

# HIGHER EDUCATION POLICY IN FINLAND

*Ministry of Education - Helsinki 2000*







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**Higher Education Policy in Finland**

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## FINLAND IN BRIEF

<b>Area:</b>	338 000 sq.km; 68% forest, 10% water, 6% cultivated land
<b>Form of government:</b>	Democratic republic
<b>Population:</b>	5,2 million
<b>Population density:</b>	17 inhabitants per sq.km
<b>Life expectancy:</b>	Men 74 years, women 81 years
<b>Official languages:</b>	Finnish (93%) and Swedish (6%)
<b>Religions:</b>	85 % Evangelical Lutheran, 1% Orthodox, 13% unaffiliated
<b>Structure of economy:</b>	Employed persons by sector: 66 % in services, 28% in secondary production, 6% in primary production
<b>Gross domestic product per capita:</b>	approx. FIM 133 270





the  
**FINNISH EDUCATION SYSTEM**



## The Finnish education system

**The Finnish** education system consists of pre-school education, comprehensive school, post-comprehensive general and vocational education, higher education and adult education.

The traditional long-term objectives of Finnish education policy have been to raise the general standard of education and to promote educational equality. Efforts have been made to provide all population groups and regions of the country with equal educational opportunities. These are the basic tenets of the educational reforms carried out over the last few decades. The comprehensive school system, the vocational education reform, the regionalization of universities and the polytechnic (*ammattikorkeakoulu*) reform have all been consistent with this approach.

Today special attention is being paid to the content of education and the methods of instruction, as well as educational standards and equality. Increasing overall flexibility and the opportunities for individual choice are also considered important and internationalization has also emerged as a key objective.

**Pre-school education** is provided in a day care centre or a comprehensive school in the year preceding the beginning of school.

**Comprehensive school** is a nine-year system (with a voluntary 10th form) providing education for all children of compulsory school age. Every Finnish citizen is required to complete this education. The school starting age is seven.

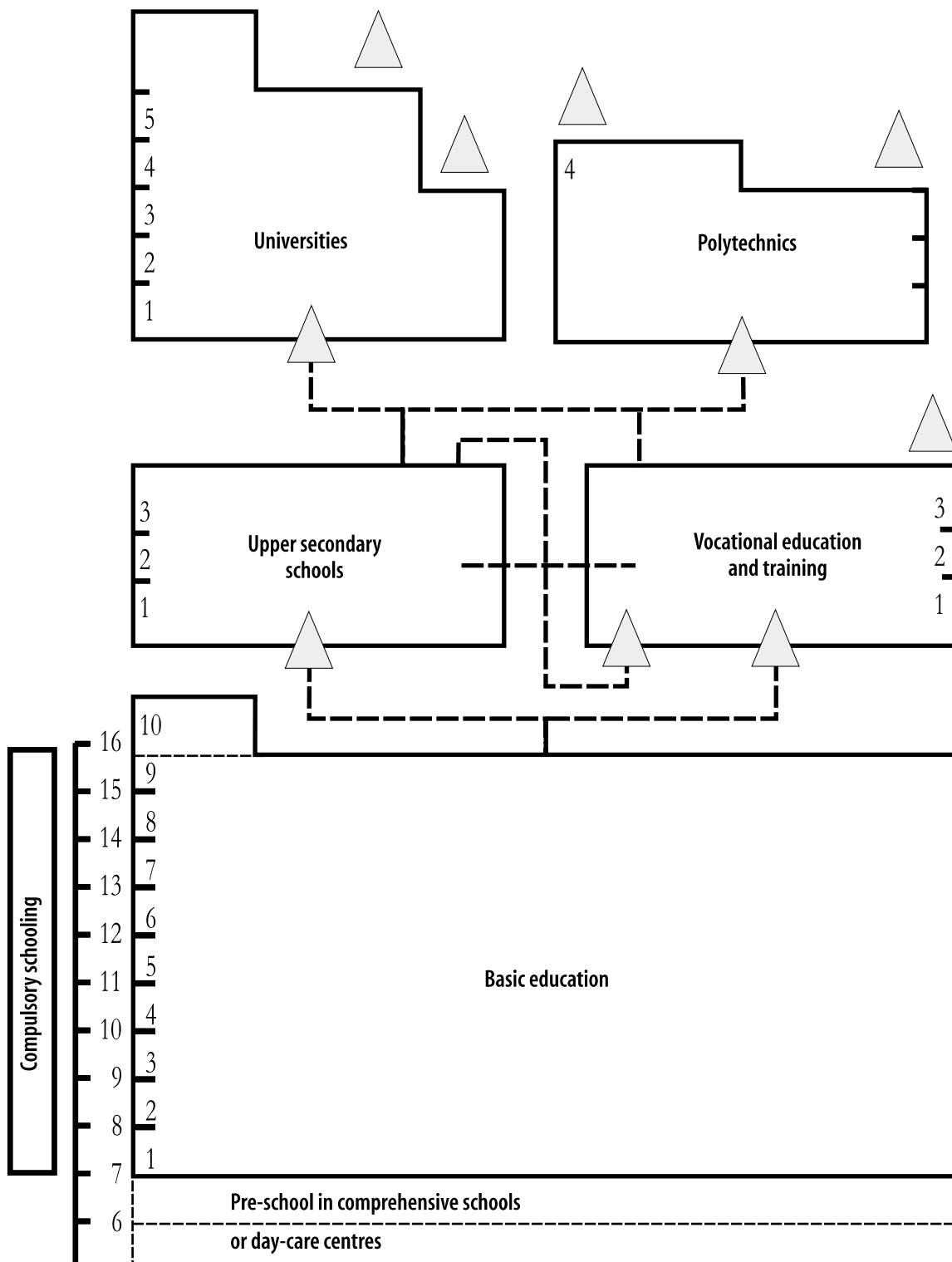
**General upper secondary schools and vocational schools** give post-comprehensive school education. The *general upper secondary schools* offer a three-year general education

curriculum, at the end of which the pupil takes the national matriculation examination, which is the general eligibility criterion for higher education. The matriculation examination consists of four compulsory subjects and one or more optional ones. Candidates may take it in three consecutive examinations, that is, over a period of 18 months. There are four compulsory tests in the matriculation examination: mother tongue (either Finnish or Swedish, depending on the language of instruction at the school), the other national language, a foreign language, and either mathematics or general studies test. In addition, candidates may take optional tests.

The general upper secondary school network covers the entire country. The schools follow a national core curriculum, but recently the range of choice has been broadened. Individual schools can cultivate a more distinct image; some upper secondaries have a specialized curriculum, giving emphasis to the arts or some other field. Upper secondary school has traditionally constituted the main channel to university education.

Finnish *vocational education and training* is traditionally institution-based to a very large extent. Taught courses form the core of the programmes but on-the-job training is nowadays included in the study programme in all fields. From 2001 onwards all the qualifications will be based on three-year courses and they will produce general eligibility for higher education. An initial vocational qualification can be completed through apprenticeship training also. In addition to these, a vocational qualification can also be taken as a competence-based examination evaluated by an examination board.

## The Structure of the Finnish Education System



The Finnish higher education system comprises two parallel sectors: universities and polytechnics. The **polytechnics** were established during the reform process of the 1990's, and now a network of 29 polytechnics covers the entire country. Polytechnic degrees are Bachelor-level higher education degrees with a professional emphasis and take 3,5 to 4 years to complete.

There are 20 **universities** in Finland, ten of which are multifaculty institutions and ten specialist institutions. Of the specialist institutions three are universities of technology, three are schools of economics and business administration, and the remaining four are art academies. In addition, university-level education is provided at one military academy under the Ministry of Defence. All universities engage in both education and research and have the right to award doctorates. The first university degree, which roughly corresponds to a Bachelor's, can generally be attained in three years of full-time study and the higher, Master's degree in five years, i.e. a further two years following the Bachelor's degree. There is also an optional pre-doctoral postgraduate degree of licentiate, which can be completed in two years of full-time study after the Master's degree. Full-time studies for a doctorate take approximately four years following the Master's degree.

**Adult education**, which is designed for the entire working-age population, has expanded rapidly in the past few years. Independent sponsoring organizations and evening schools provide general adult education. Adult education at universities comprises further education and open university courses. Each university has a centre for continuing education.

### Standard of education and range of services

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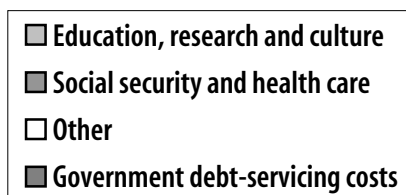
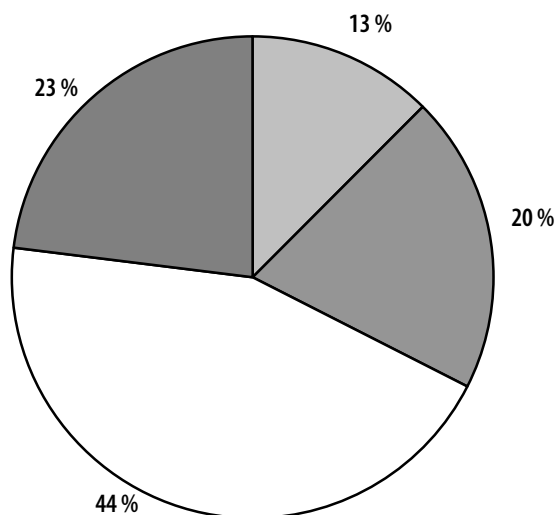
**The standard** of education in Finland has risen sharply in recent decades. By international comparison, Finland is currently at the general European level. Young people are more likely to have completed a certificate, diploma or degree than their elders are. In the 25-34 age group, 83 per cent have completed at least a degree at the upper secondary level; the corresponding figures are 37 per cent for the 55-64 age group. The rising trend still continues, and the proportion of young people in education is very high.

