



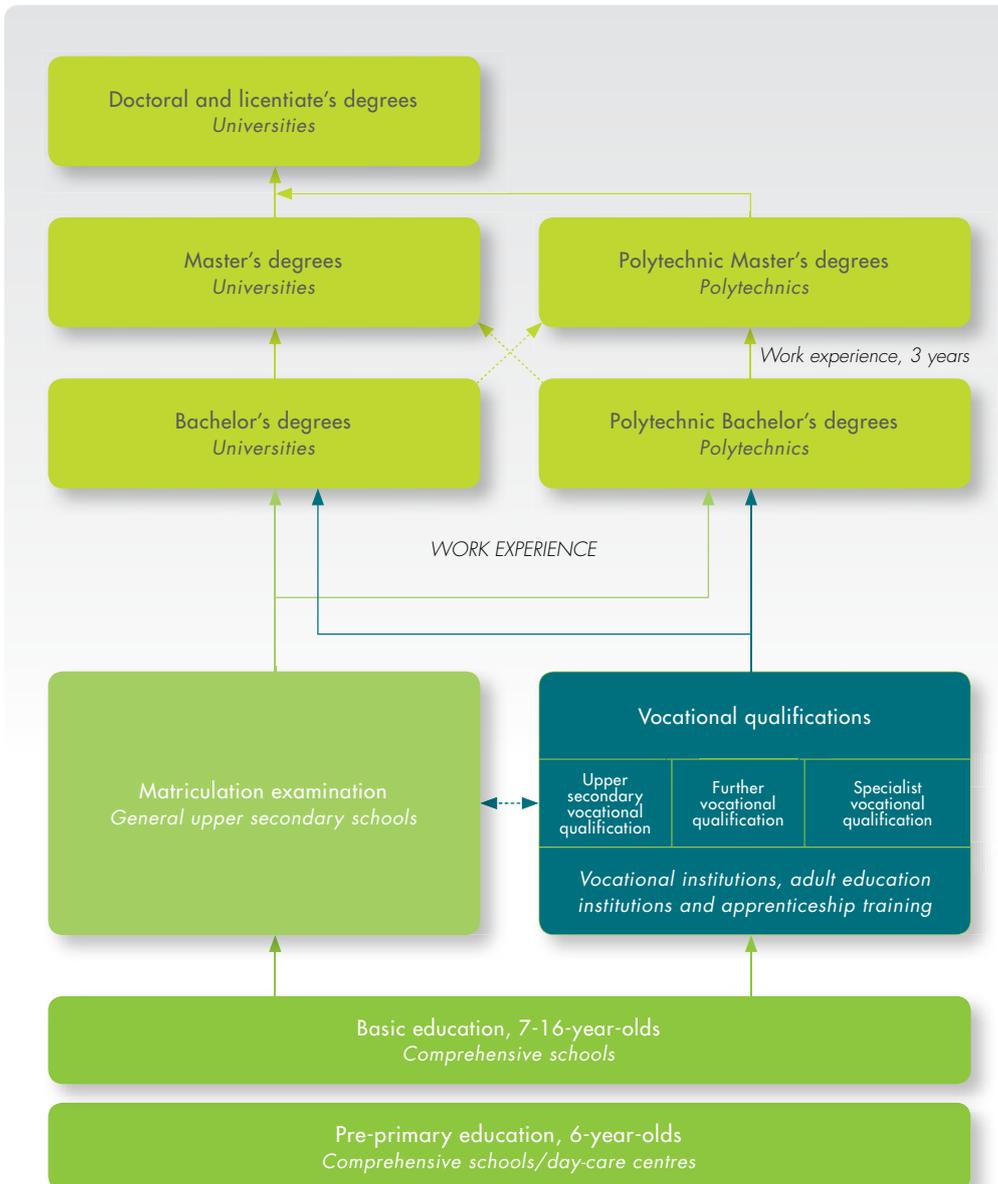
FINNISH NATIONAL
BOARD OF EDUCATION

Vocational education and training in Finland

Vocational competence, knowledge and skills for working life and further studies



Education system in Finland



The Finnish education system comprises pre-primary education, basic education, general upper secondary education and vocational education and training, as well as higher education provided by polytechnics and universities. Adult education and training is available at all levels, with the exception of pre-primary education. Students' eligibility to move from one level of education to the next is guaranteed by legislation.

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Vocational education and training – vocational skills for a changing world of work

Vocational education and training (VET) and vocational competence play a key role in promoting economic competitiveness and prosperity. The future labour market requires versatile vocational skills and solid competence, complete with continuous renewal of competencies.

Development of vocational education and training is based on quantitative anticipation of long-term demand for labour and educational needs and qualitative anticipation of skills needs at a national level. Anticipation efforts produce information about the types of skills and skilled people required in the future world of work and the ways in which this demand can be met through education and training provision. The objective is to match the quantitative demand for and supply of labour as closely as possible. In addition, anticipation data can be used to develop qualifications frameworks, vocational

skills requirements (National Core Curricula for Upper Secondary Vocational Qualifications and Requirements of Competence-based Qualifications) and instruction to better meet the skills needs of the future world of work.

