

The education system of

Brazil

described and compared with
the Dutch system

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

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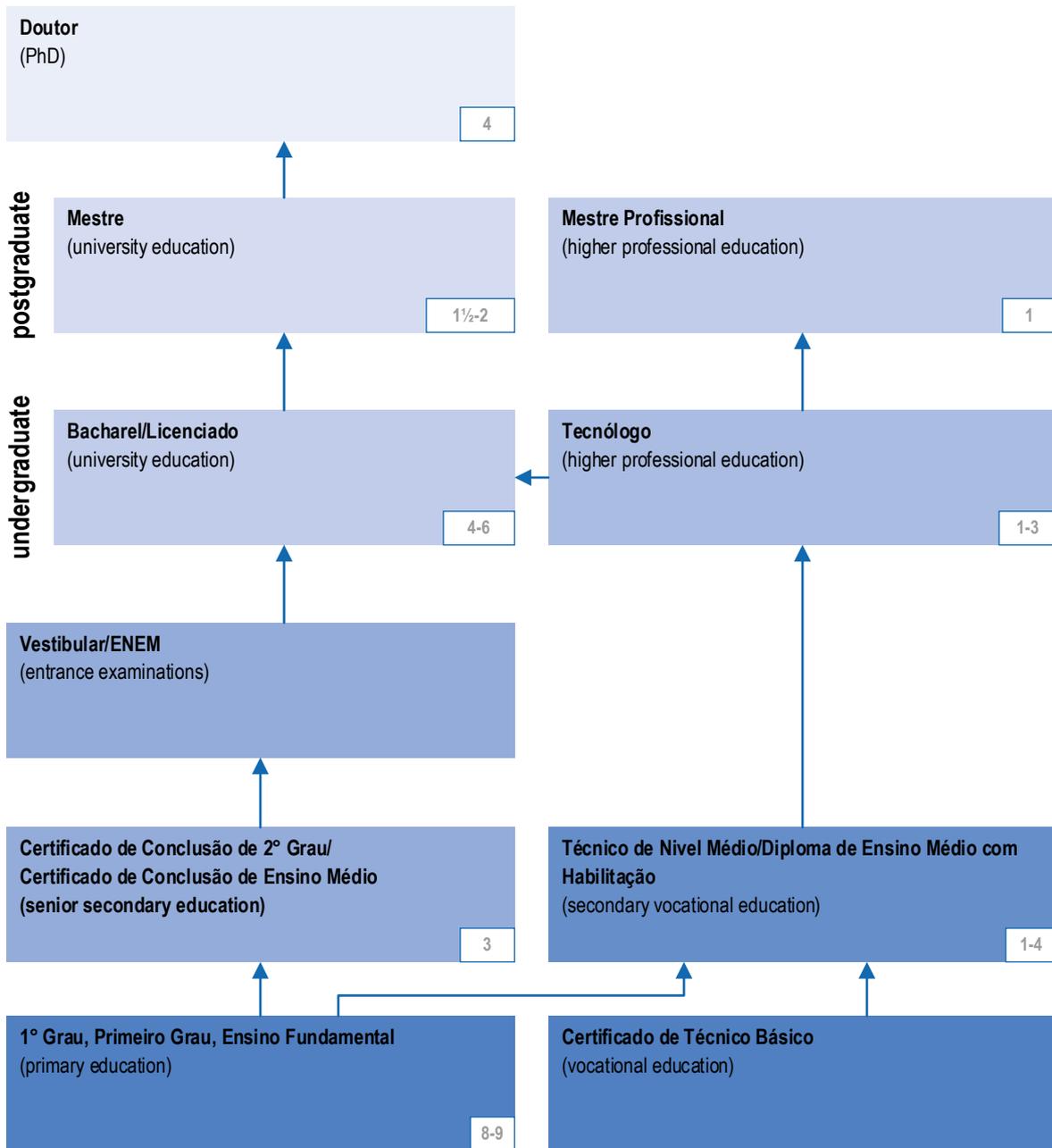
We assemble the information for these descriptions of education systems with the greatest care. However, we cannot be held responsible for the consequences of errors or incomplete information in this document.

