

Online Guide to

Educational Systems



Around the World—Belgium



NAFSA

Association of
International Educators

Submitted by Erica Lutes
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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.

- L *Certificat Complémentaire/Aanvullend Getuigschrift* (Complementary Certificate), *Certificat de Spécialisation/Getuigschrift van Specialisatie* (Certificate of Specialization), *Licence Spéciale/Speciale Licentie* or *Bijzondere Licentie* (Special Licentiate), *Licence Complémentaire* (Complementary License), *Diplôme Spéciale* (Special Diploma), *Diplôme Avancé* (Advanced Diploma), *Maîtrise/Master* (Master): complementary credentials requiring one to three years of study after **F, G, H** and **I**. (Complementary credentials carry a variety of names; these are the more common variations. They represent completion of specialized coursework in their program.)
- M *Doctorat/Doctoraat* (Doctorate): requires a minimum of one to two years of study beyond credentials **F, G, H** and **I**.
- N *Doctorat en Médecine Vétérinaire/Kandidatuur in de Diergeneeskundige Wetenschappen* (Doctor in Veterinary Medicine); program requires 3 years (180 credits) of study after credential **F**.
- O *Doctorat en Médecine, Chirurgie et Accouchements/Doctor in de Genees-, Heel- en Verloskunde* (Doctor in Medicine, Surgery, and Obstetrics); programs require 4 years (240 credits) of study after credential **F**.
- P *Agrégation de l'Enseignement Supérieur/Aggregatie voor het Hoger Onderwijs* (Higher Education Teaching Credential): required for university teaching; rarely awarded
- Q *Doctorat Spéciale/Speciaal Doctoraat* (Special Doctorate): requires a minimum of 2 years of study after credential **M**; one major dissertation and three minor theses must be prepared. Credential is required for university teaching but is rarely awarded.

Notes About the Flemish-Speaking System

Primary education: Compulsory from 6 to 12 years of age

Secondary education: The common secondary education is composed of 4 different types of education, each divided in 3 stages, each of 2 years duration.

- General education
- Technical education
- Artistic education
- Vocational education

In secondary education, a diploma 'secundair onderwijs' (diploma of secondary education) can be conferred at the end of the 3rd stage. Pupils attending vocational secondary education receive their diploma if they complete an extra third grade in the third stage (★) of vocational secondary education.

Postcompulsory education/upper secondary and postsecondary level (Associate degree): the 4th stage of vocational secondary education (★) (= extra third grade in the third stage) which is currently being phased out and which will be transformed into higher vocational education, i.e. advanced secondary education or Se-n-SE (Secundair –na-secundair)

Secundair-na-secundair (Se-n-se) (advanced secondary) education, which is organized by the institutions providing full-time secondary education. For organizational purposes these institutions are free to cooperate with other institutions, that offer education or training.

Tertiary education (Higher education): The Flemish higher-education system consists of university colleges, universities and 5 associations, i.e. institutional cooperation between one university and one or several university colleges.

Pursuant to the Bachelor's-Master's-Doctorate structure the following types of programs are organized:

- **Professional Bachelor'** programs: professional orientation, only at university colleges; 180 credits
- **Academic Bachelor'** programs: academic orientation, at universities or university colleges; 180 credits
- **Master'** programs: at universities or university colleges;
 - Medicine 240 credits
 - Veterinary: 180credits
 - Architecture, Bio-engineering, Dental studies, Design, Education sciences, Engineering, Economics, Law, Music, Para medicine and therapies, Pharmacy and Psychology: 120 credits
 - Other fields of study: 60 credits
- **Doctor/Phd** programs, only at university

Advanced programs dovetail with initial programs and comprise a minimum of 60 credits: the advanced Bachelor's an Advanced Master's

Hoger beroepsonderwijs (HBO5) (**Higher vocational education qualification level 5**) programs are organized by Centre's for Adult Education. However, these programs may also be offered by university colleges.

Notes About the French-Speaking System

Secondary studies: The common secondary education is composed of 4 different types of education, each divided in 3 degrees, each of 2 years in length.