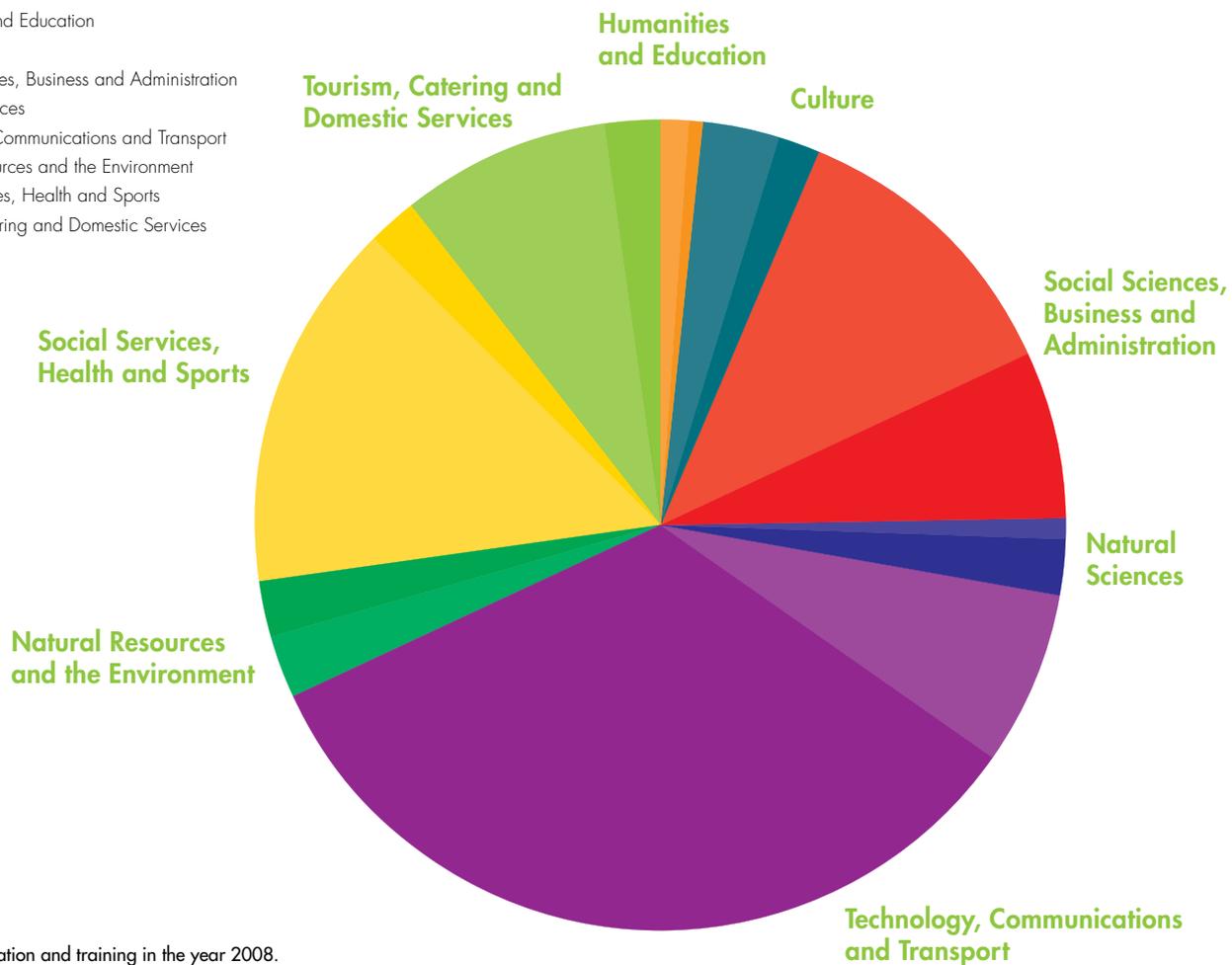
Vocational education and training is continuously improved by means of national development projects. In addition to educational administration officials, development efforts involve representatives of the world of work, VET providers, teachers and students. In recent years, key development areas have included meeting the changing skills needs of the world of work, co-operation between VET and the world of work, the quality of VET, recognition of prior learning, diversification of learning environments, enhancing efficient application procedures, reducing drop-out rates and increasing the attractiveness and appreciation of VET.



VET fields

Vocational education and training is currently classified into the following eight fields at all levels:

- Humanities and Education
- Culture
- Social Sciences, Business and Administration
- Natural Sciences
- Technology, Communications and Transport
- Natural Resources and the Environment
- Social Services, Health and Sports
- Tourism, Catering and Domestic Services



Vocational education and training in the year 2008.
Total number of students in different fields of education.
The proportion of women is represented in lighter shades.

Source: Statistics Finland

The structure of vocational education and training

The VET sector comprises upper secondary vocational education and training and further vocational training. It is targeted towards both young people ready to enter the labour market and adults already in gainful employment or outside the labour market. In addition to providing students with diverse knowledge, skills and competence required to enter and function in the world of work, vocational education and training prepares students for lifelong learning and self-development. Education and training can be organised diversely both in institutional learning environments and in workplaces as well as using online learning environments.

Upper secondary vocational education and training covers upper secondary vocational qualifications and various pre-vocational programmes preparing students for upper secondary vocational studies.

Further vocational training includes further and specialist qualifications as well as further training not leading to any specific qualification organised according to the needs of individual students and employers.

The system of competence-based qualifications

In Finland, vocational adult education and training is very much based on the system of competence-based qualifications. A specific benefit of this system is that it makes it possible to recognise an individual's vocational competencies regardless of whether they were acquired through work experience, studies or other activities.

Competence test candidates often participate in preparatory training for competence-based qualifications, which enables them to obtain the necessary vocational skills. Those with sufficient vocational skills may complete a competence-based qualification or an individual qualification unit without participating in preparatory training. It is not allowed to set preconditions concerning participation in training for those participating in competence tests. Nevertheless, the qualifications are mainly completed in connection with preparatory training.

Competence-based qualifications are completed by demonstrating the vocational skills determined in the Qualification Requirements by taking a competence test, which are primarily arranged in authentic production and service situations in the world of work. Each candidate completing a competence-based qualification progresses according to their own individualisation plan. Qualifications are gen-

erally completed one unit at a time. A competence test can either be taken at a specific time or it may involve performing a series of tasks over a longer period of time.

Competence tests are arranged by Qualification Committees appointed by the Finnish National Board of Education, working in co-operation with competence test organisers. The Qualification Committees prepare contracts for arranging competence tests, are responsible for supervising competence tests, and award qualification certificates. Each Qualification Committee includes representatives of the field's employers, employees and teachers, as well as entrepreneurs as required. Preparatory training for competence-based qualifications is organised by VET providers, who decide on the contents and provision of preparatory training in accordance with the relevant Qualification Requirements.

VOCATIONAL EDUCATION AND TRAINING (VET)				
Upper secondary VET				
School-based VET			Apprenticeship training	
Pre-vocational programmes	Programmes leading to upper secondary vocational qualifications	Preparatory training for competence-based qualifications	Preparatory training for competence-based qualifications	Programmes leading to upper secondary vocational qualifications
Further training				
School-based VET		Apprenticeship training		
Preparatory training for competence-based qualifications	Programmes not leading to a qualification	Preparatory training for competence-based qualifications	Programmes not leading to a qualification	

Vocational qualifications – competence and flexibility

The vocational qualifications framework and individual qualifications are developed in co-operation with the world of work and other key stakeholders in order to ensure that the qualifications support flexible and efficient transition into the labour market as well as occupational development and career change. In addition to the needs of the world of work, development of vocational education and training and qualifications takes into account the consolidation of lifelong learning skills as well as individuals' needs and possibilities to complete qualifications flexibly so as to suit their own circumstances.

A Qualification Requirements document is drawn up separately for each vocational qualification. The qualifications are based on competencies required in working life and consist of qualification units in keeping with the work and functional units of the world of work. The Qualification Requirements determine the units included in each qualification, any possible study programmes or competence areas made up of different units, the composition of the qualification, vocational skills required for each qualification unit, guidelines for assessment (targets and criteria of assessment) and methods of demonstrating vocational skills. The vocational skills requirements of qualifications and units are defined in terms of knowledge, skills and competences.

Upper secondary vocational qualifications

In completing upper secondary vocational qualifications, students acquire and demonstrate the skills and knowledge required to achieve vocational proficiency and find employment in their chosen field while obtaining extensive basic skills needed in different positions within the field and more specialised skills and professional competence in one sector of the study programme. In 2010, there were 52 upper secondary vocational qualifications including a total of 120 different study programmes. The scope of vocational qualifications is 120 credits (three years), including at least 20 credits (half a year) of on-the-job learning in workplaces.

Upper secondary vocational qualifications comprise vocational qualification units (90 credits) and core subject units to supplement vocational skills (20 credits), which may be compulsory or optional, as well as free-choice units (10 credits).

