

Education system

Philippines

described and compared with
the Dutch system

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

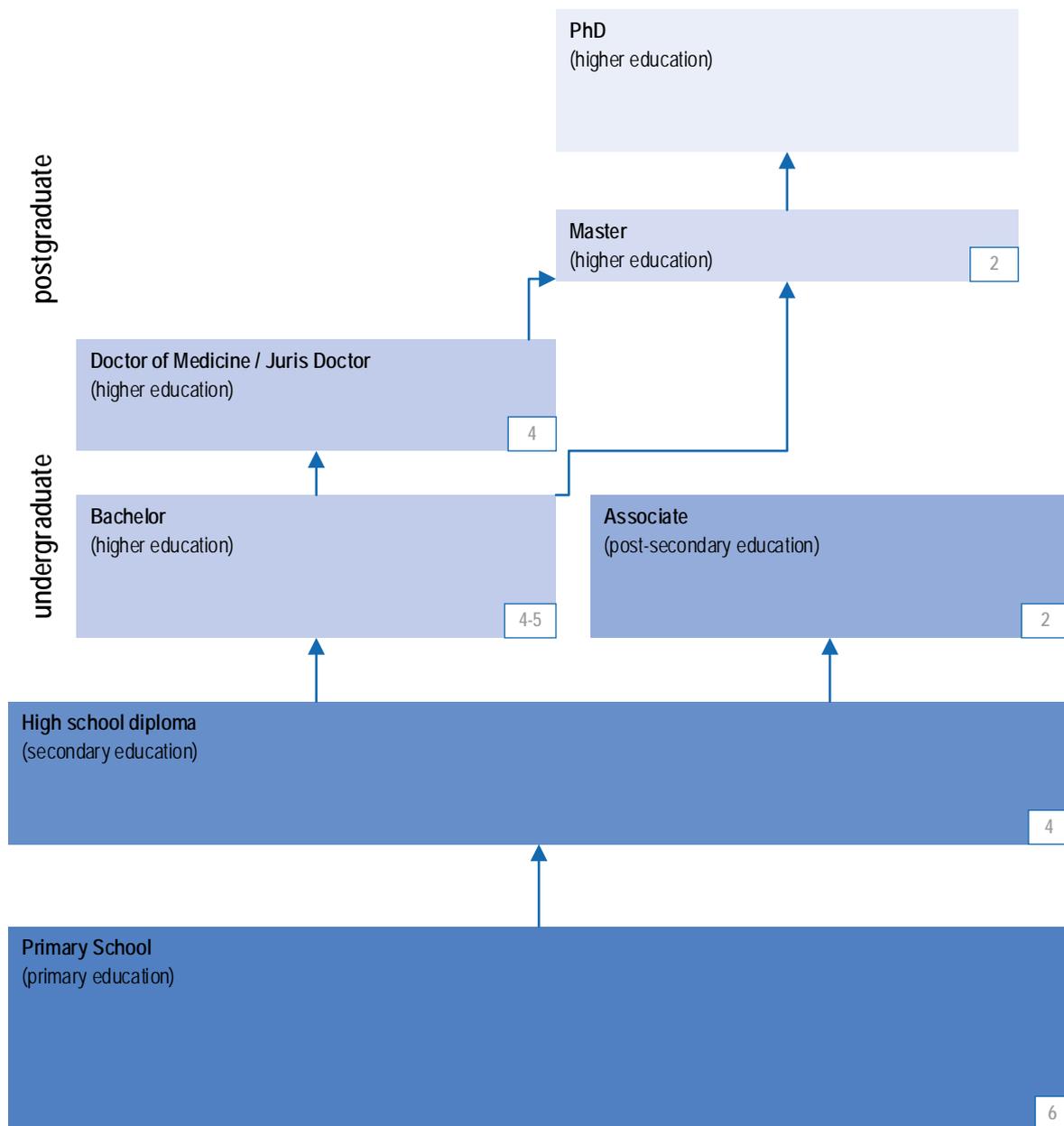
Disclaimer

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 Philippines



 Duration of education

■ 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 corresponding levels in the Dutch and European qualifications frameworks.

Degree or qualification	Dutch equivalent and NLQF level	EQF level
High School Diploma (<i>katibayan/katunayan</i>)	VMBO-T diploma	2
Associate	MBO diploma (qualification level 3 or 4)	3-4
Bachelor	2 years of HBO	6
Bachelor (obtained at a centre of excellence)	HBO bachelor's degree	6
Bachelor of Veterinary/Dental Science	2 years of WO	6
Doctor of Medicine	WO bachelor's degree	6
<i>Juris Doctor</i>	WO bachelor's degree	6

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.
- 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

The Philippines are located in South-East Asia. The archipelago was a Spanish colony for over 300 years, after which it was a colony of the USA for nearly 50 years. The influence of both cultures can still be found in the education system of the Philippines, such as Spanish names, diplomas in English and education institutions with a catholic background.

The official name of the archipelago is the Republic of the Philippines, or *Republika ng Pilipinas* in Filipino. The over 7,000 islands are divided into 3 regions: Luzon, Visayas and Mindanao. The capital city, Manila, is in Luzon.

The Department of Education (DepEd) is the main government agency in the country responsible for the implementation of basic education, particularly primary, secondary and non-formal education, including in culture and sports. Republic Act 9155, or the Governance of Basic Education Act, transformed the previous Department of Education, Culture and Sports (DECS) in August 2001 to the DepEd, which provided the overall framework for the management of education within the context of local accountability and transparency.

Two other government offices are responsible for higher education and skills trainings. The Commission on Higher Education (CHED) manages higher education, while the Technical Education and Skills Development Authority (TESDA) administers the post-secondary, middle-level manpower training and development.

Multiple languages are spoken in the Philippines. The official language – Filipino – is an amalgam of Philippine languages, primarily Tagalog. English is also widely spoken, e.g. in higher education.

Compulsory education covers primary school, for children aged 6-12. Under the K to 12 Basic Education Program, 12 years of basic education (both primary and secondary education) is compulsory. Primary and secondary education in DepEd-managed schools all over the country is free. There are also private primary and secondary schools that impose fees.

Both the school year and the academic year run from June until March. In higher education one can often also attend lectures in the summer (summer semester). In addition, a few higher education institutions recently started another academic year (namely from August to May), such as the University of the Philippines (in 2014) and parts of Ateneo de Manila University (in 2015).

■ Primary and secondary education

Primary and secondary education in the Philippines is currently being reformed, but was aimed for children aged 6-16, and lasted for 10 years. Primary education was aimed at children aged 6-12.

Secondary education

Secondary education lasted 4 years, and was aimed at children aged 12-16. In general, education is provided by both public and private schools. The names for secondary schools include 'high school', 'lyceum' and 'academy'; in general, however, the term 'high school' is used. Depending on the subject, the language of education is English or Filipino. Filipino and *makabaya* (a subject covering national identity, norms and values, among other things) are taught in Filipino. English, mathematics and science are taught in English.

In terms of level, the *High School Diploma (katibayan/katunayan)* is comparable to a VMBO-T (theoretische leerweg) diploma.

As of 2011, all pupils in the third year of high school (grade 9) take the National Career Assessment Examination (NCAE); initially this exam was taken in the fourth year of high school (grade 10).

Some high schools are affiliated with higher education institutions, in which case the diploma states that the curriculum is that of secondary education as prescribed by the Department of Education.

K-to-12 Basic Education Program

The Republic Act 10533 or the Enhanced Basic Education Act makes 12 years of basic education for Filipino children compulsory. Primary and secondary education is currently being reformed as part of the 'K-to-12' project. Under this programme, education will become compulsory for children aged 5-18, which will include 1 year of kindergarten, 6 years of primary education and 6 years of secondary education. The current 'high school' will become 'junior high school' (4 years) and the new 'senior high school' will last for 2 years (grades 11-12).

The reforms will be implemented in stages. The initial pupil cohort started under the new structure in 2012 in grade 7 (the first year of secondary education), and will receive the new grade 12 diploma in 2018.

Senior high school core curriculum subjects include the following:

- oral communication;
- reading and writing;

- *komunikasyon at pananaliksik sa wika at kulturang Filipino* or communication and research in the Filipino language and culture;
- pagbasa at pagsusuri ng iba't ibang teksto tungo sa pananaliksik or reading and comprehension of various texts for research;
- 21st century literature from the Philippines and the world;
- contemporary Philippine arts from the regions;
- media and information literacy;
- general mathematics;
- statistics and probability;
- earth and life science;
- physical science;
- introduction to philosophy of the human person;
- physical education and health;
- personal development;
- understanding culture, society and politics;
- earth science (taken instead of the earth and life science for those taking the Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics [STEM] Strand); and,
- disaster readiness and risk reduction (taken instead of physical science for those in the STEM Strand).

In senior high school, students will go through the core curriculum as well as subjects under a track of their choice. Applied track subjects include:

- English for academic and professional purposes;
- practical research 1, which aims to develop critical thinking and problem-solving skills through qualitative research;
- practical research 2, primarily for quantitative research;
- *Filipino sa piling larangan* or the Filipino language in a chosen field, such as academic, sports, arts, and technical-vocational;
- empowerment technologies (for the Strand);
- entrepreneurship, which deals with the concepts, underlying principles, processes and implementation of a business plan; and
- inquiries, investigations and immersions, the culminating activity in the senior high school that aims to develop critical thinking and problem-solving skills through both qualitative and quantitative researches.

Although the reforms mostly affect secondary education, there will also be consequences for higher education. In future, some general subjects that now occupy a large part of the curriculum during the first 2 years of bachelor's programmes will be offered as part of secondary education. Other changes to higher education have not yet been announced.

Secondary vocational education

The TESDA oversees and manages technical and vocational education training (TVET). There are 4 training modalities for TESDA's TVET program:

- School-Based Program: These programmes run for a maximum of 3 years and are offered by schools governed by TESDA;
- Center-Based Programs: Offered by TESDA training centres;
- Community-Based Programs: These are intended for people who are unable to undertake training as part of the regular education system;
- Enterprise-Based Programs: Training courses provided in collaboration with businesses. Students are employed by companies, or occupy work placement positions.

In addition to these 4 training streams, TESDA also manages language skills institutes targeted for youths at least 18 years old who had been pre-selected / pre-qualified to work locally for foreign-owned companies or based overseas. Basic language and culture courses include those for English, Japanese, Korean, Mandarin, Arabic, and Spanish.

In principle, admission to secondary vocational education requires a high school diploma.

Some higher education institutions also offer secondary vocational education; these programmes must be approved by TESDA.

■ Admission to higher education

Admission to higher education requires a *High School Diploma*. There are no national entrance examinations, however many higher education institutions have their own entrance exams. Standard additional requirements apply to some programmes.

Admission to some bachelor's programmes requires a (recognised) bachelor's degree in a relevant specialisation, e.g. bachelor's programmes in medicine and law (*Juris Doctor*).

■ Higher education

Higher education in the Philippines is unitary, i.e. higher education institutions (universities, colleges, academies, institutes, schools) offer both vocational and academic/research programmes.

There are approximately 2,300 higher education institutions in the Philippines. Approximately 30% of them are public higher education institutions. The remaining 70% consists of private higher education institutions. Both types of institutions fall under the supervision of the Commission of Higher Education (CHED).

Public institutions are established by the state (State Universities and Colleges - SUCs) or established by local authorities (Local Universities and Colleges - LUCs). In the private sector there are both religious and secular education institutions.

CHED special order number

Private higher education institutions must ask permission from CHED to allow students to graduate. This permission is granted via a special order number (SO number), which is listed on the student's diploma or academic transcript. An SO number includes a date, and pertains only to the group of students for whom the number was requested.

CHED has designated some private institutions as autonomous or deregulated: these institutions are exempt from some administrative obligations, such as requesting a special order number. In such cases, the diploma and/or academic transcript will quote the exemption. The autonomous and deregulated statuses are only valid for a limited period, varying from 1 to 5 years.

Public higher education institutions are exempt from SO numbers by default (note: not all public higher education institutions quote this exemption on the academic transcript).

University and higher professional education

Higher education is organised in 3 stages: Bachelor, Master and PhD. There are also Associate programmes. Information on the prescribed scope and structure of a large number of programmes can be found on the CHED website.

Associate

Associate programmes last 2 years, are vocational in nature and relatively small in number. Some of the most common Associate programmes are in areas such as hotel and restaurant management, electronic/electrical technology and IT.

In terms of level, the *Associate* degree is comparable to an MBO diploma at qualification level 3 or 4, depending on the specialisation.

Associate programmes do not automatically fall under the responsibility of CHED. Some are approved by TESDA, but are only offered by institutions that also provide regular bachelor's programmes governed by CHED.

Bachelor

Most bachelor's programmes are of 4-year duration, although some (such as technology-based programmes) can take 5 years. Programme scope is

expressed in units. Depending on the specialisation, the scope of a bachelor's programme can vary from around 150-210 units. Of these units, by default a considerable number (around 40-50% of the curriculum) are devoted to general education subjects, sport and the national service training program. Programmes do not generally include a thesis, but depending on the specialisation they may include practical classes and a work placement.

In terms of level, the *Bachelor* is comparable to 2 years of higher professional education (HBO).

Some programmes have a duration of 6 years, such as the *Doctor of Veterinary Medicine* and the *Doctor of Dental Medicine*. In both cases, the preparatory programme (including general subjects) takes 2 years before the actual programme commences.

In terms of level, the *Doctor of Veterinary/Dental Medicine* is comparable to 2 years of university education (WO).

Some higher education institutions have been designated as centres of excellence for specific programmes by CHED. This status is only valid for a limited period, after which it can be renewed or withdrawn. Higher education institutions designated as centres of excellence for a specific programme are not automatically centres of excellence for other programmes.

In terms of level, the *Bachelor* obtained at a centre of excellence is comparable to an HBO bachelor's degree.

M.D. and J.D.

Some degree programmes set a *Bachelor* as a prerequisite, but are not master's programmes: these are programmes in medicine (*Doctor of Medicine*, M.D.) and the *Juris Doctor* (J.D.) law degree. Additional entrance requirements apply to both programmes.

The medicine programme takes 4 years, the final year (12 months) of which consists of clinical education. Admission to the medical programme requires passing the National Medical Admission Test (NMAT) and applying for a Certificate of Eligibility for Admission to a Medical Course (CEMed) from CHED.

In terms of level, the *Doctor of Medicine* is comparable to a WO bachelor's degree in medicine.

The law programme has a nominal duration of 4 years, and awards the degree of *Juris Doctor* (J.D.). Admission requires passing the law entrance exam. The programme is a 'professional degree', and includes at least 132 units. It is not compulsory to write a thesis, however practical education is mandatory (such as the 'practice court' subject). The programme grants access to similar master's programmes.

In terms of level, the *Juris Doctor* is comparable to a WO bachelor's degree in law.

Master's degree programme

Master's programmes normally take 2 years, and include at least 30 credits. Students can usually choose between thesis and non-thesis programmes – the latter usually include a larger number of credits.

PhD

In principle, admission to a PhD programme generally requires a relevant Master's degree. The number of credits is prescribed by CHED, and varies from programme to programme. Some programmes include the option of graduating with or without a dissertation.

■ **Assessment systems**

The Department of Education prescribes an assessment system of 0-100% for secondary education, with a passing grade of 75%. Results of 65% or below are listed as 65% on the academic transcript.

Higher education has no fixed assessment system prescribed by the Commission on Higher Education. Education institutions provide information about their own assessment systems on the academic transcript.

This is a sample assessment system used by the University of the Philippines:

Grade	Definition	Grade	Definition
1.0	Excellent	2.5	Satisfactory
1.25	Excellent	2.75	Satisfactory
1.5	Very Good	3.0	Pass
1.75	Very Good	4.0	Conditional
2.0	Good	5.0	Failure
2.25	Good	Inc	Incomplete

Some examples of general abbreviations that may be encountered:

NC no credit (non-credit subject)

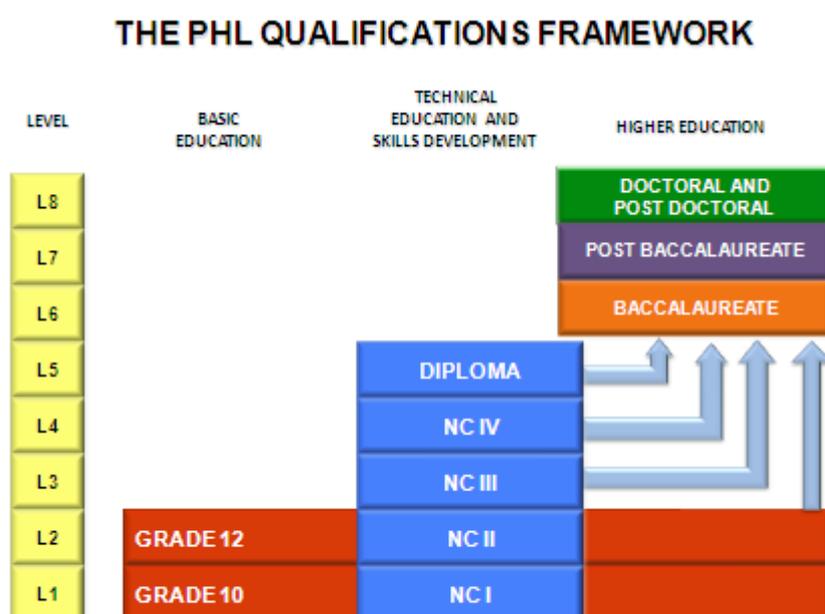
NG no grade

INC incomplete mark (subject not completed)

■ Qualification frameworks

The Philippines Qualifications Framework (PQF) is the national qualifications framework of the Philippines. The PQF National Coordinating Committee (PQF-NCC) oversees the development and implementation of the PQF. This committee was established in December 2012 and is led by DepEd.

The 2012 schedule below shows the distribution of the 8 levels of the PQF.



Bron: [TESDA Policy Brief, ISSUE 2 – December 2012](#)

More information is available on the [website](#) of the Technical Education and Skills Development Authority (TESDA).

In addition, the Philippines are also involved in the development of the ASEAN Qualifications Reference Framework (AQR).

■ Accreditation and quality assurance

The requirements, including the curriculum, of each study programme are laid down in the Policies, Standards and Guidelines (PSGs) document. These [documents](#) are published as a CHED memorandum order (CMO). There is also a list of sample curricula for a small number of bachelor programmes available online. Please check the CHED [website](#) under 'Other Issuances'.

Within the Philippine higher education system, accreditation refers exclusively to accreditation by external (private) accreditation bodies. Although there is no government agency responsible for accreditation, private educational institutions should request permission from the Commission on Higher Education (CHED) for any educational programme they offer. At first, a temporary permit (initial permit) is granted for 2 years, followed by an extension of 1 year. During this year, the study programme must meet the minimum requirements of CHED in order to qualify for recognition by the government (the Government Recognition or GR).

The umbrella organization Federation of Accrediting Agencies of the Philippines (FAAP) comprises the following 3 private accreditation bodies:

1. the Philippine Accrediting Association of Schools, Colleges and Universities (PAASCU);
2. the Philippine Association of Colleges and Universities Commission on Accreditation (PACU-COA);
3. the Association of Christian Schools, Colleges and Universities Accrediting Agencies Inc. (ACSCU-AAI).

Although accreditation is not mandatory, CHED makes use of the accreditation results and educational institutions can benefit from this. For example, with an accreditation status level 2, no prior permission from CHED is required to allow students to graduate from the accredited educational program in question. This means that the obligation to request a special order number (SO number) expires.

■ International treaties

The Philippines has concluded cultural and educational treaties with a number of countries. The country is also a member of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN).

■ Composition of file

A complete file for both secondary and higher education must include the diploma and the complete academic transcript. For secondary education, the grade list, the Permanent Record (DepEd Form 137-A), must have been issued by the Department of Education (DepEd).

Authenticity

An Authentication Certificate may be requested for higher education documents, and is issued by the Department of Foreign Affairs at the diploma holder's request. The certificate is only valid if it is still attached (by means of a round staple and a red ribbon) to the relevant documents (a declaration by CHED and copies of the diploma and the academic transcript).

■ List of higher education institutions

The CHED website provides a [list](#) of (bachelor's) programmes and the institutions offering each programme. First click on the name of the region in which the institution is located to view a list of recognized institutions in that region. The institutions are grouped by region. Please note, the so-called Local Universities and Colleges (public institutions set up by local authorities) do not appear on these lists.

■ Useful links

- The Department of Education [website](#), including information on public schools and the K-to-12 reforms.
- The Commission on Higher Education [website](#), with an archive of CHED memoranda (decisions on higher education ranging from administrative obligations to curriculum changes).
- The [website](#) of the Philippine Accrediting Association of Schools, Colleges and Universities (PAASCU) and the [website](#) of the Philippine Association of Colleges and Universities Commission on Accreditation (PACUCOA), including information on accredited programmes per education institution.
- [Website](#) of the Technical Education and Skills Development Authority (TESDA) including information on secondary vocational education and registered TVET programs.