



JYVÄSKYLÄN YLIOPISTO  
UNIVERSITY OF JYVÄSKYLÄ

**University studies as part  
of the integration path**

**JYU.INTEGRA**

Ministry of Education  
and Culture, Finland

**MO  
VI** Centre for  
Multilingual  
Academic  
Communication

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The Finnish vision for higher education and research in 2030 challenges universities to participate in making Finland the home of the smartest labour force in the world. This is done by increasing the number of highly educated experts especially in fields where there is high demand for education and workforce, by diversifying the channels to higher education, and by developing the operating model and offerings of continuous learning. Continuous learning is also part of the educational paths of adult immigrants. For example, integration training for immigrants should be seen as part of continuous learning, not as an isolated pocket where learners mainly stay in their own groups, secluded from other students and educational institutions. The recognition and utilisation of prior learning should also be developed.

Who are we actually talking about when we talk about 'international experts'? International experts are commonly perceived as individuals not able to interact in Finnish – in Finland, in Finnish society. When talking about international experts, we usually refer to members of English-speaking workplace communities or degree programmes. However, in Finland there are also many highly educated experts – as well as future experts eligible for higher education – who speak several languages but whose Finnish or English skills are not sufficient for work in expert tasks or further studies in their own discipline. The use of English and presumption of English proficiency also contribute to social exclusion. The competence of these experts would still benefit employers as well as Finnish universities and other higher education institutions. We tend to have a rather narrow perspective on the meaning of the term 'international expert'.

Immigrants who have completed degrees or parts of them before arriving in Finland have competences that should be recognised as early as possible in order to support the integration process.

The INTEGRA project, funded by the Finnish Ministry of Education and Culture, has responded to the situation by creating a model and pilot training for immigrants who have completed or are qualified for higher education. INTEGRA training can also serve as self-motivated integration training.



Photo: Jesse Liimatainen

My big goal is to complete a master's degree next year, but unfortunately I want to study in English. For if I say I want to study for a master's degree in Finnish, it calls for language level C1, which might take a long time, perhaps 3 or 4 years - I want to study only in Finnish, this is really important for my working life in Finland. I said at the employment office: I can't wait four years before I start master's studies in Finnish.

