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Latvia

General Education

Pre-school Education

Children aged 5 to 7 are required to participate in pre-school education, which is considered part of compulsory education. These programmes are typically offered by general education schools or kindergartens. The main aim is to support child's overall development and prepare them for entry into the primary level of basic education.

Basic Education

Schools provide a single structure compulsory basic education programmes (9 years) for children starting at age 7 (or 6). The curriculum is regulated by the state basic education standard, with final assessments and state centralised examinations overseen by the Ministry of Education and Science, i.e., the State Education Development Agency (since 2025). According to the state basic education standard, pupils have to pass state examinations in Latvian, a foreign language, mathematics and natural sciences.

Pupils who successfully complete all required study subjects and national assessments receive a certificate of basic education (apliecība par pamatizglītību) of EQF level 2 along with a statement of records (sekmju izraksts), which qualifies them for admission to secondary education programmes.

If a pupil does not receive assessments in certain study subjects or exams, they are issued a school report (liēcība), which allows them to continue their education in basic vocational programmes (EQF level 2).

Vocational basic education

Please see section "Vocational Education and Training"

Secondary Education

Secondary education includes two main pathways:

- general secondary education;
- vocational secondary education (see section "Vocational Education and Training").

Schools may organise entrance exams based on the requirements of state basic education standard.

General secondary education programmes last three years and are offered by general secondary education institutions (vidusskola, ģimnāzija). Programmes are developed by schools according to the state education standard of general secondary education and may follow one of several profiles:

General academic;

Humanities/social sciences;

Mathematics/natural sciences/technical subjects;

Vocational/professional (e.g., arts, music, business, sports).

Each programme includes eight compulsory study subjects and an additional three to six optional study subjects based on the chosen profile. Optional study subjects may be offered, comprising no more than 10–15% of the total study time. Programmes can also incorporate national minority components, including language and cultural studies.

Graduation requires passing four centralised state examinations that are organised according to the procedure stipulated by the regulations of the Cabinet of Ministers. These exams, arranged by the State Education Development Agency, assess both subject knowledge and general competences. Students who pass all subjects and exams receive a certificate of general secondary education (atestāts par vispārējo vidējo izglītību) of EQF level 4 and a certificate of general secondary education (vispārējās vidējās izglītības sertifikāts), the latter

showing their exam results. This qualification grants access to higher education programmes. Students who do not complete all requirements receive a school report (liecība), indicating partial completion.

Vocational secondary education

Please see section "Vocational Education and Training"

Vocational Education and Training

There are three levels of vocational education:

- basic vocational education;
- secondary vocational education;
- professional higher education (see section "Higher Education").

Vocational education institutions can be public (state, local government) and private. Depending on the provided vocational education programmes, there are the following vocational education institutions: technical school (tehnikums), competence centre of arts education (mākslu izglītības kompetences centrs), vocational secondary school (profesionālā vidusskola), continuing vocational education centre (profesionālās tālākizglītības centrs) and college (koledža). Content of vocational education is based on the state vocational education standards and the relevant occupational standard.

To acquire a qualification (at EQF levels 2 to 4), learners must undergo qualification practice and take a state qualification exam at the end of the programme.

Vocational basic education programmes

Vocational basic education (1-3 years) is offered by vocational schools, but they attract rather limited number of learners as most of them finish compulsory general basic education. Young people (at least 15 years old) can enrol the programmes regardless of their previous education. In addition to acquisition of a professional qualification of EQF level 2, pupils also have the opportunity to complete their basic education. Vocation basic education programmes are mainly school-based.

Upon successful completion of the final examinations, pupils receive a certificate of vocational basic education (apliecība par profesionālo pamatizglītību) with a professional qualification of EQF level 2, which gives access to secondary education programmes.

Vocational education programmes at secondary education level

Vocational education (arodizglītība) programmes (3-years duration, EQF level 3) may be accessed by the graduates of basic education and do not provide access to higher education. These programmes lead to a certificate of vocational education (atestāts par arodizglītību) with professional qualification of EQF level 3. Graduates can enter vocational secondary education programmes. Graduates can also attend bridging courses (these programmes typically last 1 year) that give access to higher education.

Vocational secondary education programmes (4-years duration, EQF level 4) may be accessed by the graduates of basic education and are offered by vocational secondary education institutions (mākslu izglītības kompetences centrs, profesionālā vidusskola, tehnikums).

