

Education system

Pakistan

described and compared with
the Dutch system

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

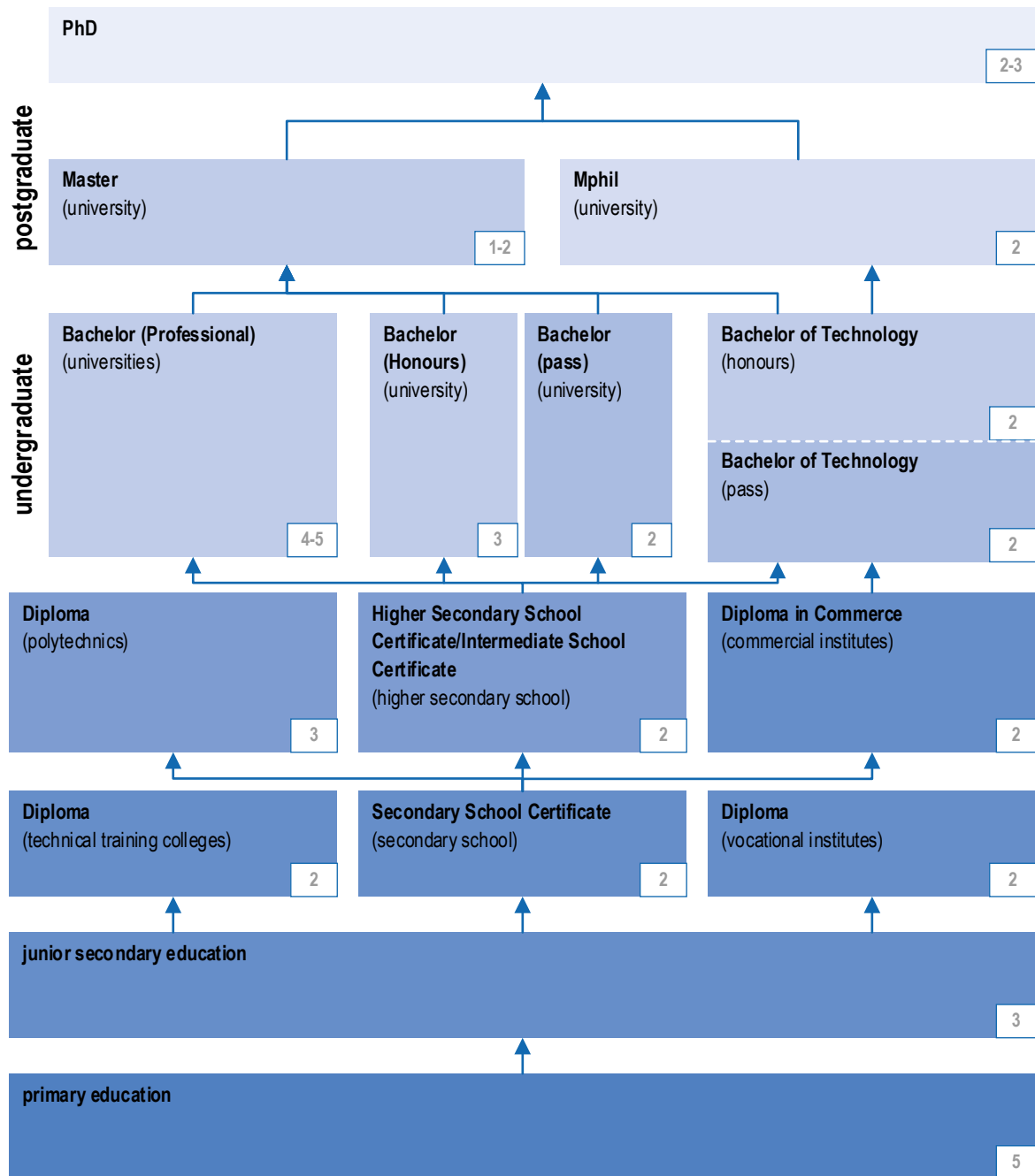
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We assemble the information for these descriptions of education systems with the greatest care. However, we cannot be held responsible for the consequences of errors or incomplete information in this document.