- General education
- Technical education
- Artistic education
- Vocational education

The pupil obtains a certificate of higher secondary education after the 6 years of these studies. A 7th year can be organized in the technical, artistic and vocational education.

Postsecondary studies: University studies are organized in three cycles :

- 1st cycle studies lead to the academic qualification of bachelor, with a duration of three years (180 credits).
- 2nd cycle studies lead to the academic qualification of :
 - master after 1 year (60 credits), or, in some cases, after 2 years (120 credits) ;
 - veterinary doctor after three years (180 credits);
 - doctor in medicine after four years (240 credits).
 - The academic qualification of advanced master enables the acquisition of a specialist professional qualification, for instance the higher education teacher training program. This program, with at least 60 credits, may be acquired following an initial program of at least 300 credits.
- Third cycle studies include on the one hand the doctoral program (60 credits), which leads to a research training certificate, and on the other hand work linked to the preparation of a doctorate thesis, which leads to the academic qualification of doctor following thesis examination. In the French Community of Belgium, the Fund for Scientific Research (F.R.S.-FRNS) manages the 21 doctoral schools that group together the thematic doctoral schools. In principle, they are inter-university, interdisciplinary and international.

Long-term higher education courses are organized into two cycles:

- The 1st cycle of studies lasts for 3 years (180 credits) and leads to the academic grade of bachelor.
- The 2nd cycle of studies carries 60 or 120 credits that can be acquired respectively in one or two years of study at least and leads to the academic grade of master.

Short-term higher education courses are organized into one cycle:

- The cycle of studies lasts for 3 years (180 credits) and leads to the academic grade of bachelor (professional oriented bachelor).

GRADING INFORMATION

Secondary and Postsecondary

Scale One: 0-20; minimum pass is 10 or 50%

<u>Numeric</u>	<u>Percent</u>	<u>Description</u>	<u>Translation</u>
18-20	90-100	<i>Avec la plus Grande Distinction/ Met Grootste Onderscheiding</i>	With the Highest Distinction
16-17	80-89	<i>Avec Grande Distinction/ Met Grote Onderscheiding</i>	With Great Distinction
14-15	70-79	<i>Avec Distinction/ Met Onderscheiding</i>	With Distinction
10-13	50-69	<i>Suffisant/Avec Satisfaction Met Voldoening</i>	Sufficient/With Satisfaction
0-9	0-49	<i>Ajourné</i>	Failed

Scale Two: 0-20; minimum pass is 12 or 60%

<u>Numeric</u>	<u>Percent</u>	<u>Description</u>	<u>Translation</u>
16-20	80-100	<i>Avec Grande Distinction/ Met Grote Onderscheiding</i>	With Great Distinction
14-15	70-79	<i>Avec Distinction/ Met Onderscheiding</i>	With Distinction
12-13	60-69	<i>Suffisant/Avec Satisfaction Met Voldoening</i>	Sufficient/With Satisfaction
0-11	0-59	<i>Ajourné</i>	Failed

Notes About the Flemish-Speaking System

Secondary: In secondary education, the deliberation class council jointly decides on the pupil's transition and on the conferral of an orientation certificate (oriënteringsattest) (A: pass; B: selective transition whereby some education forms or courses of study are excluded; C: repeat). A diploma of secondary education may be conferred at the end of the 3rd stage of general, technical and artistic education and at the end of the 4th stage of vocational education.

Tertiary education (Higher education): Students pass a course component if they obtain 10 out of 20. This results in a credit certificate, regardless of the results obtained in any of the other components. Once the Bachelor's or Master's programmes have been completed successfully, students receive the degree of Bachelor or Master. The title of "doctor" is obtained once the candidate has defended his/her dissertation in public.

Notes About the French-Speaking System

Universities: The student has to acquire a minimum of 10 out of 20 to succeed a course. But, the student receives a credit for a subject when he/she has acquired a minimum of 12 on 20, meaning that he will no more have to pass an examination on this course.

A year of study is succeeded when all the 60 ECTS are succeeded. But a jury can decide that a student has passed a year of study if he/she has acquired at least 48 credits; in this case the remaining 12 credits must be obtained in the course of the following year. If the student must repeat the year of study, he/she may get credits from the following year up to the limit of the number of credits for which he/she is exempted.

