

Online Guide to

Educational Systems



Around the World—Puerto Rico



NAFSA

Association of
International Educators

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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.

PUERTO RICO

YEARS OF EDUCATION

0	1	→ 6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	1/2	17	1/2	18	1/2	19	1/2	20	21	22	23	24
A		C			D			F		H		I	L	J	L	L	N	M	N	M	N	N	U	U
B					E			G						K	N	M		N		N	P	U		
														L		N		P		P	T	V		
														M	O	Q				R	U			
																				S				
																				T				

CREDENTIALS OR DOCUMENTATION

Pre-K / Kindergarten

- A** *Pre-Kinder* (Pre-Kindergarten) at age four is not compulsory. Puerto Rican Senate Bill P. del S. 770 proposes that Pre-K be compulsory as the first level of formal education (See *Background*).
- B** Kindergarten at age five. Kindergarten is compulsory and requires one year beyond Credential **A**.

Primary-Secondary

- C** *Educación Elemental* (Elementary Education) / *Nivel Escolar Elemental* (Elementary School Level) comprises grades one through six of elementary education beyond Credential **B**.
- D** *Educación Intermedia* (Intermediate Education) / *Nivel Escolar Intermedio* (Intermediate School Level) comprises grades seven through nine of junior-high education beyond Credential **C** and completes compulsory education. A *Diploma de Escuela Intermedia* (Junior-High Diploma) may be issued.
- E** *Segunda Unidad* (Second Unit) / *Nivel Escolar: Segunda Unidad* (Second Unit School Level): At certain Puerto Rican schools, K through ninth grade (Kindergarten, Elementary, and Junior High) are offered at the same institution.
- F** *Escuela Superior* (High School) / *Nivel Escolar Superior* (High School Level) comprises grades ten through twelve of senior-high education beyond Credential **D** (**E**). A *Diploma de Escuela Superior* (High-School Diploma) is issued.
- G** *Nivel Secundario* (Secondary Level): At certain Puerto Rican schools, seventh through twelfth grades (Junior and Senior High) are offered at the same institution.

Undergraduate

- H** *Grado Asociado* (Associate Degree) / *Grado Asociado en Artes* (Associate Degree in Arts) / *Grado Asociado en Ciencias* (Associate Degree in Sciences) normally requires two years of full-time study or 60 semester credit hours beyond Credential **F**; leads to immediate employment as well as to further study. By means of a *Programa de Traslado Articulado* (Program of Articulated Transfer), transfer students who have completed 60 semester credit hours may request a *Grado Asociado* to establish successful completion of the first two years of an undergraduate degree; an articulated transfer requires a certain g.p.a. and requisite coursework.

- I** *Bachillerato* (Bachelor's Degree) / *Grado de Bachillerato en Artes* (Bachelor of Arts Degree) / *Grado de Bachillerato en Ciencias* (Bachelor of Science Degree) / *Grado de Bachillerato en Administración de Empresas* (Bachelor of Business Administration Degree) normally requires four years full-time (or the part-time equivalent in evening, on-line, and flexible scheduling) beyond Credential **F** or two years beyond Credential **H**.
- J** *Grado de Bachillerato en Ingeniería* (Bachelor of Engineering Degree) / *Grado de Bachillerato en Ciencias de Ingeniería* (Bachelor of Sciences in Engineering Degree) normally requires five years full-time beyond Credential **F** or three years beyond Credential **H**.
- K** *Grado de Bachillerato en Arquitectura* (Bachelor of Architecture Degree) normally requires five years full-time beyond Credential **F** or three years beyond Credential **H**.

