

FACTSHEET

Vocational Education and Training

Estonia

Legal framework

Since the mid-1990s vocational education in Estonia has gone through extensive reforms. The framework of the desired developments and goals was determined in the Government regulations “The Conceptual Framework of Vocational Education” (*Kutsehariduse kontseptuaalsed lähtekohad*, 1998) and “Action Plan for Development of Vocational Education System 2001-2004” (*Tegevuskava kutseharidussüsteemi arendamiseks Eestis aastatel 2001-2004*, 2001). The main goal was to increase the attractiveness of vocational education among basic school graduates as well as to improve the quality of vocational education, also, to better respond to the labour market demands.

Based on the recommendation of the EU Council and the Estonian Education Development Plan 2022-2035 (*Eesti hariduse arengukava 2022–2035*), the Estonian Vocational Education Action Plan 2022-2030 (*Eesti kutsehariduse tegevuskava 2022–2030*) has been prepared. The development of vocational education is also based on the Estonian Education Development Plan 2021-2035 (*Eesti haridusvaldkonna arengukava 2021-2035*).

The main legal acts stipulating the establishment, reorganisation, and termination of a vocational education institution, the organisation of studies, and the principles of administration and budget formation of the budget are Vocational Education Institution Act (*Kutseõppeasutuse seadus*) and Vocational Education Standard (*Kutseharidusstandard*). The format and the conditions for issuing a vocational school leaving certificate are stipulated by the Government Regulation *Kutseõppeasutuse lõpudokumentide vormid, statuut ja väljaandmise kord*.

Vocational education system

There are state, municipal and private vocational education institutions in Estonia. In recent years, according to the development visions, many vocational education institutions have merged into regional vocational education centres that enable to unite resources as well as competence in a certain area with the aim of assuring the quality vocational education.

Instruction in vocational education institutions is carried out according to the Vocational Education Standard and the school curriculum prepared on the basis of the national curriculum for vocational education. The school curriculum has to correspond to the level of the qualifications framework determined by the *Kutseseadus* (Professions Act). The school curricula may be adjusted to a certain target group of students, and the mode of study. The national curriculum is based on the professional standard worked out by the National Qualifications Authority (*Kutsekoda*).

Since 2014, quality in vocational education and training has been assured by accreditation of study programme groups. The competent accreditation body is as for higher education the Estonian Quality Agency for Higher and Vocational Education (EKKA).

The European Credit System for Vocational Education and Training (ECVET) is fully implemented as a national credit system. In the ECVET, the workload for one academic year is 60 ECVET credits. The Estonian equivalent for ECVET is “EKAP” (*Eesti kutsehariduse arvestuspunkt*).

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Vocational secondary education may be started after completing basic education (9 years of study). The workload of vocational secondary education programmes based on basic education is 180 ECVET credits, including general secondary education courses in the amount of at least 30 ECVET credits. The students who have successfully completed the programme receive a certificate *Kutsekeskhariduse lõputunnistus* (Certificate of Vocational Secondary Education). Holders of vocational secondary education qualifications (*kutsekeskharidus*) whose intention is to continue studies at a higher education institution can improve their knowledge of general secondary education for additional year. The study is organised in cooperation with vocational education institutions and general secondary schools.

When vocational education is obtained after basic education, but without taking general secondary education subjects, the workload of studies can vary from 30-180 ECVET credits. The students who have successfully completed the programme receive a certificate *Neljanda taseme kutseõppe lõputunnistus* (Certificate of Vocational Education Level 4).

When vocational education is obtained after secondary education, the workload of study can vary from 60-150 ECVET credits. The graduates receive a qualification *Kutseerihariduse lõputunnistus* (Certificate of Specialised Vocational Education) upon completion of vocational education programme corresponding to Estonian Qualifications Framework Level 5.

From 2017/2018 admission, students have to pass at least one professional examination in order to complete their studies at a vocational education institution. Until 2017/2018 admission, students had the right to opt for replacement of the final examination by a professional qualification examination (*kutseksam*) administered by the National Qualifications Authority.