Each programme is comprised of both general and vocational education components. Structure of the programme is divided in two parts: 70% are mandatory subjects that include both vocational and general education study subjects (including eight compulsory general education study subjects) and 30% is variable part of the programme that can include either general or vocational study subjects.

Graduation requires passing four centralised state examinations (the same exams as in general secondary education, but vocational education students may choose exams of different complexity levels). In addition, vocational education students take professional qualification examination. To successfully complete secondary vocational education, all examinations must be passed with satisfactory grades. All the mentioned exams are organised according to the relevant regulations of the Cabinet of Ministers.

Vocational secondary education programmes lead to the following certificates depending of the results of final exams:

- If a person passes both general and vocational education examinations, they are awarded

with a diploma of vocational secondary education (diploms par profesionālo vidējo izglītību) of EQF level 4 and a certificate of general secondary education (vispārējās vidējās izglītības sertifikāts) recording results of general education centralised exams that grants access to higher education; in addition, a certificate of professional qualification can be issued depending on the vocational education programme;

- If a person passes only vocational education examinations, they are awarded with a certificate of professional qualification of EQF level 3 or 4, which does not grant access to higher education;
- If a person passes only general education examinations, they are awarded with a diploma of vocational secondary education (diploms par profesionālo vidējo izglītību), including reference “without professional qualification”, of EQF level 4, a certificate of general secondary education (vispārējās vidējās izglītības sertifikāts) recording results of general education centralised exams that grants access to higher education; a certificate of obtaining professional qualification part (apliecība par profesionālās kvalifikācijas daļas apguvi) and/or certificate of obtaining module (apliecība par moduļa apguvi) after modular vocational secondary education programmes may be issued.

Vocational education of EQF levels 2-8

Vocational continuing education programmes of EQF level 2-8 are available to individuals with or without specific previous education. These programmes of EQF level 3-4 typically last 1-2 years; while minimum volume for the programmes of EQF level 5 is 760 hours or 30-60 ECTS, EQF level 6 – 45-90 ECTS, EQF level 7 – 30-60 ECTS and EQF level 8 – 60-90 ECTS. Additionally, professional development courses, lasting no less than 160 study hours, may also be undertaken and can count toward a qualification. These programmes are aimed at acquiring specific professional skills and knowledge aligned with the requirements of the relevant qualification level, and do not grant access to the next education level.

Higher Education

Latvian legislation differentiates between academic (EQF levels 6-8) and professional (EQF levels 5-8) higher education (HE). The objectives of the academic HE are to prepare graduates for an independent research work, as well as to provide theoretical background for professional activities. The objectives of the professional HE are to provide in-depth knowledge in a particular field, preparing graduates for design or improvement of systems, products and technologies, as well as to prepare them for creative, research and teaching activities in this field.

Higher education institutions may offer both types of programmes.

Short-cycle higher education (EQF level 5)

Short-cycle HE study programmes (2-3 years of full-time studies, 120-180 ECTS) may be accessed after the secondary education. The programme is a part of the first-cycle professional higher education. After completion of the programme a diploma of short-cycle professional higher education (īsā cikla profesionālās augstākās izglītības diploms) (from 03.04.2024) is awarded. The qualification allows accessing labour market. In addition, after completion of the programme, an individual may enrol a bridging-programme to obtain a first-cycle qualification. The duration of full-time studies in the bridging programme must be at least 1 year, provided that the total duration of the short-cycle and first-cycle studies is at least 4 years, in accordance with the state HE standards.

First-cycle higher education (EQF level 6)

Academic bachelor's programmes (3-4 years of full-time studies, 180-240 ECTS) are acquired after the secondary education. The programme leads to a Bachelor's diploma, which allows continuing studies in the second-cycle programmes or accessing labour market.

First-cycle professional HE may be acquired through the following types of study programmes:

- Professional bachelor's programmes (at least 4 years, 240 ECTS) after the secondary education lead to a professional Bachelor's diploma. The qualification allows continuing studies in the master's study programmes or accessing labour market.
- Professional HE programmes (1-2 years, 60-120 ECTS, total length of HE studies at least 4 years) that are continuation of short-cycle professional higher education lead to a diploma of professional higher education, or a diploma of higher professional qualification. The qualification allows accessing labour market and master's study programmes.

- Professional HE programmes (1 year, 60 ECTS, total length of HE studies at least 4 years) after a qualification of EQF level 6 lead to a diploma of professional higher education, or a diploma of higher professional qualification. These programmes allow obtaining an additional professional qualification, which grants access to the master's programmes or labour market.

