

## GENERAL SECONDARY EDUCATION IN LATVIA

### Legal and Institutional Framework

The laws regulating current education system in Latvia are: Law on Education (1998); Law on General Education (1990); Law on Vocational Education (1999); Law on Higher Education Institutions (1995). With the rights entitled by the above laws the Cabinet of Ministers defines rights and duties of the institutions involved and regulates processes within education system.

The Ministry of Education and Science is the central executive institution with responsibility for the development and monitoring of national educational policy, for the development of quality monitoring system and its implementation.

In 2009 the National Centre for Education (*Valsts izglītības satura centrs*), known by its Latvian acronym *VISC* was established under the auspices of the Minister of Education and Science. *VISC* is ultimately responsible for the development, administration and grading of centralised examinations and for issuing General Secondary Education Certificates. Until 2009 these functions were executed by the Centre for Curriculum Development and Examinations (*ISEC*).

*VISC* is responsible for summative assessment of students in general and vocational education. Its work in the field of general secondary education examinations is guided by the procedures prescribed by: the Cabinet Regulations Regarding the National General Secondary Education Standard and General Secondary Education Subject Standards; the Cabinet Regulations Regarding the Content and Procedures of Centralised Examinations, and the Cabinet Regulations on National Examination Procedures.

### General Secondary Education

General secondary education programmes last for three years (grades 10-12) and are provided by secondary schools (*vidusskola*), gymnasia (*ģimnāzija*), evening schools (*vakarskola*). General secondary education could also be obtained in secondary vocational education programs provided by vocational secondary schools (*profesionālā vidusskola*), technical schools (*tehnikums*) and some colleges (*koledža*).

The compulsory curriculum and assessment principles of 3-year general secondary education are set out in the National General Secondary Education Standard (Cabinet Regulations Regarding the National General Secondary Education Standard and General Secondary Education Subject Standards)

The curriculum may be delivered through one of four approved general education programs:

- Comprehensive education (without intensive teaching in any particular subject);
- Humanities and Social Sciences programme;
- Mathematics, Natural Sciences and Technical Sciences programme;
- General education with emphasis on a particular vocational subject.

All four education programmes have 8 compulsory subjects: Latvian Language, Latvian Literature, First Foreign Language, Second Foreign Language, Mathematics, History, Physical Education, and Informatics.

## Documents Certifying General Secondary Education Outcomes

A Diploma of General Secondary Education (*Atestāts par vispārējo vidējo izglītību*) together with a Statement of records (*Sekmju izraksts*) on a 10 point grading scale is awarded to every student who has received:

- positive assessment in all subjects taught according to the chosen profile;
- positive assessment in national examinations certified by a General Secondary Education Certificate (*Vispārējās vidējās izglītības sertifikāts*).

The above documents certifying the completion of the general secondary education entitle a graduate to continue studies in any higher education program in Latvia.

To receive the Diploma of General Secondary Education and qualify to continue their education students must complete courses in all subjects (minimum 12) and pass at least 4 final examinations including three compulsory subjects and at least one elective. The elective examination should be chosen from those administered by VISC or it can be a school administered examination in a subject taught not less than 105 hours.

The Cabinet Regulations Regarding the National General Secondary Education Standard and General Secondary Education Subject Standards allow a school to include in its education program subjects other than those listed in Regulations. Such programs introduced by a school should be coordinated with VISC. For example schools specialising in Mathematics can teach a subject Math Calculus. Schools are also allowed to set a school based exam in Math Calculus, which can be a subject by student's choice.

The compulsory examinations are in Latvian Language, Mathematics and a foreign language by student's choice. All compulsory examinations are centrally marked. A number of elective examinations are also centrally marked but some (e.g. Geography, Economics, Informatics, etc.) are not. See Table 1.

