Helsinki



Guide to Finnish as a second language (S2) for students in general upper secondary schools and their guardians

What does the S2 syllabus mean?
Mother tongue and literature is a compulsory subject for all students. It can be completed by studying either Finnish language (S1) or Finnish as a second language (S2).

For whom is the S2 syllabus recommended?
The S2 syllabus is intended for students who

- do **not** have Finnish, Swedish or Sámi as their mother tongue AND
- have significant gaps in their Finnish language skills.

The S2 syllabus also applies to students with a multilingual background.

Examples:

- A student speaks Finnish fluently but struggles with reading and writing (especially in formal written Finnish). ▶ S2 syllabus is recommended.
- A student can write clear Finnish but has difficulties in reading comprehension. Writing long texts and understanding assignment instructions is challenging. ▶ S2 syllabus is recommended.
- A student is multilingual but has completed comprehensive school in Finnish and can read and write long texts fluently. ▶ S1 syllabus is recommended.

Does the S2 syllabus prevent students from applying to higher education?
S2 students can apply to higher education institutions in the same way as S1 students. The S2 matriculation examination is graded equally to the S1 exam in university admissions.

Who decides on the choice of syllabus?
The decision is made with the support of the school's S2 teacher, guidance counsellor and principal. The student and their guardian make the final decision together. Students who have turned 18 can make the decision independently.

When is the decision made, and can it be changed during general upper secondary school?
The decision is made during the first year of general upper secondary school. If the syllabus needs to be changed during the first year, the student, their guardian and the school make the decision together.