



# The Icelandic National Curriculum Guide for Upper Secondary Schools

– General Section

Ministry of Education, Science and Culture

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## PREFACE

The National Curriculum Guide contains the frame and conditions for learning and teaching based on the principles of existing laws, regulations and international conventions. Six fundamental pillars have been developed within this frame and they form the essence of the educational policy. They include the working methods, content and the learning environment at every school level and form important continuity in the Icelandic educational system. These pillars are literacy, sustainability, health, and welfare, democracy and human rights, equality and creativity.

It is of great importance to develop systematically the knowledge, skills and attitudes that strengthen the individuals' future ability to be critical, active and competent participants in a society based on equality and democracy. The fundamental pillars are, among other things, expected to improve this. The general public should be adequately educated to be able to keep the authorities sufficiently in check, whether this is within the economic or political, the media or other social sectors. Schools are factually the only institutions of society that can guarantee youth an opportunity to prepare for active participation in democratic society, exercise critical and creative thinking and to face diverse social and cultural circumstances.

It has long been known that there will be no real development in educational work without the support of teachers and school administrators. Education policy, organisation, study material and school buildings can be improved over and over again, but if the changes are not put into effect in schools, this is all of no use. The implementation of a new way of thinking in school activities is based on close cooperation of educational authorities with those who are the mainstay of the work carried out in schools.

I hope that this curriculum guide will prove valuable for Icelandic schools at a time of reconstruction, and I urge school personnel, parents, custodians and pupils to familiarise themselves with the content of the guide and to work according to its basic ideas.



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## INTRODUCTION

The general section of the National Curriculum Guide for Upper Secondary Schools stipulates the objectives and organisation of school activities at the upper secondary level. In this curriculum guide, the role of the National Curriculum Guide, general education and the fundamental pillars of education are discussed, and so are new important issues and organisation in creating curriculum guides at the upper secondary school level, cooperation, rights, responsibilities, school curriculum guides, etc.

The role of the upper secondary school is extensive. It is to encourage the overall development of pupils and their active participation in democratic society by offering each of them an education to suit their individual requirements. Furthermore, it is to prepare pupils for participation on the labour market and for further studies. The upper secondary school thus offers pupils a choice of a number of study programmes that provide varied preparation and rights regarding general education, artistic, academic and vocational studies. Appropriate diplomas are issued upon graduation from the different study programmes, such as upper secondary school leaving certificate, vocational examination for professional rights, matriculation examination, master craftsman examination or other final examinations. Upper secondary school study programme descriptions are to be organised according to this diversity. They must fulfil the requirements of the labour market, the receiving school level, at the same time as they provide pupils with overall general education.

According to the Upper Secondary School Act No. 92, 12 June 2008, the responsibility of curriculum development is increasingly transferred to the upper secondary schools. They are assigned to make proposals for the organisation, continuity and content of education in accordance with criteria, templates and the rules set for descriptions of study programmes. Thus upper secondary schools are given increased authority to develop studies with reference to the special status of the school, the needs of the pupils, local community, and the labour market. At the same time, this organisation is to give schools an opportunity to respond systematically to the requirements of the pupils, society and the economy, research findings, and quality control. Proposals for study programmes have to be confirmed by the Ministry of Education, Science and Culture (hereafter referred to as the Ministry of Education) in order to become part of the National Curriculum Guide for Upper Secondary Schools.

In this new curriculum guide, all studies at the upper secondary school are divided into four levels of competence that, on one hand, overlap with the compulsory school, and on the other, with the university level. The levels show gradually increased demand on the pupils' knowledge, skill and competence, leading to greater specialisation and professionalism. The final learning outcomes of each programme are linked to a competence level. The final objectives of study programmes are linked to competence criteria and indicate the competence that pupils are expected to have achieved upon graduation. In structuring study programmes, upper secondary schools are to work according to the rules of the Ministry of Education as they appear, for example, in the general section of the National Curriculum Guide.

At the upper secondary school level a new unit-credit system is planned, secondary school credits, which make it possible to assess pupils' work in any study programme. A secondary school credit is the standard for work effort of upper secondary school students, whether their studies are vocational or academic, and whether they take place at school or elsewhere. Each credit corresponds to pupils working about three days (six to eight hours a day).





## ROLE OF THE NATIONAL CURRICULUM GUIDE



The National Curriculum Guide is based on the Preschool Act, No. 90, 12 June 2008, the Compulsory School Act, No. 91, 12 June 2008, and the Upper Secondary School Act, No. 92, 12 June 2008. The National Curriculum Guide is a framework for school activities at these school levels and a guide through their objectives and goals. It gives a comprehensive view of education and expands on the education policy of these laws.

The National Curriculum Guide is intended for school administrators, teachers and other personnel of the educational system. It also provides information about school objectives and activities for pupils, their parents, public institutions, associations, social partners and the general public. The guide is, in a sense, a contract that the nation makes with itself on education.

### The role of the National Curriculum Guide is multiple:

- The National Curriculum Guide illustrates the public education policy, a description of study programmes and study requirements; specifications which schools and their personnel are to follow in their educational planning. The National Curriculum Guide is thus to ensure children and youth advantageous conditions for education in accordance with the current law and educational policy.
- The National Curriculum Guide is the main administrative tool used by educational authorities to ensure coordination and synchronisation in schools in the execution of a common educational policy. The National Curriculum Guide is therefore one of the

main **prerequisites** for the Ministry of Education to fulfil its assigned role in directing and supervising the quality and execution of education.

- The National Curriculum Guide defines the framework of administrators, teachers and other personnel of individual schools in their planning, execution and evaluation of school activities which they must carry out, as detailed, for example, in the school curriculum guides.
- The National Curriculum Guide provides pupils and their custodians with information about the quality system and primary criteria on which school activities are based. It is the basis for evaluation of school activities and study assessment in schools. The National Curriculum Guide is intended to provide teachers, pupils and their parents with information on the education of children and youth at each educational level. The National Curriculum Guide is also intended for those who train teachers and other school personnel, as well as those who create study material, research or survey of educational activities.

## **1.1 The general section of the National Curriculum Guide**

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Various issues that are discussed in the National Curriculum Guide are common for preschool, compulsory school and upper secondary school. Chapters 1 to 3 are the same for the curriculum guides of all three levels, and there the objectives of the educational system are discussed, general education and the objectives of the school system, in addition to the fundamental pillars of education and evaluation of school activities. Emphasis is on flexibility and continuity in the educational system, both in content and working methods. Additional emphasis is on school development and general professionalism of teachers at all levels.

In the general section of the National Curriculum Guide for Preschool, Compulsory School and Upper Secondary School, the role of each level is described and the special emphasis in learning and teaching at each level: their objectives, tasks, and working methods. In the school curriculum guides published by each school, the policy of the National Curriculum Guide is developed in accordance with the policy of the school in question, the pupil body, the school's professional emphasis and special characteristics.

## **1.2 The role of schools**

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Schools are educational institutions and their role is defined in laws on education. Icelandic schools constitute a coordinated whole, the educational system, which is to ensure consistency and continuity in education from preschool to university and adult education. Emphasis is on integral educational policy and clearly defined divisions between school levels so that pupils can pass easily from preschool to compulsory school and from compulsory school to upper secondary school in accordance with their individual educational performance and development. Pupils should also have the opportunity to study at two school levels

simultaneously if it is appropriate for their education. Every school level aims at offering varied tasks and working methods in order to meet different individual needs and encourage the overall development, welfare and education of each pupil.

The main objective of preschool, compulsory school and upper secondary school is to encourage the general education of the citizens. Schools should make an effort to operate according to the status and needs of children and youth. Educational work is to encourage their active participation in democratic society, within and outside school.

The content and tasks of school activities are incorporated in fields of study, subjects or course units. It should be kept in mind that fields of study, subjects or course units are not goals in themselves but aids to facilitate meaningful education and to achieve the objectives of the educational work. The National Curriculum Guides of the three school levels therefore define objectives in accordance with the characteristics of each school level, and the age and development of children and youth.

In the organisation and tasks of school activities and in the working methods of schools, attention should be paid to learning environment and communication that is conducive to general education. General education is the basis for vocational education and all specialised education. Learning and education take place not only in schools. Education is a lifelong process. It is important that schools encourage their pupils' initiative for studying, their enjoyment and enthusiasm and thus promote their education.

In order to achieve the objectives of welfare, learning and education, the working methods of preschools, compulsory schools and upper secondary schools, as well as the interaction between pupils and between pupils and their teachers, are no less important than the tasks set in classes. The working methods of schools should be based on tolerance and equality, democratic cooperation and responsibility.

### **1.3 Teacher professionalism**

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The role of teachers is crucial in all school activities. Their work is vital in the school system, such as teaching, administration, upbringing, counselling, research and development. Thus school administrators, remedial teachers and counsellors belong to the body of teachers. Well-educated and enthusiastic teachers are the **prerequisite** for the quality of education and success in school activities at all school levels.

Teacher professionalism is based on their special vocational education, knowledge, attitudes and work ethic. Teacher professionalism concerns pupils, their education and welfare. Effective communication and constructive teaching enhances the studies and competences of children and youth. Teachers are not only responsible for imparting knowledge to their pupils but also giving them an opportunity to acquire knowledge and skills, encouraging their joy of working and nurturing creative thinking. Teachers guide children and youth in their studies

and the evaluation of their studies and also support them to adopt a healthy way of life. They endeavour to create good school atmosphere, fair work procedures and an encouraging learning environment.

At the beginning of the 21st century, extensive changes have taken place in Icelandic society and these have both direct and indirect influence on the educational system, the pupils' studies and the work of teachers. Whether it is the economy or industrial affairs, social issues or migration, technology or communications, there are radical changes taking place that will influence cultural life and knowledge, education and upbringing. Changes in Icelandic society have truly been swift in recent years, making increasing demands on schools in assisting society to understand these changes and cope with new conditions. These changes increase the demands on teachers, both in analysing social changes and adopting school activities to the present status in a responsible manner.

Teachers cooperate with school administrators on the development of school curriculum guides consistent with conditions and special emphasis at each school level. It is the responsibility of teachers to implement professionally in their teaching and other school activities the stipulations of education law and the policy that is specified in the National Curriculum Guide.

## GENERAL EDUCATION

# 2

Definitions of general education are not consistent. Such definitions vary with time and place and even depend on the individual. The seven liberal arts were the frame for general education of the upper classes in the Classical World. In the Middle Ages the church defined general education in Europe to meet its own needs, but with the Industrial Revolution new technology and academic studies appeared that laid the foundation for general education in modern society. In the 21st century general education is defined with regard to social and individual needs.

At any given time, general education advances the capacity of the individual for meeting the challenges of everyday life. General education therefore contributes towards the individuals' understanding of their characteristics and abilities and consequently their capacity to fulfil their role in a complex society. It is at the same time both individually and socially oriented.

People acquire general education not only within the educational system. However, the school system is the most important basis for society to ensure general education. It is therefore appropriate to explain the fundamental pillars in the National Curriculum Guide and connect them to the main fields of knowledge and skills that the individual is offered at school. General education is based on varied studies of the principal aspects of our culture, environment and society. General education is the goal of integral school activities and studies in fields of study, subjects and course units. Definition of the fundamental pillars is an attempt to map the main fields of the general education at which schools aim.

## 2.1 Fundamental pillars

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The educational policy that appears in the National Curriculum Guide is based on six fundamental pillars on which the curriculum guidelines are based.

These fundamental pillars are:

- literacy
- sustainability
- health and welfare
- democracy and human rights
- equality
- creativity

Each of the fundamental pillars derives from laws on preschool, compulsory school and upper secondary school. There is also reference to other laws which include legal provisions for education and teaching in the school system, such as in the Act on Equal Status and Equal Rights of Women and Men, No. 10/2008. In addition, government policy in various issues is taken into account, as, for example, published in Welfare for the Future regarding important policy issues on sustainability. International conventions to which Iceland is a party are taken into consideration, for example, the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child and the policy of international institutions of which Iceland is a member. Here the UNESCO policy on general education and sustainable development is an apt example and also the Council of Europe policy on democracy and human rights. In formulating the policy that appears in the definition of the fundamental pillars, the idea of teacher professionalism is also taken into account as well as the developmental work that has been carried out in Icelandic preschools, compulsory schools and upper secondary schools.

### The role of fundamental pillars

The fundamental pillars refer to social, cultural, environmental and ecological literacy so that children and youth may develop mentally and physically, thrive in society and cooperate with others. The fundamental pillars also refer to a vision of the future, ability and will to influence and be active in maintaining society, change it and develop.

The fundamental pillars are based on the view appearing in school legislation that both social objectives and the educational objectives of the individual are to be achieved. They are socially oriented as they are to promote increased equality and democracy and to ensure well-educated and healthy citizens, both for participating in and for changing and improving society and also for contemporary employment. The fundamental pillars are meant to accentuate the principle of general education and encourage increased continuity in school activities as a whole. In evaluating school activities, the influence of the fundamental pillars on teaching, play and studies have to be taken into consideration.

## The fundamental pillars are an intrinsic part of school activities

The concepts that the fundamental pillars are based on are to be reflected in the working methods, communication and atmosphere of schools. They should be evident in all educational activities and in the content of school subjects and fields of study, both regarding the knowledge and the skills that children and youth are to acquire. Fields of study can be specialisation of the tasks of school activities, across subjects and school levels.

The fundamental pillars are an intrinsic part of all curriculum guides at all school levels and their stipulations for all school activities:

- Choice of material and content of study, teaching and play should reflect the fundamental pillars.
- Working methods and techniques that children and youth learn are influenced by ideas which appear in discussions of the fundamental pillars.
- Procedures of teachers and other school personnel are to be based on the fundamental pillars and thus encourage independence, initiative and development of school activities.
- When school activities are evaluated, it should be observed whether and how the fundamental pillars are reflected in study, teaching and play.

The National Curriculum Guide for Preschool, Compulsory School and Upper Secondary School is the basis for an integral composition of curriculum guides in the school system. The organisation of each day, week, month and school year is to reflect the comprehensive overview formulated in the fundamental pillars. In school activities it is important to approach tasks in an integral manner, applying professional broadmindedness and, when appropriate, interdisciplinary methods. This can necessitate unconventional teaching methods and unusual approach to school activities.

## Relations and nature of the fundamental pillars

The fundamental pillars of education are divided into six categories. They are interrelated and interdependent in education and school activities. By referring to them, a clear overview of educational work can be obtained. They are based on the idea that active democracy is unobtainable without literacy of the diverse symbolism and communication systems of society. They are also based on the idea that active democracy can only flourish if simultaneously every form of equality between individuals and groups in society is supported. Human rights will not be ensured, except by supporting individual health and welfare and by fighting discrimination and every form of violence, including bullying.

Sustainability concerns the interplay of the environment, economy, society and welfare. Sustainability includes respect for the environment, sense of responsibility, health, democratic working methods and justice, not only at the present time but also for future generations. Therefore it is unthinkable to support human rights without simultaneously espousing

sustainability and balanced social development. Additionally, sustainability is dependent on the equality of social groups. Democracy and human rights, and health and welfare are thus an integral part of sustainability and, at the same time, independent fundamental pillars of education.

Education towards sustainability, equality, democracy and human rights therefore aims at children and youth understanding society as it is and has developed. At the same time, education aims at enabling children and youth to participate in forming society and thus acquiring a vision of the future and ideals to advocate. The concepts education towards sustainability, education towards democracy and human rights and education towards equality, do not necessarily aim at developing new subjects or fields of study, they are rather used to point out educational material and attitudes that are to be emphasised.

Creativity is an important factor in all education and thus part of the other fundamental pillars. Creativity is an intrinsic part of all studies and work, not only art studies. All the fundamental pillars are based on critical thinking, reflection, scientific attitude and democratic values.

Even though the fundamental pillars are linked, they each have their characteristics. Therefore they can be used to comprise the objectives of the whole educational system and issues emphasised by each school or school level. The fundamental pillars are, however, not a new system to classify school activities, but are defined to clarify and integrate the objectives of schools. Most aspects of school activities can be classified as belonging to one fundamental pillar and many of these aspects may belong to any of them.

### 2.1.1 Literacy

Literacy has usually been linked to the knowledge and skills needed to write down one's thoughts and understand a printed text, that is reading and writing. It has been associated with one set of symbols, printed characters, and related culture and forms of expression. Schools have considered competence in this field chiefly related to individuals, and it could therefore be measured: some are able to read fluently, some are hardly literate, others even illiterate.

Over time, attitudes towards literacy have changed as scholars of various disciplines have through their research clarified this problem. Although scholars do not agree on everything concerning literacy, a few important issues they have pointed out should be mentioned: Literacy depends on agreement made on usage and meaning of words in a speech community and is therefore by nature a social problem. It is dependent on tradition and is therefore not a capacity that an individual can acquire and apply regardless of place, time, culture and values. Literacy requires writing utensils, material to write on and medium, for example, a book to publish what is written and this is partially dependant on technical media and know-how.

Even though literacy deals with systems of symbols and communication technology, it should be pointed out that it deals first and foremost with creation of meaning, and this creation never takes place in a vacuum. Two individuals may understand the same text in a different



way, although their reading technique, phonological awareness and vocabulary are similar. The quality of their literacy cannot be said to differ for their creation of meaning depends on their experience and numerous circumstantial factors that influence their interpretation and understanding. Some texts are even difficult to understand without being acquainted with the discussion tradition and use of terms in various social groups.

It is not only that literacy research which has changed public attitude, digital technology has changed the surroundings where reading and writing take place. Computers and digital communication technology are considered indispensable factors of everyday life, both at home and at work, and have become essential equipment of education. It is therefore of great importance that computers are not only powerful word processing and calculation tools but tools that can be used for wide-ranging creation of meaning, for example, together with imagery. Pupils and teachers are therefore not limited to the printed text as computer technology offers other systems of meaning for studying and teaching. When preparing surveys or projects of various kinds, they can now discuss how to compile and present the material. Should it be done in a short film or a brochure, a radio programme, or a website?

Under these circumstances, terms like digital literacy, media education and media literacy have appeared. Digital literacy refers to knowledge that people have to acquire to be able to use computer and web technology for various forms of communication and creation of material. It involves photographs, printed text as well as music, and relates to the whole spectrum of material management, that is, resources, processing and communication.

The term media education refers to educational work where pupils use various media in their studies and, at the same time, learn a good deal about their utility and influence on culture and democracy. The objective is that they learn to evaluate the material that is communicated in addition to training in using these media for creating material and knowledge. The term media literacy denotes skills and knowledge that pupils acquire in these studies.

Even though the number of tools that can be used in education has increased, it does not diminish at all the importance of reading and writing in the traditional sense. As always, it is of great importance that children acquire certain reading and writing skills although attention is drawn to all the technology that pupils can make use of in communication, education and creation of meaning – for themselves and society.

The main objective of literacy is for pupils to become active participants in transforming and rewriting the world by creating their own meaning and responding in a personal and creative manner to what they read with the aid of the media and technology that is available.

### **2.1.2 Sustainability**

Education towards sustainability aims at making people able to deal with problems that concern the interaction of the environment, social factors and the economy in the development of society.

The most common understanding of the concepts sustainability and sustainable development involves that we leave the environment to our descendants in no worse condition that we received it, and that we endeavour to meet the needs of the present without reducing the possibilities of future generations to meet theirs. This also refers to the definition of sustainability that it is a balanced situation and that sustainable development is the process of change when society, or a smaller unit, is developing towards sustainability. The difference between the traditional definition and the definition used here is a difference in emphasis rather than in meaning. This difference in emphasis is, however, important in educational work as it stresses that little things mean a lot, and that it is not necessary to wait for big changes to be able to rejoice in the smaller.

