

THE CAREER DISPATCH

INSIGHTS ON HIGHER EDUCATION IN SOUTH ASIA



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Study in Finland

Explore opportunities in one of the best higher education markets in the world

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Introduction

South Asia is a huge market for higher education institutes given the region's vast population and the developing nature of its economies. The region is the second largest in terms of student enrollments and accounts for 18% of all tertiary education students globally as per data provided by the World Bank. While the governments of these nations are involved in the development of primary education, it is the private sector that is a dominant force in the sphere of higher education in the region.

In India and Nepal, private education institutes, including universities, colleges, and stand-alone institutions, account for over 65% of higher education enrollment; in Bangladesh and Afghanistan, the share is over 40%; and in Pakistan and Sri Lanka, private HEIs cover 20% of all enrolment.

The top seven countries chosen by South Asian students are the USA, UK, Australia, Canada, New Zealand, Germany, and China. But students are now also choosing many alternate destinations like Turkey, Ireland, and Russia for various reasons.

IN THIS ISSUE

The demand for **STEM** courses from South Asia remains unrelenting. **FINLAND**, the happiest country in the world is our country in focus. We discuss its prowess in higher education and the **opportunities for post-study employment**.



The charm of STEM courses

STEM is the popular acronym for Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics. STEM courses are high in demand by students from India and South Asia, given the ever-evolving nature of technological advancements and their increasing impact on jobs and economies.

- Jobs in STEM-related fields in India have witnessed an increase by 44% between 2018-2021.
- STEM graduates gain expertise in wide areas of study and use this skillset in non-STEM fields of occupation as well.
- Jobs in STEM-related fields pay better remuneration on an average, further boosting their charm among students.
- Technological advancements necessitated by the pandemic and the Digital India drive of the government has fuelled interest in

technologies like robotics and artificial intelligence. The wave of rising entrepreneurship has further led to increasing interest in these courses.

- Engineering courses are the most in-demand STEM courses among Indian students at 18%. This is closely followed by Computer Science at 12%.
- Globally, out of the total students applying for STEM courses, 70% are interested in Mathematics, Computer Science, and Engineering.



Popular STEM courses among international students

- Physical and life sciences
- Engineering
- Computer science
- Mathematics
- Healthcare
- Agriculture

Popular destinations for STEM courses

STEM courses are one of the top-ranked courses offered by many higher education institutes (HEIs) around the world. Due to their wide-reaching implications, these courses are in high demand in many industries and consequently many internship opportunities are available to students.

Popular destinations to pursue a degree in STEM include the US, UK, Canada, and Australia, while newer entrants to the field



United States of America

- The US remains one of the top destinations for students seeking foreign education in STEM-related fields. At 12,714, India had the second highest number of international STEM students in the US in 2020-21.
- The US offers more than 400 STEM courses to international students. Among the popular STEM courses are Computer Science, Biomedical Science, Mathematics and Statistics, Nuclear Engineering, Aerospace Engineering, and Petroleum Engineering.
- The Optional Training Program (OPT) in the US allows students the opportunity to stay back and work in the US for a year, something that is in huge demand by students from India and South Asia. Additionally, students who have pursued a STEM degree from the US can extend their OPT duration by two years
- Post-study work opportunities in STEM in the US are one of the biggest draws for students. The average annual salary is about \$127,000 and international workers account for more than 17% of the STEM-workforce in the US.
- Many US universities continuously feature in the top 10 positions in rankings of higher education institutes. MIT, Stanford, and University of California, Berkeley ranked 1st, 5th, and 9th respectively in the 2022 QS World University rankings in engineering and technology.
- The average tuition fees for STEM courses in the US is \$50,100. While the market in South Asia remains price-sensitive, the quality of education offered by US universities leads to students choosing long term benefits of STEM degrees over affordability.



