

Online Guide to

# Educational Systems



Around the World—Switzerland



**NAFSA**

Association of  
International Educators

Submitted by Emily Tse  
November 2011

## About NAFSA

NAFSA: Association of International Educators is a member organization promoting international education and providing professional development opportunities to the field. Hundreds of NAFSA members volunteer to serve the Association and thousands advocate for international education. NAFSA serves international educators and their institutions and organizations by establishing principles of good practice, providing training and professional development opportunities, providing networking opportunities, and advocating for international education.

For more information about NAFSA, visit [www.nafsa.org](http://www.nafsa.org).

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.

## Notice of Liability

The information in these documents is distributed on an "As is" basis, without warranty. While every precaution has been taken in the preparation of each document, neither the submitter(s) nor NAFSA shall have any liability to any persons nor entity with respect to any loss or damage caused or alleged to be caused directly or indirectly by the information contained in any of these documents. Information about each country was current at the time of upload. Education systems change periodically and updates will be written to reflect significant changes, once known. Please note that while NAFSA periodically verified the Web site links included in these e-Publications, NAFSA cannot guarantee that every link will be current at the time of download.

## Acceptable Use Guidelines

Electronic resources are provided for the benefit of the international education community. However, commercial use, systematic or excessive downloading, or electronic redistribution of these publications are all expressly prohibited.

© 2011 NAFSA: Association of International Educators. All rights reserved.

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

Susan Whipple, Editor

May 2011

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: <http://www.nafsa.org/aceforums>. For information on how to subscribe to the network, please visit [www.nafsa.org/networksubscribe](http://www.nafsa.org/networksubscribe).

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 - 6 | 7 | 8 | 9 | 10 | 11 | 12 | 13 | 14 | 15 | 16 |  
          ½   ½   ½   ½   ½   ½   ½   ½   ½   ½  
          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.



- E** *Eidgenössisches Berufsmaturitätszeugnis / Certificat Fédéral de Maturité Professionnelle / Attestato Federale di Maturità Professionale / Professional Maturity Certificate*: represents 3 to 4 years of study after completion of lower secondary education. Gives access to universities of applied sciences.
- F** *Maturitätszeugnis / Certificat de Maturité / Attestato di Maturità / Maturity Certificate*: represents 3 to 4 years of study after completion of lower secondary education. Gives access to universities, federal institutes of technology, and universities of teacher education.
- G** *Fachmaturität / Maturité Spécialisée / Attestato di Maturità Specializzata / Specialized Maturity Certificate*: represents 4 years of study after completion of lower secondary education. Gives access to universities of applied sciences and universities of teacher education.
- H** *Passarellenprüfung Berufsmaturität / Ergänzungsprüfung / Passerelle Maturité Professionnelle / Examen Complémentaire / Passerella Maturità Professionale/ Esami Complementari / University Aptitude Test Certificate*: examination giving holders of the Professional Maturity Certificate (credential **E**) access to all types of universities.

### Postsecondary

- I** *Eidgenössischer Fachausweis / Brevet Fédéral / Attestato Professionale Federale / Federal Professional Education and Training (PET) Diploma*: A further vocational qualification validated by a national professional examination (*Berufsprüfung / Examen Professionnel / Esame di Professione*). Requires several years of work experience and preparation after credential **D**.
- J** *Diplom / Diplôme / Diploma / Advanced Federal Professional Education and Training (PET) Diploma*: A further vocational qualification validated by an advanced national professional examination (*Höhere Fachprüfung / Examen Professionnel Supérieur / Esame di Professione Superiore*). Requires additional work experience and preparation after credential **I**.
- K** *Diplom HF / Diplôme ES / Diploma SSS / Diploma from a College of Professional Education and Training (PET)*: represents 2 years of full-time study at *Höhere Fachschulen / Écoles Supérieures / Scuole Specializzate Superiori*, requiring credentials **C** or **D** for admission.
- L** Bachelor: represents 3 years of study. Credential **F** is required for admission at universities and federal institutes of technology. Credential **G** is required for admission at universities of teacher education and universities of applied sciences. Holders of credential **E** are also eligible for admission at universities of applied sciences.
- M** *Diplom from Fachhochschulen / Diplôme from Hautes Écoles Spécialisées / Diploma from Universities of Applied Sciences*: represents 3 to 4 years of study after credential **E**. Being phased out.
- N** *Diplom / Diplôme / Diploma or Lizentiat / Licence / Licentiate*: represents 4 to 6 years of study at universities and federal institutes of technology after credential **F**. Being phased out.

