

# HIGHER EDUCATION

## OVERVIEW

There are three levels of higher education programmes in Latvia – Bachelor, Master and Doctor. There are 37 public institutions of higher education and 21 higher education institutions established by legal bodies. One can receive higher education in Latvia in 6 Universities, 26 State Institutions of higher education and 26 Colleges. Universities and colleges implement academic and professional higher education programmes as well as scientific activities, research and artistic creativeness. Colleges provide first level professional higher education programmes. Colleges can act as colleges established by higher education establishments or as independent educational establishments.

**Academic higher education** programmes are based upon fundamental and applied science. The aim of the academic education is to secure the acquisition of theoretical background and skills for scientific research gradually preparing for independent scientific research in the chosen scientific branch or sub-branch. The State Academic Higher Education Standard determines the education content and scope of academic higher education. Passing exams and the development of Bachelor's or Master's Paper are an integral part of the academic higher education. Upon successful completion of academic study programme students receive the degree of Bachelor or the Master's degree.

**Professional higher education** programmes are based upon fundamental and applied science that ensures opportunities to prepare for professional activities. The State first level professional higher education Standard and the State second level professional higher education Standard determine the content and scope of professional higher education. Passing state exams is an integral part of professional higher education programme. Upon completion of second level professional higher education programmes students receive the degree of professional Bachelor or the professional Master's degree and the corresponding professional qualification.

Bachelor's degree is awarded to the group of related branches of science. In Latvia students can receive the following Bachelor's degree: Bachelor of Science in Education, Bachelor of Arts, Bachelor's degree in Social Sciences, Bachelor of Science, Bachelor of Engineering degree, Bachelor of Science in Agriculture, Bachelor's degree in Health Sciences, Bachelor's degree in Environmental Sciences.

Master's degree or its equivalent for completing higher education programme is required for admission to doctoral studies. Doctoral studies include advance studies of the subject in the relevant study programme and a scientific research and creative skills development. Doctoral thesis is an integral part of the Doctoral study programme to receive the Doctor's degree. Promotion Council awards Doctor's Degree after public defence of doctoral thesis. Doctor's degree certifies scientific qualification.

## HIGHER EDUCATION IN FIGURES

Study year	Students	Pedagogical staff	Educational institutions	Programmes
2007/2008	127 050	5 454	58	889
2008/2009	125 350	5 804	58	919
2009/2010	112 555	5 360	54	920

Students	Basic studies	Master programme	Doctoral studies	Total
Public institutions of higher education	62 855	12 794	2 044	77 693
Higher education institutions established by legal bodies	31 182	3 572	108	34 862
Total	94 037	16 366	2 152	112 555

## DEVELOPMENT

Latvia is among the countries which signed the Bologna Process Declaration in 1999 and is a full-fledged participant of the European Higher Education Area launched during the Bologna Ministerial Anniversary Conference on March 11 and 12, 2010 in Budapest-Vienna. The majority of Bologna Process reforms are successfully implemented in Latvia: three-cycle degree system (Bachelor, Master and Doctoral studies), Diploma Supplement, ECTS, internal quality assurance systems, accreditation process of higher education institutions and study programmes to ensure the recognition of Diploma issued by higher education institutions in Latvia also abroad. After the adoption of a draft Law on Higher Education, which is reviewed by the Saeima (the Latvian Parliament), it is planned to strengthen the Bologna Process demands also on the legislative level by introducing unified qualification framework in higher education, ensuring the formulation of learning outcomes on every level, programme, course or module and providing opportunities for establishing joint study programmes and allowing students to choose flexible ways of studies.

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The modernisation process in higher education is carried out according to the European Union University modernisation agenda. Management reforms of university administration were continued in 2009 shifting from 'strong ruling' to 'soft steering' and granting the derived public person's legal status to the state founded higher education institutions. In order to strengthen the autonomy of higher education institutions, significant changes are introduced in the system of funding of higher education institutions, thus ensuring the „block grant” funding of higher education institutions and allowing them manage their assets more freely.

In order to ensure and increase the competitiveness of the higher education in Latvia, the Ministry of Education and Science in collaboration with state institutions and cooperation partners has developed the “Action Plan for Necessary Reforms in Higher Education and Science for 2010 – 2012”, which is a short-term policy planning document and serves as a starting point for long-term structural reforms in higher education and science. The objective of the Plan is to state activities to be implemented thus causing corresponding conditions in the informative report approved by the government “On Necessary Structural Reforms in Higher Education and Science for Increasing Latvian Competitiveness Internationally”, for successful implementation of reform processes in 4 key areas of activities: 1) improve the quality of study work and scientific activities, 2) modernisation of material and technical base of higher education and science institutions and increasing effectiveness for using resources, 3) internationalization of higher education and increasing export incentives 4) integration of higher education and science sector with economic sector and public development. Adoption of this Action Plan is a significant prerequisite for creating the proper balance between the quality of studies, its efficiency and equity.

Despite the fact that in the academic year 2009/2010 there are more than 1700 students from foreign countries studying in higher education institutions in Latvia, from which 750 students study in English and 950 – in Russian, however the significant part of the Action Plan is to facilitate the export incentives of the higher education by developing a centre to coordinate the services of export incentives, developing study programmes in foreign languages, eliminating formal obstacles to receive visa or entrance permissions for students from foreign countries. It is planned to increase the amount of grant for students from foreign countries in order to increase mobility and to reach the set target of 20% for student mobility for studies in the European Union till the year 2020.

## SUPPORT FROM STRUCTURAL FUNDS IN 2007-2013

- 2 500 (27% of students studying in these spheres for Master's degree for the years 2009–2014) Master degree students studying Science, Maths, Engineering, Agriculture, Health Care, Environmental Protection, Logistics and the Arts will receive grants;
- 1 600 (43% of total number of students of doctoral studies for the years 2009–2014) Students of Doctoral studies will receive grants for their studies and for the development of qualification paper;
- 60 higher education programmes will be revised and 1 500 teaching staff of higher educational establishments will undergo professional development training according to the labour market demands and the new content of study programmes;
- renovated rooms and infrastructure in 31 higher education institutions;
- new study programmes for colleges developed in the field of aviation.

## INTERNATIONAL COOPERATION

It is planned to intensify the international cooperation on the Ministerial level and on the level of higher education institutions in Latvia by placing emphasis on signing bilateral/trilateral cooperation agreements, as well as participating in the international programmes and projects:

- Support is provided to higher education institutions and students for taking part in different European Union programmes, for example, Erasmus and Erasmus Mundus as well as the Nordic Council of Ministers “Nordplus” education programme's subprogramme “Higher Education” and in the framework of international bilateral financial instruments;
- The Ministry of Education and Science offers scholarships to students, scientists and academic staff from foreign countries in the framework of bilateral and trilateral intergovernmental and interministerial agreements for studies and research work in higher education institutions in Latvia;
- Active cooperation among higher education institutions in Latvia and abroad is carried out by signing bilateral cooperation agreements and supporting exchange of students and academic staff among the countries.

Latvia is interested to start negotiations with countries outside the European Union with the intention of concluding new international intergovernmental and interministerial agreements for the recognition of education documents, as well as the received degrees and qualifications in order to mutually increase the quality of higher education and its export incentives in long term.

## CONTACTS AND INFORMATION SOURCES

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### Higher Education Quality Evaluation Centre

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[www.aiknc.lv/en/index.php](http://www.aiknc.lv/en/index.php)

### Academic Information Centre

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