Applying for Your Student Visa: Finland

What is a visa?
A visa is official authorization allowing you to enter a country and travel, work, live, or study there for a specific period of time. Generally, a visa is an elaborate stamp that is sealed onto one of the pages of your passport. Visas are issued to American citizens by a foreign country's Embassy or Consulate located in the United States. Every country has its own regulations governing the issuance of visas.

Do I need a visa to go to Finland?
A visa is required for students (and their dependents, if applicable) going to Finland through an officially registered organization or program such as ISEP or UM's Partner University Exchange program for more than 3 months. The residence permit application process can take up to 3 months and cannot begin until the consulate has all of your paperwork, so it is important that you apply as soon as possible.

What do I need to apply for a visa?

You need the following documents (originals plus one photocopy of all documents) to apply for a visa (also called a "residence permit"):

- **A valid passport;**
  - Please see page 1 in the Study Abroad Handbook for how to apply for a passport.
  - Apply early for your passport! It may take 6-8 weeks to process your application.

- **Completed application for residence permit (OLE_OPI),** available online at [http://migri.fi/services/_application_forms_/residence_permit_application_forms](http://migri.fi/services/_application_forms_/residence_permit_application_forms) under “Studying”.
  Remember to provide the exact dates of your stay in Finland, and provide the original documents along with one photocopy.

- **Completed appendices**, available online; make sure to complete the appropriate appendix.

- **One passport size photos.** The photos must follow the Passport Photo Guidelines issued by the police in June 2005. Size: 3.6 cm x 4.7 cm (1 3/8 inch x 1 7/8 inch), head: between 3.2 cm x 3.6 cm (1 1/4 inch to 1 3/8 inch). Incorrect pictures cannot be accepted.

- **Original letter of acceptance** from the Finnish university you will be attending.
  - Include your acceptance letter from UM and your acceptance letter from your host institution. The letter should also clearly state your benefits regarding school fees, food and housing. Note for ISEP students: remember to include your “certification letter” from ISEP indicating that tuition, room, and board are fully prepaid. If the acceptance letter from your host institution has not arrived within two months prior to your departure, please notify UM's International Programs.

- **Written proof of your housing arrangements** in Finland.

- **Proof that you have sufficient funds** to cover your stay in Finland (EUR 6000/year is considered the minimum or EUR 500/month). This can be in a form of a letter from your bank or a bank statement that is on your own name. Bank statements of parents or shared accounts are not acceptable. If all expenses are paid through an organization, and additional sum of US$120 should be available to you each month.

- **Written proof of any scholarship** that you have received;

- **Proof of comprehensive health insurance** that meets the requirements of the Finnish Immigration Service. The insurance policy must include the coverage in figures, the effective dates, the fact that the insurance is also valid in Finland, and that the insurance has to be non-deductible. More details about the
health insurance requirement can be found at http://migri.fi/studying_in_finland/filling_in_the_application/insurance.

- A cover letter stating the exact dates of your stay in Finland, your current telephone number and the address where your passport is to be returned. Your e-mail might be helpful, too;
- Processing fee of $325 in the form of cash, money order, or certified check. Personal checks are not accepted. This fee is nonrefundable, and may change due to exchange rate fluctuations. If you wish your passport to be mailed back to you by overnight delivery, add $20.00, add $10.00 for registered mail.
- Biometric data. Fingerprints will be taken at the time of filing the application.

It takes 8-12 weeks for the Finnish Immigration Service to process visa applications, but the process cannot be started if documents are missing from your applications: be sure to sign and submit all required documents!

How do I obtain a visa?

A. In person You must apply for your residence permit in person.

- Call the consulate before you visit to schedule an appointment.
- Your fingerprints will be taken at the appointment when you turn in your visa application materials.
- Avoid waiting until the last minute to apply for your visa, as omitting one document or failing to complete a form completely may delay the processing of your visa for weeks.

General tips for applying for a visa:

Foreign embassies and consulates in the US receive hundreds of inquires every day so contacting them may be a trying experience. Have patience. Some consulates only receive visitors or calls during certain hours of the day or on certain days of the week; visit their website to learn their hours or call back at different times of the day. You may find that you are placed on hold or that your call is never forwarded to the appropriate person. Don't be discouraged: be persistent, but polite. Remember that US consulates in foreign countries operate in a similar fashion!

Embassy of Finland
States Served: Washington, D.C., Maryland, Virginia
Address: 330 Massachusetts Avenue, N.W. Washington, D.C. 20008
Tel. (202) 298-5800; Fax (202) 298-6030
Website: www.finland.org
Email: sanomat.was@formin.fi

Consulate-General of Finland, Los Angeles
States served: California, Alaska, Arizona, Colorado, Hawaii, Idaho, Montana, Nevada, New Mexico, Oregon, Utah, Washington and Wyoming
Address: 1801 Century Park East, Suite 2100 Los Angeles, CA 90067
Tel. (310) 203-9903; Fax (310) 203-9186;
Website: www.finland.org
Email: sanomat.los@formin.fi

Consulate General, New York
Address: 866 United Nations Plaza, Suite 250, New York, NY 10017
Tel. (212) 750-4400; Fax (221) 750-4418
Website:  www.finland.org
Email:  consulate.nyc@formin.fi

For more information and if the state you are a resident of is not listed, visit: http://www.finland.org/public/default.aspx?nodeid=40964&contentlan=2&culture=en-US to find the consulate you should apply to.