



FINNISH NATIONAL
BOARD OF EDUCATION

RECOGNITION OF FOREIGN QUALIFICATIONS IN FINLAND

Publications 2010:2

RECOGNITION OF FOREIGN QUALIFICATIONS IN FINLAND



© Finnish National Board of Education

Publications 2010:2

ISBN 978-952-13-4489-3 (pb)

ISBN 978-952-13-4490-9 (pdf)

www.oph.fi/english

Editia Prima Oy, Helsinki 2010

CONTENTS

| | |
|---|----|
| 1. Introduction | 5 |
| 2. Overview of decision-making at the Finnish National Board of Education | 6 |
| 3. Recognition of professional qualifications obtained by EU/EEA citizens in an EU/EEA country | 7 |
| 3.1 Who can be awarded a decision and what types of professional qualifications can the decision concern? | 7 |
| 3.2 Decision-making principles | 8 |
| 3.2.1 Conditional decisions and compensation measures | 8 |
| 4. Comparability of higher education studies completed abroad | 11 |
| 4.1 Who can be awarded a decision and when is the decision required? | 11 |
| 4.2 Decision-making principles | 12 |
| 4.2.1 Comparability with a degree of a certain level and type | 12 |
| 4.2.2 Comparability with a certain degree or with specific studies | 12 |
| 5. Finnish National Board of Education decisions on eligibility for regulated professions | 14 |
| 5.1 Teachers | 14 |
| 5.1.1 Recognition of teaching qualifications obtained by EU/EEA citizens in an EU/EEA state | 14 |
| 5.1.2 Teaching qualifications from another Nordic country | 15 |
| 5.1.3 Comparability of teacher training completed outside the EU/EEA | 15 |
| 5.1.4 Comparability of a foreign study module with studies required of teachers | 16 |
| 5.1.5 Teaching in a foreign language in Finland | 16 |
| 5.2 Positions requiring legal training | 17 |
| 5.2.1 Law degrees completed by EU/EEA citizens in an EU/EEA country | 17 |
| 5.3 Social workers and social instructors | 18 |
| 5.3.1 EU or EEA citizens who have qualified in another EU or EEA country | 18 |
| 5.3.2 Qualifications as a social worker or a social instructor obtained outside the EU/EEA | 18 |
| 5.4 Posts and positions within fire and rescue services | 19 |

| | | |
|---|--|----|
| 6. | When is an FNBE decision on eligibility for public posts not required? | 20 |
| 6.1 | Continuing studies in Finland | 20 |
| 6.2 | Applying to work for a private sector employer | 20 |
| 6.3 | The competent authority other than the Finnish National Board of Education | 20 |
| 7. | Applying for a decision and processing the application | 21 |
| 8. | Finnish National Board of Education statements on foreign vocational qualifications | 22 |
| 9. | Recognition of Finnish qualifications abroad | 22 |
| 9.1 | Statements on Finnish qualifications | 23 |
| Appendix 1: Regulated Professions and professions requiring professional practice rights in Finland | | 24 |

1. Introduction

Recognition of qualifications means making decisions on eligibility provided by foreign qualifications. Recognition of qualifications covers decisions concerning eligibility for public posts, professional practice rights and eligibility for further studies and transfer of credits.

The Finnish National Board of Education (FNBE) decides on the type of eligibility provided by foreign qualifications for public posts in Finland. As a general rule, people who have completed their studies abroad will need to obtain a Finnish National Board of Education decision when applying for a public sector post or position which requires specific qualifications laid down in law. Examples of such qualifications requirements include a higher education degree of a certain level or a specific educational qualification or module completed in Finland.

Field-specific authorities decide on granting rights to practise a certain profession or use a Finnish professional title to people who have completed their training abroad. Practising a profession or using a professional title may require certain types of training as specified in Finnish law. Such educational requirements exist in fields such as health care and seafaring.

Higher education institutions and other educational institutions decide on granting a right to study when people who have completed their studies abroad apply to continue their studies in Finland. These institutions also decide on transfer of credits completed abroad towards a qualification to be taken in Finland.

This guide is primarily intended for experts working with people holding foreign qualifications. The guide's key content covers the decision-making procedure at the Finnish National Board of Education. The guide provides information about legislation on the basis of which decisions are made, criteria for awarding a favourable decision and on how to apply for a decision.

2. Overview of decision-making at the Finnish National Board of Education

The decision-making procedure at the Finnish National Board of Education is based on the Act on the Recognition of Professional Qualifications (1093/2007; hereinafter referred to as the 'Professional Qualifications Act'), the Act on Eligibility Provided by Foreign Higher Education Studies for Public Posts in Finland (531/1986; hereinafter referred to as the 'Foreign Studies Act') or the Teaching Qualifications Decree (986/1998). The applicable law is determined according to the country of origin of the qualification, the applicant's nationality and the eligibility being applied for.

