



# Why Finland?

SOME OF THE MANY GOOD REASONS FOR INTERNATIONAL STUDENTS TO CHOOSE FINLAND





## Why Finland?

Finland offers excellent opportunities in higher education in every field of study. This Nordic country and EU member state is situated between West and East offering the best of both traditions. Finland is everything you would expect a modern welfare state to be and more: for example, it enjoys political and economic stability, it is efficiently run and has a first-class education system. Its culture is unique: the Finnish way of life combines all the advantages of a high-tech society with a love of the country's rich and vast expanses of unspoilt nature.

Finland's national strategy is based on a desire to develop the country as an information society that educates its citizens to a high standard and channels substantial investment into research. Finland has internationally recognized expertise in many areas and its institutions of higher education such as universities and polytechnics have state-of-the-art facilities. For example libraries are not only well-stocked but also have computers with internet access that are freely available to all visitors. Teachers provide their students with ongoing support throughout their studies and are more than happy to discuss any problems they may encounter. Finns are great believers in equal rights for all and this naturally extends to higher education. As a general rule there are no tuition fees at Finnish universities and polytechnics for students enrolled on regular degree programmes.

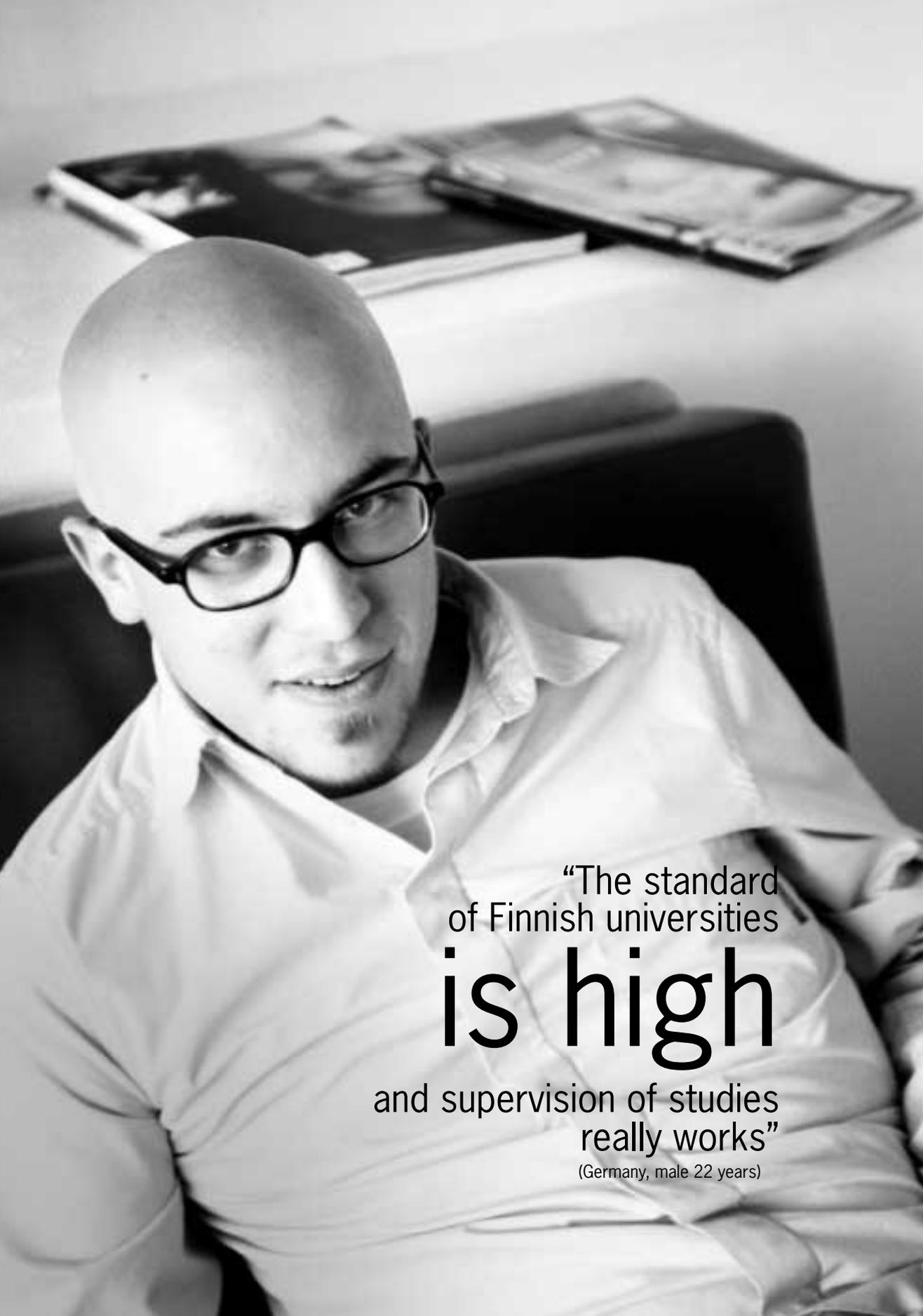
Of course, a student's life is not just about studying. The geopolitical location of Finland vis-à-vis its neighbouring countries of Sweden, Norway, Russia, and Estonia not only opens up interesting perspectives and natural areas of expertise in various fields of study and business, but it also gives students a unique opportunity to explore other countries and cultures during their free time. Students can also choose from a whole variety of leisure activities coordinated by the Finnish students' unions and other student organizations which also arrange tutoring and courses for foreign students.