The principle in planning educational services is to offer the entire age group completing comprehensive school a study place in either general upper secondary education or upper secondary vocational education. Openings in higher education will be offered to c. 65 per cent of the age group.

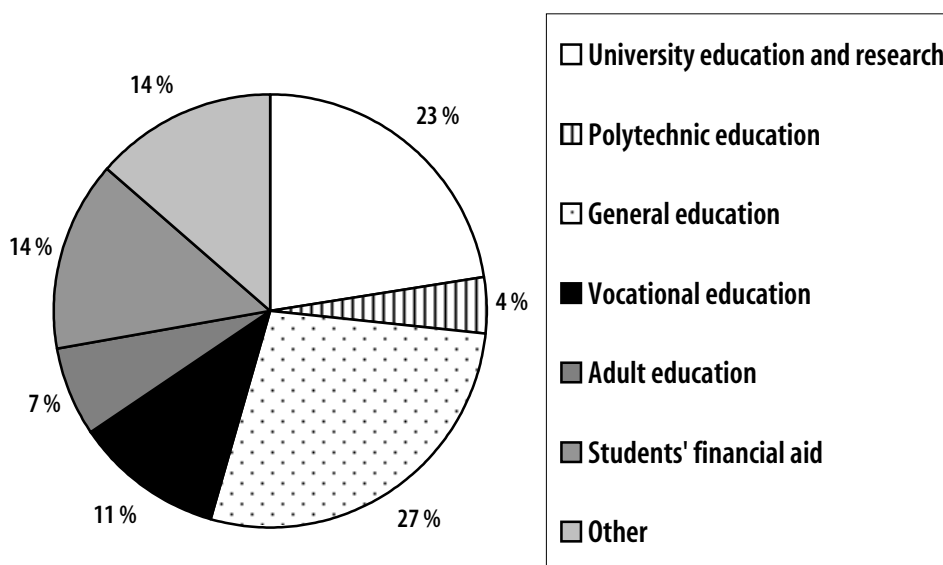
With the exception of certain areas (e.g. engineering, social services, health sciences), sexual equality can be considered to have been achieved in Finnish education. There is less differentiation by sex in the university disciplines than at other levels of study. There are still regional differences in education: the proportion of people aged 15 or more who have at least a degree at the upper secondary level varies locally from 50 per cent to 60 per cent, while the rate for the whole country is 55 per cent. Social background still affects educational choices: children of blue-collar workers and farmers tend to opt for vocational education, whereas the children of white-collar workers usually go to university. However, the rising education level of parents should gradually affect their children's choices: the more highly educated the parents are, the more willing their children usually are to obtain a higher qualification.

**Educational, research and cultural appropriations in the State budget and supplementary budgets and their distribution by sector in 1999 (%)**

**A) Share of State expenditure**



**B) Distribution by sector**



## Resources

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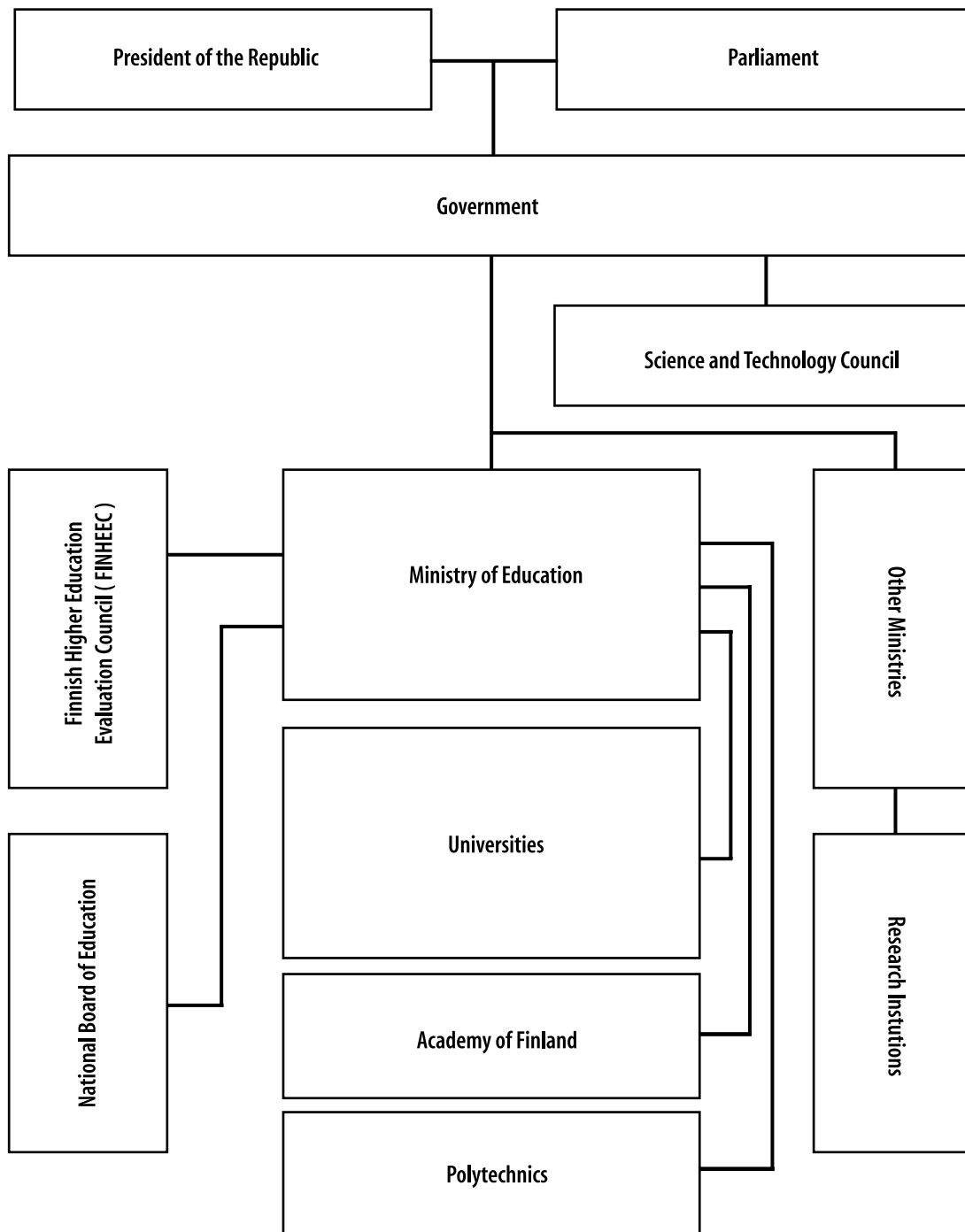
**In Finland**, spending on public education accounts for 13 per cent of all public expenditure. Some two thirds of this consists of State funding and one third of municipal funding. Public expenditure on education was 6,2 per cent of GDP in 1997.

Instruction is usually free of charge at all levels of education; there are no tuition fees. Compulsory education is completely free of charge for the pupils, but at higher levels of education, students may have to pay for study materials, meals and transport.

The accompanying table presents the percentages of total expenditure for all types of institutions in 1999.

In addition to expenditure by educational institutions, the study includes calculated payments to pension insurance funds and pensions paid to comprehensive and upper secondary school teachers and the cost of pre-primary education for 3-6-year-olds at day-care centres.

### Central Administration of Higher Education and Research



## Administration of education

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**Parliament enacts** laws on education and decides on the general principles of education policy. The Government and the Ministry of Education are charged with implementing these principles at the central government level.

Nearly all publicly funded education, from primary to higher, is steered or supervised by the Ministry of Education. Training related to national defence, law and order, and some aspects of communications and transport is administered by other ministries. Most existing private institutions are in the vocational sector, but they, too, rely heavily on public funding, and the education they provide is subject to public supervision. The universities are State institutions and funded directly from the budget; the State and local authorities provide most of the funds for the other educational institutions.

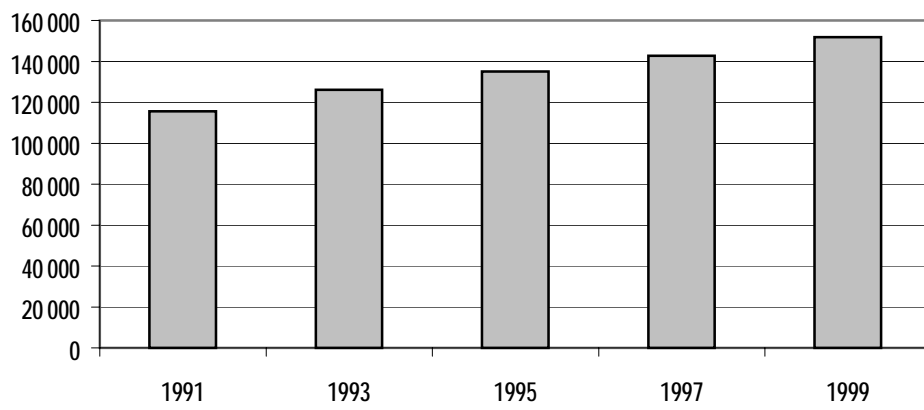
The Ministry of Education is charged with the administration of education, research, culture, youth issues and sports; its remit includes all universities and polytechnics. In matters related to comprehensive and upper secondary school, vocational institutions and adult education, the Ministry is assisted by an expert agency, the National Board of Education.

The Finnish Higher Education Evaluation Council (FINHEEC) advises the Ministry of Education and assists the higher education institutions, i.e. universities and polytechnics.

