

Education system

Portugal

described and compared with
the Dutch system

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

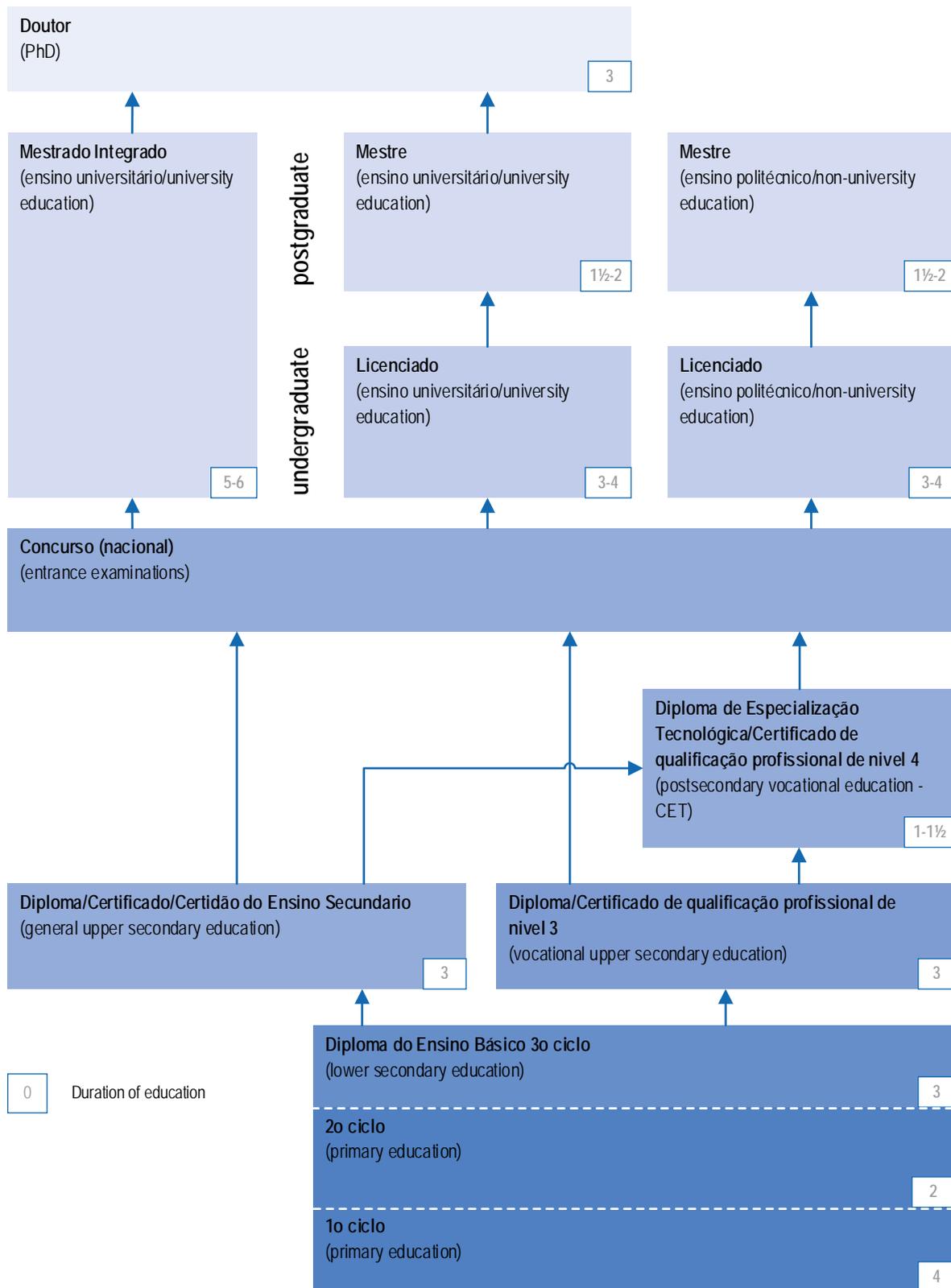
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We assemble the information for these descriptions of education systems with the greatest care. However, we cannot be held responsible for the consequences of errors or incomplete information in this document.