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Flow chart: education system Pakistan



0 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
Diploma (Vocational Institute/ Technical Training College)	VMBO diploma	2	2
Diploma in Commerce	MBO diploma (qualification level 2)	2	2
Diploma (Polytechnic)	MBO diploma (qualification level 2 or 3)	2/3	2/3
Higher Secondary School Certificate/ Intermediate School Certificate with a final result of Grade D or lower	VMBO-T diploma	2	2
Higher Secondary School Certificate/ Intermediate School Certificate with a final result of at least Grade C	HAVO diploma	4	4
Bachelor (Pass)	VWO diploma or 2 years of HBO	4+/5	4/5
Bachelor of Technology (Pass)	2 years of HBO	5	5
Bachelor of Technology (Honours)	HBO bachelor's degree	6	6
Bachelor (Honours)	3 years of HBO or 1 year of WO	6	6
Professional Bachelor (4-year programme)	HBO bachelor's degree or 2 years of WO	6	6
Professional Bachelor (5-year programme)	WO bachelor's degree	6	6
Postgraduate Bachelor (Law)	WO bachelor's degree	6	6
Master (1- or 2-year programme following a 3- or 2-year bachelor's degree)	HBO bachelor's degree or 2 years of WO	6	6
Master (2-year programme following a 4-year bachelor's degree)	WO master's degree (1-year programme)	7	7
Master of Philosophy	WO master's degree (1-year programme)	7	7

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: [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

Pakistan became an independent country following the partition of India in 1947. It is an Islamic republic.

The republic comprises 4 provinces: Punjab, Sindh, Baluchistan and North-West Frontier Province (NWFP). Islamabad constitutes a separate federal district. The country has a population of 140 million, the majority of which is Muslim.

Pakistan's education system is similar to the British one. It is centrally organized by the Ministry of Education. Examinations in general secondary education are set by 26 provincial boards. Many private higher education institutions have been recognised by the Higher Education Council.

There is a sharp distinction made between the exact sciences and the arts, the latter enjoying considerably less prestige.

Formal education starts at the age of 5 and is compulsory up to the age of 16 (Grade 10; the final class of junior secondary education). The schooling system has a 5 plus 3 plus 2 plus 2 structure. The dropout rate is high: only 40% of children enrol in senior secondary education. The official language is Urdu. Regional languages like Pashto, Punjabi and Sindhi are also used. The language of instruction is Urdu.

The academic year runs from September to June.

■ Primary and secondary education

Primary education

Primary education is offered at primary school and starts at the age of 5 and lasts for 5 years. Particularly in rural areas, the availability of education is limited and many teachers have not received sufficient professional training.

Middle school constitutes the phase between primary and secondary education and comprises Grades 6 to 8. English and Arabic are introduced as compulsory subjects in middle school. Following completion of this phase, students proceed to general secondary education or to technical training colleges for vocational training.

Secondary education

General secondary education is divided into 2 years of junior secondary education at Secondary School and 2 years of senior secondary education at Higher Secondary School or Intermediate School.

Junior secondary education is divided into 3 distinct tracks: science group, humanities group and technical group. The curriculum in all tracks consists of 5 subjects. A *Secondary School Certificate* is awarded upon successful completion of the programme. In terms of level, this Certificate is comparable to 4 years of senior general secondary education (HAVO) or *VMBO-t diploma* in the Netherlands.

In senior secondary education students choose one of the following tracks: science, humanities, general, pre-medical, pre-engineering, medical technology or home economics (only for girls). The curriculum in all tracks consists of 4 compulsory subjects, namely English, Urdu, Islamic studies/ Civics (for non-Muslims) and Pakistan studies. In addition, students at this level are taught in 3 subjects belonging to the track in question.

A *Higher Secondary School Certificate* or *Intermediate School Certificate* is awarded upon successful completion of the programme.

In terms of level, the Higher Secondary School Certificate or Intermediate School Certificate awarded with a final result of Grade C or higher is comparable to a HAVO diploma.

In terms of level, the *Higher Secondary School Certificate* or *Intermediate School Certificate* awarded with a final result of Grade D or lower, is comparable to a VMBO-T diploma (theoretical pathway).

Secondary vocational education

Secondary vocational education can be attended after Grade 8 or after Grade 10 (after obtaining the *Secondary School Certificate*) and is provided by Vocational Institutes or Technical Training Colleges (for programmes after Grade 8) and Polytechnics or Commercial Institutes (for programmes after Grade 10).

The duration of programmes at a Vocational Institute varies from 3 months to 2 years. Programmes for male and female students are kept separate.

The programmes at a Technical Training College have a duration of 2 years. These institutions provide vocational education to students who are unable to progress further in general secondary education. The training programmes consist of 20% theoretical and 80% practical education and, furthermore, are final stages in formal education designed to qualify graduates for the labour market.