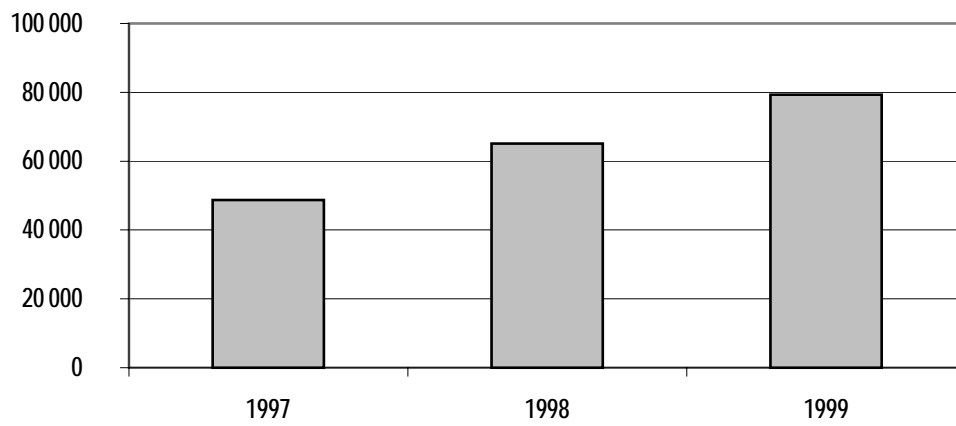
The Academy of Finland, the Finnish Research Council organization, also comes under the aegis of the Ministry of Education. Its purpose is to further scientific research and its utilization, promote international cooperation, serve as an advisory body on science policy issues, and allocate funds for research and other scientific purposes. The Academy of Finland is the main external funding body of university research and, along with the universities themselves, bears the main responsibility for basic research. Public funding for technology and development is channelled through the National Technology Agency (Tekes) which also plays a major role in external funding of the universities.

The Science and Technology Policy Council is responsible for promoting major issues related to science, technology and scientific training. The Council advises the Government and Ministries on the orientation and coordination of science and technology policy, the general development of scientific research and training and Finnish participation in international scientific and technological cooperation. The Prime Minister acts as chairman of the Council and the other members comprise the minister responsible for higher education and science, the minister in charge of industrial affairs, the Minister of Finance, two other ministers and ten non-ministerial members who are experts in scientific research and development or technology.

Number of university students 1991-1999



Number of students in polytechnics in 1997-1999



## Finnish higher education system

**Finland has** 20 universities - ten multidisciplinary institutions, six specialist institutions and four art academies - all of them State-run and engaged in both education and research. The university network covers the entire country. The university system expanded from the 1960s to the 1980s and there was a rapid growth in resources and an increase in independent decision-making from the mid-1980s up to 1990. In the 1990s, the functional independence of universities has continued to grow, while attention has focused increasingly on improving performance and quality.

University-level education is also provided by a military academy under the Ministry of Defence.

There are 29 polytechnics, most of which are multidisciplinary institutions maintained by municipalities or federations of municipalities. The polytechnic reform was launched at the beginning of the 1990's with an experimental and development phase. The polytechnics were formed on the basis of post-secondary vocational institutions by raising their standards and by merging several institutions to create multi-field polytechnics. After evaluations the Government granted permanent operating licences for polytechnics, and all the polytechnics have a permanent licence from August 2000.

## Higher Education Policy Priorities

**At the end of** 1999, the Government fixed the guidelines for higher education up to the year 2004. Education and research are crucial to Finland's strategy for the future, which aims at the well-being of its citizens, cultural diversity, sustainable development and prosperity.

The watchwords in education policy over the next few years will be high quality, educational equality and the principle of lifelong learning. Finland is to be developed into a humane knowledge-based society through education and research. The Government is committed to maintain the high level of public funding to the education and research system. Special attention will be paid to developing teaching and learning at all levels of education through teacher education and guidance services.

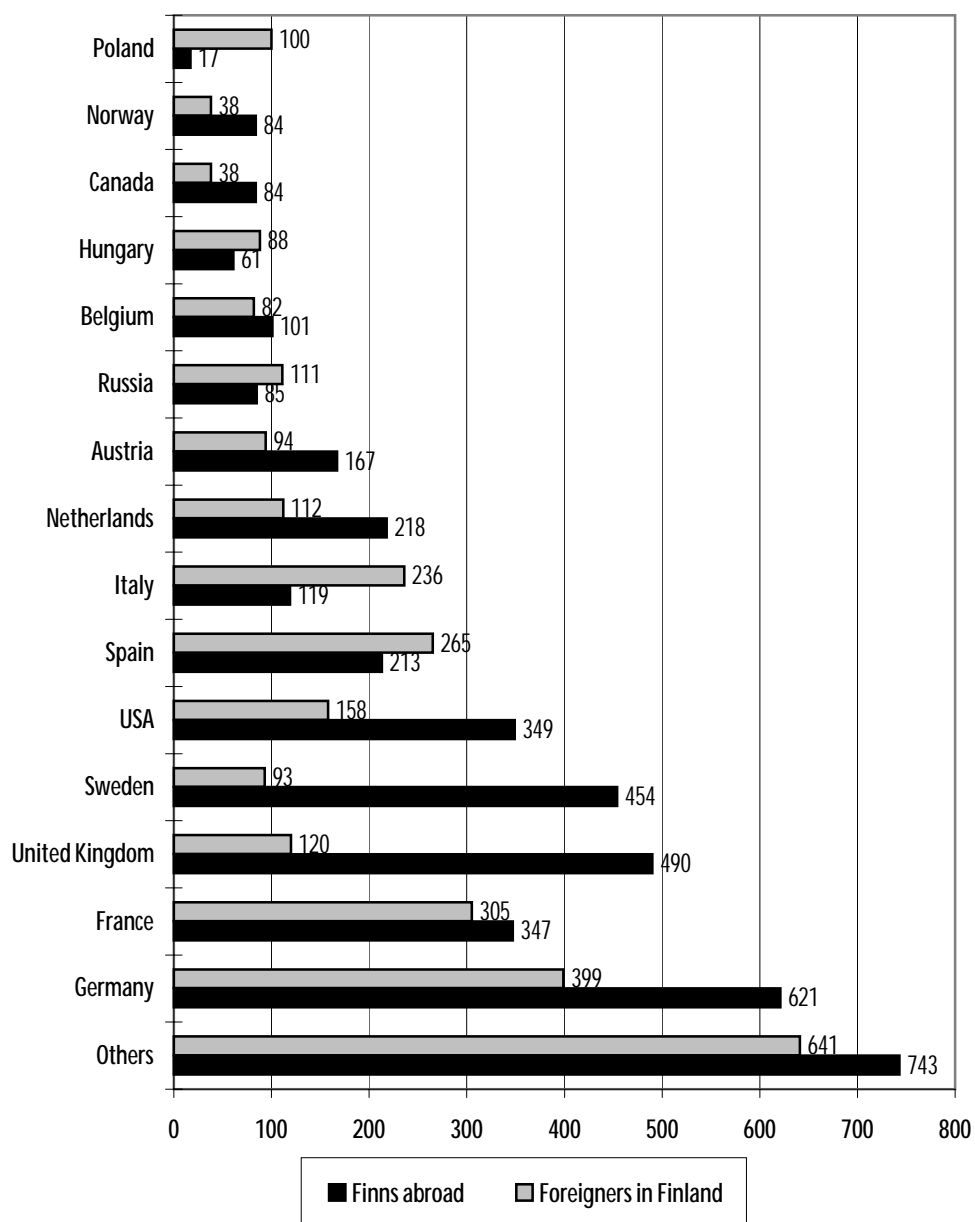
In order to meet the needs of the regions the higher education institutions must pay special attention to developing their regional responsiveness through intensified cooperation with local business and industries and by facilitating transfer of expertise to working life. The higher education system will be developed as a whole comprising the two sectors in which universities and polytechnics complement each other.

The system of higher education degrees will be developed to correspond to the needs of working life and also in view of the international development of degree structures.

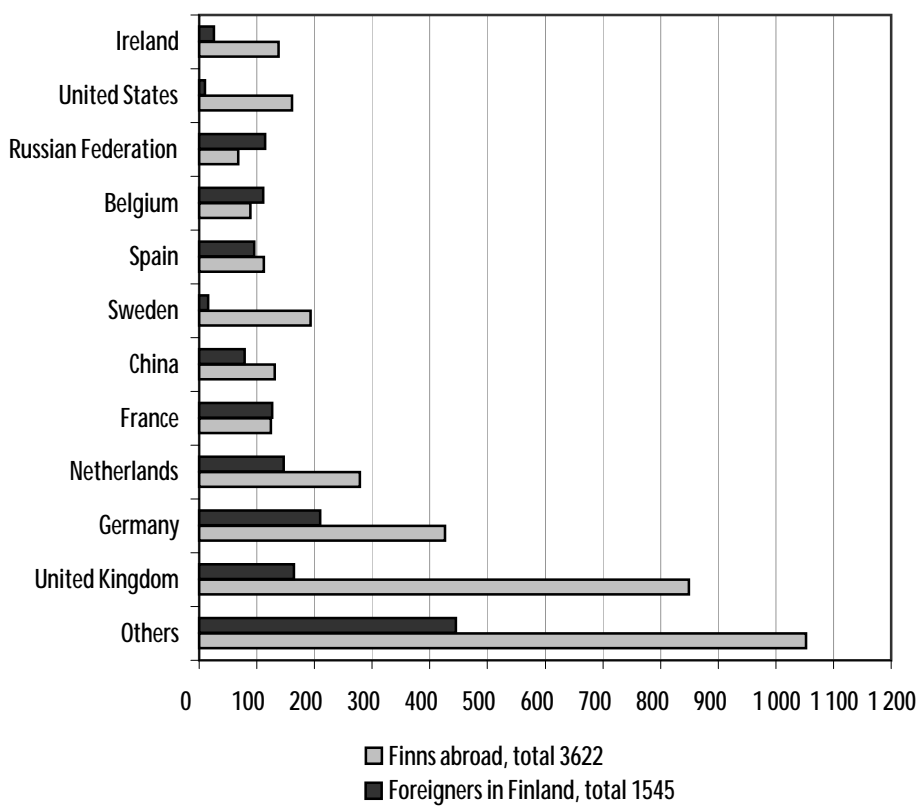
In a nutshell, development of education and research in the early years of the 21st century will focus on:

- basic educational security: no tuition fees at any level of education, regionally and linguistically covering school and higher education network, students' financial aid schemes
- principle of lifelong learning: pre-school education for all, large provision of education at all levels, better financial opportunities for liberal education and professional upgrading, raising the level of education among the middle-aged population, development of vocational competence-based qualifications, targeting educational services for third-age students
- implementing the information strategy for research and education: securing knowledge and skills in the knowledge-based society for all, developing initial and in-service teacher training, virtual school and virtual university project, expansion and diversification of content production and strengthening the necessary infrastructure in education and research
- internationalization: intensified international cooperation at all levels of education; approx. every third higher education student is expected to take part of his or her degree abroad
- improving mathematics and science skills: supporting the development of knowledge-based society, sustainable development, business and citizens' mathematical and scientific knowledge and know-how
- continuing the policy of rewarding centres of excellence and further developing researcher training: quality through evaluation and competition, further development of graduate school system
- strengthening the status of evaluation as an integral part of a steering and development policy emphasizing the importance of quality: monitoring the overall performance of schools and higher education institutions, rewarding good performance in education and adult education

Student exchanges in 1999 ( universities )



Student exchange in 1999 (polytechnics)



## University education

**Universities are** undergoing rapid changes: the number of students has risen considerably and universities are expected to produce higher numbers of Master's degrees and doctorates. In order to ensure possibilities for long-term work in universities the Government is committed to secure the positive development of university core funding by legislation.

University education will be reformed towards a more student-centred teaching method. The development of teaching and learning will especially capitalise on network-based and open and distance learning. Teaching, guidance and advisory services will be developed to promote individual learning so that they support effective progress in studies and enable systematic assessment and monitoring of student's progress. One of the aims of the reform is to shorten graduation times, which tend to be too long in many fields.

In order to raise the quality of university teaching pedagogical in-service training of university teachers will be intensified taking account of the skills needed in the new learning environments.

Use of ICT in education and research will be promoted, and a virtual university will be established to produce high-standard educational services which enable studies to be pursued in every part of Finland through networks.

One of the main reasons for prolonged studies is overloaded basic degrees. The universities are now expected to revise their degree requirements according to the principles of lifelong learning. To this end it is necessary to identify and define the key knowledge and skills required of the students in a given field. The principles for quantifying studies will be revised to correspond to actual student workload.

## Research and researcher training

**Research funding** will be increased to secure the present overall level of R&D financing, and the conditions for university research and researcher training and polytechnic R&D will be strengthened. The share of public funding will be gradually increased in the overall research input.

In researcher training, the graduate school system will be strengthened with a view to securing sufficiently broad and varied expertise for high-standard research and for the construction of the information society. The graduate school system will be expanded as the main track to a doctorate. The annual number of doctorates will be raised to some 1,400. Obstacles to women's research careers will be removed.

The Ministry of Education, universities, the Academy of Finland and other financing organisations will take joint measures to create conditions conducive to the birth and development of research units of a high international standard.

Research input will be allocated to selected targets on the basis of quality. Quality will be made a more important criterion in the allocation of resources between and within universities, and between individual researchers and research teams. Condition will be secured for the development of new research fields.

Measures will be taken to promote the commercialisation of research findings, the creation of new business and the utilisation of technologies for the benefit of the economy and employment, as well as the publication of scientific knowledge for the use of citizens.

## Polytechnics

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**The polytechnic network** is fully operational on a permanent basis from autumn 2000 onwards. The polytechnic reform will be evaluated in 2002.

Polytechnics will be developed as part of the international higher education community, with the emphasis on their status as high-standard experts on working life and its development. The autonomy of polytechnics and higher education democracy will be strengthened simultaneously with relaxed regulation. Polytechnics' project and performance-based funding will be developed.

The polytechnic network needs some streamlining and the aim in the development of the network is to combine units in an appropriate way and restructure it otherwise, too. The network should be able to serve regional needs and to consist of cost-effective and efficient entities. In order to better respond to the regional needs and SME sector, measures will be taken to develop professional postgraduate degrees and applied R&D jointly undertaken with business and industry.

## Steering of Higher Education

**In an effort** to improve higher education performance, considerable changes have been effected in higher education steering and management systems. In recent years, regulations have been lifted and authority transferred from the Ministry of Education to the higher education institutions. At the same time, budgetary and regulatory control has given way to steering of performance, backed up by a shift to budgeting by result and the development of evaluation systems. A key element in Ministry-higher education institution relations is the consultation procedure by which the Ministry and the institutions jointly set the objectives for each institution and agree on funding levels or number of new students in case of the polytechnics.

### University legislation and steering of the universities

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**The Finnish Constitution** secures the freedom of the sciences, the arts and the highest level of education. To implement these principles, the new Universities Act (1998) ensures the autonomy of the universities and prescribes their functions, operation and objectives in general terms only. Within these limits, each university decides on the detailed organization of its administration and the decision-making power of its administrative bodies.

The new framework legislation upholds the principle that the various different groups of people within the university must have representation in its multimember administrative bodies. To enhance cooperation between universities, businesses and the rest of society, universities are entitled to accept representatives of parties outside the institution as full members of these bodies.

The universities decide independently how their teaching and research are organized and on the formation of faculties and other teaching and research units. Faculties and other such units have a multimember administrative body with a membership representing the same groups as in the senate. External members cannot make up more than a third of the total membership.

There are national decrees on the university degree systems of each discipline. The decrees define only the broad framework for each degree (extent, structure, main objectives), and the universities have a full autonomy to decide on the contents of each degree.

The Ministry of Education and each university sign a performance agreement in which both parties commit themselves to certain objectives and projects and level of funding. The agreement is signed for a three-year period but the financial aspects are checked and negotiated every year.

### **Polytechnic legislation and steering of the polytechnics**

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**Provisions governing** polytechnics are mostly laid down in the Polytechnics Act and Decree. The legislation determines such issues as the status of polytechnics in the higher education system, studies and degrees, administrative principles, eligibility for studies, free-of-charge education, and teachers. Moreover, the criteria according to which the Government decides on granting the operating licence to a polytechnic are also prescribed by law.

A licence to operate a polytechnic can be granted to a local authority, municipal federation or registered Finnish foundation or association. A State-run polytechnic can only be established on special grounds related to national educational needs. The licence granted by the Government defines the overall framework for its operation, the fields to be provided, the teaching languages, student numbers and the location of the constituent units. The Government may also include a requirement for further development of operations or provisions.

The management and steering of polytechnics, apart from that based on their operating licences, is being developed along the same principles as those of universities. Management will be based on the Government plan for the development of education and the objectives derived from that, and the consultations on results and objectives between the Ministry of Education and the institutions themselves. If necessary, the Ministry can make decisions concerning the scale of polytechnic study programmes.

The Ministry-polytechnic agreements define the common objectives, the mutually agreed mission statement, educational provision and various other development objectives, such as targets for teaching, international activities, etc. together with the necessary resources.

## Evaluation of education

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**Universities and polytechnics** are obliged by legislation to evaluate their activities systematically. To emphasise the quality work of higher education institutions the Ministry of Education allocates part of the funding for the institutions on the basis of their educational output.

Under the recent legislation the Finnish Higher Education Evaluation Council (FINHEEC) is a supportive body assisting the universities and polytechnics and the Ministry of Education in evaluation matters and promoting evaluation as an integral part of institutional operations. FINHEEC is governed by a twelve-member Council consisting of representatives of universities, polytechnics, student organizations and business and industry. The members of the Council are appointed by the Ministry of Education for a four-year term.

The Council organizes evaluations of the quality of education and also institutional, programme and thematic evaluations. Furthermore, it provides advisory and consultancy services in the implementation of evaluations, develops evaluation methodology and disseminates good Finnish and international practices to higher education institutions and the Ministry of Education.

The Council also submits proposals to the Ministry of Education on centres of excellence in education and adult education to be used in determining performance-based appropriations. Furthermore, the Council Secretariat may, as part of its contracted services, act as a consultant in other evaluation projects which are of social relevance and closely related to the Council's work. The Council also participates in international joint evaluation and research projects.

Although the Council's activities are financed by the Ministry of Education, it acts entirely independently of the Ministry and the higher education institutions in defining its action plan and in identifying the evaluation projects to be carried out and the methods to be used.

The Council works also as an accreditation body to extensive continuing education programmes offered by universities and polytechnics. These programmes include e.g. MBA programmes, professional development programmes and specialist studies in different fields. The Council is responsible for maintaining the register of the accredited programmes.

## Evaluation of research

**Evaluating research** and developing methods of evaluation are among the Academy of Finland's main functions. This includes general evaluation work, evaluation of scientific disciplines and research programmes, developing research indicators and the evaluation of funding. Both foreign and Finnish experts are involved in the evaluation of quality, effectiveness and efficiency.

Evaluation in the traditional form of impartial peer review by outside experts has always been part of academia and academic debate. Over the past few years it has increased considerably, partly as a consequence of the demand for cost-effectiveness. Researchers, research teams and entire institutions and research institutes are being evaluated according to the results they have achieved.

