

Compulsory education continues for current ninth-graders in autumn 2021

As of 2021, the compulsory education will be extended, and the first age group to be affected by the reform is the current ninth-graders.

What the extended compulsory education means in practice, is that the school leaving age will be raised to 18 years. The extension applies to education after comprehensive school. The goal is for every young person to complete upper secondary education, by either passing the matriculation examination or a gaining a vocational qualification.

Compulsory education ends when the student turns 18, or if a student graduates from upper secondary level earlier.

Joint application period for upper secondary education 23 February–7 April 2021

From now on, all young people have the obligation to apply for upper secondary education after basic education. The obligation to apply continues if the young person is left without a study place, or if a student abandons studies that have already started.

The compulsory education after basic education will primarily take place in general upper secondary education or in vocational education, including apprenticeship training. It can also take place in transition-phase education between basic education and upper secondary education.

Ninth-graders apply for upper secondary and transition-phase education via the joint application system. The joint application period is **23 February–7 April 2021**. Applications should be submitted on the studyinfo.fi website. Students will receive instructions on the joint application system from their school guidance counsellors and teachers.

Upper secondary education is free of charge

The right to attend upper secondary education free of charge applies to all ninth-graders of the spring 2021. Free upper secondary education ends when the student turns 20, or when a student graduates from the upper secondary level.

In addition to the education and school meals, textbooks, supplies and other materials needed in lessons, and final tests with retakes of rejected tests are all free of charge. Learning materials required for instruction include tools, uniforms and ingredients. School journeys that are longer than seven kilometres will also be free of charge and funded by Kela. In some cases, accommodation and other travel costs can also be reimbursed.

The materials to be purchased in the Helsinki region will be specified later. The educational institution will purchase all learning materials needed by the students' centrally.

In educational institutions with special emphases, supplies such as musical instruments and sports equipment will need to be paid for by the students themselves.

Several options after comprehensive school

Helsinki offers many options for upper secondary education. Stadin AO, the Helsinki Vocational College and Adult Institute is the largest vocational education institution in Finland. It offers nearly 30 different qualifications and provides vocational education for numerous different occupations. The City of Helsinki has 14 general upper secondary schools, as well as a general upper secondary school for adults. All city-run general upper secondary schools have a special educational task or a school-specific special emphasis. In addition to these schools, there are several private or trust-funded vocational and general upper secondary schools, as well as state-owned and specialised general upper secondary schools in Helsinki.

Please note that the Finnish matriculation examination exams can only be taken in Finnish or Swedish. There are a few other international examinations in other languages available, as well as preparatory education for Finnish or Swedish-language both vocational and general upper secondary education. Learn more about these options via the Studyinfo links below.

You can find more information about the upper secondary education options:

[General upper secondary schools in Helsinki](#)

[Stadin AO in English](#)

[Studyinfo: General upper secondary education and international examinations](#)

[Studyinfo: Preparatory education options for upper secondary education](#)

Young people will receive guidance on applying for upper secondary education. If a young person is left without a place to study in the joint application system, the organiser of basic education will continue to provide guidance during the summer so that the young person can apply for studies in the continuous admission. If a young person of compulsory education age is left without a study place, or they abandon the started studies, the home municipality will ensure that they will receive guidance or a place in suitable transition-phase education.

The organiser of basic education, together with the young person and the guardian, will evaluate which type of education is the most suitable, with regard to any needs for special support.

Learn more about the joint application system on the Studyinfo website: [Finnish application system](#).

Information about the extension of compulsory education is available on the [City of Helsinki's website](#) and on the [Ministry of Education and Culture website](#).