The environment and thereby nature surround human society. Sustainable development cannot take place, except within the limits that the ecosystems of the earth draw. Therefore understanding of these limits, in addition to the processes, laws, and cycles of nature, is an important basis for successfully working according to the ideals of sustainable development. Thus pupils have to know, understand and respect nature, both because of its intrinsic value and because of the service it renders mankind. Environmental protection, climate change and biodiversity are examples of tasks to be tackled.

From a social perspective, this ideology concerns equality, both intragenerational and transgenerational. In order to obtain equality, democratic methods have to be employed, the diversity of mankind respected and multiculturalism ensured. Diversity is a source of strength that can eradicate poverty, contribute to peace and secure living conditions and quality of life for all, wherever they live in the world. Sustainability is a prerequisite to understand the importance of one's own welfare and that of others.

The economic factor of sustainability is closely related to both the environmental and social factors. The economic system of each society plays an important role when it comes to using natural resources in a sensible manner and dividing them fairly. In this context it is vital that economic growth neither relies on nor leads to excessive encroachment of nature. Production and consumption are inseparable aspects of society, and no less the finances of the individual. Understanding one's own ecological footprint, and the ecological footprints of societies and nations, is conducive to sustainability and moderation. Consumer education and financial literacy are therefore an important prerequisite for being able to assess our needs now and in the future.

Education for sustainability encompasses creating a society of collective responsibility where individuals develop as active citizens, conscious of their own values, attitudes and feelings for global impact and equality of all the inhabitants of the earth, for nature and the environment, for democracy, human rights and justice, for equality and multiculturalism, for welfare and health, and for economic development and vision of the future.

Education for sustainability further encompasses that in their studies children and youth come to grips with diverse problems and points of controversy. Teaching and working methods of the school are to be interwoven with the idea that the aim of education is capability for action. This involves training in democratic working methods and that children and youth are trained to be interested in and want to take part in society.

### **2.1.3 Democracy and human rights**

When a matter of ethical opinion arises in a democracy, people take a stand and, moreover, they take an active part in shaping society. In a democracy the citizens enjoy human rights and decide on all major issues collectively. The prerequisite of democracy is collective responsibility, consciousness and activity of the citizens and this makes them capable of participating in shaping their society and influencing it, both at home and away. Respect for the human value and health of children and youth involves both respect for their human rights and acceptance of their talents and possibilities for development. Attitudes, values and ethics are essential factors in education for democracy and are at the same time an intrinsic part of other fundamental pillars of education. Schools are to cultivate the attitude that society is to be democratic and individuals are to be critical and have a vision of the future.

Democracy is important in schools. Firstly, schools have to take into consideration that children and youth will in the future take part in democratic society and therefore it is important for children to learn about such societies. Secondly, in all their working methods schools have to take into consideration that the human rights of every individual have to be respected. It is expected that children and youth learn democracy by learning about democracy in a democracy.

In all education, tasks and methods of the school it is important to keep in mind pupils' interest and responsibility for their own education. Furthermore, knowledge of the basic rights of children and adults has to be improved, taking into consideration Icelandic legislation and international conventions. Social studies and life skills are basic subjects for knowledge of democracy and human rights, and of attitudes towards these factors. Democratic outlook is, however, relevant in all other subjects. Democratic values will not be established, unless all subjects and all fields of study are used for this purpose. Concern for people, animals and the environment is also part of democratic education and relevant in all subjects.

Education for democracy and human rights is based on critical thinking and reflection on the basic values of society. Such education relies on cooperation with parties outside the school, no less than cooperation within the school. Thus active cooperation is expected from the homes of children and youth concerning sports and youth work. Active cooperation with the local community within the municipality or area is required, but such cooperation is one of the key factors of sustainability. It is essential for democratic schools to take in this way part in creating a sustainable society of collective responsibility.

### 2.1.4 Equality

The objective of education for equality is to give every individual an opportunity to develop on his or her own terms, nurture their talents and lead a responsible life in a free society in the spirit of understanding, peace, tolerance, broadmindedness and equality. In all school activities everyone should take an active part in creating a society of equality and justice. Equality education involves critical examination of the established ideas in society and its institutions in order to teach children and youth to analyse the circumstances that lead to discrimination of some and privileges for others.

Equality education refers to both the content of education, study methods and learning environment. Equality is an umbrella concept that involves a number of factors. The following are some of these factors in an alphabetical order: age, class, culture, descent, gender, disability, language, nationality, outlook on life, race, religion, residence, sexual orientation. At every school level, education for equality should address how these factors can establish discrimination and privileges for people.

The Act on Equal Status and Equal Rights of Women and Men, No. 10/2008, has clear provisions that at all school levels pupils should be educated in equal rights where an effort should be made to prepare both genders for equal participation in society, both in family life and on the labour market. Emphasis should be on boys and girls having as extensive and as equal opportunities as possible. Nowhere in school activities, content, or in working methods should there be any obstacles for either gender. It is important that all school activities, both in classes as in all communication, should be guided by these provisions of the Equality Act. At the same time, it is important to point out that some people have to live with various kinds of discrimination when more than one of these factors come together, for example, gender and disability, sexual orientation and nationality, age and residence. For this purpose it is reasonable for schools to make use of the knowledge that has been acquired in new studies, such as gender studies, queer theory, multicultural studies and disability studies

Equality education incorporates, among other things, studies of gender and sexual orientation. The fundamental pillar equality also emphasises education concerning culture, nationality, languages, religion and values. One of the tasks is the development of Iceland as a multicultural society. With equality emphasis is also put on social understanding of the nature of disabilities. The challenges of people with disabilities derive from the environment no less than from their disabilities. In all school activities the emphasis is on inclusive education.

An effort should be made to create awareness of the different social position and significance of the young and old in comparison to those who are middle aged. Use can be made of the stereotypes, characteristics and historical development of different age groups, that is: childhood, teenage years, adulthood and old age, and the different meaning of these ages at different times in history and in different cultures. The different access to social values depending on class, residence and resources may also be studied. Additionally, the influence

of class and residence on health, education and employment opportunities, and access to positions of authority may be studied.

### 2.1.5 Health and welfare

Health is based on mental, physical and social wellbeing. It is subject to complex interrelation of the individual, circumstances and environment. As children and youth spend a good part of the day at school, all school activities should encourage health and systematically nurture welfare and wellbeing.

Schools have to create a positive atmosphere and health-promoting environment where development and health are systematically supported in various ways. The main health factors that are to be encouraged are: positive self-image, exercise, nutrition, rest, mental wellbeing, positive communication, security, hygiene, sexual health and understanding of one's own feelings and those of others.

School administrators, teachers and other school personnel should be aware of what is involved in health-related preventive measures and to be able to utilise reliable information concerning the factors that influence health. Schools are to create an environment that contributes to healthy ways of life for children and youth. Their competence is to be encouraged in communication, creating self-image, decision-making, setting goals and stress management. It is necessary that they understand the influence that culture, mass media and technology can have on health and wellbeing. The objective is, among other things, to enable children and youth to make informed and responsible decisions concerning their health.

Schools that emphasise daily exercise and systematically encourage physical exercise as part of daily life, lay the foundation for lifelong physical, mental and social wellbeing. Exercise should be taught, motor skills improved and a secure environment created to encourage physical training for everyone. This has to be kept in mind in physical education and all other school activities. In the same way, healthy diet should be encouraged in schools through education and abundant supply of varied foods. Emphasis should be on the pedagogic and social value of meals by, among other things, giving enough time for meals.

It is important that schools take into consideration the individual needs of children and youth. Everyone needs an opportunity to enjoy their strengths, which is a key factor in building a positive self-image. Many hobbies of children and youth advance health and can be of use in this context. By making room for their interest areas in school activities, it is possible to develop strengths and interest, stimulate a positive self-image and thus encourage health.

In order to meet the emphasis on health, school personnel have to review their work with regard to health and cooperate towards clear objectives that support positive school atmosphere, improve educational performance and wellbeing. In this context school personnel are important as role models. At the same time, close cooperation with parents,

healthcare personnel and people from the local community is essential since such cooperation is a prerequisite **for success**.

### 2.1.6 Creativity

Learning takes place when an individual responds to stimulus, connects it to previous knowledge and creates new. In this sense education is essentially self-creation, a means of a well-informed individual to become “a new and better person”. The creative incentive has its origin in innate curiosity, desire for enterprise, and stimulates individual initiative. The creative force engenders interest in education when children and youth understand the meaning of tasks and their value.

Creation involves forming tasks and communicating them, to make something, make something new or different from what the individual knows or has done before. Creation is to invent, enjoy, encourage curiosity and interest, engage the imagination and play with possibilities. Creativity is to sense what lies ahead and carry it out. Creativity is based on curiosity, challenge, excitement and search. Grappling the problem and finding a solution can, in itself, be the reward of creation. Creativity disrupts traditional patterns, rules and systems and shows phenomena and received ideas in a different light.

Creativity involves critical thinking and methods that constantly offer new possibilities and therefore the creative process matters no less than the final product. To create is to go outside the known set and thereby increase one’s knowledge and skills. Although the general sense of creation is closely connected to art and art studies, creativity as a fundamental pillar is no more limited to art studies than other subjects or fields of study. Creativity as a fundamental pillar is to encourage reflection, personal education and initiative in educational work.

Creative force and intuition are key elements in this context. Critical thinking is a key factor in literacy and creativity and they are interlinked with the role of critical thinking in democracy. Creativity utilises ideas and shapes attitudes, values and competence. Working methods in artistic creation and science are often characterised by joy of creation, initiative and originality. Such working methods are desirable in all educational work. Creativity not only concerns something new and original but also utilises what already exists. It encompasses task solutions and search for new possibilities. This harmonises well with education towards sustainability and literacy in the widest sense.

Play is an important learning method and opens new dimensions where the joy of creation for children and youth can come into its own. Happiness and joy depends on finding an outlet for one’s talent as an individual and part of a whole. Creation is an important basis for a vision of the future and for creating such a vision, for participating in creating democratic society and a role of one’s own in it.

## 2.2 Competence

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Modern society makes numerous and often contradictory demands on its citizens. The role of the educational system is, among other things, to prepare individuals for the challenges and tasks of everyday life and assist them to understand the complicated relationship of nature and society, objects and ideas. General education aims at increasing the self-understanding of the individuals and their competence to participate in a complicated society. Pupils have to know what they know and what they are capable of, and how best to utilise their knowledge and skills to influence their environment and improve it. Competence is therefore more than knowledge and skills; it also encompasses attitudes and moral strength, feelings and creative force, social skills and initiative.

The pupil not only needs to have acquired knowledge, skills and competence but also to be able to acquire new knowledge, skills and competence, analyse it and communicate. Education has to incorporate all these factors. Such education is based on a learning community which is characterised by the fundamental pillars of education: literacy, sustainability, democracy and human rights, health and welfare and creativity.

When organising educational work, emphasis is to be on the education of children and youth and their competence at study completion. Teaching methods and forms of communication, study material and teaching equipment should first and foremost aim at supporting pupils in their studies. Educational objectives focus on the competence that the pupil acquires during the learning process and has acquired at study completion.

Educational work, as defined by the fundamental pillars of education, takes place in fields of study, school subjects and course units. On the other hand, many tasks require being dealt with in an interdisciplinary and integral manner. In the National Curriculum Guide for each school level the fundamental pillars are further developed. There the scope of school activities is described and the role of teachers at each school level defined. The cooperation of homes and school is also discussed.

The fundamental pillars of education are developed at each school level corresponding to the law on preschool, compulsory school and upper secondary school. In the National Curriculum Guide for Preschool, the fundamental pillars are connected to the fields of education of the preschool, in the compulsory school the fundamental pillars are connected to the school subjects, and in the upper secondary school the fundamental pillars of education are developed in course units and different study programmes. The fundamental pillars are therefore developed in a different manner at the various school levels. In the curriculum guides for each school level continuity and tasks are further discussed, and so are progression, demands for competence and division into levels in accordance with the characteristics and working methods at each school level.

## 2.3 Learnability

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Pupils should know how to acquire new knowledge and skills, in addition to applying the knowledge they have already acquired. They should also be conscious of the importance of being responsible and creative in seeking knowledge, in reflection and reasoning. In order to acquire diverse competences, pupils should get an opportunity to work on different tasks that are connected to the culture of society, the environment of children and youth and everyday life. In all educational work, both in classes and at other times, children and youth should be encouraged to attain learnability both in general and in specific fields.

Learnability is thus a fundamental pillar in all educational work and is based on self-understanding and interest. Learnability also includes knowing one's own strengths and weaknesses and to be able to make decisions accordingly. Learnability is based on the natural curiosity of children and youth, their motivation, their belief in their own abilities and capability of applying their competences in a constructive manner when working on various tasks.

This demands a stimulating learning environment at school. An effort should be made for the pupils to integrate their knowledge and skills as they gain experience in communication that is based on respect for human rights and equality. At the same time, pupils are to learn to express their views and explain their working methods in a responsible, critical and clear manner.



## EVALUATION AND SUPERVISION

# 3

Evaluation is an inseparable factor in school activities and the learning of children and youth. Evaluation gives information about how far children and youth have obtained learning objectives, encourages them to succeed and is useful for teachers and personnel to promote progress in learning. The objective of evaluation of school activities is to ensure that the rights of children and youth are secured and they obtain the education and service they are entitled to according to law. Evaluation is divided into two parts: On the one hand, there is evaluation that schools carry out themselves and is here called internal evaluation. On the other hand, is evaluation by external parties for local authorities, the Ministry of Education or other parties, and is here called external evaluation.

### 3.1 Assessment

Assessment of children and youth's achievement and improvement is a regular part of educational work, inseparable from learning and teaching. The main objectives of assessment of education are to give guiding information about education and how far its objectives have been achieved. Assessment is used to examine whether the general competence standard of the National Curriculum Guide has been met, educational progression is encouraged, pupils are encouraged to improve their achievement, and to evaluate what assistance pupils require.

Assessment is aimed at gaining information about educational performance and how individuals and groups achieve set objectives. Assessment should give pupils and their parents, teachers, receiving schools and school authorities the necessary information about study progress which can be a guideline in educational planning. If assessment is to fulfil

these multiple roles, it has to meet the requirements of being fair and reliable. Assessment has to be planned and carried out in such a way that it evaluates what is supposed to evaluate in a reliable manner.

### Evaluation in school curriculum guides and school operation plans

School curriculum guides should detail the guiding principles of assessment and references so that pupils, parents and school personnel are fully aware of the demands that are made and how the school plans to assess how they are met. Pupils, parents, teachers and other personnel have to be able to understand the outcome of assessment in a similar way. This is a prerequisite for information to be used to improve learning and teaching.

### Varied assessment methods

Objectives of school activities are diverse and different means can be employed to obtain them. Therefore assessment methods have to be varied. They are to be consistent with competence criteria, mirror issues emphasised in educational work and be pupil oriented. Assessment is to be reliable, impartial, honest and fair. All aspects of education are to be evaluated: knowledge, skill, competence with reference to the criteria of the National Curriculum Guide.

Teachers should assist children and youth in making a realistic self-evaluation, explain to them the objectives of education and how they are progressing towards them. Emphasis should be on formative assessment where pupils regularly consider their education with their teachers in order to attain their own educational goals and decide where to head. Criteria, on which the assessment is based, have to be absolutely clear to pupils.

The methods of assessment have to be varied and in accordance with the emphases of educational work and apply to as many aspects of learning as possible. Therefore both oral, practical, written and pictorial assignments are to be assessed, also short specific exercises and more thorough studies, individual and group work, projects carried out within a limited timeframe and with unlimited time, and additionally various types of examinations. Portfolios or workbooks, where various tasks and solutions are collected, for example digitally, can be useful to give an overview of the pupils' work and to show their application, activity, work methods, progress and social skills. Assessment has to give special consideration to the needs of pupils and especially their learning disabilities. Schools are to make an effort to meet the needs of pupils in such cases. Special arrangements should be made for these pupils when it comes to general assessment, for example, longer time to complete examinations, being given customised examinations, use of support materials and assistance during examinations and oral examinations.

## 3.2 Evaluation of school activities

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Evaluation of school activities is by law part of the supervisory work of schools and school authorities in order to ensure the rights of pupils and promote school improvement. The

objectives of evaluation and supervision are primarily divided into three parts. Firstly, it is to examine whether school activities are in line with the provisions of law, regulations and the National Curriculum Guide. Secondly, to improve the quality of educational work and encourage improvements, ensure that the rights of pupils are observed and that they are provided with the service that they are entitled to in accordance with law. Thirdly, it is to provide information about school activities, their results and development.

Schools are responsible for internal evaluation but the Ministry of Education, and depending on circumstances, local authorities carry out the external evaluation. External evaluation comprises, for example, evaluations of school activities as a whole or specific aspects of these activities, comprehensive evaluation of the activities of individual schools, evaluation of school subjects and aspects of learning, and supervision of internal evaluation of schools. Additionally, the Ministry of Education is responsible for supervising that local authorities fulfil their relevant responsibilities created by laws on schools. Furthermore, the Ministry of Education is to supervise the status and development of the educational system. To that end the Ministry of Education collects diverse data on school management, for example, through participation in international surveys of learning outcomes and other aspects of educational work.

The Ministry of Education makes a plan about evaluation at all school levels and places it on its website. Additionally, the Ministry of Education publishes detailed directions on internal evaluation that schools can use, if they wish.

The National Curriculum Guide is the basis for criteria on evaluation of school activities but school curriculum guides further detail the objectives and criteria that are stipulated in the National Curriculum Guide and, depending on circumstances, school curriculum guides. It is important that internal and external evaluation incorporates all the objectives of school activities stipulated by law, including the role of schools to encourage pupils to participate in democratic society, support initiative and independent thinking, social skills and other factors that are, among other things, related to the fundamental pillars of education.

### **3.2.1 Internal evaluation**

Internal evaluation should specify the connection with the objectives stipulated in the school curriculum guide. Each school develops methods that take into account the unique emphases of the school in order to determine to what extent these objectives have been achieved. The methods of internal evaluation take into account the educational work that is being carried out in each case.

The internal evaluation of each school is based on a systematic method that is described in the school curriculum guide. Each school year, the school operation plan presents what aspects are to be targeted in the internal evaluation. The school internal evaluation is an effective part of everyday work and includes all aspects of school activities, such as administration, teaching, study requirements, assessment and communication within and outside the

classroom. Emphasis should be on the active participation of personnel, pupils, parents and other interested parties, depending on circumstances.

Information has to be collected by various means in order to evaluate school activities realistically. The internal school evaluation is based on diverse data. The selection of information and data that the evaluation is based on is determined by the research topic each time.

Objectives and means are to be evaluated regularly. Internal evaluation gives information about the strengths in the activities of the school and where improvement is needed. With regard to the findings of the internal evaluation, improvements are defined and planned. Schools publish the outcomes of the internal evaluation and improvement plans. Personal information is exempt from publication.

### **3.2.2 External evaluation**

The Ministry of Education, and depending on circumstances local authorities, are responsible for the external evaluation of preschools, compulsory schools and upper secondary schools, as described in the relevant regulation. The Ministry of Education makes a three-year plan for external evaluation, surveys and evaluations to provide information about the execution of school activities in preschools, compulsory schools and upper secondary schools. The plans are revised each year and published on the website of the Ministry of Education.

