



Guide: HOW TO SUPPORT STUDENTS WITH CHILDREN



SUOMEN YLIOPIPPILASKUNTIEN LIITTO
FINLANDS STUDENTKÅRERS FÖRBUND
NATIONAL UNION OF UNIVERSITY STUDENTS IN FINLAND



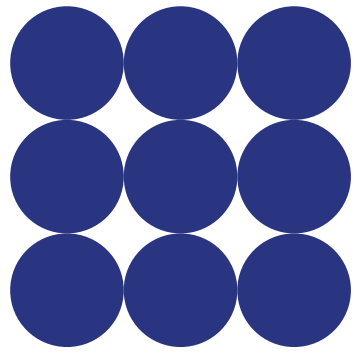


Students with children

According to recent figures, 12.7 per cent of higher education students in Finland have children. The proportions of students with children is highest in the education, health and welfare, and social sectors.

Higher education students	Students with children (% of all students)	Students with partial learning ability (% of all students)
Education	22,2	23,1
Arts and humanities	13,7	30,6
Social sciences, journalism and information	18,3	27,1
Business, administration and law	6,9	12,4
Natural sciences	9,9	24,0
Information and communication technologies	12,6	28,4
Engineering, manufacturing and construction	5,7	15,2
Agriculture, forestry and fisheries	9,7	17,6
Health and welfare	19,3	15,3
Services	3,5	17,3
Total	12,7	21,9

Source: Statistics Finland EUROSTUDENT VII Student Survey 2022



Although students with children are just like other students in most respects, certain specific characteristics do need to be taken into account. There are students with children in all age groups, but 80 per cent of those with children are aged between 25 and 40. The concerns of students with children and the difficulties they face are also very different from those typically experienced by other students.

According to a survey collected in 2018, the following were the most typical difficulties students with children have to cope with:

- Financial support for students with children
- Lack of flexibility
- Time management
- Childcare services

Although nationwide advocacy is carried out by the National Union of University Students in Finland (SYL), there is a lot that can be done in student unions locally as well. The purpose of this guide is to help you to do this. The guide is based on the EUROSTUDENT VII study and a preliminary study carried out by the National Union of University Students in Finland (SYL) and the Research Foundation for Studies and Education (Otus).



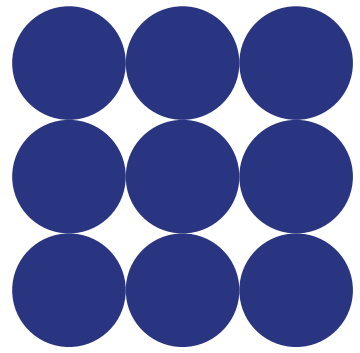
What can student unions do?

Parent- and child-friendly universities

Find out

- Are children welcome in the student canteen and in campus recreational areas?
- Are child-friendly portion sizes available in the student canteen, and are high chairs available?
- Can students with small children bring them along into lectures, seminars and the like?
- Do lecturers allow students to participate remotely?
- How are exam rooms, libraries and other study facilities used during evenings, weekends and holidays?
- What other learning pathways are provided, and are the other arrangements they require in order?
- Are there children's play areas, nurseries, breastfeeding facilities, stroller storage on the campuses, and are potties provided in toilets?
- Common difficulties faced by students with children, such as children becoming ill, having to take their child to a clinic or having

difficulties with childcare, can cause absences from lectures or make it difficult to meet study deadlines. Do universities have any provisions in place to allow for this?



Thing to aim for:

- that life on campus areas is made easy for students with children.
- that lecture facilities and equipment, etc. take these students into account. Pay particular attention to accessibility – for example, getting around with a pram or stroller should not be difficult.
- that student union organisations are sensitive to the needs of students with children. For example, tutor training and materials for student organisations should also accommodate these students.



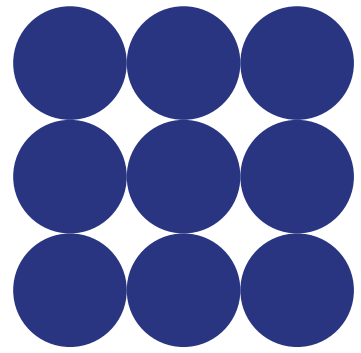
Flexibility of studies

Find out

- How flexible are study requirements?
- Is it possible to agree on flexibility in terms of deadlines and compulsory attendance, for example in the form of substitute tasks, extra time or other alternative ways of meeting course requirements?
- What remote learning arrangements are in place? Are remote learning courses time-limited, or can students follow video lectures on their own schedule?

Thing to aim for:

- Speak up for students with children.
- Make sure that a single absence due to a child falling ill or a clinic visit does not cause anyone to drop from a course or seminar, etc., and that universities have flexible practices regarding course attendance in such cases.



