Education and training of primary/class teachers who specialize in teaching English as a foreign language, Faculty of Education, University of Lapland, Finland

Primary/class teacher education and training at the Faculty of Education, University of Lapland, is one of four degree programmes, the other three comprising Adult Education, Education and Media Education.

Primary/class teacher education and training at the University of Lapland, as at other Finnish universities, requires obtaining 300 ECTS (European Credit Transfer and Accumulation System). The period of studies is usually five years. Students are expected to earn a Bachelor’s degree over the first three years of their studies (180 ECTS) and the following Master’s degree (further 120 ECTS) in two years. Thus, a full time student is expected to obtain 60 ECTS a year, which equals 1600 hours of workload inclusive of all forms of studying such as contact teaching, individual work or teaching practice. Primary/class teacher pedagogical studies must comprise at least 60 ECTS out of the total 300 ECTS. Furthermore, 20 ECTS out of 60 ECTS earned for pedagogical studies must be awarded for teaching practice periods, all of which except field practice in Master’s degree studies (6 ECTS), must take place at the University of Lapland Teacher Training School. Thus, pedagogical studies combine theory and practice. The requirement of completing teaching practice at university teacher training schools holds for all universities.

Primary/class teachers teach children in the first six years of compulsory education provided they hold a Master’s degree (Master of Education), having majored in educational sciences at the faculty of education at a university. A Master’s degree programme includes studies in major and minor subjects, teaching practice and language studies. The focus is on pedagogical studies. The programme is finalized with a Master’s thesis. Fully qualified primary/class teachers provide teaching in many, if not all, curriculum subjects including English as a foreign language. Teaching of English usually extends from grades 3 to 6 at the lower level of basic education (Figure 1).

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**Figure 1. The Finnish System of Education**

Although, following recommendations of the Bologna Process, all Finnish universities adopted a two-cycle degree system in 2005, a Bachelor of Education degree has never been recognized as an adequate level of qualification for Finnish teachers. Thus, full teaching qualification must comprise a Master of Education degree. A Bachelor’s degree is, then, only a prerequisite for a Master’s degree. It is not uncommon that teachers, even in basic education, would hold one of postgraduate degrees: a pre-doctoral licentiate or a doctorate.

Primary/class teacher university education comprises pedagogical studies (Major studies) at three levels: basic, subject and advanced studies. Basic and subject studies belong to the Bachelor’s programme whereas advanced studies to Master’s programme (Figure 5). Primary/class teacher Bachelor’s degree studies at the University of Lapland include components depicted in Figure 2.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>BEd general studies</th>
<th>Introduction to teaching and learning 4 ECTS</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Language and Communication studies 12 ECTS</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>25 ECTS</td>
<td>(including Academic English Language Centre Courses 5 ECTS)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Foundation research methodology studies 9 ECTS</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Major subjects</td>
<td>Basic pedagogical studies 25 ECTS</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>60 ECTS</td>
<td>including Guided Orientation Practice 3 ECTS</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>3 weeks</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Pedagogical subject studies 35 ECTS</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>including Bachelor’s thesis (10 ECTS), Research methodology studies 8 ECTS</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Guided subject teaching practice 8 ECTS (6 weeks)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Integration to teaching profession</td>
<td>10 ECTS</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Didactic studies and Minor subject studies</td>
<td>Foundation and didactic studies</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>85 ECTS</td>
<td>including optional studies 60 ECTS</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>including the compulsory English didactics foundation course 3 ECTS</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>optional English course (3 ECTS) and optional CLIL course (3 ECTS)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>* the CLIL course is funded by a EU project and is taught in spring 2011 only</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Minor subject studies 1</td>
<td>25 ECTS</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>English (25 ECTS) can be one of the selected minor subjects</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>* English as a minor can be also selected within Master’s degree studies as Minor subject studies 2</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Figure 2. Primary/class teacher Bachelor’s degree studies at the Faculty of Education, University of Lapland. All components referring to English studies are shaded.