The Ministry of Education makes a plan for each evaluation where its objectives, principal criteria and emphases are presented. To execute the evaluation the Ministry of Education brings in independent specialists selected according to the Ministry's procedure policy. Schools, and depending on circumstances local authorities, are notified in writing at least two weeks in advance.

External evaluation is to be based on varied data and information, such as findings of internal evaluation and other written documents from the schools, school visits and interviews, as relevant, and observation of teaching. Schools are to inform external evaluators as thoroughly as possible about those aspects of the school activities that the evaluation comprises.

External evaluators give the Ministry of Education a report on their findings. Before an evaluation report is sent to the Ministry of Education, the school in question gets an opportunity to make substantive comments. The school's comments are to be published as an appendix to the report, if requested. The external evaluation is open to public scrutiny, and its findings are to be placed on the website of the school and the Ministry of Education or in another way made accessible to the public. Similarly and depending on circumstances, the improvement plans based on the evaluation of local authorities and schools are to be published on the website of the Ministry of Education. The findings of the external evaluation are to be effectively followed up. The Ministry of Education requests responses from upper secondary schools and local authorities to the findings of external evaluations. On the basis of these responses the Ministry of Education decides what measures are to be taken.

## 4 ROLE OF THE UPPER SECONDARY SCHOOL

Act no. 92/2008 on Upper Secondary Schools stipulates that education at the upper secondary level is to be organised as continuation of compulsory school education. The second article of the act details the role of upper secondary school.

### Article 2. Objective

The objective of the upper secondary school is to encourage the overall development of all pupils and encourage their active participation in democratic society by offering studies suitable to the needs of each pupil.

The upper secondary school prepares pupils for employment and further studies. It shall strive to strengthen its pupils' skills in the Icelandic language, both spoken and written, develop moral values, sense of responsibility, broadmindedness, initiative, self-confidence and tolerance in its pupils, train them to apply disciplined, autonomous working methods and critical thought, teach them to appreciate cultural values and encourage them to seek further knowledge. The upper secondary school shall strive to communicate knowledge and train pupils in a way that provides them with skills to carry out specialised work and with solid foundations to pursue further education.

This shows that the role of the upper secondary school is extensive. It is to encourage the overall development of all pupils and encourage their active participation in democratic society by offering studies suitable to the needs of each pupil. It is also to prepare pupils for employment and further studies.

The upper secondary school offers students a choice of different study programmes which provide a range of preparation and rights regarding general education, artistic studies, academic and vocational studies. Some study programmes primarily emphasise students being active in everyday life, preparation for further studies and employment where specialisation is not necessary. The objective of other study programmes is to prepare students for specialised employment or specialised studies at the next school level. Thus study programmes have to meet the requirements of the labour market and the receiving school level as they ensure overall general education. Graduation from study programmes can, for example, be upper secondary school leaving examination, examination for professional rights, matriculation examination or other final examinations.

All upper secondary school studies are founded on the premise of the objective article of the law. It is the responsibility of each school to decide how it is integrated into the students' tasks and working methods. Both the procedures of the school and the content of the studies have to be taken into consideration, and these two main factors are to be inseparable in the school activities.

The whole school community should be aware of the objective of the upper secondary school and the welfare of the students should take precedence. Welfare and health demand that the physical, mental and social factors of the students' lives are to be taken into consideration. Parents of underage students are responsible for their upbringing, but the upper secondary school also has a pedagogical role. Important formative work takes place there in addition to training and education. Pedagogical work aims at making students active and responsible participants in democratic society, that they honour equality in communication and take a responsible stand on their own welfare and that of others. Here the school atmosphere, communication within or outside the school, and the students' active participation in shaping the school community, are of vital importance.

## FUNDAMENTAL PILLARS AND KEY COMPETENCE

# 5

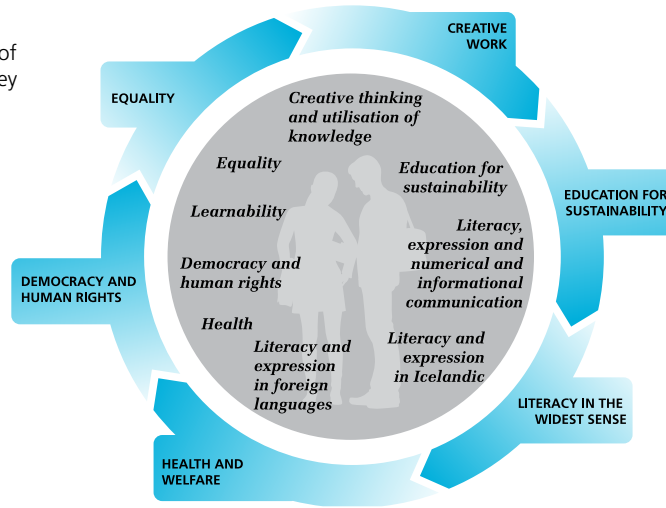
Chapter two explains the six fundamental pillars of education that are to be mirrored in school activities of the upper secondary school. The fundamental pillars should be visible in learning and teaching, working methods, organisation and development plans of schools, and furthermore, in its relations with its local community. Schools are to detail in their school curriculum guides how the fundamental pillars are applied and evaluate their visibility and implementation in the school internal evaluation.

Key competence is to link the fundamental pillars to the objectives of student competence upon graduation. Key competence relates to the students themselves and is thus student-oriented implementation of the most important issues of the fundamental pillars. Key competence is utilised in planning study programmes, creating course unit descriptions, in addition to being taken into consideration in students' assessment and reference.

Key competence and the fundamental pillars form the foundation for all school activities at the upper secondary level, for working environment and school atmosphere, in addition to the learning and teaching of all course units. When applying for accreditation of study programmes, schools have to explain where and how the fundamental pillars and key competence are applied.

The figure to the left is an attempt to show the relation of the fundamental pillars and key competence

The fundamental pillars are to be mirrored in all school activities, but the key competence links the fundamental pillars with the demand for the students' competence.



## 5.1 Key competence

Key competence incorporates nine areas. Below each area is described and common examples taken of criteria. Key competence comprises both general and abstract competence. An abstract example of health could involve health and safety at workplaces in the area of work at which the student aims. Abstract examples of human rights could involve legal environment and work ethic, and an abstract example of education for sustainability could involve a sustainable workplace.

### Learnability

Learnability involves self-knowledge, that is, to know one's own strengths and weaknesses and be able to make decisions based on those. Learnability centres on intellectual curiosity, faith in one's own abilities and talents to constructively use one's knowledge, skills and competence in various tasks. It is also related to the ability to link knowledge and skills to further studies and employment.

Key competence incorporates, among other things, that students:

- know their own strengths and weaknesses and can set realistic goals for themselves,
- are able to share their knowledge with others,
- are able to use diverse learning methods and data,
- are able to apply independent working methods,
- are able to evaluate their own work effort,
- are able to take challenges in their studies,



- are able to organise their working hours and prioritise their tasks,
- are able to take responsibility for their studies,
- are able to use earlier experience, knowledge and understanding in solving new problems.

## Health

Good health is defined as physical, mental and social health. All students have to realise that they are responsible for themselves and their social environment. The responsibility involves physical health, but in order to promote good health and general welfare, attention has to be paid to healthy habits, exercise and a healthy lifestyle. The responsibility also involves mental health, for example, a responsible attitude towards bullying and other forms of violence. Social health involves positive and healthy communication and being socially active.

Key competence incorporates, among other things, that students:

- are responsible for themselves and their actions,
- show responsibility for their own welfare and health,
- are aware of themselves as sexual beings,
- are aware of the value of regular exercise,
- are aware of the value of exercise and that they exercise regularly,
- are aware of the importance of varied and nutritious diet,
- show responsibility towards intolerance, bullying and other forms of violence,
- are aware of the damage caused by smoking and other use of tobacco, alcohol consumption and the use of other intoxicants.

## Creative thinking and utilisation of knowledge

Creativity involves forming tasks and communicating them, do something new or different from what the individual knows or has done before. The creative process encourages initiative, reflection and critical thinking and is therefore no less important than the findings of the task. The prerequisite for activating and maintaining the creative power of students is that the school creates the circumstances that encourage initiative, independence and creative thinking in various areas. Innovation and utilisation of knowledge involves that an effort is made to create or make something new and improve what already exists.

Key competence incorporates, among other things, that students:

- show initiative and creative thinking,
- show moral responsibility for their creation and utilisation of their knowledge,

- are able to communicate their competences in a creative manner,
- are able to utilise their creative power in various ways in their life and employment,
- are able to enjoy art, culture and various forms of creative work,
- understand how culture and art are related to creation of jobs and social development,

## Equality

Education towards equality is to give all students an opportunity to mature on their own terms, develop their talents and lead a responsible life, at the same time as everyone is an active participant in creating a society of equality, equal rights and justice. Education towards equality involves how age, residence, disabilities, gender, sexual orientation, race, outlook on life, culture, class, religion, descent and nationality can establish discrimination and privileges among people. In preparing future field of employment, it is important to keep in mind a gender-divided labour market and advocate a less gender-based selection of studies than is the case now. It is essential that choice of tasks set for students is based on equality and equal rights and they thus become less gender oriented.

Key competence incorporates, among other things, that students:

- respect equality in their communications,
- are aware of their own sexual orientation and sexual health,
- understand how age, residence, disabilities, gender, sexual orientation, race, outlook on life, culture, class, religion, descent and nationality can establish discrimination and privileges among people,
- are aware and critical of the influence that role models and stereotypes have on their own image and lifestyle,
- understand the role of sex and gender in society.

## Democracy and human rights

The prerequisite for democracy is collective responsibility, consciousness and activity of the citizens and this makes them capable of participating in shaping their society and influencing it, both at home and away. Attitudes, values and ethics are essential factors in education for democracy. Active citizens are aware of their own responsibility, democracy, critical thinking, tolerance, equality, human rights and respect for the opinions of others and their values of life.

Key competence incorporates, among other things, that students:

- respect the opinions of others and their values of life,
- respect human rights and human values,
- are able to express their views and participate in discussion,

- take a critical view of ethical matters of opinion,
- respect the basic principles of society,
- are active and responsible participants in democratic society,
- are aware of the value of good behaviour and conduct in their relations with other people, animals and the environment,
- have acquired a positive and constructive social and communicative ability.

### Education towards sustainability

Sustainability involves the environment, responsibility, respect and democratic working methods and present and future justice. Education towards sustainability aims at making people capable of addressing tasks that concern the interaction of the environment, social and economic factors in the development of society. Education towards sustainability emphasises understanding the limits that the Earth ecosystem sets for mankind, equality between generations, sensible exploitation of resources and their fair distribution. The prerequisite for sustainable society are active citizens who are aware of their values, views and feelings for these factors.

Key competence incorporates, among other things, that students:

- are aware of the diverse natural resources and are able to form an opinion of how they can be exploited in a sensible manner,
- know, understand and respect their environment and nature,
- understand how the ecosystem of the Earth sets a limit for mankind,
- understand how their own ecological footprints and those of societies and nations can promote sustainable development,
- are able to evaluate information about the environment and nature in a critical manner,
- are active and responsible citizens in their environment and in nature,
- are able to form a critical opinion of the environment, society, culture and economic system,
- understand the collective responsibility that the inhabitants have for the Earth and its inhabitants.

### Literacy, expression and communication in Icelandic

Literacy involves that individuals are capable of perceiving and understanding their environment and society in a critical manner and participate in shaping it. Literacy, expression and communication in Icelandic facilitate active communication in the social, cultural and technical context in Iceland. Reading is the most powerful method of acquiring knowledge

and written or oral expression are a prerequisite for participation in democratic society. Icelandic language and culture link the past and the present of the nation.

Key competence incorporates, among other things, that students are able:

- to express their thoughts, feelings and views both orally and in writing,
- to take part in discussion,
- to use nuanced language and varied vocabulary both orally and in writing,
- to express themselves clearly and expressively,
- to read varied texts for knowledge and pleasure,
- to clearly explain and reason both orally and in writing.

### Literacy, expression and communication in foreign languages

Cultural literacy of other nations, expression and communication in foreign languages lays the foundation for understanding, broadmindedness and respect. Language skills are the key to information and create access to professional material in foreign languages. It is one of the prerequisites for having successful communication and cooperation with individuals of other nationalities.

Key competence incorporates, among other things, that students:

- are able to express themselves clearly,
- are able to listen and understand spoken language,
- are able to take part in discussion,
- are able to use varied vocabulary,
- are able to read for knowledge and pleasure,
- are aware of the culture and customs that are characteristic for the regions where the language is spoken,
- are able to link different views and values that shape the culture of the countries where the language is spoken to their own society and culture.

### Literacy, expression and communication about numbers and information

Good numeracy is important to everyone in everyday life and employment. Numeracy involves competence to decipher, express oneself about and utilise numeral information. Information literacy involves, among other things, information technology as it is important for everyone to be able to collect data, categorise, process and communicate information in a critical

and creative manner. Media literacy makes students capable of analysing the information of different media so that they can evaluate it in a critical manner.

Key competence incorporates, among other things, that students:

- are able to utilise varied technology in their search for knowledge,
- are able to use and express themselves about numbers and information concerning education, culture and their utilisation,
- are able to acquire data, categorise and utilise information in a critical manner,
- are able to use information technology in searching for and communicating knowledge in a critical and creative manner,
- are able to communicate information in a creative manner,
- are information literate of different media,

## LEARNING AND TEACHING

# 6

A varied learning environment which is encouraging and supportive for students is one of the prerequisites for them to be able to acquire the aspects of key competence that involve self-knowledge, independence, initiative and creative thinking. Methods of learning and teaching can also strongly influence the development of students and encourage them to acquire critical thinking, respect and tolerance, democratic activity, equality and responsibility in their relations and behaviour towards the environment and nature. Tasks that link education with everyday life and field of employment encourage students in enhancing their environmental literacy.

### 6.1 Knowledge, skill and competence

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Knowledge, skill and competence are concepts used in creating study programmes and course unit descriptions. The relationship of these concepts is reflected in that students' competence is based on their knowledge and skills, in addition to self-understanding, views and ethics. Having acquired knowledge is not enough, students have to be able to analyse it and communicate. In the same way, students' skills are reflected not only in learning methods. They have to be able to choose and apply appropriate working methods, tools and technology each time. Both knowledge and skill incorporate all learning whether it is academic, artistic, or vocational studies.

Students' competence involves overview and ability to utilise their knowledge and skills in harmony with circumstances each time. Students should also have acquired competence and

ability to acquire new knowledge, skills and competence after graduating. In this process, learnability, information literacy, creative thinking and utilisation of knowledge are of key importance. A more detailed definition of the concepts knowledge, skill and competence appears in the figure below.

### Definition of the concepts knowledge, skill and competence:

#### KNOWLEDGE

is an accumulation of facts, principles, theories, and methods. It is both theoretical and practical.

- Knowledge is acquired by watching, listening, discussing or from experience through action.
- Knowledge is analysed through discussion, classification, and comparison.
- Knowledge is communicated through various forms of expression, for example, verbally, in writing, and vocationally.

#### SKILL

is both intellectual and practical. It involves ability to utilise methods, practices and logical thinking.

- Skills are acquired through exercising methods and practices.
- Skill involves analysis by choosing between methods and organised procedures.
- Skills are communicated by using the working methods, tools and methods of the various forms of expression.

#### COMPETENCE

involves overview and ability to utilise knowledge and skills.

- The prerequisites for competence are a sense of responsibility, respect, broadmindedness, creativity, moral awareness and the individuals' understanding of their own capabilities. Additionally, self-confidence and ability to work autonomously are of importance.
- Competence involves the students' analysis of their own knowledge and skills by comparing, connecting, simplifying, drawing conclusions and reasoning. Analytical competence is based on critical thinking and professional reflection.
- Communicating competence involves various forms of expression where cognitive, artistic, and practical knowledge and skills are interconnected with the moral and social attitudes of the individual. Communicating competence requires creativity, responsibility, and functionality

## 6.2 Learning and teaching methods

Learning and teaching methods in upper secondary schools encourage the overall development of students and are characterised by respect for individuals and their needs. An effort should be made to make students active and independent in their studies and capable of acquiring knowledge autonomously. Learning and teaching methods are to give all students an opportunity to utilise their talents and get feedback for their work. Emphasis on students' competence upon graduation requires that varied methods are used to assess students' competence and guide them towards the goal set.

Diverse working and teaching methods are one of the prerequisites for students acquiring varied competences. It should be kept in mind that different competence criteria can be achieved in various ways and that the same methods are not equally useful for every student.

Additionally, teaching methods must not discriminate against students on the basis of gender, residence, descent, disabilities, religion, sexual orientation or social status.

In order to acquire key competence, students have to get ample opportunities to take on varied tasks that are related to the working environment and everyday life. In all school activities, both in classes and at other times, students are to be encouraged to form opinions, views and competence, both generally and in specific areas. This requires that students integrate their knowledge and skills, at the same time as they get an opportunity to exercise their social competence that is based on ethics and respect for human rights and equality. An effort should be made for students to express their views and explain their work methods in a responsible, critical and clear manner. The learning and teaching environment of vocational students has to encourage students to become active and responsible professionals that have acquired sound professionalism,

### **6.3 Vocational education and training**

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Vocational education usually takes place both at school and the workplace. A good deal of the studies involves students being trained to apply various methods and techniques. The training, on the one hand, takes place in specialised vocational studies under the supervision of teachers and, on the other hand, in organised work-based learning and on-the-job training.

The concepts organised workplace learning and on-the-job training are alternatively used for vocational education and training. Here work-based learning is defined as making added demands for systematic, organised teaching, guidance and supervision from what is normal in on-the-job training. With on-the-job training an effort is made for students to get an opportunity for further exercising those features of work and procedures they have already been taught. They are supposed to show more responsibility than in work-based learning.

Work-based learning and on-the-job training give students an important opportunity to utilise their knowledge and skills and thus acquire competence for participation in the economy. In order to promote systematic work-based learning and on-the-job training, an emphasis is put on the use of portfolios. Contracts are made for work-based learning and on-the-job training according to law and regulations currently in force.



# 7 QUALIFICATION LEVELS

Study programmes in the upper secondary school end at certain qualification levels. By classifying them according to qualification levels, different requirements for the students' competence upon graduation are accentuated. Qualification levels form the framework for the different requirements upon graduation regardless of the programme being academic, artistic or vocational.

Key competence, fundamental pillars and increased specialisation are emphasised in the description of the qualification levels. The description of the qualification levels is student oriented and independent of school level and education provider. The qualification levels are to indicate tasks and study requirements and are guidelines for writing descriptions for course units and study programmes. The qualification levels are also informative for interested parties, both students and the economy, and the school level that receives the students upon graduation.

At the upper secondary school level there are four qualification levels. The first level extends to both the compulsory school and the upper secondary school and focuses on general education. There requirements for democracy, human rights, equality and sustainability are linked to everyday life and that the individual is socially active. Students that have acquired this key competence show in their everyday life and communication that they respect other people, their values and human rights. Studies at the first level can also involve general preparation for employment where little specialisation is required and work is done under the supervision of others. In study programmes that end with the first qualification level,

requirements for study progress can be unconventional and assessment primarily meant to be guiding for how students can reach their goals.