However, upper secondary vocational qualifications completed as competence-based qualifications only cover vocational units and their scope is not defined in credits.



Vocational units are based on work and functional units found in the world of work and they include at least 20 credits of on-the-job learning. In addition, all qualifications include vocational units covering vocational skills requirements relating to entrepreneurial competence and capabilities as well as those geared towards enhancing health and working capacity. Each qualification also includes a final project.

The qualification units to supplement vocational skills (core subject units) aim to provide students with the skills and knowledge that they will need at work, in further studies and as citizens, and they can be replaced with general upper secondary school units. Compulsory core subject units include languages, mathematics, physical education as well as arts and culture.

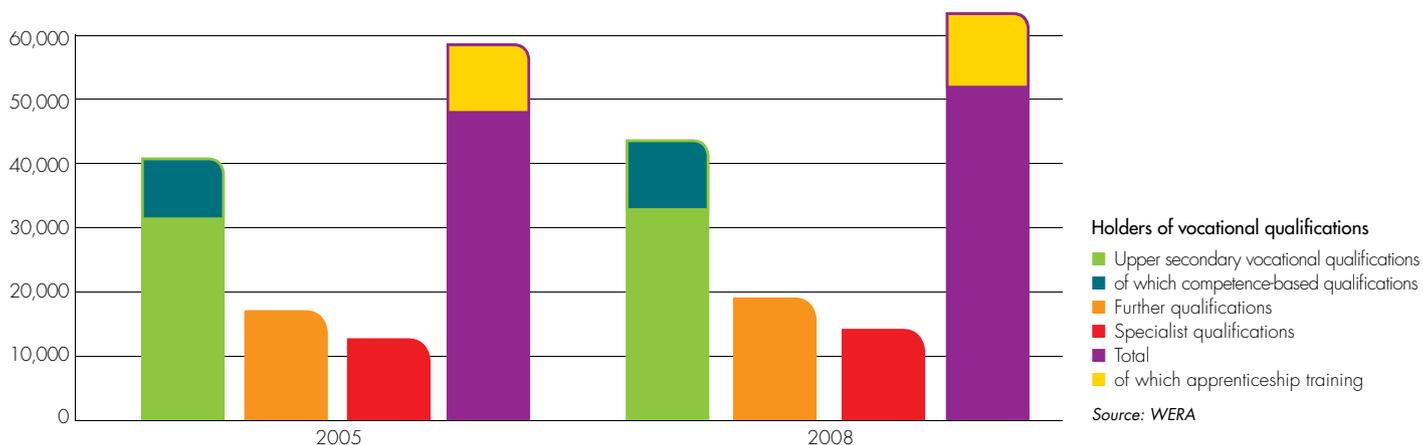
Free-choice units may be vocational units, core subject units, or general or interest-oriented units.

Students or competence-test candidates may also choose to include units from other vocational, further or specialist qualifications as part of their upper secondary vocational qualifications. In addition, they may improve their eligibility for further studies by taking general

upper secondary school courses and the general upper secondary school matriculation examination, or by individually including more vocational units than required by the scope of the qualification.

Students may also choose to complete one or more qualification units at a time, as appropriate for their individual learning abilities, life circumstances or employment. In such cases, VET providers draw up a plan for students to complete the entire qualification, working in co-operation with their workplaces if possible. The primary objective of upper secondary vocational education and training is for each participant to complete an entire qualification.

The National Core Curricula governing different upper secondary vocational qualifications determine the key lifelong learning skills, which are included in the vocational skills requirements set for vocational units and core subjects. These key lifelong learning skills include learning and problem-solving, interaction and co-operation, occupational ethics, sustainable development, aesthetics, communication and media competence, as well as active citizenship and different cultures.



Programmes leading to upper secondary vocational qualifications are mainly provided by vocational institutions in accordance with curricula conforming to the relevant National Core Curricula, and it is possible to incorporate on-the-job learning into these units in a flexible and diversified manner. Upper secondary vocational qualifications can also be completed as competence-based qualifications. The vocational skills requirements are the same regardless of the method of completion.

Further and specialist qualifications

Further qualifications enable participants to demonstrate the vocational skills required of skilled workers in their respective fields. In 2010, there were 187 further qualifications in all.

Specialist qualifications allow participants to demonstrate command of the most demanding work assignments in the field. In 2010, there were 129 specialist qualifications in all.

The further and specialist qualifications consist of qualification units in keeping with the work and functional units of the world of work. Qualification units may be compulsory or optional. The Qualification Requirements determine any possible competence areas included in a qualification and the way in which the qualification is divided into compulsory and optional units. Key lifelong learning skills are included in qualification modules as applicable.

Further and specialist qualifications or their constituent units have not been assigned any specific scopes.

Further and specialist qualifications are always completed as competence-based learning. Preparatory training may be organised in educational institutions or as apprenticeship training.



Eligibility for further studies

Holders of upper secondary vocational qualifications or further and specialist qualifications are eligible for further studies in polytechnics and universities. Natural study track for further studies for holders of upper secondary vocational qualifications includes polytechnics where just below a third of new entrants have completed such qualifications. At present, university entrants mainly come from general upper secondary schools but the vocational track is another possibility.

Pre-vocational programmes

Versatile and flexible study tracks have been developed for the transition point between basic education and upper secondary level. They are aimed at supporting successful transitions from one level to the next as well as endorsing the continuity of students' lifelong study tracks.

Prior to starting education leading to an upper secondary vocational qualification, students may apply for the following pre-vocational programmes preparing for vocational studies, where necessary. These programmes are based on the Vocational Education and Training Act (630/1998) and the National Core Curricula adopted by the Finnish National Board of Education (FNBE).

Preparatory instruction and guidance for VET – VET Start (20–40 credits)

This education is directed at young people without a clear idea of their career choice or without sufficient capabilities to apply for or cope with vocational studies. Each student studies in accordance with his or her individual study plan.

Rehabilitative instruction and guidance for the disabled (20–120 credits)

This programme allows students to develop their competencies, acquire capabilities required in vocational studies, working life and independent living and clarify their future plans. The aim is for students to achieve the best possible capabilities for independent living, education and training or work by the end of the programme. The scope of preparatory instruction is defined individually in each student's own individual educational plan.

When the objective is to move on to upper secondary vocational studies, the scope of the programme is 20–40 credits, but for special reasons it may even be as much as 80 credits. The scope is 40–120 credits when completion of a vocational qualification is too demanding an objective and the aim of the programme is to prepare participants directly for work and independent living.

Preparatory education for immigrants (20–40 credits)

This education is intended for immigrants and people of immigrant origin who already have basic proficiency in the language of instruction. Its objective is to provide immigrants with capabilities to move on to programmes leading to upper secondary vocational qualifications by improving their basic proficiency in the language of instruction (Finnish or Swedish) and other skills required for vocational



studies. A further objective is to increase their knowledge of the Finnish learning and working culture. At the same time, students also learn about different occupations and vocational studies and receive support to retain their own native language and cultural identity. An individual study plan is drawn up for each student.

