

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 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, so you (and your dependents, if applicable) will need to obtain a visa for your period of study in Finland. 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 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 (UVI 101)**, available online at www.finland.org; choose "Visas and Permits" then "Residence Permits" then "Students". Remember to provide the exact dates of your stay in Finland, and provide the original documents.
- **Completed appendices**, available online; make sure to complete the appropriate appendix.
- **Two 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.
- **A 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.
- **Written proof of any scholarship** that you have received;
- **Proof of comprehensive health insurance** that meets the requirements of the Finnish Immigration Service. A student studying in Finland less than 2 years must have health insurance that covers the cost of medical treatment up to EUR 100,000.
- **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 \$140** 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 \$8.00 for registered mail.

- **Details of their comprehensive health insurance**, which includes the types of treatment and costs that are covered by municipal health care services and the health insurance system. Students must have private insurance which primarily covers the costs of medical treatment up to 100,000 euros.
- ▶ **Attention:** This list may not be all-inclusive! Verify this information with the consulate, as the application process can change or may even vary by consulate.
- ▶ 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

- Take the above documents to the Finnish consulate that has jurisdiction over your state of residence.
- Call the consulate before you visit to verify hours of operation and location.
- 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.

B. Via mail

If you chose to apply for your visa via mail rather than in person, you should:

- Send all documents, including your passport, in a FedEx, US Overnight Mail, or other express mail service that provides a tracking number for your parcel, to the consulate. Send each document in duplicate, and keep a photocopy of all documents, including your passport, for yourself.
- Submit the \$140.00 processing fee with a money order or certified check payable to the Consul-General of Finland (no cash unless you apply in person!) --consulates will not accept personal checks.
- Enclose a *postage paid* FedEx/US Overnight Mail envelope *addressed to yourself*. (Or include an extra US\$20.00 for the Finnish Consulate to return your visa via overnight mail.)
- Apply early: the residence permit application process can take up to 3 months and cannot be started until all paperwork is submitted.
- Be sure all documents are in order. Missing documents may cause delays in the processing of your application.
- Do not leave the country until you have received your passport and visa.

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

Email: sanomat.was@formin.fi

Consulate-General of Finland in 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;

Email: sanomat.los@formin.fi

If the state you are a resident of is not listed, visit: www.finland.org to find the consulate you should apply to.