Early childhood education services and student advocacy at municipal level

Most students with children use municipal early childhood education services, which are usually provided from Monday to Friday from 7 am to 5 pm. These restricted times are particularly difficult for students whose studies include evening or early morning classes and for students who have a long journey to the daycare centre or school. Municipal authorities regulate early childhood education in municipalities. By advocating for change at municipal level, early childhood education and care services can be made more flexible, streamlined and brought closer to those who need them.

Find out

- Are early childhood services available on campus or within a reasonable distance?
- Is it possible for early childhood services to provide out-of-hours care for students with children?
- Every student needs a home. Is there enough affordable housing available in your municipality for students with children?



- How can irregular and variable service times for childhood services be arranged?
- Are the holiday periods for early childhood education compatible with your university studies? And do you think that the reductions in early childhood education fees that your student status entitles you are sufficient?

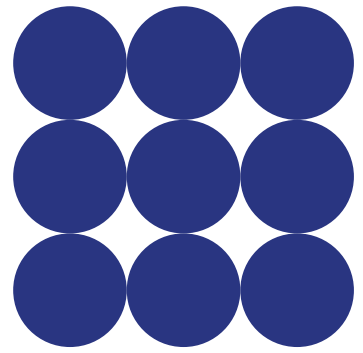
Thing to aim for:

- Ensure that student housing and municipal decision-makers can provide accommodation for all students, including those with children.
- Ensure that local decision-makers make early childhood education available, close to universities and with flexible hours.

Lack of community

Find out

- Could some events be held at other times than in the evenings?
- Are there suitable peer support activities for students with children?



Thing to aim for:

- Ensure that students with children can participate in events, even with their children.
- Organise events where students with children can meet together – peer support and a sense of community are important for these students too.
- Arrange events for bringing together students from different walks of life.

Internationalisation

Many international degree students with children arrive in Finland every year. Having children is a major reason to stay in Finland or move away.

Find out

- Do the university's internationalisation services provide information on services in Finland and abroad for students with families, and do universities provide support for families who want to do part of their studies abroad?
- Do exchange students have access to early





childhood education services in the region?

- Does the university provide information on family support in English?
- Is there information and support on residence permit procedures in cases of family reunification for students from outside the European Union and European Economic Area?

Thing to aim for:

- Find out about additional Erasmus+ support for students with children
- Encourage students from different walks of life to study abroad as part of their studies.

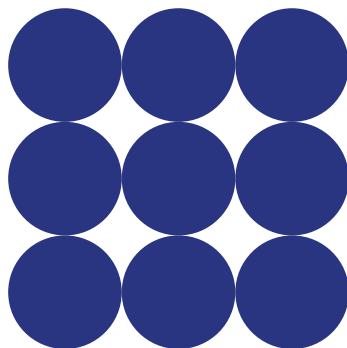
What else can be done?

- You could carry out a survey of students with children to find out the obstacles they face and concerns they have at your institution in particular.
- Make sure these students are also provided with the communication and services they need.
- Take into account how students with children can participate in the student union and act as representatives. Can the threshold for participation for students with children be



lowered?

- Encourage and instruct student associations and universities on how to better serve students with children.



Find out

- Could student unions provide childcare?
- Could student unions collaborate more closely with universities?
- For instance, could student unions contribute to setting up and running childcare centres on campuses?

Further information:

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Links

Studies and publications:

<https://syl.fi/app/uploads/2018/03/SYL-Perheellisten-opiskelijoiden-tutkimusselvitys-2018.pdf>

<https://julkaisut.valtioneuvosto.fi/handle/10024/162449>

<https://www.tylkkari.fi/kampus/kypsemmat-ikaantyyvat-varttu-neemmat-yli-30-vuotiaat-opiskelijat-jaavat-tutkimuksissa-helpos-ti>

<https://thl.fi/fi/tutkimus-ja-kehittaminen/tutkimukset-ja-hankkeet/korkeakouluopiskelijoiden-terveys-ja-hyvinvointitutkimus-kott->

Financial support for students with children

<https://samok.fi/blogi/opiskelijalapsiperheet-ja-toimeentulo/>

<https://www.suomi.fi/kansalaiselle/opetus-ja-koulutus/opiskelijan-toimeentulo-ja-sosiaalinen-tuki/opas/perheellisen-opiskelijan-taloudellinen-ja-sosiaalinen-tuki/perheellisen-opiskelijan-taloudellinen-tuki>

<https://halloota.com/ruokkisitko-sina-lapsesi-lainarahalla/>

Student union publications and websites

<https://www.tyy.fi/fi/opiskelijalle/perheelliset>

<https://jyy.fi/palvelut-opiskelijalle/koulutuspolitiikka/perheelliset-opiskelijat/>

<https://www.oyy.fi/opiskelijalle/arki-ja-hyvinvointi/#1543496923252-2f9002c1-8b13>

<https://studies.helsinki.fi/ohjeet/artikkeli/lastenhoitopalvelu-pikku-hyy>

Other links:

<https://www.parassy.fi/perheellinen-opiskelija/>

<https://www.opiskelijantampere.fi/fi/51/perheellinen-opiskelija/>