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■ 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 EHEA-QF level		EQF level	Dutch equivalent and NLQF level		EQF level
<i>Diploma de especialização tecnológica - nível 4/Certificado de qualificação profissional de nível 4</i>		5	MBO diploma (qualification level 3 or 4).*	3/4	3/4
<i>Diploma/Certificado de qualificação profissional de nível 3</i>			HAVO diploma for the general education component	4	4
<i>Diploma/Certificado/Certidão do Ensino Secundário</i>			at least a HAVO diploma	4	4
<i>Licenciado - university degree (prior to introduction of the bachelor's-master's degree structure)</i>			usually WO bachelor's degree	6	6
<i>Mestre - university degree (prior to introduction of the bachelor's-master's degree structure)</i>			usually WO master's degree	7	7
<i>Bacharel - Politécnico degree (prior to introduction of the bachelor's-master's degree structure)</i>			HBO bachelor's degree	6	6

*The evaluation of these qualifications is under revision.

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<i>Licenciado - Politécnico</i> degree (prior to introduction of the bachelor's-master's degree structure)			HBO master's degree	7	7
<i>Licenciado - university</i> degree (after introduction of the bachelor's-master's degree structure)	1st	6	WO or HBO bachelor's degree	6	6
<i>Mestre - university</i> degree (after introduction of the bachelor's-master's degree structure)	2nd	7	usually WO master's degree	7	7
<i>Licenciado - Politécnico</i> degree (after introduction of the bachelor's-master's degree structure)	1st	6	HBO bachelor's degree	6	6
<i>Mestre - Politécnico</i> degree (after introduction of the bachelor's-master's degree structure)	2nd	7	HBO master's degree	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

Portugal is a parliamentary democracy with a president as head of state. The country is divided into 18 districts and two autonomous regions (the Madeira and Azores archipelagos). The *Ministerio de Educação e Ciência* is responsible for basic, secondary and higher education.

The Portuguese educational system falls under the constitution (*Constituição de República*), which sets out the right to education (among other things). Around 1986 the Portuguese education system underwent a number of changes which are documented in the *Lei de Bases do Sistema Educativo, no 46/86*. This *Lei* was first amended by *Lei 115/97* and then by *Lei 49/2005*. In 2006 the *Decreto-Lei 74/2006* regulated the changes introduced by the *Lei de Bases do Sistema Educativo* regarding the new model of organization of higher education into cycles (Bologna structure).

The language of education is Portuguese. Education is compulsory up to age 18. The academic year runs from September until June/July.

■ Primary and secondary education

Pre-school education (*educação pré-escolar*) is for children up to age 6 and is not compulsory.

Basic education (*ensino básico*) includes primary education and lower upper secondary education, and is for children aged 6-15. This type of education is mandatory and free.

Basic school lasts for 9 years and is divided into three 'cycles': 1° *Ciclo* (4 years), 2° *Ciclo* (2 years) and 3° *Ciclo* (3 years). This type of education culminates in the *Diploma do Ensino Básico*.

Basic education (*ensino básico*) is followed by the nominally 3-year secondary education (*ensino secundário*), intended for children aged 15-18 and it also is mandatory and free. Portugal has four types of secondary education:

1. *cursos científicos humanísticos* (general secondary education);
2. *cursos tecnológicos* (general and vocational secondary education);
3. *cursos artísticos especializados* (art education);
4. *cursos profissionais* (vocational education).

Cursos científicos humanísticos

General secondary education is intended for those who wish to pursue further study.

This track has five subject clusters (study plan prior to *Decreto-Lei n.º 272/2007*):

1. *ciências e tecnologias* (nature and technology);
2. *ciências socioeconómicas* (economics and society);
3. *linguas e literaturas* (language and literature);
4. *ciências sociais e humanas* (culture and society);
5. *artes visuais* (visual arts).

