State and administrative supervision (hereinafter supervision) in preschool and school education is exercised on equal grounds.

The task of state supervision is:

- to check the fulfilment of requirements deriving from legal acts regulating teaching and education activities;
- to analyse problems in implementation of legal acts regulating teaching and education activities.

The ministry exercises supervision in individual cases or through thematic surveillance if required.

The results of supervision are formulated as a report and such reports are public documents. The Ministry of Education and Research analyses the results of supervision and publishes them in the annual overview of external evaluation of the education system.

In 2006, the Ministry of Education and Research established the obligation to conduct internal evaluation in preschool child care institutions, general education schools and vocational schools. The objective of the change was to support the creation of internal quality assurance systems and to enhance the independence and self-management of educational institutions. The objective of internal evaluation is to ensure conditions that support the development of children/students and a continuous development of the educational institution. An educational institution can use counselling service. However, since 1 September 2013, counselling service has been covered from the school funds. Counsellors have undergone specific training. Preschool child care institutions can apply for compensation of counselling service by the Ministry of Education and Research.

The objective of counselling is:

- to analyse the internal evaluation of an educational institution;
- to give the head of the educational institution feedback on internal evaluation;
- counsel the head of the educational institution in the field of internal evaluation.

The purpose of external assessment of learning outcomes is to give the school, its owner and the state as objective and comparable feedback as possible on the attainment of the learning outcomes provided for in the national curricula and the effectiveness of teaching and learning in school, and to provide the state with necessary information for making education policy decisions.

External assessment of learning outcomes is performed through standard-determining tests, harmonised final examinations of basic school and state examinations. The Minister of Education and Research establishes the subjects, forms and time of standard-determining tests, the conditions and procedure for preparing, drawing up, carrying out and assessing and the procedure for standard-determining tests and the conditions of and procedure for analysing harmonised final examinations of
basic school and state examinations.

In 2014, the conditions for graduation from upper secondary school were changed. Since 2014, an upper secondary school graduate has been required to take, in addition to the school examination and a student investigation paper or practical work, three compulsory state examinations, in the Estonian language, mathematics and a foreign language.

By the Decree of the Minister of Education and Research No 238 of 3 June 2014, the concept of general education external evaluation “General education external evaluation tasks, principles and basis for development until 2020 [1]” was approved. Focus in assessing the performance of a learner and an educational institution as a learning organisation has shifted onto formative assessment. According to the concept, evaluation of learning outcomes shall be guided by the following principles:

- to support the development of the student, the teacher and the school;
- to collect evidence necessary for taking decisions relating to the student and the school;
- to submit proposals for decisions on education at state level and to provide schools with an example of good practice in teaching.

According to the Vocational Educational Institutions Act, the Minister of Education and Research shall grant the right to conduct study on the basis of a specific curriculum group of a vocational educational institution and ensure that curriculum groups shall undergo regular accreditation, a part of which is internal evaluation in school.

Accreditation of curriculum groups of vocational education is coordinated by Estonian Quality Agency for Higher and Vocational Education, which is one of the structural units of Archimedes Foundation.

In order to operate as the manager of a continuing education institution, the continuing education provider must submit a notice of economic activities, unless, pursuant to the law he or she is required to apply for an activity licence for the provision of continuing education. In case the continuing education curricula are based on learning outcomes and comply with the continuing education standard, and teachers with required competence and a required learning environment can be provided, an activity licence must be applied for.

**Responsible Bodies**

**State supervision** over the teaching and education activities of schools is performed by the Ministry of Education and Research [2]. Where necessary, experts are involved in conduct of state supervision.

The Ministry of Education and Research exercises state or administrative supervision over the managers of continuing education institutions and their activities pursuant to the Adult Education Act [3]. The procedure for internal evaluation is established by the head of a school who shall obtain an approval for the evaluation from the board of trustees of the school in advance.

**Foundation Innove** [4] organises external evaluation of learning outcomes (standard-determining tests and examinations) in basic schools and upper secondary schools, analyses the results and informs educational institutions about the results.

**Supervisory control** over the lawfulness and efficiency of an educational institution’s activities is initialised and carried out by the owner of the institution (in municipal schools by the local municipality, in state schools by the Minister of Education and Research), involving experts of the field, where necessary.
Regarding **vocational and professional qualifications**, the quality of education is inspected by **vocational councils** whose work is organised by the **Estonian Qualifications Authority** [5]. The area of activity of the Estonian Qualifications Authority is the development of the qualifications system as a link between learning and the labour market as well as guaranteeing that the system operates. The Estonian Qualifications Authority organises the development of professional qualification standards and coordinates the organisation of professional examinations.

**Approaches and Methods for Quality Assurance**

The initial evaluation of an educational institution is carried out through issuing of an education license. All private and municipal educational institutions (preschool institutions, general education schools, vocational schools), with the exception of state schools, must apply for an education licence from the Ministry of Education and Research in order to organise teaching and education. Together with the application, the curriculum of the educational institution and the data about the teachers are submitted. When processing the education licence, the compliance of the curriculum to the requirements set out in legal acts as well as the correspondence of teachers with the qualification requirements is evaluated. An education licence gives the right for organisation of teaching and education activities. Granting of an education licence is decided by the Minister of Education and Research.