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■ Flow chart: education system Brazil



Duration of education

Evaluation chart

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

Degree or qualification	Dutch equivalent and NLQF level	EQF level
<i>Técnico de Nivel Médio/Diploma de Ensino Médio com Habilitação</i>	MBO diploma (qualification levels 1-4)	1-4
<i>Certificado de Conclusão de 2º Grau/Certificado de Conclusão de Ensino Médio</i>	approximately HAVO diploma	4
<i>Tecnólogo</i>	approximately 1 year of HBO	5
<i>Bacharel</i>	HBO bachelor's degree or at most WO bachelor's degree	6
<i>Licenciado</i>	HBO bachelor's degree in education (teaching)	6
<i>Mestre</i>	(1-year) WO master's degree	7

NB

- The information provided in the chart 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: [education and diplomas the Netherlands](#).
- [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 Federative Republic of Brazil is divided into 26 states and a federal district (Brasília). Currently, Brazil has a population of more than 200 million people.

The Brazilian education system has its roots in the 1988 constitution and in the 1996 *Lei de Diretrizes e Bases Educação Nacional* (LDB). The LDB is the law outlining the regulations and basis for the national education system. The National Education Council (*Nacional de Educação*, CNE) is primarily responsible for matters relating to education. Each state (and the federal district) also has its own education council, which supervises local primary, secondary, and vocational schools. Universities that are funded and managed by the state are accredited by these councils; however, their study programmes are evaluated at a federal level.

Higher education falls under the responsibility of the Ministry of Education (*Ministério da Educação*, MEC), and in particular the department of higher education (*Secretaria de Educação Superior*, SESU).

The 1996 LDB was implemented according to a 'National ten-year Education Plan', which included a number of measures aimed at ensuring better education for the population, improvements to educational instruments, a reduction of social and regional differences within the country, and democratization of university management. Another goal was to increase participation in higher education from 12 to 30 percent. The implementation of a binary system at all levels of education was one of the measures in the education plan.

The new law distinguishes between two parallel education systems: the *sistema de educação básica e superior* (general education) and the *sistema de educação profissional* (vocational education), with two levels per system: *educação básica* and *educação superior* (primary and higher education).

Educação básica is funded 93 percent by the individual states and municipalities. There are also a number of private and federal schools. Approximately 81 percent of all students participate in this type of education. Education is compulsory up to (and including) age 14. The language of education is Portuguese.

The academic year runs from March until December.

■ Primary and secondary education

General education

Educação básica (primary education) had a nominal duration of 11 years until 2006. According to the National ten-year Education Plan (LDB), *educação básica* officially has a total duration of 12 years since 2006. However, this has not yet been implemented by all states. According to this law, *educação básica* includes both primary school (*1º Grau, Primeiro Grau, Ensino Fundamental*) and general secondary education (*2º Grau, Segundo Grau, Ensino Médio*). There are plans to have pupils complete this stage of their education with a national examination (ENEM = *examen nacional de ensino médio*). This examination is not yet compulsory at all schools.

The first 9 years (not including child education – *ensino infantil* – offered at *Kindergartens* or pre-schools) of primary education (*1º Grau, Ensino Fundamental*) are compulsory for children aged 6-14. A school year consists of at least 200 days and 800 hours of activities per year. The curriculum consists of Portuguese, history, geography, science, mathematics, arts, and physical education from the second through fifth grade. From sixth grade onwards, one or two foreign languages are also mandatory, usually English and Spanish. When pupils reach the seventh grade, the subjects are focused on entrance examinations for the university. At the end of the programme a certificate is awarded, which allows entry to senior secondary education (*2º Grau, Ensino Médio*).

Some secondary schools also require a senior secondary entrance examination. The core subjects are the Portuguese language and Brazilian literature, geography and history, physics, chemistry and biology, mathematics, a foreign language, art, and physical education. Senior secondary school (*3ª Serie, years 10-12*) lasts 3 years, with a minimum of 2400 contact hours in total, 200 days per year and at the end of which the *Certificado de Conclusão do 2º Grau* or *Certificado de Conclusão de Ensino Médio* is awarded. This certificate allows pupils to take the entrance examination for higher education.

In terms of level, the *Certificado de Conclusão do 2º Grau/Certificado de Conclusão de Ensino Médio* is approximately comparable to a HAVO diploma.

Secondary vocational education

The new system of vocational education introduced with the LDB in 1996 has three levels. The first level is *básico*, which has no entrance requirements.

After completing their primary education, most students move on to vocational education (partly based on competencies acquired elsewhere), culminating in the certificate of *Certificado de Técnico Básico*. The duration can vary from several months to some years. The aim is also to allow students with this certificate to proceed to the next level.