A Finnish National Board of Education decision may only be obtained by application. Each application will be processed individually. Decisions may not be identical even when the country of origin, the awarding educational institution and the title of the qualification are the same. It is possible to issue differing decisions on qualifications with the same title if there are substantial differences in terms of the scope, content and requirements of the programme. The applicant's work experience may also have a bearing on the decision. Sometimes the title of a qualification remains the same while its status in the relevant country's education system changes. In such cases, the time when the qualification was completed plays a decisive role when determining whether it is comparable with a university Master's or Bachelor's degree, for example.

Decisions are formulated in keeping with Finnish legislation governing professional qualifications. They determine eligibility for a position in terms of educational requirements. However, there may also be other requirements for a position, such as language skills or work experience. These need to be demonstrated to the employer in other ways.

A decision on recognition of a qualification issued by the Finnish National Board of Education does not transform a foreign qualification into a Finnish one. The only way to obtain a Finnish qualification or degree title is to complete the relevant Finnish programme. People who have completed their qualification abroad should use their original qualification title.

3. Recognition of professional qualifications obtained by EU/EEA citizens in an EU/EEA country

3.1 Who can be awarded a decision and what types of professional qualifications can the decision concern?

A decision on recognition of professional qualifications may be awarded to a citizen of an EU/EEA state or Switzerland who has qualified for a profession in another EU/EEA state or in Switzerland.¹

A decision on recognition of professional qualifications may concern eligibility for a post or a position which requires specific qualifications laid down in an Act or a Decree in Finland. These are known as regulated professions, which cover teachers (such as class teachers, subject teachers, special needs teachers, pre-primary teachers and kindergarten teachers), social workers, social instructors, positions requiring a law degree, as well as full-time positions as fire officers, sub-officers and crew members within fire and rescue services. A list of regulated professions and competent authorities in Finland is provided in Appendix 1.

A decision on recognition of professional qualifications cannot be awarded to people who are not fully qualified for a profession in another EU/EEA country or in Switzerland for reasons such as incomplete studies. In order to qualify, they must apply to a Finnish higher education institution or some other educational institution to complete the qualification, degree or studies required to qualify for the relevant profession. In such cases, the education provider decides on granting the right to study and determines the content and scope of the required studies.

EU/EEA citizens who have completed a higher education degree in an EU/EEA country or in Switzerland need to obtain a decision on comparability of the level of their degree when applying for a post or a position requiring a

1 A decision on recognition of professional qualifications may also be granted to a person who has qualified for a profession outside the EU/EEA, provided that: the applicant is a citizen of an EU/EEA country or Switzerland; his or her professional qualifications have been recognised in another EU/EEA country or in Switzerland; and he or she has at least three years of professional experience in the country that recognised his or her professional qualifications.

higher education degree of a certain level (see Section 4.2 below). A decision on comparability of the level of the degree will be awarded in addition to a decision on recognition of professional qualifications when the applicant has completed a higher education degree lasting at least three years.

3.2 Decision-making principles

The decision-making process is governed by the Professional Qualifications Act, which is based on Directive 2005/36/EC of the European Parliament and of the Council on the recognition of professional qualifications. The premise of the Directive is that an EU/EEA citizen who has qualified in one of the EU/EEA countries or in Switzerland will also be granted equivalent professional qualifications in other Member Countries.

The Professional Qualifications Directive includes a classification of qualifications, where different types of certificates attesting to formal qualifications are grouped under levels a–e, with a being the lowest and e the highest level. The qualification levels have been described in section 6 of the Professional Qualifications Act.

A favourable decision requires that the applicant's training is placed no more than one qualification level below that of the training required for the same position in Finland. By way of example, a teacher who has completed post-secondary class teacher training lasting 1–2 years (level c) cannot be granted eligibility as a class teacher, which in Finland requires completion of a university Master's degree (level e). Conversely, an applicant who has completed class teacher training corresponding to the level of a Finnish university Bachelor's degree (level d) may be granted a favourable decision on eligibility as a class teacher, because the Finnish programme is only one level above (level e).

When processing the decision, the Finnish National Board of Education establishes the types of professional activities for which the applicant is qualified in his or her country of origin. In addition, the Board also determines whether the applicant's training corresponds to the training required for the relevant profession in Finland in terms of content and duration. By virtue of the Professional Qualifications Act, the Finnish National Board of Education makes the decision within four months of receipt of all application documents.