The official conducting administrative supervision has the right to:

- visit a school in order to inspect teaching and education, informing the head of the school thereof in advance;
- participate in the meetings of the teachers’ council, the board of trustees and parents;
- access the documents of the school;
- receive information from the school regarding the implementation of legislation;
- make proposals to the head of the school and the owner of the school for improvement of the operations of the school and mandatory precepts for elimination of deficiencies in teaching and education;
- make mandatory precepts to the head of the school and the owner of a private school for bringing the individual legal instruments regulating teaching and education and issued by them in conflict with an Act or other legislation issued on the basis of an Act into compliance with the Act or other legislation issued on the basis of an Act;
- make a proposal to the person whose competence includes termination of an employment contract with the head of the school to terminate the employment contract with the head of the school who has committed an indecent act, an offence related to office or a corruptive act or make a precept to terminate the employment contract with the head of the school who does not comply with the requirements for the position.

The following methods shall be used in conducting administrative supervision:

- analysing statistical and financial reports, learning outcomes and other collected information, including analysing and verifying the data in the Estonian Education Information System;
- examining the documents of the educational institution and analysing the content thereof;
- having conversations with the employees of the educational institution, members of the board of trustees (the teachers’ council), parents, students (children) and the owner of the educational institution, and in case of a state or a private educational institution, with a representative of the local government of the location of the educational institution;
- examining the teaching and upbringing environment of the school, including teaching and education activities.
**Internal evaluation** is used to evaluate teaching and education activities and management of preschool institutions, basic schools, upper secondary schools and vocational schools and the effectiveness thereof. Educational institutions draw up an internal evaluation report at least once during the period of the school development plan.

The report lists the strengths and areas for improvement of the operations of the school. Performance indicators, which are available to public in EEIS and approved by an order of the minister, form a basis for internal evaluation.

The objective of performance indicators is to give schools the opportunity to monitor its indicators in time and to compare them with the indicators of other educational institutions of the same type. In 2016, performance indicators were reviewed and, in addition to the previously used input and output, several new indicators for teaching and education process were introduced (e.g., absence of students, use of digital tools in a lesson, student satisfaction, etc.). Teaching effectiveness was adopted as a performance indicator for upper secondary level providing feedback on the contribution of the upper secondary school to the performance of students. In addition to examination results, the teaching effectiveness indicator for upper secondary schools provides schools with feedback allowing them to monitor more closely the effectiveness of teaching. In order to better inform the public and perform internal evaluation of the school, the so-called KOOLKAART (a school file) has been drawn up for every school and published in the educational statistics virtual environment [HaridusSilm](#6).

The methods for conducting internal evaluation are chosen by educational institutions themselves.

Since 1 September 2013, schools and preschool childcare institutions have been in charge of deciding upon ordering of the counselling service and paying for the service. The state guarantees counselling to pre-school child care institutions. The majority of counsellors are people belonging to the management of educational institutions who fulfil this task in addition to their main job. Counselling is organised and coordinated by the Ministry of Education and Research.

Counselling is regarded as an activity that is based on trustful cooperation between the counsellor and the educational institution.

**Supervisory control** is used for conducting supervision by owners of educational institutions – local municipalities perform it in municipal schools and the Ministry of Education and Research performs it in state schools. In addition to evaluation and control activities carried out in the course of state supervision and supervisory control, **external audit** as a new type of evaluation was added in 2001 to the quality assurance procedures related to state owned educational institutions. The auditor of the Ministry of Education and Research functions as the external auditor of state educational institutions. The **Chancellor of Justice** conducts supervision over educational institutions in matters related to his or her jurisdiction, i.e. over guaranteeing students’ constitutional rights. The results of supervision conducted by the Chancellor of Justice are published as a yearbook.

**External assessment of learning outcomes** is conducted through **standard determining tests**, **harmonised final examinations of basic school** and **state examinations**.

In grade 3, standard-determining tests are conducted in Estonian or Russian and mathematics; in grade 6, in Estonian or Russian and mathematics. As of 2016, standard-determining tests for grade 6 are conducted only in an electronic environment as e-tests. In 2018, additional standard-determining e-tests in natural science were conducted in grades 4 and 7 to provide students and teachers with feedback on the acquisition of the targeted learning outcomes. Knowledge, analytical skills, planning skills and interpretation skills were assessed on four levels – basic, intermediate, advanced and
excellent. Student feedback includes a description of the achieved level; marks or points are not used. The newly added standard-determining tests are based on an improved version of the concept for electronic assessment of learning outcomes in natural science, which supports the development of the self-directed learner and complies with the principles of the implementation of the new approach to learning.

In grades 9 and 12, digital skills were piloted.

Compulsory subjects where examinations must be taken at the end of basic school include Estonian or, in the event specified in the national curriculum for basic schools, Estonian as a second language; and mathematics; the third examination subject is chosen by students from among subjects established by the Minister of Education and Science.

For graduation from upper secondary school, students must pass three state examinations (the Estonian language or in the events provided for in the national curriculum for upper secondary schools, Estonian as a second language, mathematics and a foreign language) as well as the school examination and a student investigation paper or practical work.

The results of external assessment of learning outcomes are forwarded to educational institutions. Results are analysed at national level in the context of implementation of curricula and the analyses are published on the website of Foundation Innove [7].

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