Second-cycle higher education (EQF level 7)

Academic master's programmes (1-2 years of full-time studies, at least 60 ECTS; total length of HE studies at least 5 years) are acquired after bachelor's or professional HE studies. After completed the programme Master's diploma is awarded. The qualification allows continuing studies in the doctoral programmes or accessing labour market.

Second-cycle professional HE may be acquired through the following study programmes:

- Professional master's programmes (at least 1 year of full-time studies, at least 60 ECTS; total length of HE studies at least 5 years) are acquired after bachelor's or professional HE studies, the length of which is at least 4 years. The programme leads to a Master's diploma and higher professional qualification diploma, allowing continuing studies in the doctoral programmes or accessing labour market.
- Professional HE programmes (4-6 years of full-time studies, 300-360 ECTS) after the secondary education lead to a diploma of professional higher education, or a diploma of higher professional qualification. The qualification allows continuing studies in the doctoral study programmes or accessing labour market.

Third-cycle higher education (EQF level 8)

Academic doctoral programmes (3-4 years of full-time studies) may be accessed with a HE qualification of EQF level 7 (duration of previous HE studies should be at least 300 ECTS) and lead to Doctor's diploma. Doctoral studies are continued in the same or compatible field of academic knowledge, with a certain academic and professional experience which is determined by the higher education institution.

Professional doctoral programmes in arts (3-4 years of full-time studies, 180-240 ECTS) may be accessed with a HE qualification of EQF level 7 (duration of previous HE studies should be at least 300 ECTS) and lead to a professional Doctor's diploma in arts.

Higher Education Qualifications

• Pirmā līmeņa profesionālās augstākās izglītības diploms

Short cycle

Level 5

Level 5

Diploma of first level professional higher education (from 03.04.2024 Diploma of short-cycle professional higher education)

Professional qualification. Professional higher education is focused on applied sciences and/or art, which prepares students for an independent professional activity

Rights Granted

Access to next level higher education (first cycle study programmes)

Recognition Status

Issuing institution and study field must be accredited

Other Information

<https://eplatforma.aika.lv/>

<https://www.enic-naric.net/page-Latvia>

- **Bakalaura diploms; Profesionālā bakalaura diploms; Profesionālās augstākās izglītības diploms, augstākās profesionālās kvalifikācijas diploms**

First cycle

Level 6

Level 6

Academic qualification:

Academic higher education is oriented towards fundamental and applied sciences. The academic education is aimed at ensuring the acquisition of theoretical knowledge and research skills, preparing for independent research activity in particular branch of sciences

Bakalaura diploms / Bachelor's diploma

Mandatory structure of the study programme:

- Study courses;
- Bachelor thesis – at least 15 ECTS credits.

Professional qualifications:

Professional higher education is focused on applied sciences and/or art, which prepares students for an independent professional activity

Profesionālā bakalaura diploms / Professional Bachelor's diploma

Part of the study programme can be implemented as work-based learning. Mandatory structure of the study programme:

- Study courses / modules (humanities and social science courses at least 30 ECTS credits; study courses in the study field – at least 54 ECTS credits; study courses of specialisation – at least 90 ECTS credits; free choice study courses – at least 9 ECTS credits);
- Practical learning (at least 30 ECTS credits);
- State examination (no less than 18 ECTS credits);
- Elaborating and defending at least 3 research papers and/or projects.

Profesionālās augstākās izglītības diploms, augstākās profesionālās kvalifikācijas diploms / Diploma of professional higher education, diploma of higher professional qualification (total duration of full-time HE studies – at least 4 years), obtained after EQF level 6 programmes

Usually, the programme grants HE qualification of LQF level 6 (Bachelor's, professional Bachelor's diploma or diploma of professional higher education) in the same or related scientific sector or professional field as previous first cycle studies, but there can be exceptions (specific professional qualifications usually in pedagogical field, or higher education institution validate a certain types of professional experiences). Part of the study programme can be implemented as work-based learning.

Composition of the study programme is adapted to the previous education.

Profesionālās augstākās izglītības diploms, augstākās profesionālās kvalifikācijas diploms /Diploma of professional higher education, diploma of higher professional qualification (1-2 years, continuation of short-cycle programmes)

Usually, the programme grants HE qualification of LQF level 6 – Professional Bachelor's diploma or Diploma of professional higher education qualification) in the same scientific sector or professional field as previous short-cycle studies. For example, after short-cycle programme graduate is awarded with qualification "Legal Assistant", further studies in this type of education programme gives possibility to acquire qualification "Lawyer". Part

of the study programme can be implemented as work-based learning. Composition of the study programme is adapted to the previous education.