Study programmes that end with level two are characterised by short specialisation that mainly aims at professional preparation for further studies or employment that requires the employee to show responsibility and independence within a certain framework and/or under the supervision of others. The general competence of being an active citizen is expected to have been attained and attention is turned to being active and responsible in the working environment.

Study programmes that end with level three are characterised by increased requirements for knowledge, skill and competence related to specialisation and professionalism. The studies incorporate preparation for university education, regulated professions, specialised vocational education and artistic studies. Upon graduation at level three students are to be able to work independently, be responsible for planning and carrying out projects and evaluating their work.

The fourth level involves studies that take place either at the school or under its auspices, or at university. Study completion at the fourth level is characterised by either increased specialisation and/or extension, or specialisation concerning management, guidance, development or innovation.

The Ministry of Education issues arrangement of qualification levels for confirmed study completion of study programmes.

## Qualification level 1

- Study programmes are generally organised as 30 to 120 secondary school credits and usually take 1 to 4 terms. They can, however, be up to 240 secondary school credits and be organised as 8 terms for students with mental disabilities.
- Final learning outcomes are, for example, upper secondary school leaving examination or other final examinations.
- The studies involve general education where the emphasis is on the overall development of students and their active participation in democratic society.
- A study programme defined with the learning outcomes at level 1 works towards the knowledge, skill and competence objectives shown here. These objectives are to be used when defining courses at level one.

### KNOWLEDGE

Students have acquired:

- varied vocabulary to be able to express their opinions and support them
- knowledge of social values, morality, human rights and equality
- knowledge concerning being an active citizen in a democratic society
- knowledge concerning the Icelandic environment in a global context (e.g. culture, society, nature, sustainability)
- knowledge useful as preparation for further studies
- vocabulary to be able to express themselves in a simple manner in foreign languages and insight into the respective cultures
- knowledge and understanding of the influence of role models and stereotypes on their own image and lifestyle

### SKILL

Students have acquired skill to:

- express themselves clearly, responsibly and creatively
- take part in a conversation, support their views and respect the views of others
- be self-sufficient at work and in everyday life
- apply creative thinking in all their work
- work autonomously, responsibly and creatively under supervision
- use different techniques in acquiring and communicating knowledge in a responsible and critical manner
- use varied study methods
- treat their environment with sustainability in mind

### COMPETENCE

Students

- have acquired competence to express their thoughts and feelings in a rational context
- have acquired competence to express themselves in a simple manner in foreign languages
- have a clear self-image and are aware of how they can use their strengths in a creative way
- can have positive and constructive relationships and collaboration with others
- respect the values of life, human rights and equality
- show respect for the environment in a global context
- have responsible attitude towards their own welfare, both physical and mental
- have acquired a positive attitude towards education
- have acquired a competence to be an active and a responsible citizen in a democratic local community and in society as a whole
- have acquired competence to link their knowledge and skill with everyday life, technology and science

## Qualification level 2

- Study programmes are generally organised as 90 to 120 secondary school credits and usually take 3 to 4 terms
- Final learning outcomes are, for example, examinations for professional rights, upper secondary school leaving examination or other final examinations
- The studies involve preparation for further specialised and regulated professions and specialised propaedeutic studies
- A study programme defined with the learning outcomes at level 2 works towards the knowledge, skill and competence objectives shown here. These objectives are to be used when defining courses at level two.

### KNOWLEDGE

Students have acquired:

- varied vocabulary to be able to express their opinions and support them in their everyday life and in connection with specialised knowledge and/or profession
- knowledge concerning being a responsible participant in the economy
- knowledge concerning the environment related to specialised knowledge and/or profession
- knowledge useful as preparation for further studies
- vocabulary to be able to express themselves in foreign languages in connection with specialised knowledge, if necessary

### SKILL

Students have acquired skill to:

- express themselves clearly, responsibly and creatively about their specialised knowledge and/or profession
- organise a simple procedure of a profession and/or specialised knowledge and employ appropriate techniques in this context
- show initiative and autonomy with the basic working methods in a specialised knowledge and/or profession
- take part in a conversation about their specialised knowledge and/or profession

### COMPETENCE

Students

- have acquired competence to express their opinions and explain practices associated with specified working environment in a clear, responsible and autonomous manner
- have acquired competence to express themselves in a simple manner in foreign languages
- show respect for the principles of the working environment
- respect work and working conditions
- have a clear self-image and are aware of new opportunities in the environment
- have acquired competence to be an active and a responsible citizen in a democratic society and within the community of specialisation and/or profession
- have acquired competence to link their knowledge and skill with the working environment and everyday life

## Qualification level 3

- Study programmes are generally organised as 150 to 240 secondary school credits and usually take 5 to 8 terms
- Final learning outcomes are, for example, matriculation, examinations for professional rights and other final examinations
- The studies involve specialised preparation for university education, regulated professions and specialised vocational and artistic studies
- A study programme defined with the learning outcomes at level 3 works towards the knowledge, skill and competence standards shown here. These objectives are to be used when defining courses at level three.

### KNOWLEDGE

Students have acquired:

- varied vocabulary to be able to express their opinions and support them in their everyday life and in connection with specialised knowledge and/or profession
- specialised knowledge useful for employment and/or as preparation for further studies
- knowledge concerning being an active and a responsible participant in a specialised society and/or profession.
- knowledge concerning the environment in a global context and is related to specialised knowledge and/or profession
- the vocabulary and knowledge in a foreign language for further studies or in connection with a specialised knowledge, if necessary

### SKILL

Students have acquired skill to:

- express themselves clearly, critically and creatively about their specialised knowledge and/or profession
- organise a procedure and employ appropriate techniques and methods of a profession and/or specialised knowledge in a responsible manner
- show initiative and autonomy with working methods at seeking solution within a specialised knowledge and/or profession
- take a responsible part in a conversation about their specialised knowledge and/or profession

### COMPETENCE

Students

- have acquired competence to express their opinions and explain practices associated with specified working conditions in a clear, responsible and critical manner
- have acquired competence in foreign languages necessary for employment or further studies
- have moral responsibility in creative work
- show respect for the working conditions and the employment of their general knowledge
- are able to use their knowledge to discover new opportunities in the environment
- have acquired competence for further studies
- have acquired competence to be an active citizen in a democratic society of a speciality and/or a profession
- have acquired competence to evaluate their own work effort in a global context
- see their education in a global context
- have acquired competence to link their knowledge with technology and science

## Qualification level 4

- Study programmes are generally organised as 30 to 120 secondary school credits and usually take 1 to 4 terms. They are organised as continuation of qualification level three.
- Final learning outcomes are defined as additional studies at the upper secondary school level.
- The studies involve increased and/or deeper professional specialisation in connection with development or innovation.
- A study programme defined with the learning outcomes at level 4 works towards the knowledge, skill and competence objectives shown here. These objectives are to be used when defining courses at level four.

### KNOWLEDGE

Students have acquired:

- specialised knowledge useful for professional advancement and/or as preparation for further studies
- specialised vocabulary in a foreign language useful for professional advancement and/or as preparation for further studies

### SKILL

Students have acquired skill to:

- guide and communicate their knowledge in a simple and creative manner
- organise a procedure, employ appropriate techniques and develop the methods of a profession and/or specialised knowledge in a responsible manner
- show initiative and autonomy in working methods at analysing circumstances and reacting in an appropriate, realistic and creative manner

### COMPETENCE

Students

- have acquired competence to express their specialised knowledge in Icelandic and a foreign language, if necessary in work or for further studies
- are able to take part in a conversation based on specialised knowledge and skills in a critical and clear manner
- have moral responsibility for the utilisation and development of their specialised knowledge with regard to the working conditions
- have acquired competence to be an active and responsible citizen in a society of a speciality and/or a profession
- have acquired competence to evaluate their own work effort and that of others in connection with the working conditions and/or specialised knowledge in a critical and constructive manner
- have acquired competence to connect their knowledge with the global environment

## STUDY COMPLETION AT UPPER SECONDARY SCHOOL LEVEL

# 8

In developing study offer, the Ministry of Education emphasises that students have the opportunity to complete their studies in study programmes that are defined at different qualification levels. Additionally, emphasis is on students having an opportunity of further studies if they have completed the first three levels of upper secondary school.

Below is a general description of various types of graduation but a more detailed description is in Appendix 2. Schools issue certificates to certify final learning outcomes (see also chapter 11.3)

### 8.1 Upper secondary school leaving examination

Upper secondary school leaving examination signifies the emphasis that is placed on the duty to offer students education until they are 18 years of age, and that the upper secondary school should offer education suitable for everyone. At the same time, it is meant to meet the needs of those students who do not aim at other forms of graduation. Thus schools can either link the upper secondary school leaving examination to a defined study programme or to another form of the student's participation at school designed for the student's special needs. However, final objectives should in all cases be clear.

The upper secondary school leaving examination can be defined either at the first or second qualification level depending on the requirements made for the knowledge, skill and competence of the students. The content of the studies can be classified as vocational, artistic or academic but involving the objectives that characterise the qualification level of the studies.

The extent of the upper secondary school leaving examination depends on the final objectives of the studies but should always be 90 to 120 secondary school credits. If a study programme for mentally disabled students is to be completed with upper secondary school leaving examination, the same rules are valid for the extent of the studies.

After upper secondary school leaving examination is completed, a certificate is issued listing the final qualification level of the studies, reference to the general knowledge, skill and competence of the student, a list of the courses and grades, where suitable, and a list of other activities in which the student has participated and are related to the exam.

## **8.2 Vocational examination for professional rights**

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Vocational examination for professional rights is defined with final learning outcomes in programmes providing rights for regulated professions or to take journeyman's examination. These final learning outcomes can be defined at qualification levels two, three or four.

Qualification levels of vocational study programmes are to take into consideration the requirements of the Ministry of Education for key competence and competence requirements defined by the trade council of the group of trades or trade concerned. Additionally, certain rules are valid for the organisation of these study programmes.

The extent of the studies differs according to the qualification level of graduation. Vocational examination for professional rights at qualification level two generally are 90 to 120 secondary school credits, final learning outcomes at level three generally are 150 to 240 secondary school credits and study completion at level four generally are 30 to 120 secondary school credits.

Upon graduation the upper secondary school issues vocational examination for professional rights and the responsible ministry a special licence. The certificate from the upper secondary school is to denote the qualification level of the final learning outcomes, a list of the courses taken, work-based learning, vocational training and grades.

## **8.3 Matriculation examination**

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Matriculation examination aims at preparing students for university education in Iceland or abroad. Duration of study for matriculation examination can differ depending on study programmes and schools, but the students' contribution is never to be less than 200 secondary school credits. Final learning outcomes are, without exception, to be defined at qualification level three. The content of the studies for matriculation depends on the final objectives of the study programme but is also defined according to what kind of preparation for university education the study programme in question offers. The central issue of the studies can be either academic, artistic or vocational.



The qualification framework for matriculation study programmes are to be according to the requirements of the Ministry of Education and qualification requirements of the university level. In addition to rules on minimal number of secondary school credits, special rules concern studies for matriculation. They involve qualification requirements in core subjects and other subjects, in addition to general rules relating to content and organisation of study programmes with final learning outcomes at qualification level three.

Upon graduation, a matriculation certificate is issued listing the special study programme, qualification level of final learning outcomes, list of courses and grades.

Matriculation does not automatically secure admission to all university education. Different universities or university faculties can make various special requirements which students are additionally expected to meet and in some cases students have to take entrance examinations. It is important for students who aim at a specified university education to acquire information regarding the requirements that the university in question sets for preparation. Equally important is for universities to give students information through study and vocational counselling.

## **8.4 Other final examinations**

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Final learning outcomes other than matriculation, vocational examination for professional rights or upper secondary school leaving examination, are classified as other final examinations. These include various final learning outcomes that are either defined at qualification level one, two or three. The qualification framework for the study programmes denotes the specialisation that can be either vocational, artistic, academic or general education. Competence criteria are to take into consideration the relevant requirements of the Ministry of Education or the requirements of the profession or university field of study in question. If the qualification framework of study programmes neither applies to preparation for specific employment nor further studies at university level, schools can seek guidance at the Ministry of Education concerning qualification requirements.

The extent of other final examinations differs depending on the qualification level to which the final learning outcomes are linked. Other final examinations with final learning outcomes at qualification level one generally are 30 to 120 secondary school credits, with qualification level at level two the secondary school credits are generally 60 to 120 and at level three 150 to 240 secondary school credits. The extent of the study programmes for students with mental disabilities can be up to 240 secondary school credits, although they are defined as final examination at qualification level one.

## **8.5 Additional education at upper secondary school**

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Additional education at upper secondary school incorporates final learning outcomes from study programmes that upper secondary schools offer as continuation of defined study

completion at qualification level three. Additional education at upper secondary school is defined as upper secondary school studies and they are to be defined by secondary school credits.

Icelandic or foreign universities can decide to assess additional education at upper secondary school for ECTS credits and this can be mentioned in information about these studies. The number of secondary school credits is, however, entirely the decision of the university in question.

The extent of the additional studies varies according to the final objectives. It is aimed at increased professional specialisation, management and development of the field of work. If the studies involve certified professional rights, for example master craftsman examination, the upper secondary school is to act according to the requirements set by the Ministry of Education in collaboration with the trade council

## SECONDARY SCHOOL CREDIT

# 9

All the work of upper secondary school students is assessed in standardised secondary school credits, and each credit should be based on as equal work effort as possible. Full-time study equals 60 secondary school credits per school year or 30 credits per term.

One secondary school credit equals 18 to 24 hours of work for an average student, that is, six to eight hours of work for three days on the average depending on the task and capacity of the student.

Calculation of the number of secondary school credits is based on:

- participation of students in classes, irrespective of the form of teaching
- work-based learning under supervision
- on-the-job training or training at school
- assessment, for example examinations
- homework, project work and other work expected of students

## DESCRIPTIONS OF STUDY PROGRAMMES

# 10

Upper secondary schools, one or more together, make a proposal for a programme description to the Ministry of Education for confirmation. Programme descriptions that have been confirmed are from then on part of the National Curriculum Guide for Upper Secondary Schools.

The Ministry of Education will publish programme descriptions, examples of programmes, which individual upper secondary schools can use for reference when creating programme descriptions for upper secondary school leaving examinations, examinations for professional rights, matriculation examinations and other final examinations. Examples of study programmes will be defined in cooperation with upper secondary schools, universities and parties of the labour market, after which these programmes will form the guidelines of the confirmation process at the Ministry of Education. The Ministry of Education can confirm examples of study programmes as part of the National Curriculum Guide for Upper Secondary Schools.

The Ministry of Education emphasises that when developing study programmes, students should be given an opportunity to graduate at different qualification levels. Furthermore, that it should be possible for students who complete their studies with learning outcomes defined at the first or second qualification level, to continue their studies.

Programme descriptions are to be organised consistent with the general section of the National Curriculum Guide for Upper Secondary Schools and the school curriculum guide of the school in question. A programme description is to include, among other things:

- connection of education with the economy and/or other school levels,

- organisation of studies, for example, final objectives, extent of studies, at what qualification level the final learning outcomes are defined, whether the studies end with upper secondary school leaving examinations, examinations for professional rights, matriculation examinations, other final examinations or additional education at upper secondary school,
- enrolment requirements and requirements regarding student progress,
- where and how the fundamental pillars of education and key competence are mirrored in the general and specialised education of the study programme,
- learning, teaching and assessment,
- definition of education at qualification levels and course unit descriptions.

When creating programme descriptions, the following primary rules are valid for the organisation of all study programmes, regardless of tasks and student groups.

## 10.1 Qualification criteria

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Upper secondary schools are to offer their students suitable education where their competence and visions for the future are taken into account. The final objectives of each study programme are to mirror the students' competence upon graduation. They are the qualification criteria and are to be descriptive so students can see from the beginning at what they are aiming. An effort should be made for all the areas of key competence to be visible in the qualification criteria of the study programmes.

## 10.2 Course units

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Schools can write course unit descriptions in connection with programme descriptions. Each course unit description is planned as an independent unit and carries a special course unit number.

Course units are to be linked to competence levels and at least 75% of its tasks are to fall within the defined level. A course unit description is to specify what knowledge, skill and competence students are to have acquired, the precursor requirements and the extent of the course unit based on secondary school credits. The Ministry of Education issues a template for defining course unit descriptions and rules on number system.

When term begins, study plans (teaching plans) are to be available in all course units. They are, among other things, to specify:

- criteria for knowledge, skill and competence,
- general description of the tasks of the course unit,
- study material and projects,
- organisation of assessment.

## 10.3 Core subjects

Core subjects of the upper secondary school are Icelandic, mathematics and English. All study programmes are to require that students acquire at least the competence as defined at qualification level one for core subjects in Appendix 3. When organising study programmes, the qualification criteria of a programme may involve requirements for students to acquire further competence in core subjects.

### 10.3.1 Requirements for core subjects on matriculation examination

All study programmes for matriculation examination are to contain 45 secondary school credits in core subjects, that is, in Icelandic, mathematics and English.

Study programmes are to be organised so that students acquire minimum competence at qualification level three according to description in Appendix 3. The total number of secondary school credits in Icelandic in matriculation study programmes is to be at least 20 secondary school credits, of which at least 10 secondary school credits are to be at qualification level three. Study programmes are to be organised so that students acquire competence in mathematics and English at qualification level two according to description in Appendix 3. The minimum number of credits at qualification level two is 5 secondary school credits in either mathematics or English. If mathematics is chosen for minimum number at qualification level two, students have to take more credits in English and vice versa. These rules are furthermore shown in a table below.

#### Requirements for core subjects at matriculation examination

Core subject	Minimum competence	Requirements for minimum number of credits
Icelandic	Qualification level 3	Total number at level 2 and 3 are to be at least 20 secondary school credits, of which 10 secondary school credits are to be at level 3.
Mathematics and English	Qualification level 2	Minimum number at level 2 is 5 secondary school credits in either mathematics or English. If mathematics is chosen for minimum number at qualification level two, students have to take more credits in English and vice versa.
		Total has to be at least 45 secondary school credits.

Students that have Icelandic as a second language can choose mathematics or English up into the third qualification level instead of Icelandic.

### **10.3.2 Guiding examinations for core subjects for matriculation examination**

According to the Upper Secondary School Act No. 92, 12 June 2008, assessment of final course units in core subjects for matriculation examination is to take into consideration guiding examinations that the Minister of Education, Science and Culture provides or confirms. The Ministry of Education will publish examples of questions that test the competence in core subjects at qualification level two and three, and schools can use these as guidelines in final course units for matriculation examination. Schools can also use for reference the descriptions of knowledge, skill and competence that characterise core subjects at different qualification levels and appear in Appendix 3.

## **10.4 Sports and physical education**

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Upper secondary schools are to organise study programmes so that all students 18 years of age and younger can take part in sports – physical education. At the same time, schools are to plan study programmes so that students have an opportunity to take a course unit in sports every term.

## **10.5 Matriculation examination**

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Academic study programmes for matriculation examination require a Nordic language up to qualification level three and minimum requirements for a third foreign language up to qualification level two (cf. Appendix 3).

Same requirements apply for Nordic languages in other study programmes for matriculation examination, but in those programmes the choice for requirements at qualification level two applies additionally to the third foreign language, social studies or science.