3.2.1 Conditional decisions and compensation measures

Where necessary, a decision may be issued conditionally, which means that the applicant is required to complete a compensation measure in order to be

granted eligibility. The compensation measure may be an adaptation period or an aptitude test. Completion of an adaptation period or an aptitude test may be required if:

- the applicant's training lasted at least one year less than the training required for the corresponding position in Finland;
- the applicant's training differs substantially from the training required for the position in Finland in terms of content;
- the content of professional activities in Finland differs substantially from that in place in the country where the applicant obtained his or her professional qualifications.

As a general rule, the applicant is free to choose whether to complete an adaptation period or an aptitude test. In such cases, the decision includes both alternative scenarios. However, the applicant may not choose between an adaptation period and an aptitude test if practising the profession in question requires precise knowledge of national law and provision of advice on national law forms a key part of its activities. The compensation measure imposed in a decision is always an aptitude test in cases where the decision concerns eligibility for positions requiring a law degree, for example.

Work experience obtained in the profession after completion of the qualification or further studies in the field may make up for a substantial difference in training or professional activities in full or in part. In such cases, a compensation measure will not be imposed at all or it will be more limited in scope.

Adaptation period

During an adaptation period, an applicant is required to work in a position or practise a profession with guidance and supervision. In practical terms, an adaptation period means working in a post or a position for a fixed term. The applicant is expected to find a job independently to allow him or her to complete the adaptation period. The conditional decision on recognition of professional qualifications determines the duration of the adaptation period and the positions in which the adaptation period may be completed. In addition, the decision may impose other necessary conditions for completion of the adaptation period.

Upon completion of the adaptation period, the applicant should apply to the Finnish National Board of Education for a final decision on his or her eligibility. The application should be accompanied by a certificate for the adaptation period awarded by the employer or the supervising practitioner.

Aptitude test

In an aptitude test, an applicant is expected to demonstrate his or her command of knowledge and skills required in the relevant profession in Finland. The test may also include questions about the code of good professional practice. The test is arranged at a higher education institution or some other educational institution providing training in the field and, as a general rule, it may be completed in Finnish or Swedish. The conditional decision on recognition of professional qualifications determines the subject areas covered by the aptitude test and where the test may be taken. In addition, instructions on how to prepare for an aptitude test will be appended to the decision.

Upon completion of the aptitude test, the applicant should apply to the Finnish National Board of Education for a final decision on his or her eligibility. The application should be accompanied by a certificate for completion of the aptitude test awarded by the test organiser.

4. Comparability of higher education studies completed abroad

4.1 Who can be awarded a decision and when is the decision required?

A decision on comparability of a degree may be awarded to a person who has completed at least a three-year higher education degree outside Finland. The degree must be in keeping with the system of higher education degrees in place in the country of origin and it must have been conferred by an officially recognised higher education institution. These decisions are made by virtue of the Foreign Studies Act.

As a general rule, people who have completed their higher education degree abroad will need to obtain a decision on comparability when applying for a public sector post or position in Finland which requires a higher education degree of a certain level. In such cases, a decision on comparability of the level of the degree will be required regardless of whether the degree was completed within or outside the EU/EEA.

People who have completed their higher education degree outside the EU/EEA or those who are not EU/EEA citizens will need to obtain a decision on comparability when applying for a post or position in Finland for which the law requires a certain higher education degree or a certain higher education study module. Such posts or positions cover teachers (such as class teachers, subject teachers, special needs teachers, pre-primary teachers and kindergarten teachers), social workers, social instructors and library professions, etc.

Citizens of EU/EEA countries or Switzerland will need to obtain a decision on comparability if they are not qualified in the profession in the country of origin but have completed a study module required for the relevant post or position in Finland as part of or in addition to their higher education degree. Such modules may be teachers' pedagogical studies or studies in the teaching subject as part of subject teacher training.

4.2 Decision-making principles

4.2.1 Comparability with a degree of a certain level and type

A foreign higher education degree can be recognised either as corresponding to a lower or higher university degree, a polytechnic degree, a higher polytechnic degree, a pre-doctoral licentiate or doctor's degree.

The comparability of a foreign higher education degree with a Finnish higher education degree is determined on the basis of the level of the programme of study and its primary orientation (professional/academic). The level of the programme is assessed by comparing the scopes and requirements of the degrees. If the foreign higher education degree is based on other higher education degrees, these will also be considered as part of the programme of study. The scope of a degree refers to the amount of work and time that the programme leading to the degree actually requires. The requirements of a degree mean how diversified and in-depth the degree is and what kinds of theoretical and methodological capabilities it provides. The learning outcomes specified for a degree may also be taken into account when assessing its level. In addition, it is possible to assess aspects such as the share of practical training within the programme.

