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

**Copyright**

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/subjects/copyright](http://www.nuffic.nl/en/subjects/copyright) for more information on the reuse of this publication.
### Background

- **Country:** Thailand, officially the Kingdom of Thailand.
- **History:** Before 1949 the country was called Siam. The Thai era is written as B.E. (Buddhist Era) + year, and is 543 years ahead of the Western era (e.g. B.E. 2562 is the year 2019).
- **International treaties:** Thailand is a member of the [Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN)](https://www.asean.org) and the [South East Asian Ministers of Education Organization (SEAMEO)](https://www.seameo.org).
- **Compulsory education:** 6 to 15 years (basic education + lower secondary education).
- **Language of instruction:** Thai mostly, English in some cases (a few private schools and international programmes at universities).
- **School year:** June to March.
- **School exams:** Pupils take the [O-NET](https://www.moesi.go.th/en/exams/o-net) 3 times: in the last year of primary education (Grade 6), and in the last year of the lower secondary education (Grade 9) and senior secondary education (Grade 12).
- **Academic year:** August to May.
Flow chart: education system Thailand

- **Certificate of Primary Education** (primary education) 6
- **Certificate of Lower Secondary Education** (lower secondary education) 3
- **Certificate of Secondary Education/Matayom 6 (M6)** (senior secondary general education) 3
- **Certificate in Vocational Education** (senior vocational education) 3
- **Thai university Central Admission System (TCAS)** (entrance examinations) 4-6
- **Entrance examination**
- **Diploma in Vocational Education/Diploma in Technical Education** (higher professional education) 2
- **Associate Degree** (universities/colleges) 2
- **Bachelor** (university education) 2
- **Master** (university education) 2
- **PhD** (university 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.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Degree or qualification</th>
<th>Dutch equivalent and NLQF level</th>
<th>EQF level</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Certificate in Vocational Education</td>
<td>MBO diploma (qualification level 2 or 3)</td>
<td>2/3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Certificate of Secondary Education/ Matayom 6 (M6)</td>
<td>HAVO diploma</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Associate Degree (2 years)</td>
<td>2 years of HBO</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Diploma in Vocational Education/ Diploma in Technical Education</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>Master (2 years)</td>
<td>WO 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: [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.
Primary and secondary education

Primary education
Primary education in Thailand comprises non-compulsory pre-school education for children between the ages of 3 and 6 and 6-year basic education for children aged 6 to 12 (Prathom 1-6/Grade 1-6). Pupils sit for the Ordinary National Educational Test (O-NET) on completion of primary education (Prathom 6).

General secondary education
Secondary education, for children aged 12 to 18, is divided into 2 cycles:
- lower secondary education (Matayom 1-3/Grade 7-9); and
- senior secondary education (Matayom 4-6/Grade 10-12).

Core subjects
During secondary education, pupils sit for the O-NET twice: once in the 3rd year (Matayom 3) and again in the 6th year (Matayom 6). The O-NET comprises of assessments in 8 areas:
- Thai language
- mathematics
- science
- foreign languages
- social studies, religion and culture
- art
- health and physical education
- career and technology

The Certificate in Lower Secondary Education (Matayom 3) is awarded on completion of the lower secondary education cycle.

Pupils can attend the senior secondary education entrance examination. If they continue with Matayom 4-6, they can choose:
- the general track; or
- the vocational track.

General secondary education
The curriculum for the general track comprises core subjects, mandatory elective subjects, a choice of elective subjects and activities. The general track includes the same 8 subject areas as those of the O-NET test. A number of credits can be gained for each subject.

Since 2012 the number of required credits for the core subjects is 41 credits:
- 24 credits: 4 x 6 credits for the subjects Thai language, mathematics, natural sciences, and foreign languages;
• 9 credits: 3 x 3 credits for the subjects art, health and physical education, career and technology;
• 8 credits for social studies, religion and culture.

In addition, students also follow additional subjects with a total of at least 36 or 40 credits. In total, students in senior secondary education obtain a minimum number of credits of 77 or 81 credits.

**Final exam: O-NET**
The certificate awarded on completion of the sixth year may be referred to as the Certificate of Secondary Education or Matayom 6 (M6).

In terms of level, the Certificate of Secondary Education/Matayom 6 (M6) is comparable to a HAVO diploma.

