

Structure of the Master of Police Services programme, advancing in studies and the competences produced by studies 2026–2028



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1 Studies leading to a degree

According to Section 4 Government Decree on the Police University College (282/2014), “the Police University College coordinates and organises studies leading to a degree in the form of study modules focusing on a task requiring professional expertise in the field of internal security and its development. The studies and the related teaching activities are organised into study units. Study units are compulsory, alternative or elective. The degree curriculum defines at least the objectives of each study unit, the subject matter to be discussed, the scope in credits, the amount of teaching and practical training, and the required study tasks.”

This document describes, at a general level, the structure of the Master of Police Services degree (120 credits) and the advancement of studies as well as other recommendations and policies that guide curriculum work. On 11 December 2024, the Board of the Police University College approved the module-based curriculum for the Master of Police Services programme for 2026–2028 (POL-2025-3969).

2 Striving for professional excellence

Police officers are expected to possess multifaceted expertise that is based on the generally accepted values and codes of conduct of police work. The objective of the Police University College is to provide higher education in internal security, based on cultural knowledge and research conducted in the field. The studies provided by the College have been designed for those aiming for specialist and leadership positions, as well as for supporting each student’s professional growth and lifelong learning objectives. Additionally, the Police University College conducts applied research and development work which supports the planning and development of policing and internal security, as well as teaching at the Police University College.

Students who complete the Master of Police Services programme will obtain a Master’s degree in Policing. The general objective of the degree is for the student to acquire:

- wide and in-depth knowledge of policing required in the development of professionalism, and the theoretical knowledge for acting in demanding expert and leadership positions in the field
- an in-depth understanding of policing, the status of a police officer in working life, and the readiness to monitor and analyse research data and professional practices in the field of policing
- a readiness for life-long learning and continuous development of one’s own professional skills
- the good communications skills required in working life
- the skills and readiness required by international interaction and professional activities.

The Master of Police Services degree is based on the requirements of working life and provides the student with new expertise necessary for developing the professionalism required in the leadership, supervisory, developmental, and expert tasks in the field of policing. The student is also provided with the readiness to obtain, process, and apply research data in their own work and its development. The studies also reinforce the international readiness of the students.

3 Competency-based curriculum

The curricula of the Police University College focus on professional competence. A competency-based curriculum defines the learning outcomes of the related degree and degree studies, i.e. what the student must know and understand as a result of the learning process. The evaluation process, which is based on a predetermined set of learning outcomes, focuses on learning achievements. For more information on the Police University College's evaluation principles, see the College's Degree Regulations.

Factors that guide teaching and study include the goal-oriented development of competence, strengthening the aspects of learning and building modules that reflect day-to-day professional work.

Competency-based characteristics include (Alaniska ym. 2019) ¹:

- The student's self-assessment plays an important role in their study path.
- Competence is recognised and acknowledged regardless of where, when or how it was acquired.
- The training follows personalised and individual study paths.
- The teacher plays a strong role as an instructor and identifier of individual competence.
- The curriculum consists of competence areas that are relevant to working life.
- Each competence area includes student-oriented learning outcomes.
- Clear assessment criteria have been defined for the learning outcomes.
- If the skills are insufficient for the learning outcomes, competence can be acquired and complemented in different ways.
- All competence is assessed in a continuous and versatile manner and by multiple evaluators.

4 The competence of graduates

The operational environment of the police is increasingly complex and internal security requirements are constantly increasing. International cooperation in the security sector also requires increasingly versatile leadership skills from the police. Master of Police Services degree studies support professional growth and expertise related to the student's leadership skills. Another goal is to improve the student's understanding of changes and requirements in the operational environment of the police as well as their leadership and specialist role as a maintainer and developer of internal security.

The core competences of the degree are extensive entities that form the student's professional expertise and the core of the programme. Expertise consists of professional leadership skills in police work and general competences. Together, they create the basis for functioning at work, for collaboration and the development of the student's leadership skills and specialist skills.

¹ Alaniska, Hanna, Keurulainen Harri, Tauriainen Tiia-Mariia (eds.) 2019. Osaamisperustaisia käytäntöjä korkeakouluissa. Research and development publications of Oulu University of Applied Sciences, ePooki 58/2019.

