

# Study paths

The Finnish education system in a nutshell

# Early childhood education and care and pre-primary education

Children under school age can participate in municipal **early childhood education and care**. As the name suggests, it is a combination of education, teaching and care.

Guardians must ensure that their children participate in **pre-primary education** or other corresponding activities meeting the objectives set for pre-primary education. Pre-primary education supports the child's opportunities for learning. Children participate in pre-primary education for the year preceding compulsory education.



# Basic education

Compulsory education generally starts in the year in which children turn seven. At that point they start their **comprehensive school education**, which consists of school years 1 to 9.

School years 1 to 6 are called primary school and school years 7 to 9 are called lower secondary school. At the end of comprehensive school, each young person must apply for post-comprehensive school education, i.e. general upper secondary education or vocational education and training.

Compulsory education ends when the person reaches the age of 18 or when they complete the Finnish matriculation examination or a vocational upper secondary qualification.



# General upper secondary education

Finnish upper secondary level education is divided into **general upper secondary education** and vocational education and training. General upper secondary education provides, as its name suggests, general education. It does not qualify students for any particular occupation.

General upper secondary education usually takes three years to complete, and at the end of it students take a national school-leaving examination known as the Finnish matriculation examination. Those who pass the examination are eligible to apply for further studies at universities, universities of applied sciences and vocational institutions.





# Vocational education and training

**Vocational education and training** provides qualifications for specific occupations, such as a baker-confectioner, electrician or practical nurse. A young person enrolling in vocational education and training after comprehensive school education or general upper secondary education usually completes a vocational upper secondary qualification, which provides them with the basic skills required in the field in question.

A student enrolled in vocational education and training can also complete a double degree: this means that they take general upper secondary school studies alongside vocational education and training and complete both a vocational upper secondary qualification and the Finnish matriculation examination.

Graduates are eligible to apply for further studies at universities, universities of applied sciences or general upper secondary schools.



# University of applied sciences

The Finnish higher education system comprises universities and **universities of applied sciences**. Universities of applied sciences (UAS) provide practical education that aims to respond to the needs of the labour market.

Universities of applied sciences award UAS bachelor's degrees and UAS master's degrees. A student who has completed a UAS bachelor's degree and accumulated at least two years of work experience in the field in question after the completion of the degree can apply for UAS master's degree studies.

Completing a UAS bachelor's degree usually takes 3.5–4.5 years. A UAS Bachelor's degree also makes the student eligible to apply for university studies.





# University

**University education** is based on scientific or artistic research. University education is usually divided into bachelor's degree studies and master's degree studies.

Students must complete a bachelor's degree before applying for master's degree studies. This can be either a university bachelor's degree or UAS bachelor's degree.

After completing a master's degree, students can apply for postgraduate degrees, i.e. licentiate and doctoral degrees.

