

SECONDARY EDUCATION (ages 16–18, grades 10–12)

Secondary education is based on basic education and is divided into **general secondary education** and **vocational secondary education**.

General secondary education

General secondary education is acquired within three school years in gymnasium, upper secondary school or lyceum. General secondary education provides the right to continue studies at the higher education level. Teaching at an upper-secondary school takes place as day, evening and distance study. Graduation is also possible as an external pupil.

Conditions for admission

The state and local governments must ensure the availability of secondary education to everyone. Admission to gymnasium (upper secondary school, lyceum) generally takes place according to the results of graduation from basic school. Schools may carry out tests to fill available places. Admission is decided by the school's admission commission.

School specialization

The state curriculum sets the compulsory subjects at each school level, their minimum volumes, and the number of elective subjects and courses. A school forms its specialization through the choice of electives or courses and/or the extended study of some subjects. A school may have more than one specialization.

Graduating from school

In order to graduate from gymnasium (upper secondary school, lyceum), grade 12 pupils sit at least five final examinations - three state exams and two school exams. A pupil has the right to sit all five final exams as state exams. It is compulsory for all graduates of gymnasia (upper secondary schools, lyceums) to sit the Estonian language state exam. For non-Estonian schools it is also compulsory to sit the Estonian as a second language exam (with a result of more than 60 points, the graduate is issued with the mid-level language skill certificate). The other exam subjects can be chosen from amongst mathematics, foreign languages (English, German, Russian, French), physics, chemistry, biology and history. The German language state exam can also be sat as the Level II language diploma exam by the German Culture Ministers' Conference.

State exams are generally written exams. The marking commissions for the state examinations use a 100-point system to grade the results. Up to the 20 points the result of state exam is positive. Gymnasium (upper secondary school, lyceum) final exams are also higher education institution admission exams. Graduates from gymnasium (upper secondary school, lyceum) are issued a school graduation certificate and a state exam certificate.

Cooperation between home and school

Parents participate in decisions related to their children's education through parents' meetings and other bodies (board of trustees, council). In addition, pupils' representatives participate in work of the school's board of trustees.

Vocational secondary education

Is acquired in a vocational education institution, on the basis of either basic school or general secondary education. Vocational education is determined by state curricula in various vocational areas. The nominal study duration for vocational education acquired on the basis of basic education is at least 3 years, and on the basis of secondary education, at least one year. Most vocational education institutions belong to the state. A graduate from vocational secondary education institution has same possibilities to continue studies in higher education institution as a learner having general secondary education.

Conditions of admission

All citizens of Estonia and EU member states and those who have valid residency permits for Estonia can begin studies in vocational education institutions. The state and local governments are obliged to ensure all who wish it the opportunity to acquire vocational secondary education on the basis of basic education. Admission is based on documents proving previously acquired education, language skills and the result of admission tests, and a health certificate. Study according to the vocational secondary education curriculum,

following basic school, requires a basic school graduation certificate, and study following upper secondary school requires an upper secondary graduation certificate and a state examination certificate.

Schools may have additional admission requirements. According to the chosen specialty a candidate pupil must undertake certain test. Admission is decided by the school's admission commission.

Graduation from school

Graduation from a vocational education institution is proven by a graduation certificate. A graduate from a vocational education institution will have the right to sit for a qualification exam, and be awarded a professional qualification. A professional qualification is proven by a professional certificate, and the holder has the right to use the professional title of the profession, or its shortened form. The professional certificates are registered and entered into the professions register.

Graduates from vocational education institutions who wish to continue studies at the higher education level must generally sit for state exams. All learners with secondary education (both general secondary and vocational secondary education) have an equal right to compete for admission to higher education institutions.

ESTONIAN LANGUAGE INSTRUCTION

In Estonian-medium schools, Estonian is studied as the mother tongue from grade 1 to 12, according to the state curriculum. At the end of basic school, pupils sit for the compulsory Estonian language exam, and at the end of gymnasium (upper secondary school, lyceum) for the compulsory Estonian language state exam. In schools, where children of citizens of EU member states study pupils have been provided with individual curriculum according to the syllabus of Estonian language as a second language.

Children who do not speak Estonian at home can begin Estonian language studies at pre-school. In Russian-medium schools, pupils study Estonian as a second language from grade 1 to 12, according to the state curriculum. At the end of basic school, pupils sit for the compulsory exam, which is equivalent to language skills at beginner level (A). Graduates of non-Estonian gymnasium (upper secondary school, lyceum) sit for the compulsory Estonian as a second language state exam, which is equivalent to language skills at medium level (B). At least 60 points are needed to pass the level test.

Additional information:

- Education Act, Basic Schools and Upper Secondary Schools Act and Private Schools Act
<http://www.legaltext.ee/et/andmebaas/ava.asp?m=022>
- Information on examinations, level tests, Estonian language proficiency examinations, application for citizenship only in Estonian
<http://www.ekk.edu.ee/index2.html>

Contacts:

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Citizenship and Migration Board

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Non-Estonian Integration Foundation

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Estonian Ministry of Social Affairs

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Local Governments <http://www.riik.ee/en/omavalitsused/>

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Learning in Estonian school

Estonia and its schools are becoming increasingly multicultural. In our schools, there are increasingly more children of foreign citizens. According to the Education Act of the Republic of Estonia, all children living in Estonia, including children from other countries, are obliged to attend school. In the choice of education, parents have the decisive say.

In Estonia, the education levels are *pre-school education*, *basic education*, *secondary education* and *higher education*. The Estonian education system supports inclusion of children with special needs and their participation in mainstream schools.

Acquisition of basic and secondary education in state or local government schools is free.

