

Helsinki

# The joint application procedure and upper secondary education in Finland

A guide to guardians





## The Finnish education system

The Finnish education system has three levels. Comprehensive school starts at the age of seven and usually lasts nine years.

After comprehensive school, pupils apply for upper secondary education institutions, meaning general upper secondary schools and vocational institutions, via the joint application procedure. Pupils can also apply for preparatory education for programmes leading to an upper secondary qualification (TUVA education), which lasts one year, via the joint application procedure.

After upper secondary education, students can continue their studies at a higher education institution, meaning a university or university of applied sciences.

All upper secondary education institutions offer Finnish as a second language teaching and special needs teacher support.

## The joint application procedure

Pupils can apply for up to seven different places via the joint application procedure. Admission is determined based on the grades on the applicant's basic education certificate. Some institutions also organise entrance exams, the score from which is added to the applicant's grades. The joint application procedure takes place online: [opintopolku.fi](https://opintopolku.fi).

In the last year of comprehensive school, pupils are required to apply to a upper secondary education institution or for TUVA education. The pupil's guardian is responsible for making sure that the pupil submits an application.

## General upper secondary school

General upper secondary schools provide general upper secondary education. They do not provide training for a vocation. General upper secondary school students almost always continue their studies at some other educational institution after completing general upper secondary school. General upper secondary school prepares students for higher education studies in particular.

### Study units and credits

At general upper secondary school, students take mandatory and optional studies. The subjects are largely the same as in comprehensive school. In addition to these, students can study for general upper secondary education diplomas and take other optional studies. Different general upper secondary schools offer different optional studies.

The amount of studies is measured in credits and study units. For young people, the general upper secondary school syllabus consists of a minimum of 150 credits. General upper secondary school usually lasts for three years.

At general upper secondary school, students are required to read and write a lot. Furthermore, students are required to independently study broad subject areas.

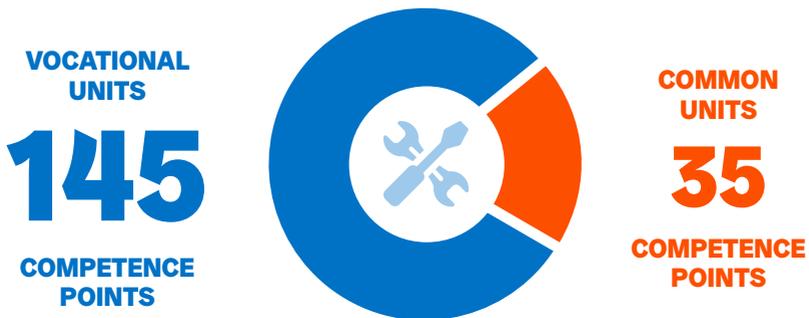


## Vocational education and training

In vocational education and training, students learn the basics of a vocation. Vocational education and training takes place at school, at a workplace and virtually. Vocational education and training is offered for over 150 different vocations. For students admitted to vocational education and training from comprehensive school, vocational education and training usually lasts three years.

## Competence points and competence-basis

Vocational education and training is competence-based. This means that the student only studies things that they are not yet competent in. In vocational education and training, studies are measured in competence points. The scope of a vocational upper secondary qualification is 180 competence points. The qualification is composed of vocational units (145 competence points) and common units (35 competence points).



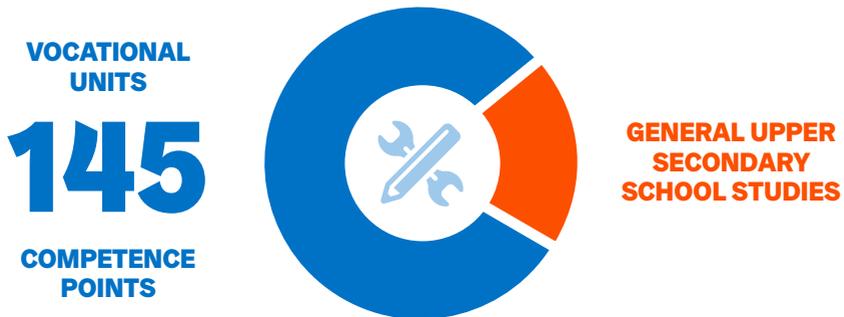
## Vocational special education institutions

Some students need comprehensive and extensive special support due to learning difficulties, a severe disability or illness, for example. Such students can apply for vocational education and training organised in the form of intensive special needs support. In this case, the education and training is organised at a vocational special education institution.

## Vocational general upper secondary school

Students studying at vocational institutions can also complete general upper secondary school studies. This is referred to as a vocational general upper secondary school. The student completes vocational units as normal, but also completes a part of the general upper secondary school syllabus at the same time. The general upper secondary school studies replace some of the vocational units. In other words, the student's workload is not much greater than in normal vocational education and training.

At the end of vocational general upper secondary school, the student takes the matriculation examination and receives both a vocational upper secondary qualification and a general upper secondary education certificate.



## Apprenticeship training

Vocational education and training can also be completed at a workplace. This is called apprenticeship training. In apprenticeship training, the student works at a workplace where they are taught the skills needed in the vocation. The things that the students needs to be taught are planned by a vocational institution in collaboration with the employer. The student completes regular competence demonstrations to demonstrate what they have learned to a teacher. At the end of apprenticeship training, the students receives a vocational upper secondary qualification.

## TUVA education

A pupil who does not want to or cannot start upper secondary education immediately after comprehensive school can apply for preparatory education for programmes leading to an upper secondary qualification (TUVA education) instead. TUVA education lasts for one year. During the one year of TUVA education, the student can learn more about general upper secondary school studies or vocational education and training, think about their career plan, raise their comprehensive school grades or improve their language skills. Every TUVA student is provided with a personal study plan.

## Basic education for adults

If a pupil does not receive a basic education certificate before the end of comprehensive school, they can continue their studies in basic education for adults. Basic education for adults is divided into two phases: the introductory phase and the final phase. Introductory phase studies are intended for those who have only completed a small amount of comprehensive school studies. Final phase studies are intended for those who have almost completed comprehensive school. At the end of basic education for adults, the pupil receives a basic education certificate, with which they can apply for upper secondary education.





## Co-operation between home and school

Guardians have a responsibility to support their children's education in comprehensive school and in upper secondary education. The guardian has the primary responsibility for the upbringing and compulsory education of the young person. The school's task is to support the student's learning and growth as a member of the school community.

Cooperation between teachers and guardians helps the child learn and grow. Guardians should always contact the school whenever they have any questions. It is important for guardians to also participate in parent-teacher meetings.

Communication can also be carried out with interpreters, if needed. The City of Helsinki's general upper secondary schools and Helsinki Vocational College and Adult Institute also have multilingual instructors.

## Support is available during studies

Students are provided with guidance counselling and support for their study choices during their studies. Guidance counsellors help students make choices about their careers and further studies. Every educational institution also has a nurse, a welfare officer and a psychologist. They provide help with issues related to student well-being.

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