*Table1: Secondary school graduation examinations*

Centralised Examinations (compulsory)	Centralised Examinations (elective)	Centrally Set Examinations (administered and marked by school)
Latvian (written)	History of Latvian and World History (written)	Informatics (combined)
Mathematics (written)	Chemistry (written)	Geography (written)
Foreign language – English, German, French, Russian (combined)	Biology (written)	Economics (written)
	Physics (written)	Russian language and literature in minority schools (written)

Examinations which are centrally set, but administered and marked by school are assessed on a 10 point scale (10 - "with merit", 9 - "excellent", 8 - "very good", 7 - "good", 6 - "fairly good", 5 - "average", 4 - "fairly average", 3 - "poor", 2 - "very poor", 1 - "extremely poor"). VISC provides schools with common marking criteria and tables for converting exam scores to 10 point scale.

External examination system in Latvia dates back to 1994 when the British Council (Baltic States) initiated reform of the secondary school exit exam in English. The first centralised exam in English was introduced in 1997, followed by French and German in 1998. Gradually centralised exams in other subjects were introduced and since 2004 university entrance is based on the results of centrally marked examinations.

Content of centralised exams is developed by VISC based on National General Secondary Education Standard. Quality Assurance approach has been adopted to ensure and monitor quality of the exams and procedures. This refers to content, format and conduct of examinations as well as processing and appeals procedures.

### Reporting Centralised Examination Results until 2012

Until 2012 external examinations results in a General Secondary Education Certificate were reported on a six-grade scale A – F, where A is the highest level and F is considered unsatisfactory (See Appendix 1). A Student has failed the exam if none of the tasks is done or the exam score is less than 5% of the total score possible.

The grading process is largely criteria-related. VISC also uses statistical methods to maintain standards and these have an impact on the relative difficulty of subjects. See Table 2.

*Table 2: Grade boundaries in centralised exams in 2011/2012*

Examination	A (%)	B (%)	C (%)	D (%)	E (%)	F (%)
Latvian (Latviešu valoda)	80-100	65-79	50-64	36-49	21-35	5-20
Foreign language (Svešvaloda)	84-100	68-83	52-67	36-51	19-35	5-18
History (Vēsture)	79-100	59-78	41-58	28-40	20-27	5-19
Mathematics (Matemātika)	85-100	62-84	40-61	23-39	12-22	5-11
Physics (Fizika)	83-100	65-82	46-64	30-45	19-29	5-18
Chemistry (Ķīmija)	87-100	76-86	58-75	41-57	22-40	5-21
Biology (Bioloģija)	86-100	75-85	60-74	44-59	30-43	5-29

After each examination session VISC prepares and provides a wide range of statistical data freely available on its website: [www.visc.gov.lv](http://www.visc.gov.lv). Table 3 shows the number and percentage of grades for all centrally marked exams in school year 2011/2012.

*Table 3: Number and percentage of grades in 2011/2012 centralised exams*

Examination	Total	Level A		Level B		Level C		Level D		Level E		Level F	
English	19160	1380	7.2%	3547	18.5%	4928	25.7%	4852	25.3%	3699	19.3%	754	3.9%
Biology	1500	76	5.1%	279	18.6%	516	34.4%	442	29.5%	156	10.4%	31	2.1%
Physics	1506	76	5.0%	280	18.6%	431	28.6%	424	28.2%	242	16.1%	53	3.5%
French	49	3	6.1%	20	40.8%	25	51.0%	1	2.0%	-	0.0%	-	0.0%
Chemistry	680	43	6.3%	111	16.3%	228	33.5%	182	26.8%	97	14.3%	19	2.8%
Russian	3034	394	13.0%	1210	39.9%	923	30.4%	402	13.2%	98	3.2%	7	0.2%
Mathematics	20498	1287	6.3%	3534	17.2%	5208	25.4%	5383	26.3%	3706	18.1%	1291	6.3%
German	308	36	11.7%	80	26.0%	87	28.2%	57	18.5%	29	9.4%	19	6.2%
History	7585	205	2.7%	838	11.0%	1939	25.6%	2466	32.5%	1491	19.7%	644	8.5%
Latvian	20650	1128	5.5%	4042	19.6%	5777	28.0%	6098	29.5%	3316	16.1%	287	1.4%

### Reporting Centralised Examination Results from 2013

Amendments introduced in 2012 to Regulations Regarding the National General Secondary Education Standard and General Secondary Education Subject Standards change the existing practice of reporting examination results. Starting from spring 2013 onwards centrally marked examination results will be expressed in percentage instead of former A-F grade scale. For each centrally marked examination total percentage scored as well as percentage scored in

each part of the examination will be reported. (See Appendix 2) Exam percentage score shows a proportion of correct answers scored in points against the maximum points possible in the whole exam or its part.

