

INSTITUTIONAL PRESENTATION

Åbo Akademi University, Turku/Åbo, Finland.

1. National education system

The Finnish education system consists of comprehensive school (obligatory until the age of 16), post-comprehensive general and vocational education, higher education (Universities, Polytechnics) and adult education. The Government's goal is to streamline the system and develop it in accordance with the principle of lifelong learning and to make it internationally compatible. The level of education in Finland has risen significantly since the 1960s, and the younger generation is now especially well educated. Universities and polytechnics offer a place to over 68.4 % of the age group (universities 31.4 %, polytechnics 37 %).

There are altogether 20 universities in Finland: ten multifaculty universities, three universities of technology, three schools of economics and business administration, and four art academies. The university network covers the whole country. The basic mission of universities is to carry out research and to provide research based higher education. All Finnish universities are state-run, and the government provides some 65 % of their funding. There are no tuition fees. All students are paid a grant. The universities select their own students, and all fields apply numerus clausus. There are at present 170 000 university students in Finland, of whom 22 000 are postgraduate students. 54 % of all university students are women. In 2003 a total of 12400 Master's degrees were awarded and 1260 doctoral degrees.

The Finnish higher education system consists of two sectors: Universities and polytechnics. The polytechnics are more practically oriented, training professionals for expert and development posts. There are 29 polytechnics in Finland. Most of them are multidisciplinary, regional institutions, which give particular weight to contact with business and industry. The polytechnics award professionally oriented higher education degrees, which take 3.5 to 4 years. At present 70 % of all entrants are matriculated students and 30 % vocational graduates. There is no tuition fee.

2. Presentation of Åbo Akademi University

Åbo Akademi can trace its roots back to 1640. At that time the Swedish Kingdom founded universities in their new territories, in Estonia, Tartu University in 1632, in Finland Åbo Akademi University in 1640 (in Åbo/Turku Swedish/Finnish) and in Skåne, Sweden, University of Lund in 1668. In 1827 the Great Fire of Åbo laid waste almost the entire city including the university. The Royal Academy in Åbo was moved to Helsinki in 1828 closer to St Petersburg (Finland was a part of the Russian Empire from 1809 to 1917) and became later the University of Helsinki. The new Åbo Akademi University was founded in 1918, a year after Finland had become independent, and now as a private university for the Swedish speaking population. It was maintained by a foundation, with money donated from private persons and rich businessmen. Even if Åbo Akademi since 1981 is a state university, the Foundation is still very important. It owns most of the old buildings where the university operates today; it administrates scholarships and research funds and maintains museums,

collections and a research institute. It also contributes to the activities of the university with large sums every year.

Åbo Akademi is a national university for the Swedish speaking population in Finland. The Swedish speaking population amount today to 300 000 or 6 %, and they are concentrated on the long coastline and on the islands in the Northern part of the Baltic Sea. The university has five faculties in Åbo and two in Vasa. The university has also a university department still further North in Jakobstad (training of kindergarten teachers), a second department for teachers training in the capital Helsingfors, a research institute on the Åland islands and a maritime research station on the island of Korpo. The Open University at Åbo Akademi organises projects, lectures and seminars throughout the Swedish speaking parts of Finland, in practically every city and municipality.

Faculties in Turku	students	research students	Master's degrees	PhD 2003
Arts	1391	202	81	13
Maths & Nat.Sci.	1186	162	75	10
Econ.& Soc.Sci.	1637	159	101	5
Chemical Eng.	829	139	64	7
Theology	216	59	19	2
Faculties in Vasa				
Education	1319	94	104	0
Soc.& Caring Sci.	487	70	33	4
ÅA total	7065	885	477	41

Budget	
State budget 2004	(€millions)
Salaries and wages	24,8
Running expenses (buildings)	7,8
Other running expenses	14,0
Total state budget	46,6
Vasa Teacher Training School	7,3
External Finance	
Contractual research	6,8
Academy of Finland	5,5
Other state finance	6,8
Private finance	4,4
Total External Finance	32,3 (37,5 %)
Overall Total	86,2

3. Mission

Åbo Akademi, Finland's Swedish-language University, is committed to research and research-based education of the highest quality. The university has a special responsibility to provide for the university-level research and educational needs of the country's Swedish language population. It is its task to ensure that research is carried

out and higher education offered in those subject fields that are of particular importance for Swedish social and cultural life in Finland. The goal is both to enable its Swedish-speaking students to enjoy freedom of choice in academic pursuits and professional careers on a par with that available to Finnish-speaking students, and to meet the demand from central sectors of society for academically educated staff capable of serving the Finland-Swedish population. In education, a concern to foster the country's bilingualism is emphasised and Finnish-speaking students are welcomed and supported.

The university cherishes the principle of freedom of scientific inquiry. Within its strongest scholarly fields, Åbo Akademi seeks to stand at the forefront of international research. The university places great stress on the international orientation of its research and teaching.

Åbo Akademi is also an environmentally oriented university and our responsibility is to create the educational and research base for a sustainable policy in the Baltic Sea region. Åbo Akademi is an internationally oriented university with a special and natural interest to cooperate with the other Nordic countries and with other countries around the Baltic Sea.