Level 7 of the European Qualification Framework (EQF) and the national qualifications framework as well as the shared competences of universities of applied sciences have been applied in the competence descriptions of the curriculum of the Master of Police Services programme. The competences describe the skill level of a student graduating with a university of applied sciences degree.

Additionally, fundamental and human rights, interaction, scientific thinking, knowledge management and preventive action are taken into account in the implementation of studies as cross-cutting themes. The curriculum work is guided by the pedagogical and RDI policies of the Police University College.

4.1 European and national qualification frameworks

The European Qualifications Framework (EQF) and National Framework for Qualifications and Other Competence (NQF) classify degrees to certain requirement levels on the basis of competence. Finland observes the EQF requirement level classification. The Act (93/2017) and Decree (120/2017) on the Framework for Qualifications and Other Learning Modules define the requirement levels of degrees, courses and other extensive learning modules.

For each requirement level, the Act specifies the knowledge, understanding and capabilities of a student who has attained the level. These requirement level descriptions are applied to the work of the Police University College, creation of competence profiles, and the evaluation of competence.

In the national qualification framework, level 7 and the shared national competences describe the level of competence of graduates of universities of applied sciences. The aim is to integrate the level descriptions and general competences with the objectives of the curricula. Achieving these objectives is also assessed as part of the normal assessment of competence associated with the learning process.

Level 7 - Postgraduate degrees from universities of applied sciences and university degrees

- Understands comprehensive and highly specialised concepts, methods and knowledge corresponding to the specialised competence in his/her field, which are used as the basis for independent thinking and/or research.
- Understands issues that are at the interface between his/her field and different fields and evaluates them and new knowledge critically.
- Solves demanding problems, also creatively, in research and/or innovation, which develop new knowledge and procedures and applies and combines knowledge from various fields.
- Works independently in demanding expert tasks of the field and in international co-operation or as an entrepreneur.
- Manages and develops complex, unpredictable and new strategic approaches.
- Manages things and/or people.
- Evaluates the activities of individuals and groups.
- Accumulates knowledge and practices in his/her field and/or takes responsibility for the development of others.
- Has the ability for lifelong learning.
- Considers communal and ethical aspects when dealing with different people in learning and working communities and other groups and networks.

- Communicates to a good standard verbally and in writing in his/her mother tongue both to audiences in the field and outside it.
- Communicates and interacts in the second national language and is capable of demanding international communication and interaction in his/her field in at least one foreign language.

Source: Government Decree (120/2017) on the framework for qualifications and other learning modules.

4.2 General and professional competences

The general and professional competences provided by the training programme follow the national framework for qualifications and other learning modules and correspond to reference level 7.

The objective of the Master of Police Services degree is to develop abilities which the students will need in the society of the future. The general capabilities for the working life create the basis for the student's ability to function and collaborate at work and to develop the student's specialist skills. The general competences are learning to learn, ethics, operating in a workplace, sustainable development, internationality and multiculturalism, and proactive development.

In policing, professional expertise contains special vocational skills in policing, acquired during the programme. The professional competence areas in policing are specialist competence, supervisory competence and investigation development competence.

4.2.1 General competences

General competences are extensive competence modules that describe proficiency and the ability to perform in professional tasks. These modules contain shared expertise areas for various degree programmes, but their specific features and importance may vary in different occupations and positions. The general competences create the basis for functioning in working life, for collaboration and the development of the student's specialist skills.

Learning to learn

The graduating student promotes their own and their community's continuous learning and competence development, drawing on knowledge from different fields and the opportunities of digitalisation.

- Is able to assess and develop their expertise diversely and in a goal-oriented manner at different stages of their career and life.
- Is able to acquire, critically assess and produce information while taking into account the perspectives of different fields.
- Is able to develop and manage goal-oriented, continuous learning in their community.

Ethics

The graduating student assesses and promotes the realisation of ethical principles and values of their field of profession, taking equality and non-discrimination into account.

- Is able to promote ethically sustainable activities and the realisation of ethical reflection in their different operating environments.
- Promotes the realisation of the ethical principles and values of their field.
- Makes decisions taking individual, communal and societal perspectives into account.
- Promotes the realisation of diversity and accessibility.
- Implements the principles of responsible conduct of research and promotes their application in their work community.
- Is able to manage societally influential activities based on ethical values.

