



## UNIPIID VIRTUAL STUDIES - STUDENT GUIDE

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## UniPID Virtual Studies

Welcome to UniPID Virtual Studies!

UniPID Virtual Studies consist of online courses provided by UniPID Member Universities<sup>1</sup>, which give the students access to specialised training and expertise from other Finnish universities. The Virtual Studies programme promotes teaching related to global development and sustainability, especially bringing forward perspectives from the Global South, and increases the amount of knowledge on these issues.

Courses are free of charge for students enrolled in UniPID member universities. From 2020 onwards, some of the courses are organized in collaboration with partner universities from the Global South, in which case the courses are available and free also for their students. Some courses can also admit other students, at the discretion of the course teacher.

### Flexible distance learning

Online courses are a flexible way of participating in university studies. You can study regardless of your location, provided that you have access to a high-quality internet connection and the required software (browser, word processing, presentation, and spreadsheet programs). If the completion of a course requires other tools, they are mentioned in the course description.

Study methods vary from one UniPID course to the next. However, courses always include a significant amount of self-study of course material chosen by the teacher. The material can consist e.g. of video or audio lectures and supporting PowerPoint presentations, scientific and popular articles, videos or other visual material. Learning assignments can take many forms, such as mandatory weekly discussions, small writing assignments, essays and videos made by students, blogs entries and audio recordings. Courses can also include self and peer evaluation assignments, which improve the students' reflections skills and capability of evaluating own and others' performance.

The pace of the course can be quite free or relatively strictly scheduled. Thus, you should always check the schedule of the course and deadlines of required assignments from the course description when you are registering for a course, in order to allow the necessary amount of time and energy for the needs of the course. On online courses students are responsible not only for their own scheduling, but also their own learning and supporting others' learning through interaction that many courses include as a part of mandatory course assignments. Studying online makes interaction and studying over institutional, national and cultural borders possible.

The number of courses you can study simultaneously is not restricted, although it is recommended that you do not take more than a couple of UniPID courses at a time so that there is enough time for

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<sup>1</sup> Aalto University, Tampere University, University of Eastern Finland, University of Helsinki, University of Jyväskylä University of Lapland, University of Oulu, University of Turku and Åbo Akademi University

the needs of each one. Online courses can be challenging, and students are expected to arrange the necessary amount of time and energy for the needs of each course. Students are also expected to keep to the course schedule, and to return assignments on time.

Online courses are offered in both spring and fall semesters, occasionally also during the summer. About half of the courses are organized during the fall and about half during the spring. Each course is offered at least three times through UniPID. The number of courses on offer and their content varies from one year to the next. On the course page you can see how many times the course has been offered.

New courses are added to the selection annually, so it is worth keeping an eye on the UniPID Virtual Studies course catalogue at <http://www.unipid.fi/students/virtual-studies/>.

### **Online learning platforms**

When a course begins, registered students receive instructions from the teacher on how to log in to the online learning environment. Most UniPID courses use the Moodle online learning environment.

Moodle can be accessed at <http://moodle.org/>. Students can access the learning environment using their username and password. In addition, admitted students receive a course key from the responsible teacher, with which they can access the course platform and further get to know course material and the contents of the course.

As a student, you should get to know the course platform independently before the course begins, as the teacher rarely has the time help students individually when it comes to using the learning environment.

### **Registration**

Students must register to UniPID Virtual Studies courses through the UniPID course catalogue page: <http://www.unipid.fi/en/courses/>.

