

IRMA GARAM

International mobility in Finnish higher education in 2015: degree students

5B/2016

FACTS AND FIGURES -REPORT

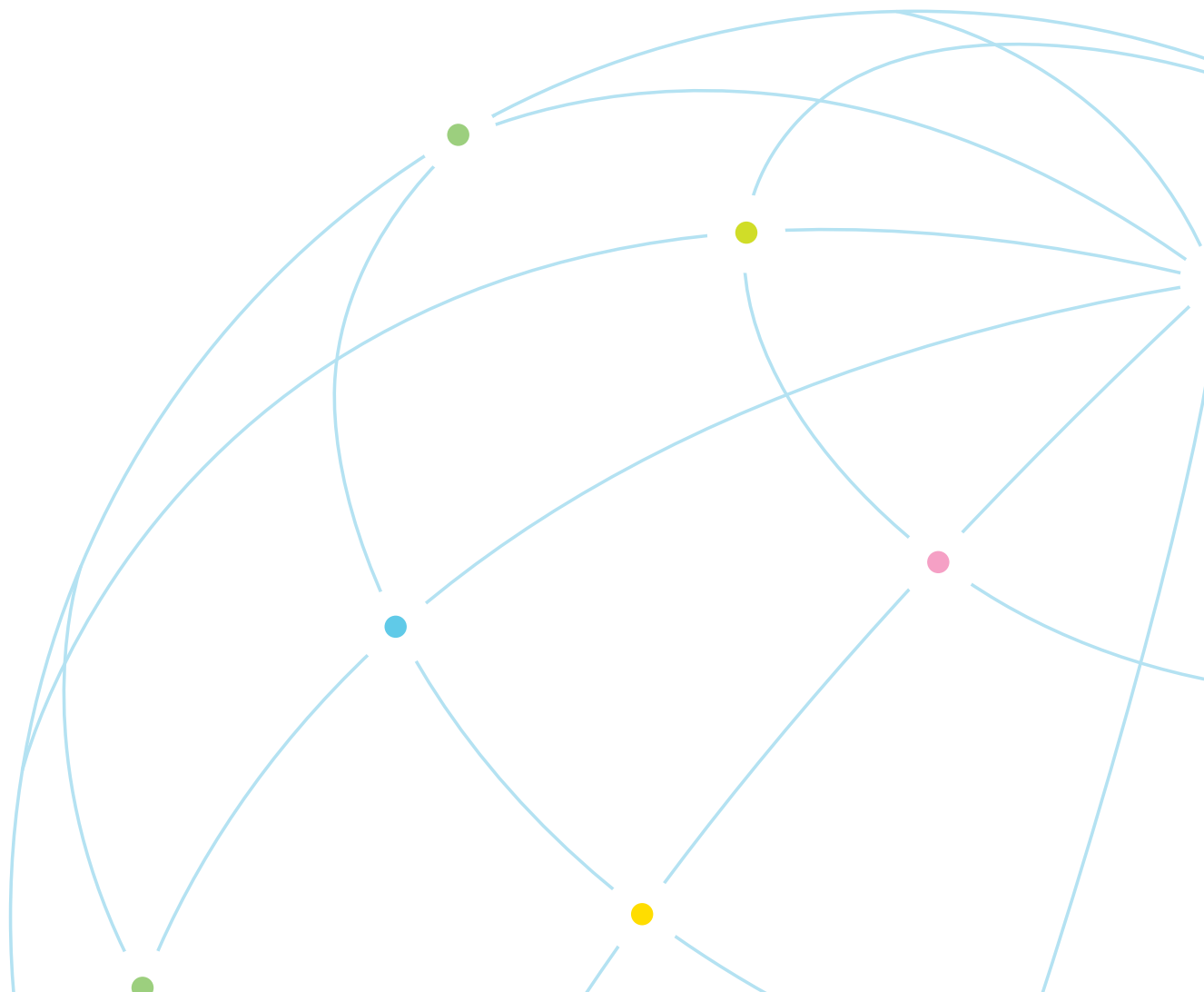


Table of contents

1 Introduction.....	4
2 International degree students in Finnish universities.....	5
2.1 Development in the 2000s.....	5
2.2 Countries and continents of origin.....	7
2.3 Fields of study.....	9
2.4 Levels of study.....	11
2.5 Applicants from abroad.....	12
3 Finnish degree students in universities abroad.....	14
3.1 Development in the 2000s.....	14
3.2 Target countries.....	16
3.3 Fields of study.....	18

1 Introduction

This report is an overview of international mobility of higher education students in Finland in 2015: about its trends and priorities. The focus is specifically on degree students, that is, international mobility of students who go to another country to complete a full higher education degree, not just a part of it.