Where necessary, the Finnish National Board of Education will request a Finnish higher education institution to issue an expert opinion on the scope and requirements of a degree.

A favourable decision on comparability cannot be granted if the applicant's programme of study does not correspond to any Finnish higher education degree in terms of level. These decisions cannot require applicants to complete supplementary studies.

4.2.2 Comparability with a certain degree or with specific studies

A degree or a study module completed abroad may be deemed comparable with a certain Finnish higher education degree or certain higher education studies, where such studies are specified in an Act or a Decree as a qualifications requirement for a post or a position in Finland.

A favourable decision requires the applicant to be fully qualified in his or her country of origin for the profession for which he or she is seeking eligibility in Finland. In addition, the studies must correspond to those required for the position in Finland in terms of scope, contents and requirements. The scope and requirements are assessed in compliance with the principles described in Section 4.2.1 above. The equivalence of contents is assessed by comparing the

foreign studies with the studies specified in the valid Finnish degree requirements.

A decision may be issued conditionally, which means that the decision requires the applicant to complete supplementary studies in Finland. When determining the contents and scope of supplementary studies, the Finnish National Board of Education will, where necessary, request an opinion from a Finnish higher education institution providing education in the relevant field. Applicants who have received a conditional decision requiring supplementary studies must independently apply to a Finnish higher education institution for the right to study.

Supplementary studies may be required as follows:

- no more than 60 credits, if the studies are comparable with a university Master's degree;
- no more than 45 credits, if the studies are comparable with a polytechnic Bachelor's degree;
- no more than 30 credits, if the studies are comparable with a university Bachelor's degree;
- no more than 15 credits, if the studies are comparable with teachers' pedagogical studies; and
- a small amount of studies, considering the overall scope of the programme, if the studies are comparable with a higher education study module.

The maximum scopes of supplementary studies are based on Decree 1206/2007.

A favourable decision cannot be granted if the amount of supplementary studies required exceeds the maximum scope determined in the Decree.

5. Finnish National Board of Education decisions on eligibility for regulated professions

Chapters 3 and 4 above presented the general principles of decision-making based on the Professional Qualifications Act and the Foreign Studies Act, respectively. The following sections describe in more detail the decision-making procedure and principles applied to granting eligibility for certain regulated professions. People with foreign educational qualifications may also need to prove their eligibility for some other positions which require specific qualifications laid down in an Act or a Decree. Information about such positions and competent authorities can be found in the list of regulated professions in Appendix 1.

5.1 Teachers

The teaching profession is regulated in Finland. The qualifications required for different types of teaching posts have been determined in the Teaching Qualifications Decree (986/1998). If holders of degrees completed abroad wish to become eligible for a teaching post or position in Finland, they will generally need to apply to the Finnish National Board of Education for a decision on eligibility.

The decision-making procedure concerning teaching qualifications is described in more detail in a Finnish National Board of Education guide entitled Recognition of foreign teaching qualifications in Finland (2010).

5.1.1 Recognition of teaching qualifications obtained by EU/EEA citizens in an EU/EEA state

If the applicant is a citizen of an EU/EEA state or Switzerland and has qualified as a teacher in another EU/EEA state or in Switzerland, the decision is made by virtue of the Act on the Recognition of Professional Qualifications. The decision is made in compliance with the general principles outlined in Section 3.2 above.

The Finnish National Board of Education may issue a decision on eligibility as a teacher to a person who is fully qualified for a corresponding teaching position in another Member Country. Besides qualifications in the country of origin, the content of studies is also examined when processing the applica-

tion. The applicant's professional experience is taken into account when making the decision. Where necessary, the decision may be issued conditionally, requiring the applicant either to complete an adaptation period or to take an aptitude test in order to be granted eligibility.

5.1.2 Teaching qualifications from another Nordic country

If a person has completed a formal class teaching degree with a duration of at least three years in Sweden, Denmark, Norway or Iceland, he or she is qualified to work as a class teacher without any specific decision (see Decree 986/1998, section 4). If a person has completed a class teaching degree with a duration of less than three years in Sweden, Denmark, Norway or Iceland, he or she is qualified to teach grades 1–4 of basic education and, upon completion of additional studies determined in the Finnish National Board of Education Decision No. 181/014/1998, all grades in basic education.