## **10.6 Organising study programmes**

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The Ministry of Education details requirements for how course units are to be linked to different qualification levels. These requirements differ depending on at which qualification level the final learning outcomes are defined. Certain flexibility is allowed when requirements for the number of course units at each qualification level are given so that students and schools have a chance to plan studies with varied proportion of specialisation. Requirements for the distribution of course units at different qualification levels form templates which upper secondary schools are to use when organising study programmes, however, the Ministry of Education also takes these templates into consideration when confirming study programmes. The templates are supposed to ensure progress in education so that the study programmes provide students with the competence that is required at study completion. Thus the templates are an aspect of the quality assurance of education. The templates are, furthermore, meant to facilitate comparison of study programmes, evaluation of students between schools and are taken into consideration by the Ministry of Education when confirming study programmes.

When organising study programmes, upper secondary schools are to offer students both areas of specialisation and free selection without, however, departing from requirements set by the Ministry of Education. On the other hand, upper secondary schools are free to require students to take more than the minimum number of secondary school credits in both core subjects and other subjects. When selecting mandatory course units, requirements for key competence, the competence criteria of the study programme and the demands of the economy and the receiving school level for necessary preparation are to be kept in mind.

When planning study programmes, schools must give students an opportunity to acquire defined key competence. How this is possible is to be done should be clearly shown in descriptions of study programmes and the school curriculum guide. Here schools can either choose to deal with the various aspects and areas of key competence in interdisciplinary projects or within the traditional school subjects, when appropriate, such as in Icelandic, physical education, foreign languages, life skills, natural science, history, mathematics, and information technology.

Upper secondary schools can offer study programmes where students can plan most of their studies themselves and such study programmes are defined as other final examinations or matriculation examinations. The same rules apply for such programmes as for other study programmes as far as organisation and content are concerned. The rights acquired through such programmes rely wholly on the composition of the studies and it is important that students are fully aware of this. Here the guidance of a study and vocational counsellor is crucial.

### 10.6.1 Study programmes with final learning outcomes at qualification level one

Study programmes with final learning outcomes at qualification level one, generally are 30 to 120 secondary school credits for students with mental disabilities. Most of the studies are at qualification level one, but students can take up to 10 per cent of the studies at qualification level two. Thus they have an opportunity to increase their competence..

Distribution of studies at qualification levels		
Qualification level	Criteria for proportion of studies	
	Minimum	Maximum
1	90%	100%
2	0	10%

#### Template for learning outcomes at qualification level 1

The template shows that at least 90% of the studies are to be defined at qualification level one.

Up to 10% of the studies can be defined at level two.



### 10.6.2 Study programmes with final learning outcomes at qualification level two

Study programmes with final learning outcomes at qualification level two, generally are 90 to 120 secondary school credits. Minimum 25 per cent of the studies is set at qualification level one but is never to exceed 50 per cent. At least half of the studies and up to 75 per cent are to be specialisation at qualification level two. Upper secondary schools can organise study programmes in such a way that students take up to 10 per cent of their studies at qualification level three. Thus students can acquire more specialisation.

Distribution of studies at qualification levels		
Qualification level	Criteria for proportion of studies	
	Minimum	Maximum
1	25%	50%
2	50%	75%
3	0	10%

#### Template for learning outcomes at qualification level 2

The template shows that one fourth to half of the studies are to be at level one, half to 75% of the studies are to be at level two and up to 10% can be defined at level three.

### 10.6.3 Study programmes with final learning outcomes at qualification level three

Study programmes with final learning outcomes at qualification level three, generally are 150 to 240 secondary school credits. Minimum 17 per cent of the studies are defined as general education at qualification level one but are never to exceed 33 per cent. One third (33%) up to half of the studies is specialisation at qualification level two. Minimum 17% of the studies are defined at qualification level three but this is never to exceed 33 per cent.

Studies at qualification level three are based on level two and therefore precursor requirements are presupposed. Studies at qualification level three and the precursor requirements from level two comprise the specialisation of the programme after which it can be named. Upper secondary schools can organise study programmes so that students take up to 10 per cent of their studies at qualification level four. Thus students have an opportunity to acquire more specialisation.

Distribution of studies at qualification levels		
Qualification level	Criteria for proportion of studies	
	Minimum	Maximum
1	17%	33%
2	33%	50%
3	17%	33%
4	0	10%

**Template for learning outcomes at qualification level 3**

The template shows that 17% to 33% of the studies are to be defined at level one, 33% to 50% of the studies are to be defined at level two, 17% to 33% of the studies are to be at level three and up to 10% can be defined at level four.

**10.6.4 Study programmes with final learning outcomes at qualification level four**

These study programmes are defined as additional education at the upper secondary school level and are therefore planned as additional studies after defined study completion at qualification level three at the upper secondary school level. Study programmes with final learning outcomes at qualification level four, generally are 30 to 120 secondary school credits. These study programmes are to be organised in such a way that 70 per cent of the studies are defined at qualification level four.

Distribution of studies at qualification levels		
Qualification level	Criteria for proportion of studies	
	Minimum	Maximum
3	0%	30%
4	70%	100%

**Template for learning outcomes at qualification level 4**

The template shows that minimum 70% of the studies are defined at qualification level four. This allows for maximum 30% if the studies to be defined at qualification level three.

**10.7 Accreditation of study programmes**

Descriptions of study programmes at the upper secondary school level that have been accredited by the Minister of Education, Science and Culture have thereby become part of the National Curriculum Guide for Upper Secondary Schools. The accreditation of descriptions of study programmes or elisions of such descriptions by the Minister of Education, Science and Culture are published in the Official Journal.

The Ministry of Education issues rules for receiving applications and confirmation of descriptions of study programmes, in addition to the rules defined in the general section of the National Curriculum Guide about structure and presentation of study programme descriptions.

When accrediting study programmes, the Ministry of Education takes into account, among other things, the presentation of qualification criteria, manifestation of fundamental pillars and key competence, rules on continuity of education and value of aspects of learning, connection of school credits with the work expected from students, and if the final examination is placed at the correct qualification level. In this process, the opinions of specialist are, among other things, taken into consideration, for example, the representatives of the university level. The opinions take into account the requirements that the Ministry of Education issues concerning quality criteria of professions and fields of study.

## STUDY ASSESSMENT

# 11

As shown above, the role of the upper secondary school is extensive and serves students who have different goals. The emphasis is on the competence of the students in this process and it is important that educational evaluation supports the objectives that they set.

Often the aim of the assessment is to examine to what extent students have acquired the objectives of the National Curriculum Guide in any given subject, but attention has also to be paid to the key competence of the student. Preferably assessment is also to be formative, that is, guidance for the students on how they most successfully can handle their future education.

Assessment is an important tool to gather information about the success of educational work and to what extent individual students and groups have reached their goals. Schools should make an effort to form their policy concerning varied assessment and guidance for students. Assessment is to be fair and reliable and its extent in harmony with the learning and teaching in the course unit in question.

Assessment is to be based on varied methods of educational evaluation and incorporate sound data on the competence of the students. An effort is to be made to secure that the assessment covers all the aspects of the education so that the students' knowledge, skill and competence, in addition to their progress, is evaluated. Assessment methods can be vocational, oral or written, include self-evaluation, peer assessment, assessment on a continuous basis and final assessment.

Upper secondary schools are to form a clear procedure policy on assessment and publish it in their school curriculum guide.

They are to incorporate:

- criteria for value of individual aspects in the assessment,
- requirements for completing a course unit,
- final requirement of study programmes, if appropriate,
- rules concerning students' illness during examinations and their rights to resit a paper,
- students' rights to go over their examination papers and data for assessment on continuous basis that are part of the final grade,
- students' rights to special measures concerning assessment, for example, customised examinations, oral examinations, longer time to complete the examination, opportunity for disabled students and students with long-term illnesses to apply for allowances from traditional assessments, etc. This assistance does not involve decreased requirements in the studies or that they are in any way different regarding this group of students than for students in general,
- other services offered because of examination anxiety, assistance for disabled students and/or students with specific learning disabilities,
- disciplinary measures taken regarding students' misconduct related to any form of educational evaluation, for example, how serious violation of rules has to be so that a student is made to leave an examination, expelled from a course unit or from school, temporarily or permanently.

## 11.1 Final school report and grades

General study assessment in upper secondary schools is the responsibility of teachers under supervision of the principal. Upper secondary school leaving examination is to be accompanied by reference for the general knowledge, skill and competence of the student. Students who want to take matriculation examination are to have completed successfully every course unit according to the curriculum guide and the result approved by the school. Assessment in final course units in core subjects is to take into account the guiding examinations that the Ministry of Education supplies and confirms. Studies in certified trades are completed with journeyman's examination but their organisation and execution is defined in a special regulation.

The results of assessment can be published as grades and/or reference. Final school report that appears in the published study progress and diploma of the student is to be given in whole numbers from 1 to 10 or in a system that can be clearly connected to it. This is necessary to facilitate evaluation when a student is transferring from one school to another. Generally 5 is the minimum grade in order to complete a course unit. Exceptions are to be explained in descriptions of study programmes and be published in the school curriculum guide.

Handling and publishing of grades should be in accordance with the Act on the Protection of Privacy as Regards the Processing of Personal Data. Schools cannot publish the grades of individual students with their name, social security number or other identifiable data without the written consent of the student. Grades of students who are below the age of consent may be given to their custodians, else the written consent of the student is necessary.

Upper secondary schools are to issue a clear procedure policy regarding grades and their issuing. They are to incorporate:

- time limit for students to see their examination papers in the presence of a teacher,
- rules on correcting grades and publishing a new grade.

## 11.2 Examination results and continuous assessment data as part of final grades

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Schools must keep all examination papers on file for one full year, whether they are written or digital in accordance with the National Archives Act. Within this time, the examinee can see his or her examination papers and receive a photocopy of them. The school principal is responsible for disposing of all examination papers at the end of that period.

Continuous assessment data should be handled according to this provision as far as feasible and possible. All teacher references and grades for specific tasks, limited examinations, take-home examinations, essays and reports have to be kept for a year. Handiwork and drawings that can be considered part of a final examination are to be kept and students are not to take them away from school until after examination showing, which equals not making any comments on the grade given.

According to the Information Act, those who wish so can receive copies of final examination papers after these examinations have been completed.

## 11.3 Graduation diplomas

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Schools issue diplomas to confirm the graduation of students. The graduation diploma should incorporate name and sign of school, information on the student's studies, such as name of diploma, study programme, organisation of studies according to qualification levels, subjects and names of course units, grades for each course unit, and if appropriate, the rights that the studies provide. Additionally, attendance grade or record of attendance is to appear. The diploma is to be dated, stamped and signed. Individual schools can add any information they deem necessary.

The graduating student may have his or her diploma issued in English, on request. The upper secondary school from which the student graduates shall be responsible for having the diploma translated. The Ministry of Education publishes on its website an appendix with

diplomas of vocational study programmes in Icelandic and English. There the competence that the graduating student has acquired upon graduation is defined and final learning outcomes linked with qualification levels in Icelandic and within the European qualification frameworks.

Schools are required to securely keep copies of graduation diplomas as per the Act on the National Archives of Iceland no. 66/1985.

## **11.4 Disputes regarding assessment**

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Students are entitled to have explained the assessment that the final grade in a course unit on which the grade is based within five days from the grade is issued. Should a student, who has not obtained the minimum grade, dispute the teacher's assessment, then he or she may turn to the principal and ask for the assessment of a special censor. Then an impartial censor is to be sought to assess the examination solution. The censor's verdict is final and cannot be appealed to higher judiciary power.

Disputes arising from the results of journeyman's' examinations should be dealt with according to regulations.

## SCHOOL ADMINISTRATION AND SCHOOL CURRICULUM GUIDE

# 12

A principal is at the head of an upper secondary school. The principal is in charge of daily administration and operation of an upper secondary school and safeguards that school activities are according to law, regulations, the National Curriculum Guide and other valid instructions at any given time. The principal is responsible for the planning and execution of the school budget and leads the writing of the school curriculum guide and improvement work within the school.

### 12.1 School curriculum guide

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Each upper secondary school is to issue a school curriculum guide divided into a general section and descriptions of study programmes and course units. In addition to using as reference law and regulations on upper secondary schools and other law, regulations and rules should be taken into consideration in planning a school curriculum guide where and when necessary and appropriate.

The school curriculum guide is prepared by the school personnel under the direction of the principal and confirmed by the school board after having been referred to a school meeting. It is to be published in an accessible manner on the school website and updated regularly.

#### Vision, policy, plans and objectives

The school curriculum guide incorporates the school policy and vision, in addition to its characteristics and special emphasis, for example with reference to local conditions and service for special target groups. The school sets objectives based on its role and policy according to the



school curriculum guide, operation plans and improvement plans consistent with the internal evaluation of its activities. Additionally, the school objectives are to take into consideration the emphases and objectives of the Ministry of Education. The objectives should describe all the most important aspects of the school activities, for example, students, study offer, study organisation, quality of teaching, support services, administration, personnel management and finances. The school curriculum guide contains a description of the systematic internal evaluation used to evaluate the quality of school activities, in addition to annual emphases and plans for internal evaluation.

The school curriculum guide is to detail school policy in specific matters, such as preventive measures and healthy lifestyle. Preventive measures are to act against bullying, smoking and other use of tobacco and intoxicants, contribute towards prevention of suicide or depression of any kind. Furthermore, schools are to publish their policy on environmental affairs, equal rights affairs, a reception plan, policy against bullying, evacuation plan, crisis and management plan, plan against emergency such as epidemic, storm, volcanic eruption and earthquake.

### Outline and organisation

The school curriculum guide deals with the framework of school activities and the organisation of teaching, for example, class-based learning, flexible learning and distance learning. It defines a certain organisation of student enrolment in accordance with school agreements, including the issues the school takes into special consideration when considering enrolment of new applicants for school admission. Additionally, are rules on behaviour and conduct at school, gatherings under the auspices of the school and in residence halls.

The school curriculum guide also describes procedure policy for handling and resolution of matters, for example, concerning assessment, absenteeism, illness, special measures, attendance and study progress. Additionally, there is information concerning measures for violation of school regulations, rules on conflict resolution and penalty. Internal and external ethics are explained, collaboration with parents/custodians of underage students, collaboration with other schools in Iceland and abroad and collaboration with social partners and the local community.

### Service

The school curriculum guide describes the working conditions, facilities and general service for students.

### School atmosphere and social activities

The school curriculum guide describes the school's emphases and means to encourage good school atmosphere, for example, with regard to the six fundamental pillars, health and welfare, democracy and human rights, equality, creativity, sustainability and literacy in the

widest sense. Furthermore, the school curriculum guide gives information on the students' social activities under the auspices of the school

### Study offer

Each school publishes descriptions of the study programmes and course units that are being offered at any given time.

### Annual operation plan

One part of the school curriculum guide is an annual operation plan where the operating period of the school, important dates and other basic information in the school operation are detailed. Also reported upon are the school personnel, school council, school board, parent council and student council.

## 12.2 School board

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The Minister of Education, Science and Culture appoints a school board comprised of five members. Two of them are appointed by nomination of the local authorities and three others appointed without nomination. Teachers, pupils and parents each nominate one non-voting member. The school board determines the emphases in school activities and confers with the principal on various matters. The principal attends school board meetings. The school board minutes are to be accessible for the public on the school website.

## 12.3 Teachers' assembly and school meetings

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Upper secondary schools are to organise a teacher assembly at least twice every school year. The principal summons the assembly, proposes a schedule and chairs the assembly, or delegates the chair. All teachers of the school have a right to sit in the teacher assembly. The principal prepares matters that will be addressed by the teacher assembly but everyone who has a right to sit in the assembly is entitled to suggest matters for discussion. The teacher assembly elects representatives for the school council and a non-voting observer for the school board.

Upper secondary schools organise a school assembly at least once every school year. School personnel and pupils' representatives, according to further decision by the principal, have a right to sit in the school assembly. The school assembly discusses matters of the school. The school assembly minutes are presented to the school board.

## 12.4 Students' associations

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Every upper secondary school is to operate a students' association which manages students' social activities, their welfare and general interests. It sets its own rules regarding composition,

role and working methods. The school is responsible for its operation and provides it with facilities. Schools may provide funding for the association and its accounts are to be subject to the same auditing as other school finances. Students elect representatives to the school council and appoint a representative to school meetings and a non-voting observer for the school board.

## 12.5 Home and school

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Upper secondary schools should make an effort to encourage the collaboration of homes and school.

Upper secondary schools take care of both underage students and those who are of age and therefore relations of home and school changes when the student becomes 18 years of age. The collaboration between upper secondary schools and parents of underage students is an important factor in minimising the division between school levels, providing students with appropriate studies and counselling and supporting preventive measures. Underage students are in the custody of their parents or legal guardians and schools are obliged to inform them about the study progress of their children and other matters concerning their school attendance. The permission of students who have reached the age of consent is necessary to give data concerning their studies to their parents.

A parent council is to operate in each upper secondary school and custodial parents/legal custodians have the right to be members. The parent council nominates one observer to sit on the school board. According to law, the role of the council is to support school activities, tend to pupils' interests and collaborate with the school in strengthening cooperation between parents and legal guardians of underage pupils at the school.

## COOPERATION AND DIVISION BETWEEN SCHOOL LEVELS

# 13

### 13.1 Upper secondary school level

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An effort should be made that students transferring between schools or study programmes can make as good use of their previous studies as possible. According to law, two or more schools can cooperate on descriptions of study programmes. Such cooperation or cooperation of common study offer is a way to make transfer between schools easier for students and facilitates small schools to cooperate with larger schools that have more extensive study offer. Schools can either offer the same study programmes or unite their activities in some other way. Thus one school can offer the first part of a study programme and students can then take the second half at the partner school. Schools can also collaborate on the teaching of course units.

The cooperation of schools can also comprise support services, such as computer systems or web service.

### 13.2 Compulsory school level

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Relations between the compulsory and upper secondary school should be active and information distributed between these two levels in order to ensure continuity and the welfare of students. Compulsory school pupils can begin their upper secondary school studies while still at compulsory school if an agreement has been made between the compulsory and upper secondary schools in question. Additionally, an agreement has to be made between the

state and the local authorities where it is stipulated that the pupil and the organisation of the studies are the responsibility of the compulsory school.

The Ministry of Education emphasises flexible division between compulsory school and upper secondary school. If compulsory school pupils fulfil the competence requirements in the subjects of the upper secondary school, they are entitled to have studies that they have completed evaluated to credits, provided they are compatible with the curriculum guide and the study programme descriptions of the school in question and study requirements comparable. Formal cooperation between compulsory schools and upper secondary schools is a precondition for study organisation of this kind.

### **13.2.1 Links with competence levels of the upper secondary school**

The first competence level of the upper secondary school overlaps with the lower secondary level of the compulsory school as the description of the first level of the upper secondary school is also valid for the competence objectives for the final stages of the compulsory school.

In the general section of the National Curriculum Guide for Compulsory School, general objectives for evaluation of education and evaluation standards are stipulated and issued for completion of studies at compulsory school. Standardised evaluation criteria upon graduation from compulsory school are to ensure a uniform description of pupil competence upon graduation from compulsory school, regardless of school. These criteria make it possible to evaluate the pupils' key competences in relation to different education fields. Upper secondary schools use final grades from compulsory school to assess, for example, what course units at the first or second competence level are appropriate for students to begin their studies.

Evaluation criteria of key competences in the compulsory school are compatible with descriptions of key competences in the upper secondary school and with the descriptions of the characteristics of the first competence level. These criteria, in addition to descriptions of final evaluation of the compulsory school within the various fields of education, are used by the upper secondary schools when organising study programmes that are meant to bridge the gap between the compulsory school and upper secondary school.