The track with the study plan according to *Decreto-Lei n.º 272/2007* has four subject clusters:

1. *ciências e tecnologias* (nature and technology)
2. *ciências socioeconómicas* (economics and society)
3. *linguas e humanidades* (languages and humanities)
4. *artes visuais* (visual arts)

The programme concludes with an internal final examination and a national examination (*exames nacionais*) in the subjects that are compulsory by law, upon completion of which the *Diploma/Certificado/Certidão do Ensino Secundário* is awarded. Those who have not completed secondary school by age 18 have a second chance to do so via the *ensino secundário recorrente*.

In terms of level, the *Diploma/Certificado/Certidão do Ensino Secundário* is comparable to at least a HAVO diploma.

Cursos tecnológicos

In principle, general secondary and secondary vocational education is intended for those entering the labour market afterwards. The general part of this programme (2 years) consists of the following subjects: Portuguese, a foreign language, philosophy, physical education and information technology.

This type of education is divided into the following groups:

- *construção civil e edificações* (building construction)
- *eletrotecnia e eletrónica*
- *informática*
- *design de equipamento* (equipment design)
- *multimedia* (multi media)
- *administração* (administration)
- *marketing* (marketing)
- *ordenamento de território e ambiente*
- *ação social*
- *desporto* (sports)

The *Diploma/Certificado de qualificação profissional de nível 3* is awarded following an internal final examination. This diploma/certificate provides entry to

both postsecondary education and to the entrance examination for higher education.

In terms of level, the *Diploma/Certificado de qualificação profissional de nível 3* is comparable to a HAVO diploma for the general education component.

Cursos artísticos especializados

The *ensino artístico especializado* is a nominally 3-year art education programme (visual arts, music and dance) at general secondary education level.

This type of education is divided into the following groups:

- *comunicação audiovisual* (audiovisual communication)
- *design de comunicação* (communication design)
- *design de produto* (product design)
- *produção artística* (artistic production)

This type of education is also completed with the *Diploma/Certificado de qualificação profissional de nível 3*, which enables admission to postsecondary education.

Cursos profissionais

This type of education includes various groups, among which:

- *artes* (arts): *artes do espetáculo, técnico de artes gráficas, técnico de audiovisuais*
- *instrumentistas* (performing arts): *instrumentista de cordas de tecla, instrumentista de jazz*
- *gestão* (management): *técnico de gestão, técnico de gestão do ambiente, técnico de gestão de produção têxtil e vestuário*
- technical programmes: *técnico de construção civil, técnico de eletrónica, audio, video e tv, técnico de desenho digital 3D.*

Upon completion of these programmes, pupils also are awarded the *Diploma/Certificado de qualificação profissional de nível 3*. This diploma grants entry to postsecondary education (*Curso de Especialização Tecnológica*) and also gives access to the entrance examination of higher education.

Postsecondary vocational education

The entrance requirement for specialized postsecondary vocational education (*ensino pós-secundário não superior*), also called *cursos de especialização tecnológica - CET*, usually is the *Diploma/Certificado de qualificação profissional de nível 3*.

Upon completion of these programmes, students are awarded the *Diploma de Especialização Tecnológica (DET)- nível 4/Certificado de Qualificação Profissional*

de nível 4 (60-90 ECTS, EQF level 5). This diploma gives access to higher education and also partial credit or exemption from some requirement of first cycle (*Licenciatura*) degrees. Holders of this diploma may be admitted to the CAP (*Certidão de Aptidão Profissional, certificate of professional qualification*).

In terms of level, the *Diploma de Especialização Tecnológica - nível 4/ Certificado de Qualificação Profissional de nível 4* is comparable to an MBO diploma at qualification level 3 or 4, depending on the duration and the specialization of the programme.

■ Admission to higher education

The system until 1996

Admission prior to 1996 was granted via the *Certidão do Décimo Segundo (12º) Ano* or the *provas de aferição* (entrance examination). This certificate is also known as the *Certificado de Fim de Estudos Secundários* or the *Diploma de 12º ano de Escolaridade*. The *Certidão do Curso Complementar* was formerly awarded after 11 years of education.

Until 1989/1990 there was a national entrance examination (*prova geral de acesso*), because the number of places at state universities was limited across the board. Every university also had its own examination (*provas específicas*) for admission into the desired programme of study.

