

Optional Course: Career Education

1. General principles

1.1. Learning and Educational Objectives

The course strives to direct the students to:

- 1) value learning as a lifelong process;
- 2) develop learning skills, communication skills, cooperation and decision-making skills and information-processing skills;
- 3) develop both the desire and the skill of setting personal goals and working systematically to achieve them;
- 4) assume informed responsibility for their own career choices and decisions;
- 5) realise their own interests, abilities and skills that stimulate adequate self-assessment and facilitate concrete career-related decision-making;
- 6) are aware of different work spheres and professions/vocations, labour legislation, educational and training opportunities, general labour market trends and the local economic environment, transformation of the importance of gender roles in a changing world of employment;
- 7) use appropriate information in career planning; and
- 8) analyse their learning outcomes and work experience and plan their careers.

1.2. Description of the optional course

The optional course “Career education” is dedicated to the topics that shape students’ readiness for optimal self-application on the labour market, development of independent decision-making skills, fulfilment of different life roles and engagement in lifelong learning. Career studies enable improved implementation of the human resources of our society on the labour market, bringing together the skills and interests of people and various learning and working opportunities. Career studies contribute to the development of a new generation, not limited by stereotypical gender roles, which have been ingrained in a particular culture during a specific period as general shared concepts of femininity and masculinity. The innate differences between women and men do not require them to choose only certain types of jobs and educational specialisations. It is not appropriate to discuss male and female jobs separately from each other; the information on health risks associated with different occupations enables both men and women make knowledgeable choices, being aware of potential risk factors.

The syllabus of the optional course of career studies at the upper secondary school stage was compiled in accordance with the syllabus of the optional course of career education for the 3rd stage of study of basic school. At both school stages the main topics of career studies are the same and they must be taught in accordance with the students' age and degree of relevance, consistently and systematically. Many of the topics connected with self-knowledge allow the students to monitor their own development (for instance, look back at the description of personal interests made in the 9th grade and see what has changed in the 11th grade, etc.).

The difference between the content of career studies at the 3rd stage of study of basic school and the upper secondary school stage is in certain topic stresses and depth or scope of treatment. The recurrent topics are studied using various methods and different aspects of the topics are revealed, offering general or more detailed information and tasks that require a lesser or greater degree of student independence, etc. The content of career studies influences the steps that the students are likely to take after finishing the current school stage. In addition to planning their further education, upper secondary school graduates are prepared more thoroughly to enter the world of work. During the course, the students of the upper secondary school stage are expected to exhibit greater independence, readiness for self-analysis and confident presentation of the results to fellow students.

The optional course consists of three parts:

1. Study of the topic of self-knowledge and performance of corresponding practical tasks help the students to shape their self-determination competence and, proceeding from self-analysis results, to make informed decisions concerning further education and working life. Connections of social and learning competence with future studies and working life are examined. Conscious shaping of learning habits coupled with the shorter- or longer-term goals formulated in the career plan facilitates prevention of interruptions to the students' education.
2. Career information: knowledge of learning opportunities, different work spheres and labour market trends is necessary for the students to be able to plan their career in an informed manner. Student readiness is shaped to flexibly react to rapid labour market changes and be engaged in lifelong learning. During their practical familiarisation with the labour market, the students obtain an overview of different work spheres and learn to pay attention to gender equality issues in their career choices. The students are directed to research and, if possible, try different jobs and volunteer work and seek and find connections between school studies and work spheres. Practical learning activities foster students' enterprising initiative.
3. Knowledge of the principles of planning and decision-making helps the students with systematisation of the information about themselves and labour market opportunities and association of this information with future plans. The students analyse different factors that affect career choices. The following student knowledge and skills are shaped: goal-setting, career-related decision-making, recognition of likely problems and their prevention and importance of effectively combining work and private life.

The optional course of career studies focuses on shaping adequate student self-assessment. The students know the interconnections of specialties, professions and vocations. They can see and understand events occurring in the world of work and are aware of the effect they have on personal employment career planning. The students realise their responsibility and are motivated to plan their personal careers in an informed manner.

Discussion of the gender equality principle in career planning raises students' awareness of the possibility of making any choices based on their preferences and abilities and of the availability of jobs that have been traditionally associated with a particular gender preference. Career studies teach tolerance and freedom of choice. Students understand that any wage issues are resolved based on the content and degree of responsibility of a job, not a gender preference. Career studies offer assistance to the students in creating an integral view of the knowledge, skills and experience acquired in other subjects, courses and various life situations – this is the basis for career-related decision-making.

1.3. Planning and Organisation of Learning Activities

The optional course of career studies for the upper secondary school stage consists of 35 subject lessons. The concrete content of the optional course is to be specified at the beginning of the course through teacher-student cooperation. When determining sub-topics, selecting practical activities and so on, the needs of each concrete study group are the starting point, but the following must also be taken into account: whether, to what extent and how other activities that support career planning and personal consultations are available within the framework of the curriculum for a particular study group.

