

The education system of

Uganda

described and compared with
the Dutch system

This document contains information on the education system of Uganda. We explain the Dutch equivalent of the most common qualifications from Uganda 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.

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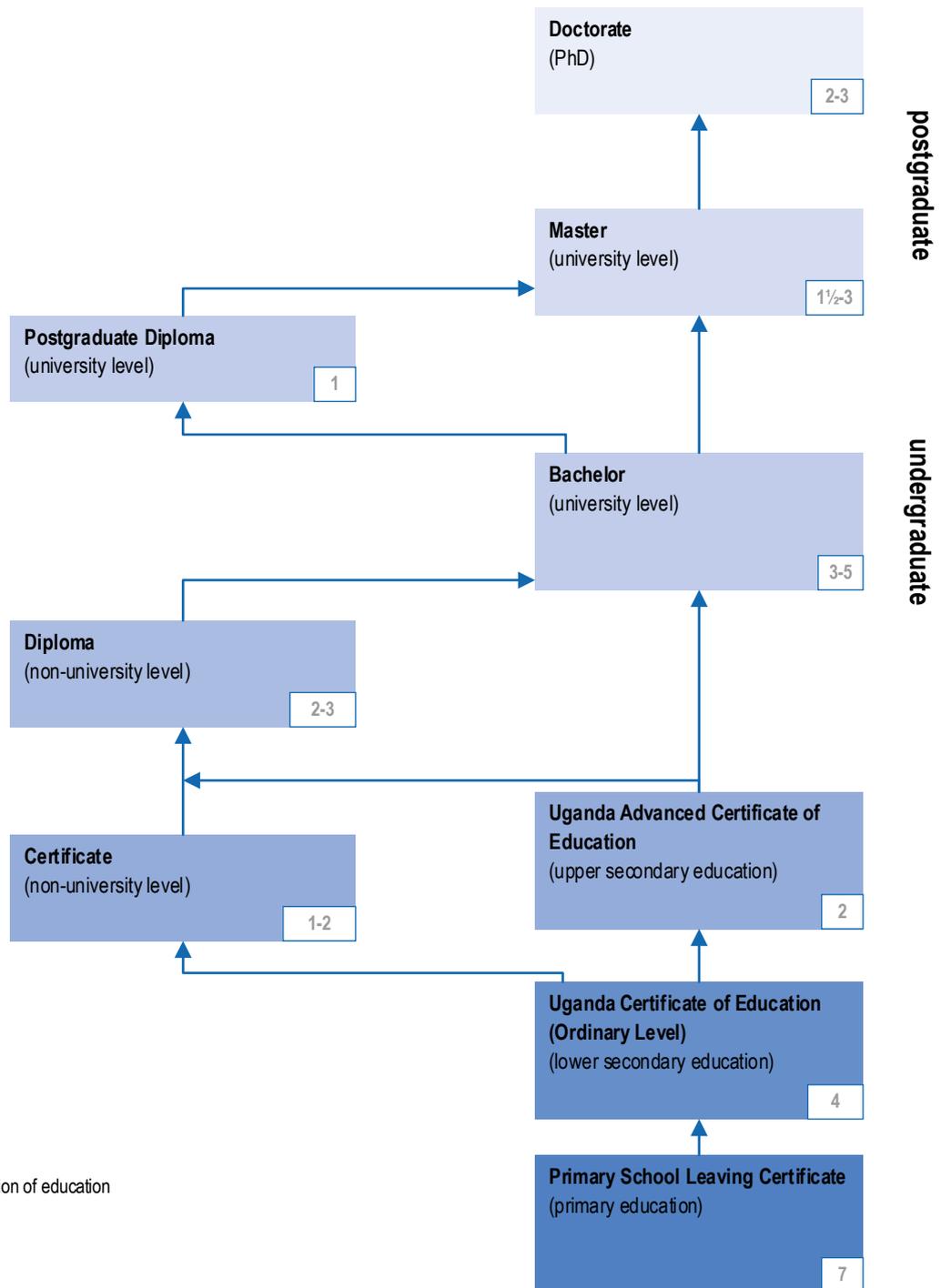


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■ Background

- **Country:** Uganda, officially the Republic of Uganda (in Swahili: *Jamhuri ya Uganda*).
- **History:** Uganda was founded when the country gained independence from the United Kingdom in 1962. The period following 1962 was characterised by coups, conflicts and civil wars. In 1995 Uganda introduced a new constitution, which has since formed the basis of the country's democratic governance.
- **Responsible for education:** The [Ministry of Education and Sports](#) is responsible for all education in Uganda. Quality assurance in higher education is the task of the Uganda National Council for Higher Education (NCHE). The Uganda National Examinations Board (UNEB) is responsible for issuing official certificates in secondary education.
- **International treaties:** In 1981, Uganda signed the Regional Convention on the Recognition of Studies, Certificates, Diplomas, Degrees and other Academic Qualifications in Higher Education in the African States. See the [UNESCO portal](#) for further details.
- **Compulsory education:** Ages 6 to 13 (primary education).
- **Language of instruction:** Primary education is taught in the local language and in English. The language of secondary and higher education is English.
- **School year:** From February to December, divided into 3 trimesters.
- **School exams:** October/November.
- **Academic year:** From October to July.

■ Flow chart: education system Uganda



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.

Foreign degree or qualification	Dutch equivalent and NLQF level	EQF level
Uganda Certificate of Education (Ordinary Level) in 6 subjects with a final result of 1 to 6	VMBO-T diploma	2
Uganda Certificate of Education (Ordinary Level) in 6 subjects with a final result of 1 to 6 + Uganda Advanced Certificate of Education with a <i>Principal</i> pass in 1 subject (6 different subjects in total)	HAVO diploma	4
Uganda Certificate of Education (Ordinary Level) in 6 subjects with a final result of 1 to 6 + Uganda Advanced Certificate of Education with a <i>Principal</i> pass in at least 2 subjects and a <i>Subsidiary Pass</i> in 1 subject (6 different subjects in total)	at least a HAVO diploma	4
Uganda Certificate of Education (Ordinary Level) in 6 subjects with a final result of 1 to 6 + Uganda Advanced Certificate of Education with a <i>Principal</i> pass in at least 2 subjects with a final result of A, B or C (6 different subjects in total)	at least a HAVO diploma	4
Bachelor (3 years)	HBO bachelor's degree or 2 years of university education (WO)	6
Bachelor (4/5 years)	HBO or WO bachelor's degree	6
Master	HBO or WO master's degree	7

Note:

- 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.

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- 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 is compulsory and lasts 7 years (age 6 to 13 years). Pupils finish this period with the *Primary School Leaving Certificate*.

Curriculum

The curriculum of classes 1 to 3 consists of themes from daily life, such as the human body and health, peace and security, animals and plants. Pupils with a native language other than English are recommended to be taught in the local language. However, the subject of English itself is taught in English.

In class 4, the thematic curriculum changes to a subject-oriented curriculum. The year is divided into 3 trimesters. In the 1st trimester the lessons are still in the local language, with a gradual switch to English. By the end of the year the language of instruction is English. From class 4, pupils follow the subjects English, mathematics, integrated science, social studies, religious education, creative arts and physical education, mother tongue/local language and Swahili.

Secondary education

Secondary education lasts 6 years and consists of:

- 4 years of lower secondary education for the ages 13-17; and
- 2 years of upper secondary education for the ages 17-19.

Lower secondary education

Lower secondary education is also called *Ordinary Level*. Pupils complete the 4-year lower-level with the *Uganda Certificate of Education* (UCE). They take a minimum of 8 and a maximum of 10 subjects. Pupils can achieve a score from 1 to 9. See the [Assessment systems](#) chapter for an explanation of the scores.

The following 8 subjects are compulsory: biology, chemistry, physics, physical education, mathematics, English, geography and history. An overview of all subjects per category:

Category	Subjects
Science and mathematics	biology, chemistry, physics, physical education, general science and mathematics
Languages	English, Swahili, English literature, local language, foreign language
Social sciences	geography, history, religious education
Vocational sciences	commerce, fine art, music, agriculture, home economics, woodworking, metalwork, technical drawing, entrepreneurship education, computer studies

In terms of level, the *Uganda Certificate of Education (Ordinary Level)* in 6 subjects with a final result of 1 to 6 is comparable to a VMBO-T diploma.

After the 4th year and having obtained the UCE, pupils can move on to the upper secondary education, to teacher training colleges or vocational institutions, or they can start working.

Upper secondary education

Pupils complete the 2-year upper-level with the *Uganda Advanced Certificate of Education (UACE)* when they are approximately 19 years old. During these 2 years, pupils follow a combination of 3 subjects at Principal level and 2 subjects at Subsidiary level, of which the general paper subject is mandatory.