The system after 1996

There are still enrolment restrictions for all programmes of study, which means that admission to university is still based on national competition (*Concurso Geral de Acesso*). The *Diploma do Ensino Secundário* or equivalent certificates (*Certificado de qualificação profissional de nível 3*) provide admission to this examination.

The education institutions announce the number of places available for each programme annually. The numbers are set by the ministry and passed on to secondary schools via a brochure. Assignment of places to programmes occurs in decreasing order, whereby each place is calculated according to a formula. Rejected candidates may take the entrance examination again in the following year.

The system as of 2007

Candidates must pass an entrance examination (*concurso nacional*) in order to be admitted into higher education (national institutions).

Results obtained for the national final examination can also be used as results for the entrance examination. The minimum score for admission is 95 on a scale of 0-200. This is included on the final examination certificate.

■ Higher education

Higher education in Portugal is a binary system and can be split up into university education (*ensino universitário*) and polytechnic education (*ensino politécnico*). It is possible to switch from one system to the other.

Portugal has various types of higher education institutions:

- *Estabelecimentos de Ensino Superior Público* (Public Higher Education Institutions)
- *Estabelecimentos de Ensino Superior Militar e Policial* (Military and Police Higher Education Institutions)
- *Estabelecimentos de Ensino Superior Privadas* (Private Higher Education Institutions)
- *Estabelecimento de Ensino Superior Concordatário* (Concordatory Education - Catholic University)

Higher education is provided by both public and private institutions. The latter must first be recognized by the ministry before being allowed to provide education.

■ University education

In Portugal, university education is provided by 52 university institutions (*instituições de ensino universitário*): 15 public universities, 5 public non-integrated higher education institutions, 4 public military and police higher education institutions, 27 private institutions and *Universidade Católica Portuguesa* which enjoys a separate status.

The *ensino universitário* covers all fields of study. The programmes usually have an academic focus, but sometimes programmes with a professional focus are also offered in *ensino universitário*, such as programmes in the arts.

Prior to introduction of the bachelor's-master's degree structure

University education had three levels, each of which culminated in a different degree. The first level finished with the *Licenciado*, the second with *Mestre* and the third with *Doutor*.

Licenciatura

These programmes had a duration of 4-5 years. Upon completion of the programmes, students were awarded the *Licenciado* degree.

In terms of level, the university *Licenciado* degree usually is comparable to a WO bachelor's degree.

Mestrado

Those holding a *Licenciado* degree with a minimum average score of at least 14 were admitted to the postgraduate course, which generally took 2 years. Upon completion of the programme, students were awarded the degree of *Mestre*.

In terms of level, the university *Mestre* degree usually is comparable to a WO master's degree.

Doutoramento

Those holding a *Mestre* degree were admitted to this (highest) doctoral degree programme as were those with a *Licenciado*, yet the latter must have a minimum average score of at least 16. There was no fixed nominal duration for carrying out research and writing a doctoral thesis.

After introduction of the bachelor's-master's degree structure (completely implemented as from 2009-2010)

Licenciatura

All initial programmes have a study load of 180 ECTS (6 semesters) till 240 ECTS (8 semesters). After completion of the programme, students are awarded the *Licenciado* degree.

In terms of level, the university *Licenciado* degree (EHEA-QF 1st cycle/EOQ level 6) is comparable to a WO or HBO bachelor's degree, depending on the type of study. Full description of [learning outcomes](#) relevant to this level.

Mestrado

The advanced programmes have a study load of 90-120 ECTS and finish with the degree of *Mestre*. The law also allows an advanced programme to consist of 60 ECTS (2 semesters) in exceptional cases. Advanced programmes are made up of classes taken in an elected specialization (minimum of 50%) and the writing of a scientific thesis, project work or a professional traineeship (minimum of 35%, but preferably a minimum of 50%) which will be concluded with a final report to which corresponds to a minimum of 35%.

University education also has integrated study cycles (*mestrados integrados*) for programmes like medicine, dentistry and architecture. These have a study load of 300-360 ECTS (10 to 12 semesters). The minimum entrance requirement of 14 (average) no longer applies. Upon completion of these programmes, students also are awarded the *Mestre* degree.