In terms of level, the *Diploma* from a Vocational Institute or Technical Training College is comparable to a VMBO diploma.

Secondary vocational education is also offered by Polytechnics, the entry requirement being a *Secondary School Certificate* (Grade 10). Programmes last for 3 years and are concluded by the award of a Diploma, the vocational education equivalent of a *Higher Secondary Certificate*. This Diploma grants in Pakistan access to higher education in technical programmes.

In terms of level, the *Diploma* obtained at a Polytechnic is comparable to an MBO diploma at qualification level 2 or 3, depending on the specialisation.

Programmes in commercial fields of study are provided by Commercial Institutes and last for 2 years. These programmes are concluded by the award of a *Diploma in Commerce*, which is also equivalent to a *Higher Secondary Certificate*. Graduates are eligible for entry into a higher education programme.

In terms of level, the *Diploma in Commerce* is comparable to an MBO diploma at qualification level 2.

Religious education

Religious education is provided at a *madrassah*. This type of education is independent of the national system and comprises primary, secondary and university education. Secondary education is concluded by the award of a diploma that is equivalent to the Higher Secondary School Certificate. University education is concluded by the award of a *Fazlia* (scholar certificate), which is recognised as a master's degree with a teaching qualification and grants access to a PhD.

■ Admission to higher education

For admission to higher education in Pakistan, an *Intermediate Certificate* or *Higher Secondary School Certificate* is usually required. Faculties can set additional requirements for each programme in terms of average grade or track chosen at higher secondary school.

■ Higher education

Higher education in Pakistan is provided by universities, institutions affiliated with universities and Colleges of Technology. There are 78 public higher education institutions in Pakistan and 59 recognised private ones.

Bachelor

Pakistan has 4 distinct types of bachelor's programmes: the *Bachelor (Pass)*, *Bachelor (Honours)*, *Professional Bachelor* and *Postgraduate Bachelor*.

The *Bachelor (Pass)* is an introductory university programme with a nominal duration of 2 years that is provided in programmes in the Arts, Science and Commerce. In addition to the compulsory subjects of English, Islamic Studies and Pakistan Studies, students study 2 to 3 electives. All subjects are accorded equal weight and addressed with the same degree of depth.

In terms of level, though not in terms of content and objectives, a *Bachelor (Pass) degree* in the Arts or Science is comparable to a VWO diploma.

In terms of level, the *Bachelor (Pass) degree in Commerce* is comparable to a VWO diploma or to 2 years of higher professional education (HBO) in economics and management, depending on the subjects taken.

The *Bachelor (Honours)* has a nominal duration of 3 years and is likewise provided in the fields of Arts, Science and Commerce, respectively. The study programme usually consists only of subjects that focus on the chosen area of specialisation. Relative to the *Bachelor (Pass)*, the *Bachelor (Honours)* therefore addresses the chosen field of study in greater depth.

In terms of level, the *Bachelor (Honours) degree* is comparable to 3 years of higher professional education (HBO) or to 1 year of university education (WO), depending on the study programme.

Depending on the specialisation, the *Professional Bachelor* programme has a nominal duration of 4 or 5 years. Programmes in agriculture, dentistry, engineering, pharmacy and veterinary medicine usually last for 4 years. Architecture and medicine usually last for 5 years.

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

In terms of level, the *Professional Bachelor* following a 5-year programme is comparable to a WO bachelor's degree.

The *Postgraduate Bachelor* is only provided in a number of fields of study. The most common areas of specialisation are Law and Education.

The entry requirement for a Postgraduate bachelor's programme in the field of law is a *Bachelor (Pass)* degree in the arts, science or commerce. The programme has a nominal duration of 3 years.

In terms of level, the Postgraduate Bachelor in Law is comparable to a WO bachelor's degree.

The entry requirement for a *Postgraduate Bachelor* programme in Education is a *Bachelor (Pass)* degree in the arts, science or commerce. The programme has a nominal duration of 1 year and qualifies graduates to teach in secondary schools.

For a teaching qualification for higher secondary schools, *Bachelor (Pass)* and master's programmes followed by a *Postgraduate Bachelor* programme in the field of education must be completed. In this case too, the *Postgraduate Bachelor* programme in the field of education has a nominal duration of 1 year.

A *Postgraduate Bachelor* degree in Education can only be compared to possible equivalents in higher education after a close consideration of the prior education and programmes completed.