Rights Granted

Access to next level higher education (second cycle study programmes)

Recognition Status

Issuing institution and study field must be accredited

Other Information

<https://eplatforma.aika.lv/>

<https://www.enic-naric.net/page-Latvia>

- **Maģistra diploms; Profesionālā maģistra diploms; Profesionālās augstākās izglītības diploms, augstākās profesionālās kvalifikācijas diploms**

Second cycle

Level 7

Level 7

Academic qualification:

Academic higher education is oriented towards fundamental and applied sciences. The academic education is aimed at ensuring the acquisition of theoretical knowledge and research skills, preparing for independent research activity in particular branch of sciences

Maģistra diploms / Master's diploma

Mandatory structure of the study programme:

- Study courses;
- Master thesis – at least 30 ECTS credits.

Professional qualifications:

Professional higher education is focused on applied sciences and/or art, which prepares students for an independent professional activity

Profesionālā maģistra diploms / Professional Master's diploma

Part of the study programme can be implemented as work-based learning. Mandatory structure of the study programme:

- Study courses that ensure in-depth acquisition of topics of recent developments in industry – at least 8 ECTS credits)
- Research, project development, creative work and management study courses – at least 5 ECTS credits
- Practical learning (at least 39 ECTS (for students with Bachelor's diploma) no less than 9 ECTS credits (for students with a professional Bachelor's diploma))
- Master thesis / project (volume not specified)
- State examination (at least 30 ECTS credits)

Profesionālās augstākās izglītības diploms, augstākās profesionālās kvalifikācijas diploms / Diploma of professional higher education, diploma of higher professional qualification (total length of full-time studies – at least 5 years)

1) After completed Bachelor's studies (EQF level 6), usually, the programme leads to a higher education qualification of LQF level 7 (Bachelor's, professional Bachelor's diploma or Diploma of professional higher education) in the same or related scientific sector or professional field as previous first cycle studies, but there can be exceptions (usually specific professional qualifications or its specialisation is awarded, for example, different specialisations in pharmacology). Part of the study programme can be implemented as work-based learning. Composition of the study programme is adapted to the previous education.

2) After completed secondary education (EQF level 4), there are 4-6-year programmes (long-cycle HE study programmes). Qualifications included in the Baltic-Benelux Treaty: medical doctor, dentist, veterinarian, but there could be other professional qualifications. Part of the study programme can be implemented as work-based learning. Mandatory structure of the study programme):

- General content study courses – at least 30 ECTS credits;
- Theoretical sectoral and IT content study courses – at least 54 ECTS credits;
- Sectoral study courses in specialisation – at least 90 ECTS credits;
- Free choice study courses – at least 9 ECTS credits;
- Practical learning – at least 30 ECTS credits;
- Elaboration and defending of at least 3 research/study papers/ projects;
- State examination – at least 18 ECTS credits.

Rights Granted

Access to next level higher education (third cycle study programmes)

Recognition Status

Issuing institution and study field must be accredited

Other Information

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• Doktora diploms; Profesionālā doktora diploms mākslās

Third cycle

Level 8

Level 8

Academic qualification:

Doktora diploms / Doctor's diploma

Academic higher education is oriented towards fundamental and applied sciences. The academic education is aimed at ensuring the acquisition of theoretical knowledge and research skills, preparing for independent research activity in particular branch of sciences

Mandatory structure of the study programme is not stipulated.

Professional qualification:

Profesionālā doktora diploms mākslās / Professional Doctor's diploma in arts

This qualification is focused on arts, which enables students for independent research in the field of science

Mandatory structure of the study programme:

- Study courses on different aspects on art (at least 47 ECTS credits);
- Free choice study courses (at least 5 ECTS credits);
- Artistic practical learning (at least 20 ECTS credits);
- State examination and elaboration and defending doctoral thesis.

Rights Granted

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Recognition Status

Issuing institution and study field must be accredited

Other Information

<https://eplatforma.aika.lv/>

<https://www.enic-naric.net/page-Latvia>

Useful Links

- [An information resource on the Latvian Qualifications Framework](#)
- [Latvia profile on ENIC/NARIC portal](#)
- [Recognised institutions and recognised programmes](#)

For more information, please visit ar-go.online.