As a centre of learning, it is the task for Åbo Akademi to offer a free and active intellectual environment that encourages critical social debate and offer solutions to the major questions of our time. The university also fulfil its culture-promoting task by supporting various kinds of activities among students and staff. The university has a full symphony orchestra and two very famous choirs, a male and a female one. Åbo Akademi maintains close contacts to cultural, social and business-life oriented organisations. Thereby a fruitful interaction is maintained between academic activity, on the one hand, and cultural interests, society and the business community, on the other.

The university's ambition is to reach internationally recognised standards within all scholarly fields and to establish itself as a leading centre for research within its best fields of specialisation. At present there are three formally appointed centres of excellence in research at the university, Centre for Formal Methods in Programming, Process Chemistry Centre and Formation of Early Jewish and Christian Ideology. Among other strong research fields can be mentioned human rights, women studies, support systems for strategic management, children's literature, aggression studies, molecular biology, materials science, environmental research, process engineering, paper and pulp science, polymer synthesis, Judaism, mass communication and caring sciences.

In the short run, the search for enhanced quality and efficiency demands a consolidation of resources within existing areas of strength and specialisation rather than expansion into new areas. Because the scholarly disciplines, like the society around them, are essentially dynamic in nature, new needs for research, knowledge and education, including those of an interdisciplinary character, are bound to grow in the longer run. The special overarching nature of Åbo Academics responsibilities forces the university continuously to consider the needs of both established areas of excellence and of potentially innovative fields of the future.

A new and comprehensive international strategy has recently been drawn up and adopted by the University Senate. Åbo Akademi strives increasingly to strike a profile as a thoroughly international university with realistic possibilities of giving its first-degree teaching an international character and of studying in an international environment. Collaboration with universities abroad is being intensified, partly within the framework of existing agreements, partly through more extensive exchange and cooperation programmes, so that an increasing number of exchange students and postgraduate students from Åbo Akademi can be offered places to study abroad and so that Åbo Akademi can receive more exchange students, foreign teachers, researchers and postgraduates. Åbo Akademi continues its efforts to develop an internationally competitive research and study environment. In both research and teaching special stress is laid on both the international perspective and a strong Nordic involvement. The students at Åbo Akademi are to be taught to think internationally. Åbo Akademi endeavours to continue to be a leader in the process of internationalisation, in both a European and a global context.

The Rector of the University has set up a working group for international affairs. This group consists of members from all faculties and independent institutions. It is the group's task to assist and advice the staff of the International office and to draw up guidelines for the process of internationalisation within Åbo Akademi.

Åbo Akademi offers today a great number of programmes and individual courses in English, including several Master's programmes, and many more are planned for the near future. The ECTS system has been used for many years at Åbo Akademi and is now familiar to everybody, both staff and students. A diploma supplement is given to all who graduate from Åbo Akademi.

The number of students going abroad to study from Åbo Akademi amount to around 200 a year and a similar or higher amount of students study 1-2 terms at Åbo Akademi every year. 500 students of foreign origin are at present studying for a degree at Åbo Akademi.

4. Implementing the Bologna process

All Finnish universities and polytechnics are obliged by national decrees to issue a diploma supplement to their students. Åbo Akademi introduced a diploma supplement in 2003. The two-tier degree structure with obligatory bachelor's degree will be introduced in Finland from August 1, 2005 to all fields of study and in all universities. The national credit system based on study weeks will be replaced by a system based directly on the ECTS from August 1 2005, simultaneously with the university degree structure reform. The Finnish Higher Education Evaluation Council (FINHEEC) was set up in 1995 to assist the universities and polytechnics in evaluation and quality assurance matters. All Finnish universities have been evaluated at the institutional level (Åbo Akademi in 1998 and 2001) and the Council has carried out several programme and thematic evaluations. Åbo Akademi has been involved in most of them. All Finnish universities are obliged to have quality assurance systems according to the principles in the Bologna process. FINHEEC has recently set up a program for auditing all universities and their quality assurance systems. The program starts this

year and will be completed before 2010. An international panel, appointed by FINHEEC, must approve the quality assurance systems.

All universities are encouraged to promote the mobility of students, researchers and teachers, and also to promote the European dimension in higher education.

A system for ensuring the high quality of Åbo Academics education was introduced in 1995. A special quality board supervises these activities. The system is based on student questionnaires, self-evaluations by all departments and faculties and external evaluations of all faculties. A new quality assurance system was approved by the senate last December and will start from August 1 this year. The system is based on electronic student questionnaires (obligatory for all students and all courses), matrices covering the most important processes in the departments based on national and university level targets and describing the present stage and plans for development, and electronic questionnaires to all staff members and students measuring their well-being. The results shall be discussed in special faculty level quality boards and all results and recommendations should be documented and sent to the central quality board.

The two-tier system was planned at faculty and departmental level during two years. All courses were re-evaluated with the help of core analysis and the average workload for the students were calculated by different methods for all courses. The curricula are now planned on a 180 ECTS + 120 ECTS base, and the average student should achieve 60 ECTS a year. The academic year is from August 1 2005 divided into 4 periods (8-10 weeks) with a one-week long break between periods for examinations. All courses are planned in such a way that an average student will get 15 ECTS per period.

The university promotes internationalisation by having special funding for tuition in the English language and for student and teacher's exchange. All departments have been encouraged to include a European dimension in the curricula.