

MEAE brochures • 3/2017

Study leave



Ministry of Economic Affairs
and Employment of Finland



Study leave

The study leave system provides employees with a flexible chance for studying. The right to study leave is based on the Study Leave Act (273/1979). The Act applies to persons in contractual employment relationships and public-service employment relationships as well as to persons in comparable service relationships (hereinafter referred to as employment relationship). The employee's employment relationship continues during study leave. By contrast, the employee does not receive any pay during study leave, unless otherwise agreed in the relevant collective agreement or between the employer and the employee.

Ministry of Economic Affairs and Employment
Labour and Trade Department
Seija Jalkanen
P.O. 32, 00023 FI-00023 GOVERNMENT
Tel. +358 29 516 001
www.tem.fi

MEAE brochures 3/2017

Layout: MEAE, february 2017

1 Right to study leave

An employee has the right to take study leave for at most two years during a period of five years, if his or her full-time employment relationship with the same employer has lasted for at least one year in one or more periods.

If the employment relationship has lasted for less than a year but at least three months, the employee is entitled to take study leave for a maximum of five days.

Study leave can be taken in one or more periods. The leave can also be arranged so that the employee is part of the working day at work and part of the working day on study leave.

A student in apprenticeship training is not entitled to take study leave.

2 What kind of studies can study leave be used for?

Study leave can be used for

- studies subject to public supervision (also abroad), and
- under certain conditions, trade union studies and training for farmers

Training or studies accepted as grounds for study leave may include

- attending lectures or other class sessions
- guided practical training in accordance with a personal study plan
- preparing for an examination or final project; however for no more than ten working days immediately before the examination or project
- full-time guided self-study for a degree or thesis
- participation in an examination

3 Applying for and granting study leave

Study leave is always based on the employee's application. A written application for study leave of more than five working days must be submitted to the employer at least 45 calendar days before the beginning of the studies. Study leave for a maximum of five working days has to be applied for orally or in writing at least 15 calendar days before the studies begin, unless otherwise agreed on between the employer and the employee.

A study leave application must include information on

- the start and end date of the studies and study leave
- the form and objective of the education/training and studying
- whether the study leave will be used for completing training or studies that have been started during an earlier study leave
- the educational institution or another education provider
- in full-time guided self-study, a personal study plan approved by the student and the personal tutor teacher. The personal study plan indicates the degree or thesis aimed at as well as the duration of studies required.

If study leave is applied for more than five days, the employer must inform the employee about his or her decision in writing at least 15 calendar days before the beginning of the studies. In other cases, the employer must inform the employee about his or her decision at least seven days before the beginning of the studies.

4 Postponing study leave

The employer cannot deny study leave but has the right postpone it, if taking the leave would cause considerable harm to the employer's activities. The leave may be postponed for a maximum of six months at a time. If the employee intends to start studies that begin less frequently than every six months, the employer may postpone the beginning of the study leave to the beginning of the following study period at the most.

The employer is also entitled to postpone study leave in cases where less than six months have elapsed since the employee's previous study leave and the purpose of the leave is not to complete studies that have been started during the previous leave.

In companies with five or more employees, the employer has the right to postpone the start date of study leave only twice in a row. In companies with four employees or less, the number of postponements is not restricted by law. In both cases, the requirement for the postponement is that the study leave would be significantly detrimental to the employer's activities.

An employee has the right to postpone the use of a study leave of more than five days, unless this would cause serious harm to the employer. An employee may apply for the postponement of study leave for a maximum of one year at a time. The application must be made in writing. If an employee does not want to use study leave granted to him or her, the employee must inform the employer of this in writing at least two weeks before the beginning of the study leave.

5 Interrupting study leave

An employee who has been granted study leave for more than 50 working days may interrupt the study leave and return to work. Study leave shorter than this cannot be interrupted. The employee must inform the employer about the interruption in writing at least four weeks before the intended return to work.

The employer is not obliged to take back an employee who is on study leave before the employment relationship of his or her possible substitute can be legally terminated. The employer must, without delay and in writing, inform the employee about his or her decision on the interruption of the study leave and about the date when the employee can return to work.

6 Benefits based on employment relationship during study leave

The employee is not entitled to receive any pay during study leave. The employee earns annual holiday during a maximum of 30 study leave days per holiday credit year. In order for the employee to earn annual holiday, he or she must return to work as soon as the study leave ends.

Study leave reduces the amount of pension, as no salary or wages are paid during the leave. The period without pay may affect for example the time entitling to pension, pensionable earnings and the projected pensionable service. Further information on the effects of study leave on pension benefits is available at the Finnish Centre for Pensions and Keva.

The employer does not have the right to terminate an employment relationship because the employee has applied for or used study leave. However, being on study leave does not prevent termination, if there are legal grounds for it.

7 Subsistence during study leave

An employee may be entitled to receive financial assistance during study leave.

The purpose of adult education allowance granted by the Education Fund is to support employees' voluntary studies. The Education Fund and the Social Insurance Institution of Finland (Kela) provide further information on the benefits available for students.



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