From 2013 centralised examination results in foreign languages in addition to percentage score will also contain information on the proficiency levels B1, B2 or C1 according to the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages: Learning, Teaching, Assessment (CEFR).

To relate the foreign language exam results to CEFR levels VISC in 2010 initiated a study with an aim to define whether foreign language exams comply with the requirements of the CEFR and can be used to assess school-leavers language proficiency according to the proficiency levels described in the CEFR. Experts from the University of Latvia carried out a thorough study analysing foreign language tasks and results. The study concluded that the foreign language exams in their present form are capable of providing tasks for the C1, B2 and B1 levels.

The percentage scored in foreign language exam from 2013 will be expressed in CEFR levels as follows:

Total percentage scored	CEFR level
95-100%	C1
70-94%	B2
40-69%	B1

Foreign language exam scores below 40% will be reported as percentage only.



LATVIJAS REPUBLIKAS IZGLĪTĪBAS UN ZINĀTNES MINISTRIJAS  
VALSTS IZGLĪTĪBAS SATURA CENTRS



## VISPĀRĒJĀS VIDĒJĀS IZGLĪTĪBAS SERTIFIKĀTS

Nr. 2012/00000000000

**MAIRA BĒRZIŅA**

personas kods 000000-00000

piedalījās centralizētajos eksāmenos par vispārējo vidējo izglītību  
 un apliecināja savu zināšanu un prasmju atbilstību:

**angļu valoda – B līmenim**

kopvērtējums 80%

(lasīšana 73%, klausīšanās 86%, valodas lietojums 72%, rakstīšana 77%, runāšana 93%)

**fizika – B līmenim**

kopvērtējums 77%

(zināšanas un pamatprasmes 80%, zināšanu lietojums standartsituācijās 77%, zināšanu lietojums nestandarta situācijās 63%, pētnieciskā darbība, veicot eksperimentu 95%)

**matemātika – A līmenim**

kopvērtējums 92%

(zināšanas un pamatprasmes 92%, zināšanu lietojums standartsituācijās 95%, zināšanu lietojums nestandarta situācijās 86%)

**latviešu valoda – B līmenim**

kopvērtējums 70%

(zināšanas un pamatprasmes 84%, teksta izpratne 66%, tekstveide 61%)



Sertifikāts izdots 2012. gada 10. jūlijā

063-1

N<sup>o</sup> 101302



LATVIJAS REPUBLIKAS IZGLĪTĪBAS UN ZINĀTNES MINISTRIJAS  
VALSTS IZGLĪTĪBAS SATURA CENTRS



## VISPĀRĒJĀS VIDĒJĀS IZGLĪTĪBAS SERTIFIKĀTS

Nr. 2013/00000000000

**MAIRIS BĒRZIŅŠ**

personas kods 000000-00000

piešķir centralizētajos eksāmenos par vispārējo vidējo izglītību  
un apliecināja savu zināšanu un prasmju atbilstību:

### angļu valoda

kopvērtējums 80%

(lasīšana 73%, klausīšanās 86%, valodas lietojums 72%, rakstīšana 77%, runāšana 93%)  
kas atbilst Eiropas kopīgo pamatnostādņu valodu prasmes B2 līmenim

### fizika

kopvērtējums 77%

(zināšanas un pamatprasmes 90%, zināšanu lietojums standartsituācijās 77%, zināšanu lietojums nestandarta  
situācijās 63%, pētnieciskā darbība, veicot eksperimentu 95%)

### matemātika

kopvērtējums 92%

(zināšanas un pamatprasmes 92%, zināšanu lietojums standartsituācijās 95%, zināšanu lietojums nestandarta  
situācijās 86%)

### latviešu valoda

kopvērtējums 70%

(zināšanas un pamatprasmes 84%, teksta izpratne 66%, teksteide 61%)



Sertifikāts izdots 2013. gada 5. jūlijā

083-1

N<sup>o</sup> 101304