**Vocational secondary education**
Instead of the general education track, students may choose to attend vocational education. After a 3-year programme, they can obtain the Certificate in Vocational Education (Cert. Voc.). There is a number of variants of this certificate.

In terms of level, the Certificate in Vocational Education is comparable to an MBO diploma at qualification level 2 or 3, depending on the subjects taken.

**Non-formal education**
In addition to the school systems described above, Thailand also has Non-Formal Education (NFE) programmes. The NFE is more flexible than regular education programmes in terms of objectives, methods of instruction and study duration. The content and the curriculum can be adapted to suit the needs of individual groups of students. This type of education is available to all age groups.

Since 2012, primary education and secondary education in the NFE are also concluded with a national test: the Non-formal National Education Test (N-NET). The N-NET is a multiple choice test covering 5 subject areas:

• learning skills;
• basic knowledge;
• occupational skills
• life skills;
• social development skills.
### Admission to higher education

A Certificate of Secondary Education or a Certificate in Vocational Education is required to be admitted into higher education.

The Central University Admission System (CUAS) has been in force since 2006. The CUAS was replaced in 2018 by the Thai University Central Admission System (TCAS). The new system works with 5 admission rounds, each with its own set of admission requirements. Whoever is placed in a first round, may not sign up for a later round. At present, about half of the public higher education institutions use the TCAS.

### Higher education

Higher education in Thailand is provided between 2 types of institutions: public and private institutions. These institutions (universities, institutes and colleges) offer both academic and higher professional education.

### University education

At Thai institutions students can obtain the following qualifications at HBO or WO level:

- Bachelor
- Master
- PhD

**Bachelor**

Most bachelor's degree programmes have a duration of 4 years (120-150 credits). The duration of bachelor's degree programmes in architecture, art, graphic art, and pharmacy is 5 years (150-188 credits). Basic training in medicine, dentistry and veterinary medicine requires 6 years of study (210-263 credits).

All bachelor's programmes consist (30 credits) of a general education module (humanities, social sciences, science and mathematics), the area of specialisation for which the credits awarded vary (84 credits for a 4-year bachelor’s programme and 114 credits for a 5-year programme) and electives (6 credits).

In terms of level, the Bachelor following a 4-year programme is comparable to 2 years of WO or to an HBO bachelor’s degree, depending on the type of study programme.
**Master**
Master’s degree programmes usually involve 2 years of further study. A bachelor’s degree with a Grade Point Average (GPA) of at least 3 is required for admission to this programme.

A master’s degree can be gained in 3 ways:
- by following lectures and sitting a comprehensive examination (45 -55 credits);
- by following lectures (36 credits) and writing a final paper (9-12 credits);
- or by conducting research and writing a final paper.

In terms of level, a 2-year Master is comparable to a WO master’s degree.

**PhD**
A master’s degree with a Grade Point Average (GPA) of at least 3.5 is required for admission to this programme. The doctoral degree (PhD) requires 2 years of study. A minimum of 48 credits are required, although many programmes require more than the set minimum. Students with only a bachelor’s degree must obtain 72 credits.

At least 12 credits of the required 48 credits need to be from course work. Furthermore, a thesis needs to be written and defended.

**Higher professional education**

Students can obtain these diplomas at institutes and colleges:
- Associate Degree;
- Diploma in Vocational Education (por wor sor);
- Diploma in Technical Education (por wor tor).

**Associate degree**
Associate degree programmes are generally 2-year programmes. A Certificate of Secondary Education or a Certificate in Vocational Education is required for admission.

In terms of level, the Associate Degree following a 2-year programme is comparable to 2 years of higher professional education (HBO).

**Diploma in Vocational/Technical Education**
A Diploma in Vocational Education (por wor sor) or Diploma in Technical Education (por wor tor) is awarded on completion of a professional or technical training programme respectively.
In terms of level, the Diploma in Vocational Education/Diploma in Technical Education is comparable to 2 years of higher professional education (HBO).

**Note:** The evaluation of these qualifications may differ when the purpose of evaluation is other than admission to higher education in the Netherlands, e.g. for admission to the labour market.

