

Education system

Denmark

described and compared with
the Dutch system

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

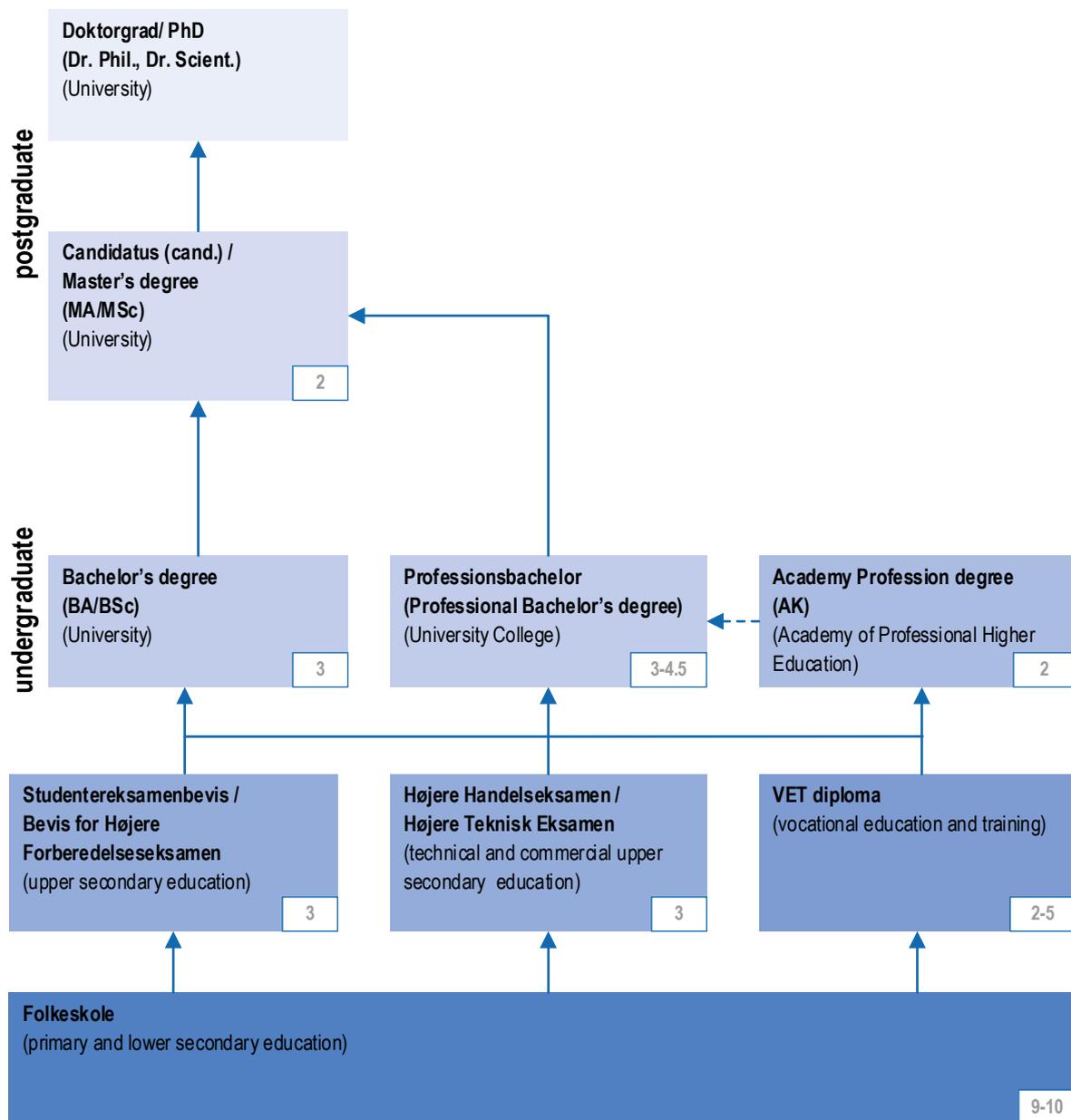
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We assemble the information for these descriptions of education systems with the greatest care. However, we cannot be held responsible for the consequences of errors or incomplete information in this document.