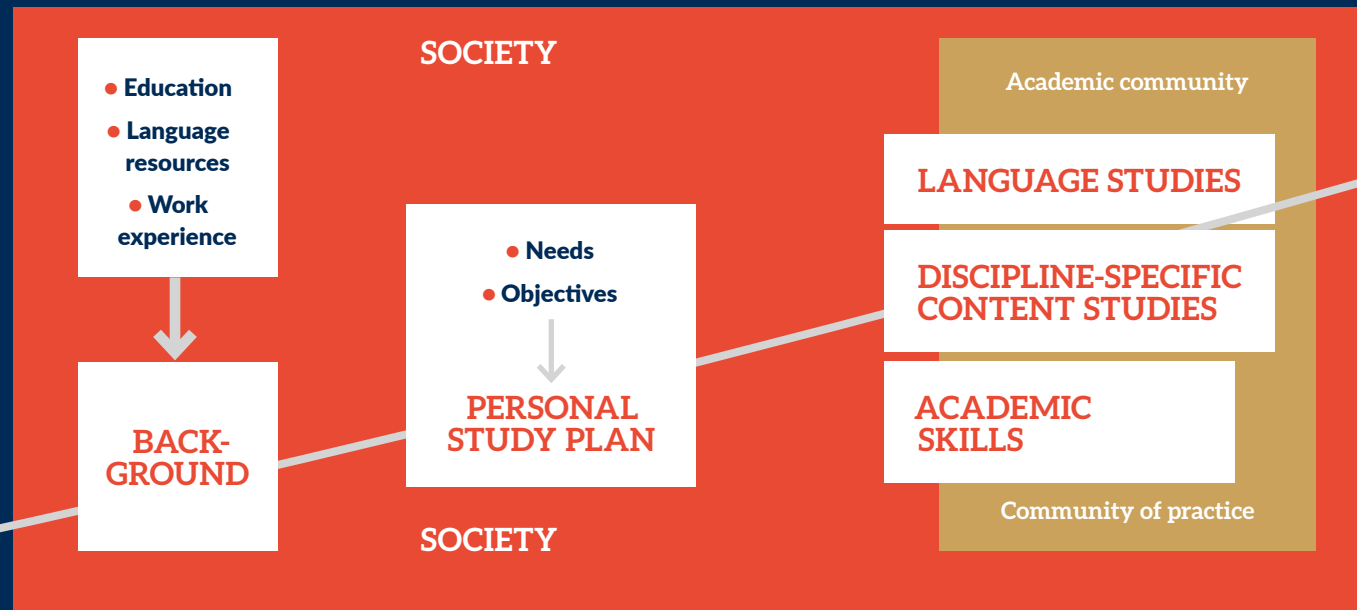
# CONTINUOUS LEARNING

## UNIVERSITY STUDIES AS PART OF THE CONTINUOUS LEARNING PATH

All adults should be entitled to continuous learning. According to the definition by the Finnish Ministry of Education and Culture ([minedu.fi/jatkuva-oppiminen](http://minedu.fi/jatkuva-oppiminen)), continuous learning refers to the development and renewal of competence at different life and career stages. Integration training for immigrants should also be regarded as one form of continuous learning, as has been done with INTEGRA pilot training.

INTEGRA is part of students' lifelong learning continuum. To access degree

studies, continuing professional education or work in their own fields, immigrants should have the opportunity to position their competence in the new educational and working life context as well as in society. Prior learning must be recognised in societal institutions to enable immigrants' access to meaningful educational and career paths. Integration training implemented at the university level visualises immigrants' competence and the needs to supplement it.





# INTEGRA TRAINING AND MODEL

The INTEGRA project has developed an educational model that integrates university language and content studies for immigrants who have completed or are eligible for higher education and aim to continue their interrupted degree studies or complement a prior degree in compliance with Finnish qualification requirements. The aim has been to create a permanent model that can be applied in other

**Language learning, discipline-specific studies and academic skills are integrated in university studies, in an academic setting and as part of integration training for immigrants.**

higher education institutions as well. An important target in the development work has been to build the model so that the training can serve as, for example, self-motivated integration training, during which the students can receive unemployment benefits. The model created in the project is thus a means to support the integration of immigrants into Finnish society as well as to promote multilingual competence and develop university pedagogy. Multidirectional and multisectoral cooperation between different parties, such as employment and economic development services (TE Offices) and integration services for immigrants, has played an important role in the project.

## FOCUS ON LANGUAGE LEARNING

The recognition of students' prior learning and the mapping of their needs were the starting points for designing the training. When studying is linked to prior knowledge and an interesting discipline and tasks, it is meaningful and motivating for the learner. The major aim has been to shorten the long integration path towards the realisation of the learners' individual targets.

In the training, the participants are divided into groups based on their Finnish and English proficiency levels.



Photo: Jesse Liimatainen

...everything was new for me; when I had to take everyone's opinions into account while writing articles together; all the pair and group assignments...

**As part of the integration training for immigrants, the participants also develop the English skills needed in higher education and learn academic English.**

The pilot training included two groups. The core idea is that the same themes are handled by adapting the abstraction level of contents and by offering support according to each learner's language learning phase. In order to accelerate the integration path, it is crucial to provide the learners with the opportunity to start integrated language and academic studies as early as possible. The aim is for the studies to constitute a continuum that allows transition from one level to the next and simultaneous

socialisation into the academic community and its practices in order to acquire the skills expected from a highly educated member of society.

University studies require diverse learning, digital and strategy skills, the lack of which complicates one's social activities and performance of expert tasks as well. Therefore, language studies should be integrated with academic and working life competences: studying does not consist only of a pen, paper and a textbook.

# THE STRUCTURE OF STUDIES

- Finnish 24 cr (ECTS credits)
- English 6 cr
- Open university studies and other studies 5–12 cr
- Guidance 5 cr

## RECRUITMENT

- Personal study plan
- Needs analyses
- Plans

## PERIOD 1

### The university and me

- Familiarisation with the Finnish school system and university studies
- Study skills and different texts related to studying and one's personal history
- Activating speech
- Tutor activity

## PERIOD 2

### Society and media

- Familiarisation with different media and social phenomena. Project work with JYU's Finnish-speaking degree students, as well as various learning methods and IT skills, are utilised for this purpose.