An overview of all courses per level:

Level	Subjects
Subsidiary level	mathematics, ICT and general paper
Principal level	biology, chemistry, mathematics, economics, geography, entrepreneurship, history, fine art, music, Swahili, English literature, Christian religious education, Islamic religious education, agriculture, local language, foreign language (Arabic, French, German and Latin), metalwork, woodwork, clothing and textiles, food and nutrition, technical drawing

The *Uganda Advanced Certificate of Education (UACE)* is issued if a pupil meets 1 of the following conditions:

- a pass at Principal level in at least 1 section, a Principal pass;
- a Subsidiary pass in at least 1 subject of which the exam has been taken at Principal level.

Pupils can then enter the labour market or continue their studies in higher education.

In terms of level, the *Uganda Certificate of Education (Ordinary Level)* in 6 subjects with a final result of 1 to 6 + *Uganda Advanced Certificate of Education* with a Principal pass in 1 subject (6 different subjects in total) is comparable to a HAVO diploma.

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In terms of level, the *Uganda Certificate of Education (Ordinary Level)* in 6 subjects with a final result of 1 to 6 + *Uganda Advanced Certificate of Education* with a Principal pass in at least 2 subjects + a Subsidiary pass in 1 subject (6 different subjects in total) is comparable to at least a HAVO diploma.

In terms of level, the *Uganda Certificate of Education (Ordinary Level)* in 6 subjects with a final result of 1 to 6 + *Uganda Advanced Certificate of Education* with a Principal pass with a final result of A to C (6 different subjects in total) is comparable to at least a HAVO diploma.

■ Admission to higher education

Non-university level studies

Admission to the *Certificate* and *Diploma* programmes is granted on the basis of the *Uganda Certificate of Education (UCE)* and the *Uganda Advanced Certificate of Education (UACE)*.

The minimum admission requirements are:

- *Certificate*: UCE with 3 to 6 passes (differs per institution and programme).
- *Diploma*: UCE with 5 passes plus UACE with a Principal pass in 1 subject plus a Subsidiary pass in 2 subjects, or a *Certificate*.

University level studies

Admission to bachelor's degree programmes is granted on the basis of the *Direct Entry* or *Diploma Entry Scheme*. The minimum requirements are:

- *Direct Entry*: a UCE with at least 5 passes plus the UACE with at least 2 Principal passes.
- *Diploma Entry Scheme*: a *Diploma* obtained at least at credit/distinction level, and in a relevant programme, at an NCHE-accredited institution.

Note: With a *Diploma*, exemptions may be obtained for a bachelor's degree programme, but this varies per institution and per programme.

Admission to degree programmes in dentistry and medicine also requires an entrance examination.

■ Higher education

In Uganda, institutions of higher education are divided into 3 categories:

- Universities
- Other degree awarding institutes (ODAI)
- Other tertiary institutions (OTI)

These 3 categories include public as well as private institutions.

The universities recognised by law are qualified to award degrees, diplomas and certificates.

The institutions under the ODAI category are not universities, but are also authorised to issue certificates, diplomas and degrees. This category has existed since 2006.

The institutions that fall into the OTI category are qualified to award certificates and diplomas.

Non-university and university level

Higher education is divided into non-university level and university level studies.

The non-university level consists of *Certificate* and *Diploma* programmes. *Certificate* programmes usually last 1 or 2 years, and *Diploma* programmes 2 or 3 years, depending on the study programme.

These programmes prepare students for higher education and are often vocationally oriented. The *Certificate* grants access to *Diploma* programmes. A *Diploma* with the classification *credit/distinction* may give admission to a bachelor's degree programme with possible exemptions, but this differs per programme and institution.

The university level consists of 3 cycles at the end of which an academic degree is earned: a bachelor's degree, master's degree and doctorate.

■ University education

In Uganda students can obtain the following qualifications at university level:

- *Bachelor's degree*
- *Postgraduate Diploma*
- *Master's degree*
- *Doctorate (PhD)*

Bachelor

Depending on the specialisation chosen, the [duration](#) of bachelor's programmes is usually 3 to 5 years. Most programmes have a duration of 3 years. Think of programmes in arts, science and law. Programmes in agriculture, forestry and (agricultural) engineering take 4 years, while those in medicine and pharmacy take 5 years.

In terms of level, the 3-year *Bachelor* is comparable to an HBO bachelor's degree or 2 years of university education (WO), depending on the content and orientation of the programme.

In terms of level, the 4 or 5-year *Bachelor* is comparable to an HBO or WO bachelor's degree, depending on the content and orientation of the programme.

Postgraduate Diploma

Postgraduate programmes build on the level of a bachelor's degree programme. They are usually 1-year programmes. The *Postgraduate Diploma* provides access to master's degree programmes. Sometimes students can get exemptions from a master's degree in a similar specialisation.

