

Online Guide to

Educational Systems



Around the World—
United States of America



NAFSA

Association of
International Educators

Submitted by Margarita Sianou

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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.

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

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.

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

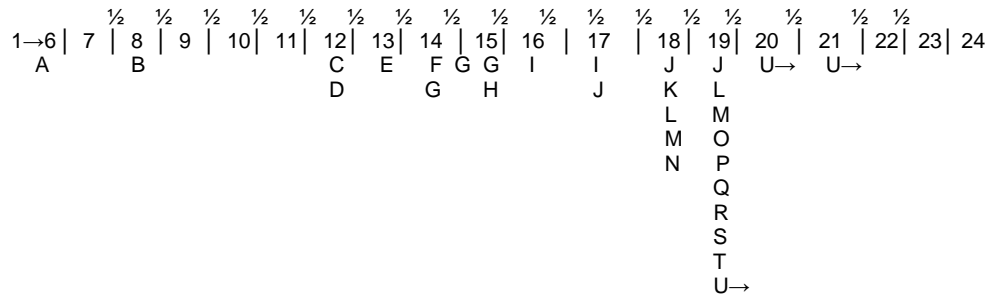
Foreign terms are used whenever possible, and are translated literally, in most cases. Literal translations are used to avoid subjectivity. We have attempted to be consistent with translations across languages, though readers may notice some differences between countries because of preferences indicated 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.

UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

YEARS OF EDUCATION →



CREDENTIALS OR DOCUMENTATION

Secondary

Elementary and secondary education requires completion of a total of 12 years of schooling. It is usually preceded by one year of pre-school which is optional in some school districts.

Elementary (primary) and secondary education typically follows one of two patterns:

- 1) 6 years elementary + 3 years junior + 3 years high school
- 2) 8 years of middle school + 4 years of high school

A common pattern is presented below:

- A Completion of six years of elementary school: documentation consists of a school record or transcript; a graduation certificate may or may not be awarded
- B Completion of two years of middle school: documentation consists of a school record or transcript; a graduation certificate may or may not be awarded
- C High School Diploma generally awarded by a senior high school
- D General Education Development: results are issued for performance examinations by the GED Testing Service

Postsecondary

- E Two possibilities:
 Advanced Placement examinations: score results issued by the Educational Testing Service for performance on standardized individual subject exams; grades of 4 and 5 are generally considered to certify completion of one year of postsecondary-level work in the subject
 International Baccalaureate: standardized curriculum, taught in the final two years of senior high school, and assessed through exams and assignments; grades of 4 and above on higher level exams are generally considered to certify completion of one year of postsecondary-level work in the subject
- F Associate of Arts (A.A) degree/Associate of science (A.S) degree: awarded by a community college, junior college, or other postsecondary institution; signifies completion of two-year program requiring credential **C** or **D** for admission
- G Associate of Applied Science (A.A.S) degree: awarded by a community college, junior college, or other postsecondary institution; signifies completion of two-year program

requiring credential **C** or **D** for admission; some two and one-half-year and three-year programs exist

- H Diploma in Nursing: awarded by a hospital school of nursing; most programs require three years of study requiring credential **C** or **D** for admission
- I Bachelors degree: awarded by a college, university, or institute upon completion of a minimum of 120 semester credits (180 quarter credits) over a period of usually four years; programs may require additional number of credits in some fields and at some institutions; credential **C** or **D** is required for admission
- J Masters degree: awarded a by a college, university, or institute upon completion of a one- to two-year program of study requiring credential I for admission
- K Juris Doctor (J.D.) degree: a three-year professional program in law based on completion of at least three years of pre-professional study*
- L Doctor of Chiropractic (D.C.): a four to five year professional program based on completion of three years of pre-professional study*
- M Doctor of Dental Science (D.D.S.) or Doctor of Dental Medicine (D.M.D.): a four year professional program based on completion of three years of pre-professional study*
- N Doctor of Pharmacy (Pharm.D): a four year professional program based on completion of two years of pre-professional study*
- O Master of Divinity (M. Div.): a three-year professional program in divinity requiring credential I for admission
- P Doctor of Medicine (M.D.): a four year professional program based on completion of three years of pre-professional study*
- Q Doctor of Optometry (O.D.): a four year professional program based on completion of three years of pre-professional study*
- R Doctor of Osteopathy/Osteopathic Medicine (O.D. or D.O.M.): a four year professional program based on completion of three years of pre-professional study*
- S Doctor of Physical Therapy (D.P.T.): a three year professional program based on completion of three years of pre-professional study*
- T Doctor of Podiatric Medicine (D.P.M.): a four year professional program based on completion of three years of pre-professional study*
- U Doctor of Philosophy (Ph.D.)**: advanced program of study, research, and writing of a dissertation requiring at least three years of study beyond credential credential I.

