



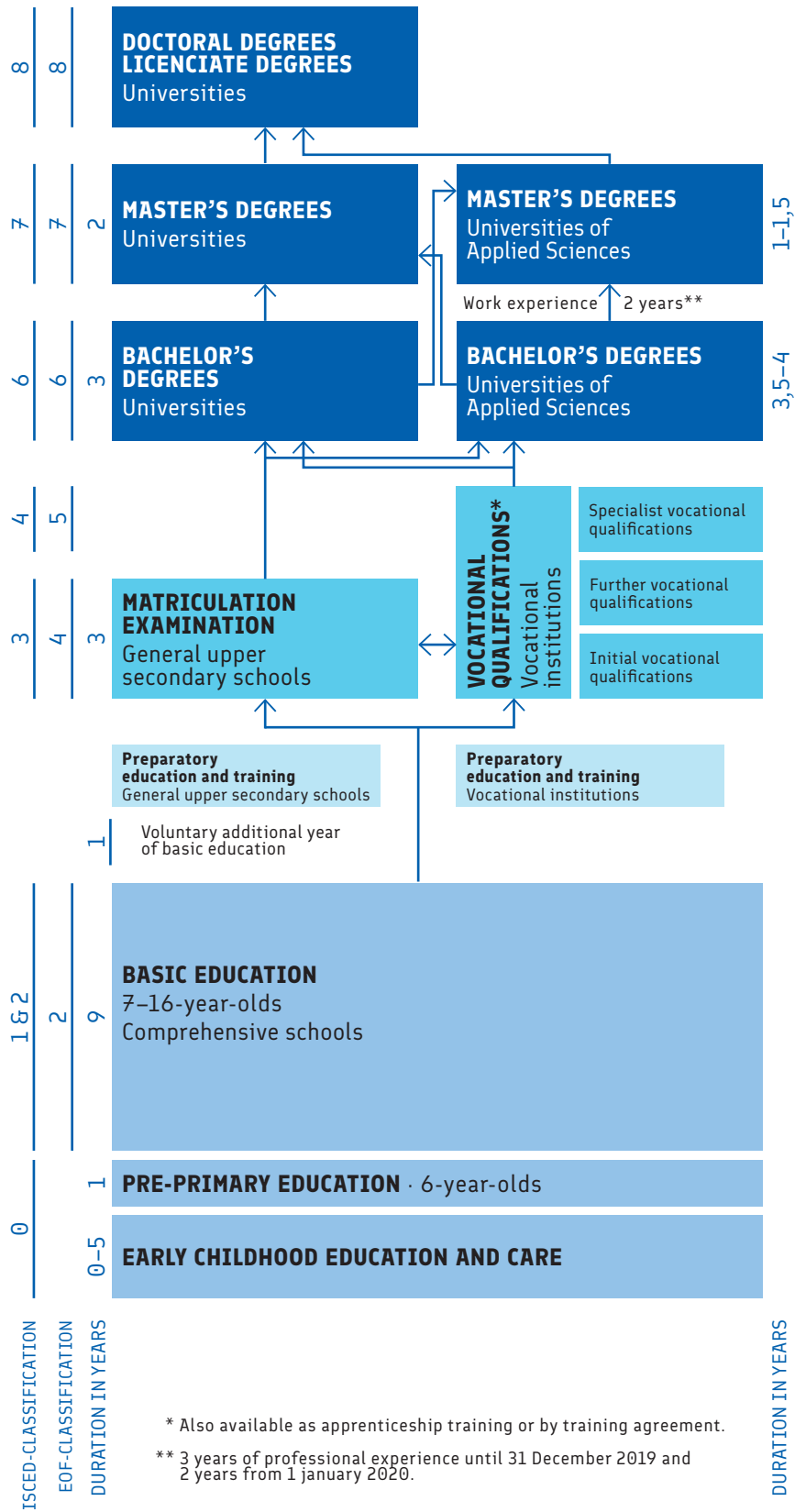
Finnish VET in a Nutshell

EDUCATION IN FINLAND



Vocational
education
and training
provides skills
for both life
and work.