The next level is secondary vocational education with a duration of 1 to 3 years or 3 to 4 years, dependent on the type of education: secondary vocational education or a combination of secondary vocational and general education. The entrance requirement is the junior secondary school final examination, following 9 years of education (*ensino fundamental*). The aim of this programme is to have pupils reach a total of 12 years of education.

Secondary vocational education can include both general subjects (the basis of high school) and vocational subjects. The general subjects are the Portuguese language and Brazilian literature, geography and history, physics, chemistry and biology, mathematics, a foreign language, art, and physical education. After completion of the programme, pupils are awarded the certificate/professional qualification of *Técnico de Nivel Médio/Diploma de Ensino Médio com Habilitação* with the addition of the specialisation.

In terms of level, the *Técnico de Nivel Médio/Diploma de Ensino Médio com Habilitação* is comparable to an MBO diploma at qualification level 1-4, depending on the duration and specialisation of the study programme.

Brazil also has an adult-education secondary school diploma (*Certificado de Conclusão de Ensino Médio Supletivo*). This certificate also allows pupils to take the entrance examination for higher education.

The quality of education in secondary schools varies considerably. In order to ensure a consistent starting level among students commencing higher education, entrance examinations are held in a number of secondary school subjects. Some students prepare for these examinations by taking additional courses for 6 months.

■ Admission to higher education

The *Certificado de Conclusão do 2º Grau/Certificado de Conclusão de Ensino Médio* and the 3-year programmes culminating in the *Diploma de Técnico de Nivel Medio/Diploma de Ensino Médio com Habilitação* grant access to the entrance examination (*vestibular*) for higher education, as well as to the nominal usually 3-year post-secondary vocational *cursos superiores de tecnologia*.

The *vestibular* may vary per university, its purpose is to select the best students. Students who do not have good grades do not pass the exam and cannot study at a university.

In 1998, the Brazilian government launched the *Exame Nacional do Ensino Médio* (ENEM), a national examination which evaluates secondary education at high schools in Brazil. At first ENEM was used to evaluate the quality of the Brazilian secondary education, but since 2009 an increasing number of universities use the results of the ENEM as a selection criterion to enter into higher education by either supplementing or replacing the *vestibular*. However, there are still universities using the *vestibular* as the examination for entrance to their programmes.

■ Higher education

Brazil has 245 public and 2069 private higher education institutions, the latter of which provide education to 89 percent of all students. The private sector includes the traditional catholic universities, institutes that are financed by local authorities, the private sector and/or non-government aid, and other organizations. The Ministry of Education recognises the institutes and accredits the programmes.

Higher education is organised into *universidades*, *universidades especializadas*, *centros universitários*, *centros universitários especializados*, *faculdades*, *faculdades integradas*, *institutos superiores*, *escolas superiores*, and *centros de educação tecnológica*.

There are both for-profit and not-for-profit private institutions. This last group includes the *comunitárias* (cooperatives), *confessionais* and *filatropicas*.

Public institutions have been set up by the federation (*federal*), by individual states (*estadual*) and by municipalities (*municipal*). Federal universities can be found everywhere in the country. Most of the other institutions are mainly located in the south and south-east of the country, with higher concentrations in São Paulo and Rio de Janeiro. Education at all public institutions is free. Quality may vary considerably between institutions and between programmes within a single institution. See under [Quality assurance and accreditation](#).

■ University education

Universities offer programmes that in the Netherlands could be classified as either WO or HBO, such as Nursing and Physiotherapy. University education has two levels: *graduação* (undergraduate) and *pos-graduação* (postgraduate).

Graduação

Graduação programmes have a nominal duration of 4, 5 or 6 years and culminate in the degree of *Bacharel*. Instead of the degree, professional qualifications are also used, such as *Médico* and *Engenheiro*. The university teacher-training programme usually has a nominal duration of 4 years. After completion of the programme, students are awarded the *Licenciado* degree (*Licenciatura*). Nowadays, the duration of the programmes is no longer expressed in years, but instead in credits and contact hours. One academic year may include no more than 200 days. Methods for calculating credits vary: in general, one credit is worth 15 classroom contact hours, or 30-45 practical contact hours. Some institutions set one credit at 20 contact hours per week.

Today, all higher education programmes require a final project (*trabalho de conclusão de curso – TCC*). This can be a final paper (*monografia*) or a report based on academic research. When evaluating the *Bacharel* degree, the learning outcomes should be taken into consideration, in addition to the type of study.