The examination board is free to award a grade even if the averaged result is not exactly as mentioned on the scales above.

POSTSECONDARY INSTITUTION RECOGNITION BODIES

Only registered institutions of higher education can offer bachelor's and master's programmes. There are two types of institutions: statutory registered institutions and non-statutory registered institutions.

Statutory registered institutions:

These institutions are the traditional higher education institutions, i.e. the universities, university colleges, institutions for postgraduate programmes and 'other statutory registered institutions'.

(Non-statutory) Registered institutions:

Since 2004, some private institutions have successfully completed a procedure for registration and, consequently, obtained official registration by the Flemish government. They are called (non-statutory) registered institutions. The registration procedure consists of providing proof of financial solvency and the entering into partnership agreements with statutory registered institutions or recognised higher education institutions abroad

NVAO (in Dutch: Nederlands-Vlaamse Accreditatieorganisatie) is the Accreditation Organisation of the Netherlands and Flanders. The organisation was established by international treaty and it ensures the quality of higher education in the Netherlands and Flanders by assessing and accrediting programmes and contributes to enhancing this quality. In addition, *NVAO* contributes to the increase of quality awareness within higher education and improving the position of higher education in the Netherlands and Flanders in the national and international context.

Belgium is legally divided by its constitution into three cultural-linguistic communities: Flemish, French-speaking, and German. Each community is responsible for education within its borders.

Flemish Ministry of Education and Training

Department of Education and Training

Hendrik Conscience Building

Koning Albert II-laan 15

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General information: call center [Infolijn Onderwijs](http://infolijn.onderwijs.be) or call this number: +32 2 553 50 70 from abroad.

Ministère de la Communauté française

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Service général de l'Enseignement universitaire et de la Recherche scientifique
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German Community: Regierung der Deutschsprachigen Gemeinschaft. www.dgov.be

RESOURCES FOR ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

Printed

Belgium: A comparative Study. NOOSR Country Education Profiles. Department of Education and Training. Canberra: Australian Government Publishing Service, 1992.

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

Foreign Educational Credentials Required, Fifth Edition. Washington, DC: American Association of Collegiate Registrars and Admissions Officers (AACRAO), 2003.

Foreign Educational Credentials Required for Consideration of Admission to Universities and Colleges in the United States. Washington, DC: American Association of Collegiate Registrars and Admissions Officers (AACRAO), 1994.

On-line

AACRAO's EDGE Electronic Database: <http://aacraoedge.aacrao.org>

Bologna Process: www.bologna-bergen2005.no/

Commission for Educational Exchange Between the United States, Belgium, and Luxembourg - <http://www.fulbright.be/>

Conseil Interuniversitaire de la Communauté française (CIUF) - www.ciuf.be/cms/. (Interuniversity Council of the French Community.) Provides information about tertiary education in the French speaking region of Belgium; in French and Flemish languages.

Conseil des Recteurs des Universités Francophones de Belgique (Council of Rectors of Francophone Universities in Belgium) - <http://www.cref.be>. In French; links to Francophone (French speaking) universities in Belgium.

Education in the Flemish Community: <http://www.ond.vlaanderen.be/dvo/english/index.htm>. An overview of all higher education programs and institutions can as well be found on www.highereducation.be and www.studyinlanders.be.

Enseignement.be - www.enseignement.be/index.php?page=0&navi=18. General administration site for education and scientific research for French speaking Belgians.

http://eacea.ec.europa.eu/education/eurydice/eurybase_en.php#belgium – European Union website on education

International Association of Universities (IAU) Online Database/World Higher Education Database - www.iau-aiu.net/onlinedatabases/index.html

National Association of Intercollegiate Athletics (NAIA) –<http://www.naia.org>

National Collegiate Athletic Association (NCAA) Eligibility Center –
<https://web1.ncaa.org/eligibilitycenter/common/>

National Junior College Athletic Association (NJCAA) –<http://www.njcaa.org>

Publications on the website of the Department of Education and Training of the Flemish community: www.ond.vlaanderen.be/publicaties.

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