Education system in Finland



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VET is based on continuous learning

Finland's educational policy objective is to guarantee equal educational opportunities for each individual. The aim is that everyone will complete at least a secondary level qualification. Around half of the students completing their basic education continue to vocational education and training (VET) and half to general upper secondary education.

Students and working life as clients

The purpose of VET is to increase and maintain the vocational skills of the population, develop commerce and industry and respond to its competence needs. VET supports lifelong learning and students' development as human beings and members of society. It provides students with knowledge and skills necessary in further studies and promotes employment.

VET provides students with strong vocational competence. However, the continuous changes in working life and the transformation of work require constantly updated



**Finnish
vocational
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competences and applied specialist skills. Therefore, another key principle is continuous competence development. In fact, more than half of VET students are 20–60 years old.

Finnish vocational education and training is competence-based and customer-oriented. Students are assessed and credited for previously acquired competence and only acquire the missing competence during their studies.



The system allows students to flexibly utilise units of the qualifications and smaller parts corresponding to their own needs.

Publicly funded and free of charge

National and local government are responsible for financing VET as part of the state budget. Also vocational education and training organised at workplaces is publicly funded.

Apart from learning materials, VET is free of charge to students. Students are entitled to a free meal and school transport subsidies. For further and specialist qualifications, students may be charged a reasonable fee. Full-time students can apply for student financial aid and loans. ●



VET is **an attractive choice**

Students who have completed basic education choose their upper secondary pathway – general or VET – based on their own interests, skills and success in previous studies. Both pathways are equal in value and provide access to further studies. The same options are also open to adults wanting to reskill or upskill.

Vocational education and training is not limited to the technical sector but covers all sectors of working life. The three biggest VET sectors are engineering, manufacturing and construction; business and administration, and health and welfare.

High regard for VET

In Finland, vocational education and training is held in high regard. Closer to 50% of the young apply for vocational upper secondary studies immediately after basic education. Nine out of ten of all Finns think VET offers high quality learning with strong working life orientation.

Qualified and competent teachers, flexible qualifications, strong employment prospects and eligibility for further studies are some of the reasons making VET an attractive choice. Finnish qualifications allow for employer-specific, regional and personal adaptations.

All competences can be acquired in work-based learning directly linked to the qualification requirements. Also, the fact that vocational education is developed and delivered in cooperation with the labour market serves as a guarantee for its quality and attractiveness.

Open pathways to higher and further education

Vocational education and training has been developed as an integral part of the education system, with the aim to lead to both employment on the labour market and further studies in either tertiary education or further vocational qualifications.

For decades, Finland's educational policy has sought pathways that are open from basic education to higher education with no dead-ends. Today, cooperation between secondary and tertiary VET is increasingly commonplace.

Strong employment prospects

Finnish vocational education and training provides the skills sought after by both employers and society at large. Also, entrepreneurship skills are high on the agenda. The placement rate directly after VET studies, either at the labour market or in further studies, is high in comparison with most EU countries.

International cooperation and skills competitions

International cooperation and mobility are encouraged in vocational education and training. This is done both at home within the qualifications and through international mobility, which is quite popular in Finland with every seventh student in initial VET spending some time abroad as a part of their studies. The aim of international mobility and

cooperation is to enhance the competitiveness and quality of the Finnish working life, education and training and to develop students' personal skills and outlooks from a global perspective. Strong networks of international cooperation also help Finnish VET provide students with the competences required in an increasingly internationalised labour market and multicultural society.

Skills competitions encourage both the young and adults to consider VET as a viable, attractive option. They are also an important tool for developing and benchmarking VET. Finland participates in WorldSkills, EuroSkills and Abilympics. Also, a national skills competition called Taitaja is organised annually. ●



Competence and flexibility are key principles in VET

For decades, all the reforms in Finnish VET have aimed to strengthen a learning-outcomes-based approach and work-based learning. With the latest reform, the number of qualifications was decreased and qualification content was broadened to support individual learning pathways and to enable more rapid responses to the changing competence needs in working life.