The overview draws on two main sets of data. Statistics Finland collects data about international degree students studying in Finnish higher education institutions, whereas the overview of Finnish students in universities abroad is based on the Finnish Social Insurance Institution KELA's data on student grants awarded to Finnish students studying for a full degree abroad. In certain situations, the Finnish study grant can also be awarded to foreign citizens.

In addition to the data of Statistics Finland and KELA, information, for example, about foreign applicants to Finnish universities, has been extracted from the Vipunen portal for education statistics, maintained by the Finnish Ministry of Education and Culture and the National Board of Education. When the source of data is other than Statistics Finland or KELA, this is mentioned in the report.

Students can also complete a part of their studies, a study period, an exchange, abroad. CIMO also collects data about international study periods of students in Finnish universities. CIMO reports about this type of international student mobility in Finland in its Facts and Figures report 4B/2016 *International mobility in Finnish higher education in 2015: exchange students*.

In addition to higher education mobility, CIMO also collects and publishes statistics on international mobility in school, vocational and adult education.

You can find pdf versions of all our publications about international mobility, covering all education sectors on CIMO's website at www.cimo.fi | Services | Publications.

CIMO's website also has a comprehensive collection of information about international mobility at different education sectors at www.cimo.fi | Services | Statistics on internationalisation. You can also find information about the international activities of universities on the Vipunen portal for education statistics, maintained by the Finnish Ministry of Education and Culture <https://vipunen.fi>.

2 International degree students in Finnish universities

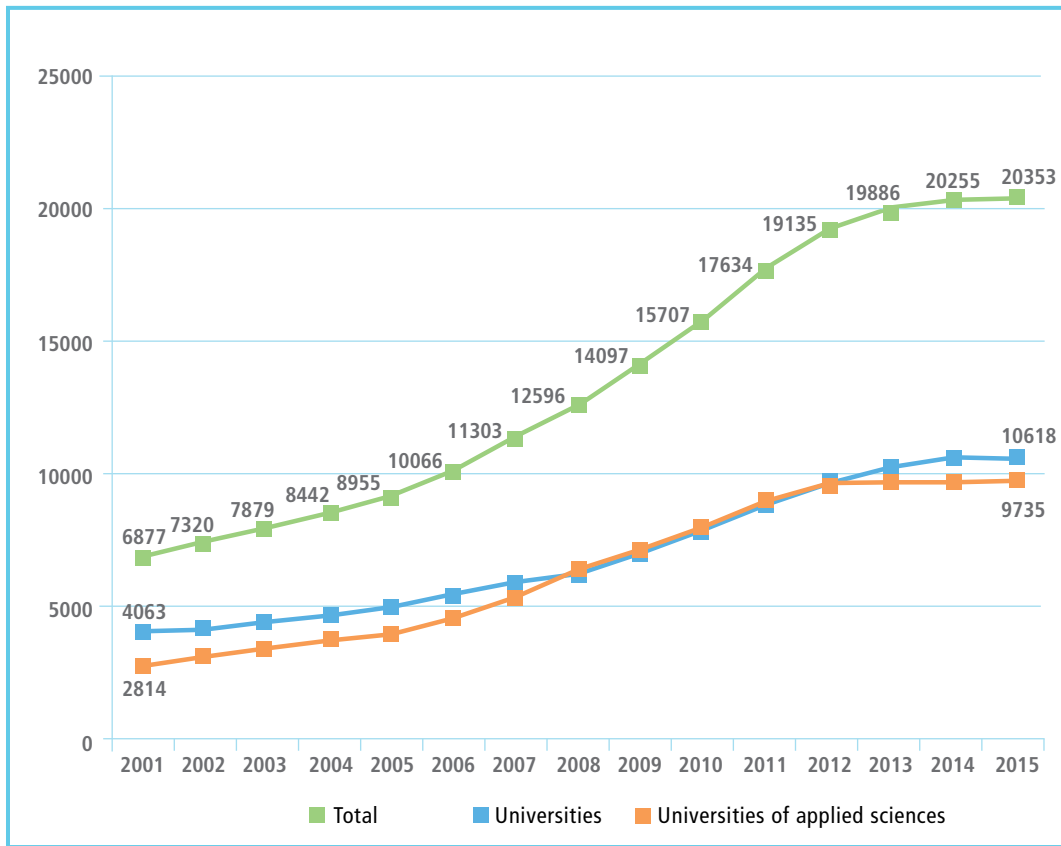
2.1 Development in the 2000s

The number of international degree students has clearly increased during the 2000s. The growth has been particularly strong after 2005 since when the number has increased by over 10% every year. During the past few years, the growth has slowed down again. In 2015, there were just over 20,000 foreign degree students in Finland. The number is quite evenly spread out between the two types of universities in Finland¹.

There were 5,295 new, first-year foreign students in Finnish universities in 2014, the most recent figure available. 2,606 of them started their studies in traditional universities and 2,689 in the Universities of Applied Sciences (UAS). The number of international students has grown at the same pace as the total number of students in universities. In 2005, the number of new, first-year international students was less than half of the above (2,447), 1,058 in universities and 1,389 in UAS's.

