

## Notes to maps of education systems

The diagrams represent the institutional structure of education systems. They provide information on the International Standard Classification of Education (ISCED) to which major types of educational programmes and institutions have been assigned for international comparison.

### Methodological notes

When reading these diagrams the following methodological considerations must be taken into account:

- The diagrams represent education systems in 2020 unless specified otherwise;
- Programmes with enrolments accounting for 1% or less of the total number of students enrolled at the ISCED level are usually not included in the diagrams;
- The size of the graphical elements provides no indication of the size of the enrolment in the corresponding educational institutions;
- Programmes offering a part-time option are indicated in pink, but the number of graphical elements provides no indication of the number of years necessary to complete the part-time option;
- If a separate box for special needs education is not included in a diagram, special needs education may be integrated with mainstream programmes;
- The graphical element referring to adult education programmes provides no indication of the theoretical age of the students;
- All student flows are directed upwards from lower to upper levels of education unless specified otherwise.
- Regarding special needs each diagram refers of the country's specific definition.
- Regarding Adult Education it is defined as follows :

*Adult education is specifically targeted at individuals who are regarded as adults by their society to improve their technical or professional qualifications, further develop their abilities, enrich their knowledge with the purpose to complete a level of formal education, or to acquire, refresh or update their knowledge, skills and competencies in a particular field. This also includes what may be referred to as 'continuing education', 'recurrent education' or 'second chance education'.*

*In most countries adult education is not recognised as part of the formal education system and should therefore be excluded from this data collection. Formal adult education programmes included in this data collection may be designed as second chance programmes for youth or adults and offered in the same or similar formal settings as initial education. They do not have the same typical entry age as equivalent programmes in initial education and may have a different, usually shorter, duration.*

- UOE data collection on formal education, Manual on concepts, definitions and classifications, June 2019, p.6

### The ISCED classification

The classification of the levels of education is based on ISCED 2011. The first ISCED classification was developed by UNESCO in the mid-1970s, and revised in 1997, then in 2011 to reflect changes in education and learning systems. ISCED 2011 is an instrument for compiling statistics on education internationally and distinguishes among 8 levels of education as described in the sequence.

## ISCED 2011 classification

ISCED 2011 levels	Description
<b>ISCED 0</b>	<b>Early childhood education:</b> Refers to programmes with an intentional education component aimed at developing cognitive, physical and socio-emotional skills for participation in school and society. They are grouped into two categories: <b>ISCED 010, early childhood educational development</b> - programmes designed for younger children (between the ages of 0 and 2); <b>ISCED 020, pre-primary</b> - programmes designed for children from the age of 3 to the start of primary education (ISCED level 1).
<b>ISCED 1</b>	<b>Primary education:</b> Designed to provide a sound basic education in reading, writing and mathematics and a basic understanding of some other subjects.
<b>ISCED 2</b>	<b>Lower secondary education:</b> Completes provision of basic education, usually in a more subject-oriented way with more specialist teachers. In some countries, the end of this level marks the end of compulsory education.
<b>ISCED 3</b>	<b>Upper secondary education:</b> Final stage of secondary education in most countries. Stronger subject specialisation than at lower secondary level, with teachers usually more qualified.
<b>ISCED 4</b>	<b>Post-secondary non-tertiary education:</b> Internationally, this level straddles the boundary between upper secondary and post-secondary education, even though it might be considered upper secondary or post-secondary in a national context. Programme content may not be significantly more advanced than that in upper secondary, but they serve to broaden the knowledge of participants who have already completed an upper secondary programme.
<b>ISCED 5, 6, 7, and 8 (see below)</b>	<b>Tertiary education</b>
<b>ISCED 5</b>	<b>Short-cycle tertiary:</b> Programmes are more complex than those in ISCED 3 and 4, and typically shorter than those in ISCED 6. They are designed to deepen knowledge by imparting new techniques, concepts and ideas not generally covered in upper secondary education. By comparison, ISCED level 4 programmes serve to broaden knowledge and are typically not significantly more advanced than programmes at ISCED level 3.
<b>ISCED 6</b>	<b>Bachelor's or equivalent level:</b> Designed to provide participants with intermediate academic and/or professional knowledge, skills and competencies, leading to a first degree or equivalent qualification. They are typically offered by universities and equivalent tertiary educational institutions.
<b>ISCED 7</b>	<b>Master's or equivalent level:</b> Programmes designed to provide participants with advanced academic and/or professional knowledge, skills and competencies, leading to a second degree or equivalent qualification. They may have a substantial research component, but do not yet lead to a doctoral qualification. The cumulative duration of studies at the tertiary level is usually five to eight years or even longer and can be provided entirely within ISCED 7. Access to this level may be possible, in some cases, directly from ISCED 3 and 4.
<b>ISCED 8</b>	<b>Doctoral or equivalent level:</b> Programmes that lead directly to the award of an advanced research qualification, e.g. Ph.D. The theoretical duration of these programmes is three years, full-time, in most countries, although the actual enrolment time is typically longer. Programmes are devoted to advanced study and original research. Doctoral programmes exist in both academic and professional fields.

More detailed information about ISCED and the criteria used to classify programmes can be found here: *ISCED 2011 Operational Manual: Guidelines for Classifying National Education Programmes and Related Qualifications*” (<https://doi.org/10.1787/9789264228368-en>)

OECD. *Education at a Glance 2020: OECD Indicators*, OECD Publishing, 2020. <https://doi.org/10.1787/69096873-en>

# Key



Starting/ending age of compulsory education



Recognized exit point of the education system



Typical student flow



Transfer from a programme to another



Programme designed for part-time attendance



Vocational/Professional orientation  
(according to national definition at the tertiary level)



Single structure education (integrated ISCED levels)



May be provided within one school structure



Transfer at crossing lines is not possible

Diploma

Name of diploma, degree or certificate

2020

Reference year (school year 2019/2020 in the northern hemisphere)

\* **Theoretical starting ages** refer to the ages as established by law and regulation for the entry to a programme, actual starting ages may vary depending on the programme.