

RESIDENCE PERMITS FOR STUDENTS

OTHER THAN EU/EEA CITIZENS

Foreign students are welcome to study at Finnish educational institutions. A foreign student needs a residence permit if the period of study in Finland is longer than three months.

No residence permit is needed for a stay lasting less than three months. However, a foreign student may still need a visa if he or she is a citizen of a country requiring visas. More information on visas and visa requirements is available from Finnish diplomatic missions abroad and on the website of the Finnish Ministry for Foreign Affairs at formin.finland.fi.

This fact sheet gives general information on the cases when foreign students need residence permits and when residence permits are issued on the basis of studies in Finland. The information on this fact sheet is based on the Aliens Act, which entered into force on May 1, 2004.

Please note that the information on this fact sheet does not apply to citizens of EU member states or Iceland, Norway, Liechtenstein and Switzerland.

REQUIREMENTS FOR A RESIDENCE PERMIT

Students are issued a temporary residence permit if the main purpose of their stay in Finland is to study at a Finnish educational institution. In order to be issued with a residence permit, students must be able to prove that they have sufficient funds for their residence and studies.

A residence permit can be issued

- when the applicant has been accepted as a student at a Finnish university or vocational institution;
- for studies at some other educational institution leading to a degree or vocational qualification;
- for studies of Finnish or Swedish if the studies are at university level and lead to a degree;
- for short language courses only in the event that the applicant has been accepted as a student at a Finnish educational institution and wishes to learn about Finnish language and culture beforehand;

- for exchange students who are temporarily supplementing their studies at an educational institution abroad with at most one academic year at a Finnish university or other tertiary education institution, polytechnic, vocational institution or upper secondary school;
- exchange students who are participating in an approved exchange programme. Approved exchange and trainee programmes include AFS Intercultural Programs, Asse International, EF High School Year, Comenius, FIMSIC, ICYE, I.V.S.A., Lions, Rotary International, STS High School Foundation, Youth for Understanding and 4H. Applicants will get more information on these programmes from their own educational institution or from Finnish educational institutions.

Residence permits are not generally issued for studies at folk high schools, Christian colleges or similar institutions where studies do not lead to a degree or vocational qualification. A residence permit can, however, be obtained with special justification. This could consist of, for instance, the need to supplement studies pursued in the applicant's home country, further studies connected with a vocational qualification or special training available in Finland.

PARTICIPATION IN ENTRANCE EXAMS

A student may be required to take part in entrance exams at an educational institution before being accepted as a student. No residence permit is needed for entrance exams, but a student may still need a visa if he or she is a citizen of a country requiring visas. Visas are issued by Finnish diplomatic missions abroad, which will also supply additional information concerning visa requirements.

INCOME DURING STUDIES

In order to get a residence permit, students must have a secure means of support during their stay in Finland in the form of a scholarship, grant or other funds. Students must be able to prove that they have at their disposal at least 500 euros a month or 6000 euros for a year. If the educational institution provides free accommodation and meals in addition to free tuition, the required amount of disposable funds may be lowered.

The means of support for a student participating in an exchange programme can be arranged through the programme.

PERMISSION TO WORK ON A RESIDENCE PERMIT

Students are permitted to do a limited amount of paid work under a residence permit issued for studies if the work in question is practical training included in the studies or final project work. Part-time employment is also possible, if the working time comes to an average of 25 hours per week at most. There are no limitations on working hours in full-time employment during holidays, specifically the summer and Christmas holidays.

Earnings from part-time work during term-time may be included in the amount of disposable funds required for a residence permit at the discretion of the authorities. This is not, however, possible in the case of a first residence permit.

STUDENTS' HEALTH INSURANCE

Any student who submits a residence permit application on or after 1.9.2007 must attach details of their comprehensive health insurance cover to their application. Comprehensive insurance cover means insurance which includes the types of treatment and costs that are covered by municipal health care services and the health insurance system. A student must have insurance cover when applying for a residence permit as without it a residence permit cannot be granted.

