

Liberal adult education

Liberal adult education fosters lifelong learning, offering all-round education and training, courses based on the student's interests, and social studies. The students can take evening classes, short full-time courses or intensive courses, which do not normally lead to a qualification. The curricula are not enacted in the law.

Liberal adult education is given in, for example, folk high schools, adult education centres, study centres and summer universities. These can be maintained by municipalities, federations of municipalities, associations, foundations or limited companies.

Folk high schools mainly offer year-long courses, which do not lead to a qualification as such.

General adult education

In general upper secondary education for adults it is possible to complete the whole syllabus, take the matriculation exam or individual courses or raise previous grades. The students can thus improve their chances of getting into higher education or vocational institutions, improve their general knowledge or complete studies which they had begun at an earlier date.

General upper secondary education for adults is available in adult high schools, general upper secondary schools and some folk high schools. Prospective students can apply directly to the institution at any time of the year. The students will study according to their individual study plans.



■ KAISU LAGER-RUUTI,
GUIDANCE COUNSELLOR,
TAMPERE UPPER SECONDARY
SCHOOL FOR ADULTS

1. What does your guidance and counselling work entail?

I work both with comprehensive school pupils and 18–70-year-old adult education students. I also have clients at two vocational colleges, where my group are getting the double qualification of a vocational degree and matriculation exam. We go through different questions about school and studying. With the teenagers it's mainly about further education and with the adults about course choices. I get to meet people of different ages, which makes my job particularly interesting.

2. What else do you do?

Within the school, my work includes administration and monitoring the students' progress and graduation, drawing up timetables and coaching students for the matriculation exam. I'm also a member of the school's steering group. Outside the school I liaise with various bodies helping us with a range of issues, such as learning or health problems. I work in close contact with the Employment and Economic Development Offices and I'm involved in different networks. Lately, my job has also entailed international projects.

3. What is your own educational background?

I started out studying youth work and graduated as a Master of Social Sciences with a major in Social Work. I have since qualified as a guidance counsellor.

4. What do you find challenging in guidance and counselling work?

I find that the challenges have to do with language skills: how to motivate students to include optional language courses in their programme and make them see the significance of language skills in the labour market. And on the other hand, the immigrants' command of the Finnish language restricts their course choices, for example.



Vocational education and training for adults

Vocational education and training is intended both for those in employment and the unemployed. Education and training that has been specifically developed and organised for adults is available at all levels. Mature students can gain the same initial vocational qualifications as the young. What they need to do is take a self-motivated decision to study in adult education and submit their application.

Adult education also qualifies for financial support. Teaching is provided in vocational institutions and, increasingly, also in workplaces and virtual learning environments. Adults can attain all initial vocational qualifications and further and specialist qualifications as a competence-based qualification.

In higher education, mature students have bachelor's degree paths of their own: they have their own entrance quotas, and the education and training intended for them takes many different forms. Polytechnics also award worklife-based master's degrees. In the university sectors, mature students can benefit from conversion training, which makes it possible to attain a new higher education degree in a shorter period of time on the basis of an existing university or polytechnic degree.

Polytechnics and universities also provide specialisation courses and extension studies to higher education graduates as well as open university studies.

■ COMPETENCE-BASED QUALIFICATION

Mature students can attain a vocational qualification through competence-based qualification. They will demonstrate the required professional skills primarily in a genuine worklife situation. This is often preceded by preparatory training, where the students will learn more about the necessary skills.

A competence-based qualification includes practical work assignments and written or oral assignments. The student's existing competences and know-how will also be taken into account. Interested students should apply directly to the educational institution. It is also possible to do this competence-based training as labour market training for adults.

Work trial

Work trial is designed to test a person's ability to handle different job situations and occupations. The service aims to assist with career choices and supports the return to working life. Work trial may last no longer than 12 months, however, no longer than 6 months on the same duties. Strong guiding elements will be offered for those in work trial as to ensure that the young person continues to apply for education or apprenticeship after the work trial.

Staff development and training

In terms of numbers, staff development and training is the biggest form of adult education, training the personnel in accordance with the needs of the companies. The training is normally short-term and primarily paid for by the employers.

- An unemployed person can apply to do full-time study also in other than labour market training without losing his/her unemployment benefit. This is to increase the job seeker's opportunities to develop his/her professional skills and find/keep a job. The Employment and Economic Development Office will therefore assess a person's need for education and training in relation to the labour market.

