

Education system

Eritrea

described and compared with
the Dutch system

This document contains information on the education system of Eritrea. We explain the Dutch equivalent of the most common qualifications from Eritrea for the purpose of admission to Dutch higher education.

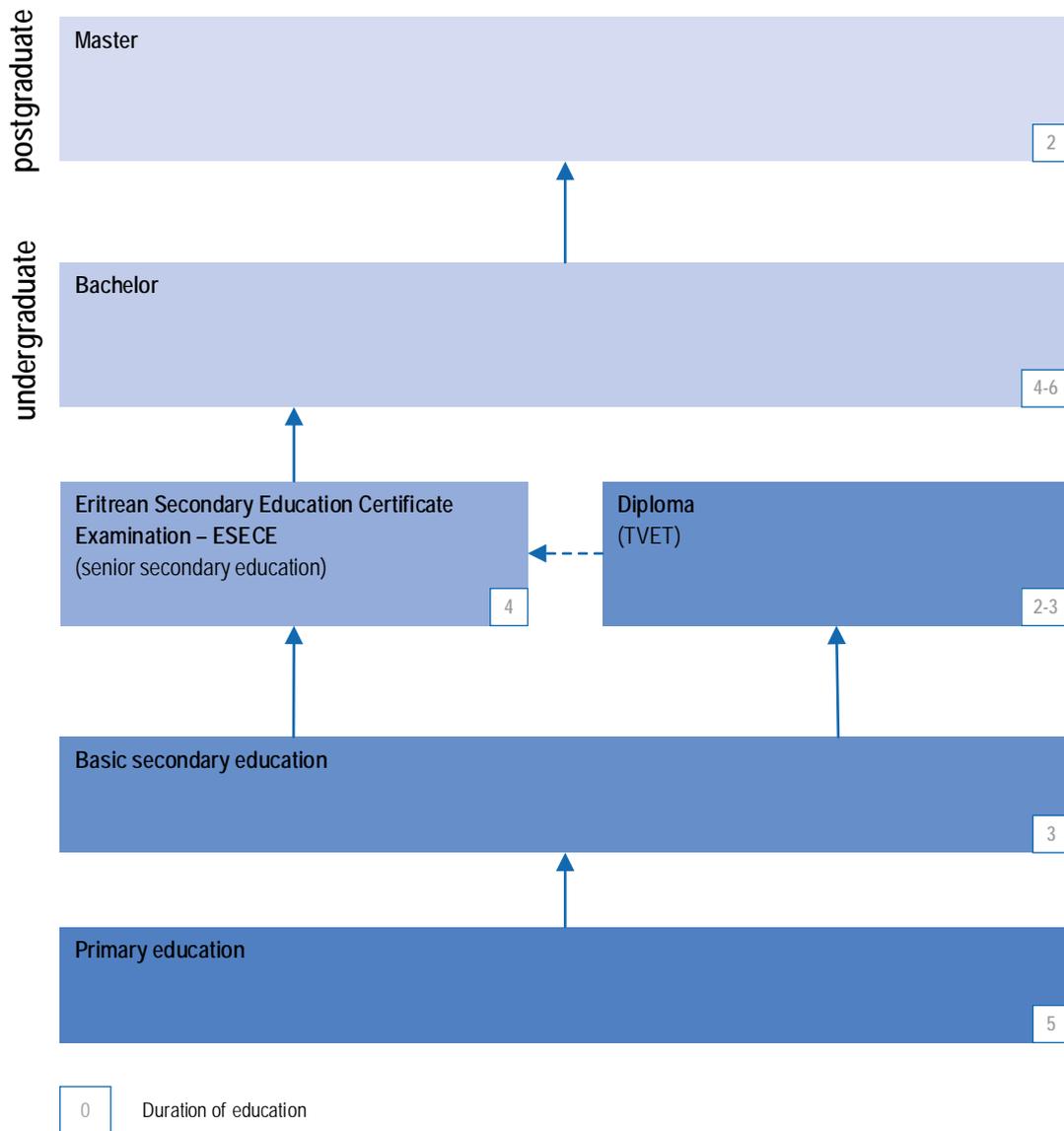
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We assemble the information for these descriptions of education systems with the greatest care. However, we cannot be held responsible for the consequences of errors or incomplete information in this document.