Course in home economics (20 credits)

Courses in home economics provide students with capabilities and practical skills required to manage their everyday lives and households. The course prepares students for further studies and it can be adapted according to a specific VET field and in a student-focused manner.

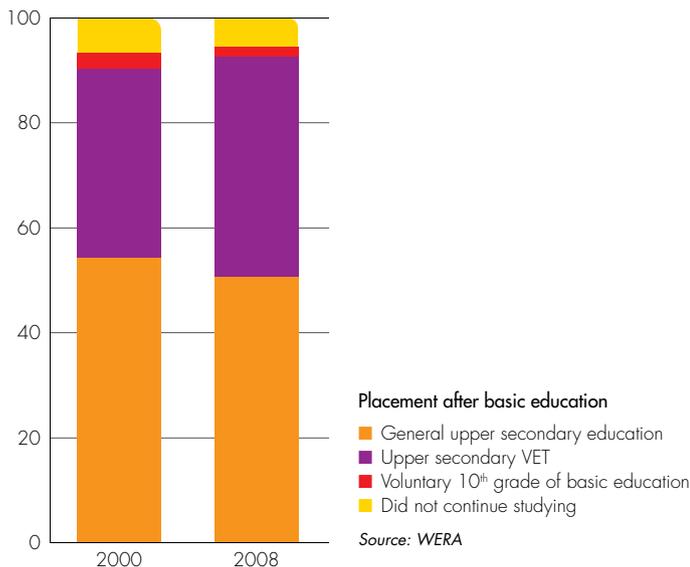
Applying for and starting vocational education and training

Prospective students are free to apply for the vocational programme of their choice anywhere in the country. Those aiming for upper secondary vocational education and training generally apply through the joint application system. Applicants for further vocational training contact vocational institutions, Employment and Economic Development Offices or organisers of apprenticeship training directly.

VET applicants include young people and adults from different educational and working backgrounds, whose prior competencies must be recognised as part of vocational qualifications. It is also possible for general upper secondary school graduates to apply for vocational education and training and complete vocational qualifications.

Upper secondary VET students are required to have completed the basic education syllabus or an equivalent previous syllabus. In addition, VET providers may also admit people who are otherwise deemed to have sufficient capabilities to cope with the studies.

The Ministry of Education and Culture decides on student admissions criteria. These include the applicant's previous study record and work experience and the ranking of the programme on the



applicant's list. VET providers decide on student admissions and may use for example entrance and aptitude tests or interviews to support their selection.

Provision of general and vocational upper secondary programmes is quantified so as to give all young people an opportunity to continue their studies after basic education. The attraction of upper secondary vocational education and training has grown throughout the 21st century. An increasing number of applicants primarily apply for and are admitted to upper secondary VET programmes. Approximately 95 percent of those completing basic education will immediately continue their studies in general upper secondary education, upper secondary VET or voluntary additional basic education.

Each year, approximately 50,000 students start upper secondary vocational education and training. The average age of entrants is 19 years. Some 10,000 candidates participate in preparatory training for competence-based upper secondary vocational qualifications annually.

Prospective students are free to apply for the further vocational training of their choice. The VET provider decides on student admissions criteria and on any possible entrance or aptitude tests. All applicants are subject to equal selection criteria. Where necessary, the criteria for student admissions may be determined by the Ministry of Education and Culture.

Self-motivated further vocational training is customer-oriented, and provision is therefore based on demand.

Every year, approximately 75,000 students start further vocational studies. The majority of them are gainfully employed adults aged between the ages of 25 and 64.

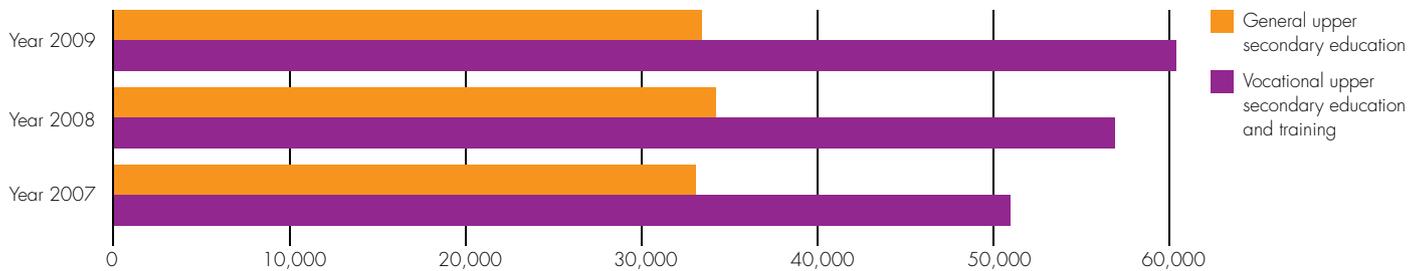
The number of competence test participants has increased continuously.



Applicants admitted to upper secondary vocational education and training 2007–2009



Primary applicants for general upper secondary education and vocational upper secondary education 2007–2008



Source: Statistics Finland

Studies and guidance counselling

Studies leading to upper secondary vocational qualifications and preparatory training for competence-based qualifications are carried out as direct contact, distance and multiform learning at vocational institutions, or in the form of apprenticeship training. Studies at vocational institutions take place in a variety of learning environments, such as workshops, laboratories and teaching restaurants. Work-based learning is central to meeting the vocational skills requirements.

On-the-job learning

On upper secondary VET programmes, responsibility for organising on-the-job learning places rests with the VET provider, who signs a written contract with the employer. Students are not usually considered to be in an employment relationship with the employer, which means that they retain their student status and social benefits. In addition, employers are not usually paid any compensation. On-the-job learning places may also be located abroad. Teachers and workplace instructors plan and implement each period of on-the-job learning and assess the learning agreed as being the objective of the period together with the student.

Apprenticeship training

Apprenticeship training is a work-based form of providing vocational training. It is based on a written fixed-term employment contract (apprenticeship contract) between an employer and an apprentice, who must be at least 15 years old. Civil servants and entrepreneurs may also develop their competence through apprenticeship training.

Approximately 70–80 percent of apprenticeship training takes place in the workplace, where the apprentice's training is entrusted to the responsible workplace instructor(s). Workplace training is supplemented with theoretical studies, which are mainly provided by vocational institutions. The provider of apprenticeship training confirms the apprenticeship contract between the apprentice and the employer. Apprenticeship training accounts for about 17 percent of vocational education and training.