## PERIOD 3

### Academic texts I

- Reading study-related texts
- Practising the literacies and strategies needed in studies

## SUMMER BREAK

- E-learning modules
- Independent studies
- Work practice
- Work try-out
- Break

OPEN UNIVERSITY: STUDIES IN ONE'S OWN DISCIPLINE / ELECTIVE STUDIES

GUIDANCE

## PERIOD 4

### Academic texts II

- Familiarisation with different text types
- Study-related writing and speaking
- Practising the language and working methods of lecture courses as part of the course *Relationships and social networks in multicultural working life*.

## PERIOD 5

### Research and projects

- Practising data collection and selection in various ways and with different data
- Carrying out and presenting a research project related to one's field or interest. The applied methods include inquiry-based learning as well as reading circles with JYU's Finnish-speaking degree students.

## PERIOD 6

### Texts and working life

- Working on texts related to one's field, studies and job search

## PERIOD 7

### Completing the studies

- Individual guidance on assignments
- Discussion on personal study plans and feedback, both individually and in small groups
- Recording future plans

Text is understood to be a piece of written or spoken material. Each period includes individual and group guidance sessions. The degree of challenge in the contents varies depending on the level of the group in which the student participates. At the beginning of each period, students set individual goals, and each period ends with self-evaluation. At the same time, students have content studies in their own disciplines or other elective studies, which are utilised in language learning in the lessons of both Finnish and English.



# PRINCIPLES



Photo: Jesse Liimatainen

## IN THE INTEGRA MODEL

- immigrants who have completed higher education or are eligible for it study in the university environment. This facilitates their socialisation into academia and social inclusion as well as brings them into a meaningful environment and culture right from the beginning of their language studies.
- the learners' heterogeneous backgrounds, needs and targets are taken into account when designing course contents and dividing the learners into groups.
- prior learning – such as discipline-specific studies and multilingual resources – is recognised.
- discipline-specific studies are integrated with language learning, which enables the utilisation of prior knowledge and development of competence in Finnish and English.
- language learning is integrated with academic skills – such as reflection, data collection and teamwork skills.
- individual and group guidance is provided regularly throughout the training.
- the Open University is in charge of teaching in the various disciplines, and teachers receive training and support on student guidance, which also contributes to the development of university pedagogy and the utilisation of multilingual resources.
- cooperation crosses department and faculty boundaries, including joint courses with Finnish and other international students.

# OPEN UNIVERSITY

## OPEN UNIVERSITY STUDIES AND OTHER STUDIES

The Open University offers a wide range of studies in different university disciplines, and there are no requirements regarding prior education. Language skills, the ability to perceive course structures and requirements, and academic skills particularly in text comprehension and production are essential for effective studying. The studies can be parts of university degrees and consist of basic- or intermediate-level courses of 5 to 10 ECTS credits, and they will be listed on a transcript of records. The discipline can be the same as in the student's prior degree or in the pursued degree (e.g. a future bachelor's or master's degree). This is how the studies also

support socialisation into the academic practices of one's field and working life. The studies can also consist of continuing professional education for tasks in one's field (e.g. health sciences for medical doctors). In case of insufficient Finnish skills, students can complete the studies in English.

The course selection, courses to be completed, the modes of completion and support for studies are handled in individual guidance. The plans are recorded in a personal study plan. The teachers of the Open University play an important role in guidance, and cooperation with them should start before and continue throughout the training.