Correspondingly, international students completed a total of 3,407 degrees in Finnish universities in 2014, 1,890 of them in traditional universities and 1,517 in UAS's. The number of degrees completed by international students has grown more rapidly than the number of students, almost tripling since the mid-2000s. In 2005, a total of 1,192 higher education degrees were completed by international students, 617 of them in universities and 575 in UAS's.

¹ Finnish higher education consists of two complementary sectors: universities and universities of applied sciences (UAS). Universities promote research and provide academic higher education based on research, whereas UAS's provide professional or 'vocational' higher education. For clarity in this publication, we often refer to universities as 'traditional universities' as opposed to Universities of Applied Sciences (UAS). When we just write 'universities' in the text we mean both sectors or just the traditional universities when it is clear from the context that we are only referring to them.



Graph 1. International students in Finnish universities 2001-2015.

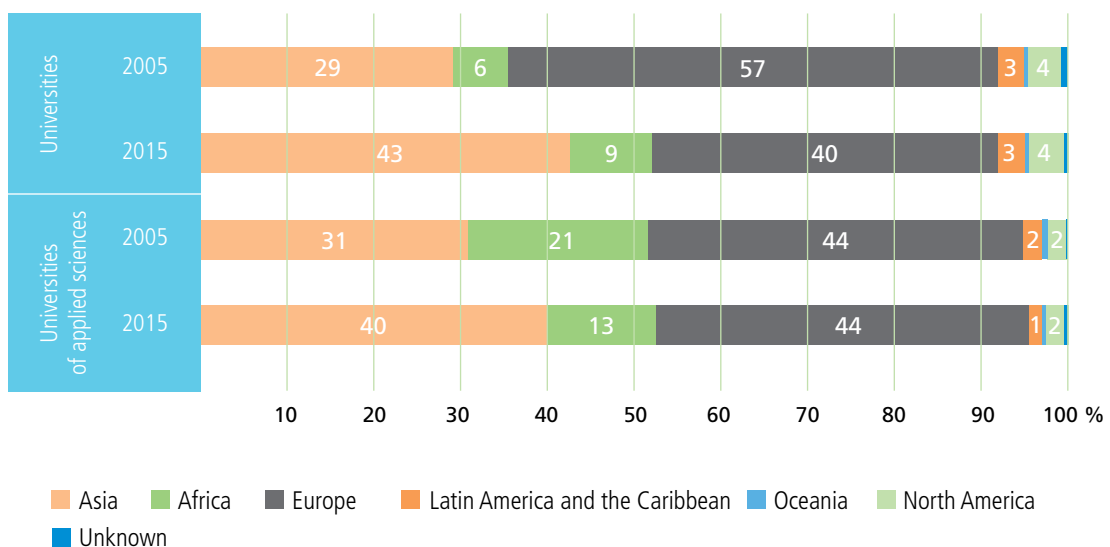
2.2 Countries and continents of origin

In total, 76% of international students in Finnish universities came from outside of the EU/EEA countries in 2015. In UAS's, the number is even higher, 80% coming outside of the EU/EEA, whereas in universities the figure is 73%.

By continent, the majority of international degree students come to Finland from Europe and Asia, a little more than 40% from each. There are some differences in the continents of origin between the two university sectors. Somewhat more students come to UAS's from Europe and Africa, and to traditional universities from Asia.

Compared to 2005, the biggest change is the bigger role taken by Asia. In the traditional universities, the numbers have grown at the expense of the Europeans, whereas in the UAS's, the number of African students has decreased.

China is the single most common country of origin in universities, Russia in UAS's. The most common countries of origin in both university sectors have changed over the past ten years or so. With the exception of Russia, European countries have disappeared from the top ten or moved down on the list. Vietnam and Nepal have shot to the top, particularly in the UAS sector. China and Russia have traditionally held top positions in the list of countries of origin. This is still the case in the traditional universities, whereas in UAS's, China has lost its position at the top, having been overtaken by Russia, Vietnam and Nepal.



Graph 2. International degree students in universities by continent of origin 2005 and 2015, %.