Academic English courses are taught by university language centres to students of all disciplines. They vary as to length and number of credits awarded. University faculties decide about the total amount of credits obtainable for language courses. Discrepancies in the number of credits attached to language courses by individual faculties may, to a certain degree, reflect faculties’ perceptions of the importance and need for language teaching at tertiary level. As can be seen in Figure 2, all students at the Faculty of Education are expected to complete 5 ECTS Academic English courses, which comprises Reading Comprehension 2 ECTS (CEFR B2)\(^1\) and Oral Skills 3 ECTS (CEFR B2). In addition, English Writing 3 ECTS and English: Academic Presentation Skills 3 ECTS can be selected as optional courses within either Bachelor’s or Master’s studies. Since those courses focus on skills needed in academic studies and are taught to all university students, they are not perceived as core courses in education of primary/class teachers who specialize in

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\(^1\) CEFR (the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages)
teaching English as a foreign language. However, they certainly improve students’ language skills. It should be noted that the majority of students entering class/primary teacher education and training have learnt English as their primary foreign language during basic and upper secondary education, which amounts to about 10 years of learning. However, the level of competence varies. It should also be noted that all compulsory, optional and specialist English courses are taught in native-speaker English and all course-related work is performed in English as well.

As regards English, the first compulsory course all prospective class/primary school teachers are expected to complete in their second year of study is the English didactics foundation course (3 ECTS). The course constitutes one component of a larger unit, which includes also Guided subject teaching practice (8 ECTS) and tutorials. The course is intensive and content-rich, and aims to provide students with foundations of teaching English as a foreign language. It also focuses on preparing students, in a basic way, to the Guided teaching practice in the following semester. The course can be successfully completed only if, in addition to active participation, students complete assignments (lesson observation and teaching portfolio) during the Guided subject teaching practice. After completing the course students should be able to demonstrate basic knowledge of the selected approaches to foreign language teaching and learning: e.g. task-based approach, lexical approach, theme teaching, project-based teaching, communicative approach, teaching integrated skills, teaching through stories. They should be also able to demonstrate knowledge of methods and techniques, including ICT-based methods, of teaching various language skills and language areas to children: reading, writing, listening, speaking, vocabulary, pronunciation and grammar. Students should also know how to present and practise the new language during a lesson. Students should be able to critically evaluate books and other teaching material. After the course students should be able to make a period and lesson plan, appropriate to age and curriculum, based on a book or a theme. During the course students study the basics of the following aspects: children vs. adults in learning foreign languages, basic foreign language lesson types, teaching various language skills, long-term, period and lesson planning, approaches to correction, motivating young learners, assessment and evaluation, ICT in foreign language teaching, selected concepts and terminology related to the language and teaching of a foreign language, and classroom management. Teaching and studying methods comprise lectures, seminars, tutorials, individual, pair, and group work, and written course work. The course is taught in the autumn semester and its completion is a prerequisite to participation in the Guided subject teaching practice in the following spring semester.

In addition to the English didactics foundation course (3 ECTS), it is recommended that students complete one of the optional courses before the Guided subject teaching practice in spring: a 3 ECTS English course. The course aims to improve students’ skills regarding pronunciation and grammar related to the primary school curriculum. The writing component consists of writing notes, messages and short letters. Course work emphasizes practical help with production of English sounds through assessing individual needs of students and minimal pairs practice. The content covers areas such as sounds in connected speech, word stress, and basics of phonetic transcription. Practice of grammar is related to the primary school curriculum. Writing focuses on skills needed in real-life situations and develops students’ awareness of mistakes through text correction. The course comprises teacher-led seminars with emphasis on group and whole-class practice as well as individual pronunciation practice with the teacher, amounting to at least one short session for each student.