**As part of the integration training, it is possible to complete studies at the Open University and receive credits for them.**

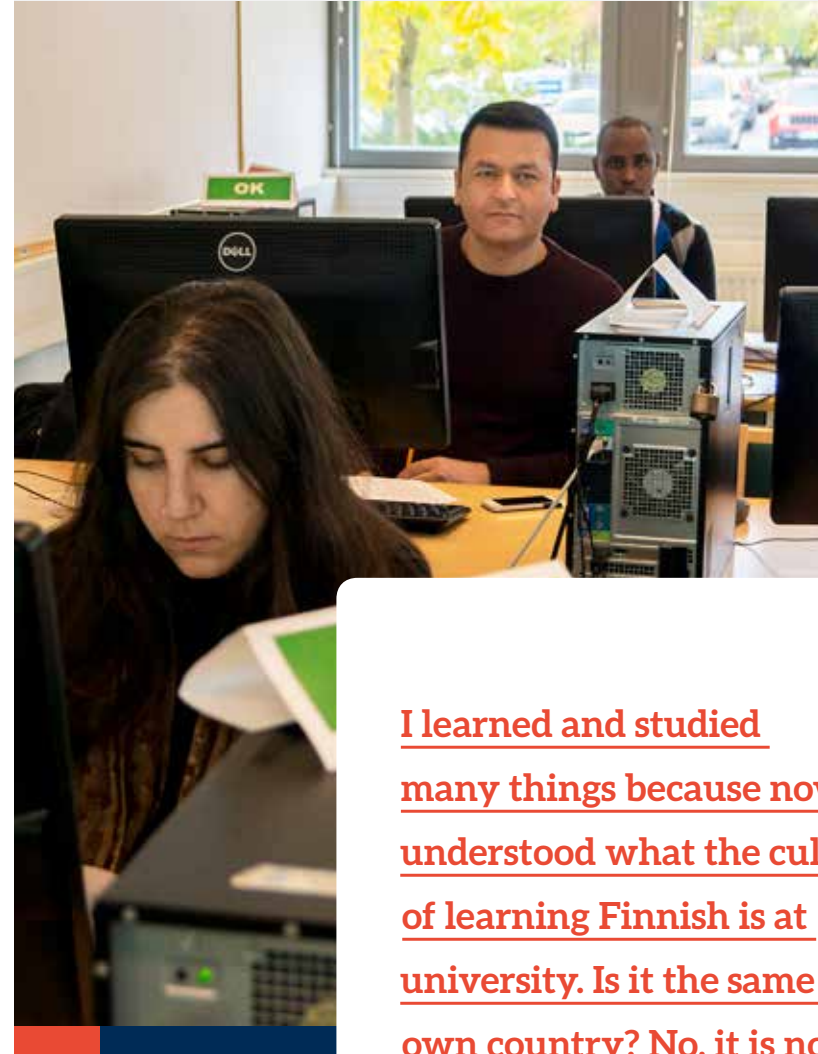


Photo: Jesse Liimatainen

I learned and studied many things because now I understood what the culture of learning Finnish is at university. Is it the same in my own country? No, it is not.



Photo: Jesse Liimatainen

An essential tool in individual guidance is the personal study plan, which each student creates and regularly updates in cooperation with the teacher that provides guidance. The group guidance approach is based on sharing experiences and meanings in a safe small group. The small groups comply with the group divisions of the training. In addition to sharing their experiences and views, students can practise active listening and conversation skills in Finnish and/or English in the groups. The activities of the past period are reflected upon and questions related to the next period are handled jointly. Furthermore, the group meetings can receive guests who talk about their experiences related to employment and about the research and project work undertaken at the university.

### GROUP MEETING THEMES:

- I as a student
- my strengths and developmental needs
- networks and networking skills
- interaction and meanings in an international student group
- handling stressful life situations
- planning your future

# GUIDANCE

Systematic guidance and support are provided during the entire training programme. All students are provided with regular individual guidance discussions, and they participate in group and peer guidance in home groups that meet at the transition points of the periods. The purpose of guidance is to help students create a clear, justified idea of their studies and learning applicable to their individual life situation. This promotes their progress in academic or other studies and access to working life.