Even those who have completed a class teaching degree in another Nordic country and are therefore qualified without a specific decision may apply for recognition of their eligibility in accordance with the Professional Qualifications Act, if they wish (see Section 5.1.1 above).

5.1.3 Comparability of teacher training completed outside the EU/EEA

In cases where the training was completed outside the EU/EEA or the applicant is not an EU/EEA citizen, the decision-making process is governed by the Foreign Studies Act. The decision is made in compliance with the general principles outlined in Section 4.2 above.

A favourable decision on comparability is subject to conditions such as:

- whether the applicant is fully qualified in his or her country of origin to work in the teaching position for which he or she is seeking eligibility in Finland.
- whether the degree corresponds to the degree required for the relevant teaching position in Finland in terms of level (such as a university Master's degree for class teachers, subject teachers and special needs teachers and a university Bachelor's degree for kindergarten teachers); and
- whether the applicant's studies correspond to those required in Finland for the relevant teaching position in terms of scope, content and requirements.

As a general rule, decisions require completion of supplementary studies. The supplementary studies required may include both those relating to subject knowledge and pedagogical studies. Where necessary, the Finnish National Board of Education will request a Finnish university faculty to issue an opinion on the comparability of studies and the supplementary studies to be required to support its decision-making process.

5.1.4 Comparability of a foreign study module with studies required of teachers

A study module included in or completed in addition to a foreign higher education degree may be deemed comparable with a higher education module that is required in Finland to qualify for a teaching position. Such modules include teachers' pedagogical studies or studies in the teaching subject as part of subject teacher training.

The decision-making process is governed by the Act on Eligibility Provided by Foreign Higher Education Studies for Public Posts in Finland (531/1986). The decision is made in compliance with the general principles outlined in Section 4.2 above. When deliberating on the decision, the Finnish National Board of Education compares the scope, content and requirements of the foreign studies to the relevant Finnish study module. As a general rule, decisions require applicants to complete supplementary studies. Where necessary, the Finnish National Board of Education will request a Finnish university faculty to issue an opinion on the comparability of studies and the supplementary studies to be required to support its decision-making process.

5.1.5 Teaching in a foreign language in Finland

For special reasons, the Finnish National Board of Education may grant eligibility to provide education where the language of instruction is other than Finnish, Swedish or Saami. These decisions are based on the Teaching Qualifications Decree (986/1998, section 21). The decisions may grant eligibility to provide pre-primary, class, subject or special needs education within English-language education, for example. These decisions have mainly been issued to people who have received teacher training outside the EU/EEA.

A favourable decision on eligibility requires at least that:

- the applicant is fully qualified to work in a corresponding position in his or her country of origin;
- the teacher training completed by the applicant corresponds to at least a Finnish lower university degree in terms of level;
- the applicant has completed pedagogical studies and studies in the teaching subject with adequate scopes;

- the applicant has completed teacher training in the foreign language in which he or she is going to teach in Finland and which is an official language in his or her country of origin.

As a general rule, decisions require applicants to take an aptitude test. The decision issued by the Finnish National Board of Education determines the subject areas covered by the aptitude test and where the test may be taken.

People who have completed teacher training abroad will not generally need a specific decision on sufficient studies to qualify for foreign-language education, if they receive a decision on recognition of teaching qualifications that they have obtained in another EU/EEA country (see Section 5.1.3) or a decision on comparability of training completed outside the EU/EEA with studies required of teachers in Finland (see Section 5.1.4).

5.2 Positions requiring legal training

5.2.1 Law degrees completed by EU/EEA citizens in an EU/EEA country

EU or EEA citizens who have completed a law degree in another EU or EEA country may apply to the Finnish National Board of Education for a decision on eligibility to work in a post or position which requires a Finnish Bachelor or Master of Laws degree (oikeusnotaari/rättsnotarie or oikeustieteen maisteri/juris magister). The decision will be issued by virtue of the Act on the Recognition of Professional Qualifications. The decision is made in compliance with the general principles outlined in Section 3.2 above.

Where necessary, the decision will be issued conditionally, which means that the applicant will need to take an aptitude test covering subjects included in the training required in Finland but not included in the applicant's own training. The aptitude test will be implemented by a university faculty offering law degrees. The aptitude test covers the following topics, of which the applicant may either be required to complete all or some:

1. Structure and Sources of the Finnish Legal System;
2. Law of Obligations;
3. Law of Property;
4. Family and Inheritance Law;
5. Criminal Law;
6. Procedural Law;
7. Constitutional Law;
8. Administrative Law.

If the applicant has acquired work experience in the legal profession in Finland or completed supplementary law studies in Finland, he or she may apply for exemption from one or more aptitude test topics.