Once during each research councils' term of office the Academy publishes an assessment of the general attainment level and quality of Finnish research. The first "State and quality of scientific research in Finland" reports by the research councils were published in 1997. The next assessment will be completed by the end of 2000. In addition to these state and quality reports, the Academy supports international evaluation of different fields of research in Finland and other evaluation activities.

## Higher education databases

**Monitoring the performance** of the universities and the polytechnics is one of the cornerstones of the present steering system. In order to have correct data on the institutions of higher education two databases have been established, one for the universities and one for the polytechnics. The universities and polytechnics report on the attainment of their objectives in their operating reviews and by entering the relevant statistics into the databases maintained by the Ministry of Education (KOTA-database for universities (<http://www.csc.fi/kota/kota.html>) and AMKOTA-database for polytechnics (<http://www.csc.fi/amkota/>).

The databases contain e.g. the following data:

- |                               |   |
|-------------------------------|---|
| • Applications and admissions | • Costs per result area   |
| • Students                    | • Premises  |
| • Foreign students            | • Continuing education  |
| • Degrees                     | • Open university instruction                                       |
| • Target number of degrees    | • Researchers and teachers visiting abroad                          |
| • Duration of studies         | • Scientific publications   |
| • Graduate placement          | • Courses taught in a foreign language in undergraduate programmes. |
| • Teaching staff              |   |
| • Other staff                 |   |
| • Appropriations              |   |

## Financing of higher education

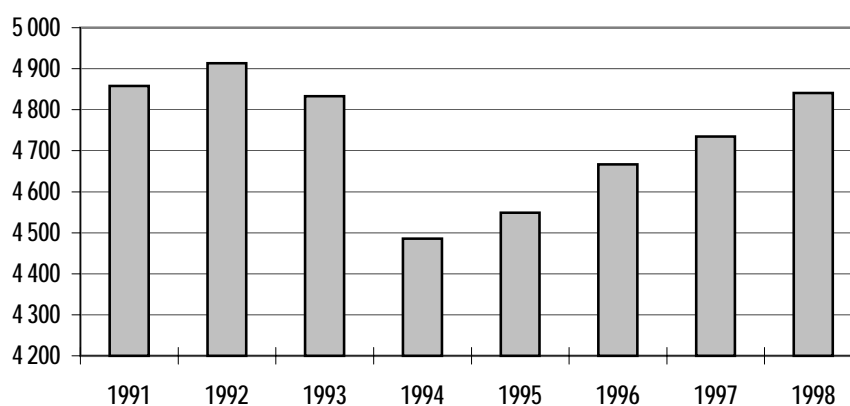
### Funding of the universities

**All Finnish universities** are State institutions whose operations are primarily financed from public funds. In 1999 some 65 per cent of the universities' budget came from the State budget through the Ministry of Education. In addition to the university budget set by the State, the universities are increasingly procuring external funding and expanding their chargeable services. The Academy of Finland and the National Technology Agency (Tekes) are among the main sources of funding. Especially funds provided by businesses and abroad have increased.

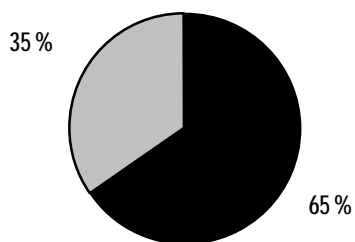
The operating expenditure agreed upon in the result negotiations between the Ministry and the universities comprises basic funding (c. 85 - 90 per cent), earmarked funding for national responsibilities and programmes, project funding and performance-based funding. Perform-

mance-based funding is used to reward universities for high-quality education and research. The State university budget is allocated according to a formula. This formula-based funding system has been gradually implemented since 1997 and it will be fully operational in 2003. The formula allocates basic funds to universities primarily according to their target numbers for Master's degrees and doctorates weighed by field of study. Lagging behind the targets is also taken into account in the formula.

Operating expenses of universities (FIM) per annual accounts data, 1991-1998\*, appropriations in real terms\*\*

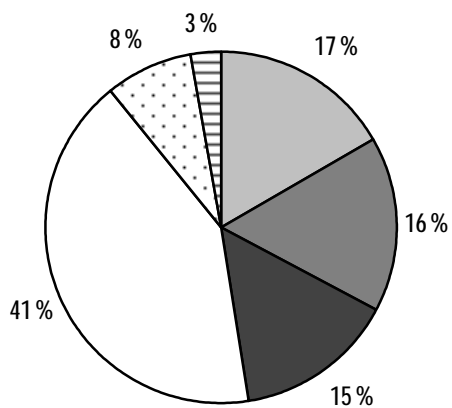


A) Total funding of universities in 1999



- Budget funding and building investments, total 5,815.2 FIMm
- External funding, total 3,100.6 FIMm

B) External funding, breakdown by source 1999



- Academy of Finland
- Tekes
- Finnish corporate funding
- Other Finnish funding
- EU
- Other foreign funding

### Funding of the polytechnics

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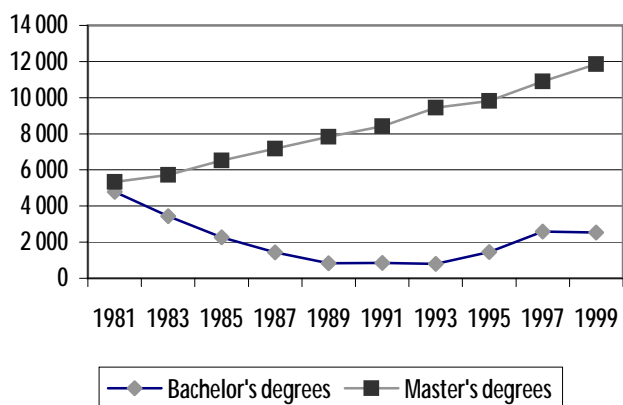
**The polytechnics** are mainly maintained by municipalities or federation of municipalities. The polytechnics are primarily funded from public funds. The costs are shared by both the State and the local authorities. Of the basic funding, the State's contribution accounts for 57 per cent and that of local authorities for 43 per cent. The funding is based on degree-specific unit prices determined per student. A calculatory unit price is determined for each polytechnic, depending on the fields in which the polytechnic provides education.

The Ministry of Education grants project funding to polytechnics for major development targets. In recent years, project funding has particularly been channelled into the promotion of teachers' level of education, internationalisation, development of library and information services, development of information technology, and careers and recruitment services.

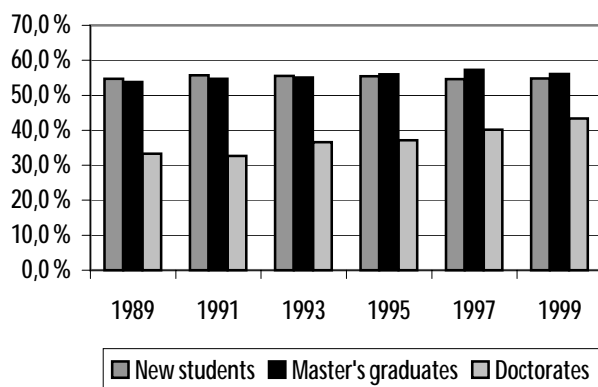
Some of the additional funding granted by the Ministry of Education is awarded on the basis of performance, i.e. educational outcomes. The amount of funding to be granted on the basis of performance will be increased in the coming years.

## University degrees

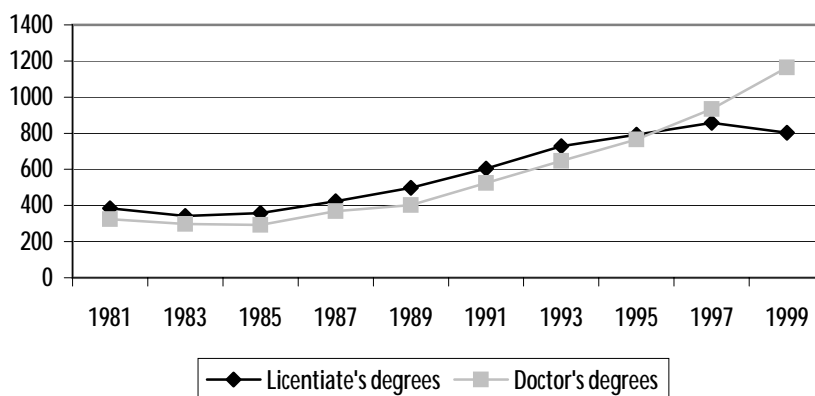
Bachelor's degrees and Master's degrees 1981-1999



Percentage of women amongst new students, Master's graduates and Doctorates 1989-1999



Licentiate's degrees and Doctor's degrees 1981-1999



## Structure and content of higher education degrees

### University degree structure

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**The national degree** regulations define the objectives, extent and overall structure of degrees. Within the framework of these regulations, the universities decide on the contents and structure of their degrees in more detail. They also decide on their annual curricula and forms of instruction.

The university degree system has been undergoing reform since the early 1990s. The decisions on revising the degree programmes were made on the basis of evaluations carried out by the universities and the Council for Higher Education, the objective being to set up broad, flexible and internationally compatible programmes.

As a result of the reform, a clearly subject-based syllabus was adopted in most fields. The new degree structure usually combines studies in one main, or major, subject and in one or more subsidiary, or minor, subjects. Studies are measured in credits, one credit being defined as the amount of work (average 40 hours) required from the student to attain the required objectives.

