

FACTSHEET

Higher Education

Estonia

Grading and credit system

Organisation of course of study

The academic year at higher education institutions is divided into two semesters: the autumn and the spring semester. The academic year begins in September and ends in the first half of June. As a general rule, it comprises 40 weeks of lectures, seminars, practical training, independent study and research or other assignments, and an examination period. Normally, full-time studies consist of approximately 50% of contact hours (16...26 hours per week) and 50% of independent work, but it varies depending on the individual choice of courses per term.

Since 01.09.2009, European Credit Transfer and Accumulation System (ECTS) is fully implemented as a national credit system. In the ECTS, the workload for one academic year is 60 ECTS credits. Until 31.08.2008 the University Act enabled parallel usage of both systems – the national system and the ECTS.

The national credit system was a cumulative calculation of credits (*ainepunkt, or AP*) based on a student's workload. One credit corresponds to 40 hours or one week (5 days a week x 8 hours a day = 40h) of studies performed by a student. A credit point is not related to lectures or any other workload of a member of the academic staff. The workload for one academic year (40 weeks of study from September to June) was 40 credits.

Grading

All courses taught at higher education institutions must end with an examination (*eksam*) or a pass/fail assessment (*arvestus*). There may be several independent examinations in separate parts of the course. At the end of each semester, during a 4-week examination session, there are usually oral and written examinations. The results of examinations or other forms of assessment may be given in numbers or expressed in words: pass (*arvestatud*) or fail (*mitte arvestatud*).

Until the 1999/2000 academic year there was no unified grading system used in higher education institutions of Estonia. The two most common grading scales were a 5-point scale and a 6-point scale. The 5-point scale was as follows:

5	-	<i>väga hea</i> / very good or excellent (pass)
4	-	<i>hea</i> / good (pass)
3	-	<i>rahuldav</i> / satisfactory (pass)
2	-	<i>puudulik</i> / unsatisfactory (fail)
1	-	<i>kasin</i> / poor (fail)

The 6-point scale was as follows:

5	-	<i>suurepärane</i> / excellent (pass)
4	-	<i>väga hea</i> / very good (pass)
3	-	<i>hea</i> / good (pass)
2	-	<i>rahuldav</i> / satisfactory (pass)
1	-	<i>kasin</i> / sufficient (pass)
0	-	<i>puudulik</i> / unsatisfactory (fail)

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The fail grade indicates that the student has not met the minimum requirements for the course. If the student fails, he/she is allowed two chances to retake the examination.

In accordance with the Regulation of the Ministry of Education and Research, all higher education institutions started using a unified grading system in the 1999/2000 academic year. According to the regulation:

- a 6-point percentage-based grading system was established;
- the minimum passing level in examinations is 51%;
- the distribution of marks among the students who pass the examination is not calculated.

Grade	Description Estonian/English	Completion of required work
5 or A	<i>suurepärane</i> / excellent	91 – 100 %
4 or B	<i>väga hea</i> / very good	81 – 90 %
3 or C	<i>hea</i> / good	71 – 80 %
2 or D	<i>rahuldav</i> / satisfactory	61 – 70 %
1 or E	<i>kasin</i> / sufficient	51 – 60 %
0 or F	<i>puudulik</i> / insufficient	0 – 50 %

Some higher education institutions use letter grades A – F, others use numbers 5 – 0. Grades F or 0 are the fail grades.

Since September 2010, the same grading scale has been in use, but assessment is based on learning outcomes.