Operating in a workplace

The graduating student is able to develop and manage their work community and reforms working life.

- Is able to develop and manage multidisciplinary teams and work communities.
- Is able to develop the communication and interaction culture of work communities.
- Is able to develop and manage the comprehensive well-being of a work community.
- Utilises the opportunities of technology and digitalisation in development and management.
- Promotes the resilience of a work community.

Sustainable development

The graduating student develops and manages sustainable and responsible operating methods in their work and promotes sustainable change in their work community and society.

- Is able to apply the knowledge and future visions of sustainable development comprehensively as a basis for sustainable solutions.
- Is able to analyse and assess systemic dependencies of complex multidisciplinary problems and the different dimensions of solutions
- Is able to manage the search, implementation and establishment of sustainable solutions and operating models in their work community.

Internationality and multiculturalism

The graduating student is able to develop and manage multicultural and international operating environments and networks.

- Is able to develop operating methods that take multiculturalism into account in their work community.
- Is able to anticipate the impacts and opportunities of global development and phenomena.
- Is able to interact, communicate and develop activities internationally in their own field.

Proactive development

The graduating student is able to manage the development of new solutions that anticipate the future and produces new information using different research and development methods.

- Produces new information and reforms operating methods, combining competence in different fields.
- Is able to implement research, development and innovation projects and apply different research and development methods.

- Is able to develop new customer-oriented, sustainable and economically viable solutions, anticipating the future.
- Is able to analyse the current situation and anticipate the future of their field and changes in the operating environment.

4.2.2 Professional competences

A police officer graduating from the Master of Policing Degree programme is an expert in leadership and development, whose key professional areas of competence include:

Expert skills

The student

- is able to operate in demanding expert positions in the field of policing
- is able to operate in national and international cooperation networks
- is able to critically assess changes in society and anticipate their effects.

Leadership skills

The student

- understands the core principles of strategic thinking and leadership, financial and operational management, and intelligence-led policing
- masters the key practices of the operative leadership of policing
- is capable of leading in accordance with the principles of strategic personnel management and ethical leadership
- is able to develop and manage the operations and occupational safety of the working community, and promote well-being at work and competence in cooperation with the staff
- is able to develop the quality of work, work processes and structures of the police, and make ethically sustainable decisions in changing operating environments.

Investigation development competences

The student

- is able to develop policing work utilising theoretical and practical methods and to produce new information, and is familiar with the research and development methods belonging to the degree level
- is able to assess the starting points of research, development, and innovation operations, and understand the importance of ethics in the operations
- is able to innovate and lead projects and assess their impact.

4.3 Cross-cutting themes

Fundamental and human rights

Fundamental rights defined in the Constitution and human rights defined in international treaties affect all actions of the police. Their impacts are clearly visible in the regulation guiding police activities. The rule of law determines that all exercise of public power must be based on laws, and the laws must be strictly observed in all public activities.

As a public authority, the police can legally intervene significantly in individual interests and rights in certain situations. However, applying laws is not a mechanical activity; instead, it always involves different situations requiring deliberation and consideration. It is also necessary for the police to consider the significance of fundamental and human rights when making decisions and justifying them so that the end result is materially correct, fair and reasonable.

Interaction

Interaction competence is a key part of the work of the police and leadership communications. In productive leadership, interaction competence and communication skills are emphasised. Communication and interaction can be verbal or non-verbal, and listening skills are important. Interaction skills are, above all, an ability to be an effective and appropriate communicator.

The police must also be able to investigate different situations through argumentation, conflict management and, for example, by adapting their communication. Leadership communications and interaction skills and reflecting on them help the student succeed in their studies and at work.

Scientific thinking

Scientific thinking is needed in all decision-making in society. Scientific thinking combines general competences and professional skills. Scientific thinking emphasises rational, systematic and analytic qualities. Scientific thinking requires reasoning and problem-solving skills and the ability to assess matters from different perspectives.