You are asked to fill in the following information when registering for a course:

- Permission to forward personal details within the UniPID Member Universities for course purposes
- Full name
- Gender
- Address
- Email address
- Telephone number
- Personal identity number (for exchange students and other foreign students, date of birth)
- Place of residence

- Nationality
- Native language
- Preferred language for contact: Finnish/English/Swedish
- If you have been previously registered to the Producing University's system
- Finnish home university
- Other home university, if any
- Enrolled as present at your home university: yes/no
- Student number
- Major/degree programme
- Faculty/Department
- Degree to which the course is intended to be included
- Start date of studies
- Estimated end date of studies
- Who at your home university (administration) has approved the course for your degree
- The date of approval
- Are you completing the UniPID study module Sustainability in Development (see below)
- Have you completed UniPID courses before
- The number of previously completed UniPID courses
- Interest/Motivation to take the course
- Additional information

By filling out the registration form you give your consent for UniPID to forward the information you have given on the form to the institution organizing the course. Information given on the form is used both in administrative processes and to choose between students to be admitted. Please note that students enrolled in the UniPID module (read more on page 6) have privilege over other students if the number of registered students exceeds the amount of students that can be admitted. **Submitting the registration form does not guarantee admittance to a course.** Course teacher may require students to deliver e.g. a preliminary assignment or a motivation letter before the course begins to help choose which students to admit, if it is not possible to admit all registered students.

## Online Courses Step by Step

Each UniPID Virtual Studies course is worth 5 ECTS. When you are planning to take a UniPID course, remember to include it in your personal study plan (HOPS). The inclusion of UniPID Virtual Studies in your degree has to be approved in advance at your institution. UniPID Virtual Studies Contacts at your institution can help you with this procedure, you will find their contact information at <https://www.unipid.fi/students/virtual-studies-contacts/>

### Before the course begins

1. Pick a course that interests you and read the course description with care.

Some courses require previous studies or prior knowledge, which will be mentioned in the course description. Before registering, make sure that you fulfil any prerequisites and that the course can be included in your degree.

2. **Register online at <http://www.unipid.fi/students/virtual-studies/>**

Please make sure that you complete all fields in the registration form. Incomplete registrations may not be accepted.

*Note: if a course requires a separate registration (e.g. through the Open University), instructions for this are included in the course description.*

3. **The online registration form is sent to the responsible teacher for approval**

The teacher will contact you after the end of the registration period to let you know whether you have been admitted to the course. If you do not hear from the teacher within seven days of the end of the registration period, contact the course teacher directly. If necessary, you can also contact the UniPID Coordination Unit, whose contact details are available at <https://www.unipid.fi/unipid/contacts/>

4. **Get to know the online learning environment.**

Once you have been admitted, you will receive instructions from the teacher describing how to access the online learning environment. The teacher sends you all the information you need in order to access the course material. Make sure that you have all the material (e.g. course books) you need, enough time, and that you have explored the learning environment before the course begins.

Please note that, as a general rule, late registrations are not accepted because they cause an additional administrative burden. However, this can be discussed together with the student, teacher and UniPID Coordination unit, and you are advised to be in contact both with the teacher and UniPID Coordination unit.

## During the course

5. **Read the course description and the schedule carefully.**

Even though UniPID courses are flexible and allow you to study from home, they demand a large amount of independent study, and there are always deadlines that should be kept.

## When a course ends

6. **You are asked to fill in an electronic feedback form.**

Student feedback is essential for the development and success of the UniPID Virtual Studies. Your feedback helps the teacher recognize which components of the course work as planned, and which aspects have room for improvement. You can find the student feedback from here: <https://www.unipid.fi/vs-forms/student-feedback-form/>.

7. **Assessment and feedback.**

During the course you may receive feedback for your assignments both from the teacher and from other students. Your performance is often assessed on a scale of 0-5 (0=fail, 5=excellent).

#### 8. Credit registration

After you have passed a course, your course credits and your grade are registered in the study attainment system of the institution organizing the course. For this purpose, a so-called visiting student status is registered for you. The successful registration of visiting student status requires that you have filled in all the information on the registration form and notified course staff if any of that information has changed since.