Lower academic degrees (usually called kandidaatti/kandidat) are first degrees of the Bachelor level, and consist of 120 credits (minimum). Higher academic degrees are second-cycle Master's degrees (usually called maisteri/magister). They consist of a total of 160 or 180 credits, or a Bachelor's syllabus plus 40-60 credits. The minimum

duration of full-time studies for a lower degree is three years; for a higher degree it is five years, or a further two years following the Bachelor's degree. In practice, the average time taken to complete a Master's degree is about 6.5 years. In medicine, dentistry and veterinary medicine, the degrees are more extensive and take six years of full-time study to complete.

Studies in a subject (or a degree programme) are usually classified as basic, intermediate or advanced. A lower (Bachelor's) degree consists of basic and intermediate studies in the major subject, including a Bachelor's thesis, studies in one or more minor subjects, and language studies. For the higher (Master's) degree, students must complete an advanced study module and prepare a Master's thesis in addition to completing the Bachelor's syllabus (or in addition to basic and subject studies in a degree programme). Some degrees require compulsory practical training; for others it is optional.

Universities have paid special attention to the placement of graduates and have developed guidance and advisory services to promote employment. Faced with dwindling job opportunities in the public sector, on the one hand, and growing international cooperation, on the other, the universities have developed more comprehensive degree programmes to respond better to the changing demands of working life.

## Doctoral studies

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**Operation of the** Finnish university sector is based on the unity of research and teaching. Scientific postgraduate education, in particular, is closely linked with the research work performed at universities and research institutions.

In the new degree structure, students can start working for a doctorate as soon as they have obtained the Master's degree. The licentiate is an optional degree, and is not offered in all fields of study. In certain cases, licentiate programmes may include specialist training. The aim of the Ministry of Education is to develop the Licentiate degree into an independent and more professionally oriented postgraduate degree which could be offered for adults with Master's degree and relevant work experience.

The graduate schools established in 1995 have greatly increased the opportunities for full-time postgraduate education and the number of doctorates has risen considerably. The students in graduate schools are paid and they receive top-level intensive courses and research tutoring in Finland's leading research teams collaborating through networking with other national and international research centres.

The graduate schools cover all the main areas of research. Together they form a network ranging from units concentrated in a single faculty or locality to nation-wide establishments combining the resources of several faculties.

## Polytechnic degrees

**Polytechnic degrees** are higher education (Bachelor level) degrees with a professional emphasis. The starting points for the development of the degree programmes originate in the requirements and development needs set by working life. The degrees give capabilities for various professional expert positions in working life.

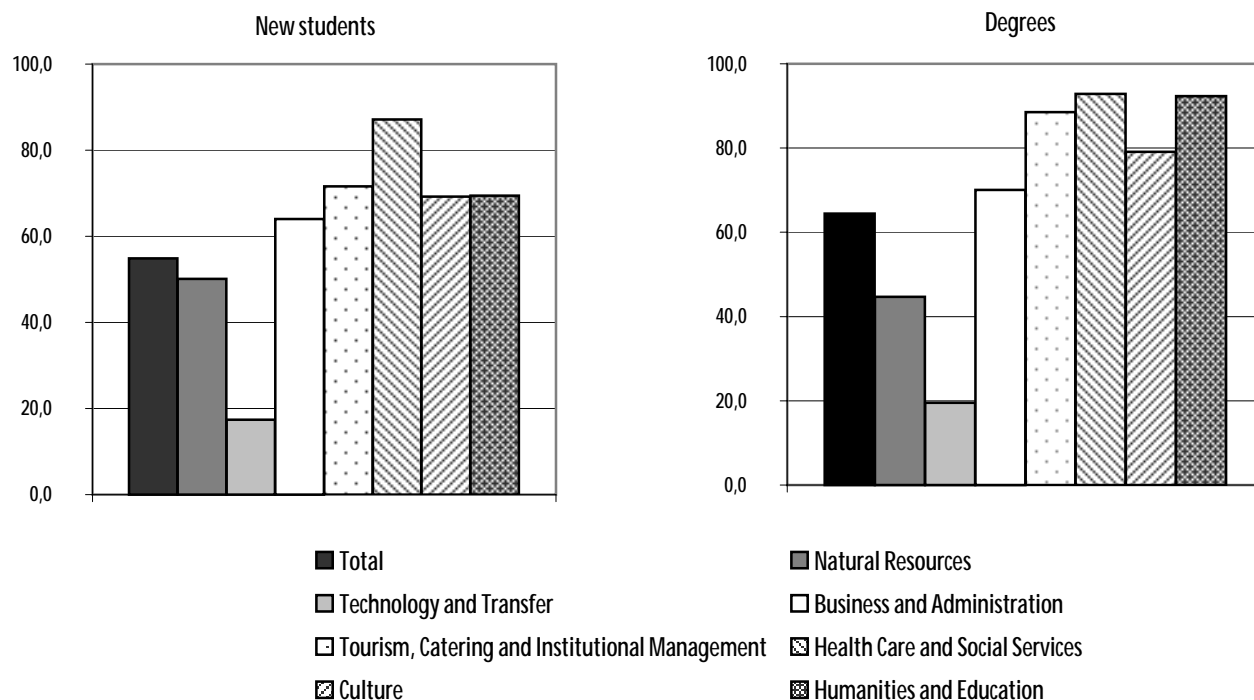
Polytechnic degree programmes are either 3,5-year or 4-year programmes. Certain programmes are more extensive. The extent of the degrees has been determined in credits in the same way as in universities, and most of the programmes consist of 140 or 160 credits. Students have the right to exceed the standard duration set for the completion of a degree by one year. The average study time for those who graduated in 1998 was 3.9 years.

The studies leading to a polytechnic degree comprise basic and professional studies; optional studies; practical training and a diploma project.

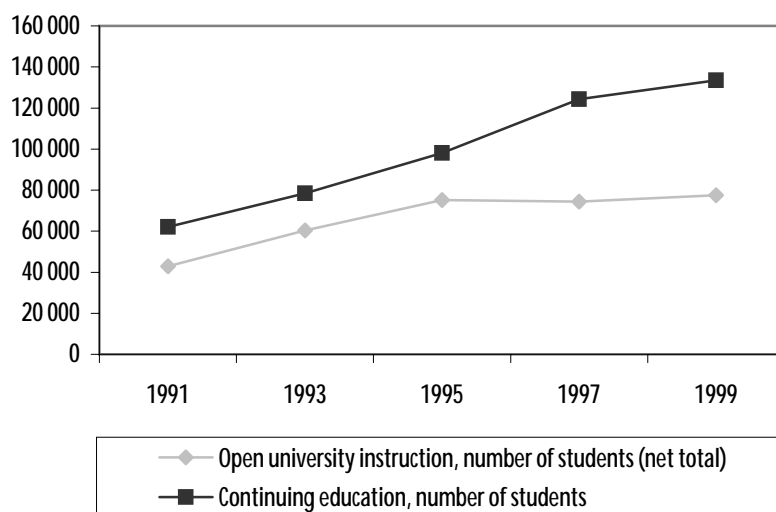
The Ministry of Education confirms the degree programmes. The polytechnics decide on the contents of their curricula independently.

There are plans to introduce a system of postgraduate degrees to polytechnics. These degrees would be geared for those who have completed a polytechnic degree and have a few years of relevant work experience

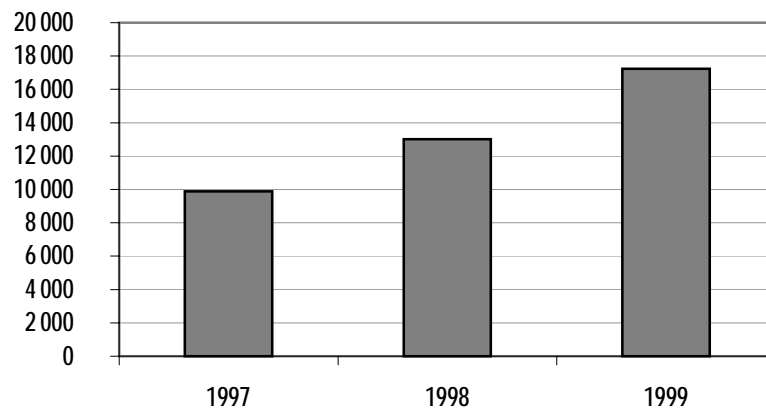
Percentage of women amongst new students by fields of study in 1999



Number of students in adult education 1991-1999 (universities)



Number of students in adult education (polytechnics)  
(degree-oriented studies)



## Adult education in universities and polytechnics

**Both universities and** polytechnics offer a wide range of adult education services. These services range from degree oriented programmes (in the polytechnic sector) to professional continuing education courses (both sectors). Open university education has already long traditions in Finland, and open polytechnic education is being developed by all polytechnics. It is not possible to complete a whole degree via open university or open polytechnic studies, but students with an agreed amount of open university or open polytechnic studies may be admitted to regular programmes in a flexible way and have full recognition of the earlier studies. There are no formal educational requirements for admission.