When thinking scientifically, you understand the processes of producing information, which improves your skills in assessing the quality of information and its reliability. Examining different texts and materials and producing your own texts develop scientific thinking. Scientific thinking requires wondering, asking questions, finding new information and reassessing old ideas.

Intelligence-led approach

The constantly changing and evolving operational environment poses new challenges to the activities of the police organisation. Intelligence-led policing utilises analysed data in targeting the activities and combating crime. Knowledge management uses different techniques and practices to manage, analyse and utilise data.

The aim of knowledge management is to take sufficient data, different perspectives and options into account in decision-making concerning police activities. It requires factual situational awareness, phenomenon analyses and descriptions, knowledge, skills and understanding of the organisation's internal processes, as well as knowledge and understanding of the external operational environment and its changes. Intelligence-led policing is implemented in both strategic and operative leadership.

Preventive action

Finland's internal security is primarily based on prevention. From the viewpoint of the police, preventive action is related to everything the police do and what is done in the police services. The police carry out preventive work in surveillance and security operations, crime prevention and licence administration. It is a question of high-quality leadership work in the police. Cooperation

with other authorities, communities and residents is the most important method of the police in maintaining security and carrying out preventive action.

5 Pedagogic and RDI policies behind the curriculum

5.1 Pedagogic policies

Expertise in policing creates future security

We combine strong expertise in policing with higher education as well as the skills, knowledge and attitudes required by both. We educate experts in internal security and leadership who act ethically and learn continuously throughout their careers.

We use forward-looking education to meet the expectations directed at the police and respond to changes in the operational environment. We experiment boldly and try out new things. We encourage participation in the research and development of working life practices.

We build a common view of our education and ensure in-depth learning and well-being within the university college community. We support the ability to study and learn based on the principle of a constantly learning organization.

This is how we reach our goals

Forward-looking approach

- In the planning of our education, we utilize foresight information as well as information about the operational environment systematically.
- We develop learning outcomes, contents, teaching and evaluation methods and learning environments on the basis of research data and best practices.
- We strengthen compatibility with working life through personal rotation and other competence development practices.

A competent university college community

- We plan and implement education based on the principles of constructive alignment.
- We encourage everyone to think, act, investigate, and experiment creatively.
- We appreciate and support the continuous improvement of know-how and expertise.

Strong partnerships

- We are active in partnership networks within the fields of education and research and with various authorities that support teaching and studying.
- We develop our education and working life together with our partners.
- We offer diverse student and staff exchange programs and cross-institutional studies.

Social responsibility

- We implement our sustainable development goals and strengthen our competence in responsibility.
- We comply with the ethical principles of teaching, research, open science and the police.
- We support diverse ways of learning.

The principles of our education

Student-centricity

Students have an active role. We take the needs of diverse learners into consideration. We ensure a safe and confidential atmosphere. We promote learning by using diverse teaching methods, evaluation practices and both authentic and digital learning environments. We encourage feedback.

Collegiality

We study, teach and work in multiprofessional teams. Our education is based on co-teaching. We encourage sharing of skills and knowledge as well as experimentation with new methods. We are accountable for the welfare of ourselves and each other. We strengthen an interactive university college community together.

Competency-based curriculum

Our education is based on the national qualification framework. Our competency-based curricula ensure compliance with the standards of higher education, close cooperation with working life and the development of professional and general competencies.

Shared pedagogic management

We share pedagogic management. We promote cooperation and collegiality between actors. We support and guide the planning and development of education and everyday work in teaching. We manage competence to enable each individual, the team and the whole organization to learn, develop and reach their goals.

5.2 RDI policies

We produce research and innovations in a long-term way for the development of a safe and fair society. We are building a knowledge base for police education and police expertise. We are a distinguished and international university college and a project partner in the security sector.

This is how we reach our goals

Forward-looking approach

- We predict and analyse the development of the operating environment and higher education.
- We develop new ways to act by evaluating our own activities and learning from others.

A competent university college community

- We strengthen a research and development-oriented approach in education and policing.
- We increase the RDI competence of students and police staff in a versatile manner.

Strong partnerships

- We engage in targeted, cross-disciplinary and cross-professional cooperation.
- We utilize RDI activities to solve complex societal problems.