**The participants receive regular individual and group guidance throughout the training to enable realistic future plans.**

# STUDENT'S FINANCIAL SECURITY

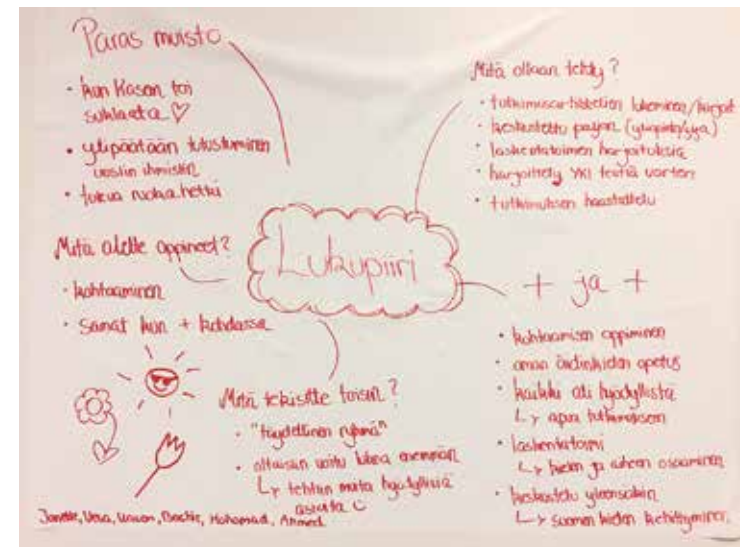


Photo: Tuija Lehtonen



Photo: Tuija Lehtonen

Financial security enables goal-oriented study, in which meaningful learning and the goals set for schedules and credits can be achieved. Immigrant students' financial conditions and financing options vary depending on their immigrant status. The type of residence permit affects student financial aid and other social security benefits, as well as the tuition fees of students from outside the EU/EEA in English-medium degree programmes. The situation is the hardest for asylum seekers living in Finland and entitled to apply for a study place at a higher education institution as well as to be admitted. Without a residence permit, they are excluded from municipal basic

services, and without regular work they only receive a small amount of spending allowance. According to the current legislation, asylum seekers must cancel their residence permit application based on international protection if they are admitted to studies and upon application receive a residence permit based on studies. Furthermore, the factors related to residence permits do not always depend on the students only but also on, for example, their family situation or spouse's residence permit prerequisites.

The role of the TE Office (employment and economic development office) is crucial particularly during the period when an immigrant can receive

an integration plan including measures that, based on legislation (Act on the Promotion of Immigrant Integration 30.12.2010/1386), can be implemented over the course of three years. Most of the participants in the INTEGRA training were within this integration plan period. Based on a decision by the TE Office, their studies were regarded as self-motivated integration training and merited unemployment benefit. Some of the students had been living in Finland for a longer time, and their integration plan period had ended. These students could participate in INTEGRA as self-motivated training supported by unemployment benefit.

# RECOMMEN- DATIONS

**1** Finnish universities' action model for continuous learning should include integration training for immigrants who have completed or are eligible for higher education. This training should respond to their needs to develop as experts in their fields and as members of Finnish society.

**2** The societal and educational responsibility of universities should be developed: universities are in charge of integration training and language education at the highest level for immigrants who have completed or are eligible for higher education and come from different backgrounds.

**3** Integration training based on the INTEGRA educational model should be part of the permanent educational activities of universities and funded through university core funding instead of project funding.

**4** Immigrants' paths to higher education should be developed further among and within universities by enhancing cooperation between faculties and units and by developing alternative routes to university studies.

**5** The educational paths should be developed by providing immigrants with earlier and correctly allocated language and integration training together with other university studies designed based on students' needs and goals.

**6** The integration training for immigrants with or eligible for higher education should combine the following three elements: discipline-specific studies supporting expertise and competence, academic skills studies, and language studies.

**7** The students' prior learning and multilingual backgrounds should be utilised in the studies. They support language learning and discipline-specific studies as well as develop the university community.

**8** The guidance and counselling activities for immigrants with higher education backgrounds (SIMHE, Supporting Immigrants in Higher Education in Finland) should be integrated into the permanent activities of universities, and multilingual and multicultural guidance skills should be developed on demand.

**9** As part of guidance, psychosocial support and multiprofessional collaboration are needed to meet the support needs of students with different backgrounds: non-degree students lack an all-embracing support network.

**10** Close cooperation with TE administration is needed in guidance and in designing the training in order to allow students to concentrate on studying without the fear of losing financial security.

My Finnish skills developed a lot and I can discuss with Finnish people and take care of my affairs myself, and someone else does not need to help me.

## **INTEGRA: PLANNING, GUIDANCE AND IMPLEMENTATION**

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