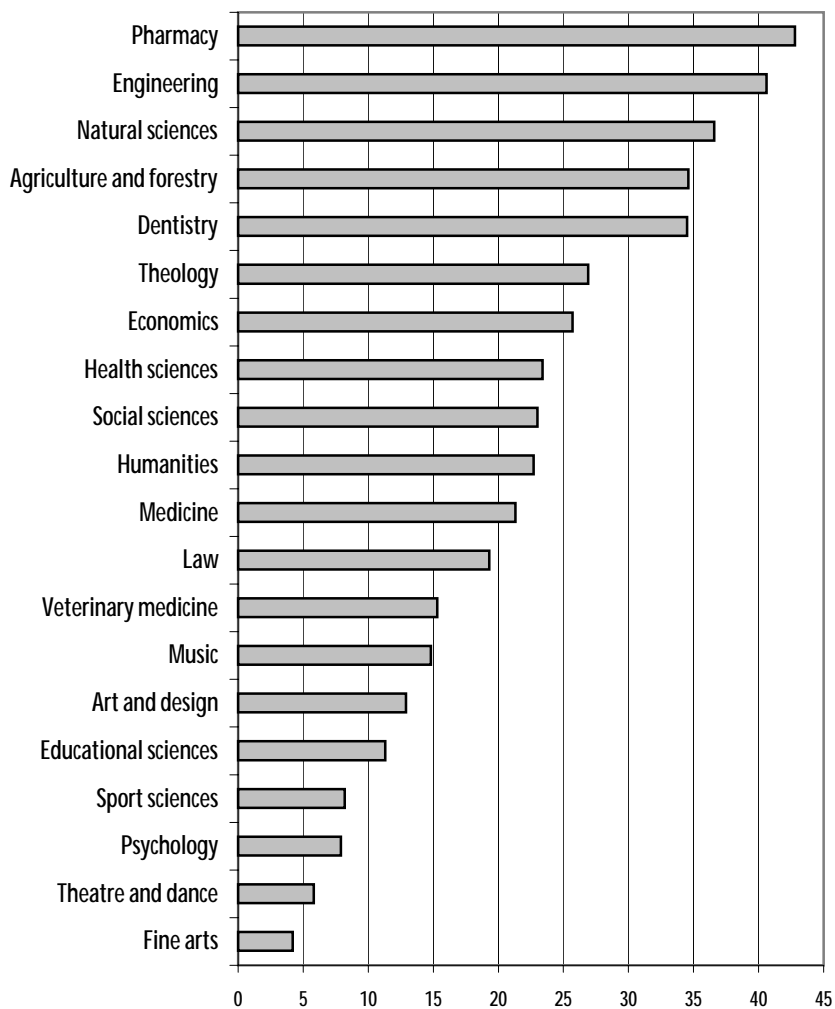
The activities of the open university and open polytechnic are mostly funded using the allocations made by the Ministry of Education to the higher education institutions. Tuition fees only cover study administration costs such as information, supervision, study materials and similar items. Fees vary depending on the teaching and teaching arrangements, but in keeping with the aims of equality in education, efforts are made to keep the fees at a modest level.

Degree-oriented adult education in polytechnics leads to the regular polytechnic degrees, but students' former qualifications and relevant work experience are taken into account. At the moment, most of the adult degree students in polytechnics have a post-secondary vocational diploma as a basis for their studies.

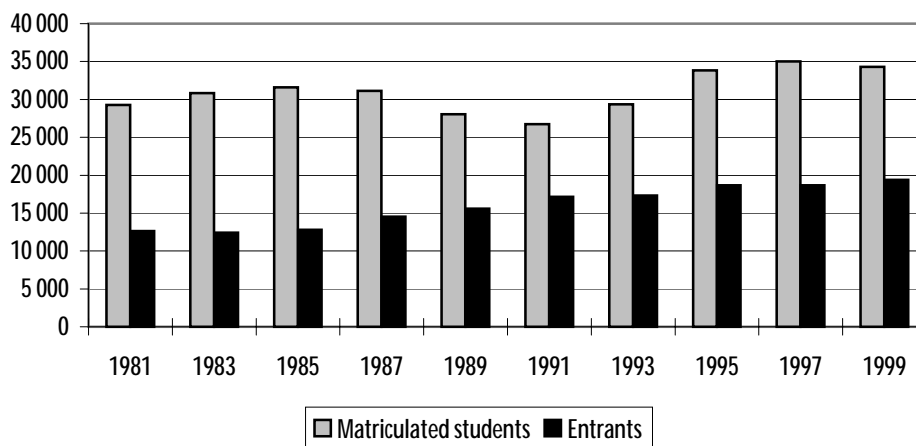
Specialisation studies offered by the polytechnics and universities are extensive continuing education programmes aiming at professional development. They may also count towards post-graduate degrees. Usually the extent of these programmes is 20 to 40 credits. Both universities and polytechnics arrange a wide range of short-term courses for higher education graduates. Continuing education is a business activity carried out by the institutions of higher education, and thus it is not free of charge for the students.

Through their continuing education centres or corresponding organisations the institutions of higher education are actively involved in numerous regional development projects where continuing education and R&D frequently join forces and act as an instrument for regional networking.

Student selection in 1999 by field of study ( universities )  
(percentage of applications admitted)



Matriculated students and university entrants 1981-1999



## Student selection procedure and criteria

### Admission to universities

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**The universities select** their own students, and the competition for university places is increasingly fierce. An applicant may apply and be accepted for a number of places at the same time. However, as for the selection procedure for the academic year 1999–2000 onwards, a student has been able to accept only one place leading to a degree, in any one academic year. The reform has affected both universities and polytechnics and has put study places to the most effective use. The differences between disciplines are considerable: the acceptance rate is highest for engineering, natural sciences and pharmacy, and lowest in the artistic fields, sport sciences and psychology.

General eligibility for university education is conferred by the Finnish matriculation examination and equivalent international and foreign certificates. A three-year vocational qualification also gives general eligibility for university studies.

The selection is made by the universities, their faculties or departments. Students can be ranked on the basis of marks in the matriculation examination and in the school-leaving certificate plus entrance tests; on the basis of entrance tests only; on the basis of marks in the matriculation examination and in the school-leaving certificate.

There is no national entrance examination common to all universities; – the existing tests serve the various selection purposes of autonomous universities and their independent departments. In certain fields of study, entrance tests are arranged in cooperation between universities or departments at various institutions.

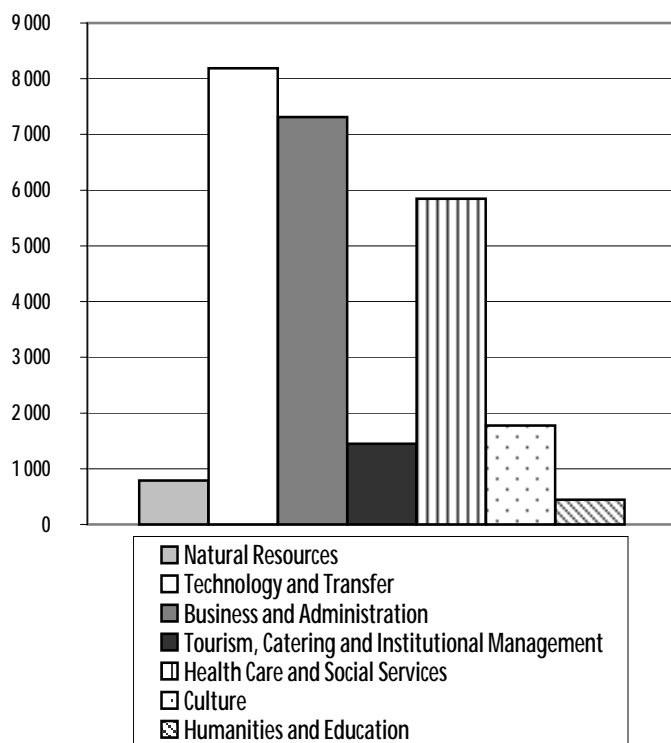
### Admission to polytechnics

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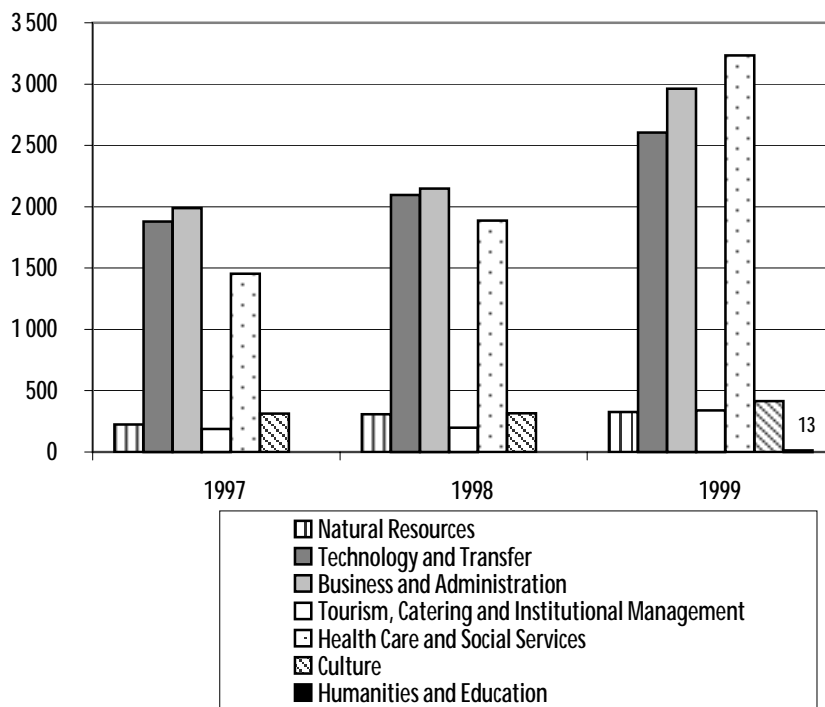
**Students apply** for entry to polytechnics after general or vocational upper secondary education. The requirement is a Finnish matriculation certificate, i.e. an upper secondary school leaving certificate, a basic vocational qualification, or an equivalent international or foreign qualification.

There is a joint national system for application to polytechnics which is administered by the National Board of Education. The polytechnics determine their own entry requirements and select their students. The selection is based on the student's school achievement, work experience and often also an entrance test.