Universities				UAS's			
2015		2005		2015		2005	
China	1215	China	696	Russia	2112	China	748
Russia	933	Russia	556	Vietnam	1495	Russia	558
India	625	Estonia	352	Nepal	896	Estonia	277
Pakistan	574	Sweden	314	China	591	Sweden	253
Iran	548	Germany	241	Estonia	418	Kenya	252
Vietnam	418	India	146	Nigeria	307	Nigeria	119
Germany	392	United States	146	Kenya	279	Ghana	110
Estonia	316	United Kingdom	135	Germany	253	Germany	82
Nepal	308	Spain	108	Sweden	217	Vietnam	79
Bangladesh	307	Italy	107	Bangladesh	205	Ethiopia	77

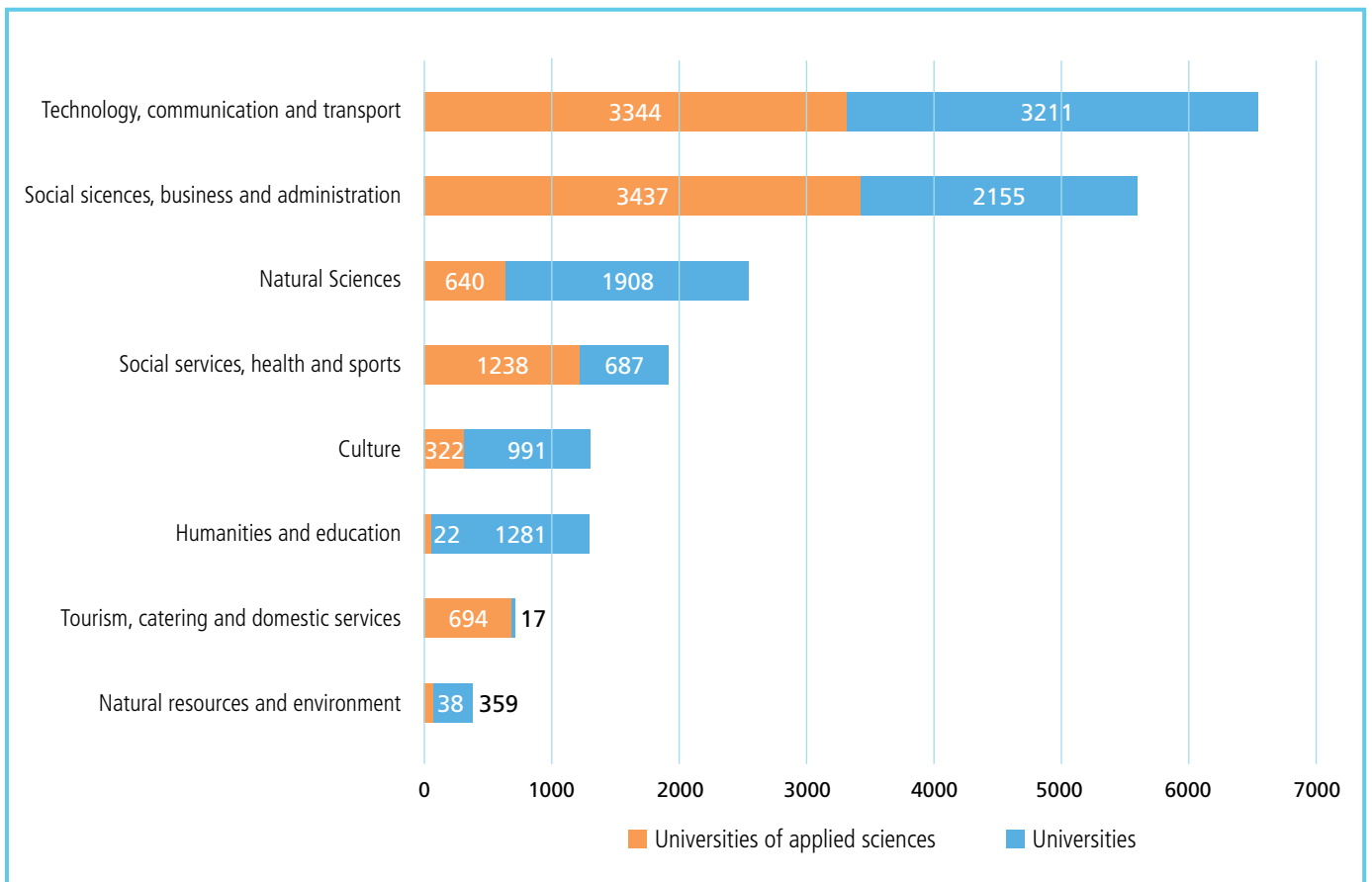
Table 1. The most common countries of origin of international degree students in universities and UAS's 2015 and 2005.

2.3 Fields of study

Two fields of study stand out when it comes to numbers of international students: technology and transport, and social sciences, business and administration. About 60% of all international students study in these two fields. An equal number of students in both university sectors study technology and transport whereas social sciences, business and administration is somewhat more popular in the UAS sector. Natural sciences, culture and humanities are mainly studied in the traditional universities.

The profile of different fields of study vary somewhat depending on which parts of the world the students come from. The fields of technology and transport and natural sciences have more than an average number of students from Asia. The spread of nationalities in social sciences, business and administration is quite close to the average. There are more students of social services and health from Europe and Africa than on average. There are clearly more than an average number of Europeans among students of humanities and culture.