5.3 Social workers and social instructors

5.3.1 EU or EEA citizens who have qualified in another EU or EEA country

EU or EEA citizens who have qualified as social workers or social instructors in another EU or EEA country may apply to the Finnish National Board of Education for a decision on eligibility to work in a corresponding position in Finland. The decision will be issued by virtue of the Act on the Recognition of Professional Qualifications. The decision is made in compliance with the general principles outlined in Section 3.2 above.

The Finnish National Board of Education may issue a decision on eligibility as a social worker or a social instructor to a person who is fully qualified for a corresponding position in another Member Country. The content of studies and professional activities is also examined when processing the application. The applicant's professional experience is taken into account when making the decision.

Where necessary, the decision may be issued conditionally, requiring the applicant either to complete an adaptation period or to take an aptitude test in order to be granted eligibility. The Finnish National Board of Education will, where necessary, request an opinion from a higher education institution providing training in the field in order to specify the aptitude test and the adaptation period.

5.3.2 Qualifications as a social worker or a social instructor obtained outside the EU/EEA

If an applicant has qualified as a social worker or a social instructor outside the EU/EEA or if the applicant is not an EU/EEA citizen, the decision-making process is governed by the Foreign Studies Act. Decisions are made in compliance with the general principles outlined in Section 4.2 above.

A favourable decision on comparability is subject to conditions such as:

- whether the applicant is a fully qualified social worker or social instructor in his or her country of origin;
- whether the degree corresponds to at least a Finnish higher university degree in terms of level, if the application concerns eligibility as a social worker;
- whether the degree corresponds to at least a Finnish polytechnic degree in terms of level, if the application concerns eligibility as a social instructor; and
- whether the applicant's studies correspond to those required in Finland for the relevant position in terms of scope, content and requirements.

As a general rule, decisions require applicants to complete supplementary studies. The Finnish National Board of Education may request an opinion on the comparability of studies and the supplementary studies to be required from a higher education institution providing training in the field to support its decision-making process.

5.4 Posts and positions within fire and rescue services

EU or EEA citizens who have qualified for fire and rescue services positions in another EU or EEA country or in Switzerland may apply to the Finnish National Board of Education for a decision on eligibility for a full-time post or position as a crew member, a sub-officer or a fire officer within fire and rescue services in Finland. The decision will be issued by virtue of the Act on the Recognition of Professional Qualifications. Decisions are made in compliance with the general principles outlined in Section 3.2 above.

The Finnish National Board of Education may issue a decision to a person who is fully qualified for a corresponding fire and rescue services position in another Member Country. The content of studies and professional activities is also examined when processing the application. The applicant's professional experience is taken into account when making the decision.

Where necessary, the decision may be issued conditionally, requiring the applicant either to complete an adaptation period or to take an aptitude test in order to be granted eligibility. Where necessary, the Finnish National Board of Education will request the Emergency Services College to issue an opinion in order to specify the aptitude test or adaptation period.

6. When is an FNBE decision on eligibility for public posts not required?

Those who have studied abroad do not always need to obtain a Finnish National Board of Education decision on their eligibility. The following sections present the most common cases where such a decision is not required.

6.1 Continuing studies in Finland

If a person who has studied abroad wishes to continue his or her studies in Finland, he or she should apply for a right to study at a Finnish higher education institution. Higher education institutions decide independently on issues relating to student admissions and transfer of credits completed abroad. Where necessary, higher education institutions may request the Finnish National Board of Education to provide further information on the relevant foreign programme as a basis for their decision-making process.

6.2 Applying to work for a private sector employer

Finnish National Board of Education decisions concern eligibility for public posts or positions. With the exception of certain regulated specialist fields, private sector employers are not bound to formal qualifications requirements – instead, they may assess foreign education and training independently and recruit anyone they consider to be suitably qualified. Nevertheless, a decision issued by the Finnish National Board of Education on eligibility for public posts may also be useful when applying for a private sector job.

6.3 The competent authority other than the Finnish National Board of Education

Certain posts or positions are governed by specific statutes on eligibility provided by foreign qualifications, which determine that decisions on eligibility are made by a body other than the Finnish National Board of Education. The contact details of competent authorities for each profession can be found in the list of regulated professions in Appendix 1.

7. Applying for a decision and processing the application

To apply for a decision, applicants should submit a completed and signed application form, accompanied by the necessary appendices, to the Finnish National Board of Education. Detailed instructions on appendices to be enclosed with the application can be found in the instructions for filling in the application. The application form and instructions are available on the FNBE website at www.oph.fi/recognition. The form and the instructions are available in Finnish, Swedish and English. In addition, the application instructions are available in Russian.