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■ Education system Eritrea



Evaluation chart

The left-hand column in the table below lists the most common foreign qualifications applicable to admission to higher education. The other columns show the Dutch equivalent along with the comparable levels in the Dutch and European qualifications frameworks.

Foreign degree or qualification	Dutch equivalent and NLQF level		EQF level
<i>Diploma</i> (TVET) (2-3 years)	in most cases an MBO diploma (qualification level 2)	2	2
<i>Eritrean Secondary Education Certificate Examination</i> (science and social science/commerce) with a GPA of at least 2.0	HAVO diploma	4	4
<i>Diploma</i> (2 or 3 years)	2 or 3 years of HBO or VWO diploma	6/4+	6/4
<i>Bachelor of Arts/ Bachelor of Science</i> (4 years)	HBO bachelor's degree or 2 years of WO	6	6
<i>Bachelor of Engineering/ Bachelor of Law/ Bachelor of Science in Pharmacy</i> (5 years)	at least HBO bachelor's degree or WO bachelor's degree	6	6
<i>Bachelor of Medicine /Bachelor of Dentistry</i> (6 years)	at least a WO bachelor's degree	6	6
<i>Master's degree</i> (2 years)	HBO or 1-year WO master's degree	7	7

NB

- The information provided in the table is a general recommendation from which no rights may be derived.
- NLQF = Dutch Qualifications Framework; EQF = European Qualifications Framework

Education system Eritrea

- The EQF/[NLQF level](#) is not so much a reflection of study load or content; rather, it is an indication of a person's knowledge and skills after having completed a certain programme of study.
- Information about Dutch equivalent qualifications can be found on our website: [the Dutch education system](#).
- [The Cooperation Organisation for Vocational Education, Training and the Labour Market \(SBB\)](#), evaluates statements on foreign qualifications and training at VMBO and MBO level. The evaluation may vary if SBB evaluates the diploma for admission to VET schools or the labour market in the Netherlands.

■ Introduction

Eritrea (officially: the State of Eritrea) is in East Africa. The country has a turbulent history of colonisation: it was under Italian rule until 1941, after which time it became a British protectorate. In 1950 the United Nations decided that Eritrea would become part of a federation with Ethiopia. In 1962 Eritrea was annexed and became a province of Ethiopia. Finally, in 1991 Eritrea became independent and was recognised in 1993 by the United Nations as an independent country. Eritrea has had a presidential system since independence.

The Eritrean people comprises 9 population groups: the Tigrinya (the largest), the Tigre, the Afar, the Saho, the Kunama, the Nara, the Bilin, the Hedareb and the Rashaida. The 2 predominant religions are Christianity and Islam (about 50-50). Aside from the Gregorian calendar (GC) the country also has the Geez calendar, which is 7 years and 8 months behind the GC.

The Ministry of Education is responsible for primary, secondary, technical and vocational education, and consists of the departments for General Education, Research and Human Resource Development, Technical Education and Vocational Training. Since 2006, higher education falls under the supervision of the National Commission for Higher Education (NCHE). The NCHE is the successor of the National Board for Higher Education (NBHE, from 2010 to 2015) and the Provisional Committee for the Coordination of Higher Education (PCCHE, from 2006 to 2010).

Various vocationally and professionally oriented training programmes fall under other ministries, like the Ministry of Health (programmes for associate nurses, village health workers and technicians, for example) and the Ministry of Agriculture (programmes for ministerial staff for the ministry itself and farmers).

Prior to independence in 1991, the primary and secondary education systems adhered to a 6+2+4 pattern: 6 years of primary education, 2 years of basic (junior) education and 4 years of senior secondary education. After independence it became a 5+3+4 pattern, with the first 8 years considered as 'basic education' and the last 4 years as secondary education.

Eritrea has no official language. In primary education the children are taught in their mother language. Starting from grade 6 onwards (including secondary and higher education) the language of instruction is English.

Education is compulsory in Eritrea for children from 6 to 14 years (covering the period up to and including basic education).

■ Primary and secondary education

Primary education

Primary education ('elementary education') lasts 5 years (grades 1-5) and is intended for children in the age group 6-12. Pupils must pass an exam at the end of each school year to be allowed to proceed to the following year. Much time is spent on their own local language (which is the language of instruction in primary education), mathematics, art, social subjects and physical education.