Graduate

- L** *Certificado Profesional Post Bachillerato* (Post-Baccalaureate Professional Certificate) / *Certificado Profesional Graduado* (Graduate Professional Certificate) / *Certificado de Postgrado* (Graduate Certificate) requires one to two semesters beyond Credentials **I**, **J**, or **K**.
- M** *Grado de Maestría* (Master's Degree) / *Grado de Maestría en Artes* (Master of Arts Degree) / *Grado de Maestría en Ciencias* (Master of Sciences Degree) / *Grado de Maestría en Educación* (Master of Education Degree) normally requires one to three years (depending on major) beyond Credentials **I**, **J**, or **K**.
- N** *Certificado Post Maestría* (Post-Master's Certificate) requires one to two semesters beyond Credential **M**.
- O** *Grado de Doctor en Farmacia* (Degree of Doctor of Pharmacy / Pharm.D.) requires four years beyond completion of a minimum of 71 - 74 semester credits (specified credits in Social and Behavioral Sciences, English, Spanish, Math, Chemistry, Biology, and Physics). Some 45 semester credit hours in practicums are required.
- P** *Grado de Juris Doctor* (Doctor of Law Degree) requires three years full-time (or four years in evening program) beyond Credentials **I**, **J**, or **K**.
- Q** *Grado de Doctor en Optometría* (Degree of Doctor of Optometry) requires four years beyond completion of a minimum of 90 semester credits (specified credits in Social and Behavioral Sciences, English, Spanish, Math, Chemistry, Biology, and Physics). The fourth year covers clinical experiences and both internal and external rotations.
- R** *Grado de Doctor en Medicina* (Degree of Doctor of Medicine) requires four years (two of biomedical sciences and two of clinical clerkships) beyond Credential **I**.
- S** *Grado de Doctor en Medicina Dental* (Degree of Doctor of Dental Medicine) requires four years beyond Credential **I**. The fourth year covers clinical experiences and externship.
- T** *Programa Conjunto JD/MBA* (Combined JD/MBA Program) requires four years (alternating 5 semesters in law school and 3 in business school) beyond Credentials **I**, **J**, or **K**.
- U** *Doctorado* (Doctorate) / *Ph.D.*(Ph.D.) normally requires five years beyond Credentials **I**, **J**, or **K** or four years beyond Credential **M**.
- V** *Grado de Juris Doctor / Doctor en Medicina* (Doctor of Medicine and Doctor of Law Degree) requires six years beyond Credential **I**.

Accreditation

Puerto Rican elementary schools are accredited through the Commission on Elementary Schools of the Middle States Association of Colleges and Schools.

Puerto Rican secondary schools are accredited through the Commission on Secondary Schools of the Middle States Association of Colleges and Schools. Transcripts are issued on standardized *Departamento de Educación* (Department of Education) forms.

Puerto Rican institutions of higher education generally hold regional accreditation through the Commission on Higher Education of the Middle States Association of Colleges and Secondary Schools. Other regional accreditors with a presence on Puerto Rico are the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools, New England Association of Schools and Colleges, and North Central Association of Colleges and Schools. Other accrediting organizations include the Accrediting Commission of Career Schools and Colleges of Technology, Accrediting Council for Continuing Education and Training, and Accrediting Council for Independent Colleges and Schools. See *Resources* below for June, 2009 listing of institutions and corresponding recognized accreditors (including institutions with no accreditor). Note: Transcripts do not follow a standardized format.

Brief Historical / Educational Background:

El Estado Libre Asociado de Puerto Rico (Commonwealth of Puerto Rico) is a self-governing unincorporated territory of the United States. In 1898, the U.S. occupied the island during the Spanish-American War. When Puerto Rico became an autonomous commonwealth associated with the United States, 400 years of Spanish rule over the island ended.

Under the U.S. administration, education was given high priority; public education was established, patterned after the U.S. educational system. Co-educational classes were started and English became the language of instruction while Spanish, the native tongue, was taught as a special subject. The use of English as the medium of instruction caused some serious educational problems since most students did not speak English outside the classroom; as a result, very few students mastered either language. By 1915, Spanish was returned as the medium of instruction in primary (elementary) school level, and in 1949, it became the medium of instruction in all public schools.

Puerto Ricans were first granted U.S. Citizenship by the Jones Act which went into effect on March 2, 1917; stopped for a time, U.S. Citizenship was reestablished in 1927. This citizenship is by Act of Congress and is not part of the Constitution.

Puerto Rican law defines *Educación Formal* (Formal Education) as encompassing ages 5 to 21. Formal Education will be lowered to age 4 if Puerto Rican Senate Bill P. del S. 770, dated 5-11-09, is enacted. This bill, which amends Article 1.03 of Law 149 of 7-15-99, proposes that Pre-K be compulsory as the first level of formal education, to be effective as of 8-1-11 for academic year 2011-2012.

Grade Scales

Elementary and Secondary Education

A	<i>Excelente</i> (Excellent)	4.00/A
B	<i>Bueno</i> (Good)	3.00/B
C	<i>Regular</i> (Fair)	2.00/C
D	<i>Deficiente</i> (Poor)	1.00/D
F	<i>Reprobado</i> (Failure)	0.00/F

Higher Education (Tertiary)

A / 90-100	<i>Sobresaliente</i> (Outstanding) / <i>Excelente</i> (Excellent)	4.00/A
B / 80-89	<i>Bueno</i> (Good) / <i>Notable</i> (Notable)	3.00/B
C / 70-79	<i>Satisfactorio</i> (Satisfactory) / <i>Suficiente</i> (Sufficient)	2.00/C
D / 60-69	<i>Deficiente</i> (Deficient) / <i>Aprobado pero deficiente</i> (Passed but deficient)	1.00/D
F / 0-59	<i>Reprobado</i> (Failed) / <i>Fracaso</i> (Failure) / <i>No aprobado</i> (Not passed)	0.00/F