In terms of level, the *Bacharel* degree is comparable to an HBO bachelor's degree or to at most a WO bachelor's degree, depending on the learning outcomes and the type of study programme.

In terms of level, the *Licenciado* degree is comparable to an HBO bachelor's degree in education (teaching).

As part of the restructuring of education, *cursos de seqüenciais* (further education) have been implemented in the universities. These programmes do not confer a *Bacharel*; rather, students receive a *Certificado* for courses in general education (*cursos seqüenciais de complementação de estudos*) and a *Diploma* for courses in professional education (*cursos seqüenciais de formação específica*). The entrance requirement is a secondary-school diploma.

Pos-graduação

The term *pos-graduação* covers *especialização*, *mestrado* and *doutorado* programmes. There are two types of *pos-graduação* programmes: *latu sensu* (in the broad sense) and *strict sensu* (in the strict sense). MBA programmes also fall under the term *pos-graduação* and are usually accredited by the Ministry of Education.

Especialização (pos-graduação *latu sensu*)

Cursos de especialização generally last from 360 hours to a maximum of 2 years, and culminate in a *Certificado de Especialização*. In general, these programmes are not accredited by the Ministry of Education. This group of university post-graduate programmes does not include the medical specialisations that in general take 3 years, but rather covers additional training courses that aim to deepen or update knowledge already acquired. The programmes are completed with a final paper or academic research.

Mestrado (pos-graduação *stricto sensu*)

The *Mestrado* programme has a duration of 18 to 24 months, it can often be taken part-time and is completed with a final paper (*tese*). The degree awarded is that of *Mestre*, and the certificate grants entry to the *doutorado*. The entrance requirement for this programme is a *Bacharel/Licenciado*, an entrance examination (which can include a written test and an interview) and a small proposal of the student's research project. Knowledge of English, and in some cases of Spanish and French, is also tested.

In terms of level, the *Mestre* degree is comparable to a (1-year) WO master's degree.

Doutorado

A *Mestre* degree grants admission to the *doutorado*. The *doutorado* usually takes 4 years following a *mestrado*. The programme consists of 1 year of classes, followed by 3 years of research that results in a dissertation (*dissertação/tese*). After completion of the programme, a *Doutor* diploma is awarded. In a few cases a *Bacharel* degree also grants admission to a doctorate programme, in which case the duration of the programme is generally longer.

■ Higher professional education

Cursos superiores de tecnologia are classified as post-secondary professional education. Entrance to the *tecnológico superior* is granted by a *Técnico* certificate or a *Certificado de Conclusão do 2º Grau, de Ensino Médio*. The programme consisted of 1600 to 2400 contact hours, depending on the chosen specialisation. It was also possible to acquire knowledge through experience or courses at work.

The programme is primarily geared towards the labour market. The internship is an important part of the curriculum. At the end of the programme, students are awarded a certificate with the professional qualification of *Tecnólogo*. This certificate also allows students to continue on to a nominal 1-year professional

postgraduate programme (*Mestrado Profissional*) or to a related university undergraduate programme with certain exemptions.

In terms of level, the *Tecnólogo* is approximately comparable to 1 year of higher professional education (HBO).

In 2000 there were 364 *cursos superior de tecnología*, but today the total number of programmes is almost 4,500. The rise in the number of these programmes is due to the growth of Brazil's economy. This increases employment and the need of qualified personnel in various professions.

Today, the programmes take about 3 years on average, and are not limited to technical areas, but also offered in the field of arts, commerce, communication, design, informatics, health, tourism, and management. The programmes are offered not only at institutions for higher professional education anymore, but also at the various types of universities.

Currently the profession of *Tecnólogo* is being regularized through parliament. The regulation will lead to standards and conditions on the labour market and should subsequently result in a rise in the number of programmes. Today, already approximately 16 percent of the undergraduate programmes are technological (professional) programmes.

Assessment systems

There is no uniform system of assessment in Brazil. The most common system is a scale of 0-10, with 5 or higher representing a pass.

Numerical grade	Letter grade	Description
9-10	SS/A	<i>Superior/Excelente</i>
7-8.9	MS/B	<i>Médio Superior/Bom</i>
5-6.9	MM/C	<i>Médio/Regular</i>
3-4.9	MI/D	<i>Médio Inferior/Insuficiente</i>
0-2.9	II/D	<i>Inferior/Reprobadado</i>

A scale of 0-100, with 60 or higher representing a pass, is also commonly used.