Vocational qualifications are developed in close cooperation with working life to ensure that the qualifications support a flexible and efficient transition into the labour market as well as to allow for occupational development and career changes. In addition to the needs of working life, the development of VET and qualifications take into account the consolidation of lifelong learning skills as well as individuals' needs and opportunities for completing qualifications flexibly.

Flexible learning pathways promote equality in education and reduce the unnecessary overlapping of studies. A modular qualification structure is also the key to maintaining study motivation and reducing dropout rates.

For individuals, it is important that they can have their learning outcomes validated, irrespective of how and where they have acquired the competence, and assessed units of learning outcomes can be accumulated towards a qualification. They can return later to continue their studies and complete their qualification or update their skills.

Broad-based and flexible qualifications

There are three types of qualifications – vocational qualifications (initial vocational qualifications), further vocational qualifications and specialist vocational qualifications. All qualifications are composed of units of learning outcomes. Vocational qualifications consist of vocational units and common units. Further and specialist qualifications comprise only vocational units and the necessity for common units is assessed when preparing the personal competence development plan.

Vocational units are either compulsory or optional. Students can complete entire

qualifications, parts of them or smaller units, or combine parts of different qualifications based on their needs. Competence requirements are the same in all learning environments, also in workplaces. Qualifications are the same for young people and adults.

Vocational qualifications are independent of the way the vocational skills have been acquired. As long as the individual's competences meet the national qualification requirements, they can be acquired in different learning environments and ways, at different times. Students demonstrate their skills in competence demonstrations at practical work.

In addition to vocational qualifications, students can complete training preparing them for VET. This preparatory education and training provides students with capabilities for applying to VET leading to qualifications and fosters their preconditions for completing qualifications. Preparatory education and training for work and independent living is available for those who need special support due to illness or injury. It provides students instruction and guidance according to their personal goals and capabilities.

VET also allows students to advance or supplement their vocational skills without having to aim at completing a qualification or its part. These aims and contents of so-called 'other VET' are tailored to the needs of workplaces or individuals.

Individual learning pathways

Prospective students can apply to VET whenever suitable and start their studies flexibly throughout the year. National joint application is organised each spring for those who have completed basic education and who do not have a secondary qualification. The aim is to ensure each young person a student place after basic education.

A personal competence development plan is drawn up for each student. The plan is drawn up by a teacher or a guidance counsellor

together with the student and, when applicable, representative of working life.

The plan charts and recognises the skills previously acquired by the student and outlines what kind of competences the student needs and how they will be acquired in different learning environments. Students may have obtained relevant skills from working life, another school, international study, work placement periods, family and leisure activities or through the media. Previous learning is recognised and only the missing skills are acquired.

The plan also includes information on the necessary supportive measures. The support received by a student may involve special teaching and studying arrangements due to learning difficulties, injury or illness, or studies that support study abilities. ●



Learning at work **strengthens competence**

Guided and goal-oriented studying at the workplace takes place in versatile learning environments both at home and abroad and is based on practical work tasks. Educational institutions, workplaces, workshops, worksites of educational institutions and virtual learning

environments reinforce each other. The education provider is responsible for the education but the student will also be appointed a workplace trainer who must have the required competences for the task.

Studying at the workplace is either based on apprenticeship or on training agreement.

Both can be flexibly combined.

Learning at work can be used to acquire competence in all vocational qualifications as well as other training advancing or supplementing vocational skills. Studying at the workplace can cover an entire degree, a module or a smaller part of the studies.

In apprenticeship, most of the competence will be acquired at the workplace through practical work tasks and will be reinforced in other learning environments if needed. The student, education provider and employer agree on the arrangements on the apprenticeship together. The apprenticeship is based on a fixed-term contract between the student and the employer. The student is a full-time worker and receives pay.

In the training agreement, the student is not in a contract of employment and does not receive any pay or other compensation. This agreement is drawn between the education provider and the workplace. The workplace is required to keep track of the development of the student, report to the education provider and take action if the competence is not reached.