Number of entrants in polytechnics by fields of study in 1999



Degrees by fields of study in 1999 (polytechnics)



Total in 1997 : 6 049  
 Total in 1998 : 6 955  
 Total in 1999 : 9 896

## Financing of studies and the status of students

**Regular students** at Finnish universities or polytechnics do not have to pay for tuition or for taking a degree. Adult education is, however, subject to a charge. Students can apply for financial assistance from public funds. The granting of assistance is coordinated by the Social Insurance Institution (KELA). The present system of financial assistance for education was established in 1992–1994.

Three forms of financial aid are available to university students: grants (which are taxable), housing allowances and loans. Study grants and housing allowances (which are paid to students to offset high housing costs) do not have to be repaid. Student loans are granted by banks and guaranteed by the State.

Financial aid is granted for the duration of full-time studies but is subject to a maximum of 70 months. At universities financial aid is granted for 55 months for studies towards a Master's degree. At polytechnics financial aid is available for 45 to 55 months depending on the extent of the degree. The remaining time up to 70 months can be granted for other higher education studies. An average study grant and housing allowance is FIM 2, 400 per month. The amount of student loan is FIM 1, 300 per month.

Financial aid for adult education is granted to students aged 30 to 54 up to two years. The amount of the study grant for mature students depends on the student's income level before commencing studies, ranging from FIM 1,540 up to FIM 2, 800. In 1999 there were 1, 650 mature students receiving study grants.

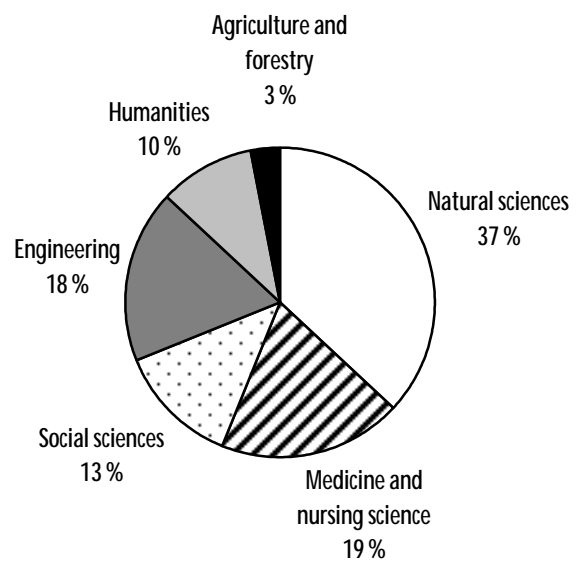
Foreign students may qualify for financial aid if they have resided in Finland for a minimum of two years for purposes other than study, or if they have a permanent residence permit in Finland. Finnish students may also receive aid for studies abroad provided that the studies correspond to Finnish studies that would be covered by students financial aid provisions or for a part of a Finnish degree programme. In 1999 there were 5, 227 students who received financial aid for higher education studies abroad.

Consistent efforts have been made to provide reasonably priced rental accommodation to all students in need of it. Construction has been financed mainly by State-subsidized low-interest loans; local authorities have also encouraged housing production by making land available free of charge or on reasonable lease terms. Housing is also available for foreign students.

Every university has a student union to look after students' interests. Membership is compulsory for all those studying for a Master's degree and optional for others. A nominal membership fee is charged. Membership entitles students to various discounts and services, including the services of the local student health care centres and student restaurants. Detailed legislative provisions govern the status of the student union. The unions have a national umbrella organization, the National Union of Finnish Students (SYL).

Polytechnic students are members of SAMOK (national umbrella organization of polytechnic student unions) via student unions of polytechnics. Membership in a union is voluntary.

Academy of Finland decisions on research funding by field of research in 1999



## Research

**In the organisation** of research, the universities are responsible for basic research, but increasing attention is being paid to the relevance of university research from the point of view of the business sector and society. Interaction between universities and companies in research itself and in putting it to use, has increased dramatically. The emphasis in university research and in its funding is on the high quality of research, and on the development of internationally competitive centres of excellence and researcher training.

The key methods of developing the quality and efficiency of the research system and its scientific and social relevance are to build multiple network cooperation and to increase quality-based competition in the targeting of research funding, while ensuring a steady flow of basic funding to research organisations. Evaluation at regular intervals is an essential part of the development work. Another important goal is to promote genuine two-way internationalisation of the Finnish research system. Cooperation is being increased between the research-funding organisations, the universities, the polytechnics and the business sector. Once again, the aim is to increase the efficiency with which research findings are passed on for practical use.

Apart from a slight decrease at the start of the 1990s, Finnish research funding has increased consistently compared with the modest level in the early 1980s, and currently forms an estimated 3.1 per cent of GDP which is among the highest figures within the OECD.

Besides the recent growth in public-sector funding, company research activity, in particular, has increased along with the economic upturn in recent years, and as part of Finland's industry's rapid structural change towards knowledge-intensive and high-technology production. The business sector's share of research funding is estimated to have risen to almost 70 per cent in 1999.

The share of technological research and product development in public-sector research funding grew rapidly throughout the whole of the 1990s, while the share taken up by Governmental research institutes for sectoral research declined.

## The Academy of Finland

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**The Academy of Finland** is an expert research-funding organization. Its function is to promote and publicize high-level research. It funds basic research which lays the foundation for innovative applied research. Scientifically topical research is given special emphasis.

The Academy has four research councils, which decide on research funding on the basis of mutual competition between applications for appropriations. They are: the Research Council for Culture and Society, the Research Council for Natural Sciences and Engineering, the Research Council for Health, and the Research Council for the Environment and Natural Resources.

The Academy funds Finnish research to an amount of about FIM 900 million annually. The Academy's research funding represents about 12 per cent of public R&D funding. Some three thousand research professionals are working on research projects funded by the Academy.

The Academy funds the scientific work of researchers and research teams at universities and research institutes by means of research appropriations, research posts and grants. About 80 per cent of research funding goes to research at universities. Almost 10 per cent is allocated to researchers' work abroad. In 1998, 7 per cent of funding went to Governmental research institutes.

In terms of creating favourable environments for research, the centres-of-excellence policy is an essential tool for enhancing and maintaining quality. The size of units depends on the particular field. Every positive and creative research environment is entitled to apply for work alloca-

ted to centres of excellence. When successful, the policy will both ensure sufficient resources for the best research teams and create favourable conditions for the emergence of new centres. The centres require long-term funding from their backers, the Academy and other funding bodies. Their share of Academy funding is about 20 per cent. The number of centres of excellence active in 2000-2005 is 26.

Research programmes are a growing form of Academy funding. They differ from other Academy-funded research in that they have a given problem to start with. Their aim is to boost new, rising, or relapsed yet important areas of research or to answer a particular social need. In the future, special emphasis will be given to multi- and interdisciplinary approaches.

In order to develop career opportunities for young researchers the Academy has also set up three-year posts for post-doctoral researchers and two-year positions for research teams for the same purpose. On an annual level, the system will provide some 20 per cent of new doctors with an opportunity to continue their research immediately.

In developing research careers special attention has been paid to problems concerning woman researchers. The Academy of Finland has taken measures to alleviate the shortcomings in evaluating research applications, in allocating funds, in the situation of young researchers and researcher families, and in attitude education.

## Research at universities

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**In 1999 the universities** spent over FIM 4 100 million on research, providing 50 per cent of the funding from their own budgets. The contribution made by external funding to university research has increased both quantitatively and proportionally. It is an essential consideration, however, that external research funding should help the universities to fulfil their primary functions. The most important sources of external funding are the Academy of Finland and the National Technology Agency (Tekes). The international contribution to research funding has also increased, primarily because of EU research programmes. The importance of external research funding varies considerably from one university to another. In 1998 its contribution to technology and to medicine was clearly largest, at over 60 per cent.

The largest fields of research at Finnish universities are technology and the natural sciences, which receive almost half of university research spending.

Expanding and strengthening research is a key area for developing the university sector. The aim is to guarantee the prerequisites for basic research and lay the foundations for a strong, internationally top-level research environment. The universities are expected to concentrate their research activities on their special fields of expertise. Funding is thus targeted to create and develop centres of excellence in research, with support from the Ministry of Education, the Academy of Finland and other funding providers. The most important reforms in scientific policy in the 1990s included the reform of researcher training which started halfway through the decade with the aid of

the 'graduate school' system. As a continuation of this a post-doctoral researcher training system was launched to further develop a researcher's career, and promote the further training of talented people who have just received their doctorates as professional researchers.

Over the last ten years, cooperation between the universities and the business sector has become much closer. The dissemination of research results for use by business has been advanced by targeting research funding and various other mechanisms. The special emphasis in university funding has been on rapidly developing growth areas that are also important for the business world, such as information and communication technologies (ICT) and bio-technology. According to the Government programme to increase research funding, funding at the universities will be primarily directed at extending researcher training, filling the gaps in research facilities, particularly in the areas of technology and natural science, and developing data networks and information services for research.

The Centre for Scientific Computing, which is owned by the Ministry of Education, has the central responsibility for the high-power scientific computing required by the universities, polytechnics and researchers, and for maintaining joint data network services. The universities and research institutes are connected by the FUNET data network. Use of the network has been expanding continuously, more than doubling every year.

### **R&D work at polytechnics**

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**R&D work** of the polytechnics is being developed in order to enhance the opportunities of the polytechnics to better respond to regional needs and to the needs of the SME sector and to promote regional innovation systems. The R&D work will be funded mostly by business and industry, public service providers and national and regional authorities responsible for funding applied R&D. Close cooperation with working life and high quality are the most crucial issues in developing R&D work in polytechnics. Extra funding is still needed to promote the infrastructure of R&D work, such as personnel and equipment, in the polytechnics. The polytechnics are expected to work on their own strategies in this field, taking into account reasonable division of labour and cooperation with the universities.







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