

The education system of

Rwanda

described and compared with
the Dutch system

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

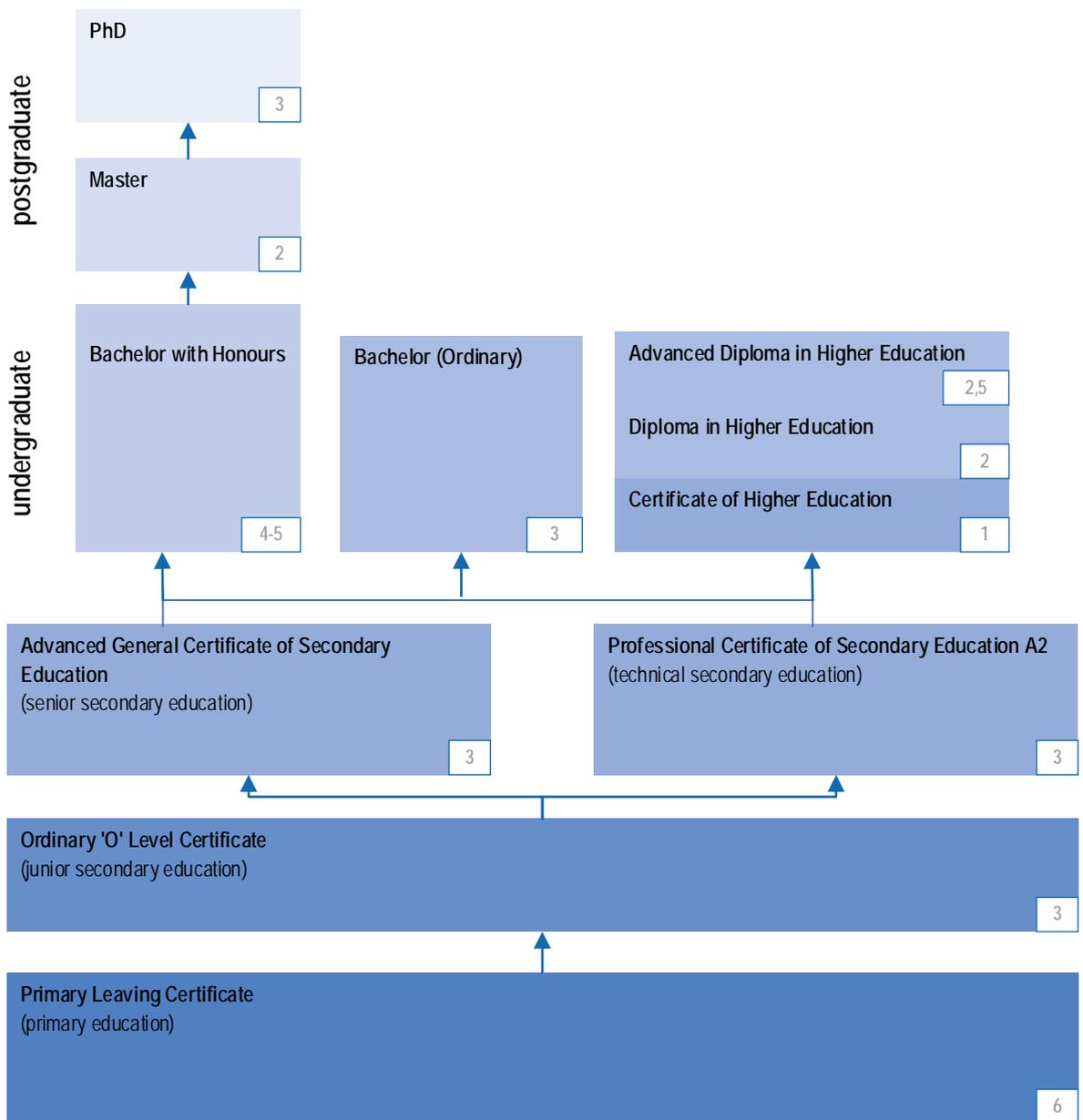
Disclaimer

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 for more information on the reuse of this publication.