The number of international degree students has grown by about 30% from 2010 to 2015. During this period, the number of students has grown the most in natural sciences (47%) and the least in tourism, catering and domestic services (3%).

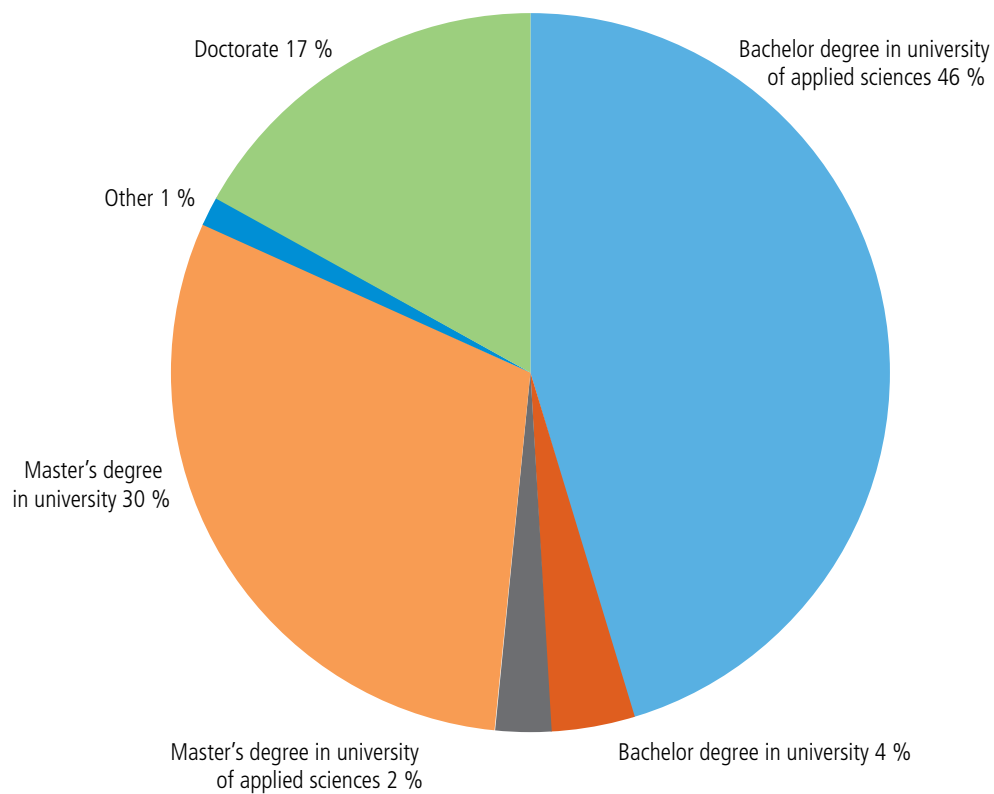


Graph 3. International degree students in universities and UAS's by field of study 2015

2.4 Levels of study

The majority of international degree students are studying for a Bachelor's degree in a UAS or a Master's degree in a traditional university. In addition, just under 20% are studying for a Doctorate.

You can also study for a Bachelor level degree in a traditional university and for a Master-level degree in a UAS. However, there are few study programmes available in English at these levels, so they have few foreign students.



Graph 4. International degree students in Finnish universities in 2015 by level of degree, %

2.5 Applicants from abroad

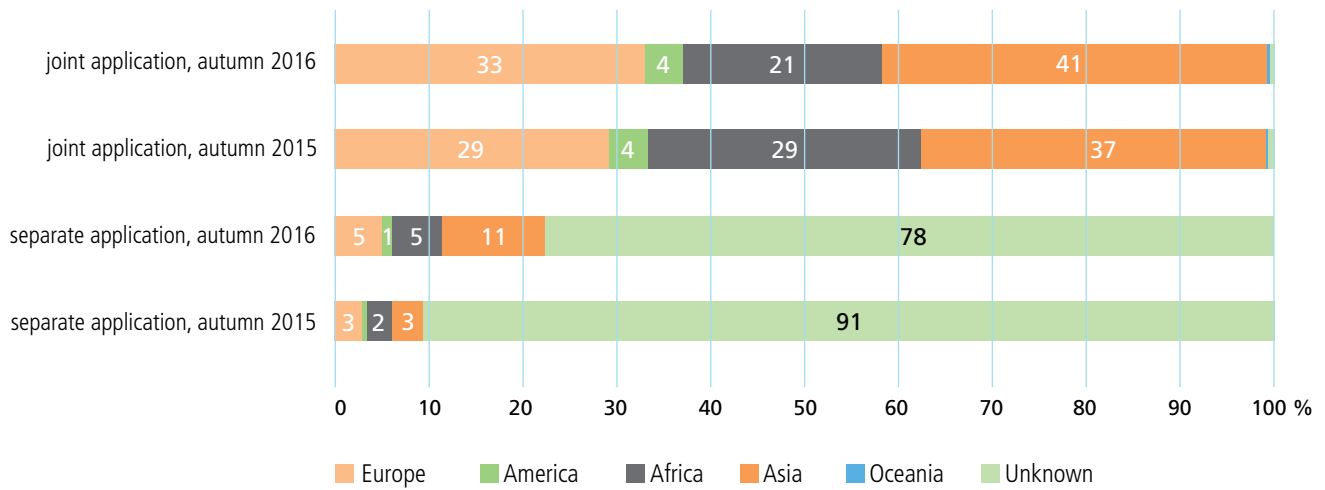
Information about applicants to universities and those selected is available in the Vipunen portal of the Finnish Ministry of Education and Culture and the National Board of Education. According to its data, 20,707 people from abroad applied for a place in a study programme starting in the autumn of 2016 (all applicants). 42% of them, that is, just over 8,700 applied through the Finnish joint application system and 58% (just over 11,900) through the separate application system. Applications to English-language Bachelor's programmes of UAS's come mainly through the joint application system and those to Master's programmes of universities through the separate application system.

