The education system of

Nigeria

described and compared with
the Dutch system
This document contains information on the education system in Nigeria. We explain the Dutch equivalent of the most common qualifications from Nigeria 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.

With the exception of images and illustrations, the content of this publication is subject to the Creative Commons Name NonCommercial 3.0 Unported licence. Visit [www.nuffic.nl/en/home/copyright](http://www.nuffic.nl/en/home/copyright) for more information on the reuse of this publication.
## 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.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Degree or qualification</th>
<th>Dutch equivalent and NLQF level</th>
<th>EQF level</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>National Technical Certificate/ National Business Certificate</td>
<td>MBO diploma (qualification level 2/3)</td>
<td>2/3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Advanced National Technical Certificate/Advanced National Business Certificate</td>
<td>MBO diploma (qualification level 3 or 4)</td>
<td>3/4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>National Diploma</td>
<td>MBO diploma (qualification level 4)</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>West African Senior School Certificate (WAEC) (at least 6 subjects with A1, B2-3 or C4-6)</td>
<td>HAVO diploma</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Senior School Certificate (NECO) (at least 6 subjects with A1 or B2-3)</td>
<td>HAVO diploma</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nigeria Certificate in Education</td>
<td>1 year of HBO in education</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Higher National Diploma</td>
<td>2 years of HBO</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bachelor (4 years)</td>
<td>HBO bachelor’s degree or 2 years of WO</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Postgraduate Diploma in Education</td>
<td>at least an HBO bachelor’s degree in education</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Master</td>
<td>HBO master’s degree or WO bachelor’s or master’s degree</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**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 Federal Republic of Nigeria is a country in West Africa, and is divided into 36 states and one Federal Capital Territory.

In 1850 Nigeria came under British rule, but obtained its independency in 1960. Nevertheless some influences of the British are still visible, particularly in the structure of the education system. The Nigerian education system had steadily switched in 1982 to the American system though British examinations, i.e. General Certificate of Education – Ordinary Level and Advanced Level, were offered at high schools until 1989.

Over the past decades, Nigeria has faced frequent political instability. This political unrest has among others generated negative effects on the education system. It has suffered from a shortage of material and human resources; e.g. a lack of qualified teachers and brain drain from the public sector. The government of Nigeria therefore declared education as one of its priorities and has been working on the education system to provide access to all levels of education and improve the quality and efficiency of the entire system.

The responsibility for educational institutions is shared between the Federal state, the local government, communities, and private organisations.

The education policy in Nigeria is based on the National Policy on Education (NPE), which was last revised in 2013. In 1999 the introduction of Universal Basic Education within NPE resulted in free and compulsory education for the first 9 years, which comprised primary and junior secondary education. Since 2013 1 year of pre-primary education was made compulsory as well, hence making the first 10 years of education compulsory. This concerns children aged 5 to 15. Pre-primary, primary and junior secondary education are jointly referred to as basic education.

The language of instruction of secondary and higher education is English.

The academic year runs from October to July and is made up of 2 semesters, each 14-16 weeks long.
Primary and secondary education

Since the introduction of the Senior School Certificate in 1989, the Nigerian primary and secondary education system consists of 6 years of primary education for children, 3 years of junior secondary education and 3 years of senior secondary education. This is called a 6-3-3 system.

Primary Education
Primary education lasts 6 years (age group 6-12) and culminates in the First School Leaving Certificate.

Junior and Senior Secondary Education
Secondary education is now divided into general secondary education and secondary vocational education, and begins at the age of 12. After 3 years of Junior Secondary School, the Basic Education Certificate (previously known as the Junior School Certificate) is awarded. It is issued by the Federal Capital Territory (FCT) and State Governments.

After 3 years of Senior Secondary Education the (West African) Senior School Certificate is awarded. Since 1989 the Senior School Certificate has been issued by the West African Examinations Council (WAEC), and since 1999 by the National Examinations Council (NECO) as well. Since 1998 the certificate awarded by the WAEC carries the name West African Senior School Certificate (WASSC).