- O Certificate of Advanced Studies: represents studies lasting a minimum of several months (10 ECTS credits). Admissions requirements vary; however, credential **L** often gives access.
- P Diploma of Advanced Studies: represents a minimum of a ½ year of study. Admissions requirements vary; however, credential **L** often gives access.
- Q Master of Advanced Studies: represents a minimum of 1 year of study. Admissions requirements vary; however, credential **L** often gives access. A terminal qualification that does not give access to doctoral studies.
- R Master: represents 1.5 to 3 years of study after credential **L**. Offered at universities, federal institutes of technology, universities of teacher education and universities of applied sciences. However, 3-year Master's programs are primarily offered at universities and federal institutes of technology.
- S Teaching Diploma for Academic Upper Secondary Schools: represents 1 year of study after a Master's degree in 1 to 2 teaching disciplines (credential **R**).
- T Dr. Med. / Doctor of Medicine: represents 1 year of study, following the 3-year Bachelor of Medicine (credential **L**) and the 3-year Master of Medicine (credential **R**).
- U *Doktorat / Doctorat / Doctorate*: represents 3 to 5 years of study after credential **R**. Offered at universities and federal institutes of technology.
- V *Habilitation*: represents postdoctoral study after credential **U**. Only at German-speaking universities, qualifying holders for professorship.

## GRADING SCALE

Grade	German	French	Italian	English
6	<i>hervorragend</i>	<i>excellent</i>	<i>eccellente</i>	excellent
5½	<i>sehr gut</i>	<i>très bien</i>	<i>molto bene</i>	very good
5	<i>gut</i>	<i>bien</i>	<i>bene</i>	good
4½	<i>befriedigend</i>	<i>satisfaisant</i>	<i>sufficiente</i>	satisfactory
4	<i>ausreichend</i>	<i>passable</i>	<i>bastante</i>	pass
3½	<i>ungenügend</i>	<i>insuffisant</i>	<i>insufficiente</i>	fail
3				
2½				
2				
1½				
1				

Please note that Switzerland also has a 10-point and a 5-point grading scale. However, these have been phased out.

## POSTSECONDARY INSTITUTION RECOGNITION BODY

Center of Accreditation and Quality Assurance of the Swiss Universities: [www.oaq.ch](http://www.oaq.ch)

Federal Office for Professional Education and Technology: [www.bbt.admin.ch](http://www.bbt.admin.ch)

Rectors' Conference of the Swiss Universities: [www.crus.ch](http://www.crus.ch)

Swiss Conference of Cantonal Ministers of Education: [www.edk.ch](http://www.edk.ch)

## RESOURCES FOR ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

### Print

Chapman, Eunice. *Switzerland: A Study of the Educational System of Switzerland and a Guide to the Academic Placement of Students from Switzerland in Educational Institutions of the U.S.A.* Washington, D.C.: American Association of Collegiate Registrars and Admissions Officers (AACRAO), 1965.

Dickey, Karlene. "Switzerland." *The New Country Index: Volume I.* Berkeley, CA. Ten Speed Press, 2004.

Dickey, Karlene. "Switzerland." *A Guide to Educational Systems around the World.* Feagles, Shelley. Ed. Washington, DC: NAFSA: Association of International Educators, 1999.

Dickey, Karlene. *Switzerland: A Study of the Educational System of Switzerland and a Guide to the Academic Placement of Students from Switzerland in Educational Institutions of the United States.* Washington, D.C.: American Association of Collegiate Registrars and Admissions Officers (AACRAO), 1981.

Dickey, Karlene and Karen Lukas. *Swiss Higher Schools of Engineering and Swiss Higher Schools of Economics and Business Administration.* Washington, D.C.: American Association of Collegiate Registrars and Admissions Officers (AACRAO) and NAFSA: Association of International Educators, 1991.

Egger, Eugène and Emile Blanc. *Education in Switzerland.* Geneva: Swiss Educational Documentation Centre, 1974.

Garke, Esther. *Higher Education in Switzerland.* Vollman, W. Ed. Bucharest: UNESCO European Centre for Higher Education, 1984.

National Office of Overseas Skills Recognition (NOOSR). *Switzerland: A Comparative Study.* Canberra, Australia: Australian Government Department of Education, Science and Technology, 1992.

Trempe, Marianne and Rudolf Nägeli. *A Guide to the Swiss Higher Education System and Its Qualifications.* Berne: Equivalency Information Service ENIC, 1996.