Another optional course but available only in spring 2011 is a 3 ECTS course titled: Developing Communication Self-confidence in Young People through Content and Language Integrated Learning (CLIL). The course is financed through EU project funds and intended for in-service teachers in Lapland and also students in class/primary teacher education and training at the Faculty of Education, University of Lapland.

Having completed compulsory and recommended optional courses within 85 ECTS Didactic and Minor subject studies (Figure 2) students can commence the Guided subject teaching practice (8 ECTS). The practice period follows the first-year three-week Guided Orientation Practice (3 ECTS) and is the second compulsory practice out of four practice periods required for the full teacher qualification (Master’s degree). The Guided subject teaching practice lasts for six weeks. Students are expected to teach 24 lessons in 4 – 6 subjects, at least three lessons per subject. Since pupils for English classes can be divided into groups for at least one English lesson per week, students teaching English need to plan at least two lessons and teach at least three. Teaching includes period and lesson planning, preparation of teaching materials, actual teaching, reflection on teaching and evaluation. After every taught lesson students are given oral feedback from the teacher of English at school and peers observing a given lesson. The feedback is also given by the university lecturer in English didactics if present. University lecturers observe one to three lessons per student. During the Guided subject teaching practice students work in small groups and decide among themselves who teaches what subjects. All primary school subjects must be covered by a given group but individual students would teach a different combination of subjects. It follows that only a group of students, usually one third or one
fourth on the yearly intake, experiences teaching English. If the remaining students do not select English for their Minor subject studies 1 or Minor subject studies 2 (Figure 2) or do not teach English during their field practice or final practice (those practice periods belong to Master’s degree studies), they cannot experience teaching English throughout their studies, which can be regarded as a drawback of the existing teaching practice system.

Studies regarding English are intensified in students’ second and third year of study and extended to the fourth year. The third year of study comprises Minor subject studies (25 ECTS). English studies in the second year are summarized in Figure 3.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Aug</th>
<th>Sep</th>
<th>Oct</th>
<th>Nov</th>
<th>Dec</th>
<th>Jan</th>
<th>Feb</th>
<th>March</th>
<th>April</th>
<th>May</th>
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</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

English didactics foundation  
English (optional)  
CLIL (optional)  
Guided subject teaching practice

Figure 3. English studies intended for the second year students in primary/class teacher education and training at the Faculty of Education, University of Lapland.

The structure of English studies is flexible and first year students may be already completing some of the core courses. Likewise, second year students may participate in some English courses intended for the third year students. Although requirements for obtaining Bachelor’s and Master’s degrees render Minor subject studies 1 and Minor subject studies 2 as separate, in practice they may be taken in parallel. Indeed, as stated above, English specialist courses, or English Minor subject studies (25 ECTS), are intended for both third year (Bachelor’s studies) and fourth year (Master’s studies) students.

In spring semester of the second year of study students commit themselves to Minor subject studies. English Minor subject studies (25 ECTS) comprise 8 courses:

- **Oral Skills** (5 ECTS) 60 h
- **Children’s Literature** (3 ECTS) 30 h
- **Grammar and Writing** (3 ECTS) 30 h
- **Phonetics and Pronunciation** (5 ECTS) 60 h;
- **Introduction to the Study of Language** (2 ECTS) 20 h
- **English Didactics** (4 ECTS) 40 h
- **Communicative Materials** (2 ECTS) 20 h
- **British Culture** (1 ECTS) 10 h

All courses are taught courses and comprise assignments including individual study (reading), writing and oral presentations. 1 ECTS usually corresponds to 10 h of contact teaching and further individual work. Three of the above courses focus on developing language proficiency: Oral Skills, Grammar and Writing and Phonetics and Pronunciation. However, as all eight courses are taught in native-speaker English and students do assignments and take tests in English, they develop their language skills in each of the courses listed. The schedule for English minor is depicted in Figure 4. Abbreviated course descriptions are in Attachment 1.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>spring</th>
<th>2011</th>
<th>2012</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| 2nd year | • Grammar and Writing  
 • Phonetics and Pronunciation 2  
 • Introduction to the Study of Language  
 • Communicative Materials  
 • British Culture |