In terms of level, the university *Mestre* degree (EHEA-QF 2nd cycle/EQF level 7) usually is comparable to a WO master's degree.

Full description of learning outcomes relevant to this level:

http://ec.europa.eu/education/pub/pdf/general/eqf/leaflet_en.pdf

Doutoramento

The entrance requirements for a PhD (*doutoramento*) is a *mestre* or a *licenciado* degree with a relevant academic or scientific curriculum. The course consists primarily of the writing of a doctoral thesis and the possible realization of curricular units called doctorate course. Following public defence of the doctoral thesis, the degree of *Doutor* is awarded. The option of being admitted to a *doutorado* with a *licenciado* and an average score of 16 no longer exists.

■ Higher professional education

In Portugal, polytechnical education is provided by 57 polytechnic institutions (*instituições de ensino politécnico*): 15 public polytechnic institutions, 41 private polytechnic institutions, 1 military higher education institution.

Prior to introduction of the bachelor's-master's degree structure

Ensino politécnico covered the nominally 3-year polytechnical education programmes in various areas of concentration. Upon completion of the programme, students were awarded a *Bacharel* degree.

In terms of level, the *Bacharel* degree is comparable to an HBO bachelor's degree.

The *Cursos Superiores Especializados*, which used to culminate in the *Diploma de Estudos Superiores Especializados*, are no longer provided by polytechnical education institutions. Instead, 2-stage programmes were offered (*cursos bietápicos de licenciatura*). Following attainment of the *Bacharel*, it was still possible to take a 1 to 2 year follow-up programme and finish with a *Licenciado* degree.

In terms of level, the *Licenciado* degree obtained at a *Politécnico* is comparable to an HBO master's degree.

After introduction of the bachelor's-master's degree structure

All initial programmes have a study load of 180 ECTS (6 semesters) till 240 ECTS (8 semesters) and are completed with the *Licenciado* degree.

The advanced programmes have a study load of 90-120 ECTS and finish with the degree of *Mestre*. The law also allows an advanced programme to consist of 60 ECTS (2 semesters) in exceptional cases. Advanced programmes are made up of classes taken in an elected specialization (minimum of 50%) and the writing of a scientific dissertation, project work or a professional traineeship which will be concluded with a final report to which corresponds to a minimum of 35%.

In terms of level, the *Licenciado* degree (EHEA-QF 1st cycle/EQF level 6) obtained at a *Politécnico* is comparable to an HBO bachelor's degree.

Full description of learning outcomes relevant to this level:

http://ec.europa.eu/education/pub/pdf/general/eqf/leaflet_en.pdf

In terms of level, the *Mestre* degree (EHEA-QF 2nd cycle/EQF level 7) obtained at a *Politécnico* is comparable to an HBO master's degree.

Full description of learning outcomes relevant to this level:

http://ec.europa.eu/education/pub/pdf/general/eqf/leaflet_en.pdf

■ Assessment systems

Secondary Education

Numerical grade	Description	Meaning
18-20	<i>Muito bom</i>	Excellent
14-17	<i>Bom</i>	Good
10-13	<i>Suficiente</i>	Satisfactory
10	<i>Aprovado</i>	Pass
< 10	<i>Reprovado</i>	Unsatisfactory

Higher education (prior to Bologna)

Numerical grade	Description	Meaning
20	<i>Muito bom com distinção e louvor</i>	Very good, first-class honours
19-18	<i>Muito bom com distinção</i>	Very good, honours
17-16	<i>Bom com distinção</i>	Very good
15-14	<i>Bom</i>	Good
13-10	<i>Suficiente</i>	Satisfactory
0-9	<i>Reprovado</i>	Fail

Higher education grading system (after Bologna)

The degree of *licenciado* and *mestre* will carry a final classification between 10 and 20 on a numerical scale of 0 to 20, as well as its equivalent in the European comparability scale for classifications.

The academic *doutor* degree is given a final classification pursuant to the regulating standards approved by the university that awards it.

The classification is given by the jury, taking into consideration the classifications obtained in the curricular units of the doctorate course, whenever there is one, and the merit of the doctoral thesis analysed during its public defence.