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 Duration of education

■ National Framework of Qualifications

The Danish Qualification Framework (NQF) distinguishes 8 levels. The degrees for higher education are placed at levels 5-8. The certificates for primary and secondary education and certificates for supplementary qualifications are placed at levels 1-5 in the NQF.

Certificates and degrees		Certificates for supplementary qualifications	
1	Primary and lower secondary school certificate (9 th class)	1	Preparatory adult education certificates
2	Primary and lower secondary school certificate (10 th class)	2	General Adult Education certificates
3		3	
4	General upper secondary certificates	4	Higher preparatory single subject certificates Supplementary upper secondary certificates
5	Academy Profession degrees and VVU Degrees	5	
6	Bachelor and Diploma Degrees	6	
7	Master's Degree (Candidatus) and Master Degrees	7	
8	PhD Degree	8	

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.

Degree or qualification and NQF level		EQF level	Dutch equivalent and NLQF level		EQF level
VET diploma	3-5	2-4	MBO diploma (qualification level 2, 3 or 4)	2-4	2-4
<i>Højere Handelseksamen (HHX)/Højere Teknisk Eksamen (HTX)</i>	4	4/5	VWO diploma for the general education component	4+	4
<i>Studentereksamenbevis (STX)/Bevis for Højere Forberedelseksamen (HF)</i>	4	4/5	VWO diploma	4+	4
Academy Profession degree (AK)	5	5	2 years of HBO	5	5
Professional Bachelor's degree/ <i>professionsbachelor</i>	6	6	HBO bachelor's degree	6	6
Bachelor's degree (BA/BSc) (university)	6	6	WO bachelor's degree	6	6
<i>Candidatus</i> degree (MA/MSc)	7	7	WO master's degree	7	7

NB

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

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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 Danish education system is governed by national legislation.

The *Undervisningsministeriet* (Ministry of Education) is responsible for primary and secondary education, vocational programmes, professional bachelor programmes and AK programmes and also determines in general terms the education frameworks, curricula and exit qualifications.

The *Uddannelses- og Forskningsministeriet* (Ministry of Higher Education and Science) is responsible for higher education, with the exception of professional bachelor programmes, AK programmes and some programmes in the Visual Arts and Architecture.

The Danish higher education system is binary, including research universities that offer programmes up to PhD level, and universities of applied science with higher professional programmes of varying lengths.

The language of education is Danish, yet the number of programmes being taught in English is increasing, particularly in international education. Education is compulsory for children aged 6-16.

The academic year starts on 1 September and ends on 1 July.

■ Primary and secondary education

Compulsory education in Denmark lasts 10 years (since 2009) and covers, in Dutch terms, primary education and junior secondary education. Compulsory education is provided by a *Folkeskole*. The tenth (optional) grade exists for pupils who are not yet ready for senior secondary education, or who do not yet know which direction they wish to take. The *Folkeskole* concludes with a national examination, either the *Folkeskolens Afgangsprøve* (after year 9 or 10) or the *Folkeskolens 10-klasseprøve* (only after year 10).

Senior secondary education

Senior secondary education offers 3 main specializations:

1. general;
2. technical/administrative;
3. vocational.

The first kind, general senior secondary education, is provided at *gymnasier*. Pupils choose 1 of 2 subject clusters, either in the natural sciences (*naturfaglig*) or linguistics (*sproglig*). Each subject cluster consists of subjects only offered in that cluster, as well as common subjects and electives. Subjects can be taken at 3

levels: A (high), B (middle) and C (low). Pupils complete examinations in 10 subjects, no more than 3 of which can be completed at the end of the first or second year. At the end of the third year, pupils take examinations in Danish and other subjects studied at A-level. After completion of this final examination, pupils are awarded the *Studentereksamen (STX)*.

Another variant of general secondary education leads to the award of the *Højere Forberedelseksamen (HF)*, or the higher preparatory examination. This examination was created to offer a form of general senior secondary education to adults and young people who stopped studying after the *Folkeskole*. The *HF* programme can be completed in 2 years full-time, yet pupils may take individual examinations at different times.