Almost 7,800 of all international applicants (38% of applicants) were selected and just over 5,600 (27% of applicants) started their studies in the autumn of 2016.

The number of international applicants has reduced by almost a third compared to the year before, as there were a total of 30,193 applicants for study programmes starting in autumn 2015, 38% – over 11,600 – of them through the joint application system and 62% (about 18,700) through the separate application system. The number of international applicants to Master's programmes of traditional universities through the separate application system has reduced in particular². Just over 9,500 (32%) of those applying to start their studies in autumn 2015 were selected and 6,500 (22%) started their studies.

A third of the international applicants through the joint application system come from Europe and a little more than that from Asia. The percentage of European and Asian applicants in the joint application system has grown somewhat during the past year, that of the Africans reduced. A similar country breakdown is not available for the separate application system so the nationality of many of the applicants is unknown.

² One reason for the fall in the number of international applicants is that there may also have been Finnish applicants among those with an unknown nationality in the separate application round for study programmes that started in autumn 2015. Nationalities of applicants for study programmes that started in autumn 2016 through the separate application system were recorded in more detail.



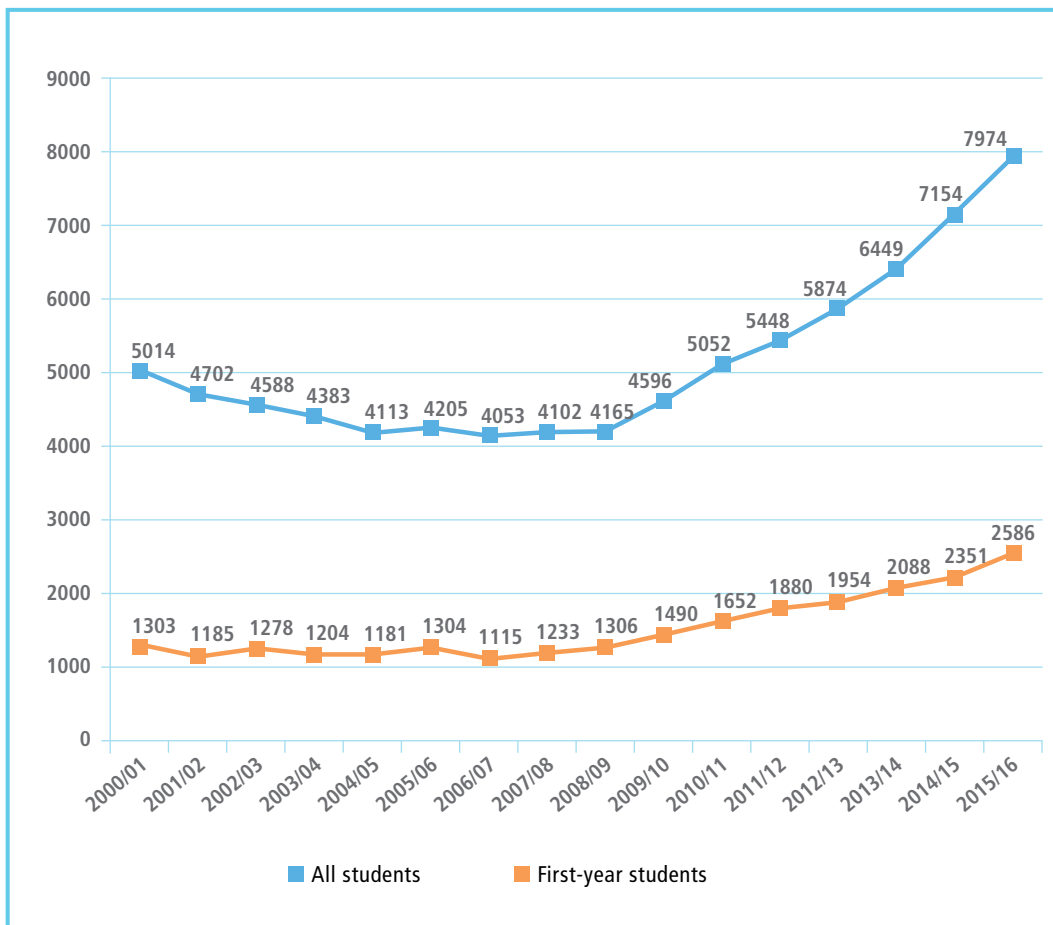
Graph 5. International applicants through the joint and separate application systems by nationality (study programmes starting in autumn 2015 and 2016) %