The compulsory school level will use the criteria and standards below in assessing the competences of pupils upon graduation from compulsory school in Icelandic, English, Danish (Norwegian/Swedish), mathematics, physical education, artistic and vocational subjects, natural science, social studies and information and technology education.

Five elements constitute the criteria for assessing key competence in the compulsory school:

- Pupils' competence to express their thoughts, feelings and opinions orally, in writing or in another manner. Competence to communicate their knowledge and skills and

express themselves clearly and in a listenable manner and in taking part in conversation and discussion

- Creative thinking and initiative in presentation and processing of material. Competence to use knowledge and skill, to draw conclusions, confidence to seek new solutions and use critical thinking and reasoning
- Competence to work independently, in cooperation with others and under supervision
- Competence to use various media in seeking, processing and communicating knowledge, and in using information in a responsible, creative and critical manner
- Pupils' competence to be responsible for their education and to evaluate their work methods and performance

Standardised evaluation criteria are defined for each field of education and the compulsory school is to use them when graduating pupils from compulsory school. According to these criteria there are four grades, A, B, C and D.

Standard	Filed of education	Key competence
<b>A</b>	Exceptional learning competence and performance with reference to the competence criteria of the subject or field of education.	Exceptional competence with reference to the criteria of competence.
<b>B</b>	Good learning competence and performance with reference to the competence criteria of the subject or field of education.	Good competence with reference to the criteria of competence.
<b>C</b>	Passable learning competence and performance with reference to the competence criteria of the subject or field of education.	Passable competence with reference to the criteria of competence.
<b>D</b>	Defective learning competence and performance with reference to the competence criteria of the subject or field of education.	Defective competence with reference to the criteria of competence.

The compulsory school is responsible for fair and reliable evaluation upon graduation from compulsory school and that the evaluation supplies pupils, parents and upper secondary schools with dependable guidance for the pupils' continued studies at the upper secondary school. Course units at upper secondary schools are defined according to competence levels, and upon graduation from compulsory school pupils begin their studies either in course units of the first or second competence level depending on the precursor requirements of each course unit and the competence of the pupil.

Assessment of what level is most suitable for each pupil is the responsibility of the upper secondary school in question, but generally pupils with grade A in Icelandic, mathematics, English and Danish should begin their studies at competence level two in these subjects

### 13.3 University level

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The Ministry of Education emphasises flexible division between school levels, and this applies as well to the division between the upper secondary school and university. Educational institutions are granted added authority to develop their study offer where school levels meet in order to increase flexibility and opportunities for students when graduating from one school level to the next. Thus various course units at competence level four can overlap with university studies. Cooperation between adjoining school levels is a precondition for assessment of studies between school levels.

According to the Upper Secondary School Act, schools can offer continued studies after defined study completion at the third competence level. The studies are defined as additional education at upper secondary school at competence level four and as secondary school credits.

The fourth competence level can be assessed as credits at university level (ECTS), according to the Higher Education Institution Act no. 63/2006. This is, however, on the terms of each university institution, whether they are Icelandic or foreign. An upper secondary school should always advertise studies at the fourth level in secondary school credits, but if an agreement has already been made with a university institution, this can be mentioned in information on study offered.

### 13.4 The economy

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The collaboration of the upper secondary school and the economy is a prerequisite for the school system responding to the needs of the economy and at the same time offering diverse education that will be useful for students in their work following graduation. This collaboration can take various forms and be emphasised in various ways.

Councils of specialists have been formed in some upper secondary schools where representatives from the labour market are, for example, consulted when decisions are made on emphasis in specific study programmes. Additionally, there is widespread cooperation between upper secondary schools and the labour market on matters concerning the local community. This can be related to the needs of businesses for educated personnel and/or the needs of students at the school for work-based learning or on-the-job training. Furthermore, there are examples where schools collaborate with workplaces that provide them with facilities for vocational training in specific course units.

One of the roles of trade councils, appointed as stipulated in the Upper Secondary School Act no. 92, 12 June 2008, is to encourage mutual understanding and improving relations between schools and the economy. They, for example, define the requirements for knowledge, skill and competence on which the study programme descriptions for the occupation in question are based and give recommendation on vocational study programme descriptions which individual schools want accredited.

## 13.5 Adult education

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The Adult Education Act no. 27/2010 is to meet the requirements of individuals with short formal education. Primarily, this is a question of people who have dropped out of school and started working without having completed defined education at the upper secondary school level.

Adult education comprises vocational and study counselling, validation of competence and education according to curriculum guides that the Ministry of Education accredits. Among the objectives of the adult education is giving individuals an opportunity to enhance their vocational competence and give them increased options to participate in society. Studies within the adult education system can be assessed for secondary school credits according to the decision made by the authorities of individual schools. An effort should be made to validate as extensively as possible the studies of those who wish to return to formal upper secondary school studies. It is important that upper secondary schools and adult education providers cooperate on assessment of education for secondary school credits and study offer that takes into consideration the competence and requirements of different students in order to ensure diverse study offer and easy access to further studies.

## 13.6 Other cooperation

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The various cooperative ventures with parties in Iceland or abroad is a productive means to stimulate the fundamental pillars of education in school activities. These can, for example, be projects in cooperation with other schools, the local community or various organisations.

There are various possibilities for cooperative ventures between Icelandic schools or with foreign schools, in addition to student exchange. Furthermore, schools can participate in conferences, research and international school competitions.

All these possibilities can be employed to stimulate social and cultural relations of students with different communities, in addition to enhancing their awareness of sustainability, literacy and creativity.



## RIGHTS AND RESPONSIBILITIES

# 14

Upper secondary schools can be either public or private institutions. The principal is responsible for school activities on behalf of the Minister of Education, Science and Culture or the guarantors of a private school, in accordance with the agreements, charter or other founding documents of the school in question.

The Ministry of Education emphasises the duties of upper secondary schools in providing service for their students. Upper secondary schools are to provide students with the service that makes their studies as successful as possible. The service is to be in accordance with the different needs of the students and comprise access to information and data, assistance and services from the home room teacher, learning facilities, and service for students with special needs.

Upper secondary schools are to issue clear guiding principles concerning the rights and responsibilities of school and students. These are to be introduced in the school curriculum guide and be accessible for students, their custodians and others concerned. The Ministry of Education here stipulates several rules that are to facilitate schools to address questions concerning rights and responsibilities and service provided for students. Laws and regulations are referred to when appropriate.

## 14.1 Student welfare

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Student welfare is related to physical, mental and social health.

Each school is to offer healthy food on its premises in accordance with public dietary goals and thus contribute to the health of its students. Principals of upper secondary schools are to collaborate with a healthcare centre in the neighbourhood of the school for healthcare and health promotion and describe this in the school curriculum guide.

In addition, upper secondary schools are to encourage the students' healthy lifestyle and healthcare. An effort is to be made in alcohol and drug prevention, sexual health and promotion of mental health. Furthermore, it is important for schools to enhance the social health of the students by encouraging active participation in social activities.

## 14.2 Right to education

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Those who have completed compulsory education, have acquired comparable basic education, or are 16 years of age may enrol in upper secondary schools. These individuals have, furthermore, right to study until they are 18 years of age, subject to provision paragraph 33 of the Upper Secondary School Act on school regulations and handling of individual cases.

Violations of school regulations may lead to the disciplinary measures that a student is temporarily expelled from school or a specific subject. When such a decision is made, the principal's procedure is to be in accordance with the provisions in the Icelandic Administrative Act. Care should be taken that the right of custodial parents/legal guardians to argue against such decisions is observed before a decision is taken concerning the rights and responsibilities of a student.

At enrolment, the upper secondary school has certain responsibilities concerning students with disabilities, students coming directly from compulsory school, students who pass to the subsequent term or school year, and those who are underage (not 18 years of age) at enrolment.

## 14.3 Enrolment in upper secondary schools

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A school agreement between an upper secondary school and the Ministry of Education stipulates expressly the responsibilities of the school at the enrolment of students and the prerequisites and requirements that the school makes for enrolment at the school or specific study programmes. The Ministry of Education decides on the arrangement of enrolment and issues guidelines concerning forms of application. Otherwise, enrolment should be based on regulations currently in force.

In order to ensure consistency in assessment at the end of the compulsory school, the Ministry of Education issues rules on criteria at the end of compulsory school in the general section of the National Curriculum Guide.

## 14.4 Service

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In addition to tuition free of charge, students in public upper secondary schools are offered all the service that the school organises for students. Permissions to fee collection for public upper secondary schools are defined in a special regulation and these are stipulated below.

An example of service bound by law is students' right to have study and vocational counselling, access to a library that is an information centre for students and teachers. It is to be equipped with books and audio-visual aids, in addition to other library material related to the subjects taught at the school. Linked to the library should be reading facilities with access to reference books.

## 14.5 Students with special needs

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Students with specific learning difficulties, emotional or social difficulties, dyslexic students, students with long-term illnesses, students with health-related special needs or disabilities are entitled to special support in their studies based on confirmed special needs. Students with disabilities should study with other students in so far as it is possible.

An effort should be made to enable students with special needs to study and give them the necessary support that can be supplied, as per regulation concerning students with special needs now in force. This can either be done by offering study programmes for students with disabilities or by giving them special support in the other study programmes of the school.

Upper secondary schools can acquire information from compulsory schools concerning students, and compulsory schools are obliged to supply this with the informed consent of students who are of age or the custodial parents/legal guardians if the student is younger than 18 years of age. Furthermore, schools are permitted to reach an agreement with the local authorities or other parties concerning the service of specialists for certain students in order to secure educational continuity for them.

Transition plan is to accompany students with disabilities when they graduate from compulsory school, as per regulation concerning students with special needs in compulsory schools.

## 14.6 Fee collection by public upper secondary schools

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Students in public upper secondary schools are offered teaching free of charge and other service that the school organises for students. The following fee collection is, however, permitted according to a special regulation on fee collection by public upper secondary schools.

The principal decides the enrolment fee, but the Ministry of Education decides the maximum amount. If students are enrolled outside the time announced for enrolment it is permissible to put the price up by 25 per cent per term.

Upper secondary schools are permitted to collect from students in vocational education a cost of course material for material necessary in their studies with which the school supplies students. The material fee is to take into account the real price of materials. The Ministry of Education issues the maximum cost of materials. Upper secondary schools can offer education outside the regular daily operational time and in distance learning. In such cases they are permitted to collect fees from students for part of the employment cost of the teaching. When appropriate, the Ministry of Education will issue further regulations concerning fee collection. If studies take place during the summer, upper secondary schools are permitted to collect fee in order to meet expenses due to instruction.

Furthermore, schools are permitted to collect fees from students for optional activities, such as theatre trips, field studies and museum visits in relation with their studies.

Upper secondary schools may collect fee for other services that are offered and are not by law considered part of or derived from the role of schools. The fee involves services such as issuing certificates (other than graduation certificates), access to wireless network, computer programming, issuing an e-mail address, data storage, locker rent, printing, photocopying and parking space. Having consulted with the school board, principals announce fees. The fees should at maximum bear relation to the cost and be issued on the school website before the beginning of enrolment.

Assessment of students' education, that has been acquired recently within the Icelandic school system and does not require extensive assessment work, should be free of charge. Upper secondary schools are permitted to collect a moderate fee for extensive assessment work on validation for competence and assessment of studies. This fee should not exceed cost and be announced in the school curriculum guide.

## 14.7 School regulations

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School regulations are to be issued in the school curriculum guide and be accessible to all. They are to stipulate the following issues:

- attendance,
- behaviour and conduct
- assessment, study progress and examination regulations,
- disciplinary measures for violation of school regulations,
- regulations on handling matters of conflict and disciplinary measures.

In handling cases concerning students' rights and responsibilities, expulsion from school for more than one school day or if a student is not permitted to attend classes in a specific subject for a period of time, principals are to take into account the provisions of the Icelandic Administrative Procedure Act No. 37/1993. The decision of the principal can be referred to

the Ministry of Education. Referral should be according to provisions in Section VII in the Icelandic Administrative Procedure Act No. 37/1993.

### 14.7.1 Attendance

Upper secondary schools are to give reference on students' attendance in study progress and graduation certificate. Attendance regulations are to stipulate:

- students' rights and responsibilities,
- disciplinary measures for violations of attendance regulations,
- how poor attendance because of illness or other circumstances beyond their control is handled,
- how cases concerning underage students are handled with regard to compulsory education.
- In issuing such regulations, special consideration should be given to students with long-term
- illnesses and to students who are temporarily absent from school due to illnesses or other circumstances beyond their control.

In accordance with the Icelandic Administrative Procedure Act No. 37/1993 and attendance regulations, students can be expelled from specific course units or from school because of poor attendance, if they have first been given a written warning by the teacher in question, home room teacher or school authorities. The right to counter such decisions is to be observed and custodial parents/legal guardians of underage students are to be informed in writing. Final expulsion is the responsibility of the principal.

### 14.7.2 Handling of matters of conflict

Each school issues a regulation on communication channels and procedure policy concerning matters of conflict that may arise. In handling such cases, provisions in the Icelandic Administrative Act no. 37/1993 should be taken into account.

The procedure policy is to stipulate:

- in what way students, both those of age and underage, are warned before disciplinary measures are taken,
- the right to counter the impending decision within a specific period of time,
- the handling of matters of conflict, complaints and charges because of interaction between students and teachers and/or other personnel of upper secondary schools,
- handling of matters of conflict concerning study progress,
- handling of applications for exemption

Violations of school regulations should be dealt with swiftly, whenever possible. Should the involved parties not accept the decision made, the matter may be referred to the Ministry of Education.

Upper secondary schools should record disputes arising within the school and violations of school regulations. In handling individual cases, provisions in the Icelandic Administrative Act no. 37/1993, the Act on the Protection of Privacy as Regards the Processing of Personal Data, no. 77/2000 and the Information Act no. 50/1996 (cf. Appendix 1) should be taken into account. Violations of school regulations should be dealt with swiftly, whenever possible, but at the same time the solution and handling should be as secure and careful as possible.

### 14.7.3 Study progress

Upper secondary schools are to issue clear procedure policy on student progress. It is to be announced in the school curriculum guide and be accessible to students, custodial parents/legal guardians. Regulations on study progress may differ according to final objectives of studies, at what qualification level the study programme is completed and whether students are of age (18 years old) or not. Regulations on study progress are to be defined in study programme descriptions and the Ministry of Education decides on them when the study programme is accredited.

## 14.8 Handling of data

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Data containing students' personal information, and which is kept by the school, should be handled in accordance with the Act on the Protection of Privacy as Regards the

Processing of Personal Data no. 77/2000, provisions in the Information Act no.

59/1996 and the National Archives Act no. 66/1985, as relevant. Personnel in upper secondary schools are bound by confidentiality and it is illegal to give out personal information about students without their consent and the consent of their custodial parents/legal custodians if the student is below the age of 18. All upper secondary schools are to keep information on students' education and give them access to this information. Upper secondary schools are to give access to custodial parents/legal custodians to the school's information system where, among other things, students' grades and attendance are kept. The rights of noncustodial parents to access information concerning their child is in accordance with the Act in Respect of Children no. 76/2003. When students have reached the age of consent, only they or those they have granted power of attorney may be given information about matters that affect them personally

Upper secondary schools can, however, give other schools information concerning specific students who are transferring from one school to another or those who study at more than one school or educational institution simultaneously. Educational authorities can, furthermore, acquire such information for a well-defined purpose. Sensitive personal information can,

however, only be given with the informed consent of students who are of age or the custodial parents/legal guardians if the student is younger than 18 years of age.

Personal information is to be given in a secure manner and in the strictest of confidence

## **14.9 Smoking and intoxicants**

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Smoking and other use of tobacco is forbidden on upper secondary school premises. The handling and use of alcohol and other intoxicants is strictly forbidden on school premises and at social activities under its auspices. If something happens in these matters, upper secondary schools are to contact the custodial parents/legal guardians if the student is younger than 18 years of age.

## ASSESSMENT

# 15

The Ministry of Education emphasises that when evaluating education, students' competence is of utmost importance. All studies at the upper secondary school are linked to levels of competence. As upper secondary schools organise their study programmes themselves, they are expected to enable their students to choose different ways to achieve the competence criteria of each level. Generally the receiving school accepts the assessment of the school that the student comes from when assessing whether the student has acquired the competence in question.

### **15.1 Assessment of education from other schools**

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Students transferring to another school operating according to the National Curriculum Guide for Upper Secondary Schools, will have courses that they have completed successfully accredited at the same competence level at the receiving school, provided they are a stipulated part of the school curriculum guide and study programme descriptions of the school where they enrol.

Upper secondary schools are to issue clear procedure policy concerning assessment of the studies of students who transfer from one study programme to another or from another school. The following rules are valid, but upper secondary schools are expected to elaborate on them in their school curriculum guides.

- Receiving schools are to accredit course units at the same competence level as they are defined in the student's former school, regardless of the organisation of teaching.



- Education that has been evaluated from other schools may be listed as such on the student's graduation certificate.

## 15.2 Validation of competence into upper secondary school study programmes

Validation of competence is an organised process where the overall experience and knowledge of the student is evaluated in a formal manner. The evaluation is based on former studies, work experience and other experience that has been acquired outside the formal school system. Validation of competence can lead to students being considered having completed certain course units and/or their on-the-job training being reduced.

Validation of competence is especially beneficial for those who have not completed studies at the upper secondary school level, been on the labour market for at least three years and are at least twenty-three years of age and have acquired knowledge, skill and competence in a certain field that can be advantageous in their studies towards final examination. In certified trades, minimum five-year work experience on the labour market is mandatory and that the individual be at least twenty-five years of age. Applicant for validation of competence is to provide necessary data to support the application, such as articles of apprenticeship, certificate from employer supported by a pension fund statement, an overview of studies, courses or workshops taken or other information that can be helpful in evaluating the application.

### 15.2.1 Validation of competence

When validation of competence is assessed according to the competence requirements of the upper secondary school, the objective is to evaluate the knowledge, skill and competence of the applicant compared to given criteria concerning the studies that the applicant aims at completing. The competence requirements and final objectives of the studies should be taken into account and it kept in mind that the same goal can be reached by various means. Former education or experience does not necessarily have to be identical with the requirements of the curriculum guide; instead an effort should be made to evaluate equivalent studies and work experience and whether the student has the prerequisites to complete the studies that he or she wishes.

Validation of competence is further discussed in regulation on adult education.

## EXEMPTIONS FROM THE NATIONAL CURRICULUM GUIDE

# 16

Upper secondary schools are responsible for their activities to correspond to the National Curriculum Guide, but at the same time they have extensive authority to adjust the curriculum guide to the requirements of students with disabilities, students with long-term illnesses and those with learning disabilities. School authorities may grant exemption from the curriculum guide for various other reasons. The student's graduation certificate should always list exemptions from study progress and study assessment.

### 16.1 Subject and course units

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Students with disabilities, students with long term illnesses and those with specific learning disabilities and/or other sensory disabilities confirmed by a specialist in the relevant field, may apply to the school principal to be exempted from individual course units. Students who are granted such an exemption should take other course units in lieu.