United Kingdom

- The UK ranks a close second as a study destination for STEM courses after the US, with 54% of the country's output categorised as world-leading—higher than the US, Canada, Germany, Japan, and Brazil.
- The Graduate Immigration Route (GIR) has been a brilliant proposition for international students to stay and work in the UK post studies for up to two years (three years for Ph.D. students). Its reintroduction in 2021 has led to a spike in students choosing the UK: a total of 90,669 Indians were issued UK student visas in the 12 months ending in September 2021, marking a 102% rise from 2020.
- The UK is also India's second-largest research partner for science and innovation. Between 2008 and 2021, a total investment of about GBP 400 million was made between the two nations.
- The UK offers multiple scholarship options for STEM applicants. Scholarships like those for women in STEM have high relevance for students from India, with nearly 43% of the total graduates in STEM being women.

Canada

- Canada has fast caught up with leading STEM destinations like the US in the past few years and has emerged as one of the most appealing destinations.
- Five Canadian universities were ranked among the top 100 in the world in the fields of Computer Science, Engineering, and Medicine by the 2022 Times Higher Education World University Rankings.
- A comparatively lower cost of education also adds to Canada's allure. With international undergraduate fees averaging around US\$25,800 in Canada—cheaper than the US' average cost of around US\$50,000—Canada draws many Indian students to its universities.
- Canada also is a leading destination for international students due to its visa and immigration policies. Many students from India aim at working in their destination country after studies and settling down with permanent resident status. Canada's Post-Graduation Work Permit (PGWP) is an important step in that direction. Between 2016-19, the number of Indian students who obtained PR status in Canada grew by 105%.



Country In Focus FINLAND

Students from South Asia have generally preferred countries like the US, UK, Canada, and Australia for higher education. But in the last decade, many other countries have risen in preference, including Finland. The **'Happiest Country in the World'** (as per the UN's World Happiness Report) offers a mix of rich culture and technological acumen to young learners from around the world.

Apart from being a prominent study destination for STEM courses, Finland is known for its education system that puts a lot of emphasis on equality, innovation, collaboration, and communication. The ethos of curiosity and practical problem-solving approach is ingrained from the school level and is evident in the higher educational institutes as well.

Indian students are increasingly choosing Finland for STEM courses, and popular universities include the likes of Aalto University, University of Helsinki, University of Turku, University of Tampere, and the University of Oulu.

Finland has 2 types of higher education institutes – universities (13) and universities of applied sciences (22), with the former focusing on scientific research and the latter offering professionally oriented higher education.

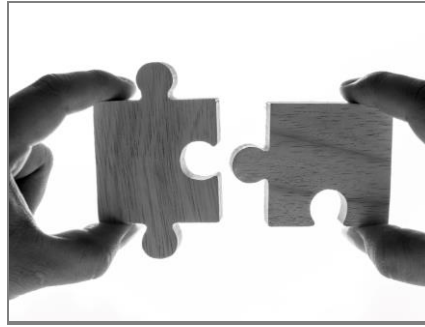


Why Finland leads in STEM education



STEM as part of educational curriculum

STEM is part of the education system in Finland from an early stage. The problem-solving approach of STEM is deployed in education from the school stage, and the government funds 90% of schools that offer STEM as part of the basic compulsory education. STEM education is available in universities, polytechnics, and in adult education programs.



Collaboration, Enquiry, and Communication

Finnish education system encourages open communication between the students and faculty to enhance learning.

The practice to work with all stakeholders is inculcated and problem-solving is given a global perspective where international students can relate their learnings to problem areas in their countries.



Courses widely available in English

Despite English not being the official language, the Nordic country offers more than 400 bachelor's and master's degree programs in English throughout its 35 universities and universities of applied sciences.

Specialty degree programmes are popular among international students, including STEM and business administration.

Post-study work opportunities

The Finnish economy is well-known for its innovative ecosystem and booming startup space. The Finnish ICT and gaming industries are among the pioneers in the world and there exist multiple employment opportunities for STEM graduates.

According to the European Skills Index 2020, Finnish people have the best opportunities in Europe to develop their skills at work. One out of 11 people in Finland is employed in the high-tech economy, which covers advanced manufacturing as well as services like the ICT or finance sectors.