More information on the ECTS system is available in the [ECTS User's Guide](#) issued by the European Commission.

See the following [link](#) for grade conversion:.

■ Bologna process

Information on the current situation can be found on the official [website](#) of the European Higher Education Area (EHEA).

■ Qualification frameworks

The FHEQ-Portugal (Framework for Higher Education Qualifications Portugal) is a subsystem of the National Qualifications Framework. Information on current developments related to FHEQ - Framework for Higher Education Qualifications (*Quadro Nacional de Qualificações para o Ensino Superior*) can be found on the website of the *Direção-Geral do Ensino Superior - Ministério da Educação e Ciência*. See under [Useful links](#).

■ Quality assurance and accreditation

The *Agência de Avaliação e Acreditação do Ensino Superior* (Agency for Assessment and Accreditation of Higher Education) is responsible for the quality control and accreditation of higher education programmes. More information is available on the website of this agency. See under Addresses.

A list with recognized higher education institutions, study programmes and degrees that can be conferred is available on the websites of the Portuguese NARIC and the *Direção-Geral do Ensino Superior – Ministério da Educação e Ciência*:

www.dges.mec.pt/en/pages/naric_pages/higher_education/higher_education_institutions.html

List of recognized higher education institutions.

www.a3es.pt/en/accreditation-and-audit/accreditation-process-results

List of accredited study programmes.

www.dges.mctes.pt/DGES/pt/OfertaFormativa/CursosConferentesDeGrau/CiclosAutorizados/

List of recognized degrees.

■ International treaties

Portugal has bilateral recognition agreements with various Portuguese-speaking African countries and Brazil. Portugal has also ratified the Lisbon Convention.

■ Composition of file

The official university/polytechnical diploma (*Carta de Curso*) or other degree certificates (*Certificado/Certidão*) contains the designation of the degree (*bacharel, licenciado, mestre* or *doutor*) awarded (*concluiu*).

There is also another official document (*Certidão de Habilitações*) that contains an overview of the subjects taken by the student with the grades awarded, and proves the successful conclusion of the degree programme by stating the degree awarded (*bacharel, licenciado, mestre* or *doutor*).

The higher education institutions are the competent entities for issuing the above documents and also the Diploma Supplement. Portugal also awards certificates to students who have taken (*frequentou*) but not completed their studies. The same applies to the secondary school certificate.

■ Diploma supplement

In Portugal the Diploma Supplement follows the model developed by the European Commission, Council of Europe and UNESCO, which is in Portuguese and in English, and also mandatory for Bologna degrees. More information on the Diploma Supplement is available on the website of the European Commission: http://ec.europa.eu/education/lifelong-learning-policy/doc1239_en.htm

■ List of Higher Education Institutions

www.dges.mec.pt/en/pages/naric_pages/higher_education/higher_education_institutions.html

Website of the Portuguese NARIC with a list of recognized higher education institutions.

■ Useful links

www.portugal.gov.pt/pt/os-ministerios/ministerio-da-educacao-e-ciencia.aspx

Website of the Ministério da Educação e Ciência.

www.naricportugal.pt

Website of the Portuguese NARIC.

[www.dges.mctes.pt/DGES/pt/OfertaFormativa/CursosConferentesDeGrau/Ciclos Autorizados](http://www.dges.mctes.pt/DGES/pt/OfertaFormativa/CursosConferentesDeGrau/CiclosAutorizados) and www.a3es.pt/en/accreditation-and-audit/accreditation-process-results

Websites of the Direção-Geral do Ensino Superior – Ministério da Educação e Ciência with a list of study programmes and degrees that can be conferred.

www.dges.mctes.pt/DGES/pt/AssuntosDiversos/FHEQ/

Website of the Direção-Geral do Ensino Superior - Ministério da Educação e Ciência with information on current developments related to FHEQ - Framework for Higher Education Qualifications (Quadro Nacional de Qualificações para o Ensino Superior).

www.a3es.pt/en/

Website of the Agência de Avaliação e Acreditação do Ensino Superior, Agency for Assessment and Accreditation of Higher Education.