

## Recommendation for universities for including information literacy competency in the new degree structures

**Background:** *By information literacy we mean the ability: to recognise situations where information is needed; to search and locate information; and to critically and ethically evaluate and use the acquired information. In academic studies and professions, good information seeking and searching skills and information technology skills not only rationalise and accelerate work performance, but also raise the quality of work. Students with versatile information competencies speak of the high standard and competitiveness of degrees.*

*The Ministry of Education Development Plan for Education and Research 2003–2008<sup>1</sup> stresses the importance of the willingness of libraries to contribute to the development of teaching and study methods, and thus, on their part, to ensure that university and polytechnic graduates have good information literacy (p. 55). At the moment, the instruction in information literacy provided by university libraries reaches only a part of students and is not coordinate enough. The situation varies by university and discipline. While some universities are able to provide only a minimal amount of instruction in information literacy, some universities have progressed far beyond the present recommendation.*

*University libraries have launched a national project for the creation of an information literacy curriculum. This project is coordinated by the University of Helsinki and receives funding from the Ministry of Education from 2004 to 2006. The central aim of the project is to integrate information literacy as part of academic studies. Information literacy frequently features in the stated strategies of universities, but in practice, the integration of information skills as part of studies requires common standards and financial resources also for the instruction provided by libraries. The universities may decide on the practical implementation of the information literacy curriculum themselves.*

*The purpose of the information literacy curriculum below is to define the central elements of information literacy and assist in the development of the contents of courses in information skills. The recommendation describes the minimal level of objectives in information literacy. The integration of the recommended curriculum in the study*

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<sup>1</sup> Available in English at <http://www.minedu.fi/julkaisut/koulutus/2004/opm08/opm08.pdf>

*programmes of all Finnish universities would greatly enhance the comparability of degrees and the transferability of credits from one university to another.*

## **Information literacy curriculum**

Steering group for the information literacy curriculum project, 4 June 2004. Further information available from the steering group secretary, Anne Lehto, Planning Officer, tel. (09) 191 23958, [anne.ma.lehto@helsinki.fi](mailto:anne.ma.lehto@helsinki.fi).

**Objectives:** The student will be able to access and use effectively the information he or she needs, which is a prerequisite for learning to learn and completing an academic degree. When leaving the university, the student will have the information competencies required by professional life and lifelong learning.

The objective of the information literacy curriculum is that graduates from the university will meet the international information literacy competency standards,<sup>2</sup> according to which an information literate individual is able to:

1. determine the scope of information needed,
2. access the information needed effectively and efficiently,
3. evaluate information and its sources critically and incorporate the new information into his or her existing knowledge base,
4. use information effectively in his or her studies and work, and
5. understand the economic, legal and social issues pertaining to the use of information, and access and use information ethically and legally.

## **Course descriptions:**

### **I New students: Basics in information literacy**

**Timing of courses:** initial stage of studies.

**Scope:** 1-2 credits (ECTS, European Credit Transfer System).

**Unit responsible for the provision of courses:** depending on the university, the faculty or other equivalent unit. The courses will be part of compulsory general studies, e.g. part of ICT studies.

**Practical implementation:** libraries.

**Previous studies:** it is recommended that students have basic ICT skills.

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<sup>2</sup> The international standards for information literacy competency are based on the *Information Literacy Competency Standards for Higher Education*, issued in 2000 by the American Library Association, available at <http://www.ala.org/ala/acrl/acrlstandards/standards.pdf>

**Contents:** basics of information access, basic competencies for successful studies:

- general presentation of information sources and organisation of information
- basics of information access and search
- the use of publications and services needed in studies
- basics of the assessment of the reliability of materials and the ethical use of information

## **II Bachelor's level studies: Information literacy in intermediate level studies**

**Timing of courses:** proseminar/ Bachelor's thesis seminar.

**Scope:** 1-2 credits (ECTS, European Credit Transfer System).

**Unit responsible for the provision of courses:** depending on the university, e.g. the student's home department.

**Practical implementation:** the module will be compulsory and integrated into the proseminar/ Bachelor's thesis seminar; cooperation between the seminar supervisor and library will be of the utmost importance.

**Contents:** systematic acquisition of information and making use of one's information competencies in the writing of the thesis:

- primary sources of information in one's field, organisation of information
- conceptual organisation of one's information needs
- search methods, systematic search processes and retrieval strategies
- comprehensive search for information on the research topic, analysis of the process and results
- introduction into the reference practices and standards of the field, tools for bibliography management and their use in the production of academic texts
- deeper insight into the assessment of the reliability of materials and the ethical use of information

## **III Master's level studies: Information literacy in advanced level studies**

**Timing of courses:** Master's thesis seminar or equivalent stage

**Scope:** 1-2 credits (ECTS, European Credit Transfer System)

**Unit responsible for the provision of courses:** depending on the university, e.g. the student's home department.

**Practical implementation:** the module will be compulsory and integrated into the Master's thesis seminar; cooperation between the seminar supervisor and library will be of the utmost importance.

**Contents:** systematic acquisition of information and making use of one's information competencies in the writing of the thesis:

- deeper insight into the information sources of one's field, updating the knowledge of the primary sources of information in the field
- determination of the need for information on the research topic, conceptual organisation of one's information needs
- search methods, systematic search processes and retrieval strategies, revision
- comprehensive search for information on the research topic, analysis of the process and results
- deeper insight into the reference practices and standards of the field, tools for bibliography management and their use in the production of academic texts