The Finnish National Board of Education will send each applicant confirmation of receipt of the application within one month. The applicant may be asked to provide additional information if necessary. The application will not be processed until the applicant has provided the Board with a completed and signed application form and all the required appendices.

The average period for processing an application is 3 to 4 months. The processing period varies according to whether the Finnish National Board of Education requests any external expert opinions on the qualification, for example. The Finnish National Board of Education will contact the applicant if the eligibility applied for cannot be granted.

A decision may be issued in Finnish or Swedish. The decision is subject to a fee and it is sent to the applicant's address in Finland on a cash-on-delivery basis (COD). The applicant may appeal against the decision to an Administrative Court. The appeal instructions will be appended to the decision.

8. Finnish National Board of Education statements on foreign vocational qualifications

The Finnish National Board of Education issues advisory statements on foreign vocational qualifications for which it is not possible to issue a decision on eligibility for public posts. A statement can be drawn up on any completed qualification falling within the official qualifications system in the country of origin. Such a statement is an assessment by an expert authority, which does not grant eligibility for public posts. Nevertheless, an FNBE statement may be helpful when searching for a job and, in certain situations, when applying for studies or for transfer of credits.

A statement on a foreign vocational qualification provides information about the level and content of the qualification and the competence provided by the qualification in the country of origin. The Finnish National Board of Education will mostly compare the content of the qualification with corresponding Finnish qualifications in so far as the Board has the information required for this purpose. Statements are issued in Finnish or Swedish.

People wishing to apply for a statement should send a completed application with appendices to the Finnish National Board of Education. The application form and instructions for applying for a statement are available in Finnish, Swedish and English on the FNBE website at www.oph.fi/recognition. The statement is subject to a fee and it is sent to the applicant's address in Finland on a cash-on-delivery basis (COD).

9. Recognition of Finnish qualifications abroad

The international principle for recognition of qualifications is that the receiving party makes an interpretation of the level of a foreign qualification and the qualifications it provides. Finland cannot directly influence the decision-making process of another country's authorities. Even if EU directives or international agreements set out certain general provisions, each country decides for itself how it implements provisions and applies them in individual cases.

The Finnish National Board of Education functions as the National Contact Point for information on recognition of professional qualifications, which is responsible for providing information about qualifications and competences and recognition procedures in Finland and other Member States. The Finnish National Board of Education also functions as the National Academic Recognition Information Centre (ENIC/NARIC) in Finland. Where necessary, the Finnish National Board of Education advises people who have completed a qualification in Finland and wish to get it recognised in another Member State.

Finns leaving for another country to study or to search for a job would do well to check with the target country's authorities in advance about the qualifications recognition procedures in place in that country and the types of documents required for this purpose. Key documentation includes qualification or degree certificates awarded by a Finnish educational institution and their appendices as well as any translations of these that may be required. It is also possible to apply to the Finnish National Board of Education for a specific statement on a Finnish qualification.

9.1 Statements on Finnish qualifications

The Finnish National Board of Education may issue advisory statements on Finnish qualifications for international contexts. A statement can be drawn up on any completed qualification falling within Finland's official qualifications system. Statements are issued in Finnish, Swedish or English.

There are two types of statements issued on Finnish qualifications:

1. Statements concerning:
 - the applicant's eligibility for higher education in Finland;
 - the status of the qualification and/or the educational institution within the Finnish education system;
 - whether the qualification falls within the scope of the Professional Qualifications Directive (2005/36/EC).
2. Detailed statements on the content of the applicant's qualification and the academic and professional competences it provides.

People wishing to apply for a statement should send a completed application with appendices to the Finnish National Board of Education. The application form and instructions are available on the FNBE website at www.oph.fi/recognition. The statement is subject to a fee and it is sent to the applicant's address in Finland on a cash-on-delivery basis (COD).

Appendix 1: Regulated Professions and professions requiring professional practice rights in Finland

