

Education system

Ethiopia

described and compared with
the Dutch system

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

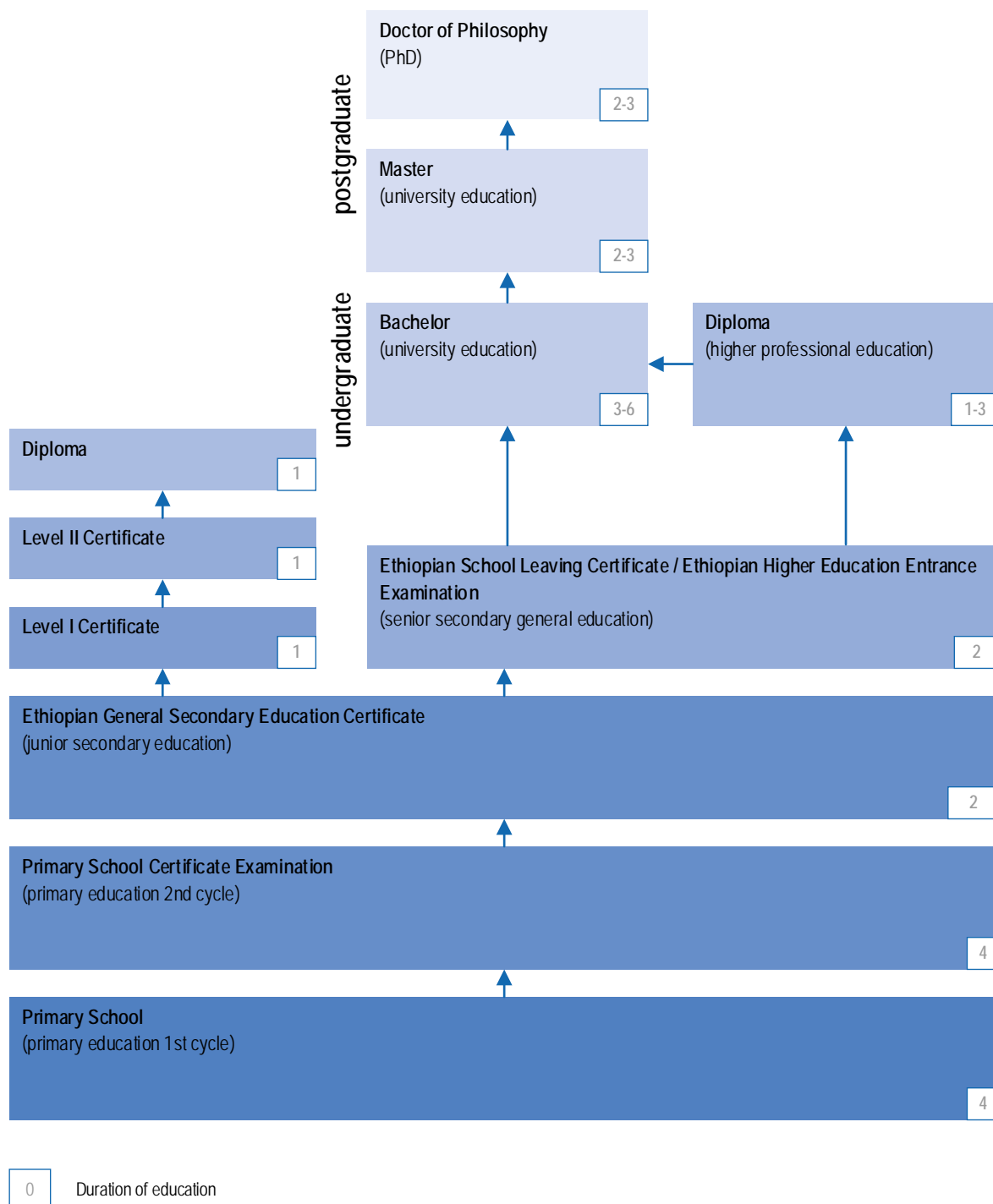
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Education system Ethiopia



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 | Dutch equivalent and NLQF level | | EQF level |
|--|---|-----|-----------|
| Ethiopian General Secondary Education Certificate/ 10th Grade National Examination | VMBO-T diploma | 2 | 2 |
| Diploma Technical and Vocational Education (3 years) | MBO diploma (qualification level 2 or 3) | 2/3 | 2/3 |
| Ethiopian School Leaving Certificate/ Ethiopian Higher Education Entrance Examination | HAVO diploma (only if at least 6 subjects with A, B or C) | 4 | 4 |
| Diploma (1 year) | 1 year of HBO | 5 | 5 |
| Diploma (2 years) | 2 years of HBO | 5 | 5 |
| Diploma (3 years) | 3 years of HBO | 6 | 6 |
| Bachelor (4 years) | HBO bachelor's degree or 2 years of WO | 6 | 6 |
| Bachelor (5 years) | WO bachelor's degree | 6 | 6 |
| Master (2 years) | HBO master's degree or WO (1-year programme) | 7 | 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.
- 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 Ethiopian Federal Democratic Republic is located in the north-eastern part of Africa. The country has a population of approximately 85 million, 100 different ethnic groups and 70 languages. It is one of the poorest nations in Africa and its economy is almost entirely dependent on agriculture.