The employment growth average in Finland between 2020-2030 is estimated at 6,976. With researchers and engineers figuring in the top 3 occupations in 2020, there is immense scope for STEM graduates to land promising jobs.

STUDENT SPEAK

Student Speak is a special segment where we talk to South Asian students studying in different parts of the world and understand their journeys in foreign lands.

In this issue, we speak with Atharv Agarwal, a student at Aalto University, Finland. Atharv, who hails from Saharanpur in the state of Uttar Pradesh, is a final year M.Sc. Mechanical Engineering student, currently residing in Espoo in Finland. Edited excerpts:



How would you describe your experience as an international student in Finland right from applying to universities to adjusting to a new educational system?

Transitioning from the Indian education system to Finnish was seamless. The admission process is quite straightforward where there is just one portal for all colleges and courses. The best part is that there is no application fees for applying to Finnish universities. The visa process is also really simple, and you don't need consultants or major documents while applying for a residence permit.

Once you reach here it's very easy to gel in with the education system. Professors are very approachable, and hierarchy is almost negligible.

While everyone has a personal opinion about the course content, the curriculum is quite flexible wherein you are free to choose your subjects, including minors and majors.

While deciding on which country or university to choose, what were the top 3 factors that you considered, and how did Finland emerge as the top choice?

My top 3 factors were (a) Cost of tuition fees, (b) Course content, and (c) Living expenses. I personally got a full scholarship, so I didn't have to pay any tuition fees and the course curriculum was really interesting and matched my personal interests.

But as far as the IT/CS/automation/AI-ML fields are concerned there are plenty of job opportunities available and there is no language barrier since most of the employees are white-collar and can speak fluent English.

Do you plan to go for post-study work opportunities in Finland? If not, what options have you considered?

Yes, I definitely plan to go for work opportunities after my studies. Work-life balance is really good here plus you get a reasonable salary even as a fresher. As I mentioned earlier, the hierarchy is really flat, and you will feel very comfortable even when talking to a super senior.

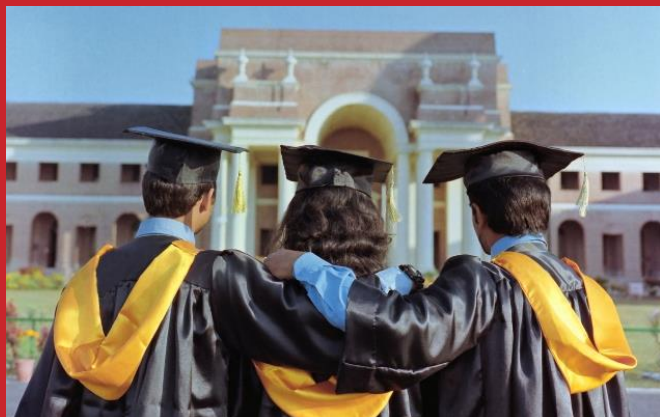
What would be your advice or suggestions to aspiring students from India looking to acquire STEM education from a foreign university?

It is worth coming to a foreign country and getting a STEM education as the challenges that you face make you stronger and more resilient. You get to meet people from varied backgrounds which helps in broadening your perspective as well as learning novel technologies.

Having said that, I would suggest gaining some industry experience in India after graduation, even if with a small organisation. This will give you an edge over other students while applying for jobs as companies really respect your work experience.

News and Updates

UK and India sign MoU on Mutual Recognition of Academic Qualifications



In July 2022, the UK and India signed a landmark agreement to mutually recognise each other's higher education qualifications, including maritime education, and a framework agreement on the health care workforce. The MoU was signed as part of the UK-India Enhanced Trade Partnership (ETP).

This MoU provides for mutual recognition of educational qualifications and duration of study undertaken by students within duly approved and recognized higher education institutions in the two countries.



Demand for part-time work set to rise among international students

In an ICEF Monitor survey of top agents across several markets, including Bangladesh, Nigeria, Nepal, and Pakistan, the increasing economic crisis in different parts of the world is adding to concerns about the cost of study among international students. Consequently, the ability to work during studies is currently even more important to many than post-study work opportunities.