No minimum or maximum amount has been set for competence acquired in connection with practical work tasks. Instead, education and training organised at the workplace is planned as part of the personal competence development plan, taking into account the competence needs

Studying at the workplace can cover an entire degree, a module or a smaller part of the studies.

of the workplace and individuals. The plan is attached to the agreement and the training is designed in cooperation with different parties. Students can find the workplace by themselves or ask the education provider for help with finding a suitable workplace. ●



VET is built on trust **and shared responsibility**

The Finnish system is based on trust and shared responsibility. The network of vocational education and training providers play a key role in implementing VET and ensuring the quality of training and qualifications.

The Parliament decides on the legislation and the annual budget allocations to VET.

The Government decides on the development of VET in the Government Programme. The Government also makes decisions on the structure of vocational qualifications.

The Ministry of Education and Culture prepares legislation related to VET and steers, regulates, finances and monitors the industry.

The Finnish National Agency for Education (EDUFI) prepares the national qualification requirements for vocational qualifications and preparatory education and training for VET.

EDUFI also develops education and training through funding projects, increases the productivity of education and supports internationalisation of the Finnish society.

The Ministry of Education and Culture grants licences to provide vocational education and training. The licence determines the educational task of the education provider and ensures that education providers meet the preconditions for providing high-quality qualifications and education. The licence covers VET provided to both young people and adults. The licence entitles the organisation to provide education required for completing vocational qualifications, to organise competence demonstrations and to grant qualifications.

Within the limits of their licence, education providers decide independently on the allocation of the education they offer, and how and in which educational institutions and learning environments the education is organised. Education providers also decide how they are profiled based on different fields or customer groups and what kind of staff they have.

Funding based on outcomes, efficiency and effectiveness

The VET funding system rewards education providers for their outcomes, efficiency and effectiveness of their activities. The focus of funding is on completed units and qualifications, employment or placement in further studies after the education as well as the feedback collected from students and working life. The amount of time spent on education is not relevant from the point of view of the funding structure.

VET is jointly financed by central and local government. The funding is based on an appropriation in the state budget. The funding is granted and paid directly to the VET providers,

who decide on the use and allocation of the financing.

The funding comprises strategic funding, core funding, performance-based funding and effectiveness-based funding. The share of strategic funding is at least 4 % of the appropriation for VET. The remaining part of the appropriation for VET is granted on a basis according to which the share of basic funding is 50%, performance-based funding 35% and effectiveness-based funding 15%.

FUNDING SYSTEM FOR VOCATIONAL EDUCATION AND TRAINING

STRATEGY FUNDING

(A maximum of 4% of the total funding)

IMPUTED FUNDING
(a minimum of 96% of the total funding)

50 %

CORE FUNDING

student-years

Creates

- preconditions for the future provision of education in all fields and for all students
- a foreseeable foundation for the provision of education and qualifications

35 %

PERFORMANCE-BASED FUNDING

– qualifications and modules

Guides and encourages to

- target education and qualifications in accordance with competence needs
- intensify study processes
- complete qualifications and modules in accordance with the set objectives

15 %

EFFECTIVENESS-BASED FUNDING

– access to employment
– further studies

Encourages to

- redirect education to fields where labour force is needed
- ensure that education corresponds to the needs of the working life and is of high quality
- provide readiness for further studies

Quality assurance on many levels

The quality of vocational qualifications and VET is ensured in multiple ways. Ultimately, the quality of education plays a crucial role in the success of those with vocational qualifications in finding work, how attractive VET is, and how much VET is valued in society and working life.

The quality assurance of VET consists of the quality management systems of education providers, national steering and regulation, and external evaluation. The legislation regulating VET requires education providers to evaluate the qualifications, education and other activities they provide as well as their quality and effectiveness. Education providers must also regularly participate in external evaluation of their activities and quality management systems.

External evaluation involves the evaluation of learning outcomes, auditing related to the activities of education providers, or evaluation of the quality management systems of the education providers. Finland's National Education Evaluation Centre (FINEEC) is responsible for the external evaluation of education. Finland does not have an inspector system or a ranking system for education providers.