GUIDANCE AND COUNSELLING IN ADULT EDUCATION

The key objective in the guidance and counselling of mature students is to help them to design their individual study plans, to improve their study skills and to advise them in the choice of subjects to be studied. Such guidance and counselling, provided by guidance counsellors, will support the student's education and training and his/her career choices. Group advisers will guide and monitor the progress of their own groups. Guidance and counselling can be individual, take place in small groups or over the web.

Adult students receive personalised services: guidance and counselling services, teaching arrangements and support measures should be based on the customer's needs. Also taken into account are special circumstances arising from a student's different cultural and linguistic background or, for example, from dyslexia and dysgraphia. In a competence-based qualification, the personalised approach applies to guidance and counselling throughout the qualification, starting from the application period.





Guidance and counselling in Employment and Economic Development Offices

Employment and economic development administration

The services available in employment and economic development administration build on four key objectives of employment and entrepreneurship policy. While existing companies should be able to grow further, the creation of new companies should also be promoted. A prompt re-employment is supported, for example, by offering services during the notice period already. At the same time, those in the weakest position in the labour market also need support.

Regional state administration in Finland encompasses **Centres for Economic Development, Transport and the Environment**, also charged with implementing regional employment and entrepreneurship policies. The centres promote entrepreneurship, labour market functioning, competence and cultural activities. They are also in charge of the development of information, guidance and counselling services.

Local **Employment and Economic Development Offices** provide labour market services to individuals and businesses alike. The extent and means of guidance and counselling to individuals are determined by their needs: are they jobseekers, do they need to work on their professional skills or are they being rehabilitated for the labour market and do they therefore also need other than public employment services?

The Employment and Economic Development Offices aim at using multiple channels for providing information, advice and guidance services to the citizens in a client-centred manner. This allows the client to consult the services at a time, place and method most appropriate and convenient to him/her.

The long-term unemployed with a low employability are helped by **labour force service centres**, where employment and economic development services are provided in tandem with local social services and the Social Insurance Institution KELA.



■ JANI LEHTO,
VOCATIONAL GUIDANCE PSYCHOLOGIST, ITÄKESKUS EMPLOYMENT AND ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT OFFICE, HELSINKI

1. What does your guidance and counselling work entail?

I mostly see unemployed, those at work but unhappy about their career choice and students who are thinking of discontinuing their studies. The key to this job is mapping the client's situation and finding a suitable vocational field through discussion, psychological assessments and assignments designed to enhance self-knowledge. Sometimes we also use work and education try-outs, testing whether an occupation or education suits the client.

2. What else do you do?

I work in collaboration with different educational institutions, supporting guidance counsellors, for example, when students are thinking of discontinuing their studies and end up unemployed. Our current project aims to provide new tools and procedures to help students in vocational special education institutions to make use of the Employment and Economic Development Offices and their services. I liaise with the health care sector when there is need, for example, to assess a client's fitness for work or learning problems. I get consultation requests also from the mental health sector.

3. What is your own educational background?

I have a Master's degree in Psychology.

4. What do you find challenging in guidance and counselling work?

I worry about not being able to provide enough help to those who need it. Often, there's not enough time or resources. It's also hard to work with clients who are not motivated to make use of guidance; for example, young people who receive guidance and counselling not because they want it but because they've been sent here by somebody else. Guidance and counselling should always rise from the client's own wish to discuss careers and occupational choices.

GUIDANCE AND COUNSELLING SERVICES

Employment service

Employment advisers and counsellors at the Employment and Economic Development Offices help jobseekers and employers find one another. In a job-search interview, the client and employment adviser discuss the client's job wishes, skill needs and labour market demands, and agree on the required services. Employment services also provide group-based training in job-seeking skills and a jobsearch desk where the clients can find information about jobs and education and training either independently or with the staff's assistance.

Finland is part of the EURES employment services network of the European Commission along with other European Union countries as well as Norway, Iceland, Liechtenstein and Switzerland. **EURES advisers** provide services to those who wish to work in another European country, giving guidance and counselling both to jobseekers and employers.

Educational and vocational information services

Education advisers are available to discuss entry into education; courses and syllabi; occupations and occupational fields; and financing one's studies. The discussions will help the client to bring his/her educational or job-seeking plan to a concrete level. The service is facilitated by a national telephone service number and email. The clients can also search information independently or with the education adviser's help on the internet or in the library corner in the Employment and Economic Development Office.

Vocational guidance and career planning services

Vocational guidance and career planning services help to address questions on career choice, professional development and career path. Together with a **vocational guidance psychologist**, the clients can analyse their current situation, interests, expectations relating to work, educational background, skills and competences, and work experience. They can also minimise or reduce obstacles to employability where necessary.