Already some 7,000 foreign students representing more than 40 nationalities are studying for a degree in Finland. In addition, thousands of others come to Finland every year either on exchange programmes or independently.

This leaflet is a short introduction to the reasons why you might want to choose Finland for all or part of your higher education studies. The quotations are the words of foreign students already studying in Finland – their response to the question "Why Finland?".

Tervetuloa Suomeen! Välkommen till Finland! Welcome to Finland!

Centre for International Mobility CIMO



“The standard  
of Finnish universities

**is high**

and supervision of studies  
really works”

(Germany, male 22 years)



## Finland offers



- **a good education system with high standards and efficient quality assurance**
- **excellent opportunities for study**
- **internationally oriented universities and polytechnics with special regional features**
- **world-renown expertise in many areas e.g. IT, bio-tech, forestry and environmental sciences, architecture, art and design**
- **study programmes involving close collaboration with industry and business**
- **no tuition fees as a general rule**

There are higher education programmes throughout Finland – and they are also open to foreign students. Higher education is provided by 20 universities and 29 polytechnics, situated in almost every corner of the country. All of them are internationally oriented with good services for foreign students.

Ten of the twenty universities are multidisciplinary institutions and ten are specialist ones (three universities of technology, three business schools and four art academies). All universities are involved in both education and research and award doctorates.

The polytechnics form a system of higher education more practically oriented than that of the academic universities. The polytechnics award Bachelor-level higher education degrees emphasizing close contacts with business and industry. Polytechnics always include a period of practical training in their programmes. Most of the polytechnics are multi-faculty, regional establishments.

The Finnish universities and polytechnics have areas of specialization often directly linked to the features of the region in which they are located. By surface area Finland is the fifth largest member state of the European Union and has a rich variety of regional features relating to the natural environment, local industries and neighbouring countries.

Finland's education system is efficient and well-organized. The overall performance of the country's higher education institutions is constantly monitored and performance-based funding is used to reward institutions for high-quality education and research. The Finnish universities are state institutions and are overseen by the Ministry of Education. The polytechnics are mainly maintained by municipalities or federations of municipalities.