Close cooperation with the working life at national, regional and education provider level is a significant part of the quality assurance of VET. Working life representatives participate in the anticipation of learning and education needs and the development of vocational qualifications as well as the preparation of plans for the implementation of education providers' competence assessments. They also take part in preparing students' personal competence development plans, implementing education at workplace and assessing competence demonstrations. Moreover, the feedback collected from working life is part of the VET funding system, providing information also for developing quality.

Working life committees play a key role in the quality assurance of VET. They participate in ensuring the quality of the implementation of competence demonstrations and competence assessment as well as developing the VET qualifications structure and qualification requirements. They also process rectification requests concerning the assessment of students' competence. ●



VET teachers and trainers are respected professionals

Teachers in Finland are generally highly valued and respected. This also applies to VET teachers and is reflected in the intake to VET teacher training: clearly less than half of the applicants are admitted.

The training requirements for VET teachers are fairly demanding. Firstly, vocational teachers must have a Master's or Bachelor's degree in their own vocational sector. If such a degree does not exist, it can also be supplemented by the highest possible other qualification in the sector. Secondly, they have a pedagogical teacher training with the scope of 60 ECTS credit

points. Thirdly, they need enough relevant work experience in their own field.

Close connection to working life


The work of VET teachers exhibits a close connection of theory and practice. VET teachers convey to students how to ‘do the job’ in practice as well as the professional ethos.

The work context of VET teachers encompasses both the VET institution and the working life. The students’ work-based learning and competence demonstrations require teachers to have wide networks with local enterprises, businesses and public institutions. The teachers and the representatives of the enterprises and institutions negotiate and agree on what the students must learn during these periods, and how it should be assessed.

Work place trainers also in key role

During work-based learning periods, workplace trainers are central to students’ development. They mentor and guide the student both in everyday work tasks, and when it comes to understanding the principles, approaches and ethics of the specific vocational field.

Education providers are responsible for acquainting the workplace trainers with their tasks and provide the necessary training to the workplace trainers. To ensure the competence of workplace trainers, the qualification structure makes it possible to select units the contents of which provide skills in acting as a workplace trainer. Online material is also available on the Ohjaan.fi website to support workplace trainers.



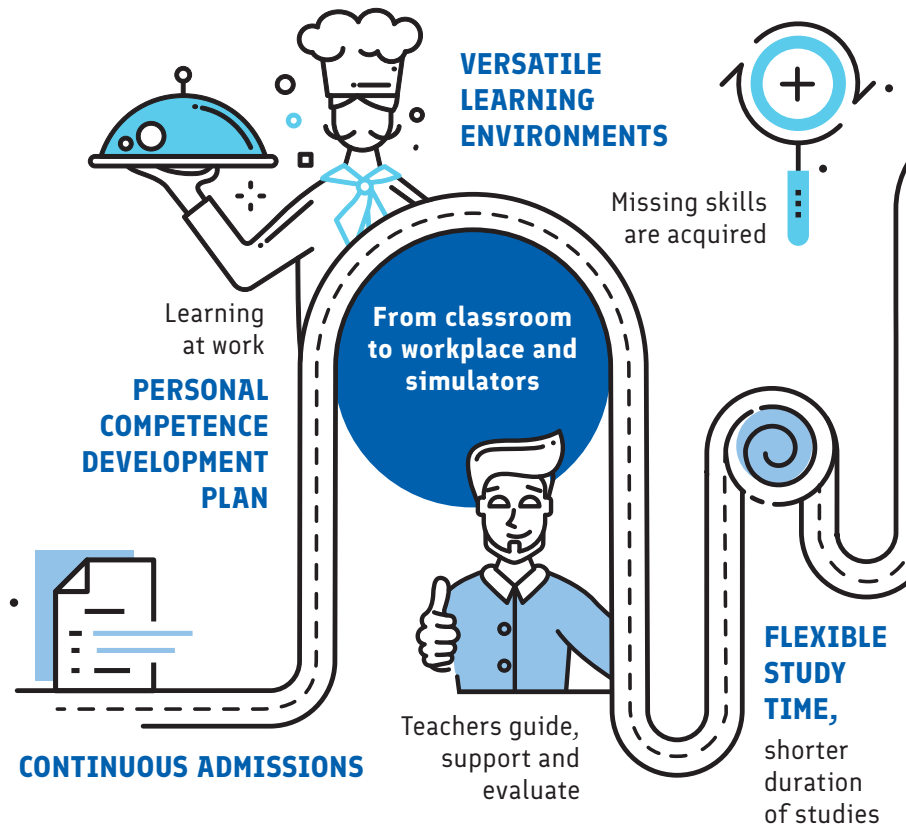
The training requirements for VET teachers are fairly demanding.