The technical/administrative type of senior secondary education also has 2 possible variants. Schools for business economics or technical education award the *Højere Handelseksamen (HHX)* or the *Højere Teknisk Eksamen (HTX)*, respectively. Both programmes last for 3 years, and consist of both general subjects as well as subjects in economic/administrative or technical specializations. The *HHX* programme most closely resembles the linguistic track of general senior secondary school, and the *HTX* the natural sciences track.

The vocational type of Danish senior secondary education is the *Ehrvervsuddannelser*, programmes sometimes referred to in English as 'Vocational Education and Training (VET)' programmes. These programmes are comparable to *BOL* and *BBL* programmes in the Netherlands. They can last from 2 to 5 years; most programmes last between 3½ and 4 years. In addition to qualifying pupils for the labour market, a VET diploma also grants entry to shorter higher professional education programmes.

In terms of level, the *Studentereksamenbevis* and the *Bevis for Højere Forberedelseksamen* (NQF level 4/EQF level 4/5) are both comparable to a VWO diploma. Full description of all [NQF levels](#).

The *HHX* and *HTX* programmes also satisfy the general entrance requirements for higher education.

In terms of level, the *Højere Handelseksamen (HHX)* and the *Højere Teknisk Eksamen (HTX)* (both NQF level 4/EQF level 4/5) are comparable to a VWO diploma for the general education component. Full description of all [NQF levels](#).

Most VET diplomas also grant entry to shorter higher education programmes, provided the candidate has taken enough general subjects.

In terms of level, the VET diploma (NQF level 3-5/EQF level 2-4) is comparable to an MBO diploma at qualification level 2, 3 or 4, depending on the duration of the programme and the specialization. Full description of all [NQF levels](#).

■ Admission to higher education

General senior secondary education is intended as preparation for higher education. This means that all of the general upper secondary school leaving examinations, the *Studentereksamenbevis (STX)*, *Bevis for Højere Forberedelseeksamen (HF)*, *Højere Handelseksamen (HHX)* and *Højere Teknisk Eksamen (HTX)*, fulfill the general criteria that apply to entry to higher education. In addition, many 3 to 4-year vocational education programmes may also give access to professionally oriented higher education programmes. Access may also depend on specific requirements such as specific subject combination in upper secondary school or a certain grade point average.

■ Higher education

Like the Netherlands, the Danish higher education system is binary and makes a distinction between academic education and higher professional education. Academic education draws a distinction between multidisciplinary research universities (*universitet*) and specialized institutions with separate programmes in areas such as art, music and architecture.

Higher professional education distinguishes between institutions that offer shorter-length programmes (*Erhvervsakademier*, professional academies) and institutions that offer longer programmes (*Professionshøjskole/University Colleges*). Professional academies offer around 15 2-year programmes, mostly in commercial and technical specializations. The CVUs offer around 20 programmes lasting 3½ to 4 years in the following fields: engineering, education, social work, art and healthcare.

An important difference compared to the Netherlands is that the entrance level is the same for both academic and higher professional programmes. Students with the diplomas named above (*STX*, *HF*, *HHX*, *HTX*) satisfy the criteria for both types of higher education.

Many specializations set additional criteria, such as prerequisite subjects and/or work experience. A quota applies to some specializations, and certain programmes require an entrance examination or portfolio of artwork.

■ University education

In 1993, Danish higher education was reformed and a new degree system was introduced. Before that time, academic education was made up of one long programme lasting 4 to 6½ years, upon completion of which the *candidatus* degree was awarded. This system still applies to four study programmes, mainly in the medical sciences.

The university education reform in 2007 brought the number of general universities down from 12 to 8, plus the 13 universities specializing in architecture, art and music.

Since 1993, the following degrees have been awarded in academic education:

Bachelor of Arts/Bachelor of Science

Most bachelor's degrees last 3 years (180 ECTS). Students take subjects related to their major from the outset of the programme, and a Bachelor project is required for all specializations. At the end of the programme a BA or BSc is awarded, with the specialization included in the title. The Danish terminology is also often included, such as *Handelshøjskolens Afgansprøve* (final examination of the university of commerce) or the *Diplomingeniør* for technical specializations.

In terms of level, a Bachelor's degree (BA/BSc) (NQF/EQF level 6) obtained at a university is comparable to a WO bachelor's degree in a similar specialization obtained. Full description of all [NQF levels](#).