The current Ethiopian government recognizes the importance of education for national development. Policy is mainly aimed at expanding the education sector, improving quality and ensuring that educational content is harmonized with the country's economic needs.

Each of the country's nine states have two own educational bureaus (National Regional States Education Bureaus). These Bureaus are responsible for the administration and management of the general education, technical and vocational education and teacher-training programmes and institutions. The federal Ministry of Education is responsible for higher education. The Ministry of Education formulates policy and guidelines, which are implemented by the various Bureaus.

There are also two government bodies charged with regulating higher education, namely the Higher Education Strategy Center (HESC) and the Education and Training Quality Assurance Agency (ETQAA) (formerly HERQA). The number of students enrolled in public universities is around 200,000.

The education system comprises both formal and non-formal education. Non-formal education includes a broad scope of educational programmes for all age categories, catering to both school leavers and new pupils. Formal education comprises pre-school education, primary and secondary education (general education), technical-professional education and higher education.

The issue of higher education is currently high on the list of national priorities. It was not until 2003 that a strategy was formulated to bring about further development in this area. The 2003 Higher Education Proclamation aimed to ensure that the higher education system contributes directly to the national strategy for economic development and poverty reduction. In 2009, a new Higher Education Proclamation came into force, putting emphasis on - among others - higher education autonomy, quality and relevance of education and research, and on income generation.

Until 2000, higher education consisted of two universities and 17 colleges. The number of students totaled 31,000, while a single department at the Ministry of Education was charged with supervising the entire system. There are currently 32 universities (another 6 universities will soon be registered by the Ministry) colleges,

over 40 private higher education institutions and around 29 teacher training colleges. Approximately 70,000 are enrolled in private higher education institutions.

Education is free at all levels. The official language in primary and secondary education is Amharic. English is the official language in post-secondary and higher education. The academic year runs from September to July.

■ Primary and secondary education

Primary education has a duration of 8 years (age groups 6 to 14) and is divided into two 4-year cycles (1 through grade 4 and grade 5 through 8). At the end of the grade 4, pupils take a national exam and must achieve a score of at least 50% in order to continue to grade 5. At the end of grade 8, pupils take the national Primary School Certificate exam.

After 2 years of general secondary education, pupils take the Ethiopian General Secondary Education Certificate or 10th Grade National Examination. This exam is administered by the Ministry of Education's National Organization for Examinations. After having successfully completed this exam, pupils can opt to attend the two general upper grades or follow vocational training.

In terms of level, the *Ethiopian General Secondary Education Certificate* is comparable to a VMBO-T (*theoretische leerweg*) diploma.

The second phase of preparatory secondary education has also consisted of a 2-year period since 2001 (Grades 11, 12) and is regarded as preparation for higher education. Until 2003, pupils could obtain the Ethiopian School Leaving Certificate (ESLC) at the end of this period. This certificate has since been replaced by the Ethiopian Higher Education Entrance Examination (EHEEE). The second phase of preparatory secondary education has two tracks called a natural science stream and a social science stream, which include the following subjects:

Natural science stream

- specific subjects: biology, chemistry, mathematics, physics.
- general subjects: social studies, English, physical education.
- optional subjects: foreign language, national language.

Social science stream

- specific subjects: social studies, geography, history.
- general subjects: English, mathematics, physical education.
- optional subjects: foreign language, national language, natural sciences.

In terms of level, the *Ethiopian School Leaving* (ESCL) or an *Ethiopian Higher Education Entrance Examination* (EHEEE) with at least 6 subjects with A, B or C is comparable to a HAVO diploma.

Vocational education

After having completed grade 10 of their lower secondary education, pupils can opt to attend technical and vocational education and training. In order to be admitted after grade 10, pupils must obtain an Ethiopian General Secondary Education Certificate. There are 1-year and 2-year programmes resulting in a Level I and Level II Certificate, and 3-year programmes resulting in the Diploma.

In terms of level, the *Technical and Vocational Education and Training Diploma* following a 3-year programme is comparable to an MBO diploma at qualification level 2 or 3, depending on the specialization.