In 2011 a new curriculum was introduced. It consists of 4 compulsory subjects: English Language, General Mathematics, a Trade or Entrepreneurship subject and Civic Education. Students take 4 to 5 electives from the following fields of studies: Science and Mathematics, Technology, Humanities and Business Studies.

It is commonly assumed that the level of the NECO examination is lower than the examination run by the WAEC. Upon successful completion of the entrance examination (University Tertiary Matriculation Examination, UTME), both diplomas grant access to higher education.

In terms of level, the West African Senior School Certificate issued by the WAEC, with a final result of A1, B2-3, C4-6 for at least 6 subjects, is comparable to a HAVO diploma.
Until 2011 the curriculum consisted of 6 compulsory subjects: English, one of the Nigerian languages, mathematics, one of the subject cluster physics/chemistry/biology, one of the subject cluster English literature/history/geography and either an agrarian or vocational subject. Students also took 3 electives, one of which they could drop in their third year. In order to obtain the Senior School Certificate, candidates must complete examinations for at least 8 subjects: the 6 compulsory subjects and 2 electives.

Secondary vocational education

After obtaining the Basic Education Certificate students can also opt for 3 years of secondary vocational education at a Technical College, leading to the award of either the National Technical Certificate (NTC) or the National Business Certificate (NBC). The National Business and Technical Examination Board (NABTEB) conducts the examinations and issues the certificates.

In terms of level, the National Technical Certificate and the National Business Certificate are comparable to an MBO diploma at qualification level 2 or 3, depending on the specialization.

The NTC and NBC prepares its graduates to enter the labour market. In addition, holders of the NTC or NBC with at least 2 years of relevant work experience are eligible to enrol in a 1-year study programme leading to the award of the Advanced National Technical Certificate (ANTC) or the Advanced National Business Certificate (ANBC). Again the NABTEB conducts the examinations and issues the certificates.

In terms of level, the Advanced National Technical Certificate and the Advanced National Business Certificate are comparable to an MBO diploma at qualification level 3 or 4, depending on the specialization.
Admission to higher education

The higher education institutions in Nigeria determine the admission requirements for their undergraduate programmes. It is the Joint Admissions and Matriculation Board (JAMB) however that administers the actual admissions. Student can enter higher education either through indirect or direct entry. The mode of admission will generally be mentioned on a student’s transcript of results.

Most students enter higher education through indirect entry by taking the University Tertiary Matriculation Examination (UTME), the entrance examination administered by the JAMB. Generally students holding a (West African) Senior School Certificate need to take the UTME when applying for a bachelor’s programme. The required subjects and results depend on the bachelor’s programme applied for.

In some cases direct entry into higher education is possible. The direct entry route is also administered by the JAMB, only no UTME is involved. The National Diploma can grant direct access into a bachelor’s programme. The same applies to the Nigeria Certificate in Education, which may also grant direct access into the second year of the Bachelor of Education. The General Certificate of Education – Advanced Level may grant access to the second year of a bachelor’s programme as well, depending on the results. The Higher National Diploma may grant access to the third year of a bachelor’s programme.

For admission to undergraduate programmes leading to the award of the Diploma and Advanced Diploma students generally do not have to take the UTME. The (West African) Senior School Certificate generally suffices for admission to the Diploma programme.

Higher education

University education is provided by universities. There is a distinction between public (including federal and state universities) and private institutions (which were introduced in 1990). Both public and private institutions are accredited by the National Universities Commission (NUC).

In the past, the quality of education offered by federal universities was assumed to be better than that of state universities, due to the fact that individual states had the right to establish their own universities without the need for national accreditation. Nowadays all universities are monitored by the (federal) government, and states are no longer permitted to set up their own universities. The purpose of this measure is to create a uniform level among all universities.
Higher technical and professional education is mainly provided by specialist schools and institutions such as Polytechnics, Institutions of technology, Colleges of Education and Professional Institutions. Monotechnics provide education in the field of agriculture and industry.

University education

Higher education in Nigeria consists of the 3 following stages.