Candidatus/Master's degree

Candidatus or master's programmes take 2 years (120 ECTS) following a bachelor's degree. These programmes are set up as a more extensive specialization of the subjects taken during the bachelor's programme. Research forms an important component, and a master's thesis (*speciale* in Danish) is compulsory for all specializations. At the end of the programme, graduates are awarded the title of *cand.* followed by the relevant specialization.

In terms of level, the *Candidatus* degree (NQF/EQF level 7) is comparable to a WO master's degree in a similar specialization obtained. Full description of all [NQF levels](#).

PhD

Most PhD programmes last for 3 years following a *candidatus* degree. The programme involves 6 months of classes in research skills, as well as the writing and public defence of a doctoral thesis.

The traditional Danish *doktorgrad* (*dr.phil, dr.scient.*) is still awarded to those who have conducted a total of 5 to 8 years of original research and written and defended a doctoral thesis. No classes are required for this title.

■ Higher professional education

In Denmark, higher professional education is provided by 2 types of institutions: Academies of Professional Higher Education (*Erhvervsakademi*) and University Colleges (*CVU/Professionshøjskole*).

Academies of Professional Higher Education (*Erhvervsakademi*)

Diplomas awarded after short programmes in higher professional education are given the abbreviation AK after the title, e.g. *finansøkonom AK, designetnolog AK*. The AK refers to the *AKademie* in the word *ErhvervsAKademie*, the name for schools that provide this type of shorter programme. Students with an AK diploma are sometimes eligible for exemptions in other higher professional education programmes. The programmes have a duration of 2 years (120 ECTS).

In terms of level, the AK diploma (NQF/EQF level 5) is comparable to 2 years of higher professional education (HBO) or an Associate Degree in a similar specialization obtained. Full description of all [NQF levels](#).

University Colleges (*CVU/Professionshøjskole*)

Since 2000, most graduates of institutions that offer longer programmes are awarded the *professionsbachelor* degree. This title distinguishes the academic university bachelor's degrees from higher professional bachelor's degrees. All students that take a professional bachelor's programme must complete a work experience placement and a project paper. The programmes have a nominal duration of 3 to 4½ years (180-270 ECTS).

In terms of level, the Professional Bachelor's degree/*professionsbachelor* (NQF/EQF level 6) is comparable to an HBO bachelor's degree in a similar specialization obtained. Full description of all [NQF levels](#).

Adult and continuing education

Denmark has a long tradition of adult education that runs alongside the regular education system. General and professional programmes are offered at both secondary and higher education level. In higher education, the qualifications obtained through the adult education system correspond to those in the regular system.

The following diplomas are available:

- The *VVU* degree (*Viderregaende Voksuddannelse*, Advanced Adult Education) is awarded upon completion of programmes comparable to Academy Profession (AK) level, i.e. 2 years of HBO or an Associate Degree.
- *Diplomuddannelse* (Diploma programmes) are awarded following completion of programmes whose level is comparable to a professional bachelor's degree, and grant admission to master's programmes.
- A *Masteruddannelse* is awarded following completion of a programme at postgraduate (master's) level.

Adult education programmes usually consist of 2 years of part-time study and are therefore equivalent to 1 year of full-time study (60 ECTS). Certain master's programmes require 1½ years of full-time study (90 ECTS). The entrance requirements for adult education are: a relevant educational qualification, and at least 2 years of work experience.

■ Assessment systems

Since 2007, the following 7-point system has been used for all forms of state-run education:

Numerical grade	Description
12	excellent performance displaying a high level of command of all aspects of the relevant material, with no or only a few minor weaknesses
10	very good performance displaying a high level of command of most aspects of the relevant material, with only minor weaknesses.
7	good performance displaying good command of the relevant material but also some weaknesses.
4	fair performance displaying good command but also some major weaknesses.
02	performance meeting only the minimum requirements for acceptance
00	performance which does not meet the minimum requirements for acceptance
-3	unacceptable performance in all respects

In addition to this 7-point system, an assessment may also be given in terms of a 'pass' or 'fail'. 02 is the minimum pass mark for examinations.

The European Credit Transfer and Accumulation System (ECTS) has been in use in higher education since 2001. More information on the ECTS system is available in the [ECTS User's Guide](#) issued by the European Commission.

