

Online Guide to

Educational Systems



Around the World—Costa Rica



NAFSA

Association of
International Educators

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In 1948, NAFSA pioneered the concept of providing professional services for postsecondary exchange students. Early efforts to enhance living and learning environments for exchange students have blossomed into today's active association of accomplished professionals whose numbers continue to grow worldwide.

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Instructions for Using the *Online Guide to Educational Systems Around the World*

Susan Whipple, Editor

December 2008

These documents are updates to those in the 1999 publication *A Guide to Educational Systems Around the World* (which was an update to *The Handbook on the Placement of Foreign Graduate Students*, published in 1990 and colloquially known as the "Graduate Handbook.")

It is important to note that these documents do not replace either of the earlier publications, which should be used for credentials issued prior to 1999, the period those publications cover.

Readers familiar with the original version of *A Guide to Educational Systems Around the World* will note that these updates use the same format:

1. Each of these publications provides lists of credentials and other data that can be used both for undergraduate and graduate admissions.
2. "Advice for admissions officers" is intentionally not provided. We have attempted to avoid all types of subjective interpretation, relying instead on objective data. Users of these updates should use the information provided in conjunction with other resources to determine their own placement recommendations and possibility of transfer credit. Questions about credentials can be posted on the Admission and Credential Evaluation discussion forum on the Recruitment, Admissions, and Preparation Knowledge Community Web site:
http://www.nafsa.org/knowledge_community_network.sec/recruitment_admissions/admissions_and_credential/forums.

Please note that these updates should be supplemented by additional written materials that describe complete foreign educational systems, including data on specific institutions, and by professional training in the theory and practice of credential evaluation. Many of these resources are available from NAFSA, either as printed publications or on-line. The need for institution support for budgetary resources and training for undergraduate and graduate admissions personnel remains important, regardless of the increased availability of resources on the Web.

These publications were compiled by many authors using a standardized template and style. Although minor variations among entries do occur, the basic guidelines are explained as follows:

Educational Ladder

1/2 1/2 1/2 1/2 1/2 1/2 1/2 1/2 1/2 1/2
1 - 6 | 7 | 8 | 9 | 10 | 11 | 12 | 13 | 14 | 15 | 16 |
A B B

The year or half-year at which a credential is awarded is the point at which the corresponding credential letter is placed. In the example above, credential A is awarded after the 9th year of education. Note that the corresponding letter is placed directly below the number 9.

All *normal* possibilities of the total number of years of education that a credential might require are indicated on the ladder. This occurs for credential B, in which the credential can be awarded after either 12 or 13 total years of education. An explanation is provided in the description of the credential whenever a letter appears on the ladder more than once. There are a few cases when this multiple-listing style was not used; in these cases, there are explanatory comments.

An arrow (→) is used after a credential letter in cases where no maximum length of study for a particular program is specified, or where the study time is open-ended. For example, a doctor of philosophy degree program may require a minimum of three years of enrollment. The corresponding credential letter with an arrow will appear under the minimum number of total years of education required to earn the Ph.D.

Explanations About Documents

Credentials are divided into two categories: secondary and postsecondary. The decision to include the credential under one or the other category is not a subjective one—a credential is determined to be either secondary or postsecondary according to its designation by the country of origin, regardless of how individual institutions might perceive the level (and recommend transfer credit).

Numerical endnotes, placed directly after the complete list of credentials, are used when a lengthy explanation about a credential is necessary.

Foreign Terms and Words

Foreign terms are used whenever possible, and are translated literally, in most cases. Literal translations are used to avoid subjectivity. We have attempted to be consistent with translations across languages, though readers may notice some differences between countries because of preferences indicated by the submitters. Credential evaluators and admissions personnel should always rely on official foreign language documents, using translations only as guides.

Grading Information

Only the most common grading scales used in each country are listed. Evaluators understand that variations in grading are common and that one should always consult the grading information that may be provided on official transcripts. Rather than making grade equivalency statements, the submitter(s) of the update provided information regarding grading practices within the countries.

year programs prepare the students for the workforce. The students receive a diploma with a number of credits varying from 60 to 90. Diplomas awarded by such institutions are not recognized in the formal education system and lead only to employment. Admission requires credential **B** or **C**.