Education system Rwanda



0 Duration of education

■ 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		Dutch equivalent and NLQF level		EQF level
<i>Advanced General Certificate of Secondary Education</i>		HAVO diploma	4	4
<i>Professional Certificate of Secondary Education A2</i>		HAVO diploma for its general education component	4	4
<i>Advanced Diploma in Higher Education</i>	3	3 years of HBO	6	6
<i>Bachelor with Honours</i>	5	HBO bachelor's degree or 2 years of WO	6	6
<i>Master (2 years)</i>	6	HBO or 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 = Rwandan Qualifications Framework. 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

Rwanda is a presidential republic located in Central Africa. The country gained independence from Belgium in 1962.

Rwanda experienced protracted civil wars, which claimed hundreds of thousands of victims in the mid-1990s. This also led to the destruction of the country's existing education system. Primary schools had already reopened within 2 months of the end of conflicts, in July 1994. The country's secondary schools and university followed soon after. As a result of these developments, investment in education is key to the country's current economic growth strategy.

Rwanda is divided into 5 provinces: *Nord, Est, Sud, Ouest* and *Kigali*. Rwanda's official languages are *Kinyarwanda*, English and French. *Kinyarwanda* is the official language of education during the first 3 years of primary education, after which all education is provided in English.

General responsibility for education lies with the *Ministry of Education*. The Ministry's primary objective is to offer all Rwandan nationals an equal opportunity to enjoy qualitative education, shaping them into educated citizens equipped to contribute to the country's socio-economic development. Amongst other aspects, the Ministry is responsible for developing strategies and national programmes and coordinating collaborations with international partners.

The *Rwanda Education Board* (REB) is one of the Ministry of Education's key bodies. The REB was established in 2011 as the result of a merger between 5 organisations: the *National Examination Council* (RNC), *National Curriculum Development Centre* (NCDC), *Student Financial Agency Rwanda* (SFAR), *General Inspection of Education* (GIE), and *Teacher Service Commission* (TSC). All tasks formerly carried out by these 5 organisations now fall under the responsibility of the REB.

The *Higher Education Council* (HEC) is another important Ministry of Education body. Amongst other aspects, the HEC is responsible for the quality of higher education institutions and the organisational structure and performance of the higher education system, as well as providing advice on higher education policy.

Education is compulsory for 9 years (for children aged 7-15). The school year runs from the end of January through November, while the academic year runs from October through June.

■ Primary and secondary education

Until 2011, the *Rwanda National Examination Council* (RNEC) was responsible for organising national examinations for the final 2 years of primary and secondary education. The *Rwanda Education Board* (REB) has held responsibility for national examinations since January of 2011.

In Rwanda, primary education and lower secondary education is known as '*nine years basic education*' (9YBE). This consists of 6 years of primary education and 3 years of lower secondary education. Primary education starts at age seven, and concludes with a national examination. The *Primary Leaving Certificate* provides access to lower secondary education. At the end of their lower secondary education, pupils take a national examination providing admission to the senior secondary level. These examinations are at *Ordinary 'O' Level*.

Secondary education lasts a total of 6 years, for pupils aged 13 - 18. It consists of the aforementioned 3-year lower secondary education and a 3-year senior secondary level. For these final 3 years, pupils can choose between general education, technical secondary education or education at a Teacher Training College (TTC). Since 2010, there have been plans to integrate the 3-year senior level with the 9YBE in order to create a continuous '*12 years basic education*' (12YBE) learning track. Efforts are currently underway to implement these plans.

Pupils in the senior levels of general secondary education take subjects including English, French, mathematics and several subjects from their chosen specialisation such as *sciences*, *humanities* or *languages*. The national exams leading to the *Advanced General Certificate of Secondary Education* are administered at the end of the third year, in November.

Pupils take exams in at least 3 predetermined subjects from their chosen specialisation. They are also required to write a *General Paper* and take the subject of *Entrepreneurship*. Exam results are expressed in letters, whereby A through E are passing grades. Grades for the subject *General Paper* are limited to an S (*Subsidiary*). An S grade for any other subject should be taken to mean that the student did not complete the subject at *Advanced Level*. Diplomas also specify the total number of points. This total is calculated on the basis of the grades to be obtained (see [Assessment systems](#)) and is relevant in terms of admission to higher education.

In terms of level, the *Advanced General Certificate of Secondary Education* is comparable to a HAVO diploma.

