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THE FINNISH EDUCATION SYSTEM IN A NUTSHELL



Education for all

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- The development of the whole education system takes time. During the first years of the 20th century, only a third of rural children went to school.
- The 1921 act on compulsory education started the path towards a modern education system based on the **philosophy of education for all**.
- Today **education from pre-primary to higher education is free of charge** for Finns and citizens from EU/ETA countries. Early childhood education and care is subsidized.



History

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1943

Law on free-of-charge school meals. All pupils have been served free school lunch during each school day since 1948.

1973

Act on Children's Day Care. Local authorities are obliged to organize public day care, which allows both parents to participate in working life.

1921

Compulsory School Attendance Act.

Municipalities are obliged to provide six years of compulsory education to all children aged 7 to 13.

1972

School reform. New comprehensive school system with 9 grades guarantees same opportunities for good quality education in a school nearest to you.



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School meals work as an equalizer between children from different backgrounds, strengthen equal opportunity and most importantly, promote learning.

Photo: Elina Manninen/Keksi



History

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1994, 2004, 2014

The national core curriculum and the education system have been reformed several times

1994

Requirement of master's level education for all basic education teachers

1985

Shift from a unified curriculum to a national core curriculum with local adaptations

1990s

Strong decentralization of education system. Abolishment of School inspectorate system, School books no longer centrally approved.

1996

Introduction of the dual model in higher education: academic universities & universities of applied sciences.



History

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2010

Introduction of the principal of inclusion in Finnish schools

2018

Reform of secondary vocational education to introduce competence-based qualifications and a close co-operation with workplaces

1995

First 'e-Learning strategy': Education, Training and Research in the Information Society (1995-2000)

2015

Pre-primary education compulsory for all 6-year-olds

2021

Extension in compulsory education. The minimum school leaving age raised from 16 to 18 years.



The Finnish education system today

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0-5-year-olds
Early childhood
education and
care

6-year-olds
Compulsory
pre-primary
education

Basic education
7-16-year-olds
Basic education
in comprehensive
schools

Secondary education

16-19-year-olds
Matriculation
examination in
general upper
secondary
schools

16-19-year-olds
Vocational
qualifications in
vocational
institutions

Tertiary education

Appr. 3+2 years
Bachelor's and
Master's degrees
at Universities

Appr. 3+2 years
Bachelor's and
Master's degrees
at Universities of
Applied Sciences

Doctoral
degrees and
licentiate
degrees in
Universities



Minimum number of teaching hours per week

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The legislation defines the minimum number of hours a pupil is entitled to receive instruction per week. The minimum number of hours is:

- 1st and 2nd grade 20 hours a week
- 3rd grade 22 hours a week
- 4rd grade 24 hours a week
- 5st and 6nd grade 25 hours a week
- 7st and 8nd grade 29 hours a week
- In the 9th grade, 30 hours a week.



Teaching hours for teachers

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- Primary 24h/week
- Secondary 16-24 h/week
- Vocational 1600hrs/year

More lessons= more pay



Maximum length of the school day

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- The maximum number of lessons allowed for the length of the school day is fixed, which **may not exceed five lessons** in the **first and second grades**, and **no more than seven lessons in other classes.**

Upper secondary education

Flexible

Personalised

Individualisation

Modular/course structure

Combining general & vocational studies

Eligibility for higher education



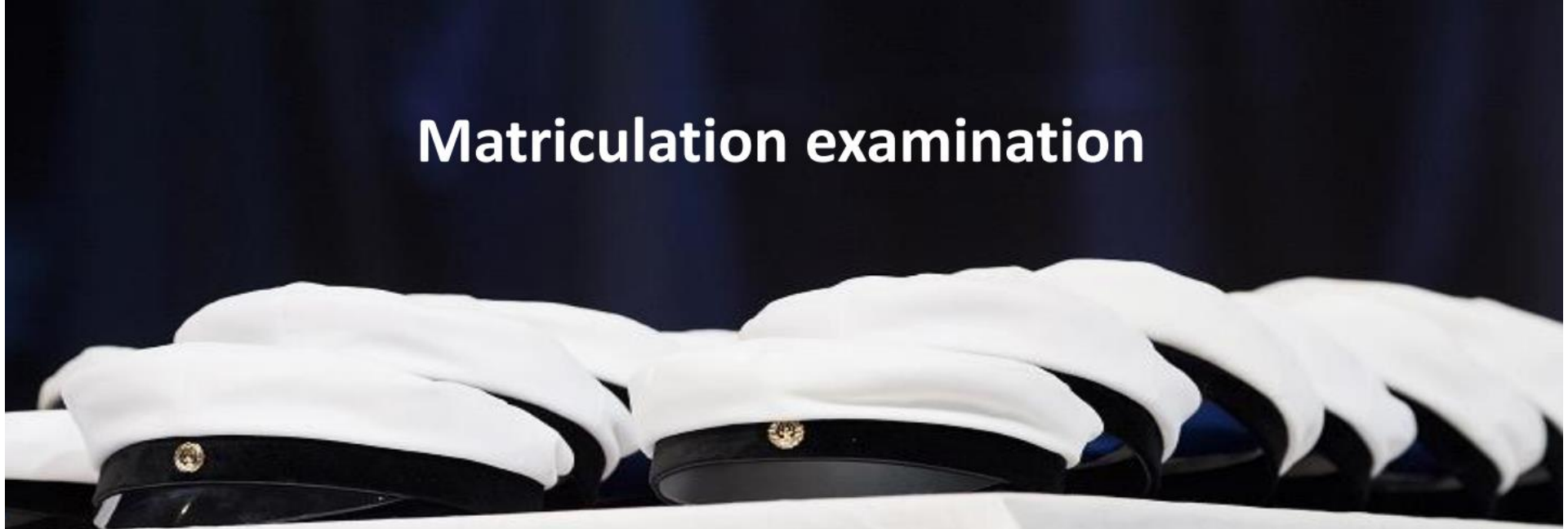


Subjects in General Upper Secondary Schools (150 credits)