Secondary education

Secondary education has the following cycles:

1. Basic secondary education (also called 'lower/junior' or 'middle level education') lasts 3 years and is intended for children in the age group 12-15 (grades 6-8). The language of instruction is English, and the same subjects as in primary education are taught. At the end of grade 8 the pupils must take part in the 'National Examination'. If passed, they can continue on to senior secondary education.
2. Senior secondary education ('secondary education') lasts 4 years and is intended for children in the age group 15-19 (grades 9-12). Senior secondary education has 2 streams: science and social science / commerce. Aside from the compulsory subjects Maths and English, at least 3 subjects must be chosen from:
 - agriculture
 - biology
 - book keeping
 - chemistry
 - social science
 - general knowledge
 - general science
 - geography
 - history
 - physics

The senior secondary education is concluded with the *Eritrean Secondary Education Certificate Examination (ESECE)*.

In terms of level, the *Eritrean Secondary Education Certificate Examination* (science and social science/commerce) with a GPA of at least 2.0 is comparable to a HAVO diploma.

Vocationally-oriented secondary education

From grade 9, pupils can also attend technical (TVET) programmes of nominally 2-3 years. Programmes offered include fields such as automotive engineering, construction, electrical engineering, metalworking, radio technology and woodwork. The TVET-diploma (called after its' subject, for instance: Diploma in Automotive Engineering, etc) is issued by the TVET section of the Ministry of Education. After completion of the TVET-programmes, diploma holders can continue for the Education Secondary Education Certificate Examination. However, before these certificate-holders are allowed to enter higher education in Eritrea, they have to fulfil National Service for at least 2 years.

In terms of level, the *Diploma* (TVET) obtained upon completion of a nominal 2 or 3- year programme is in most cases comparable to an MBO diploma at qualification level 2.

Admission to higher education

In principle, the *Eritrean Secondary Education Certificate Examination* (ESECE) (science and social science/commerce) grants access to higher education in Eritrea, on condition that a GPA of at least is 2.0 (on a 4.0 scale) is achieved. The GPA is calculated based on 5 subjects: the compulsory subjects mathematics and English and the 3 subjects for which the highest marks are achieved.

Pupils with a valid reason for not being able to participate in the ESECE exams must write entrance examinations, which are set by the Bureau of Standards and Evaluation (BS&E, part of the National Commission for Higher Education (NCHE)).

Admission to higher education institutions in Eritrea is facilitated by the NCHE (National Commission for Higher Education): applications are registered here and handled by the Admissions and Placement Committee (APC). Students are assigned to colleges and/or programmes by the APC based on the GPA achieved (see above) and admission criteria (compulsory subjects), available vacancies and on the preferences indicated by the students.

Higher education

Until 2004 the University of Asmara was the only higher education institution in the country. In order to decentralise higher education and to improve accessibility for students in the entire country it was decided to divide the University of Asmara into 7 individual institutions of higher education spread across the country.

This reform was implemented in the 2004/2005 academic year and resulted in the following higher education institutions:

- Eritrean Institute of Technology (EIT) in Mai Nefhi. EIT has 3 colleges under it:
 - College of Science
 - College of Engineering and Technology
 - College of Education
- Hamelmalo Agricultural College in Hamelmalo;
- Asmara College of Health in Asmara;
- Orotta School of Medicine and Dental Medicine in Asmara;
- College of Marine Sciences & Technology in Massawa;
- College of Business and Economics in Halhale;
- College of Arts and Social Sciences in Adi Keih.

Each institution has its own specific orientation: programmes in the field of engineering, for example, are exclusively offered by the Eritrean Institute of Technology, but Marine Engineering and Agricultural Engineering programmes are offered in the College of Marine Science and Technology and Hamelmalo Agricultural College, respectively. Programmes in the area of medicine and dentistry can be attended at the Orotta School of Medicine and Dental Medicine.

No more students were accepted at the University of Asmara after 2003; in 2007/2008 the last cohort of students received their degree there. There are (still) no accredited private higher education institutions, though the SMAP Institute of Education, Training and Consultancy applied to the National Board for Higher Education (NBHE) for accreditation in 2012.

■ University and higher professional education

The 7 higher education institutions in Eritrea offer various university and higher professional education programmes in their own fields: diploma programmes of 2-3 years nominally, 4-5 (some 6)-year bachelor's programmes and a number also offer master's programmes of 2 years nominally (one year of coursework and another year of research).