Conv = *Convalidación* (Transfer / Equivalency)

Exr = *Exonerado* (Exempt)

I = *Incompleto* (Incomplete)

NP = *Reprobado* (Failed) / *No aprobado* (Not passed)

NS = *No Satisfactorio* (Unsatisfactory)

P = *Aprobado* (Passed)

Ret = *Retirado* (Withdrawn / Dropped)

S = *Satisfactorio* (Satisfactory)

W = *Baja autorizada* (Withdrawn / dropped with permission)

F* = *Baja sin autorización* (Withdrawn / dropped without permission)

RESOURCES

Published

Admission and Academic Placement of Students from the Caribbean: A Workshop Report - British Patterned Education, Cuba, The Dominican Republic, Dutch Patterned Education, The French West Indies, Haiti, Puerto Rico, The U.S. Virgin Islands, NAFSA & AACRAO, Centro Norte – Sur, Puerto Rico, 1974.

The International Encyclopedia of Higher Education, Volume 7 N-Q, pages 3435-3440; Asa S. Knowles, Editor-in-Chief, Jossey-Bass Publishers; San Francisco, Washington, and London; 1978.

Política pública sobre la organización escolar y requisitos de graduación de las escuelas de la comunidad elementales y secundarias del Departamento de Educación de Puerto Rico (Public policy on school organization and graduation requirements for elementary and secondary community schools of the Puerto Rican Department of Education), Carta Circular Número 9 – 2009-2010, 10 marzo 2010. Note: Document details subject and clock hour requirements for grades 1-6 as well as subjects and units of credit for grades 7-12.

Internet

Acreditaciones Institucionales de la Instituciones de Educación Superior en Puerto Rico (Institutional Accreditations of Puerto Rican Institutions of Higher Education). Note: Lists recognized accreditors; also lists institutions without recognized accreditors.

<http://www.gobierno.pr/NR/rdonlyres/3F8DE9F4-FA56-471D-99CD-0332202A678C/0/ACREDITACIONESINSTDELASIES.pdf>

Breve historia de la Educación en Puerto Rico (Brief History of Education in Puerto Rico). (Provides a glossary of educational terms.)

http://www.encyclopediapr1.org/esp/glosario_article.cfm?ref=06081401

Catálogo Graduado, Universidad de Puerto Rico, Recinto de Río Piedras (Graduate Catalog, University of Puerto Rico, Río Piedras Campus). Note: Lists all graduate academic degrees by category and semester credit hours required for all Post-Baccalaureate, Master, Post-Master, and Doctoral degrees.

http://graduados.uprrp.edu/catalogo/grados_acad.htm

Consejo de Educación Superior de Puerto Rico (Puerto Rican Council on Higher Education). <http://www.gobierno.pr/cespr/inicio/>

Departamento de Educación de Puerto Rico (Puerto Rican Department of Education).

<http://de.gobierno.pr/>

Directorio de Instituciones de Educación Superior (Directory of Higher Education Institutions). Note: Lists institutional information including websites and degree offerings, but not sources of accreditation.

<http://www.gobierno.pr/NR/rdonlyres/0BF4C446-8C55-44DB-9295-8D04016F3CB3/0/DirectorioIESENERO2010.pdf>

División de Licenciamiento y Acreditación (Licensing and Accreditation Division), Consejo de Educación Superior de Puerto Rico (Puerto Rican Council on Higher Education)

<http://www.gobierno.pr/CESPR/Conocenos/DivisionLicenciamientoAcreditacion/>

Instituciones de Educación Superior con Licencia del Consejo de Educación Superior de Puerto Rico (Institutions of Higher Education Licensed by the Puerto Rican Council on Higher Education). Note: Lists every degree and major offered by Puerto Rican institutions licensed between July 1, 2007 and June 30, 2009.

<http://www.gobierno.pr/NR/rdonlyres/32D4E295-7BA4-450C-907B-F2CC07C7F295/0/CESPRLICENCIASUNIV.pdf>

Puerto Rico Education Directory for a listing of public schools, private schools, school districts, libraries, colleges, universities with profiles of educational institutions.

<http://puerto-rico.educationbug.org/>

Universidad de Puerto Rico (University of Puerto Rico) <http://www.upr.edu/>

Universidad Interamericana de Puerto Rico (Inter-American University of Puerto Rico)

<http://www.inter.edu/>

U.S. Department of Education website <http://www2.ed.gov/about/contacts/state/pr.html>;

http://wdcrobcolp01.ed.gov/Programs/EROD/org_list_by_territory.cfm?territory_cd=PR
(Provides educational resource directory list.)

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