Following the Associate Degree, Diploma in Vocational Education or a Diploma in Technical Education, it is possible to continue to the third year of a bachelor’s programme. For further study at bachelor’s level a Grade Point Average (GPA) of at least 2 is required (see also Assessment systems).
Assessment systems

Secondary education
The following system is used for grading subjects in secondary education:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Numerical grade</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>excellent</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>good</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>fair</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>pass</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>0</td>
<td>fail</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Higher education
The grading of subjects in higher education is more differentiated.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Letter grade</th>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Numerical grade</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A</td>
<td>excellent</td>
<td>4.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B+</td>
<td>very good</td>
<td>3.50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B</td>
<td>good</td>
<td>3.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C+</td>
<td>fairly good</td>
<td>2.50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C</td>
<td>fair</td>
<td>2.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>D+</td>
<td>poor</td>
<td>1.50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>D</td>
<td>very poor</td>
<td>1.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>F</td>
<td>failure</td>
<td>0.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I</td>
<td>incomplete</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>W</td>
<td>withdrawn</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>WF</td>
<td>withdrawn due to failure</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>AU</td>
<td>audit</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Credits
A system based on credits is used in higher education: 1 credit is awarded for 1 hour of class time during a semester.
Qualification frameworks

Thailand is still in the process of establishing a national qualifications framework. The framework is restricted to qualifications obtained in higher education.

There are 3 levels with a corresponding minimum requirements of credits:
- Bachelor, with a minimum of 120/150/180 credits;
- Master, with a minimum of 36 credits (following Bachelor);
- PhD/Doctor, with a minimum of 48 credits (following Master).

More information can be found on the website of the Office of the Higher Education Commission (OHEC).

Accreditation and quality assurance

Following the adoption of the National Education Act in 1999, a system of quality assurance and accreditation is set up by the Ministry of Education.

Quality assurance
Internal quality assurance is the responsibility of the education institution in question. The Office of the National Education Standards and Quality Assessment (ONESQA) is responsible for external quality assurance. This independent public organisation is not part of the Ministry of Education.

Accredited institutions
The Office of the Higher Education Commission (OHEC) published this overview of accredited higher education institutions in February 2019.

Checking documents

Secondary education
A complete file consists of the diploma and a grade list in Thai plus a translation of both documents. If the grade list does not state O-NET results, students can request the official exam results (both in Thai and in English) from the examining authority: National Institute of Educational Testing Service (NIETS).

Higher education
- Bachelor’s degree and a list of grades in Thai, as well as English translations of both documents.
- Additional documents for a 2-year bachelor’s degree: a diploma of the previous study programme and a list of marks in Thai, plus translations of the documents.
- Master’s degree and grade list in Thai, plus translations.
Credential evaluation
Nuffic evaluates qualifications according to the principles of the Lisbon Recognition Convention (1997). A practical implementation of these standards can be found in the European EAR manual.

Overview of higher education institutions
The Office of the Higher Education Commission (OHEC) published the overview of accredited higher education institutions in February 2019.

Useful links
- Ministry of Education Thailand (MOE), including information on the Thai education system and the administrative structure of the ministry.
- The new Ministry of Higher Education, Science, Research and Innovation (MHESI), created on 2 May 2019 by merging the Ministry of Science and Technology (MOST) with the Office of Higher Education Commission (OHEC). This website is currently only available in Thai.
- Bureau of International Cooperation Strategy (BICS) of the former Office of the Higher Education Commission (OHEC), including information about the national qualification framework.
- Office of the National Education Standards and Quality Assessment (ONESQA).
- National Education Act 1999 (pdf with the English translation), via the ASEAN website.
- National Institute of Educational Testing Service (NIETS).

Glossary
- Duration: the official length of the full-time programme (not part-time) without study delay.
- Graduate programme: a higher education programme after completion of a bachelor’s degree. See also the description in the Nuffic Glossary: graduate.
- Lisbon Recognition Convention (LRC): The Convention on the Recognition of Qualifications Concerning Higher Education in the European Region, was drafted in 1997 by the Council of Europe and Unesco to facilitate and promote fair recognition among Parties of the Convention. Read more on the website of the Council of Europe.
- O-NET: Ordinary National Educational Test.
- Undergraduate programme: a programme for an associate degree or bachelor’s degree. See also the description in the Nuffic Glossary: undergraduate.