* Minimum admission requirements include two or three years of undergraduate study in a bachelors degree program; however, most often, candidates for admission into these programs are holders of bachelor degrees.

** **Titles of research doctorates**

Doctor of Arts (D.A.), Doctor of Business Administration (D.B.A.), Doctor of Church Music (D.C.M.), Doctor of Canon Law (J.C.D./D.C.L.), Doctor of Design (D.Des.), Doctor of Education (Ed.D.), Doctor of Engineering (D.Eng./D.E.Sc./D.E.S.), Doctor of Fine Arts (D.F.A.), Doctor of Hebrew Letters (D.H.L.), Doctor of Industrial Technology (D.I.T.), Doctor of Juridical Science (J.S.D./S.J.D.), Doctor of Music (D.M.), Doctor of Musical/Music Arts (D.M.A.), Doctor of Music Education (D.M.E.), Doctor of Modern Languages (D.M.L.), Doctor of Nursing Science (D.N.Sc.), Doctor of Philosophy (Ph.D.), Doctor of Public Administration (D.P.A.), Doctor of Physical Education (D.P.E.), Doctor of Public Health (D.P.H.), Doctor of Sacred Theology (S.T.D.), Doctor of Science (D.Sc./Sc.D.), Doctor of Social Work (D.S.W.), Doctor of Theology (Th.D.)

GRADING INFORMATION: All Levels of Education

Letter	Percentage	Quality Point	Description
A	90-100	4.00	Excellent
A-		3.67	
A/B		3.50	
B+		3.33	
B	80-89	3.00	Above Average
B-		2.67	
B/C		2.50	
C+		2.33	
C	70-79	2.00	Average
C-		1.67	
C/D		1.50	
D+		1.33	
D	60-69	1.00	Below Average
D-		0.67	
F	0-59	0.00	Failure

The grading scale used can vary. Transcripts will contain the grading scale used at the institution.

POSTSECONDARY INSTITUTION RECOGNITION BODIES

Six regional commissions grant institutional accreditation. They are listed below. In addition, professional associations accredited programs in specific fields.

Middle States Association of Colleges and Schools

Middle States Commission on Higher Education (MSCHE) www.neasc.org

New England Association of Schools and Colleges

Commission on Institutions of Higher Education (NEASC-CIHE)

www.ncahigherlearningcommission.org

Northwest Commission on Colleges and Universities (NWCCU) www.nwccu.org

North Central Association of Colleges and Schools

The Higher Learning Commission (NCA-HLC) www.ncahigherlearningcommission.org

Southern Association of Colleges and Schools (SACS)

Commission on Colleges www.sacscoc.org

Western Association of Schools and Colleges

Accrediting Commission for Community and Junior Colleges (WASC-ACCJC) www.accjc.org

Western Association of Schools and Colleges

Accrediting Commission for Senior Colleges and Universities (WASC-ACSCU)

www.wascweb.org

RESOURCES FOR ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

Published:

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

On-Line:

American Council on Education - <http://www.acenet.edu>

American Association of Collegiate Registrar's and Admission Officers/AACRAO
<http://www.aacrao.org/>

Association of American Colleges and Universities/AAC&U
<https://secure.aacu.org/source/Orders/>

Boston College Center for International Higher Education
http://www.bc.edu/bc_org/avp/soe/cihe/

Council for Higher Education Accreditation - <http://www.chea.org/>

College Board - <http://www.collegeboard.com/>

Council for Higher Education Accreditation (CHEA) <http://www.chea.org/Directories/index.asp>

Council of Graduate Schools - <http://www.cgsnet.org/>

Higher Education Publications - <http://www.hepinc.com/>

NAFSA: Association of International Educators - <http://www.nafsa.org/>

National Center for Educational Statistics - <http://nces.ed.gov/>

National Science Foundation - <http://search.nsf.gov>

US Department of Education - <http://www.ed.gov/about/offices/list/ous/international/usnei>

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