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>autumn</th>
<th>2011</th>
<th>2012</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| 3rd year | • Oral Skills  
 • Phonetics and Pronunciation 1  
 • Children’s Literature  
 • English Didactics * |

*the LAST course taken in English Minor subject studies

Figure 4. Recommended selection of English Minor studies (25 ECTS) in primary/class teacher education and training at the Faculty of Education, University of Lapland.
As can be seen in Figure 4, six out of eight English Minor courses are taken during the third year of studies. However, second year students can select courses marked with green arrows, and under certain conditions also the course marked with a yellow arrow. Such selection allows for flexibility and individually controlled pace and intensity of studies.

All English Minor courses are also available to international students in primary/class teacher education and training. However, participation in some courses is subject to teaching lecturer’s agreement. A good level of proficiency in English and pedagogical preparation for teaching foreign languages is a prerequisite for taking some courses, for example English Didactics. Pedagogical preparation means having completed, already in the home country, various courses on learning and motivation theories, preferably also foreign language teaching methods and approaches. It can also mean having prior teaching experience in the home country. In addition to courses listed in English Minor subject studies (25 ECTS), Faculty of Education runs a specially prepared programme for the international students based on English lesson observation and teaching: The Teaching Experience Package for International Students - English / Class Teacher Education and Training (2 - 22 ECTS). Out of 22 ECTS, 4-17 ECTS can be obtained through Observation period leading to the Teaching Experience, Teaching Experience and Reflection on the Teaching Experience as regards foreign language learning. The Observation period includes guided foreign language observation and further teaching. The Teaching Experience period includes a tutorial on language teaching, guided period (long-term) and lesson planning, actual teaching, self-evaluation and feedback after taught lessons. At the end of the Teaching Experience students reflect on their teaching through guided Teaching Experience Reflective Report and submit relevant documentation regarding their teaching (portfolio). The whole package is run in English so students practise all language skills in addition to their pedagogical skills.

By the end of the third study year students should obtain Bachelor of Education degree and commence Master’s degree studies. Master’s degree comprises 120 ECTS out of which 80 ECTS are advanced pedagogical studies. Primary/class teacher Master’s degree studies at the University of Lapland include components depicted in Figure 5.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>MEd general studies</th>
<th>5 ECTS</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Advanced pedagogical studies</td>
<td>80 ECTS</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>17 ECTS courses pertaining to curriculum planning, evaluation, school development, personal and professional development, educational administration, including 5 ECTS optional studies</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8 ECTS advanced research methodology studies</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15 ECTS Teaching practice including:</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6 ECTS Guided field practice</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9 ECTS Guided final practice</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>40 ECTS Master’s thesis seminars</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Minor subject studies 2</td>
<td>25 ECTS</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>English (25 ECTS) can be one of the selected minor subjects</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Optional studies</td>
<td>10 ECTS</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Figure 5. Primary/class teacher Master’s degree studies at the Faculty of Education, University of Lapland. All components referring to English studies are shaded.

As can be seen in Figure 5, students may opt for teaching English either in their field practice or final practice. Field practice lasts for four weeks and can be completed at either a Finnish school other than a university teacher training school or in a school abroad. Students are expected to teach at least 25 lessons and participate in other activities related to teaching. During final practice students teach 35 lessons and participate in class work during the whole school day. Lessons related to Minor subject studies 1 or 2, for example English, can be taught during that practice period. The practice extends over five weeks.
Elizabeth E. Alssen, Senior Lecturer in English Didactics, Faculty of Education, University of Lapland, PL 122, 96101 Rovaniemi; elizabeth.alssen@ulapland.fi

If students do not select English as Minor subject studies 1, they can select it as Minor subject studies 2. They can also choose Bachelor’s or Master’s thesis topic related to teaching English.