Admission to higher education

Formally, pupils must obtain a grade point average (GPA) of at least 2.0 – for both the *Ethiopian School Leaving Certificate* and the *Ethiopian Higher Education Entrance Examination* – in order to be admitted to the bachelor's courses. In practice, however, admission is restricted to pupils with the highest grades due to the limited capacity of the higher education system. Students that have achieved a C grade or higher in at least five subjects including English, mathematics and Amharic are generally admitted. Admission to the Diploma programmes requires a GPA of 1.4, yet in practice the required GPA is determined on the basis of the number of available seats. In order to increase access to higher education for women, they are allowed to access on the basis of a GPA that is 0.2 points lower than the required GPA.

Higher education

Diploma

Institutes, colleges and technical universities offer mainly professionally-oriented programmes resulting in the obtainment of a Diploma. The programmes have a nominal duration of 1 or 2 years. Although the Diploma programmes are mainly designed to prepare students for the labour market, they also provide access to bachelor's degree programmes. Some Diploma programmes can also be followed at the universities.

The most common study programmes are in the area of agriculture or accountancy.

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

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

Bachelor

All bachelor's programmes start with a so-called freshman year. During this year, students are prepared for a study in a specific area. The nominal duration of a bachelor's programme is usually 4 years. However, since 2003/2004 universities have started to offer 3-year bachelor's programmes as well. Bachelor's programmes in the area of the technical sciences, law and pharmacy last 5 years. Medicine and Veterinary Science programmes last 6 years.

In terms of level, the *Bachelor of Arts* or *Bachelor of Science* degrees following a 3-year programme are comparable to 3 years of higher professional education (HBO) or 1 year of university education (WO), depending on the type of the study programme.

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

In terms of level, the *Bachelor of Arts* or *Bachelor of Science* degrees following a 5-year programme are comparable to a WO bachelor's degree.

Master

The master's programmes have a duration of 1 or 2 years. A majority of the master's programmes are offered by the Addis Ababa University. However, in 2008 a few other universities announced to offer master's programmes as well. In order to be admitted, students must obtain a bachelor's degree. Writing a final paper is required for the completion of most master's programmes.

In terms of level, the *master's degree* obtained through a 2-year advanced programme is comparable to an HBO master's degree, or a 1-year WO master's degree, depending on the type of the study programme.

Doctor of Philosophy

The Addis Ababa University offers a wide range of programmes leading to a degree in Doctor of Philosophy. The admission requirement is generally a relevant master's degree, but in practice it is possible to be admitted on the basis of a bachelor's degree. Candidates who are admitted to the postgraduate study upon completion of their master's degree are obliged to finish the programme within 5 years.

Candidates who are admitted upon completion of their bachelor's degree, are obliged to finish the programme within 7 years. The PhD programme is completed with a doctoral thesis, demonstrating the acquired knowledge of their specialty, and their ability to carry out independent research. Candidates defend their doctoral thesis during an oral examination.

■ Assessment systems

Secondary education

| Letter grade | In percentages | Meaning |
|--------------|----------------|--------------|
| A | 90-100 | excellent |
| B | 80-89 | very good |
| C | 60-79 | satisfactory |
| D | 50-69 | average |
| E | Under 50 | failure |

Exceptionally gifted pupils receive the following grades:

| | |
|------------------------|------------------|
| Very great distinction | Five or more A's |
| Great distinction | Four A's |
| Distinction | Three A's |

Higher education

| In numbers | Letter grade | Meaning |
|------------|--------------|----------------|
| 4 | A | excellent |
| 3 | B | good |
| 2 | C | satisfactory |
| 1 | D | unsatisfactory |
| 0 | F | failing |

■ Quality assurance and accreditation

Currently, 32 public universities are under the direct supervision of the Ministry of Education. If you wish to check if a public university is recognized, please visit the [website](#) of the Ministry.

The private colleges are under the supervision of the national, regional and sub-regional education bureaus. Private institutions must be accredited by the education bureaus, the Office of Investment and – if offering medical courses – the Ministry of Health.

If you wish to check if a private higher education institution is recognized, please visit the [website](#) of the Ministry of Education.

■ Composition of file

The Ethiopian Higher Education Entrance Examination is administered by the Ministry of Education's National Organization for Examinations. The subjects and the obtained marks must be stated on the diploma. In addition, the grade lists of the student's various years of study that have been completed, issued by the national regional states, must also be submitted.

Diplomas issued by the institution in question usually do not state the duration of the study programme. This information can be derived from an accompanying grade list issued by the same institution.

Universities issue certificates specifying the obtained degree. Here, too, the duration is derived from the accompanying grade list. A Temporary Certificate of Graduation or a Student Copy of the transcript are handed over quite frequently. It is recommended to have the certificate and transcript of the university involved sent directly to the higher education institution, by the Registrar.

■ Overview of higher education institutions

[Website](#) of the Ministry of Education with a list of public universities and accredited non-government higher education institutions.

■ Useful links

[Website](#) of the Ministry of Education.

Other than this, the amount of reliable sources is extremely limited.