Numerical grade	Letter grade	Description
100	SS/A	<i>Superior/Excelente</i>
80-90	MS/B	<i>Médio Superior/Bom</i>
60-70	MM/C	<i>Médio/Regular</i>
50	MI/D	<i>Médio Inferior/Insuficiente</i>
	II/E	<i>Inferior/Reprobadado</i>

Accreditation and quality assurance

The Brazilian Ministry of Education is responsible for the quality assessment in higher education. The *Comissão Nacional de Avaliação do Ensino Superior* (CONAES) is responsible for evaluating the *graduação* programmes, and the *Coordenação de Aperfeiçoamento de Pessoa de Nível Superior* (CAPES) for the evaluation of the *pos-graduação* programmes (*strictu sensu*).

CONAES is formed by representatives from the *Instituto Nacional de Estudos e Pesquisas Educacionais* (INEP), CAPES, and professors and students in higher education. INEP, the National Institute for Educational Research and Studies, is an agency connected to the Ministry of Education that collects, evaluates and manages information on all aspects of the Brazilian education system. CONAES has developed the *Sistema Nacional de Avaliação da Educação Superior* (SINAES), the Higher Education National Evaluation System, to measure the quality of the programmes and of higher education institutions.

An important factor in the evaluation is the *Exame Nacional de Desempenho de Avaliação de Estudantes* (ENADE). ENADE is a survey that is conducted every year for students starting university and students finishing their studies. The results lead to the development of quality indicators used for the evaluation. The quality indicators are published by [INEP](#) in the *Índices Gerais de Cursos das Instituições* (IGC), the general index for programmes. The outcome is representative for the quality of all programmes offered by an institution. The end results of the evaluation are published annually on the [Ministry of Education's website](#).

Degrees and titles from *Centros Universitários, Faculdades Integradas, Institutos* and *Escolas de Nível Superior* need to be recognised and registered by a government education institution on behalf of the MEC, proof of which is shown by stamps on the back of the certificate.

A list of all accredited programmes is also available at the [website of the Brazilian Ministry of Education](#) (e-MEC). It is possible to search by institution, or by programme by navigating to *Consulta Avançada*.

■ International treaties

Brazil has mutual recognition agreements with Argentina, Uruguay, Paraguay and Chile under *Mercosul* (a trade agreement among South American countries).

■ Checking documents

Secondary education

At the end of secondary school a list of marks is issued (*historico escolar*), stating that the student involved has completed secondary school and is eligible for higher education studies (*concluiu 3ª serie do 2º grau, apto ao prosseguimento de estudos em nível superior*). Some institutions only issue the *historico escolar*, others also issue a *Certificado*. Older certificates sometimes state that the person involved is qualified to teach the first 4 years of primary school (*professor de 1º Grau de 1ª a 4ª serie*).

Higher education

Upon completion of a university programme, a certificate with a *Bacharel* degree is awarded, sometimes with a professional qualification such as *Médico* (medical doctor), *Fisioterapeuta*, *Enfermagem* (nurse) or *Engenheiro*. The accompanying grade list indicates the study programme that was followed.

Credential evaluation

Nuffic evaluates qualifications according to the principles of the Lisbon Recognition Convention (1997). A practical implementation of these standards can be found in the European [EAR manual](#).

■ Overview of higher education institutions

[Website of the INEP](#), the National Institute for Educational Research and Studies, including an overview of higher education institutions (only in Portuguese).

■ Useful websites

- [Website](#) of the Nuffic NESO office in Brazil (only in Portuguese).
- [Website](#) of the *Ministério da Educação* (MEC), Brazilian Ministry of Education.
- [Website](#) of the Brazilian Ministry of Education, including the *Índices Gerais de Cursos das Instituições* (IGC), the index with information about the quality of undergraduate and graduate programmes offered by a higher education institution (only in Portuguese).
- [Website](#) of e-MEC, including a list of accredited programmes and information of the quality of all undergraduate, master's and PhD programmes (only in Portuguese).
- [Website](#) of the *Instituto Nacional de Estudos e Pesquisas Educacionais Anísio Teixeira* (INEP), National Institute for Educational Research and Studies in charge of evaluating educational systems and the quality of education in Brazil (only in Portuguese).
- [Website](#) of the *Coordenação de Aperfeiçoamento de Pessoal de Nível Superior* (CAPES), Brazilian federal agency for support and evaluation of postgraduate education (*stricto sensu*).
- [Website](#) of the *Associação Nacional das Universidades Particulares* (ANUP), association of private education institutions.