Once full teaching qualifications have been obtained, subject teachers can gain class teacher qualifications by completing supplementary courses in pedagogical studies. Likewise, class teachers can become subject teachers by completing discipline-specific courses. In case of English such studies should be undertaken at a university English department (Figure 6).

![Figure 6. Extending teacher qualifications](image)

As regards the Faculty of Education, University of Lapland, in-service class teachers could become subject teachers by completing 35 ECTS English Language Subject Studies. Courses within those studies were organized in the past by the Continuing Education Unit at the Faculty of Education, University of Lapland, in 2006-2007. They were taught jointly by lecturers at the University of Lapland and English Department at the University of Jyväskylä. The same unit organized studies for those in-service teachers who wished to extend their qualifications to class teaching. They completed a two-year programme organized over two years at most weekends. The courses took place at the Faculty of Education, University of Lapland, and were taught by the faculty academic staff. The possibility of organizing both types of studies described above depends on special funding and currently the future of such education and training is not certain.

References

Eurybase- The Information Database on Education Systems in Europe. The Education System in Finland 2007/08. European Commission

Opinto-opas 2010-2012, Kasvatustieteiden tedekunta, University of Lapland.
http://www.ulapland.fi/loader.aspx?id=03c7b7f1-25a0-4441-bfc4-3dc1428c2bf4
Attachment 1

English Minor subject studies (25 ECTS) - abbreviated course descriptions:

- **Oral Skills** (5 ECTS) 60 h
- **Children’s Literature** (3 ECTS) 30 h
- **Grammar and Writing** (3 ECTS) 30 h
- **Phonetics and Pronunciation** (5 ECTS) 60 h;
- **Introduction to the Study of Language** (2 ECTS) 20 h
- **English Didactics** (4 ECTS) 40 h
- **Communicative Materials** (2 ECTS) 20 h
- **British Culture** (1 ECTS) 10 h

**Oral Skills   5 ects**

**Aim/Learning outcomes:** To provide a range of opportunities for the students to improve their communicative competence for various contexts. To develop and expand students’ vocabulary, organisational skills and teaching competence, to expand their knowledge and understanding of cultural aspects and features of the English language.

**Content:** Communicative activities, discussions, debates, role play and simulations.

**Method:** Contact teaching 60 h; Communicative activities, discussions, debates, simulations, role play.

**Requirements:** Active participation. Preparation and execution of a series of communicative activities with the class.

**Evaluation:** 5 - 1/fail  (for criteria of assessment see ‘requirements’)

**Children’s Literature   3 ects**

**Aim/Learning outcomes:** To expose students to a broad spectrum of children’s literature spanning many eras. For students to explore the themes and language features within these texts and to develop their ability to analyse children’s (and other) literature.

**Content:** The exploration of themes and language within a variety of texts, to include: classic stories and fairytales, epics, myths, legends, fables, as well as more contemporary stories.

**Method:** Contact teaching 30 h.

Discussions in class of the set texts. Leading questions set by teacher.

Homework: reading and highlighting of set texts for class discussions.

Two books to be chosen for presentation and essays.

**Requirements:** All set texts to be read and highlighted in readiness for class discussions. Assessment based upon: *Active participation in discussions and practical activities.* The reading of two books leading to: 1. A short, summary-style essay about each book giving basic information about the author, the plot of the books and the student's own opinion of the book; these essays will be collected as part of a class anthology to be distributed to all class members at the end of the course. 2. An in-class oral presentation about one of the books. 3. A longer, analytical paper about one of the books.

**Evaluation:** Pass/Fail  (for criteria of assessment see ‘requirements’)

**Writing and Grammar   3 ects**

**Aim/Learning outcomes:** Students will have improved their writing through peer correction, evaluation, and revising. Students should be able to write a properly structured paragraph, coherent arguments, descriptions, a short story, a summary and a reaction essay. Students will know the principles of normative grammar on the intermediate level and will be able to teach selected grammatical structures on the primary school level.