Master

Master's programmes have a duration of 1½ or 2 years. The curriculum includes a thesis. A master's degree programme in medicine takes 3 years.

The admission requirement for a master's degree programme is usually a bachelor's degree with the minimum classification *second class*.

In terms of level, the *Master* is comparable to an HBO or WO master's degree, depending on the content and orientation of the programme.

PhD

Candidates with a master's degree are eligible to pursue a doctorate. A *Doctorate* is conferred after 2 or 3 years of research and writing a doctoral dissertation.

■ Assessment systems

Secondary education

The following system is used for the assessment of subjects and classification in secondary education:

Uganda Certificate of Education

Marks	Description
1 to 2	Very good
3 to 6	Pass with credit
7 to 8	Subject pass
9	Fail

Classification	Preconditions
Division One	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - 5 passes with credit with a language subject of Group I or III; and - a pass in at least 1 subject of Group II, 1 subject of Group IV and 1 subject of Group V; and - the sum of the scores of the 6 best subjects does not exceed 23.
Division Two	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - 4 passes with credit and 2 subject passes with a language subject of Group I or III; and - the sum of the 6 best subjects does not exceed 33.
Division Three	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - a pass with credit and 5 subject passes; or - 2 passes with credit and 3 subject passes; and - the sum of the 6 best subjects does not exceed 44.
Division Four	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - a pass with credit (score 6 or higher); or - at least 2 passes with score 7; or - 3 passes with score 8.

Uganda Advanced Certificate of Education

The scores on the UACE are indicated by the letters A, B, C, D or E, where the score A is the highest obtainable score and E the lowest pass. The score 'o' indicates that the candidate has achieved a fail for a subject at the Principal

level, but a pass at the Subsidiary level. The score for subjects at the Subsidiary level is indicated with the numbers 1 to 6, where score 1 is the highest obtainable pass and 6 the lowest.

Higher education

Letter Grade	Grade Point Average (GPA)	Percentage
A+	5.0	90-100
A	5.0	80-89.9
B+	4.5	75-79.9
B	4.0	70-74.9
B-	3.5	65-69.9
C+	3.0	60-64.9
C	2.5	55-59.9
C-	2.0	50-54.9
D+	1.5	45-49.9
D	1.0	40-44.9
D-	0.5	35-39.9
E	0	below 35

CGPA	Classification	Description
4.40-5.00	Distinction/First Class/First Class Honours	Excellent
3.60-4.39	Upper Credit/Second Class (Upper Division)/ Second Class Honours (Upper Division)	Very Good
2.80-3.59	Lower Credit/Second Class (Lower Division)/ Second Class Honours (Lower Division)	Good
2.00-2.79	Pass/Third	Fair
0.00-1.99	Fail	Poor

The *master's degree* and *doctorate* are not classified.

Quality assurance and accreditation

The Uganda National Council for Higher Education (NCHE) was founded as the regulatory institution for higher education in order to carry out the University and Other Tertiary Institutions Act of Parliament (2001). The NCHE is responsible for the registration and inspection of institutions for higher education, accreditation and quality assurance of study programmes and the qualification of both public and private institutions of higher education.

Since 2006, higher education institutions have been obliged to have both professionally oriented and academic programmes accredited by NCHE before they offer these programmes. NCHE accredits programmes for a period of 5 years.

The [NCHE website](#) has an overview of recognised institutions of higher education, [institutional accreditation](#), and [accredited programmes](#).

Checking documents

For admission to higher education, candidates must submit the following certificates:

- the *Uganda Certificate of Education (UCE)*; plus
- the *Uganda Advanced Certificate of Education (UACE)*.

The diploma is awarded after completion of a higher education programme. Usually students also receive an overview of subjects (transcript) with the obtained study and examination results.

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

- [Website of the Ministry of Education and Sports](#) with a list of recognised public and private universities.
- [Website of the Uganda National Council for Higher Education](#) with lists of recognised institutions of higher education.

■ Useful links

- [Ministry of Education and Sports](#), with a [list of government secondary schools](#).
- [Uganda National Council for Higher Education \(NCHE\)](#).
- [National Curriculum Development Centre \(NCDC\)](#).
- [Uganda National Examinations Board](#).
- [Uganda Business and Technical Examinations Board](#).
- [Directorate of Industrial Training \(DIT\)](#).

■ 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](#).
- **Undergraduate programme:** a programme for a bachelor's degree. See also the description in the Nuffic Glossary: [undergraduate](#).