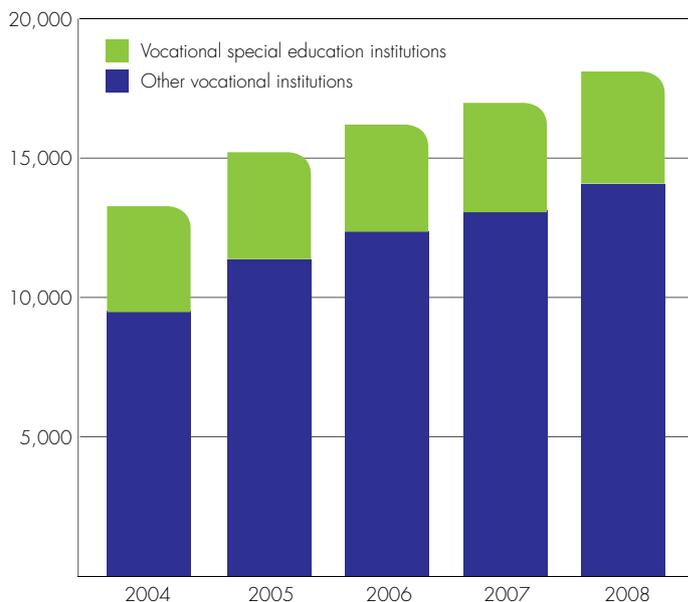
The employer pays the apprentice's wages according to the relevant collective agreement for the period of workplace training. For the period of theoretical studies, the student receives social benefits, such as a daily allowance and allowances for accommodation and travel expenses. The employer receives training compensation to cover the costs of training provided in the workplace.

Special needs education

Vocational special needs education and training is designed for students who require special support with their studies due to disability, illness, delayed development or for some other reason. Special needs students are attended to using various pedagogical means and through student welfare services during their studies. The objective is to support their studies and help them qualify for an occupation. Special needs education and training builds on each student's personal abilities combined with self-development and growth as a human being.

Instruction is planned and provided for both young people and adults, respecting each student's individual needs as much as possible. An individual educational plan is always drawn up for each special needs student. The objectives of qualification-oriented upper secondary VET programmes may also be adjusted as required.

Special needs students in upper secondary VET in 2004–2008



Source: State subsidy information system



Instruction for those in need of special support is primarily provided at regular vocational institutions in the same groups as other students or, where necessary, partially or completely in separate groups. Vocational special education institutions and a few VET providers assigned a special educational mission are responsible for providing education and training for students with the most severe disabilities.

Students requiring practice in basic skills may participate in preparatory and rehabilitative instruction and guidance for the disabled before starting vocational studies.

Special needs students account for approximately 13 percent of upper secondary VET students. The number of special needs students has increased in recent years.

Vocational education and training for immigrants

The term 'immigrants' is used to refer to refugees, migrants, repatriates and other foreign nationals and, in certain contexts, asylum seekers. Immigrant students may study at vocational institutions and complete vocational qualifications. They are subject to the same vocational skills requirements as other students.

Prior to starting upper secondary VET programmes, immigrants may participate in preparatory education for immigrants. They may also apply for other types of pre-vocational programmes, provided that they fulfil the admission criteria specified.

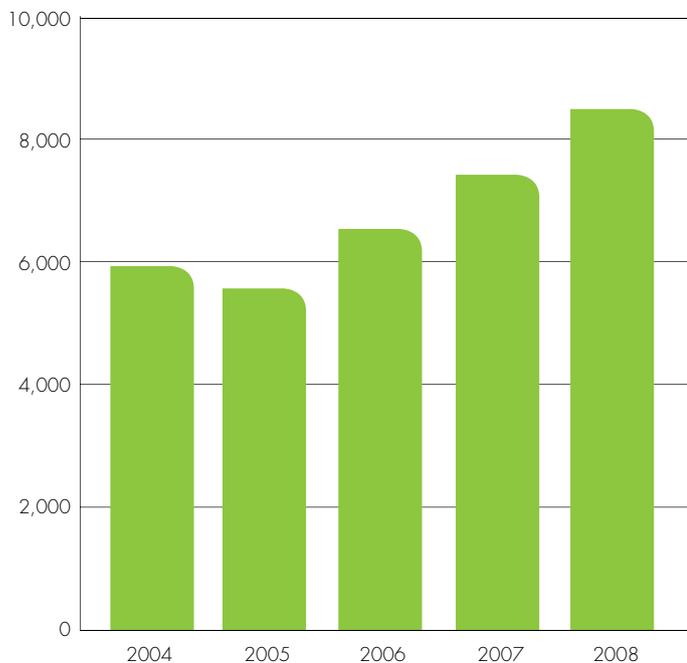
Adult immigrants falling within the scope of the Act on the Integration of Immigrants and Reception of Asylum Seekers are provided with integration training. The average duration of this training is 40 weeks, that is, one school year. The programmes generally comprise several courses, most of which focus on labour policy training. Integration training covers the Finnish or Swedish language, knowledge of society, everyday life skills, cultural knowledge, and careers and employment counselling. In many cases, the programme also includes practical training at a workplace. It also involves developing students' learning skills and drawing up an individual study plan and employment plan during the training.

Guidance counselling and individual study plan in upper secondary VET programmes

In programmes leading to upper secondary vocational qualifications, the VET provider co-operates with each student to draw up the student's individual study plan, which covers the student's individual choices, progress in studies, assessment of learning, identification and recognition of the student's competencies, on-the-job learning places and periods, and vocational skills demonstrations. Students are entitled to identification and recognition of their prior competencies that may also reduce the duration of their studies.

Students can also complete an upper secondary vocational qualification and the general upper secondary school matriculation examination in parallel. In such cases, students complete general upper

Foreign-language VET students in 2004–2008



Source: Statistics Finland

secondary school studies to the extent that they are able to take tests in at least four subjects included in the matriculation examination. They can also complete the entire general upper secondary school syllabus. It is possible to complete these two programmes within 3 to 4 years.

For the effectiveness of individual study plans and support for individualisation of qualifications to be guaranteed, upper secondary VET programmes include at least 1.5 credits of guidance counselling. Guidance counselling consists of group counselling and personal counselling as well as other guidance necessary to complete a qualification and relating to learning.

Guidance counselling involves all teachers and other people responsible for guidance and counselling at the vocational institution. The guidance counsellor has the main responsibility for practical organisation of guidance counselling and for its overall planning and implementation.

In many vocational institutions, older students act as tutors who introduce the school's operational culture to new students in particular.



Individualisation in competence-based qualifications

In competence-based qualifications, VET providers attend to individualisation at the following three stages: application for competence-based qualifications and for preparatory training, acquisition of the required vocational skills, and completion of qualifications. In addition, students are also advised on and referred for support services provided by other experts.

When an individual applies to complete a competence-based qualification, the competence test organiser is responsible for determining the applicant's prior competencies and other resources, suitable qualification and training needs, as well as any possible needs for guidance and support measures. Competencies are identified making diverse use of various methods appropriate for the field.

An individualisation plan is prepared for each student to help them acquire the required vocational skills. The plan takes into account the individual's life circumstances, competencies, identified learning needs and opportunities for on-the-job learning.

Assessment of competence

In programmes leading to upper secondary vocational qualifications, students' learning and its development as well as the competence acquired as a result of learning are assessed throughout the period of study. Assessment always involves students' individual self-assessment.

Students' learning and competence are always assessed in terms of the vocational skills requirements and assessment criteria determined within the relevant National Core Curriculum. Students' *learning is assessed* by giving verbal or written feedback on the progress of their studies. *Assessment of competence* forms the basis for awarding grades for all qualification units on students' certificates, using the following three-step grading scale: Satisfactory 1, Good 2, and Excellent 3.