In Finland education is highly valued. The population of 5.2 million people is small but well-educated. No wonder, because although the population density of Finland is among the lowest, its network of higher education institutions is among the densest in Europe. All the major cities boast one or several universities and polytechnics. So practically anywhere in Finland it is possible to find tuition in the areas in which the country has internationally acclaimed expertise such as IT, bio-tech, forestry and environmental science, architecture, art and design.

As a general rule, there are no tuition fees for students on degree programmes at Finnish universities and polytechnics. Most of the international programmes do not charge tuition fees either. The student unions at the universities however may charge a membership fee of 30-85 euros to cover services such as counselling and healthcare. Students can use the well-stocked libraries, all of which have excellent computer facilities, free of charge. The student card also gives students discounts for a wide range of other services.

“Lots of different  
forward-thinking courses

taught in  
English”

(Austria, female 22 years)



- **more than 300 international study programmes in English**
- **an excellent choice of subjects**
- **programmes ranging from short-term courses to complete degrees**
- **Bachelor's, Master's and Doctor's degree programmes**
- **good-quality graduate schools for young researchers**
- **scholarships for post-graduate study and research**

You don't have to know any Finnish to study in Finland because there are more than 300 international study programmes taught in English.

The scope of the programmes on offer is extensive both with regard to the subjects taught and the length of the course. Study opportunities range from interdisciplinary programmes such as Russian and East European studies, and intercultural studies through to high-tech know-how, marketing and engineering as well as design and fine arts. Depending on the time you have available and your particular needs, the choice spans short-term courses through to complete degree programmes requiring several years of full-time study.

If you are interested in studying for a complete academic degree in Finland you generally ought to know one of the two official languages of the country, Finnish or Swedish. The lower academic degree which corresponds approximately to a Bachelor's, can usually be attained in three years of full-time study. The higher degree i.e. Master's degree takes five years (two years additional study following the Bachelor's degree). Full-time studies for a doctorate take approximately four years following completion of a Master's degree.

The quality of scientific research in Finland is high. Systematic, professional research training is available in about one hundred graduate schools which are attached to Finnish universities and cover all the main areas of research. Students attend top-level intensive courses and receive research tutoring in Finland's leading research teams which work in close collaboration with other national and international research centres. Some institutions of higher education offer complete post-graduate degree programmes in English. They can be found listed by field of study on the Discover Finland website at <http://finland.cimo.fi> (the section on studying | international programmes).

For post-graduate students and researchers there are scholarships for study in Finland. For example the Centre for International Mobility CIMO awards scholarships to young researchers (post-graduates who have completed their Master's degree or post-doctoral students) for study at Finnish universities. The programme is open to young researchers from all countries. For this and other scholarships further information is given on the Discover Finland website at <http://finland.cimo.fi> (the section on studying).

“The practical  
training period  
in Finland improved my

**professional** skills”

(Canada, male 24 years)



- **good opportunities for practical training relating to your studies**
- **placements in Finnish companies with a high international profile**
- **a wide range of programmes from technology to marketing and tourism**
- **programmes designed for students and recently graduated persons over 18 years of age**
- **training periods varying from one-month summer placements to a maximum of 18 months**

In order to add a Finnish dimension to your studies you don't have to actually study in Finland, but instead you could complete the practical training period there.

If you choose to train in Finland you will have a unique opportunity to experience first-hand Finnish culture, commerce and industry, education and technological expertise. Training opportunities in Finland are available for both full-time students who have completed at least two years at a university, polytechnic or vocational college and graduates of not more than two years' standing. The selection of placements is wide ranging from environmental technology, IT applications and marketing to tourism. Assistant teaching posts are also available for native speakers of English, French or German.

The training period is directly related to the student's particular field of study. Previous work experience in the field is desirable but not always a requirement. The training normally takes place during the summer (June-August) but is also possible in winter. The minimum training period is one month, maximum 18 months. Students are required to have a working knowledge of English, Swedish or Finnish.