Technical secondary education also has a duration of 3 years. The curriculum for this type of education consists of both general subjects and subjects focusing on a specific area of specialisation. Pupils who successfully complete their national examination at the end of the third year are awarded a *Professional Certificate of Secondary Education A2 (Diplôme d'Etudes Secondaires Professionnelles A2)*. This certificate also provides access to higher education in Rwanda.

In terms of level, the *Professional Certificate of Secondary Education A2* is comparable to a HAVO diploma for its general education component.

■ Admission to higher education

In principle, the *Advanced General Certificate of Secondary Education* and *Professional Certificate of Secondary Education A2* grant access to higher education. Institutions and degree programmes may also apply specific requirements in terms of the student's exam grades.

■ Higher education

Higher education is provided by both public and private institutions. Most institutions fall under the jurisdiction of the Ministry of Education.

There are a total of 5 institutions:

- *University of Rwanda*
- *Integrated Polytechnic Regional Centres*
- *Institute of Legal Practice and Development (ILPD)*
- *Nursing Schools*
- *Private Higher Learning Institutions*

The *University of Rwanda* was established in 2013 as the result of a merger between Rwanda's public universities, of which the *National University of Rwanda* (NUR) was the largest. The new institution also absorbed the *Kigali Institute of Science and Technology* (KIST), *Kigali Institute of Education* (KIE), *Institute of Agriculture and Animal Husbandry* (ISAE), *School of Finance and Banking* (SFB), *Higher Institute of Umutara Polytechnic* (UP) and *Kigali Health Institute* (KHI).

The *University of Rwanda* consists of 6 departments:

- *UR - College of Arts and Social Sciences*
- *UR - College of Education*
- *UR- College of Sciences and Technology*
- *UR- College of Medicine and Health Sciences*
- *UR- College of Business and Economics*
- *UR - College of Agriculture, Animal Sciences and Veterinary Medicine*

The academic year consists of two 15-week semesters.

■ University and higher professional education

Students starting a higher education programme have the option of obtaining a diploma at the end of each year. The diploma awarded upon completion serves as confirmation that the student has obtained the required number of *credits*.

Prior to the bachelor's degree, the following diplomas may be obtained:

- *Certificate of Higher Education*: awarded after 1 year of studies and obtainment of at least 120 credits;
- *Diploma in Higher Education*: awarded after 2 years of studies and obtainment of at least 240 credits;
- *Advanced Diploma in Higher Education*: awarded after 2,5 years of studies and obtainment of at least 300 credits.

In terms of level, the *Advanced Diploma in Higher Education* is comparable to 3 years of higher professional education (HBO).

Bachelor's degree programmes

Degree programmes leading to a bachelor's degree have a minimum duration of 3 years (at least 360 *credits*) for an *Ordinary degree* and 4 to 5 years (at least 480 *credits*) in the case of an *Honours degree*. The medicine programme (*Bachelor of Medicine and Surgery*) is an exception to this rule, with a duration of 6 years plus a 1-year internship at a hospital. One academic year equals 120 *credits* and 1 credit represents 10 hours of study.

In terms of level, the *Bachelor with Honours* is comparable to an HBO bachelor's degree or 2 years of university education (WO), depending on the specialisation.

Master's degree programmes

The nominal duration of master's degree programmes is 1 or 2 years. Admission to master's degree programmes will require a *Bachelor with Honours, Secondary Class Upper Division*. Master's degree programmes with a duration of 1 year generally have a duration of 1 calendar year (from September through August) and result in obtainment of 180 *credits*. After having attended lessons over the course of the academic year, students are required to spend the remaining weeks writing their final paper. The programmes lead to a *Master of Arts* or *Master of Science* degree in a specific specialisation.

Two-year master's degree programmes are structured on the basis of the academic calendar. The degree is awarded once a total of 240 *credits* have been obtained. Students write a final paper during the final semester.

There are also various undivided bachelor's-master's degree programmes that directly lead to a master's degree. These programmes consist of 600 *credits* of which at least 120 *credits* must be obtained at *Level 6* (master's degree level). The various *levels* are part of the Rwandan Qualifications Framework. For more information, see the chapter on [Qualification frameworks](#). Available degrees include the *Master of Engineering*, *Master of Science*, *Master of Technology* and *Master of Computing*.

In terms of level, the *2-year master's degree* is comparable to an HBO or WO master's degree, depending on the specialisation.

PhD

A doctorate is awarded following a period of at least 3 years of study and research. The doctoral thesis must be defended in public before an examinations board. In principle, admission requires a master's degree.