Students may also apply to the principal for exemptions from a particular subject if their learning disabilities render them unable to grasp the course materials. Such learning disabilities must be confirmed by a specialist in the relevant field. Students that have been exempted from a particular subject in compulsory school may also apply for exemption from the same subject in upper secondary school. Those who are granted such exemptions should take other subjects in lieu. Before the exemption is granted, the principal should make it clear to the students that the exemption could reduce their possibilities to study at university level and to work in the field of work in question, if the study programme is vocational.

### 16.1.1 Sports

Students who parallel to their studies in an upper secondary school are engaged in extensive physical training under the auspices of a special sports association and/or athletics association with a trained coach, athletics instructor or teacher, can apply to the principal to be exempt from specific courses or parts of courses in sports or physical education.

### 16.1.2 Students whose native language is not Icelandic

Schools should make an effort to meet the needs of students of foreign origin through active teaching of Icelandic, by educating them about Icelandic society and culture, and by providing assistance with homework, peer-assisted learning, and through other forms of assistance. Each school is to issue a reception plan defining the main aspects of school activities in a language that the students in question and their custodial parents and/or lawful custodians of underage students understand. The reception plan is to include an individual curriculum guide that takes into account the background and language competence of the students in question, and organise the cooperation of them and the school personnel and clearly describe what assistance the school supplies, for example, regarding homework and interpretation. Special attention should be paid to Icelandic students who have spent long periods overseas. Many of these students require assistance parallel to that organised for students of foreign origin.

Upper secondary schools may accredit the native language of students as an elective or in lieu of another foreign language.

Students whose native language is not Icelandic should be given an opportunity to preserve their native language as an elective, if they wish to do so. Upper secondary schools can offer such studies as class-based learning or distance learning or assess studies taken elsewhere. Each school has to approve the studies if a student wishes to have them accredited. The upper secondary school is not responsible for these studies but can act as an intermediary, for example, with data bases, libraries, associations or others that offer students access to education in their native language.

Students whose native language is not Icelandic have the right to instruction in Icelandic. The same applies to hearing impaired students. Students who resided outside the Nordic countries during compulsory school can apply to study a language other than one of the Nordic languages. Students who have been granted an exemption from studying a Nordic language in compulsory school can also be granted such an exemption in upper secondary school. In such cases, they are required take another subject in lieu.

## 16.2 Exceptional students

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Exceptional athletes should be accommodated in such a way as to allow their school absences as a result of games and/or training to be overlooked when calculating a grade for

school attendance. School absences as a result of games and/or training should not exclude exceptional students from assessment at the end of the school year or term. The student in question should be provided with an opportunity to complete examinations or final projects when that is possible.

Exceptional students are those who have been selected to play on a national youth team or a national team in a given sport, competition, art or occupation, or those that have been selected for participation in and/or preparation for a Nordic tournament, European championships, world championships, or the Olympics or other comparable tournaments in their field.

When the intended participation of a student has been confirmed, principals are advised to make special agreements with the student in question regarding allowances for attendance, completion of assignments and examinations. At the beginning of the school year or term, the relevant sports association/coach of a national team/national team committee shall present the school with a confirmed plan for the student's participation in projects, as far as that is possible.

## EVALUATION OF UPPER SECONDARY SCHOOL ACTIVITIES

# 17

According to the Upper Secondary School Act, the objective of evaluation and supervision of the quality of educational work in upper secondary schools is to:

- give information about school activities, their results and development to educational authorities, upper secondary school personnel, receiving schools, the economy, parents and students,
- ensure that schools activities are in accordance with provisions of law, regulations and the National Curriculum Guide for Upper Secondary Schools,
- improve the quality of education and school activities and encourage development,
- ensure that students' rights are observed and they get the service they are entitled to according to law.

Evaluation of school activities in upper secondary schools is divided into two parts: On one hand, there is evaluation that schools make themselves and is here called internal evaluation. On the other hand, there is evaluation that an outside party makes on behalf of the Ministry of Education or another party and is called external evaluation (cf. also Chapter 3).

### 17.1 Internal evaluation at the upper secondary school level

Internal evaluation gives information about the working methods of the upper secondary school, encourages improvements and increased quality and is a factor in the development of

school activities. Through systematic evaluation it is defined what works and what does not work and then decisions are made on the basis of that outcome.

Evaluation of upper secondary schools is to take into consideration the objectives and values stipulated in law, regulations and the National Curriculum Guide for Upper Secondary Schools. Additionally, the internal evaluation takes into account the work methods and characteristics of each school as listed in the school curriculum guide. Internal evaluation is to be integrated into daily work, encourage reflection and encourage a sense of responsibility among the personnel.

The principal, in collaboration with the personnel, is responsible for the quality of the work that takes place in each school. Each school is to form a clear policy in accordance with the fundamental pillars of education, objectives and emphases of the Upper Secondary School Act and the National Curriculum Guide for Upper Secondary Schools. Each school defines the criteria for its activities and develops evaluation methods that are appropriate for the activities of the school. Employing democratic working methods for the internal evaluation enhances the quality of school activities. Here school authorities, teachers, other personnel, students and parents play an important role.

The school curriculum guide is the basis for school activities and this guide defines the policy of the school and the systematic internal evaluation that is used to evaluate the quality of the activities of the school. The school curriculum guide is also to list the emphases and plans for internal evaluation.

## 17.2 External evaluation at the upper secondary school level

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The Ministry of Education is in charge of the acquisition, analysis and distribution of information about school activities in upper secondary schools and this is part of the regular evaluation of the quality of school activities, in addition to assessments, surveys and research. External evaluation can extend to the upper secondary school as a whole, to internal evaluation methods or other specific factors of the activities of upper secondary schools. Furthermore, the external evaluation can comprise several upper secondary schools at the same time. Upper secondary schools are to assist and provide the data necessary for the evaluation, including the findings of the internal evaluation. Upon completion of the external evaluation, the school describes how it will respond to its findings. The Ministry of Education undertakes to follow up internal and external evaluation through support, instruction and guidance for the school in question so this work can lead to improvement in the operation of the school.

The Ministry of Education makes a three-year plan for surveys and reports to gather information about the execution of law, regulations and the National Curriculum Guide for Upper Secondary Schools and other aspects of schools activities. Additionally, the Minister of Education, Science and Culture can decide on a special external evaluation of an upper

secondary school or specific aspects of school activities, if this is considered necessary. Assessment of a particular school should take place at least every five years

In accordance with law, the Minister of Education, Science and Culture can decide to hold achievement examinations in specific subjects of the upper secondary school, and additionally ability tests linked to the competence criteria and competence levels of education.

## APPENDIX 1

### LAWS AND REGULATIONS 2012 CONCERNING THE UPPER SECONDARY SCHOOL LEVEL:

Act in in Respect of Children, No. 76/2003

The Adult Education Act, No. 27/2010.

The Upper Secondary School Act, No. 92/2008.

Act on Equal Status and Equal Rights of Women and Men, No. 10/2008.

Act on the Affairs of People with Disabilities, No. 59/1992

Act on the Protection of Privacy as regards the Processing of Personal Data, No. 77/2000

The Administrative Procedures Act, No. 37/1993

The National Archives Act, No. 66/1985

The Information Act, No. 50/1996

Act on Working Environment, Health and Safety in Workplaces, No. 46/1980

Regulations regarding:

- permission for fee collection in public upper secondary schools, no. 614/2009
- the enrolment of students, no. 1150/2008
- evaluation and supervision in upper secondary schools, no.70/2010
- evaluation committee for preschools, compulsory schools and upper secondary schools, no. 241/2009
- evaluation committee for study and vocational counsellors, no. 160/2010
- sabbaticals for upper secondary school teachers and administrators, no. 762/2010
- (In process) students with special needs in upper secondary schools
- pupils with special needs in compulsory schools, no. 585/2010
- the right for instruction in Icelandic in upper secondary schools, no. 654/2009
- specialist services by local authorities for preschools and compulsory schools and Pupils' Welfare Council in compulsory schools, no. 584/2010
- appointment and role of occupational councils, no. 711/2009 and no. 1007/2009
- venture fund for preschools, compulsory schools and upper secondary schools, no. 242/2009
- personnel and organisation of upper secondary schools, no. 1100/2007
- tasks and procedures of the exemption committee for upper secondary schools, no. 669/2010
- journeyman's certificate, no. 698/2009



- accreditation of private schools at the upper secondary level, no. 426/2010
- work-based learning and on-the-job training, no. 697/2009 and 1103/2009
- working environment and health based on act no. 46/1980

## APPENDIX 2

### DESCRIPTIONS OF FINAL LEARNING OUTCOMES AT THE UPPER SECONDARY SCHOOL LEVEL

Descriptions of final learning outcomes are summarised below. The types of study completion are defined, that is upper secondary school leaving examination, examination for professional rights and matriculation examination. Other final examinations and additional education at upper secondary school are collective terms for various forms of study completion which are not defined as study completion of the types mentioned above. Some forms of study completion can be defined at different competence levels, others not.

#### Upper secondary school leaving examination

The extent of the upper secondary school leaving examination depends on the final learning objectives of the studies, but it is always 90 to 120 secondary school credits. Study completion can be defined at competence level one or two. If a study programme for students with mental disabilities is to end with an upper secondary school leaving examination, the same rules for extent are valid.

The upper secondary school leaving examination is to support the emphasis that is placed on education for students until they are 18 years of age, and that the upper secondary schools offer education that meets the requirements of each student. Furthermore, it is to meet the requirements of students who do not aim at other study completion. Thus schools can either link the upper secondary school leaving examination to defined study completion or to other forms of school participation specially shaped for individual requirements. However, final objectives should always be clear

Competence level	Main characteristics
1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Content</b> the studies involve general preparation for further studies or employment on the labour market where little specialisation is required and work is done under the supervision of others.</li> <li>• <b>Organisation</b> the studies can involve academic, artistic and/or vocational education and be organised as an integral study programme or be linked to the study programmes of the school in various ways. It can involve career days or on-the-job training.</li> <li>• <b>Extent</b> 90-120 secondary school credits</li> <li>• <b>Rights</b> upon graduation with upper secondary school leaving examination at the first competence level, students can choose either unskilled employment or further studies at upper secondary school level.</li> </ul>
2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Content</b> the studies are characterised by rather short specialisation that mainly aims at professional preparation for further studies or employment that require the employee to show responsibility and independence within a certain framework and/or under the supervision of others.</li> <li>• <b>Organisation</b> the studies can involve academic, artistic and/or vocational education and be organised as an integral study programme or be linked to the study programmes of the school in various ways. It can involve on-the-job training.</li> <li>• <b>Extent</b> 90-120 secondary school credits</li> <li>• <b>Rights</b> upon graduation with upper secondary school leaving examination at the second competence level, students can choose either employment that does not require much specialisation, further studies or accreditation for the study programmes of the upper secondary school level.</li> </ul>

### Vocational examination for professional rights

Vocational examination for professional rights is defined as final learning outcomes in programmes providing rights for regulated professions or to take journeyman's examination. These final learning outcomes can be defined at qualification levels two, three or four.

Competence level	Main characteristics
2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Content</b> the studies are characterised by rather short specialisation that aims at professional preparation for further studies for employment where the employee is required to show responsibility and independence within a certain framework.</li> <li>• <b>Organisation</b> the studies are organised as vocational education and involves on-the-job training</li> <li>• <b>Extent</b> 60-120 secondary school credits</li> <li>• <b>Rights</b> upon graduation with vocational examination for professional rights at the second competence level, students can choose either further studies or employment that requires professional rights. Continued studies involve specialisation within the vocational studies or accreditation for the study programmes of the upper secondary school level.</li> </ul>
3	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Content</b> the studies are characterised by specialised preparation for regulated professions that require the employee to be able to work independently, be responsible for for planning and carrying out projects and evaluating their own work.</li> <li>• <b>Organisation</b> the studies are organised as vocational education and involves on-the-job training</li> <li>• <b>Extent</b> 180-240 secondary school credits</li> <li>• <b>Rights</b> upon graduation with vocational examination for professional rights at the third competence level, students can choose either further studies or employment which requires professional rights. Further studies involve increased specialisation and development at the workplace at the fourth competence level, additional studies for matriculation examination and studies at university level, or accreditation for other study programmes of the upper secondary school level.</li> </ul>
4	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Content</b> the studies are characterised by either increased specialisation and/ or extension, or specialisation concerning management, guidance, development or innovation.</li> <li>• <b>Organisation</b> the studies are organised as vocational education or job-related training</li> <li>• <b>Extent</b> 30 – 120 secondary school credits</li> <li>• <b>Rights</b> upon graduation with vocational examination for professional rights at the fourth competence level, students can choose either further studies at the fourth level, jobs with many responsibilities on the labour market, or jobs in the regulated professions. The studies can, in some cases, be accredited for certain studies at university level.</li> </ul>

## Matriculation examination

Matriculation aims at preparing students for university education in Iceland or abroad. Duration of study for matriculation can differ depending on study programmes and schools, but students' contribution is never to be less than 200 secondary school credits. Final learning outcomes are, without exception, are to be defined at qualification level three. The content of the studies for matriculation depends on the final objectives of the study programme but is also defined according to what kind of preparation for university education the study programme in question offers. The central issue of the studies can be either academic, artistic or vocational.

In addition to rules on minimal number of secondary school credits, special rules concern studies for matriculation. They involve qualification requirements in core subjects and other subjects, in addition to general rules relating to content and organisation of study programmes with final learning outcomes at qualification level three.

Competence level	Main characteristics
3	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Content</b> the studies are characterised by specialised preparation for university. Upon graduation from the third competence level, students are to be able to work independently, be responsible for planning and carrying out projects, and evaluating their own work..</li> <li>• <b>Organisation</b> the studies are generally organised as academic but can involve vocational training, vocational and/or artistic education</li> <li>• <b>Extent</b> 200-240 secondary school credits</li> <li>• <b>Rights</b> upon graduation with matriculation examination the student can choose either further studies at university level or employment on the labour market that does not require professional rights. Matriculation examination does not automatically ensure admission to all studies at university level. Different universities or university faculties can make various special requirements which students are additionally expected to meet and in some cases students have to take entrance examinations.</li> </ul>

## Other final examinations

Final learning outcomes other than matriculation, vocational examination providing professional rights or upper secondary school leaving examination are classified as other final examinations. These include various final learning outcomes that are either defined as qualification level one, two or three. The qualification framework for the study programmes denotes the specialisation that can be either vocational, artistic, academic or general education.

Competence level	Main characteristics
1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Content</b> the studies involve general preparation for continued studies or employment on the labour market that does not require extensive specialisation and are carried out under the direction or supervision of others.</li> <li>• <b>Organisation</b> the studies are either organised as academic, artistic or vocational education and can involve career days or on-the-job training</li> <li>• <b>Extent</b> 30 – 120 secondary school credits, but up to 240 secondary school credits for students with mental disabilities</li> <li>• <b>Rights</b> upon graduation at the first competence level students can choose unskilled employment or further studies at upper secondary school level</li> </ul>
2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Content</b> the studies are characterised by short specialisation which mainly aims at professional preparation for further studies or employment where the employee is required to show responsibility and independence within a certain framework or under the direction of others</li> <li>• <b>Organisation</b> the studies are organised either as academic, artistic or vocational education and can involve career days or on-the-job training</li> <li>• <b>Extent</b> 60- 120 secondary school credits</li> <li>• <b>Rights</b> upon graduation at the second competence level students can choose further studies or employment which depends on the final objectives of the education of how specialised employment is available. Studies following the second level require increased specialisation within vocational education or accreditation for the study programmes of the upper secondary school level.</li> </ul>

<b>3</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Content</b> the studies are characterised by specialised preparation for specialised vocational and/or artistic education. Upon graduation from the third competence level, students are to be able to work independently, be responsible for planning and carrying out projects, and evaluating their own work..</li> <li>• <b>Organisation</b> the studies are organised either as academic, artistic or vocational education and can involve on-the-job training</li> <li>• <b>Extent</b> 150-240 secondary school credits</li> <li>• <b>Rights</b> upon graduation at the third competence level students can choose further studies or employment which requires professional rights. Further studies involve increased specialisation and development at the workplace at the fourth competence level, additional studies for matriculation examination and studies at university level, or accreditation for other study programmes of the upper secondary school level.</li> </ul>
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### Additional education at upper secondary school

The fourth competence level involves either education that takes place within the upper secondary school or under its auspices or at university. Final learning outcomes at the fourth level are characterised by specialisation and/or extension of specialisation concerning management, guidance, development or innovation.

Competence level	Main characteristics
<b>4</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Content</b> the studies are characterised by increased specialisation and/or extension of specialisation concerning management, guidance, development or innovation</li> <li>• <b>Organisation</b> the studies are either organised as academic, artistic or vocational education. Additional education at upper secondary school level is defined as upper secondary school studies and they are to be defined by secondary school credits. Precursor requirements with final learning outcomes at this level are generally graduation from level three.</li> <li>• <b>Extent</b> 30 – 120 secondary school credits</li> <li>• <b>Rights</b> upon graduation at the fourth competence level students can choose either further studies at level four or jobs with many responsibilities on the labour market. The studies can, in some cases, be accredited for certain studies at university level.</li> </ul>

## APPENDIX 3

### COMPETENCE CRITERIA OF CORE SUBJECTS

Core subjects in the upper secondary school are Icelandic, mathematics and English. Generally every study programme is to require students to acquire at least the competence according to the description of the first competence level of core subjects. The organisation of study programmes can involve competence criteria for further competence in core subjects.

Below are descriptions of the knowledge, skill and competence which characterise each competence level in core subjects.

#### ICELANDIC

#### Competence Level 1

##### KNOWLEDGE

Students have acquired general knowledge and understanding of:

- basic concepts of essay writing
- most important concepts in grammar and spelling used in spoken and written language
- vocabulary beyond common spoken language
- various methods of reading, several genres of literature and types of functional texts, and important concepts used to discuss literature

##### SKILL

Students have acquired skill to:

- write various types of continuous functional texts using clear and organised presentation
- use spelling correction programmes and other means to improve their texts
- use common grammatical concepts to improve their linguistic abilities
- use different nuances and registers in spoken and written language .
- summarise the main points of lectures and written texts, find information in source material and use it in an accepted manner
- write and deliver short abstracts, descriptions and presentations of a specific subject
- read for pleasure and purpose texts that make demands on the reader and understand common figures of speech and idioms.