See also our [website](#) for information about grading systems.

■ Bologna process

In the late 1980s and early 1990s, the bachelor's-master's degree system was introduced in Danish higher education. Denmark was one of the 29 countries that signed the Bologna Declaration in 1999. In the old system, the *candidatus* degree was the lowest academic title, and was awarded at the end of a 5-year study programme. The introduction of the bachelor's-master's degree structure brought the addition of the bachelor's degree, awarded after 3 years of study.

Candidatus is the title used to indicate the current master's degree. Information on the current situation can be found on the [website of the European Higher Education Area](#).

■ Qualification frameworks

In 2009 a proposal for a Danish Qualifications Framework for Lifelong Learning (NQF) and its implementation was approved by the Minister for Education, the Minister for Science, Technology and Innovation, the Minister for Culture and the Minister for Economic and Business Affairs. The Danish Qualifications Framework incorporates an 8-level structure. As of 2011, each level in the Danish Qualifications Framework is linked to a level in the European Qualifications Framework (EQF).

More information on the Danish Qualifications Framework can be found on the [website of the Danish Ministry of Higher Education and Science](#).

■ Accreditation and quality assurance

The accreditation system is based on the Danish Accreditation Act (in force since 1 July 2013). The responsibility of implementing the Act lies with the *Uddannelses- og Forskningsministeriet* (Ministry of Higher Education and Science). A principle aim of the Act is to create a system with a view to ensuring and documenting the quality of higher education in the Danish educational institutions.

The Accreditation Council is the specific unit of the Accreditation Agency for Higher Education that takes decisions regarding accreditation of all higher education study programmes. These decisions are based on accreditation reports prepared by 2 accreditation operators:

- The [Danish Accreditation Institution](#) (AI), which prepares the accreditation reports for university study programmes.
- The [Danish Evaluation Institute \(EVA\)](#), which prepares the accreditation reports for higher education study programmes within the fields covered by the Ministry of Education and the Ministry of Culture.

A detailed description of the accreditation system can be found on the [website *Studyindenmark.dk*](#) of the Ministry of Higher Education and Science.

Denmark has accreditation at both institutional and programme level. To find out whether a Danish higher education institution or degree programme has been accredited, you can visit the website of the *Danmarks Akkrediteringsinstitution* (Danish Accreditation Institution) in [Danish](#) or in [English](#).

■ International treaties

Denmark signed the Lisbon Convention in 1997, and ratified it in 2003. Denmark has a bilateral agreement on academic recognition with The People's Republic of China.

■ Diploma Supplement

Danish higher education institutions have been obliged to issue the Diploma Supplement since 2002.

More information on the Diploma Supplement is available on the Danish [Europass website](#) and the [website of the European Commission](#).

■ Composition of file

It is common for Danish secondary and higher education institutions to issue documents in both English and Danish. It is advisable to have documents submitted in both languages, particularly in higher education. In most cases the diploma and grade list are combined into a single document; separate diplomas are generally not awarded in Denmark.

■ Overview of higher education institutions

The [website Studyindenmark.dk](#) provides an [overview](#) of higher education institutions.

■ Useful links

- English [website of the Ministeriet for Børn, Undervisning og Ligestilling](#) (Ministry for Children, Education and Gender Equality) also the Danish ENIC/NARIC as well as the national coordinator for EU programmes, providing information on institutions, study programmes, etc.
- English [website of the Uddannelses- og Forskningsministeriet](#) (Ministry of Higher Education and Science).
- English [website of the Styrelsen for Videregaende Uddannelser](#) (Danish Agency for Higher Education), a service of the Danish Ministry of Higher Education and Science, responsible for higher education, supporting mobility and foreign study, the recognition of foreign qualifications, and international cooperation.
- het ondersteunen van mobiliteit en buitenlandstudie, de erkenning van buitenlandse kwalificaties en internationale samenwerking.
- [Website of the Danish Accreditation Institution](#) (Danmarks Akkrediteringsinstitution).
- [‘The Danish Education System’](#), a publication (pdf) of the Ministry of Higher Education and Science, the Ministry for Children, Education and Gender Equality, and the Ministry of Culture.