

Description of practical placement in Finland

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Practical placement (PP) in higher education in Finland is regulated by the **Government Decree on University Degrees 794/2004**. There in Finland are no general requirements or regulations focused on PP on national level, but PP is a possible integrated part of studies. Differences between different training programs may be considerable.

At Finnish universities in Bachelor and Master degrees PP has not been compulsory in the majority of cases but they have been requested or desirable and duration is usually between 0-15 ECTS and in universities of applied sciences 30-60 ECTS. Requirements for the PP depends of the specialization, e.g. the degree of Bachelor of Science in Pharmacy shall include a compulsory internship.

In higher university degree studies for the degrees of Medicine, Licentiate of Dentistry and Licentiate of Veterinary Medicine, the degree of Master of Science in Pharmacy and the degree of Master of Science in Psychology, and education in social work belonging to the field of social sciences include compulsory internships.

The content of the PP is usually to be decided in cooperation between the student and enterprise and has a link to the studied discipline. PP coordinators at faculties can recommend the companies and specify the requirements for the PP. The students of the universities can participate during PP in different research and development projects for the enterprises.

Evaluation methodology differs across university types and study courses. At universities a report has to be handled or a certificate from the enterprise can be enough to accept the PP in the curriculum. Evaluation is often graded pass or fail.

In Finland universities and students are the main actors in the finding of the PP enterprises. The students have to search for placements, have to apply and have to care for the timing and coordination with their theoretical studies and have to prove the results required by their university. Universities support PP from own budget financing and can provide help in searching for placement offers or preparing the PP period (career services centers, coordinators at faculties and departments, job fairs, partner enterprises etc.) according to their financial and HR possibilities. Contact persons from the universities and faculties give detailed instructions about the financial support during the PP and other questions regarding with the organizational matters. PP contract can be signed between student and enterprise or be three-party-contract: university, student, enterprise.

Enterprise support in Finland: The general internship contract defines the salary and the duties of the student, similar to a regular contract of employment. Enterprises pay full or partly salary of the student. From universities allowances can be support just a part of the PP. The enterprise can pay salary directly to the student. Other possibility is that enterprise pay to the university and university pay scholarship to the student. In general, enterprises have an adviser or tutor who is responsible for the interns.

An example of entrepreneur and student collaboration has been described in the paper **Entrepreneur and Student Collaboration: Building model for integrative learning and value creation** (Tomi Heimonen, Jari Handelberg, Natalia Narits, Helsinki School of Economics Small Business Center, 2009) presented during the EUE-NET conference in Nicosia on 29.4.-3.5.2009.

In Finland can be mentioned the following difficulties and obstacles regarding PP:

- There is no common PP database on detailed regulation and placement offers
- Incipient PP culture nation-wide (content of collaboration with enterprises)
- Lack of sufficient instruction and evaluation during the internship
- Lack of PP opportunities (partnership enterprises)
- Lack of time for the advising of the students during PP and financial resources in SMEs (there is need for the support of SMEs for PP)