- For studies of less than two years in duration, a student must have private insurance which primarily covers the costs of medical treatment up to 100,000 euros (cost level in 2007).
- Where the duration of the studies is two years or more, a student will usually have a home municipality in Finland and is therefore entitled to municipal health care services. In such cases, it is sufficient for the insurance to primarily cover the cost of medicines (in practice the cover extends to doctor's fees and costs of treatment and examination), up to 30,000 euros (cost level in 2007).

HOW TO APPLY FOR A RESIDENCE PERMIT

Foreign students should generally apply for their first residence permit before arriving in Finland at the Finnish diplomatic mission in their country of origin or another country where the applicant is legally resident. Applicants must wait for the decision on their application abroad, because the residence permit must be in the student's passport when arriving in Finland.

A fee is charged for processing residence permit applications. The fee must be paid when the application is submitted. Because this is a processing fee, it is not refunded even if the application is unsuccessful or if the application is withdrawn.

The application form for a residence permit (OLE 1) is available from Finnish diplomatic missions abroad or it can be printed out from the Finnish Immigration Service's website at www.migri.fi. The diplomatic mission sends the residence permit application and its attachments to the Finnish Immigration Service for processing. The application should include the following attachments:

- clarification on studies (appendix form OLE 4) completed in the language that the applicant's studies in Finland will be in;
- copies of all pages of the applicant's passport that have entries;
- a letter of acceptance from a Finnish educational institution, showing the duration of studies, the language of studies, and the degree or vocational qualification that studies aim for;
- if relevant, an account of previous studies/degrees or qualifications and any employment, account to be given in full for the entire period following the completion of compulsory education;
- if relevant, a justification for engaging in studies that do not lead to a degree or vocational qualification; if the justification includes Finnish ancestry, then an account of the Finnish ancestry should be included;
- proof of means of support; for example, a bank statement for the applicant's bank account or a document confirming a scholarship or grant to be received from an educational institution or other benefits;
- details of comprehensive health insurance cover;
- a language certificate if relevant;
- proof from a Finnish educational institution that the applicant is enrolled/entered as present and proof of any completed courses if the applicant has already started his or her studies;
- an applicant under the age of 18 requires written consent from his or her guardians and at least one of the guardians must sign the application form.

APPLYING FOR A RESIDENCE PERMIT WHEN IN FINLAND

As an exception, a student who takes part in entrance exams in Finland can apply for a residence permit in Finland if the studies start so soon after the entrance exam that the student cannot return to his or her home country to make the application.

In Finland, the application should be submitted to the police, and the police will then send the application

to the Finnish Immigration Service for processing. The applicant is permitted to wait for the decision in Finland and to start his or her studies even before receiving a residence permit.

EXTENSION OF A RESIDENCE PERMIT

Applications for the extension of a residence permit are submitted while in Finland to the police in the municipality in Finland where applicants live, and the police make the decision on the application.

In order to receive an extension to their residence permit, students are required to still be enrolled in the educational institution, to be involved in full-time study and to have completed the study units required by the educational institution in question. If the completed study units are too few, an extension may be denied.

THE PERIOD OF VALIDITY OF A RESIDENCE PERMIT

A student's residence permit is temporary in nature, shown by the letter B on the permit. If studies last for more than a year, the residence permit is generally issued for a year at a time. If studies last for two years at most, a residence permit can be issued for the entire duration of studies.

APPEAL CONCERNING RESIDENCE PERMIT DECISIONS

Those dissatisfied with decisions on residence permits may appeal to the Administrative Court. The decision includes instructions for appeal, including details on the appeal period.

AFTER THE STUDIES END

Once a student has received a degree or vocational qualification, a new temporary residence permit can be issued so the student can look for work. A new residence permit can also be issued on some other grounds, for example, postgraduate studies in the same discipline, employment or family ties.

FURTHER INFORMATION

Further information on residence permits is available in Finland from the Finnish Immigration Service and the local police, and from Finnish diplomatic missions abroad.

Practical instructions and contact information is available on the following websites:

www.poliisi.fi (the police)

formin.finland.fi/missions (the Ministry for Foreign Affairs, Finnish diplomatic missions)

Finnish Immigration Service

Postal address: P.O. Box 18, 00581 Helsinki, Finland

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