■ **MARIKA LOIKKANEN,**
EDUCATION ADVISER,
HÄMEENLINNA EMPLOYMENT AND
ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT OFFICE

1. What does your guidance and counselling work entail?

I mainly guide clients to education and training. Some of the clients have only recently started to think about the different educational options, while others who know what they want need information about how and when to apply. With some clients, we talk about what occupations and educational options there are in the first place.

2. What else do you do?

Mostly, I provide advice on education and training. Sometimes I help clients with applications at the jobsearch desk, and on occasion I'm involved in the planning of labour market training.

3. What is your own educational background?

I have a Master's degree in Education. Further, I have completed a guidance and counselling training programme. This training gave me more comprehensive guidance skills and competences as well as taught about client contact and interactive skills.

4. What do you find challenging in guidance and counselling work?

You need to manage the whole educational field, know our way around vocational and higher education, supplementary education and training and extension studies, and keep up-to-date for good measure. The guidance situations are always different, as the people and their circumstances differ. You need to be able to listen to the client. Immigrants are a challenging group of customers, since the Finnish system is not necessarily very familiar to them.

A range of methods are available to assess the client's aptitude and to define educational and employment options. These include psychological tests, general and occupational health checks, and try-outs of education and employment. The focus has in the last years been more and more on adult clients. The services are open and free of charge to all. In addition to the unemployed, the services are provided to those in or returning to employment.

Higher education advisers in the Employment and Economic Development Offices work in collaboration with the careers and recruitment services in their own area, guiding and counselling higher education students who are transferring from study to work.

Vocational rehabilitation

Vocational rehabilitation services are intended for people with disabilities. These services include employment services, career planning, educational services, guidance in rehabilitation and health checks. Vocational rehabilitation is provided by vocational guidance psychologists and **rehabilitation advisers**.

Guidance and counselling services for immigrants

All Employment and Economic Development Offices also serve immigrants permanently resident in Finland. The larger offices also have designated employment advisers trained in immigrant services.

If an immigrant is registered as a permanent resident in Finland and is out of work, he/she is entitled to an integration plan and the services agreed therein. The aim is to ensure that the immigrant acquires a sufficient command of Finnish or Swedish and necessary employment skills in, for example, through preparatory and vocational training.



Training of guidance and counselling practitioners in Finland

Guidance counsellors

Those planning a career as a guidance counsellor in Finland have many different paths to choose from. The universities of Eastern Finland and Jyväskylä offer a master's degree in education, with a major in guidance counselling (300 credits), and an opportunity to include 60 credits of guidance counselling studies in a teaching qualification. Guidance counsellor training is given in Swedish by Åbo Akademi University in Vaasa. Prospective guidance counsellors in the vocational sector can take their qualification (60 credits) at the HAMK or Jyväskylä Universities of Applied Sciences.

As a general rule, working as a guidance counsellor requires a teacher's qualification supplemented by one of the above professional qualifications. Education and training is also available in a diversity of teaching modes (multiform training), which makes it possible for students to gain the qualification while working at the same time.

All the above programmes provide a broad-based education: qualified guidance counsellors can work at any educational level. Guidance counsellors also have a great number of supplementary and professional development programmes available for them.

Education and training for advisers in employment and economic development administration

The post of a vocational guidance psychologist in employment and economic development administration always requires a master's degree which includes or is complemented by the highest possible grade in psychology. There are no formal qualification requirements for the positions of education advisers or employment advisers and counsellors. In practice, however, many of these practitioners have a higher education degree from a polytechnic or university.

The guidance and counselling professionals in employment and economic development administration enhance their skills through in-service training provided by the employer, in external training programmes and through independent study. Customer service personnel are given basic training in guidance and counselling. They can later develop these competences further by participating in advanced study programmes.

The main training provider for staff in employment and economic development administration is the Education and Development Centre Salmia in Jyväskylä.

What lies ahead?

Government objectives

Improving the Finnish knowledge and competence base is seen as a cornerstone for the nation's overall competitiveness on the global market as well as in the European Union. Against this goal, the current government programme, effective since 2011, aims to reduce poverty and inequality as well as to increase social inclusion, to consolidate public finances, and to strengthen sustainable economic growth, employment and competitiveness.

