



EAC/10/2019 Preparatory Action - Expert Network on Recognition of outcomes of learning periods abroad in general secondary school

FINLAND

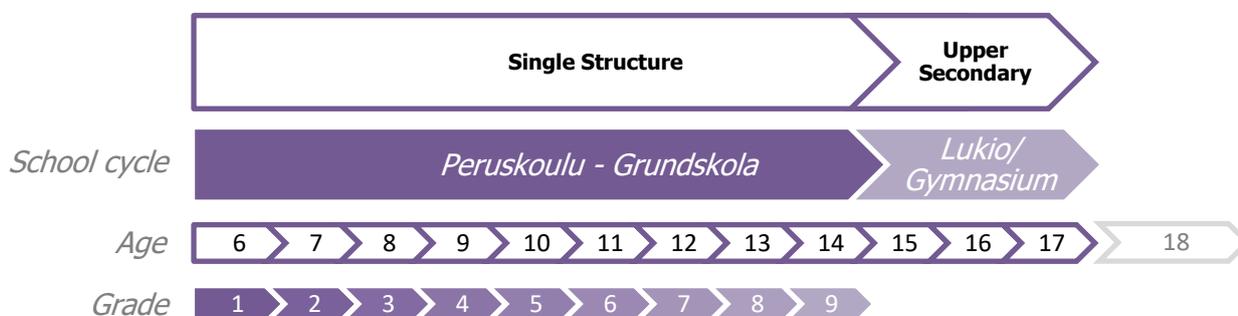
INFOPACK - RECOGNITION OF LEARNING PERIODS ABROAD IN GENERAL SECONDARY EDUCATION

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The information below gives an overview of procedures¹ for the recognition of learning periods abroad in general secondary school. It can be consulted by pupils, as well as their families and teachers, who are or plan to be involved in long-term individual pupil mobility programmes abroad. Please note that this general overview does not include details on different programme types (which may be run by governmental agencies, civil society organisations, private companies or schools themselves) and such information can be obtained directly with the provider of the respective mobility programme.

GENERAL SECONDARY EDUCATION SYSTEM



¹ Based on data gathered in February 2021.

Education is compulsory until 16 years of age. Upper secondary education is a three-year cycle and is compulsory² as from August 2021. The upper secondary education curriculum is not divided by grades: subjects are structured as a set number of study points to be completed during the three-year cycle. This means that pupils draft their own study plan and set the pace for their studies in order to accumulate the number of study points required to complete the curriculum. Teaching happens in 5 to 6 week long periods during which pupils choose 5 to 6 courses on different subjects, and at the end of the period they take an exam on the content of the courses followed.

Graduation and Certification

The general upper secondary school leaving certificate is awarded to pupils who complete the entire general upper secondary school syllabus. In addition, pupils take a separate end-of-school examination to obtain the Matriculation Examination Certificate. The examination includes at least 5 subjects, sometimes 8 or 9.

If pupils change schools, they are given a certificate for any subjects in which they have completed the syllabus. The school certificates include a section 'further information' which notes any additional proof of learning.

There are two types of higher education institutions, Universities of Applied Science and Universities. The general upper secondary school leaving certificate can be used to enter universities of applied science. If a pupil wishes to enrol in a university, they must have the Matriculation Examination Certificate and will also need to pass university entrance exams.

For more information on the structure and features of the different national education systems in Europe please see the Eurydice overview: National Education Systems | Eurydice (europa.eu).

INFORMATION FOR PUPILS GOING ABROAD FROM FINLAND

Age and grade

Pupils who go on a learning period abroad do so at the age of 16/17 years old, during the second year of the cycle. They do not usually go abroad during the third year as the end-of-school examination starts in February and the university entrance exams are held in May/June.³

Registrations in the sending school

You will remain enrolled in your home school while you are abroad and will be thus covered by basic insurance during the exchange period.

² Compulsory Education Act

<https://finlex.fi/fi/laki/alkup/2020/20201214?search%5Ball%5D=matkakustannusten&search%5Bkohdista%5D=koko&search%5Btype%5D=tekstihaku>

³ E. Briga, 'Recognition of school study periods abroad in Europe: An overview and policy recommendations. European Federation for Intercultural Learning', EFIL, Brussels, 2018.

