



GD Bildung und Kultur

Programm für lebenslanges Lernen



FRIEDRICH-ALEXANDER  
UNIVERSITÄT  
ERLANGEN-NÜRNBERG

**Friedrich-Alexander-Universität Erlangen-Nürnberg**  
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<b>Personal Information</b>	
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Host university:	University of Turku
Host country:	Finland
Study programme at host university:	Information Systems
Duration in semester (WS, SS or whole year):	WS

## 1. Preparation (organization, application at the host university)

The application process at the FAU was very straight forward and well-supported by the Falke chair. Since the teaching language in Turku is English, it is certainly advantageous to write the application and motivational letter in English but in general, it is not required. The ensuing interview at the chair is generally held in a relaxed atmosphere and will not digress into a pop quiz. However, you are expected to have thought about what it means to live and study in Finland and will need to assure the interviewer of your honest dedication to use the stay abroad to advance as a person and in your studies and not just as an extended party trip. It should also be mentioned that at least parts of the interview will be conducted in English to make sure you possess the necessary language skills to study in Turku.

After being selected, the Falke chair takes care of most of the issues and provides the necessary information, e.g. for the registration at the university that has to be done by the students themselves. Note that neither the chair nor the University of Turku provide you with an accommodation, this is entirely the student's responsibility.

## 2. Arrival / Visa (flight, train)

Turku can be reached comfortably by plane, train or bus while most of the traffic runs through Helsinki. Although taking the bus from the capital is probably the cheapest alternative, paying very close attention when booking the route is recommended as some options require you to change buses. This can become a problem as some bus drivers may have insufficient English skills to give proper instructions.

As an EU citizen, no visa is required but technically you would have to register at a local police office if your stay exceeds three months. This can however be circumvented by leaving and reentering the country (e.g. during a trip to neighboring countries like Sweden).

## 3. Accommodation (student residence hall, private apartment)

Most of the exchange students apply for an apartment in the "student village", an area solely dedicated to housing for students, both from Finland and other countries. The houses for ERASMUS students typically feature three stories, each with 12 apartments and a rather large common kitchen that is regularly cleaned by the housekeeping staff. However, the tidiness of the kitchen still mostly depends on the inhabitants, so your experience may vary.

The rooms themselves each feature a bathroom with a shower and have an own refrigerator. Apart from that, they are only equipped with the most basic furniture like a bed, a desk and a chair which is certainly nothing special but has to be expected in a student dormitory. In order to survive the first few days, students can obtain a "starting package" consisting of basic necessary items like a blanket, a pot, flatware etc.

Although the student village is located not very centrally, the inner city is still in walking distance and fairly well-connected by several bus lines.

## 4. Study at the host university (Courses / Timetable)

The University of Turku offers a wide variety of courses, both on the bachelor and the master level. Even though quite some courses are held in Finnish, there's also a sufficient number of courses available in English, especially on more advanced levels. The academic year is divided into two semesters (just like in Germany) each of which is again divided into two periods. The course register usually indicates in which period a given course takes place (periods I + II = winter semester, periods III + IV = summer semester) which should be taken into account when planning your studies.

The level of teaching especially in the advanced courses is very much comparable to Germany and the exams require a decent amount of prior reading and learning. Grading is generally fair but achieving excellent grades is definitely more work-intensive than in certain other countries.

5. Support service at the host university (International Office, Department)

One of the positives about Turku is the tutoring program for exchange students that assigns a tutor for each foreign student. While I have only had positive experiences with my tutor, the degree of engagement of a tutor will naturally vary from person to person. However, it is not very hard to get in contact with other tutors that will provide help if you need it, like e.g. picking up the starting package prior to your arrival.

The staff at the International Office is very helpful and competent, just like the vast majority of university employees. Unlike in other countries, you will also very rarely have to deal with someone who is not fluent in English which effectively eliminates the language barrier.

6. Language courses at the host university (charges or fees required)

As previously noted, most Finns are fluent in English or can at least have a basic conversation in the language so there is no immediate need to learn Finnish. If you wish to do so, however, the University of Turku offers various beginners and advanced courses. Apart from these regular, graded courses, there is also a "survival course" that covers the most basic topics and is extracurricular. It should be noted that the number of students that can be accepted for each course is limited and interested students should decide and apply quickly.

7. Facilities at the host university (library, computer pool, etc.)

The facilities of the University of Turku are fairly modern and include a library, several computer rooms with rather well-equipped workstations for students and temporary workstations near the printers that can be used only for a short period of time, e.g. to print documents. The university facilities except the libraries can be accessed even outside of the normal opening hours with a special key every student can obtain.

8. Finances & Spare time activities (sight seeking, cost of living, bank, mobile phone, jobs)

The cost of living in Finland is generally higher than in Germany which encompasses pretty much everything including groceries, beverages and rents. Having a Finnish bank account is not really necessary as there are ATMs at every corner and it is very common to pay absolutely everything with a credit card. This means, as long as you have a card that allows you to withdraw money free of charge or a credit card you can use abroad, there is no need to go through the hassle of opening a new bank account. However, it is very useful to get a Finnish mobile phone number (e.g. a prepaid card from DNA) as it is required to pay for the washing machines in the student village, among other things.

As far as spare time activities go, it has to be noted that the city of Turku has relatively few things to offer. There are no real sights to speak of (except for maybe the castle) and the nightlife is as buzzing and diverse as you would expect it to be from a city of this size. However, especially in areas like the student village, there are always private gatherings and parties organized by students. Moreover, due to the relative proximity to Helsinki, Stockholm, St. Petersburg and the Baltic countries, it offers the perfect opportunity to travel and get to know new places.

9. Conclusion (best and worst experience)

All in all, Turku is an ideal destination for students that are looking for a place with a relative cultural similarity to Germany and an almost non-existent language barrier. It is also a good place to advance with one's studies as the quality of teaching is generally at least on par with Germany.

However, students thinking about coming to Turku should be aware of the cost of living, environmental aspects as the harsh winter and the lack of sunlight especially in December and January. Moreover, the city itself probably is not the most exciting place on earth so you will have to make your stay worthwhile yourself.

#### 10. Important contact persons and links

- Housing: <http://www.tys.fi/en>
- Curricula guides: <https://nettiopsu.utu.fi/opas/index.htm?lang=en&uiLang=en>
- University homepage: <http://utu.fi>

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Signature: