

Education system

Bangladesh

described and compared with
the Dutch system

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

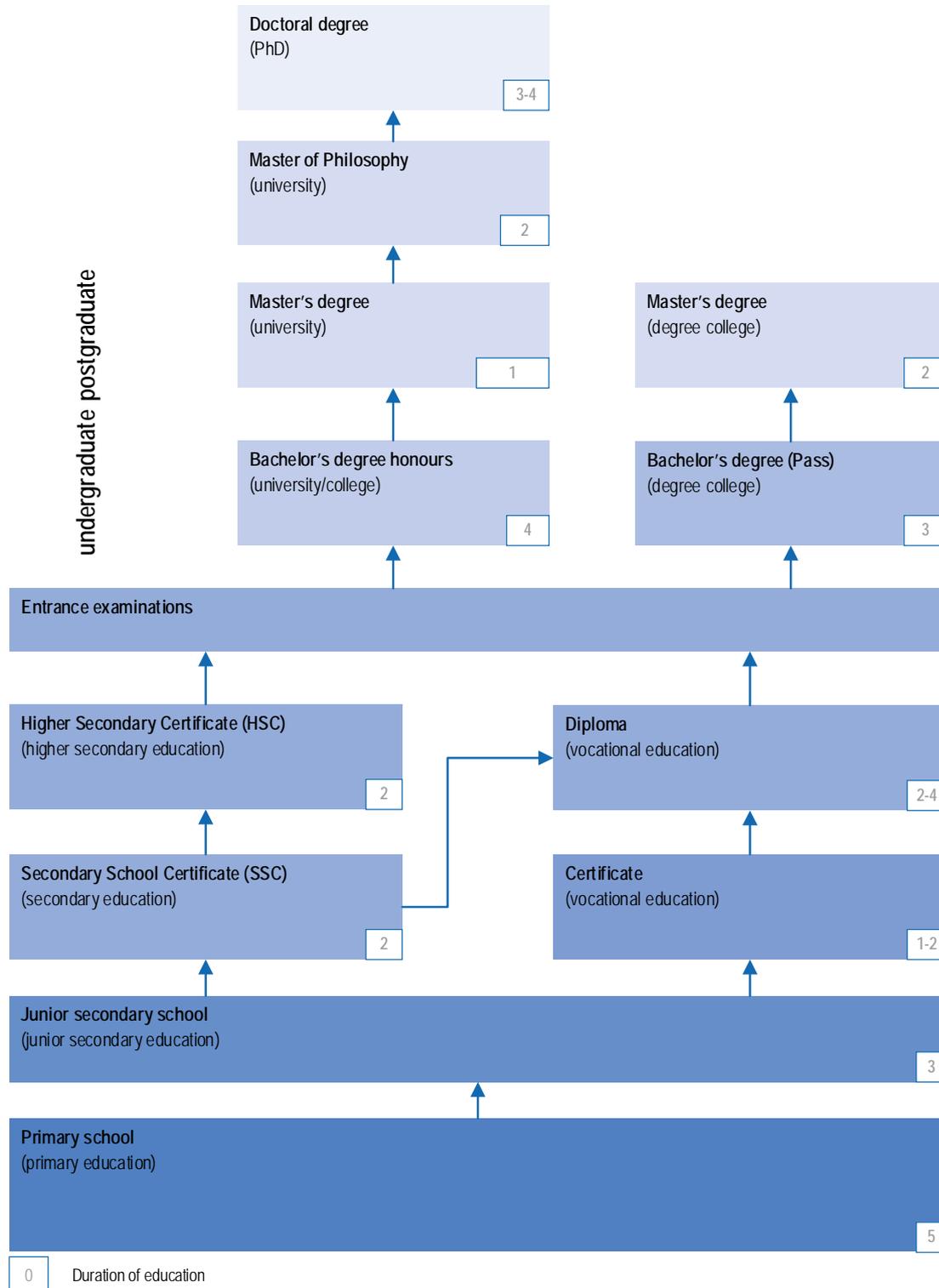
Disclaimer

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 Bangladesh



■ 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
Secondary School Certificate/Dakhil Certificate	VMBO-T diploma	2
Higher Secondary Certificate (business management)	MBO diploma (qualification level 3)	3
Diploma in Engineering	MBO diploma (qualification level 3 or 4)	3/4
Higher Secondary Certificate (vocational. business studies)	HAVO diploma with vocational subjects	4
Higher Secondary Certificate (humanities/sciences)/Alim Certificate	HAVO diploma	4
Pass Bachelor (2 years)	VWO diploma or 2 years of HBO	4+/5
Pass Bachelor (3 years)	3 years of HBO or 1 year of WO	5
Honours Bachelor (4 years)	HBO bachelor's degree or 2 years of WO	6
M.Sc./M.A. (1 year following Honours Bachelor)	WO bachelor's degree or HBO master's degree	6/7
Master of Philosophy (M.Phil.)	WO master's degree	7
Master's degree college (2 years following a 3-year Pass Bachelor)	HBO master's degree	7

NB

- The information provided in the table is a general recommendation from which no rights may be derived.
- NLQF = Netherlands 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.

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- 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 People's Republic of Bangladesh is a parliamentary democracy with a president as head of state.

The capital is Dhaka. Bangladesh has seven administrative divisions: Dhaka, Rajshahi, Rangpur, Sylhet, Barisal, Chittagong and Khulna. Bangladesh is a relatively new state. From 1858 to 1946, Bengal province was part of British India. The modern state of Bangladesh was established in 1971. The majority of the population are Muslims. Hinduism and Buddhism are also practiced by the minority section.

The Ministry of Education (MoE) and the Ministry of Primary and Mass Education (MoPME) share responsibility for the entire education system, with the MoE responsible for all education after primary education. This includes religious education (taught at *Madrasahs*) and technical and secondary vocational education. The MoE prepares legislation and regulations, drafts policies and carries out supervision of educational institutions. The MoPME is responsible for primary education and non-formal education. University Grants Commission plays an advisory, supervisory and regulatory role in respect of public higher education in Bangladesh.

The education system in Bangladesh encompasses both formal and non-formal education. Both types are available in a religious variant. Non-formal education encompasses organised, structured learning that takes place outside of the school environment. Examples of this include programmes aimed at tackling illiteracy, work-related or talent development programmes, such as company training and lifelong learning programmes, but also training programmes for those who have left school without a qualification. Non-formal education is provided at a variety of levels.

Following the country's independence, many schools in Bangladesh were brought under state control. The Directorate of Secondary and Higher Education (DSHE) was established in 1981 under the auspices of the MoE and is responsible for the administration of secondary schools (state schools and private schools), teacher training programmes for secondary education and curriculum development for secondary education.

The Bangladesh Technical Education Board (BTEB) is responsible for the development of technical and professional education. BTEB also organises examinations for various programmes and awards the certificates.

Established in 1992 to develop higher education at Degree colleges, the National University formed an umbrella organisation for all colleges offering general education programmes at bachelor's and master's level. It is basically a so-called

affiliating institution which administrates examinations and awards diplomas on behalf of its affiliated institutions.

The country's official language is Bengali. The second (not official) language is English. Further Urdu is spoken by non-Bengali Muslims in Bangladesh. English is widely used in higher education. Medium of instruction is English at both public and private universities. School attendance is compulsory from grades I to V, i.e. for the entire duration of primary education. There are plans to extend compulsory schooling to grade VIII, meaning that it would also include the junior years of secondary education.

In secondary and higher education at public universities, the academic year runs from January to December. At private universities students are enrolled in academic years of 2 to 3 semesters.

■ Primary and secondary education

Primary education

Primary education lasts 5 years (grades I to V) and is intended for children aged 6 to 11 years. Two variants are available: a general variant and a religious variant (taught at *Madrasahs*). The *Madrasah* system comprises 5 years of primary education (grades I to V, *Ebtedayee* education). Primary education is free.

The curriculum includes the subjects of Bengali, mathematics, English, environmental studies – society, environmental studies – science, religion (Islam, Hinduism, Buddhism or Christianity), physical education, arts and crafts, and music.

Secondary education

Following primary education, pupils may choose from three programmes of study: general, religious (taught at *Madrasahs*) or technical vocational secondary education.

Secondary education lasts 7 years (3+2+2) and comprises three cycles: junior secondary (grades VI-VIII), secondary (grades IX and X) and higher secondary education (grades XI and XII).

Secondary education is concluded with a public examination leading to the Secondary School Certificate (SSC). This is administrated by seven Boards of Intermediate and Secondary Educations (BISE) in Dhaka, Rajshahi, Jessore, Comilla, Chittagong, Sylhet and Barisal.

Vocational specializations are offered within the secondary education curriculum, and these lead to a vocational SSC. Within the general curriculum,

pupils can choose from the humanities group, commerce group and the science group.

Higher secondary education is provided by intermediate colleges, degree colleges or by intermediate sections of degree colleges or master's colleges, and leads to the Higher Secondary Certificate (HSC). Within the general curriculum, pupils can choose from the humanities group and the science group. Here again, it is possible to choose vocational subjects within the HSC curriculum and obtain a vocational (business studies) HSC or a HSC in business management (this latter programme falls under the responsibility of the Technical Education Board). With a vocational (business studies) HSC or a HSC in business management, it is only possible to gain admission to higher education in a relevant discipline and if the institution wishes to admit the student in question.

Thirty per cent of secondary school pupils follow a programme of Islamic education (at *Madrasahs*). The secondary level of the *Madrasah* comprises 5 years of secondary education (grades VI-X, *Dakhil* education, comparable to SSC) and 2 senior years of secondary education (grades XI and XII, *Alim* education, comparable to HSC). The *Dakhil* Certificate and the *Alim* Certificate are awarded by the Bangladesh Madrasah Education Board (BMEB).

In terms of level, the *Secondary School Certificate* and the *Dakhil Certificate* is comparable to a VMBO-T (*theoretische leerweg*) diploma.

In terms of level, the *Higher Secondary Certificate* (humanities/sciences) and the *Alim Certificate* is comparable to a HAVO diploma.

In terms of level, the *Higher Secondary Certificate* (vocational, business studies) is comparable to a HAVO diploma with vocational subjects.

In terms of level, the *Higher Secondary Certificate* (business management) is comparable to an MBO diploma at qualification level 3.

Secondary vocational education

In secondary vocational education, Certificate programmes of 1 or 2 years duration are offered from grade IX, as well as Diploma programmes which require an SSC for admission.

Diploma programmes are provided by Polytechnics and Technical Schools & Colleges. The Diploma programme in Commerce lasts 2 years, while Diploma programmes in Nursing and in Engineering last 4 years. With a Diploma in Engineering, it is possible to obtain exemption of up to 6 months of study credits for a higher education study programme in a relevant discipline. It is up to the institution to decide per case, as there is no official policy on this.

The Bangladesh Technical Education Board (BTEB) administers the examinations and also awards the certificates and diplomas.

In terms of level, the *Diploma in Engineering* is comparable to an MBO diploma at qualification level 3 or 4, depending on the specialization.

■ Admission to higher education

Admission to university education is decided on the basis of the Higher Secondary Certificate (second division) or a certain grade point average (GPA) (usually between 2.5 and 3.5), often in combination with a university entrance examination. The exact requirements may vary by institution and by faculty.

■ Higher education

Higher education is offered by a total of around 2,000 education institutions, encompassing public institutions, international universities, (a growing number of) private institutions as well as specialized colleges. Examples of specialized programmes offered by these colleges include medicine, dentistry, law, teacher training programmes, leather technology and physical education. There is also a large category of around 1,800 degree course offering colleges under the National University.

In addition to general higher education, a religious form of higher education is also available (taught at *Alia Madrasahs*), with a 2-year *Fazil* programme followed by a 2-year *Kamil* programme. The diplomas for these programmes are awarded by the Bangladesh Madrasah Education Board.

There is also a category of technical /technological education covering agriculture, engineering, medicine, textiles, leather technology and ICT.

While universities largely offer a combination of higher professional study programmes and research-oriented programmes, the degree colleges (like medical colleges, textile colleges) almost exclusively focus on higher programmes with a professional focus.

■ University education

Bachelor's degree

The education system in Bangladesh encompasses various bachelor's degree programmes with a nominal duration varying from 3 to 5 years. The universities mainly offer 4-year honours programmes, while the degree colleges, most of which are affiliated with the National University, concentrate on the 3-year Pass Bachelor's, although they may also offer honour's programmes. Until 2003, there were also 2-year Pass Bachelor's programmes, but these have now been extended to 3 years. Following the 3-year Pass Bachelor, the master's degree programmes last 2 years; this contrasts with the 1-year master's degree programme following the 4-year Honours Bachelor. Universities offered honours programmes of nominal 3 years until 2006. After 2006 these programmes were extended into 4 year honours programmes.

In terms of level, the bachelor's degree awarded following a nominally 2-year Pass Bachelor's programme is comparable to a VWO diploma or 2 years of higher professional education (HBO) in a relevant subject, depending on the study programme.

In terms of level, the bachelor's degree awarded following a nominally 3-year Pass Bachelor's programme is comparable to 3 years of higher professional education (HBO) or 1 year of university education (WO) in a relevant discipline, depending on the study programme.

Honours Bachelors are specialized programmes in which one major subject is studied for 3 or 4 years. The study programmes leading to the Bachelor of Arts, Bachelor of Science, Bachelor in Engineering and Bachelor in Agriculture last 4 years, while the Bachelor in Medicine, Dentistry and Architecture take 5 years. Admission to 2-year Bachelor of Law programmes requires a Pass Bachelor in relevant areas other than law. A Bachelor degree is also required for admission to the 1-year Bachelor of Education.

Teacher training colleges offer 1-year Bachelor of Education programmes, while Physical Education Colleges offer programmes leading to the Bachelor of Physical Education.

The bachelor's degrees awarded include the Bachelor of Arts (B.A.), Bachelor of Science (B.Sc.), Bachelor of Social Science(s) (B.S.S.), Bachelor of Commerce (B.Com.) and Bachelor in Law (LL.B.).

Graduation requirements are often described in terms of the number of units to be completed, where one unit is worth 4 credits. The number of credits required to complete a 4-year bachelor of arts honours programme is usually around 144 (equivalent to 32 units), but this may vary depending on the specialization.

In terms of level, the bachelor's degree awarded following a nominally 4-year honours programme is comparable to an HBO bachelor's degree or 2 years of university education (WO) in a relevant discipline, depending on the study programme .

Master's degree

Master of Arts programmes usually last 1 year and require around 32 credits (8 units), and are preceded by a 4-year honours bachelor's programme.

Admission to Master of Science programmes requires a 4-year Bachelor of Science, commonly with a GPA of 2.5. The nominal duration of Master of Science programmes is 1 year. A total of at least 32 credits (8 units) is required to complete the programme. It is possible to choose a programme with or without a final dissertation.

In the technical programmes, there is a distinction between a Master of Engineering (M.Eng.) based primarily on coursework (30 credits) and a project (6 credits) and the Master of Science Engineering (M.Sc.Eng.), where the programme is based 50 per cent on coursework (18 credits) and 50 per cent on the final dissertation (18 credits).

In terms of level, the *Master of Arts* and *Master of Science* awarded following a nominally 1-year programme are comparable to a WO bachelor's degree or an HBO master's degree in a relevant discipline, depending on the study programme .

Master of Philosophy (M.Phil.) programmes take 2 years and are research-oriented. They are usually based on 1 year of coursework, followed by a written and a viva voce examination at the end of the year, as well as a final paper. Admission requires a master's degree (first or second class) in a relevant discipline or a 4-year bachelor's degree in a relevant discipline. If the bachelor's degree

was not taken in a relevant discipline, a first class degree will be required for admission to the master's degree.

In terms of level, the *Master of Philosophy* is comparable to a WO master's degree.

PhD

Doctor of Philosophy programmes last 3 to 5 years and admission generally requires a Master of Philosophy or a Master of Science/Master of Engineering degree with a GPA of at least 2.75.

In special circumstances, it may also be possible for excellent students to be recommended for admission to a PhD programme following completion of the coursework of an M.Phil. programme (with a GPA of at least 3.0).

The programme encompasses coursework and research, followed by a research paper.

■ Higher professional education

Until 2003 2-year Pass Bachelors were offered by degree colleges. These programmes have now been extended to 3 years.

The National University currently has 1,778 affiliated degree colleges offering 3-year Pass Bachelors and, in some cases, also honours programmes. These programs are professionally oriented. Master's degree programmes that require a Pass Bachelor for admission generally last for 2 years.

In terms of level, the *Pass Bachelor's degree* awarded following a nominally 3-year programme is comparable to 3 years of higher professional education (HBO) or 1 year of university education (WO), depending on the study programme.

Following the Pass Bachelor, students may opt to follow a 2-year master's programme at a degree college. Not all degree colleges offer these programmes.

In terms of level, the *master's degree* awarded following a nominally 2-year programme at a degree college is comparable to an HBO master's degree.

■ Assessment systems

Secondary education

For SSC and HSC, the following system has been in use since 2004.

In numbers	Grade Point	Letter grade	Meaning
80-100	5	A+	Excellent
70-79	4	A	Very good
60-69	3.5	A-	Good
50-59	3	B	More than satisfactory
40-49	2	C	More than satisfactory
33-39	1	D	Satisfactory
00-32	0	F	Unsatisfactory

Higher education

In 2006/2007, the University Grants Commission (UGC) introduced the Uniform Grading Scheme for all universities in Bangladesh.

In numbers	Grade point	Letter grade ¹	Description
80% and higher	4.0	A+	A plus
75%-80%	3.75	A	A regular
70%-75%	3.5	A-	A minus
65%-70%	3.25	B+	B plus
60%-65%	3.0	B	B regular
55%-60%	2.75	B-	B minus
50%-55%	2.5	C+	C plus
45%-50%	2.25	C	C regular
40%-45%	2.0	D	
< 40%	0.0	F	

¹ I = incomplete grade, W = withdrawn

■ Qualification frameworks

Bangladesh has not (yet) established a national qualifications framework. There are plans, however, for a National Technical and Vocational Qualification Framework (NTVQF), which will primarily focus on secondary vocational education.

■ Quality assurance and accreditation

There is no national quality assurance system in Bangladesh. To provide assurances of the quality of higher education, one of the duties of the University Grants Commission (UGC) is to promote and coordinate university education and to monitor and maintain quality standards. However, the UGC is not an accreditation body. UGC is now ensuring quality in higher education mainly by enforcing minimum requirements in respect of opening and operation of public higher education institutions and the programmes the institutions offer.

Under Section 38 of the new Private Education Act (2010), the Ministry of Education is considering establishing an Accreditation Council for Private Universities of Bangladesh (ACPUB), making membership compulsory for all private universities. No such accreditation body has yet been mooted for public sector universities. However, public universities have some sort of built-in mechanism to ensure quality of education. Among other, special committees are reviewing and adjusting the curricula.

Made up of four component parts, the University Grants Commission's Higher Education Quality Enhancement Project (HEQEP) is aimed at improving the quality of higher education.

The first part encompasses funds made available to universities in conjunction with proposals to improve the quality of the education they provide: the Academic Innovation Fund (AIF).

The second part encompasses the design of a Higher Education Management Information System (HEMIS): computer software programmes intended to provide management with administrative and academic data, for instance, the number of students admitted, how they are performing, as well as information on study programmes and alumni. HEMIS will be implemented at the national and institutional levels.

The third part encompasses the establishment of the Bangladesh Research and Education Network ([BdREN](#)), which will aim to facilitate professional liaison between researchers and academic staff at the national level. The final part encompasses the project management of HEQEP, the aim of which is to ensure

smooth progress with the preparations for and implementation of the entire project.

The [website](#) of the University Grants Commission can be consulted to check whether a university has accredited status. For other institutions, refer to the [website](#) of the Ministry of Education.

■ Composition of file

A complete file in secondary and in higher education includes the diploma and the corresponding academic transcript.

Authenticity

All SSC and HSC secondary school diplomas from 1996 can be verified online via the [website](#). This can be done by entering the examination year and roll number ('roll') stated on the diploma and selecting the Education Board that awarded the diploma. The Madrasah variants of these programmes of study can be found here too, as can the Diploma in Commerce and the Diploma in Business Studies.

Technical and vocationally-oriented secondary education programmes (SSC vocational and HSC vocational, HSC business management and the Diploma in Commerce) can be verified online on the [website](#) of the Bangladesh Technical Education Board. Data is available from 2005.

Diplomas awarded by the National University (NU) can be verified on the [NU website](#). Data is available from 2005 or 2006, but sometimes not older than 3 years

■ Overview of higher education institutions

- [Website](#) of the Ministry of Education, including lists of schools, intermediate colleges and degree colleges.
- [Website](#) of the University Grants Commission (UCG), including lists of private sector universities.
- [Website](#) of the UCG, including lists of accredited public universities.

■ Useful websites

- [Website](#) of the Ministry of Education.
- [Website](#) of the Ministry of Primary and Mass Education.
- [Website](#) of the University Grants Commission of Bangladesh.
- [Website](#) of the Bangladesh Technical Education Board.
- [Website](#) of the Bangladesh Madrasah Education Board, Dhaka.
- [Website](#) of the Higher Education Quality Enhancement Project (HEQEP).
- [Website](#) of the Bangladesh Research and Education Network (BdREN).