3 Finnish degree students in universities abroad

3.1 Development in the 2000s

It is difficult to get exact information about Finnish degree students abroad because they apply directly to universities abroad, and they will not then be recorded in any Finnish registers or statistics. However, Finnish students that meet certain criteria can be awarded the Finnish student grant by KELA for degree studies in a university abroad, too. Consequently, KELA's statistics on Finnish higher education students receiving the student grant abroad offers us a decent estimate about the number of Finnish degree students abroad, although it is not quite accurate: not all Finnish students abroad receive the student grant, or are entitled to it, and on the other hand, some foreign nationals may also be entitled to the Finnish student grant on certain conditions. The following overview is based on KELA's data on degree students who received the Finnish student grant abroad.

In the academic year 2015/2016, almost 8,000 students receiving the Finnish student grant were studying for a degree in a higher education institution abroad. Over 2,500 of them were new, first-year students. The number of Finnish degree students abroad has clearly increased from the mid-2000s. From the academic year 2006/2007, the number of all students has almost doubled and the number of new students more than doubled.



Graph 6. Finnish higher education students abroad who receive the Finnish student grant (all students and new first-year students) 2000/2001 – 2015/2016

3.2 Target countries

The target countries of Finnish degree students are different than the ones from where students come to Finland. The vast majority (as many as 89%) go to study in another European country. The second most common destination continent is North America with 6% of all degree students receiving the Finnish student grant abroad. Hardly any Finnish students go to Asia, the common place of origin of degree students coming to Finland.

Of individual countries, the UK and Sweden have long been the most popular target countries. During academic year 2015/2016, Sweden surpassed the UK in popularity for the first time, when we look at first-year students. The number of those enrolled to study in Sweden has more than doubled from the beginning of the 2000s, whereas the number of new starters in the UK has increased “only” by about 20%. In addition to Sweden, the number of new students in the Netherlands and Estonia has also clearly grown more than on average. The number of students in some eastern European countries, such as Romania, Latvia and Poland, has also grown rapidly over the past few years, even if they don’t quite make it to the top ten. These countries have many medical students.

All students		First-year students	
United Kingdom	1983	Sweden	622
Sweden	1707	United Kingdom	601
Estonia	1215	Estonia	376
Netherlands	491	Netherlands	176
United States	416	United States	130
Germany	325	Germany	98
Denmark	237	Denmark	75
Spain	157	Spain	68
Latvia	124	Norway	44
France	106	France	36

Table 2. The top ten countries for Finnish degree students abroad 2015/2016 (all students and new students)

The below table 3 describes mobility of students between the Nordic countries: the number of students going to study for a whole degree in another Nordic country with a student grant. The information is based on data collected by KELA in cooperation with corresponding student grant authorities in other Nordic countries, and can be found at KELA's website³.

The figures in table 3 show that the flows of international students are not spread equally across the Nordic countries. Denmark receives a lot of degree students, particularly from Norway (2,776) and Sweden (1,376). Clearly fewer Danish students go to other Nordic countries than the country receives.

Instead of Denmark, Finnish students favour Sweden as their study destination. Sweden wins hands down as the most popular Nordic destination of Finnish students. Finland differs from the other Nordic countries also in that that it receives clearly fewer students from all other Nordic countries than it sends out.

The other Nordic countries is the least important target region for Swedish students; only 11% of all Swedish students abroad are studying in another Nordic country. For Icelandic students, however, other Nordic countries are a significant region; over a third of all students abroad study in another Nordic country. The Danish students in general are not particularly keen to study for a whole degree abroad; only 1% of recipients of a student grant study in a university abroad. Icelandic students study abroad the most often.