##### COMPETENCE

Students are able to use the general knowledge and skill which they have acquired in order to:

- write short texts of various kinds using appropriate language.
- study languages, for example, by using dictionaries and the most common grammatical terms
- use nuances in language in order to avoid monotony and repetitions
- carry on a conversation and support their assertions, decisions and views in a factual manner
- interpret and assess plot and characters in literature or other narratives

## ICELANDIC

## Competence Level 2

### KNOWLEDGE

Students have acquired knowledge and understanding of:

- key concepts in essay writing
- concepts in grammar and spelling rules used in spoken and written language
- vocabulary adequate to understand modern Icelandic, written and spoken
- various forms of literature, functional texts and several key works of Icelandic literature, in addition to basic concepts of literary studies

### SKILL

Students have acquired skill to:

- write an argumentative essay using critical thinking and presenting their ideas in a clear and informative manner
- use appropriate aids efficiently in essay writing
- use grammatical terms and information to enhance their linguistic ability
- understand and use common styles in spoken and written language
- summarise and use information from different source material and make it a part of their own views and conclusions in an honest way
- deliver with some self-confidence speeches, abstracts, descriptions and presentations of specific subjects
- read for pleasure and purpose both literature and functional texts and discuss their content

### COMPETENCE

Students are able to use the knowledge and skill which they have acquired in order to:

- work on creative projects concerning the curriculum and have considerable variations of usage at their disposal
- increase their linguistic ability and foreign language studies, for example, by using grammatical information in reference books
- write and speak without mistakes clear and nuanced language
- take part in objective discussions, underpin their reasoning clearly, present their views and doubts about the subject and reach a conclusion
- read into a text although it has a deeper meaning



**ICELANDIC****Competence Level 3****KNOWLEDGE**

Students have acquired knowledge and understanding of:

- essay writing and reference work
- the main characteristics of the Icelandic language used in written and spoken language and for studying foreign languages
- vocabulary adequate to read the main works of Icelandic literature
- different forms of both literature and functional texts, literary movements in Iceland, both modern and old, in addition to the most important literary concepts

**SKILL**

Students have acquired skill to:

- apply critical thinking in writing a reference essay and express the ideas in a clear and informative manner in a nuanced language
- arrange a reference essay and any kind of texts, and to use the positive criticism of others to improve the final outcome
- use grammatical terms in discussions on language and its development, culture, and history
- understand and use appropriate rhetorical devices, idioms and cultural references in spoken and written language
- summarise and use in an accepted and critical manner information from any kind of source material, both in spoken and written language, and assess their authenticity
- deliver with self-confidence and persuasion a well-structured speech or a extensive presentation of a complex subject
- read all genres of written language, both modern and old, for pleasure and purpose, understand key concepts and distinguish different viewpoints

**COMPETENCE**

Students are able to use the knowledge and skill which they have acquired in order to:

- write a clear, effective text with a logical structure, and be able to choose a writing style depending on the circumstances and recipients
- assess and enhance their own linguistic ability and that of others, for example, by using grammatical information and their knowledge of the Icelandic language structure
- express themselves in an appropriate and effective manner in varied circumstances both in spoken and written language
- express a well-founded attitude in various circumstances, explain viewpoints and take active part in objective discussions in order to reach a reasoned conclusion
- summarise main points, apply critical thinking when reading, interpreting or processing a demanding text, discern social references and recognise hidden meaning and ideas
- demonstrate mature moral awareness, broadmindedness, creativity and compassion in their articulation, discussion and actions

## Mathematics

Not all the mathematical aspects of knowledge, skill or competence are necessarily to be acquired at each level, but instead the aspects of the studies that are the basis for the competence criteria of the study programme. Thus specific mathematical aspects can be developed up to higher competence levels.

Additionally, there is a description of the knowledge, skill and competence which characterises mathematics of competence level four. This is done because study programmes that prepare students for scientific studies at university level often teach mathematics at competence level four.

## Mathematics

## Competence Level 1

### KNOWLEDGE

Students have acquired general knowledge and understanding of:

#### *numbers and algebra:*

- priority of operations and use of common mathematical symbols
- arithmetics and divisibility with low numbers
- fractions, percentage calculation, proportionality, and interest calculation
- approximation and rounding of numbers
- use of symbols as substitutes for numbers

#### *geometry:*

- the metric system, the coordinate system, mensuration, square and cubic measure
- transformation and similarity of simple figures, enlargement and reduction
- qualities of a straight line in the coordinate system

#### *calculations, statistics and probability calculus:*

- presentation of data in a graphic form

### SKILL

Students are able to use in a structured context:

#### *symbols:*

- priority of operations, general mathematical symbols and to interpret these items verbally

#### *numbers and algebra:*

- arithmetic and divisibility with low numbers
- operations with fractions, percentage calculation, proportionality, interest calculation
- precision in approximation and rounding of numbers
- simple equations and the equal sign

#### *geometry:*

- the metric system, the coordinate system, square and cubic mensuration of common objects
- transformation of simple figures, enlargement and reduction, maps and tables
- qualities of a straight line in the coordinate system and their interpretation in projects that lead to linear relation

#### *counting, statistics and calculations:*

- application, reading and interpretation of graphic data and a critical view concerning misleading use of these
- calculation of simple probability of events and assessment of the consequences of the events

#### *aids:*

- simple calculators and common computer programmes

### COMPETENCE

Students have acquired competence in the following fields and are able to:

#### *verbal and written communication:*

- understand and interpret the explanations and arguments of others without prejudice, showing respect and tolerance
- write their solutions systematically, share ideas with others about them and explain their ideas and tasks, verbally and graphically
- understand the interrelation of different methods of presenting mathematical ideas and projects
- analyse and utilise mathematical information that appears at the first level, whether it is verbal, written, graphic or in tables

#### *mathematical thinking:*

- understand the meaning and relation of concepts in the curriculum and how to apply them
- know what kind of questions lead to mathematical problems, to ask such questions and be aware of what kind of answers to expect

#### *solving problems and projects:*

- apply methodical techniques in seeking solutions to problems in a familiar context and explain these methods
- use critical and creative thinking and show daring, initiative, intuition and originality in solving problems
- transfer everyday problems into mathematical form, solve them and interpret the mathematical solution
- use the solutions to the problems for making a choice, comparison, plans and decisions

#### *reasoning:*

- follow and understand verbal and written reasoning and apply simple arguments
- judge whether information is correct and/or reliable
- everyday life and general education, for example,
- at work, in the field of finance, technology or art

## Mathematics

## Competence Level 2

### KNOWLEDGE

Students have acquired knowledge and understanding of, for example:

#### *numbers, sets and algebra:*

- divisibility based on prime factors and the existence of real numbers
- rules for calculation, relations of powers and roots, writing decimal powers
- common rules for calculation, algebraic fractions
- first and second-degree equations, inequalities

#### *geometry:*

- the importance of precision in mensuration
- the concepts of Euclidian geometry and coordinate geometry in a level plane, ratio of lengths, square and cubic measures

#### *functions:*

- polynomials, trigonometric functions, logarithms and exponential functions

#### *counting, statistics and probability calculus:*

- simple rules of counting
- classification of data and principal characteristics from descriptive statistics
- simple probabilities
- 

### SKILL

Students are able to use:

#### *symbols:*

- priority of procedures and common mathematical symbols and to verbally interpret them

#### *numbers and algebra:*

- calculation and divisibility with low numbers
- decimal fractions, percentage, proportional and interest calculation
- precision in rounding and approximation of numbers
- equations and equal sign

#### *geometry:*

- the metric system, the coordinate system, square and cubic mensuration of common objects
- transformation, enlargement and reduction, maps and tables
- qualities of a straight line in projects that lead to linear relation

#### *counting, statistics and calculations:*

- application, reading and interpretation of graphic data and a critical view concerning misleading use of these
- probability of events and assessment of the consequences of these

#### *aids:*

- calculators and common computer programmes

### COMPETENCE

Students have acquired competence in the following fields and are able to:

#### *verbal and written communication:*

- understand and interpret the explanations and arguments of others showing respect and tolerance without prejudice
- write their solutions systematically, share ideas with others about them and explain their ideas and tasks, verbally, graphically
- understand the interrelation of different methods of presentation
- analyse and utilise mathematical information that appears at the first level verbally, in writing, graphic form or in tables.

#### *mathematical thinking:*

- understand the meaning and relation of concepts in the curriculum
- know what kind of questions lead to mathematical problems, to ask such questions and be aware of what kind of answers to expect

#### *solving problems and projects:*

- apply methodical techniques in seeking solutions to problems linked to known context and explain their methods
- use critical and creative thinking and show daring, initiative, intuition and originality in solving problems
- transform everyday projects into a mathematical form, solve them and interpret the solutions
- use the solutions to problems for making a choice, comparison, plans and decisions
- reasoning:
- follow and understand verbal and written arguments and apply simple reasoning
- judge if information is right and/or reliable
- in everyday life and general education, for example:
- in professions, finance, technology or art

## Mathematics

## Competence Level 3

### KNOWLEDGE

Students have acquired specialised knowledge and understanding of skills on, for example:

#### *numbers, sets and algebra:*

- the infinity of the number system, complex numbers and sets operations
- finite and infinite sequences and rows
- solutions of equations, such as trigonometric functions and logarithms

#### *geometry:*

- geometric concepts and projects in two- and three-dimensional coordinate systems

#### *functions:*

- differentiation of simple and complex functions
- integration and relation of differentiation and integration

#### *counting, statistics and probability calculus:*

- composite counting rules
- probability calculus
- correlation and the correlation concept

### SKILL

Students are fully capable of, can form their own demonstrations when appropriate and have acquired training in methods and procedures on:

#### *application of symbols:*

- all the principal rules on mathematical presentation, and verbal interpretation of symbols

#### *numbers, sets and algebra:*

- the infinity of the number system, finite and infinite sequences and rows, complex numbers
- solutions of equations of specialised functions, such as trigonometric functions and logarithms

#### *geometry:*

- problems in two- and three-dimensional coordinate systems

#### *functions, differentiation and integration:*

- differentiation of complex functions, such as logarithms and composite functions
- relation of differentiation and integration

#### *counting, statistics and probability calculus:*

- composite counting rules
- probability based on counting, probability distribution, correlation

#### *aids:*

- apply scientific calculators and mathematical programmes with confidence and are aware of their limits

### COMPETENCE

Students are to be able to use the specialised knowledge and skill that they have acquired in the field of, for example:

#### *verbal and written communication:*

- understand and interpret the explanations and arguments of others without prejudice, showing respect and tolerance
- write their solutions systematically, share ideas with others about them and explain their ideas and tasks, verbally or graphically
- understand the interrelation of different methods of presenting ideas and projects and select an appropriate method
- to analyse and utilise mathematical information at the third level, whether it is verbal, written, graphic or in tables

#### *mathematical thinking:*

- apply the meaning and relation of concepts in the curriculum
- understand what kind of questions lead to mathematical problems, to ask such questions and be aware of what kind of answers to expect
- distinguish between necessary and adequate conditions for solving problems
- understand the concept of generalisation
- use mathematical knowledge to make decisions in specialised projects

#### *solving problems and projects:*

- use critical and creative thinking and show daring, initiative, intuition and originality in solving verbal problems
- apply methodical techniques in seeking solutions to problems, and through equations
- transform projects, presented verbally, into a mathematical form, solve them and interpret the solution
- use the solutions to problems for comparison, plans and decisions

#### *reasoning:*

- follow verbal and written reasoning
- follow proofs in the curriculum
- discern when reasoning can be considered satisfactory proof
- give simple proofs of their own

#### *everyday life and general education, such as:*

- in professions, finance, technology or art

## Mathematics

## Competence Level 4

### KNOWLEDGE

Students have acquired academic knowledge and understanding on, for example:

#### *numbers and sets:*

- convergence of infinite sequences and rows,

#### *algebra:*

- concepts of pure algebra, such as groups and their categories

#### *geometry:*

- linear algebra, its principal concepts and correlation with geometry

#### *functions, differentiation and integration:*

- convergence concept
- integration with considerable changes of variables

#### *counting, statistics and probability calculus:*

- specialised concepts, such as random variables, testing of hypothesis, confidence intervals

### SKILL

Students have mastered, are able to give their own proofs, when necessary, and have acquired training in methods and procedures on:

#### *application of symbols:*

- all the principal rules on mathematical presentation of the curriculum, and to verbally interpret the ideas of which the symbols consist

#### *numbers and sets:*

- comparison and research on the convergence of infinite sequences and rows

#### *algebra:*

- the principal concepts of pure algebra, such as groups and their chief categories

#### *geometry:*

- the methods of linear algebra and its relation with geometry

#### *functions, differentiation and integration:*

- methods to research convergence

#### *counting, statistics and probability calculus:*

- computer programmes for quantitative data

#### *aids:*

- apply scientific calculators and different mathematical programmes with confidence and are aware of their limits

### COMPETENCE

Students have acquired academic competence in the following fields and are able to:

#### *verbal and written communication:*

- understand and interpret the explanations and arguments of others without prejudice, showing respect and tolerance
- write their solutions systematically, share ideas with others about them and explain their ideas and tasks, verbally and graphically
- understand the interrelation of different methods of presenting ideas and projects and select an appropriate method each time
- analyse and utilise mathematical information that appears verbally, in writing, graphically or in tables.

#### *mathematical thinking:*

- apply the meaning and relation of concepts in the curriculum
- know what kind of questions lead to mathematical problems, to ask such questions
- distinguish between necessary and adequate conditions for solving problems
- understand the concept of generalisation
- use mathematical knowledge to make decisions in specialised projects

#### *solving problems and projects:*

- use critical and creative thinking and show daring, initiative, intuition and originality in solving verbal problems
- apply methodical techniques in seeking solutions to problems, and though equations
- transform projects, presented verbally, into a mathematical form, solve them and interpret the solution
- use the solutions to the problems for making a choice, comparison, plans and decisions

#### *reasoning:*

- follow and understand extensive reasoning, whether it is verbal or written
- discern when reasoning can be considered satisfactory proof
- give a proof of their own

#### *everyday life and general education, such as:*

- in professions, finance, technology or art

## English and other foreign languages

The description of knowledge, skill and competence that characterises English at different competence levels applies to all other foreign languages. It is important to keep in mind that the competence levels describe the knowledge, skill and competence that characterises students regardless of school level. Thus pupils in compulsory school are studying a Nordic language or English at the first competence level as students in upper secondary schools who are studying a new language. The time for acquiring the competence that characterises each competence level may differ from one pupil to another.

The Ministry of Education published in 2006 a translation of the European Language Portfolio for upper secondary schools (<http://www.menntamalaraduneyti.is/nyrit/nr/3931>). The Portfolio includes a self-evaluation framework that describes competence in listening, reading, writing and speaking in both interaction with others and in narrative. The description of student competence is defined in six levels called A1, A2, B1, B2, C1 and C2.

The criteria of the Language Portfolio characterising levels A1, A2 and B1 can partially be applied in the description of the knowledge, skill and competence of competence level one.

The criteria of the Language Portfolio characterising levels B1 and B2 can be applied in the description of the knowledge, skill and competence of competence level two.

The criteria of the Language Portfolio characterising level C1 can be applied in the description of the knowledge, skill and competence of competence level three.

## FOREIGN LANGUAGES

## Competence Level 1

### KNOWLEDGE

Students have acquired general knowledge and understanding of:

- the vocabulary which is necessary to acquire the learning outcomes of the level
- daily life, culture and customs in the countries where the language is spoken and are acquainted with their communication practices
- the basic factors of the language structure
- structure and formation of a text and the difference between spoken and written language

### SKILL

Students have acquired skill to:

- understand spoken language about familiar subjects when spoken clearly and expressively
- read different types of texts in their own area of interest or texts on familiar subjects and employ appropriate methods each time, according to the purpose of the reading
- take part in general conversation on subjects in their own area of interest or texts on familiar subjects and adhere to appropriate politeness routines, stress and intonation
- narrate clearly by using satisfactory (vocabulary), usage, pronunciation, stress and intonation
- write a continuous text on familiar subjects or in their areas of interest using appropriate language adhere to basic rules on written language
- use information technology and aids in language learning

### COMPETENCE

Students are able to use the general knowledge and skill which they have acquired in order to:

- follow narratives and talks and understand the main points in the media and visual media if the subject is familiar
- acquire information, discern the main points and employ them in their studies
- understand the main points in a magazine or newspaper article and be able to draw conclusions from what they read
- read for pleasure and instruction literature of a suitable difficulty level and express their opinions on it
- adopt to various situations in everyday life, use appropriate language and communication practices and carry on a conversation
- express their own knowledge, views and feelings, in addition to personal experience, hopes and expectations
- explain and support decisions and plans, and make compromises
- share material that they have acquired knowledge of
- write about events, imagined and real
- write a summary based on a specific subject, such as a film or newspaper article
- write about their interests and hobbies



**FOREIGN LANGUAGES****Competence Level 2****KNOWLEDGE**

Students have acquired knowledge and understanding of:

- the basic structure of the societies where the language is a native language/first language
- different views and values and how they form the culture in the countries where the language is used and can relate these to their own society and culture
- the vocabulary which is necessary to acquire the learning outcomes of the level, including phrases and interdisciplinary vocabulary
- the usage to acquire the learning outcomes of the level, both in spoken and written form; the main tradition for text setup and organisation, such as punctuation

**SKILL**

Students have acquired skill to:

- understand language spoken with different accents and in different situations, and understand common phrases characteristic for spoken language
- read different types of texts and employ the reading methods appropriate for the type of text
- actively participate in communication in an appropriate manner and language
- express themselves clearly and without errors on subjects they have acquainted themselves with
- write different types of texts, formal and informal, and follow the principal traditions and rules on language performance

**COMPETENCE**

Students are able to use the knowledge and skill which they have acquired in order to:

- understand everyday language, such as conversations and the media, whether they know the topic or not
- understand without difficulty the main points of talks and discussions, even on rather complicated topics, if they are familiar
- understand the meaning of a written text and utilise it in various ways
- read texts where certain views or opinions are introduced, realize the purpose and attitude of the author, react or express their opinions on the topic in writing or verbally
- read between the lines, understand the deeper meaning of a text
- solve various problems that arise in relations and use language appropriate for the situation
- exchange ideas, give reasons for their ideas and answer objections and counterarguments in an appropriate manner
- take the initiative in conversation and react to unexpected questions and remarks
- express themselves in a clear and expressively and use the language with comparative accuracy in various situations
- explain attitudes concerning current affairs and outline different attitudes for and against
- write a presentable text on a chosen topic of their own where imagination comes into its own; write many types of texts and adhere to the writing traditions that are appropriate each time

## FOREIGN LANGUAGES

## Competence Level 3

### KNOWLEDGE

The student is to have acquired knowledge and understanding of:

- politics, the media and history and their influence on the social development in the countries where the language is spoken
- the culture of the nations where the language is spoken, in addition to their own culture in a global context
- the origin and distribution of the target language, and its relation to Icelandic
- the vocabulary required to easily understand written material in further studies or occupation.
- traditions related to written or spoken language, for example, different registers

### SKILL

Students have acquired skill to:

- understand well specialised texts in an area they are familiar with
- understand ordinary spoken language, even when the narrative is incoherent
- read for pleasure and purpose texts that make great demands on the reader, either because of vocabulary and structure or imagery and figures of speech
- use the language in a flexible and effective manner in conversation
- be able to express themselves with confidence on various subjects, both general and personal
- employ written language for various purposes, academic and personal, with appropriate figures of speech and registers and meeting the requirements of the level

### COMPETENCE

Students are able to use the knowledge and skill which they have acquired in order to:

- use lectures, conversations and discussions on topics they are familiar with
- understand for their own advantage when a complicated topic is being discussed, whether it is academic or technological
- discern different registers styles in spoken language and the underlying attitudes and purpose of the speaker
- analyse historical, social, cultural and political context in a text, e.g., in literature and other texts
- make a critical assessment of a text
- use an academic text and evaluate source material in a critical manner
- use the language without major problems to take an active part in conversations and discussions on personal, cultural, social and multicultural topics
- deliver a well-structured narrative, presentation or report, summarise the main points and support their views fairly accurately with examples and react to questions
- describe in a clear and well-defined manner complex objects or processes in a field they know well
- apply the writing traditions appropriate in writing a text, including introduction with a topic sentence, body text with well-defined paragraphs and conclusion
- use various data banks and bring together as a whole according to source material traditions
- write a concise, intelligible and well-structured text suitable for the intended reader
- write a argumentative text weighing the arguments for and against
- expressing feeling, using imagination and apply rhetorical devices, e.g., imagery and figures of speech