First Stage
Generally bachelor’s programmes have a nominal duration of 4 years. The bachelor’s programmes in medical (medicine, veterinary science and dentistry) or engineering studies, and of the LLB (Bachelor of Laws) take between 5 to 6 years, depending on the institution. Generally a bachelor’s programme is completed by submitting a thesis.

In terms of level, the 4-year Bachelor is comparable to an HBO bachelor’s degree or 2 years of university education (WO), depending on the specialization and type of study programme.

All the above mentioned programmes are at Honours level; both single and combined Honours are available. In a single honours programme a single subject is studied. In a combined honours programme students study 2 or more subjects from different areas.

Second Stage
The second stage of higher education takes 1 to 2 years, and is a continuation of the First Stage. Students can obtain a postgraduate certificate, postgraduate diploma or master’s degree. The postgraduate certificate and postgraduate diploma have separate programmes, but can also be a part of a master’s programme. In a 2-year master’s programme, research-oriented subjects are part of the curriculum.

The admission requirement for a master’s programme is usually a bachelor’s degree with first or second class Honours. A postgraduate diploma may grant access as well.

In terms of level, the Master is comparable to an HBO master’s degree or WO bachelor’s or master’s degree, depending on the specialization and type of study programme.
Third Stage
The Doctorate is awarded upon completing 2 to 3 years of study following a master's degree. A thesis is submitted and generally defended orally. Students may be required to study a number of courses as well. Some universities offer the opportunity to obtain a Master of Philosophy degree during or before starting the PhD programme. In some cases the Master of Philosophy, is a requirement for admission to a PhD programme.

Higher professional education

In the 1960s and 70s, 10 Polytechnics were founded in different locations: Auchi, Calabar, Enugu, Ibadan, Ilorin, Kaduna, Maiduguri, Makurdi, Port Harcourt and Yaba. These institutions and more recently established Polytechnics run 2-year programmes leading to the National Diploma and the Higher National Diploma.

Successful completion of the National Diploma programme must be followed by 1 year of practical experience before admission to the 2 year programme leading to the Higher National Diploma is granted.

In terms of level, the National Diploma is comparable to an MBO diploma at qualification level 4.

In terms of level, the Higher National Diploma is comparable to 2 years of higher professional education (HBO).

After obtaining the Higher National Diploma, students can continue on to the Full Professional Diploma (also called the Post Higher National Diploma), obtained after approximately 18 months of study.

Some universities offer Diploma and Advanced Diploma programmes. These programmes are intended to provide practical skills for the labour market and generally no UTME is required for admission to these programmes. In some cases graduates from Diploma or Advanced Diploma programmes can enter bachelor's programmes.

Teacher training programmes

The Nigeria Certificate in Education (NCE) has been the minimum teaching qualification in Nigeria since 1998. This certificate can be obtained at a College of Education after 3 years of study. Students must have obtained at least three
satisfactory grades for their Senior School Certificate in order to be admitted to the NCE programme. Students who have obtained the Nigeria Certificate in Education can continue on to the second year of the Bachelor of Education or the first year of a regular bachelor’s programme.

In terms of level, the Nigeria Certificate in Education is comparable to 1 year of higher professional education (HBO) in education (teaching).

To be qualified to teach at Senior Secondary Schools, a Bachelor of Education is required, or a regular bachelor’s degree followed by a 1-year Postgraduate Diploma in Education.

In terms of level, the Bachelor of Education is comparable to an HBO bachelor’s degree in education (teaching).

In terms of level, the Postgraduate Diploma in Education is comparable to at least an HBO bachelor’s degree in education (teaching).

Technical Teachers’ Colleges provide a 3-year teacher-training programme in a technical or commercial field. Upon completion of these programmes, students are awarded the Nigerian Certificate of Education with mention “(technical)” or “[commercial)”, depending on the chosen specialization.