Trainee exchanges are arranged by various organizations: CIMO and its contact organizations, student organizations, universities etc. You can also come to Finland as a trainee via some of the European community action programmes i.e. Leonardo da Vinci and Socrates/Comenius 2.2.



The facilities are good  
and students are made to  
feel really  
welcome”

(Spain, female 26 years)



- **an established international reputation for a high standard of facilities**
- **free access to well-equipped library and computer services**
- **the latest information technology**
- **a range of services dedicated to international students including orientation, academic counselling and language courses**
- **excellent support from teachers**
- **a wide variety of student organizations and events**

The Finnish institutions for higher education receive a lot of praise from foreign students and experts for the high standard of their facilities.

Buildings are modern and functional, libraries are well-stocked and equipped offering computer services and internet access, and the latest developments in information technology are exploited in every field of study.

Foreign students also enjoy the efficient yet relaxed atmosphere in the Finnish universities and polytechnics. Teachers are easy to approach and they are committed to supporting their students throughout their studies.

Finnish universities and polytechnics organize language courses for foreign students in both Finnish and Swedish, Finland's two official languages.

The students' unions and other student organizations arrange tutoring, a variety of courses and informal leisure activities. They will do their best to ensure that you get the most out of your time in Finland.



“The newest  
technology  
and unspoilt  
nature  
right next to each other.”

(Hungary, male 22 years)

- **an inspiring cross-cultural environment: Western tradition enriched with Eastern influences combined with a Nordic lifestyle**
- **a peaceful, well-organized country**
- **a society where English is widely spoken**
- **excellent opportunities for sports and cultural activities**
- **friendly people**

In Finland you can experience a way of life that combines a dynamic urban culture with a richly diverse natural environment. Finland is also a high-tech society that is quick to exploit the advantages of the latest technological advances.

Finland is an EU member state and a Nordic republic with two official languages, Finnish and Swedish. The country is situated between West and East bordering Sweden, Norway and Russia by land and Estonia by sea. During its history, Finland has been part of Sweden and an autonomous Grand Duchy under the Russian Tsar before gaining independence in 1917. If we add to this the fact that about 20 % of the country lies above the Arctic Circle, the picture of Finland's unique position on the world map starts to take shape. All this is naturally reflected in the Finnish culture, traditions, cuisine, way of life, and in the character of the people.



According to surveys foreigners consider Finns very friendly, polite and helpful, though a bit shy. English is widely spoken, especially among younger people, so even if you don't speak a word of Finnish or Swedish you won't have difficulties communicating. Finnish society is stable and well-organized. The country's population is only 5.2 million so long queues are almost unheard of. Traffic jams too are rare - the transport systems in the towns and cities are extremely efficient and every corner of the country is easily accessible by public transport.

Nature is an integral part of the Finnish way of life because nature is everywhere. Approximately 70% of the land is covered by forest, there are about 188,000 lakes, 1,100 km of coastline and around 81,000 islands off the coast. The archipelago that lies between mainland Finland and Sweden is the largest in Europe. The country is 1,160 km long: the terrain in Lapland, the northernmost part of Finland, is tundra while the middle and southern parts of the country are lush and green and dotted with thousands of lakes. It is not surprising that with such beautiful natural surroundings Finns love outdoor sports.

Finland has four distinctive seasons, which are clearly reflected in the Finnish rhythm of life. In Finnish Lapland, the northernmost part of the country, the sun doesn't set for around eight weeks in summer, whereas in winter it doesn't rise above the horizon for several months. So in summer Finns enjoy the long days under the midnight sun while the winter is a time for the magic of the Aurora Borealis and polar nights of silver moonlight glistening on virgin snow.

As to the culture, Finns are very active as producers and consumers of all that it has to offer. In this country of eager readers, the libraries are very well-stocked with literature, magazines and newspapers, not only in Finnish but in other languages too. In Finland you can always go to the cinema because foreign films are not dubbed in Finnish but shown with subtitles. And there are restaurants, cafés, bars and clubs to suit every taste.