In the previous system of vocational education there were two levels of vocational education: vocational secondary education (*kutsekeskharidus*) and vocational higher education (*kutsekõrgharidus*). Vocational secondary education was based on basic education (with a length of study of at least three years) and on secondary education (with a length of study of at least 40 study weeks). Vocational higher education (3 - 4 years) was based on secondary education and was a part of the higher education system. According to the Universities Act and other binding laws adopted in 2002, beginning with academic year 2002/2003 students are admitted only to reformed professional higher education programmes that replace the former vocational higher education programmes.

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Vocational and Professional Secondary Qualifications of Estonia since 1991

Title of Qualification	Code	Issued from	Issued to	Access requirement	Type of programme	Access to higher education
Kutsetunnistus (<i>Professional Certificate</i>)	A	1991	1996	Basic or secondary education	Vocational education	No
Diplom [keskerihariduse omandamise kohta] (<i>Diploma [of Specialised Secondary Education]</i>)	A	1991	Until admission 1994	Basic education	Professional secondary and general secondary education	Yes
				Secondary education	Professional secondary education	Yes

Lõputunnistus <i>Certificate [of Vocational Education]</i>	K	1996	Until admission 1998	Basic education	Vocational education	No
				Secondary education	Vocational education	No
Lõputunnistus kutse- ja keskhariduse omandamise kohta (<i>Certificate of Vocational and Secondary Education</i>)	KK	1995	Until admission 1998	Basic education	Vocational and secondary education	Yes
Lõputunnistus keskerihariduse omandamise kohta (<i>Certificate of Specialised Secondary Education</i>)	T	Since admission 1995	Until admission 1999	Basic education	Professional secondary and general secondary education	Yes
				Secondary education	Professional secondary education	Yes

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Title of Qualification	Code	Issued from	Issued to	Access requirement	Type of programme	Access to higher education
Lõputunnistus põhihariduse baasil kutsekeskhariduse omandamise kohta (<i>Certificate of Vocational Secondary Education Based on Basic Education</i>)	P	Since admission 1998	Until admission 2005	Basic education	Vocational and secondary education	Yes
Lõputunnistus keskhariduse baasil kutsekeskhariduse omandamise kohta (<i>Certificate of Vocational Secondary Education Based on Secondary Education</i>)	K	Since admission 1998	Until admission 2005	Secondary education	Vocational education	Yes
Lõputunnistus põhihariduse nõudeta kutseõppe läbimise kohta (<i>Certificate of Vocational Education without the Requirement of Basic Education</i>)	A	Since admission 2006		No access requirement	Vocational education	No
Lõputunnistus põhihariduse baasil kutseõppe läbimise kohta (<i>Certificate of Vocational Education Based on Basic Education</i>)	A	Since admission 2006		Basic education	Vocational education	No
Lõputunnistus kutsekeskhariduse omandamise kohta (<i>Certificate of Vocational Secondary Education</i>)	P	Since admission 2006		Basic education	Vocational and secondary education	Yes
Lõputunnistus keskhariduse baasil kutseõppe läbimise kohta (<i>Certificate of Vocational Education Based on Secondary Education</i>)	A	Since admission 2006		Secondary education	Vocational education	Yes

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Title of Qualification	Code	Issued from	Issued to	Access requirement	Type of programme	Access to higher education
Teise taseme kutseõppe lõputunnistus <i>(Certificate of Vocational Education Level 2)</i>	K	Upon completion of study programme entered in the Estonian Education Information System after 1 September 2013		No access requirement	Vocational education	No
Kolmanda taseme kutseõppe lõputunnistus <i>(Certificate of Vocational Education Level 3)</i>	K			No access requirement	Vocational education	No
Neljanda taseme kutseõppe lõputunnistus <i>(Certificate of Vocational Education Level 4)</i>	K			Basic education	Vocational education	No
Kutsekeskhariduse lõputunnistus <i>(Certificate of Vocational Secondary Education)</i>	KK			Basic education	Vocational and secondary education	Yes
Kutseerihariduse lõputunnistus <i>(Certificate of Specialised Vocational Education)</i>	KE			Secondary education	Specialised vocational education	Yes