### Assessment systems

**(West African) Senior School Certificate**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Letter grade</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A1</td>
<td>Excellent</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B2</td>
<td>Very good</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B3</td>
<td>Good</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C4, C5, C6</td>
<td>Credit</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>D7, D8</td>
<td>Pass</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>F9</td>
<td>Fail</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Previously subjects were assessed on a scale ranging from 1 (highest) to 9 (lowest). The current “A1” corresponds to the “1”, the current “B2” corresponds to “2”, et cetera.

**National Diploma and Higher National Diploma**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>G.P.A.</th>
<th>Qualification</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>3.5-4.0</td>
<td>Distinction</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.0-3.49</td>
<td>Upper Credit</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.5-2.99</td>
<td>Lower Credit</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.0-2.49</td>
<td>Pass</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.0-2.0</td>
<td>Fail</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Bachelor and Master**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>In percentages</th>
<th>Qualification</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>70-100</td>
<td>1st class</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>60-69</td>
<td>2nd class upper division</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>50-59</td>
<td>2nd class lower division</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>45-49</td>
<td>3rd class pass</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>40-44</td>
<td>Pass</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>0-39</td>
<td>Fail</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Nigeria Certificate in Education**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Letter grade</th>
<th>Qualification</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A</td>
<td>Distinction</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B</td>
<td>Upper Credit</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C</td>
<td>Lower Credit</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>D</td>
<td>Pass</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>E</td>
<td>Pass</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>F</td>
<td>Fail</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Quality assurance and accreditation

The Federal Ministry of Education (FME) and the Ministry of State for Education are responsible for secondary and higher education.

The National Universities Commission (NUC), founded in 1962, is responsible for accrediting institutions, granting funding, assessing the extent to which the curricula meet the requirements of the labour market, and the development of university education. Accreditation takes place every 6 years.

The universities are managed by a Council and a Senate. Within universities, institutes and boards function more or less autonomously.

In general, federal institutions rate more highly than the original state universities in the university rankings issued by the NUC. However, measures are taken to create a uniform level among all universities.

Polytechnics, Colleges of Agriculture, Monotechnics, Colleges of Health Technology and Technical Colleges are accredited by the National Board for Technical Education (NBTE). The NBTE is also responsible for developing and accrediting the curriculum used for examinations run by the NABTEB.

Teacher education is supervised by the Teachers Registration Council of Nigeria (TRCN). Colleges of Education and their programmes are overseen by the National Commission for Colleges of Education (NCCE).

For more information, please see Useful links.

Composition of file

A complete secondary education file requires a copy of the diploma, issued by the West African Examinations Council (WAEC) or the National Examinations Council (NECO). Documents not issued by these organisations are generally not official.

A complete higher education file requires a copy of the diploma and the corresponding transcript. It is possible that students receive their diploma several years after graduation or that they are yet to receive it. In case of the latter the Nigerian institution may be able to provide a graduation statement instead. Generally the obtained degree is mentioned on the transcript as well.

Authenticity

Based on our knowledge and experience Nigeria needs particular attention when it comes to authenticity.
To verify the *West African Senior School Certificate*, students can purchase a WAEC Scratch Card, which allows examination results to be verified five times. Copies of the front and the back of this card must be submitted. By entering a pin-code, the examination session and the candidate number, the results can be verified on the [WAEC website](https://www.waec.com.ng). All results from 1991 to the present can be checked.

To verify the *NECO Senior School Certificate*, copies of the front and the back of a NECO Result Card must be submitted. The results can be verified on the [NECO website](https://www.neco.gov.ng). All results from 2000 to 2016 can be checked.

Generally higher education results cannot be verified online online.

### Overview of higher education institutions

- [Website of the National Universities Commission](https://www.nuc.edu.ng) with an overview of accredited higher education institutions (see tab “Nigerian Universities”).
- [Website of the National Board for Technical Education](https://www.nbte.edu.ng) with an overview of accredited higher education institutions.
- [Website of the National Commission for Colleges of Education](https://www.cce.edu.ng) with an overview of accredited Colleges of Education.

### Useful links

- [National Examinations Council (NECO)](https://www.neco.gov.ng).
- [Federal Ministry of Education](https://www.education.gov.ng).