In-service training to maintain up-to-date competence

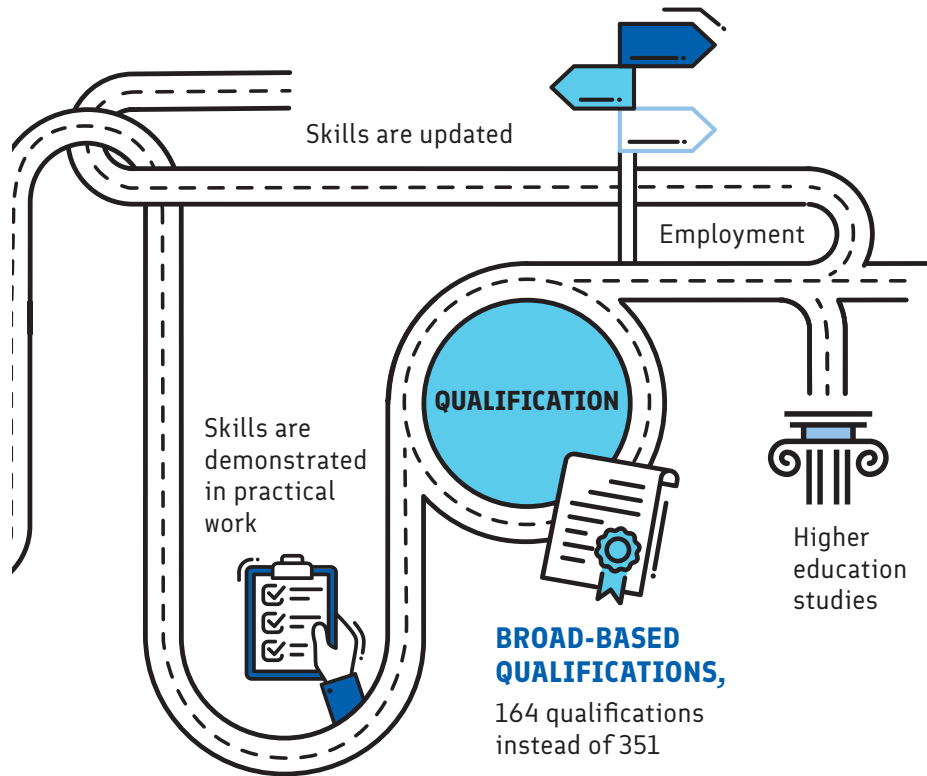
Participation in in-service training is compulsory for teachers in most VET fields. The training is intended to keep teachers' skills and competences up to date. The responsibility for funding in-service training rests with the teachers' employers. Training focuses on the priorities of current education policy.

VET teachers are also encouraged to update their expertise by professional development placements in enterprises and other workplaces. During such on-the-job training, they are expected to enhance the cooperation between the enterprise and the VET institution and to develop on-the-job learning opportunities for students together with the enterprise. ●

VOCATIONAL EDUCATION AND TRAINING IN FINLAND



Working life is undergoing changes.
New occupations keep on emerging and old ones disappear. Technology advances.
Revenue models are renewed. Students' needs are becoming more and more individualistic.
Skills need to be updated throughout careers.





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