- E** *Título de Diplomado en_* (Title of Diploma Degree in_): Two to three years of short-term studies. Holders of this diploma are called *Diplomados*. Students may choose to continue their studies or seek employment. Admission requires credential **B** or **C**.
- F** *Título de Profesor de Enseñanza (diferentes áreas)* [Title of Teacher of (different fields) Education]: Three three-year programs are exclusive for teacher training. The students may choose to continue their studies or seek employment. Admission requires credential **B** or **C**.
- G** *Grado de Bachiller* (Bachelor's Degree) / *Grado Académico de Bachillerato Universitario* (Academic Degree of University Bachelor): Four-year program in different fields. The students may choose to continue their studies or seek employment. Admission requires Credential **B**, **C**, **E** or **F**.
- H** *Título de Licenciado* (Title of Licentiate): Five-year program in different fields. The students may choose to continue their studies or seek employment. Admission requires Credential **B**, **C**, or one year program based on credential **G**.
- I** *Título de Licenciado en Medicina y Cirugía* (Title of Licentiate in Medicine and Surgery): Six-year program. Credential gives access to professional practice and graduate education. Admission requires Credential **B** or **C**.
- J** *Título de Especialista* (Title of Specialist): *Especialidad Profesional* (Professional Specialization) forms part of postgraduate studies centered on specialized practical training in a given professional field. The length of program varies and a qualifying university degree is a requirement. The students may choose to continue their studies or seek employment. Admission requires Credential **H** or **I**.
- K** *Grado Académico de Maestría* (Academic Degree of Master): Two-year program after a qualifying first degree. Admission requires Credential **G**, **H**, or **I**.
- L** *Doctorado Académico* (Academic Doctorate): The *Doctorado Académico* is highest degree. The minimum duration of studies is three-and a half years after *Bachillerato Universitario / Licenciatura*. Other admission credentials include: **H,I,J** or **K**.

GRADING SCALES

Secondary:

Numerical	Description	Translation	U.S. Equivalence
100	Sobresaliente	Excellent	4.00/A
80	Notable	Very Good	3.00/B
65	Suficiente	Pass	2.00/C
0	Insuficiente	Fail	0.00/F

Postsecondary:

Numerical	Description	Translation	U.S. Equivalence
95-100	Excelente	Excellent	4.00/A
85-94	Muy Bueno	Very Good	3.00/B
70-84	Bueno	Good	2.00/C
0-69	Nota Minima	Minimum Grade	0.00/F

POSTSECONDARY INSTITUTION RECOGNITION BODY:

Ministerio de la Educación Pública (Ministry of Public Education)
Apartado Postal: 10087-1000; San José Costa Rica
<http://www.mep.go.cr/>

CONESUP: Consejo Nacional de Educación Superior Privada (National Council of Private Higher Education). Also written as Consejo Nacional de Enseñanza Superior Universitaria Privada (National Council of Private Higher University Instruction)
Apartado 10087-1000; San José, Costa Rica
<http://www.mep.go.cr/CONESUP/index.aspx>

SINAES: Sistema Nacional de Acreditación de la Educación Superior (National System of Accreditation for Higher Education):
<http://www.sinaes.ac.cr/>

Note: In Costa Rica, institutional recognition does not confer blanket accreditation to all degree programs. Therefore, it is critical to check the CONESUP Web site for program accreditation, particularly at the graduate level for non-Costa Rican students.

RESOURCES FOR ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

Published:

Feagles, Shelley M., editor. *A Guide to Educational Systems Around the World*.
Washington, DC: NAFSA, 1999.

On-Line:

Organización de Estados Iberoamericanos Sistemas Educativos Nacionales – Costa Rica
(Organization of Ibero-American States - Costa Rica)
<http://www.oei.es/quipu/costarica/index.html>

UNESCO- World Academic Database:
<http://www.unesco.org/iau/onlinedatabase/index.html>

World Data Education. 6th edition 2006/07. Compiled by UNESCO-IBE:
<http://www.ibe.unesco.org>

Consejo Nacional de Rectores (National Council of University Rectors)
<http://www.conare.ac.cr/>

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