In vocational qualification units, competence is assessed by means of vocational skills demonstrations, which entail performing work assignments relevant to the vocational skills requirements in the most authentic settings possible. Where necessary, other assessment methods are used to supplement vocational skills demonstrations. Skills demonstrations are designed, implemented and assessed in co-operation with representatives of the world of work within the framework of the National Core Curricula. As far as possible, skills demonstrations are arranged as part of on-the-job learning periods, either in workplaces or at vocational institutions.

Once students have completed all units included in a qualification to an acceptable standard, they receive a qualification certificate, which consists of a vocational upper secondary certificate and a certificate of skills demonstrations. The certificate of skills demonstrations includes information on the vocational skills demonstrations taken and the grades awarded for these, while the vocational upper secondary certificate covers the qualification units and their grades.

In competence-based qualifications, assessment is always based on the vocational skills requirements and assessment criteria determined within the relevant Qualification Requirements. Also, competence test performance is evaluated in relation to these. Assessment makes diverse use of different and primarily qualitative methods, such as observation, interviews, surveys, as well as group and self-assessment. Candidates' competence is assessed in competence tests.

Vocational skills are assessed by representatives of employers, employees and the educational sector. In addition, each candidate also assesses their own competence. In fields characterised by high rates of self-employment, the entrepreneurial sector is also taken into account when selecting assessors. After completion of a qualification unit, there will be an assessment discussion attended by the candidate and the assessors representing employers, employees and the educational sector. The assessors submit their proposal to the relevant Qualification Committee for either failing the module or awarding a specific grade (Satisfactory 1, Good 2, or Excellent 3) in upper secondary vocational qualifications and for either failing or passing the performance in further and specialist qualifications. Qualification Committees make the decisions regarding final assessment.

The qualification certificate may be awarded once all units required to obtain the qualification have been completed to an acceptable standard.

Study costs and social benefits for students



Instruction and completion of qualifications is free of charge for students studying for upper secondary vocational qualifications. Students are also offered one free meal per day and have the opportunity to receive school transport subsidy. However, students are expected to cover some of their own study expenses, such as textbooks and the tools, equipment and materials for personal use that will remain their property at the end of their period of study.

In cases where upper secondary vocational qualifications are completed as competence-based qualifications, preparatory training is provided free of charge, but students are not entitled to free meals. Competence test candidates are charged a test fee when they register for a test.

Students may be charged reasonable fees in preparatory training for further and specialist qualifications and in other types of self-motivated further vocational training. Also, candidates taking competence tests as part of further and specialist qualifications without participating in preparatory training may be charged reasonable fees to cover the costs arising from organising the tests. In addition, candidates need to pay a test fee when they register to take a competence test.

Student financial aid is available for upper secondary vocational education and training and for further vocational training. The conditions for receiving student financial aid include full-time study, progress made in studies and the need for financial support. The aid is means-tested and determined according to the student's age, form of accommodation and income. Mature students with extensive career records may be granted adult education subsidy. Further conditions include that students take unpaid study leave for a minimum of two months and do not receive any other financial aid for studies. In order for the student to be eligible to receive aid, studies must take place at an educational institution located in Finland and supervised by public authorities.

Students in apprenticeship training receive pay according to the relevant collective agreement, theoretical education free of charge as well as travel and accommodation allowances. They also receive a daily allowance for the period of theoretical studies if their pay does not cover that period. Apprentices with families are also entitled to family allowance.

Students are entitled to receive social and health care services free of charge, provided in co-operation with municipal social and health administrations. Many educational institutions have a multidisciplinary student welfare team to look after students' welfare. In education and training intended for young people, educational institutions are obliged to maintain contact with their homes.

Administration of vocational education and training

Vocational education and training falls within the administrative sector of the Ministry of Education and Culture. Provisions on vocational education and training are defined in Acts of Parliament. Key legislation consists of the Vocational Education and Training Act (630/1998), the Vocational Adult Education Act (631/1998) and the Act on the Financing of the Provision of Education and Culture (1705/2009).

The national objectives of upper secondary vocational education and training, the qualifications framework and the core subjects are defined by the Government, while the Ministry of Education and Culture decides on the specific details and scopes of qualifications.

The Ministry of Education and Culture is responsible for specifying education policies and for regulating, steering and financing vocational education and training. Its work is guided by policies determined in the Government Programme, the Government Strategy Document and the Development Plan for Education and Research adopted by the Government.

The Ministry of Education and Culture grants authorisations for provision of both upper secondary vocational education and training and further vocational training. Authorisations to provide upper secondary VET cover provisions on VET fields, qualifications, student volumes, language of instruction, locations, special educational missions and any other issues that may be required. Authorisations to provide further vocational training, in turn, include the necessary provisions on VET fields, language of instruction, and the numbers of student-years in preparatory training for competence-based qualifications and in other further vocational training as well as the number of apprenticeship contracts concerning further vocational training. VET providers may also be assigned missions to develop and serve the world of work.

The Finnish National Board of Education (FNBE) is an expert and development body which decides on the National Core Curricula and the Requirements of Competence-based Qualifications, determining the vocational skills requirements of qualifications and the methods of demonstrating competence. In addition, the Finnish National Board of Education co-ordinates national projects to develop education, training and teaching, monitors learning outcomes and anticipates changes in educational and skills needs.

VET providers decide on the provision of vocational education and training in their region within the limits of their authorisation from the Ministry. They decide independently on issues such as the kind of education and training provided and the method of completion of these studies as well as making decision regarding organisation of operations and the educational institutions maintained. When planning their operations, VET providers take into consideration the educational needs of the world of work and the population of the region. VET providers prepare their vocational education curricula for the fields where education and training is provided based on the National Core Curricula.

The National Education and Training Committees are tripartite advisory bodies appointed by the Ministry of Education and Culture to ensure effective contacts between the VET sector and the world of work at a national level. Committees participate in development and anticipation of vocational education and training as advisory bodies.



VET providers maintain one or more bodies for vocational skills demonstrations and some also have field-specific local advisory councils, which include representatives of the world of work. Close contacts with the local world of work constitute the cornerstone for high-quality instruction.

A key role in adult education and training is played by the Qualification Committees, which are bodies appointed by the Finnish National Board of Education to implement competence-based qualifications. The Qualification Committees are responsible for organising and supervising competence tests, monitoring the effectiveness of the competence-based qualifications system in their respective VET fields and, where necessary, making initiatives concerning its development. The Qualification Committees prepare contracts for arranging competence tests for different qualifications with the providers of relevant training or other bodies capable of arranging competence tests for the qualifications concerned in keeping with the principles of the competence-based qualifications system. They ensure the consistent quality of qualifications and award qualification certificates.

There are no specific educational inspection procedures in Finland. However, the Ministry of Education and Culture and the Finnish National Board of Education or an external audit firm, as decided by the Ministry, perform inspections to verify the validity of the criteria for allocation of funds.