Social responsibility

- We commit to the principles of scientific freedom, open science and research, and research ethics.
- We increase societal impact by publishing and communicating in a versatile manner.

RDI activities are research, development and innovation activities, such as RDI projects, publications, analyses, theses and student projects. These also include service activities, export of knowledge, compilation and presentation of police history and the development of RDI environments.

6 Structure of the degree and advancement of studies

The curriculum provides an overall description of the degree and the required studies. The curriculum is approved by the Board of the Police University College.

Students who complete the Master of Police Services programme will obtain a Master's degree in Policing. The scope of the degree is 120 credits, and its target duration is two years. The degree consists of advanced professional studies (71 credits), practical training (10 credits), elective studies (at least 9 credits) and a thesis (30 credits).

The objective of the **advanced professional studies** is to give students an opportunity to deepen their skills in:

- applying theory in practice
- utilising data produced by analysis
- project management and participating in research and development work and
- social interaction.

The advanced professional studies also include a practical leadership training period, during which the student works in operative command duties under supervision. During the practical training period, the student will be assigned to a command position at a police department for a period of no less than eight weeks. In special cases, the practical training can be carried out in other command or expert duties.

The objective of the **thesis** is to develop the ability to apply research data and to show one's skills in using selected methods in analysing and solving problems, and to demonstrate readiness for independent, expert work.

Elective studies deepen and widen the student's competence through the Police University College's elective studies or university-level studies completed elsewhere.

This promotes the student's growth as a supervisor and specialist and is evaluated through various individual and group exercises throughout the degree.

Studies are advanced one module at a time and are completed in a specified order. There are five (5) modules before the practical training and two (2) modules after the practical training. The scope of one module is 15 credits, and it consists of several study units. Some of the study units continue in the next module, in which case the duration of the study unit is two (2) modules. The thesis study unit is located in modules 1–8.

Master of Police Services degree 120 cr

1. Academic year			
Module 1 Orientation to leadership studies2,5 cr HR management and occupational health and safety 7 cr Legal basis for leadership in policing (Modules 1–2)4,5 cr Thesis (Modules 1–8) 1 cr	Module 2 Public management – Strategy work 2 cr Intelligence-led policing as a leadership tool1,5 cr Legal basis for leadership in policing (Modules 1–2) .2,5 cr Development of operations 3 cr Introduction to leading an investigation (Modules 2–3) 3 cr Thesis (Modules 1–8) 3 cr	Module 3 Leading operative police field work 6 cr Introduction to leading an investigation (Modules 2–3) 2 cr Leading an investigation (Modules 3–4) 3 cr Thesis (Modules 1–8) 4 cr	Module 4 General and situational leadership 4 cr Leading information gathering and coercive measures (Modules 4–5) 2 cr Leading an investigation (Modules 3–4) 3 cr Elective studies 2 cr Thesis (Modules 1–8) 4 cr
2. Academic year			
Module 5 Leading information gathering and coercive measures (Modules 4–5) 4 cr Performance guidance and resource management. 3 cr Leading a demanding police operation situation (Modules 5–6) 3 cr Thesis (Modules 1–8) 5 cr	Module 6 Orientation to practical training2,5 cr Practical training 10 cr Leading a demanding police operation situation (Modules 5–6)1,5 cr Thesis (Modules 1–8) 1 cr	Module 7 Organisational security, standby planning and preparedness2,5 cr Special functions of an intelligence-led approach (Modules 7–8)1,5 cr Leading a serious crime investigation (Modules 7–8) 2 cr Thesis (Modules 1–8) 9 cr	Module 8 Special functions of an intelligence-led approach (Modules 7–8) 3 cr Leading a serious crime investigation (Modules 7–8) 2 cr Elective studies 7 cr Thesis (Modules 1–8) 3 cr

Figure 2 Degree structure of the Master of Police Services degree.

As a rule, the studies included in the preceding module must be completed successfully before advancing to the next module. Attendance is generally required in contact teaching and synchronous (online) teaching. More detailed information on hours required for attendance is provided in Moodle for each study unit.

The degree regulation of the Police University College provides more detailed guidance on the organisation of education, teaching and studies.

Students are assigned to Master of Police Services studies by their employee, and attendance is mandatory.