Consequently, the national and regional employment, economic and education policy must reflect the above goals and facilitate proactive and rapid responses to situations of change in working life and structural changes in the labour market. It is evident that ensuring a high level of competence as well as a sufficient workforce across sectors and regions calls for targeted strategies addressing the decreasing working-age population and diminishing younger age groups. Further, a pretty recent phenomenon is the increasing number of citizens, who face alternate periods of work, training and unemployment and who therefore require constant policy level attention.

For tackling the relatively high and persistent youth unemployment, the Government (2011–) has launched a joint project between the relevant ministries - the Ministry of Employment and the Economy, the Ministry of Education and Culture, and the Ministry of Social Affairs and Health - for the purpose of preparing and introducing a social guarantee for young people by 2013. This action will be implemented so that each young person under 25 and recently graduated people under 30 will be offered a job, on-the-job training, a study place, or a period in a workshop or rehabilitation within three months of becoming unemployed.

Measures to develop guidance and counselling

The continuous development of guidance and counselling in the Finnish education, training and employment sectors is the key to ensuring that information, advice and guidance services are easily available and well accessible for all citizens and that they meet the needs of different client groups. Currently the guidance service provision is more and more based on the one-stop principle, which makes full use of the competence and expertise of several service providers from different administrative sectors and allows the citizen to get most services at one location.

To this end, the employment sector will through regional administration reforms contribute to establishing such operating conditions which allow the Employment and Economic Development Offices to provide jobseekers and employers with a more personalised service. Further, placing the emphasis more on developing online services is expected to speed up finding employment as well as to help allocate the human resources at the Employment and Economic Development Offices more towards people who have severe difficulties in becoming employed. As the clientele is highly diverse, services will also be targeted at various occupational groups, including both the highly educated and those without training. Moreover, efforts will be continued to secure the availability of vocational guidance and career planning services.

In the education and training sector, careers guidance and counselling will be strengthened at all levels of education. For adoption in the autumn term of 2014, criteria will be defined for guidance and counselling in basic and general upper secondary education as well as in vocational education and training. The higher education institutions will continue raising the standard of instruction and guidance to speed up the permeability and to improve the graduation rates at all degree levels. Moreover, web-based information, guidance and counselling services will be developed as part of the learner's online services included in the national SADe programme expediting electronic transactions and democracy.



Finally, the initial education of guidance counsellors will be further developed in response to the growing demands placed on the profession. Similarly, measures will be taken to improve opportunities for persons working in the field of guidance in different administrative sectors to participate in further and continuing professional development.

National guidance cooperation and coordination

For promoting and developing the national, regional and local information, advice and guidance systems and services, the Ministry of Education and Culture and the Ministry of Employment and the Economy have established a national cooperation and steering group for guidance and counselling. The aim of the group is to strengthen the cross-sectoral and multi-professional cooperation between the main stakeholders and key actors of lifelong guidance, to steer the work of a national European Social Fund project on guidance for adults as well as to contribute to the EU-level policy and strategy work of the European Lifelong Guidance Policy Network (ELGPN).

The national cooperation group has defined the following strategic objectives for developing lifelong guidance in Finland:

1. Services will be equally accessible for all and they meet the individual needs;
2. Individual career management skills will be strengthened;
3. Those who work in the field of guidance will have the required knowledge, skills and competences;
4. A quality assurance system for guidance will be developed;
5. The guidance system will function as a coherent and holistic whole.

With these strategic goals and related measures Finland aims at creating a coherent and holistic lifelong guidance system that will be easily accessible for all individuals at a time, place and method most appropriate to their needs. This can only be achieved in goal-oriented policy and strategy coordination and cooperation across sectors and different administrative levels as well as by involving users to a larger extent in the design, development, implementation and evaluation of information, advice and guidance services.

Useful internet sites

- Ministry of Education and Culture
www.minedu.fi
- Finnish National Board of Education
www.oph.fi
- Ministry of Employment and the Economy
www.tem.fi
- Ministry of the Interior
www.intermin.fi
- University of Jyväskylä, Finnish Institute for Educational Research
<http://kti.jyu.fi>
- Centre for International Mobility CIMO, Euroguidance Centre Finland
www.cimo.fi/services/euroguidance_finland
www.studyinfinland.fi





Ministry of Employment and the Economy • P.O. Box 32 • 00023 GOVERNMENT • Finland • www.tem.fi

Ministry of Education and Culture • P.O. Box 29 • 00023 GOVERNMENT • Finland • www.minedu.fi

Finnish National Board of Education • P.O. Box 380 • 00531 Helsinki • Finland • www.oph.fi

CIMO • P.O. Box 343 • 00531 Helsinki • Finland • www.cimo.fi