In Finland, regional administration plays an important role in promoting the relevance and demand-driven approach of vocational adult education and training. Regional authorities implement Government-funded continuing training for teaching staff in their respective regions. In addition, they allocate grants for the purposes of vocational institutions' mission to develop and serve the world of work. They also manage regional ESF funding, which is allocated to purposes such as development of work-based learning.

Parliament

- Legislation
- State Budget
- General education policy

Government

- Decrees
- Development plans and policy programmes for education and training
- General objectives of studies

Ministry of Education and Culture

- Specific education policies
- Steering, financing and regulation
- Qualifications

Finnish National Board of Education

- National Core Curricula and Qualification Requirements
- Implementation of development programmes
- Services

National Education and Training Committees

- Contacts with the world of work

Qualification Committees

- Contacts with the world of work

VET providers

- Local planning and organisation of education and training
- Provision of education and training
- Local advisory councils for VET and other bodies
- Quality management

Regional administration

- Specific administrative duties

VET providers

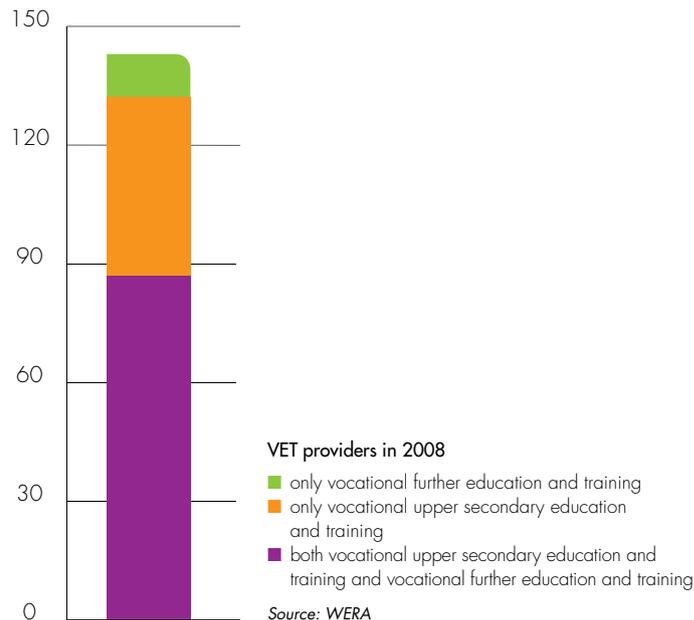
Vocational education and training may be provided by local authorities, joint municipal authorities, registered associations or foundations, or state enterprises authorised by the Ministry of Education and Culture to provide education and training. The Government maintains the Sámi Education Institute and the Maritime Safety Training Centre.

The VET provider network is comprehensive and diversified in regional terms. The provider network comprises multidisciplinary vocational institutions, often created on a sub-regional or regional basis. They are responsible for providing both upper secondary vocational education and training and further vocational training on the basis of working life needs in their respective areas. The key factors involved in responding to vocational competence needs include sound field-specific expertise, close contacts with the world of work and business as well as taking individual educational needs into account when planning and implementing education and training. Swedish-language vocational education and training is provided either by Swedish-language or bilingual institutions.

The number of VET providers has decreased notably in the last ten years as providers maintaining vocational institutions have been merged to form larger entities. The majority of VET providers offer both upper secondary VET and further vocational training. There are close to 150 VET providers in total.

Almost all VET providers maintain several institutions and units, while many also offer apprenticeship training. Vocational institutions have diverse teaching facilities and up-to-date technology for practical teaching purposes. Teaching staff are well-educated.

In each educational institution, there is a principal (rector) responsible for its operations. Each vocational institution also has a student body exercising the students' right to be heard. The student body communicates students' views to the VET provider's decision-making bodies. Students are also given opportunities to participate in and influence development of education and training and to engage in leisure interests in the school environment. National student organisations (the Finnish Students Alliance, OSKU, and the Central Organisation for Finnish Vocational Students, SAKKI) support student bodies' operations and also carry out lobbying activities.



Teachers

The qualifications requirements for vocational teachers include an appropriate university degree or an appropriate polytechnic degree, at least three years of work experience in a field relevant to the position and teachers' pedagogical studies. In addition to these, the qualifications requirements for special needs teachers and guidance counsellors also include studies specialising in these areas.

Training for vocational teachers, special needs teachers and guidance counsellors is provided by vocational teacher education colleges operating in conjunction with polytechnics. There is a volume of applicants for vocational teacher education, and roughly 35–40 percent of applicants are admitted every year. Some VET teachers have obtained their teaching competence as part of a university degree by completing a teacher training programme.

Approximately 72 percent of VET teachers are formally qualified for their positions. The primary reason for the lack of formal teaching qualifications is the absence of pedagogical studies required of teachers. The highest proportions of those formally qualified for their positions can be found among principals and directors, full-time teachers, special needs teachers and guidance counsellors.

More than half of VET teachers work in the field of Technology, Communications and Transport and the subfield of Health Care and Social Services. Women account for just over half (54 percent) of teachers.

Alongside teachers, there are workplace instructors who supervise work-based learning, participating both in supervision and guidance of students and in assessment of their vocational skills.



Financing

Vocational education and training is mostly financed from the budget of the Ministry of Education and Culture. Vocational education and training funded by the Ministry of Education and Culture forms part of the system of central government transfers to local governments. The Ministry of Employment and the Economy also finances labour policy training, which may be upper secondary vocational education and training, further training or higher education. The labour administration purchases labour policy training from education providers in the administrative sector of the Ministry of Education and Culture and, to some extent, from other education providers as well.

Financing of vocational education and training is based on calculatory unit prices and granted directly to authorised VET providers. The annual funding allocated to a VET provider is based on the number of students or other financial performance indicator (such as student-year) and the calculated unit price payable per such indicator. The VET provider can spend the funding granted to it for planning and implementation of its provision as it sees fit. In a system based on calculated unit prices, use of funding granted is not tied to the award and calculation criteria.

The VET funding model steers the provision of vocational education and training to meet the needs of different fields in the world of work as unit prices are determined on the basis of the world of work and training costs within different fields. The model takes into consideration educational needs within fields where the costs of education are higher than the average as well as paying special attention to fields of particular importance with regard to national economy.

Financing of vocational upper secondary education and training

Vocational upper secondary education and training is co-financed by the State and municipalities. The statutory government transfer is calculated to cover approximately 42 percent of operating costs, and some 58 percent of funding comes from municipalities.

The Government confirms the average unit price for vocational upper secondary education and training annually, and field-specific unit prices are calculated based on this average. When confirming the average unit price, the Government takes into consideration the total costs of vocational upper secondary education and training nationally, change in the level of costs as well as changes in the scope and quality of operations due to legislation and other actions by state authorities. The financing a VET provider receives is determined based on the number of students and the allotted unit price per student. Unit prices are banded based on factors substantially affecting operating costs. In vocational upper secondary education and training, the unit price of a VET provider is determined based on factors such as the field of education provided, whether the education and training is particularly expensive, the number of students receiving special needs education and the number of students receiving housing from the education institution. The unit price for vocational upper secondary education arranged as apprenticeship training is roughly 63 percent of the average unit price for vocational upper secondary education. In special needs education, the unit price for apprenticeship training is raised.