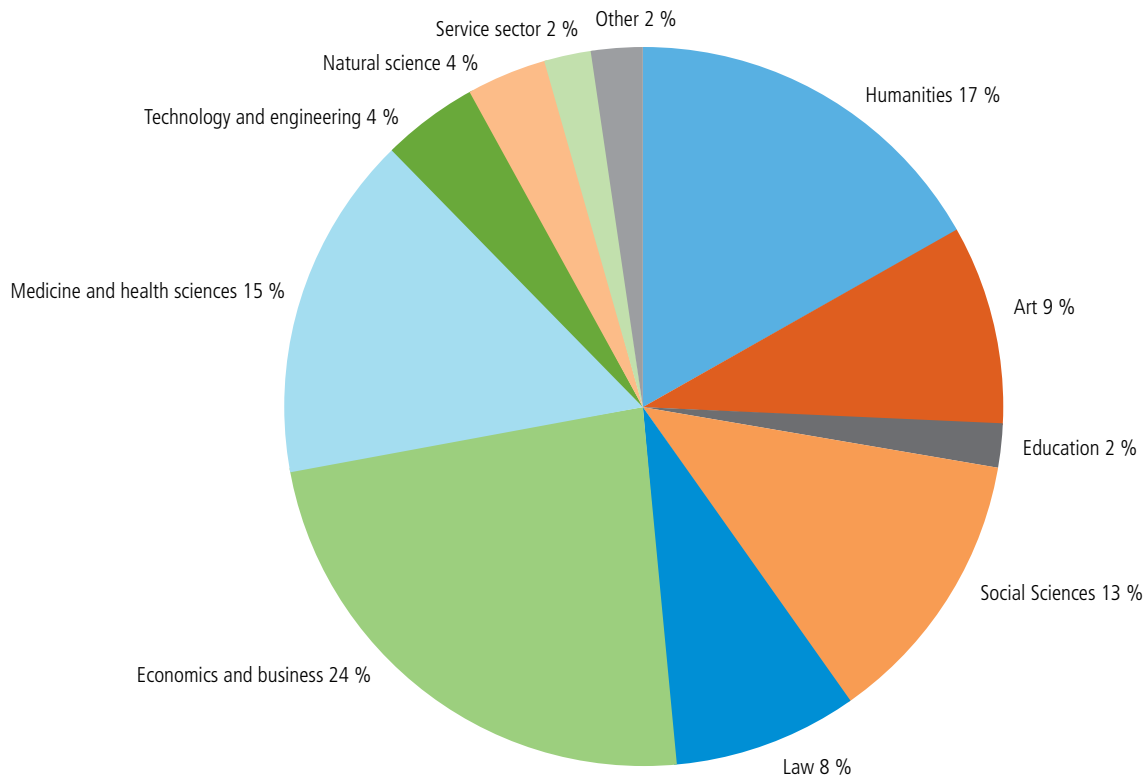
To	From	Denmark	Finland	Iceland	Norway	Sweden
Denmark		-	191	402	2776	1376
Finland		15	-	3	16	161
Iceland		69	6	-	33	52
Norway		273	66	98	-	862
Sweden		599	1417	186	651	-
Studying in Nordic countries of all students abroad %		24 %	23 %	38 %	20 %	11 %
Studying abroad of all recipients of student grant %		1 %	4 %	19 %	8 %	7 %

Table 3. International mobility of degree students between the Nordic countries in 2014/2015

³ <http://www.kela.fi/yhteistyotahot>

3.3 Fields of study

The most common fields of study of Finnish degree students abroad are economics and business, humanities, medicine and health sciences and social sciences. The growth in the fields of medicine and health has been the biggest in the past few years. Studying law and economics and business has also increased in popularity more than on average.



Graph 7. Finnish degree students abroad in 2015/2016 by field of study.

Different subjects are studied in different countries. Finnish students study medicine mainly in Sweden, Estonia and the more rare Eastern European countries, such as Latvia and Romania. Law studies clearly focus on Estonia where half of the Finnish law students go to. Students of economics and business are spread more evenly and to more countries; it is studied in Estonia, Sweden, the UK, the United States, the Netherlands as well as outside these most popular target countries. Students of humanities and social sciences have two favourite target countries: the UK and Sweden.

To some extent, Finnish students studying abroad study in different fields than they do in Finland. There is clearly less interest in technology and natural sciences abroad than in Finland. Whereas only 4% of Finnish degree students abroad study technology and another 4% natural sciences according to the student grant data of KELA, the figures in Finnish universities in 2015 according to the Vipunen database are as many as 18% for technology and 14% for natural sciences.

In contrast, Finnish students abroad study more often medicine and health sciences, economics and business, law and arts than they do in the home country. According to the Vipunen database, in 2015, 7% of bachelor's and master's students in traditional universities studied medicine or health sciences, 14% economics and business, 3% arts and 3% law. Comparing fields of study abroad and in Finland is not an exact science, however, because sources of data and categories used are not quite comparable.

Finnish students abroad also study in different fields than international degree students in Finland (see chapter 2.3). The vast majority of international degree students in Finland study technology, which does not feature prominently among Finnish students abroad. International students in Finland also often study economics and business which is also true for Finns abroad. In addition, there are also many international students in Finland studying natural sciences, another field that is not popular among Finnish students abroad.