QUB up 10 places in Complete University Guide league table

Queen's University Belfast has climbed 10 places to 24th position in the UK in this year's Complete University Guide league table. The university ranked 1st for Social Work (up seven places from last year), 1st for Agriculture and Forestry (retaining the top position), and 1st for Dentistry (up one place). Two subjects were ranked 2nd: IT & Systems and Pharmacology & Pharmacy.



Erasmus Mundus scholarships: India ranks #1 two years in a row

161 Indian students have received the prestigious Erasmus Mundus scholarships for the academic year 2022-23. This is the second time India has stood first among 167 countries.

The selected Indian students will get the opportunity to study in over 18 different European countries over a period of 2 years, and obtain double, joint, or multiple degrees.



UOW set to become 1st Australian uni with teaching base in India

An LoI has been signed between the University of Wollongong, New South Wales, and Gujarat International Finance Tec-City to establish a location for teaching, research, and industry engagement in GIFT City within a partnership or on a stand-alone basis.

The university aims to focus on finance, business, and STEM UG programs initially when it plans to commence in early September 2023.



IIT Madras aims at offshore campuses in Africa and South Asia

IIT Madras, which ranks among the topmost education institutes in India, is planning to open offshore campuses in several countries including Tanzania in Africa, Nepal, and Sri Lanka.

The institute is considering country-specific courses that have the potential of generating employment in these nations. Among the courses, artificial intelligence is in high demand in these countries.



GB Pant University of Agriculture debuts in QS world rankings 2023

Based in the Indian state of Uttarakhand, Govind Ballabh Pant University of Agriculture and Technology has become the only Indian agri varsity to feature in the QS world rankings 2023, with a rank of 361. It is among the 41 Indian educational institutes to make it to the list.

Much of the credit for this is being attributed to the National Agricultural Higher Education Project running in the university.

UK announces 75 scholarships for India Students in India's 75th year of independence



On the occasion of India celebrating 75 years of independence in 2022, the UK has decided to offer 75 scholarships to Indian students. These scholarships will be fully funded and offered to students starting college in the UK from September 2022.

The UK has partnered with leading businesses in India to offer these scholarships.

ABOUT T&A CONSULTING

INDIA & SOUTH ASIA EDUCATION REPRESENTATION SERVICES

T&A Consulting is an international consulting practice to government economic development organisations, higher education institutions (HEIs), and private businesses.

We specialise in developing and successfully executing market entry and growth strategies across the many markets in which we operate. As a global practice, we have a subsidiary in Canada and representative offices in Europe and the UK.

With a strong belief in the age-old adage “quality is the best business plan”, and going against the more traditional approach of representing multiple HEIs, we understand that HEIs want more than just a marketing function in-market. HEIs want to build sustainable brand recognition in the South Asia region, which is the fastest growing geography for international student mobility in the world.

Therefore, we made a deliberate choice to introduce a unique reward-based partner approach to a limited number of HEIs, ensuring each one of them has dedicated resources and the full support of our experienced marketing, representation, and admissions capabilities.



T&A CONSULTING | SERVICES

In Market and Operational Support

- Assistance in developing strategies and implementation of plans to recruit students in line with entry requirements.
- Management and reassessment of existing agents' network.
- Appointment of new agents in previously unexplored South Asian markets including Tier 2,3 and 4 cities in India.
- Maintenance of data on market specific changes, admission requirements and course information.
- Market Intelligence towards new interventions including new programmes, agent engagements and rewards and scholarships.



Get in touch with our University Engagement Manager



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Event Management & Logistics

- Design, schedule and implement physical and virtual events
- On-site logistics, AV equipment, catering, venue set-up
- Co-ordinate inter and intra city travel and transport



Industry Integration /Employability

- Development of Industry linkages to boost student work placements
- Partnerships with private companies with research and innovation centres to provide hands-on research experience to students



Marketing & PR Services

- Brand positioning and strategy development
- Social media strategy creation and implementation
- Managing social media platforms
- Designing advertising campaigns
- Strategic planning and execution of public relations initiatives



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