■ Assessment systems

Secondary education

Examination subjects are graded A - F, with each grade representing a specific number of points: A (6), B (5), C (4), D (3), E (2), F (0).

The *General Paper* subject is a standard component of the national examinations at *Advanced Level*. The subject can only be completed with an S grade and counts for one point. An S grade for any other subject should be taken to mean that the student did not complete the subject at *Advanced Level*.

Examined subjects at *Advanced Level* are counted three times when determining the total number of points.

Higher education

The public higher education system applies the following grade system:

Grade	Percentage	Class
A	80 - 100%	<i>First Class Honours</i>
B+	70 - 79%	<i>Second Class Honours, Upper Division</i>
B	60 - 69%	<i>Second Class Honours, Lower Division</i>
C	50 - 59%	<i>Pass</i>
F	0 - 49%	<i>Fail</i>

The final classification of *honours* bachelor's degrees is calculated as follows:

Class	Requirements
<i>First Class Honours</i>	A grade of at least 80% for more than half of the modules at <i>Level 4</i> and <i>5</i> (including the final paper) and no grade lower than 70%
<i>Second Class Honours, Upper Division</i>	A grade of at least 70% for more than half of the modules at <i>Level 4</i> and <i>5</i> (including the final paper) and no grade lower than 60%
<i>Second Class Honours, Lower Division</i>	A grade of at least 60% for more than half of the modules at <i>Level 4</i> and <i>5</i> (including the final paper) and no grade lower than 50%
<i>Third Class Honours</i>	A grade of at least 50% for all modules at <i>Levels 4</i> and <i>5</i> (including the final paper). Students may have obtained grades of between 45% en 49% for a maximum of 20 <i>credits</i> , as long as the final paper was graded at least 50%.

■ Qualification frameworks

Rwanda's national qualifications framework, the *Rwandan Qualifications Framework*, comprises 7 levels. The framework outlines requirements for the awarding of degrees by higher education institutions. The framework is based on the *Credit Accumulation and Modular Scheme* (CAMS).

The following overview describes the most common degrees and associated levels:

Qualification	Level	Credits
<i>Certificate of Higher Education</i>	1	120
<i>Diploma in Higher Education</i>	2	240 (120 Level 1 + 120 Level 2)
<i>Advanced Diploma in Higher Education</i>	3	300 (120 Level 1 + 120 Level 2 + 60 Level 3)
<i>Ordinary Bachelor's</i>	4	360 (120 Level 1 + 120 Level 2 + 60 Level 3 + 60 Level 4)
<i>Ordinary Bachelor with Honours</i>	5	480 (120 Level 1 + 120 Level 2 + 60 Level 3 + 60 Level 4 + 120 Level 5)
<i>Master of Arts, Master of Science</i>	6	180 (with a minimum of 140 credits at Level 6)
<i>Ph.D.</i>	7	Not based on credits

For a full overview of the various degrees and associated levels (in accordance with the framework), see: www.hec.gov.rw/spip.php?article226.

■ Quality assurance and accreditation

The *Higher Education Council* (HEC) was established by the Rwandan government and operates as an independent government agency. The *Council* is responsible for the structure, organisation and performance of all higher education institutions. The *Council* also monitors and evaluates the preconditions for higher education quality and standards and works to ensure the further improvement of education and research quality. The *Council* advises the Ministry of Education on all issues relating to the accreditation of higher education institutions. The *Council* also sets standards for the accreditation of private institutions.

A list of accredited institutions can be found at the bottom of the *Higher Education Council* home page: <http://hec.gov.rw>.

■ Composition of file

The *Advanced General Certificate of Secondary Education* as issued by the *Rwanda Education Board* is required for secondary education.

All higher education diplomas obtained must be submitted together with an overview of subjects and grade lists.

■ List of higher education institutions

www.mineduc.gov.rw/agencies/higher-learning-institutions

Website of the Ministry of Education, containing an overview of all public and private higher education institutions.

■ Useful links

www.mineduc.gov.rw/home

Website of the Ministry of Education.

www.education.rw

Website featuring information on the Rwandan higher education system.

<http://hec.gov.rw>

Website of the *Higher Education Council* (HEC).

www.reb.rw

Website of the *Rwanda Education Board* (REB).