**Content:** Instruction will include analysis of selected types of texts and guidelines for writing them (e.g. argumentative essays, reaction essays, summaries); Some writing will be based on readings selected by the teacher and students. Systematic revision of intermediate grammar with attention to explaining some grammatical points for teaching purposes.

**Method:** Contact teaching 30 h; individual writing, peer correction, re-drafting, group work, self-study.

**Evaluation:** 5 - 1/fail  on the basis of submitted written assignments and end-of-course grammar test

**Phonetics and Pronunciation   5 ects**

**Aim/Learning outcomes:** To give students basic knowledge about the English phonological system, improve their pronunciation, and prepare them to deal with their future pupils’ pronunciation problems.

**Content:** Basic course (3.5 ects): Introduction to English segmental phonetics, phonetic transcription, pronunciation practice, practical methods of improving pupils’ pronunciation. Advanced course (1.5 ects):
Strong and weak forms, word and sentence stress, pronunciation practice, practical methods of improving pupils' pronunciation.

**Prerequisites:** The basic course (40 hours) is a prerequisite for the advanced course (20 hours)

**Method:** Contact teaching: 60h (40h + 20 h); lectures, discussion, practical exercises, homework.

**Evaluation:** Phonetics: Pass/fail on the basis of an exam; Pronunciation: 5 - 1 based on assessment by the teachers

**Period:** I-II (autumn) Basic course, 40h   (3.5 ects);    III (spring) Advanced course, 20h (1.5 ects)

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**Introduction to the Study of Language**  2 ects

**Aim/Learning outcomes:** Students should be able to demonstrate knowledge of the basic concepts in linguistics useful for a language teacher.

**Content:** The course will cover those areas of the language study which are of particular interest to teachers of English: theories of language acquisition and learning, issues in semantics, pragmatics, sound system, and language analysis on morphological, word and sentence levels.

**Method:** Contact teaching 20h; lectures and seminars.

**Evaluation:** 5 - 1/fail based on active participation and end-of-course exam

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**English Didactics**  4 ects

**Aim/Learning outcomes:** Students should be able to demonstrate theoretical and practical knowledge of various approaches to TEFL so that they can make informed choices in their practical teaching of English.

**Content:** Teaching various language skills: vocabulary, reading, writing, speaking, listening, pronunciation, grammar and structures; ICT in the primary language teaching and learning; motivating young learners to learning English; cultural issues in a primary classroom; immersion; teaching English through stories; theme- and project-based teaching and learning of English; assessment in English language learning. LAPE 1601 (see Teaching Experience Package English) or a course with the corresponding content is a prerequisite for this course.

**Method:** Contact teaching: 40h; lectures, individual and group work, presentations, student-led seminars, written course work.

**Evaluation:** 5 - 1/fail based on active participation, presentations, student-led seminars, written course work.

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**Communicative Materials**  2 ects

**Aim/Learning outcomes:** Students should be able to demonstrate knowledge of a wide range of communicative theories and related material for the teaching of foreign languages. The course should enable students to become competent at critically evaluating examples of the various communicative techniques. After the course students will be able to prepare samples of age and curriculum appropriate material.

**Content:** Introduction to the main communicative techniques: information gap (describe and draw, spot the difference, jigsaw), role play / simulation, interviews, debates, surveys. Trying out and critically evaluating examples of these techniques. Creating or adapting samples of material and testing with a small group of fellow students , followed by reflection and evaluation of the material.

**Method:** Contact teaching 20 h; Lectures, practical exercises, discussions, homework in the form of material preparation, testing prepared material, personal reflection and evaluation of the material

**Requirements:** 1. Active participation in activities and discussions; 2. Preparation of age and curriculum appropriate communicative material; 3. Execution of said material with a small group of fellow students, reflection and evaluation of the event.

**Evaluation:** 5 - 1/Fail   (for criteria of assessment see ‘requirements’)