

FACTSHEET

Estonia

Secondary Education

Curriculum. List of courses

Educational standards for secondary education are established in the national curriculum (1996; 2002; 2010; 2011, 2014). The national curriculum determines the study objectives, the duration of studies, the relationship between the national curriculum and the school curriculum, the list of compulsory courses, including the number of lessons and their contents, the options and conditions for the selection of courses, as well as the requirements for students in terms of different study periods and graduation. The national curriculum is approved by the Government.

The national curriculum for basic and secondary education (2002) gives schools more freedom in choosing the direction of studies, makes it possible to consider the students' interests and abilities, and decreases the study load. It emphasises the need for the integration of different courses and the importance of putting knowledge into practice. It also coordinates the development of an external evaluation system.

The new national curriculum (*Gümnaasiumi riiklik õppekava*, 2010, 2014), gives more importance to achieving the goals, competencies and subject integration set in the curriculum. The study load has been reduced, the learning outcomes have been expressed more clearly and there is more freedom of choice for the students.

The national curriculum establishes compulsory courses and the minimal scope of their treatment (compulsory courses and compulsory topics). The nominal period of study at general secondary school is three years (Grades 10 – 12), at the end of which, the students have to take five examinations, whereas at least three of them must be taken as national examinations (*riigieksamid*). A school year includes no less than 175 days (35 weeks) of study.

It is possible to intensify the treatment of compulsory courses by adding topics or by offering courses to be chosen by students. The number of alternative courses is determined by the national curriculum, but the school, taking into consideration the students' wishes and the existing opportunities, determines their content. A school may have more than one field of specialisation. Within the scope of alternative courses, a secondary school may offer preliminary vocational training in cooperation with vocational schools.

In the secondary school curriculum, the course programmes are compiled as units, whereas the word "unit" refers primarily to a 35-hour of study. According to the national curriculum the compulsory courses at the secondary level are the following:

Course	Units	
	Curriculum 2002	Curriculum 2011, 2014
Estonian (<i>eesti keel</i>)	6	6
Literature (<i>kirjandus</i>)	6	5

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Russian (<i>vene keel</i>) ¹	3	6
Literature (<i>kirjandus</i>) ²	9	5
Estonian (<i>eesti keel</i>) ³	9	9
A-foreign language (<i>A-võõrkeel</i>)	6	5
B-foreign language (<i>B-võõrkeel</i>)	6	5
Mathematics (<i>matemaatika</i>)	9	8 or 14
Human geography (<i>inimgeograafia</i>)	-	1
Physical geography (<i>loodusgeograafia</i>)	-	2
Geography (<i>geograafia</i>)	3	-
Biology (<i>bioloogia</i>)	4	4
Chemistry (<i>keemia</i>)	4	3
Physics (<i>füüsika</i>)	6	5
History (<i>ajalugu</i>)	7	6
Human studies (<i>inimeseõpetus</i>)	1	1
Civics and citizenship education (<i>ühiskonnaõpetus</i>)	2	2
Music (<i>muusika</i>)	3	3
Art (<i>kunst</i>)	3	2
Physical education (<i>kehaline kasvatus</i>)	6	5

The national curriculum (2011) had to be implemented by 1st September 2013.

¹ At schools where the language of instruction is Russian

² At schools where the language of instruction is Russian

³ At schools where the language of instruction is Russian or another foreign language