It is recommended to organise the following learning activities while teaching the course:

- 1) roleplay and other active learning methods and multifunctional methods;
- 2) filling in of questionnaires dedicated to self-analysis and working life, as well as thought development sheets;
- 3) classroom lectures or independent student work online to acquire theoretical knowledge;
- 4) discussions and debates;
- 5) work with sources of career information and critical analysis of such information;
- 6) writing of essays;
- 7) research paper compilation (for example, about a certain sphere of work);
- 8) conducting of interviews (for example, with a representative of a certain type of profession);
- 9) conducting of professional suitability tests;
- 10) study outings and visits to companies;
- 11) independent work (for example, to become familiarised with different spheres of work);
- 11) career plan compilation;
- 13) learning portfolio compilation;
- 14) public presentations; etc.

Learning activities are selected in accordance with the needs of the students of a particular study group and optimised with activities in other subjects and extracurricular activities. It is recommended to prefer active learning methods to lectures and use multifunctional methods that can be easily connected with learning activities in other subjects.

1.4. Physical Learning Environment

The following conditions and means are provided to the students:

- 1) various worksheets, questionnaires and thought development sheets for learning about themselves and the labour market;

- 2) study outings to real working environments;
- 3) access to literature about career planning in the school library;
- 4) computer classroom access (as necessary, either for individual work or group work) during lessons to search online for information about career planning (rajaleidja.ee and other websites); and
- 5) personal support and impartial and confidential advice from a career specialist in accordance with student needs.

1.5. Basis for Assessment

The learning outcomes of career studies are assessed in accordance with the general part of the national curriculum and other legislation that regulates such assessment. Assessed are the students' knowledge, their skills in implementing this knowledge and their acquisition of general competence on the basis of oral answers (presentations), written and/or practical work and practical activities, taking into account how the knowledge and skills of the students comply with the desired learning outcomes. The learning outcomes are assessed using oral appraisal and numerical grades.

Assessment during career studies is not applicable to the attitudes and values of the students, but they receive corresponding feedback if necessary and possible. Assessment takes into account the students' individuality and supports their development. The students must be active partners in the assessment process, as such participation facilitates the shaping of self-analysis skills.

It is recommended for each student to compile, during the course, a personal learning portfolio, collecting in it self-analysis, company visit worksheets and other results of study tasks, as well as other vocation- and specialty-related materials of interest. The study tasks can be performed by the students individually or working in groups. The learning portfolio's defence can be assessed in the form of the overall grade for the course.

At the beginning of the course the students are explained what will be assessed, when and on what basis.

Assessment covers:

- 1) practical work: CV compilation; motivational letter, job application and essay; notes or summary of a visit to a company and job shadowing; self-analysis summary and personal career plan (study plan); etc.;
- 2) the skill of comprehending practical activities;
- 3) the skill of finding and analysing relevant information (summary of career information analysis);
- 4) creativity and rationality;
- 5) awareness of the main factors that affect career decisions;
- 6) the skill of independent analysis; and
- 7) achievement of the learning outcomes stipulated in the curriculum, which the students prove during discussions, presentation of their group work-based learning portfolios and other activities.

2. Course plan

2.1. Learning Outcomes and Learning Content

Self-knowledge and its importance in career planning

Learning Outcomes

At the end of the course the students:

- 1) analyse their personality and use the self-analysis results to plan their life and make career choices;
- 2) are motivated to learn and know and use different learning strategies;
- 3) can analyse themselves as future employees; and
- 4) can see the connections between their different life roles and career choices.

Learning Content

Personality traits: nervous system type, temperament and character.

Personality traits: values, needs, motivation, attitudes and emotions.

Personality traits: abilities, intelligence, interests and skills (general skills and special skills).

Image of self and self-assessment, identity and introspection.

Knowledge of career-related information and its importance in career planning

Learning Outcomes

At the end of the course the students:

- 1) know about labour market trends and different works spheres and are aware of labour market opportunities and demands;
- 2) know about different career opportunities in spheres of economic activity;
- 3) understand the interconnections of education and the labour market and the need for constant self-development; and
- 4) are capable of finding information about the labour market, specialties and learning opportunities and using this information to plan further education.

Learning Content

Changing labour market: labour market situation, trends, development directions, forecasts, employer expectations, forms of business enterprises and legislation that regulates labour relations.

Changing labour market: labour market supply and demand, competition, lifelong learning and work motivation, equal treatment in the labor market.

Spheres of economic activities, professions and groups of professions, vocation and vocational skills, vocational standards and vocational preferences.

Education: specialties, educational system, formal and informal education and connections between education and the labour market.

Planning and deciding

Learning Outcomes

At the end of the course the students:

- 1) understand career planning as an integral, consistent and lifelong process;
- 2) can make independent decisions and analyse the factors that affect such decisions;
- 3) turn whenever necessary to career specialists for help (career consultations and support in acquisition and analysis of career information);
- 4) are prepared to make informed career decisions and compile a personal career plan in the context of lifelong learning; and
- 5) assume responsibility for planning their own career.

Learning Content

Career planning as a lifelong process: decision-making and influencing factors, difficulties when deciding, sources of career information, searching for information, alternatives, forced choices, coping with changes and career services.

Personal career plan compilation: lifelong learning, success, life roles, lifestyle, career, learning motivation, personal responsibility, job application documents, career planning and career plan compilation.