#### 9. Credit transfer to home university

When a course has concluded and the course credits have been registered, **you are in charge of transferring the credits to the study attainment system of your home university.** You can do this by getting a transcript of records or a certificate of completion from the university that provided the course and delivering this document to your home department's study administration. The course teacher and administration staff will assist you in this process, if necessary.

In some cases (e.g. if the student comes from outside the UniPID network), UniPID Coordination Unit can provide separate course diplomas for students who have passed a course. Please note that the course diplomas provided by the UniPID are not official.

### UniPID Module in Development Studies: *Sustainability in Development*

The UniPID module, *Sustainability in Development*, in development studies programme consists of at least five courses worth 5 ECTS credits each for a total of 25 ECTS. Students can choose courses to be included in the module freely from among the courses offered by UniPID.

The completion of the minor requires registration at <https://www.unipid.fi/students/study-module/>. Before registering for the module, you should make sure that the module can be included in your degree. When teachers are choosing who to admit to their UniPID course, they give priority to students completing the module.

Even if you have already completed one or more UniPID Virtual Studies courses, you can still register for the module. In this case, too, you need to discuss with study administration staff at your home institution about the inclusion of the module in your degree.

Students who have completed the *Sustainability in Development* minor module successfully may request a certificate from the UniPID Coordination Unit. After you have completed the required amount of courses, you should deliver your transcripts to the UniPID Coordination Unit and request the certificate.

## Virtual Studies Guidelines

Since students from various disciplines and institutions take part in UniPID Virtual Studies, it is worth going through some general guidelines. These guidelines can be used on all courses, but there is variance between universities, courses and disciplines. Thus, you should primarily follow the instructions given by the teacher, and second the instructions given in this document.

### Plagiarism

Plagiarism is a serious offense. Please remember to acknowledge all ideas, phrases, quotations, etc. that are not your own. Several courses use anti-plagiarism software to ensure academic integrity. As a student you are responsible for using direct citations and references according to good academic practice. If you have any questions about plagiarism, use your learning environment's *Questions and Answers* board. This way, the question reaches both the teacher and other students, and the teacher does not have to answer to the same question multiple times. More information about plagiarism can be found at [www.plagiarism.org](http://www.plagiarism.org).

On most courses students are free to choose the citation style, as long as it's used in a consistent fashion. Please note that sometimes the teacher can ask the students to use a single citation style, defined by the teacher (e.g. Harvard). Different citation styles are outlined here: [http://www.plagiarism.org/plag\\_article\\_citation\\_styles.html](http://www.plagiarism.org/plag_article_citation_styles.html).

### Academic Writing

Student performance in online courses is often assessed with written assignments. It is important for students to express themselves clearly and effectively in these assignments. Thus, you should pay close attention to writing style, grammar, structure and other elements of good academic writing. Often **your own faculty's website** can provide good guidelines and rules on academic writing. As students come from many different disciplinary and institutional backgrounds, a list of links is compiled below which gives general guidelines about academic writing.

- Guide to grammar: <http://www.ucl.ac.uk/internet-grammar/home.htm>
- Guide to correct punctuation: <http://www.correctpunctuation.co.uk/>
- Essay writing guide: <http://www.theory.org.uk/david/essay.htm>

## Contact Information

The Virtual Studies contact persons can help students with administrative issues relating to online courses. Contact persons can help in registering for a course, transferring credits, and by answering questions that you might have about UniPID Virtual Studies in general. You will find the contact details on the UniPID website at <http://www.unipid.fi/students/virtual-studies-contacts/>

If you need help and your university does not have a nominated contact person, please contact the UniPID Coordination Unit. Course-specific questions should, however, be addressed to the course teacher.

Feel free to contact the Coordination Unit/Virtual Studies coordinator with any questions. You will find the Coordination Unit's contact details at <https://www.unipid.fi/unipid/contacts/>.

You can read more about UniPID activities from our website: <https://www.unipid.fi/>.

We hope that you enjoy studying UniPID Virtual Studies and learning more about global development!