VET FUNDING MODEL			
	Statutory government transfers • operating costs and investments	Performance-based funding	
		Based on operational outcomes	Based on quality assessment
Vocational upper secondary education and training	unit price / student / year	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> effectiveness formal teaching qualifications staff development 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> EFQM excellence model special themes
Vocational further education and training	unit price / student-year / year	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> qualifications completed 	
Apprenticeship training	unit price / student = confirmed apprenticeship agreement / year		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> EFQM excellence model special themes when necessary

Performance-based criteria was introduced as a basis for determining calculatory banding of operating costs in vocational upper secondary education and training in the beginning of 2006. Performance-based financing system comprises funding based on operational outcomes determined on the basis of quantitative indicators, and funding based on quality assessment. Performance-based funding is designed to motivate VET providers to continuously work on developing and improving their operational outcomes and the quality of education and training provided.

Performance-based funding constitutes 3 percent of the overall funding for vocational upper secondary education and training. The amount of performance-based funding a VET provider receives is determined based on indicators used to measure the employment situation of qualification holders, placement in further studies in higher education, drop-out rate, proportion of students passing their qualifications, formal teaching qualifications of the staff and resources allocated towards staff development. Reform on the model for determining performance-based funding will take place in 2011.



Financing of vocational further education and training

Vocational further education and training is mainly financed by the state. Part of the education and training is funded by students and employer who may be required to pay certain fees. Statutory government transfers constitute approximately 85 percent of funding in self-motivated education and training and approximately 47 percent of in-service training. The municipalities are not under any obligation to contribute to the financing of vocation further education.

Financing of school-based vocational further training is determined based on student-years and unit prices. Student-year specific unit prices are based on the average unit price for vocational upper secondary education and training. Banding of unit prices is based on price category rates representative of the level of costs within different fields of education and training. The Ministry of Education and Culture annually confirms the quantity of student-years for each institution providing vocational further education and training based on the operations data from previous years. This constitutes the basis for calculating the amount of statutory government transfer, as unit prices are multiplied by the confirmed number of student-years.

In vocational further education and training arranged as apprenticeship training, unit prices are determined in the State Budget for education and training leading to qualification as well as for other vocational further education. These prices are multiplied by the number of confirmed apprenticeship agreements for the following year.

Performance-based funding was introduced in vocational further education and training in 2010. It constitutes 3 percent of the overall statutory government transfers in vocational further educational and training. Completing all modules of a qualification programme constitutes a prerequisite for performance-based funding.

Quality management

Quality assurance in vocational education and training is a tool for VET providers to assure and improve the quality of provision. The national quality management system in vocational education and training comprises national steering, quality management of VET providers and external evaluation of VET. International quality assurance policies, such as the Recommendation of the European Parliament and of the Council on the establishment of a European Quality Assurance Reference Framework for Vocational Education and Training (EQARF), have been taken into account in developing national and provider-level quality management.

The extensive mission of vocational education and training and the objective of meeting the increasing and changing needs of individuals and the world of work set further requirements on the quality of VET provision. Continuous improvement of the quality of vocational education and training is a key priority both in Finland and within the European Union as a whole.

In addition to legislation, central instruments for steering quality management in VET include the Development Plan for Education and Research adopted by the Government, the State Budget, authorisations to provide vocational education and training, the qualifications framework and the National Core Curricula for Upper Secondary Vocational Education and Training and the Requirements of Competence-based Qualifications, criteria for funding operations and performance-based funding, as well as qualifications requirements for teaching staff. In addition to these, guidance from educational administration carried out in the form of development and information services plays an im-

portant role in this respect, as do vocational skills demonstrations and competence tests. Continuous improvement of teachers' competence and active contacts between teaching staff and the world of work also form a key part of quality management.

VET providers are obligated by law to carry out self-assessment of their own operations. They are also required to make the key results of these assessments public. The quality of vocational education and training is also assessed by means of external evaluations, in which VET providers are obligated to participate. The Finnish Education Evaluation Council has been established for the purposes of external evaluation of education. The Finnish National Board of Education maintains a national monitoring system of learning outcomes based on vocational skills demonstrations for the purposes of national follow-up assessments on learning outcomes. Decisions on other types of external evaluation of education and training are made by the Ministry of Education and Culture and carried out by the Finnish Education Evaluation Council or some other auditor appointed by the Ministry. In addition to these, another widely used method is based on peer assessments, which are carried out both nationally and internationally.

VET providers are encouraged to manage and improve the quality of their operations through the national Quality Management Recommendations for Vocational Education and Training and the Quality Awards for VET granted annually as part of performance-based funding. The assessment criteria used for Quality Awards are based on the EFQM Excellence Model (the European Quality Award model).



Internationalisation

Vocational education and training also aims to provide students with the knowledge, skills and competences required in an increasingly internationalised labour market and multicultural society. The competence requirements of vocational qualifications include language proficiency as well as other international capabilities.

The starting point for internationalisation of vocational education and training lies in developing education and training to enhance the competitiveness of the Finnish world of work and education and training in an international environment. Through international co-operation, the quality and attractiveness of VET can be improved and mobility among vocational students and qualification-holders can be promoted.

Recognition of competencies and qualifications together with related exchanges of information form an integral part of this development. For the purposes of comparing and recognising qualifications and competencies, Finland has developed a National Qualifications Framework based on the European Qualifications Framework (EQF). Credit transfers in vocational education and training have been actively developed in several projects on the basis of the European Credit Transfer System for Vocational Education and Training (ECVET).

VET providers are actively involved in international co-operation and development. Their foreign partners mainly come from within the European Union but co-operation is also carried out with countries outside Europe.

Every year, some 5,300 Finnish vocational students go abroad, accounting for about 11 percent of the total number of students. Finland receives approximately 2,500 vocational students each year. Teachers' professional development placements are also carried out abroad in order to develop their pedagogical and vocational expertise.



Education in figures



- Independent since 1917
- Member of the European Union since 1995
- Population: 5.3 million
- Land area: 304,000 km²
- Official languages: Finnish (91%) and Swedish (5%); Saami in the Saami domicile area of Lapland (0.03%)
- Religions: Evangelical Lutheran 81%, Greek Orthodox 1%, unaffiliated 17%
- Foreign nationals account for 2.5% of the population.

Source: Statistics Finland

Education and training in Finland

Finland's educational expenditure accounted for 5.6 percent of the GDP in 2007.

Source: Education at a glance 2010

Students and educational institutions in 2009

	Students	Institutions
• Comprehensive schools (incl. special needs schools)	538,193	3,097
• Upper secondary schools	112,283	397
• Vocational institutions	142,799	148
• Polytechnics	144,639	28
• Universities	168,343	20

As a result of mergers, there were 25 polytechnics and 16 universities in Finland in 2010.

Sources: Statistics Finland and Reports from the system of funding for education and culture

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