Master

Master's programmes are provided in the fields of the arts, science and commerce. The mode of study of the programme consists of attending lectures. The programme does not always involve the writing of a final paper.

The nominal duration of a master's programme is 2 years after completion of a *Bachelor (Pass)* programme or 1 year following completion of a *Bachelor (Honours)* programme.

In terms of level, the *Master* (1 or 2 years following a 3- or 2-year bachelor's degree) is comparable to an HBO bachelor's degree or to 2 years of university education (WO), depending on the study programme.

In addition to the regular master's programmes, there are master's programmes following a nominal 4-year bachelor's programme. This programme usually does involve the writing of a final paper, and is provided mainly in the field of agriculture. The programme has a nominal duration of 2 years following completion of a nominal 4-year *Professional Bachelor* programme in agriculture.

In terms of level, the *Master* (2 years following a 4-year bachelor's degree) is comparable to a WO master's degree (1-year programme).

The *Master of Philosophy* programme is research-based and has a nominal duration of 2 years.

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

PhD

A PhD programme usually lasts 3 years following a regular master's programme or 2 years following a *Master of Philosophy* programme.

■ Higher professional education

Higher professional education is provided by Colleges of Technology, which provide 2-year programmes concluded by the award of a *Bachelor of Technology (Pass)* degree. These programmes comprise 1 year of industrial training and 1 year of institution-based training. Graduates can then proceed to the 2-year *Bachelor of Technology (Honours)* programme. The *Bachelor of Technology (Honours)* is considered the equivalent of the *Bachelor of Science in Engineering* degree. The programme's structure is identical to that of the *Bachelor of Technology (Pass)* programme.

In terms of level, the *Bachelor of Technology (Pass) degree* is comparable to 2 years of higher professional education (HBO).

In terms of level, the Bachelor of Technology (Honours) degree is comparable to an HBO bachelor's degree in engineering and technology.

■ Assessment systems

Secondary education

Results in secondary education are specified by a letter:

Letter grade	In percentages	Description
A-1	80+	Outstanding
A	70-79	Excellent
B	60-69	Very Good
C	50-59	Good
D	40-49	Satisfactory
E	33-39	Pass

Higher education

In higher education, grading systems may differ per university. The following system is the most common:

In percentages	Qualification
60% and higher	Division I
45-59%	Division II
33-44%	Division III
less than 33%	Fail

■ Qualification frameworks

The Higher Education Commission (HEC) has developed the Pakistan Qualification Framework (PQF). Within this framework all qualifications have been categorized into 8 levels.

More information on the PQF can be found on the [HEC website](#).

■ Quality assurance and accreditation

Quality assurance and accreditation is the responsibility of the Higher Education Commission (HEC). Pakistan does not have an official ranking system.

If you wish to verify whether a higher education institution is recognised, please visit the [overview of recognised higher education institutions](#) on the HEC website.

■ Checking documents

Secondary education certificates are issued in English. An official copy of the *Secondary School Certificate* or *Higher Secondary School Certificate* must be submitted for the file. This certificate must have been issued by the Board of Intermediate and Secondary Education and, in addition, bear the name and an authenticating mark of the province in which the study programme was completed.

A temporary Result Card is not sufficient. If the individual in question graduated only recently, it is possible that the concluding certificate has not yet been issued. In some cases it is possible to verify examination results online through the website of the issuing Board.

Higher education diplomas are issued either in English and Urdu or only in English. The grades list (Result Intimation Card, annual examination) is usually drawn up in English. The file must include both the diploma and grades list.

Authenticity

A close study of the authenticity of certificates is necessary in the case of Pakistan. Certificates must therefore be authenticated by the Ministry of Education, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the Higher Education Commission (in the case of higher education certificates). A request to verify a certificate can be submitted to the Higher Education Commission, though success in this regard is not a given. The Higher Education Commission provides an overview of recognised higher education institutions on its website.

■ Overview of higher education institutions

The Higher Education Commission (HEC) provides an [overview of all recognised higher education institutions](#) in Pakistan.

■ Useful links

- The [Higher Education Commission \(HEC\)](#).
- The [Federal Board of Intermediate & Secondary Education \(FBISE\)](#), Islamabad.
- The [Pakistani government](#) provides an overview of all ministries, including the [Ministry of Professional and Technical Training](#) and the [Ministry of Science and Technology \(MoST\)](#).