



Description of the vocational education and training system in Finland

The Finnish education system comprises basic education, general and vocational upper secondary education, higher education and adult education. The basic education consists of a 9-year compulsory education from 7 to 16 years of age.

Post-compulsory education is provided at general and vocational upper secondary schools and other educational institutions. The general upper secondary school entails a 3-year general education curriculum which leads to the national Matriculation examination (Finnish *ylioppilastutkinto*/ Swedish *studentexamen*). Vocational upper secondary schools provide 3-year study programmes which lead to vocational qualifications (*ammattillinen perustutkinto*/ *yrkesinriktad grundexamen*).

In addition to school-based vocational upper secondary education the vocational education and training system comprises competence-based qualification system. Competence-based qualifications include vocational (*ammattillinen perustutkinto*/ *yrkesinriktad grundexamen*), further vocational (*ammattitutkinto*/ *yrkesexamina*) and specialist vocational (*erikoisammattitutkinto*/ *specialyrkesexamina*) qualifications.

Vocational upper secondary education and training is governed by the Vocational Education Act (630/1998) and Decree (811/1998), with amendments. To be entitled to award vocational qualifications, an education provider must have authorisation from the Ministry of Education and Culture determining the fields of study, total number of students and the education provider's educational duties.

Vocational qualifications completed in the form of competence-based qualifications, further vocational and specialist vocational qualifications as well as the preparatory training for competence-based qualifications are governed by the Vocational Adult Education Act (631/1998) and the Decree on Vocational Adult Education (812/1998).

Vocational upper secondary education and training

Vocational upper secondary education and training covers the following fields: humanities and education; culture; social science, business and administration; natural sciences; technology, communication and transport; natural resources and the environment; social services, health and sport; tourism, catering and domestic services.

Education and training for upper secondary vocational qualifications is arranged in multi-field or specialised vocational institutions, or in the form of apprenticeship training combining on-the-job learning with theoretical studies at a vocational institution.

The completion of an upper secondary vocational qualification (*ammattillinen perustutkinto*/ *yrkesinriktad grundexamen*) takes 3 years after the completion of compulsory education. Vocational study programmes consist of 120 credits:

- 90 credits of vocational studies which include at least 20 credits of on-the-job training and a final project of at least 2 credits
- 20 credits of core subject studies (including languages, mathematics and science) and 10 credits of free choice studies

At least 5 credits of entrepreneurship studies and at least 1.5 credits of guidance and counselling are included in the studies as obligatory parts.

One year of full-time study is equal to 40 credits and one credit equals to 40 hours of student's workload.

Upper secondary vocational qualifications provide extensive vocational skills for various assignments in the field and more specialised expertise in one sector of the qualification. The qualification holders are equipped with the skills needed for employment, for performing various tasks in changing conditions in their fields, and maintaining and improving their vocational skills throughout their lives. Upper secondary vocational qualifications provide general eligibility to all forms of higher education.

The Finnish National Board of Education decides on the national core curricula that determine the objectives, core contents and assessment criteria of the studies. The content of the national core curricula is monitored by National Education and Training Committees which are expert bodies established under the Ministry of Education and Culture to advise in the planning and development of vocational education and training in Finland.

Competence-based qualification system

Competence-based qualification system consist of vocational qualifications (*ammattillinen perustutkinto/yrkesinriktad grundexamen*), further vocational (*ammattitutkinto/yrkesexamina*) and specialist vocational (*erikoisammattitutkinto/ specialyrkesexamina*) qualifications. The vocational qualifications fully correspond to the qualifications taken in school-based vocational upper secondary education and training. Further vocational qualifications demonstrate the vocational skills required of skilled workers in the field. Specialist vocational qualifications attest a command of the most demanding tasks in the field.

Competence-based qualifications are arranged in the following fields: humanities and education; culture; social science, business and administration; natural sciences; technology, communication and transport; natural resources and the environment; social services, health and sport; tourism, catering and domestic services. In competence tests candidates may demonstrate their vocational skills independent of how and where they have acquired the skills. There are no formal requirements for participation in competence tests, but most candidates choose to participate in preparatory training to complement their existing vocational skills. All candidates are provided with individual study plans.

The Finnish National Board of Education decides on the qualification requirements that determine the objectives, qualification modules, the required vocational skills, and assessment criteria of competence-based qualifications. The qualifications requirements are dealt with by National Education and Training Committees which are expert bodies established under the Ministry of Education and Culture to advise in the planning and development of vocational education and training. The Finnish National Board of Education nominates a Qualification Committee for each competence-based qualification. The Qualification Committees include representatives of employers, employees, teachers and, if necessary, self-employed people in the field. They supervise and oversee the arrangement of competence-based qualifications and issue certificates.