Regulated Professions in Finland

| Profession | Competent Authority |
|---|--|
| cantor | Church Council, www.evl.fi |
| chimneysweep | Regional State Administrative Agency, www.avi.fi |
| class teacher | Finnish National Board of Education |
| crane operator (mobile crane operators and tower crane operators) | Uusimaa Occupational Safety and Health Inspectorate, Occupational Safety and Health Office, www.tyosuojelu.fi |
| dental hygienist | Valvira ¹ , www.valvira.fi |
| dental specialist | Valvira, www.valvira.fi |
| dental technician | Valvira, www.valvira.fi |
| dentist | Valvira, www.valvira.fi |
| dietician | Valvira, www.valvira.fi |
| diver working in underwater construction | Uusimaa Occupational Safety and Health Inspectorate, Occupational Safety and Health Office, www.tyosuojelu.fi |
| driving instructor | Finnish National Board of Education |
| emergency response centre operator | Finnish National Board of Education |
| fire and rescue services crew member and sub officer | Finnish National Board of Education |
| fire officer | Finnish National Board of Education |
| guidance counsellor (basic education) | Finnish National Board of Education |
| guidance counsellor (upper secondary level) | Finnish National Board of Education |
| hospital cell biologist | Valvira, www.valvira.fi |
| hospital chemist | Valvira, www.valvira.fi |
| hospital geneticist | Valvira, www.valvira.fi |
| hospital microbiologist | Valvira, www.valvira.fi |
| hospital physicist | Valvira, www.valvira.fi |
| kindergarten teacher | Finnish National Board of Education |
| medical laboratory technologist | Valvira, www.valvira.fi |
| medical specialist | Valvira, www.valvira.fi |
| midwife | Valvira, www.valvira.fi |
| naprapath | Valvira, www.valvira.fi |
| occupational therapist | Valvira, www.valvira.fi |
| optician | Valvira, www.valvira.fi |
| oral hygienist | Valvira, www.valvira.fi |
| ordained deacon/deaconess | Church Council, www.evl.fi |
| ordained minister and lector | Church Council, www.evl.fi |

1 National Supervisory Authority for Welfare and Health (Valvira)

| Profession | Competent Authority |
|---|---|
| orthopaedic technician (orthotist – prosthetist) | Valvira, www.valvira.fi |
| osteopath | Valvira, www.valvira.fi |
| patent attorney | National Board of Patents and Registration of Finland, www.prh.fi |
| pharmaceutical dispenser (bachelor of science in pharmacy) | Valvira, www.valvira.fi |
| pharmacist (master of science in pharmacy) | Valvira, www.valvira.fi |
| physician | Valvira, www.valvira.fi |
| physiotherapist | Valvira, www.valvira.fi |
| podiatrist | Valvira, www.valvira.fi |
| police officer (non-commanding ranks) | Finnish National Board of Education |
| practical nurse | Valvira, www.valvira.fi |
| practical nurse (social services) | Finnish National Board of Education |
| prison guard | Finnish National Board of Education |
| professions requiring the Finnish oikeustieteen maisteri/juris magister degree (master of Laws) | Finnish National Board of Education |
| professions requiring training in library services | Finnish National Board of Education |
| psychologist | Valvira, www.valvira.fi |
| psychotherapist | Valvira, www.valvira.fi |
| public health nurse | Valvira, www.valvira.fi |
| radiographer | Valvira, www.valvira.fi |
| registered nurse | Valvira, www.valvira.fi |
| security company manager | Ministry of the Interior, www.intermin.fi |
| security guard | Ministry of the Interior, www.intermin.fi |
| shoffirer | Häme Occupational Safety and Health Inspectorate, Occupational Safety and Health Office, www.tyosuojelu.fi |
| social instructor | Finnish National Board of Education |
| social worker | Finnish National Board of Education |
| special kindergarden teacher | Finnish National Board of Education |
| special needs teacher | Finnish National Board of Education |
| speech therapist | Valvira, www.valvira.fi |
| subject teacher | Finnish National Board of Education |
| teacher in liberal adult education | Finnish National Board of Education |
| teacher of vocational studies | Finnish National Board of Education |
| teacher providing pre-primary education | Finnish National Board of Education |
| trained masseur | Valvira, www.valvira.fi |
| veterinarian | Finnish Food Safety Authority, www.evira.fi |

Other Professions Requiring Professional Practice Rights

| Profession | Competent Authority |
|----------------------------------|--|
| chartered public finance auditor | Board of Chartered Public Finance, www.jhtt.fi |
| chartered accountant | Central Chamber of Commerce, www.keskuskauppakamari.fi |
| advocate | Finnish Bar Association, www.asianajat.fi |
| seafarers | Finnish Transport Safety Agency, www.trafi.fi |

ISBN 978-952-13-4489-3 (pb)
ISBN 978-952-13-4490-9 (pdf)

The unit for Recognition and International Comparability of Qualifications decides on the eligibility granted by foreign qualifications in Finland, issues statements on foreign vocational qualifications and seeks to promote the recognition of prior learning.

The unit functions as the national co-ordination and information centre for the following networks: Europass, Academic Recognition (ENIC/NARIC), Directive on the Recognition of Professional Qualifications and the European Qualifications Framework.