The capital of Finland is Helsinki - a small metropolis in a scenic location on the shores of the Baltic Sea. Great architecture, a lively cultural scene and of course its own beautiful natural surroundings just waiting to be explored.



**We hope that you've now got some idea of how you could make use of the excellent study opportunities Finland has to offer!**

- If you want to come to Finland as an exchange student, please contact the international affairs office at your own institution for more information. Exchange students can come to Finland through European Union programmes, such as Socrates/Erasmus and Leonardo da Vinci. Students from the USA can participate in the ISEP exchange programme while students from the other Nordic countries can take advantage of the Nordplus scheme. Finnish institutions of higher education have bilateral agreements with colleges and universities abroad which also cover exchange programmes. In special cases, students can be accepted from outside the above-mentioned schemes.

- If you are a post-graduate student and interested in participating in a post-graduate degree programme taught in English in a Finnish institution of higher education, please contact direct the institution you are interested in. You can find them listed by the field of study on the Discover Finland website at <http://finland.cimo.fi> (studying I international programmes). The website also has information about the scholarships available to foreign post-graduate students and researchers.

- If you wish to study in Finland for a complete degree, please contact directly the institution you wish to apply to for admission. As a general rule, international applicants for degree studies in Finland must first meet the minimum requirements of their own country for entry into higher education. They must also be prepared to come to Finland to take an entrance exam, especially when applying for entry to universities. For further information visit the Discover Finland website at <http://finland.cimo.fi> (FAQ I more information).

- If you are interested in practical training in Finland, you can obtain more information from your university, the local branch of the student organizations responsible for arranging trainee placements or CIMO's contact organization in your country. A list of CIMO's partners is on the Discover Finland website at <http://finland.cimo.fi> (practical training I more information). Since it takes four - five months to find a suitable placement, it is wise to apply approximately six months before the beginning of the planned working period. The deadline for applications for many of CIMO's programmes is February 15th each year.

- The Finnish Embassies and Consulates around the world will help you with the necessary formalities related to coming to study in Finland, such as applications for visas and other permits. The list of the Finnish Diplomatic Missions abroad is on the web at <http://www.formin.fi/missions>.

- **You'll probably find the answers to most of your questions concerning the various opportunities Finland has to offer in the fields of higher education, research and practical training on CIMO's Discover Finland website at <http://finland.cimo.fi>.**

- **You can also contact CIMO by phone and E-mail: Telephone information service for international clients: +358 1080 6767 (Mon-Thu 10-12, 13-15) Fax +358 9 7747 7064 E-mail [cimoinfo@cimo.fi](mailto:cimoinfo@cimo.fi) CIMO's website at <http://www.cimo.fi> gives you information about CIMO and statistics on the Finnish education system.**

The Centre for International Mobility CIMO is at your service!

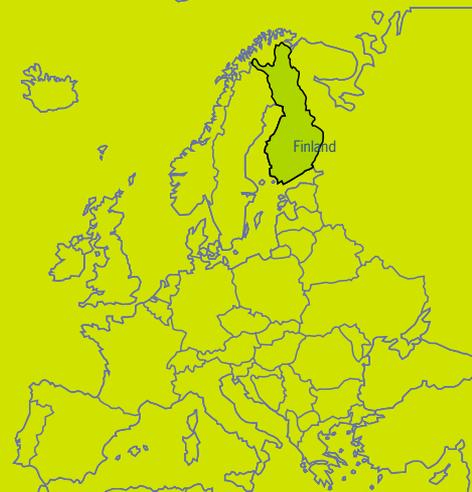
Remember to reserve enough time to complete all the necessary formalities such as arranging visas and other permits before your departure!



# So, why not?

“Finland is a student’s  
paradise.”

(Japan, female, 26 years)





Finland

- add a new dimension to your studies,  
and life!



**CIMO**

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