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- **Mother tongue and Literature** (Finnish or Swedish)
- **Second National Language** (Finnish or Swedish)
- **Foreign Languages** (English, German, French, Spanish, Chinese, Italian, Latin)
- **Maths and Natural Sciences** (Biology, Geography, Physics, Chemistry))
- **Humanities and Social Studies** (Philosophy, History and Social Studies, Psychology)
- **Religion and Worldview studies**
- **Physical education, other arts and skills, and health education** (Visual arts, physical education, music, health education)
- **Guidance counselling** (not graded)
- **Diplomas** (home economics, visual arts, home crafts, media, music, dance, theatre)

Matriculation examination

- 
- Minimum 4 tests
 - Mother tongue + 3 of the following:
 - 2nd national language
 - foreign language
 - mathematics
 - general studies
 - One or more optional tests possible
 - Biannual
- (one subject in sciences and humanities)



Creativity and problem-solving

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- At the end of the 20th Century Finland's economy started focusing on **technology industries, R&D, information and knowledge**.
- New partnerships developed between tertiary education and industry, while primary and secondary education also evolved to **promote creativity, problem-solving, teamwork and other working life skills**.
- The national core curricula of 2014 for basic education and 2021 for general upper secondary education emphasized **transversal competences** and **phenomenon-based learning**, while still holding on to traditional school subjects.



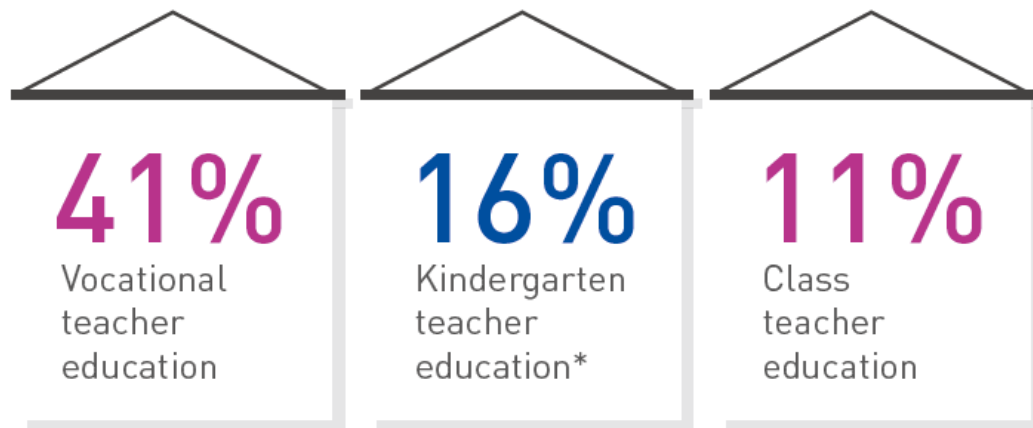
Field of education	Share of applicants admitted (%)
Art and design	9
Class teacher education programme	11
Medicine	11
Law	12
Engineering	41



Examples of admission rates to some popular fields of study



Admission rate to teacher education in 2016:



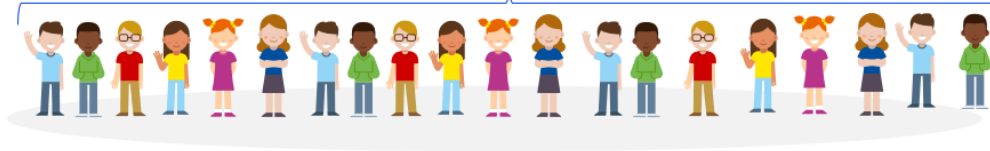
Subject teachers at all levels qualify by completing a master's degree in subject studies and teachers' pedagogical studies.

* Kindergarten teacher education qualifies one to work in both ECEC and pre-primary education for 6-year-olds.

Less than a quarter of applicants admitted to teacher education

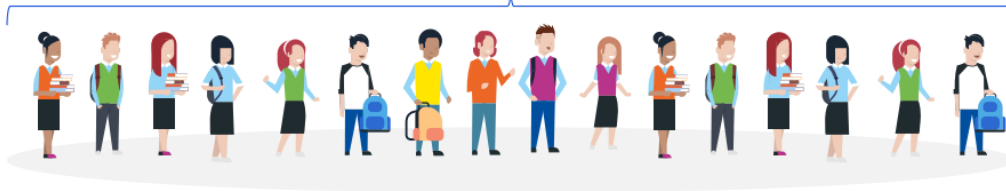
Group size in Finland (2016)

20



Grades 1-6

16



Grades 7-9



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Thank you!

Photo: Sakari Piippo