## Online

Board of the Swiss Federal Institutes of Technology: [www.ethrat.ch](http://www.ethrat.ch)

“The Bologna Reforms in Swiss Medical Education.” *The Extent and Impact of Higher Education Curricular Reform across Europe*. Enschede, Center for Higher Education Policy Studies, 2006: [http://ec.europa.eu/education/pdf/doc244\\_en.pdf](http://ec.europa.eu/education/pdf/doc244_en.pdf)

Bürgi, H. et al. *Swiss Catalogue of Learning Objectives for Undergraduate Medical Training*. Geneva: Joint Commission of the Swiss Medical Schools, 2008: [http://sclo.smifk.ch/downloads/sclo\\_2008.pdf](http://sclo.smifk.ch/downloads/sclo_2008.pdf).

Center of Accreditation and Quality Assurance of the Swiss Universities: [www.oaq.ch](http://www.oaq.ch)

Federal Office for Professional Education and Technology: [www.bbt.admin.ch](http://www.bbt.admin.ch)

*Higher Education in Switzerland*. Bern: State Secretariat for Education and Research, 2006: [http://www.ond.vlaanderen.be/hogeronderwijs/bologna/links/documents/Higher\\_Education\\_in\\_Switzerland.pdf](http://www.ond.vlaanderen.be/hogeronderwijs/bologna/links/documents/Higher_Education_in_Switzerland.pdf)

“Implementation of the Bologna Declaration in Switzerland”. *World Education News & Reviews* Volume 18, Issue 4 (August 2005): <http://www.wes.org/ewenr/PF/05july/pfpractical.htm>

*International Standards: Guide to International Academic Standards for Athletics Eligibility*. Indianapolis: National Collegiate Athletic Association, 2011: <http://www.ncaapublications.com/productdownloads/IS10.pdf>

Rectors' Conference of the Swiss Universities: [www.crus.ch](http://www.crus.ch)

Rectors' Conference of the Swiss Universities of Applied Sciences: [www.kfh.ch](http://www.kfh.ch)

State Secretariat for Education and Research (SER): [www.sbf.admin.ch](http://www.sbf.admin.ch)

*Studying in Switzerland: Universities*. Berne: Rectors' Conference of the Swiss Universities, 2011: [http://www.tuke.sk/tuke/pre-studentov/oznamy/Studying\\_online\\_2011.pdf](http://www.tuke.sk/tuke/pre-studentov/oznamy/Studying_online_2011.pdf)

*Studying in Switzerland: Universities of Applied Sciences*. Berne: Rectors' Conference of the Swiss Universities of Applied Sciences, 2011: <http://www.kfh.ch/uploads/doku/doku/Studying.pdf?CFID=24231171&CFTOKEN=81242002>

*Studying in Switzerland: Universities of Teacher Education*. Berne: Swiss Conference of Rectors of Universities of Teacher Education, 2011: [http://www.cohep.ch/fileadmin/user\\_upload/default/Dateien/03\\_Publikationen/04\\_Dokumente/2011/BR\\_COHEP\\_2011.pdf](http://www.cohep.ch/fileadmin/user_upload/default/Dateien/03_Publikationen/04_Dokumente/2011/BR_COHEP_2011.pdf)

Swiss Conference of Cantonal Ministers of Education: [www.edk.ch](http://www.edk.ch)

Swiss Conference of Rectors of Universities of Teacher Education: [www.cohep.ch](http://www.cohep.ch)

“Swiss Education Report 2010.” Aarau: Swiss Coordination Centre for Research in Education, 2010: <http://www.swissnexchina.org/background/education-report-2010.pdf>

Swiss National Science Foundation: [www.snf.ch](http://www.snf.ch)

Swiss Science and Technology Council (SSTC): [www.swtr.ch](http://www.swtr.ch)

Swiss University Conference (SUS): [www.cus.ch](http://www.cus.ch)

Swiss University Continuing Education: [www.swissuni.ch](http://www.swissuni.ch)

“Switzerland: Bologna National Report 2007-2008.” Berne: State Secretariat for Education and Research and Federal Office for Professional Education and Technology, 2008:  
[http://www.ond.vlaanderen.be/hogeronderwijs/bologna/links/National-reports-2009/National\\_Report\\_Switzerland\\_2009.pdf](http://www.ond.vlaanderen.be/hogeronderwijs/bologna/links/National-reports-2009/National_Report_Switzerland_2009.pdf)

Submitted by

Emily Tse  
International Education Research Foundation (IERF)  
November 2011