Diploma/bachelor's degree

Once a student has completed one of these programmes a Temporary Diploma is awarded. The final diploma is only awarded after completion of compulsory National Service. As far as the level of education is concerned, however, the Temporary Diploma has the same value as the official diploma.

The 7 higher education institutions have however to date only awarded Temporary Diploma's, pending to the designing and printing of the official diplomas.

Students that have obtained their diploma after the reform can therefore only produce a Temporary Diploma (official diplomas will be issued as of the beginning of 2017).

In terms of level, the *Diploma*, obtained upon completion of a nominal 2 or 3-year programme is comparable to 2 or 3 years of higher professional education (HBO) respectively, depending on the type of study and duration of the programme or in level (not content and purpose) to a VWO diploma.

Bachelor's programmes with a nominal duration of 4 years usually have a study load of 130-150 credits. They are offered in various degree programmes and are concluded with the *Bachelor of Arts* or *Bachelor of Science*, depending on the programme.

In terms of level, the *Bachelor of Arts/Bachelor of Science* following a nominal 4- year programme is comparable to an HBO bachelor's degree or 2 years of university education (WO), depending on the type of study.

A number of programmes have a longer standard duration, like the engineering programmes at the EIT, the *Bachelor of Law* and the *Bachelor of Science in Pharmacy* at the Orotta School of Medicine and Dental Medicine in Asmara.

In terms of level, the *Bachelor of Engineering/Bachelor of Law/ Bachelor of Science in Pharmacy* following a nominal 5-year programme is comparable to at least an HBO bachelor's degree or a WO bachelor's degree, depending on the type of study.

In terms of level, the *Bachelor of Medicine/ Bachelor of Dentistry* following a nominal 6-year programme, is comparable to at least a WO bachelor's degree.

After obtaining a bachelor's degree, students may transfer to the master's degree programme.

Master's programmes

Master's programmes were introduced in Eritrea in 2001, and have a duration of 2 years.

There are plans to enable more students to follow a master's programme. In the first instance by creating master's programmes at an increasing number of

institutes, but also by introducing a 'fast-track master degree programme'. This entails students from different master's programmes following the same first-year programme. This is followed in the second year by a specialisation track and writing a thesis.

In terms of level, the *master's degree* is comparable to an HBO or a 1-year WO master's degree, depending on the type of study

PhD

There are as yet no doctoral programmes available in Eritrea. PhD programmes however, being designed to be offered in a sandwich model with partner universities outside the country.

Assessment systems

The secondary education system applies the following points system.

Grade	Scale	Grade description
A	75 – 100	Excellent
B	65 – 74	Very Good
C	50 – 64	Good
D	40 – 49	Satisfactory
F	0 – 39	Failure

Higher education institutions generally use the following system:

Grade	Grade description	Grading points
A	Excellent	4
B	Good	3
C	Satisfactory	2
D	Unsatisfactory	1
F	Fail	0

■ Quality assurance and accreditation

Higher education falls under the supervision of the National Commission for Higher Education (NCHE), Bureau of Standards and Evaluation (BS&E). This bureau sets specific parameters for academic quality and monitors, evaluates and accredits state (and in the future) private higher education institutions. Additionally, BS&E organises and conducts national and international examinations (such as TOEFL, GMAT, GRE, SAT, etc).

For a list of recognised institutes of higher education, see below: [List of higher education institutions](#).

■ Composition of file

The concluding diploma for secondary education is the ESECE, which is issued by the BS & E, cosigned with the Ministry of Education. This diploma states the GPA and for how many, and which subjects, an examination was taken, and what mark was achieved.

Higher education institutions issue the official student record when awarding the Temporary Certificate (of the Diploma / bachelor's degree).

■ List of higher education institutions

- Eritrean Institute of Technology (EIT) in Mai Nefhi;
- Hamelmalo Agricultural College in Hamelmalo;
- Asmara College of Health in Asmara;
- Orotta School of Medicine and Dental Medicine in Asmara;
- College of Marine Sciences & Technology in Massawa;
- College of Business and Economics in Halhale;
- College of Arts and Social Sciences in Adi Keih.

■ Useful websites

[Website](#) of the National Commission for Higher Education.