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Funding for the sending school

General upper secondary schools report their pupil numbers twice a year in order to obtain State funding (i.e. 20 September and 20 January). If you go on your exchange on or between these dates, your school will be eligible for State funding for you.

RECOGNITION OF LEARNING PERIODS ABROAD

The following information addresses learning periods abroad of any duration. The same procedures are applied, irrespective of which country the learning period is spent in (EU or non-EU).

Please note that in the case of a mobility within a school-to-school partnership⁴ (e.g. Erasmus+) the learning agreement between sending and host school can be used as a tool for recognition, although there is no evidence that it can be successful for the recognition of a full school year abroad.

Since general upper secondary school in Finland is not based on year levels but on study points, on your return you will usually continue your studies from where you left off.

Before the exchange period, your school team (i.e. study counsellor, subject teachers, school principal) will encourage you to draft a learning agreement defining the studies to be completed abroad and how they will be recognised upon return.

Decisions on recognition of the subjects / study units is based on a statement or a transcript of marks from your host school and depends on the content of the subjects studied and objectives achieved during the period abroad.

The school team is the key player in the recognition process and it may use different methods to verify learning such as documentation (e.g. certificates, project work, proof of attendance, learning diaries, portfolios), discussion and tests upon your return.

You should be aware that you will need to catch up with your studies on your return, which means that it might take you longer than your peers to complete your general upper secondary studies.

INFORMATION FOR PUPILS HOSTED IN FINLAND

Registration in the host school

School principals decide on the admission of exchange pupils. Since general upper secondary school in Finland is not based on year levels, as a hosted pupil, you will attend classes in different subjects based on your prior knowledge. The number of years in upper secondary education in your home country can be used as an initial reference point for placing you in a given year. The collection of study points per subject is often cumulative, which means that if you have studied the subjects before, there is no need to take the modules of the first parts of the syllabus of each subject. You cannot be placed in the 3rd grade as the school year ends in February to allow pupils to prepare for

⁴ within a school-to-school partnership, learning outcomes are usually recognised based on a learning agreement developed between the schools concerned.

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the end-of-school examination, and it is unlikely for hosted exchange pupils to pass these examinations.

Funding for the host school

If the hosted pupil's exchange period covers a whole term (i.e. August to December or January to May), the school is eligible for State funding for you.

Certification for hosted pupils

Hosted pupils received an overview of the courses they have completed. In case they have participated in the exam at the end of the course, also grades are included.

Possibility of graduating in the host country during the exchange

If the host school agrees you may study for the general upper secondary school certificate and the Matriculation examination. However, completing a general upper secondary education with an end-of-school examination in Finland normally requires a good knowledge of either Finnish or Swedish language. There have been some cases of this occurring, however this is a rare practice.

TESTIMONIAL

Lotta from Finland: a full school year to France

"It is amazing how much a person grows when he/she is alone in a foreign country."

My two older siblings and my mother went on exchange, so I knew from a young age I wanted to experience that too.

After my arrival I had some stressful days because of the language barrier, but after two or three months I became more comfortable speaking French and it was downhill from there.

Speaking French would have been practical when I had my bag stolen. When that happened, I was out with my host sister and her friends, and I had been in France only for two weeks. Since my phone, wallet and keys were in the bag, I had to call my mother from my host mother's phone and then go to the police station. Normally it's a not a nice situation, but without speaking a word of French it was even more chaotic!

Recognition

My exchange was so amazing that I forgot almost all the little obstacles I faced. The good memories are the ones you will remember. Although I am a very sociable person, I understood the importance of taking some time for myself, and I will value this lesson in my future too. I would recommend at least a 3-month exchange, it is definitely an experience not to miss. Even if you are not a very

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extroverted person, but open to new experiences, this one will make you grow and understand important things about yourself and other cultures. My advice is not to have many expectations: your best memories may come from the least expected moments.

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