

Education system

# Mexico

described and compared with  
the Dutch system

This document contains information on the education system in Mexico. We explain the Dutch equivalent of the most common qualifications from Mexico for the purpose of admission to Dutch higher education.

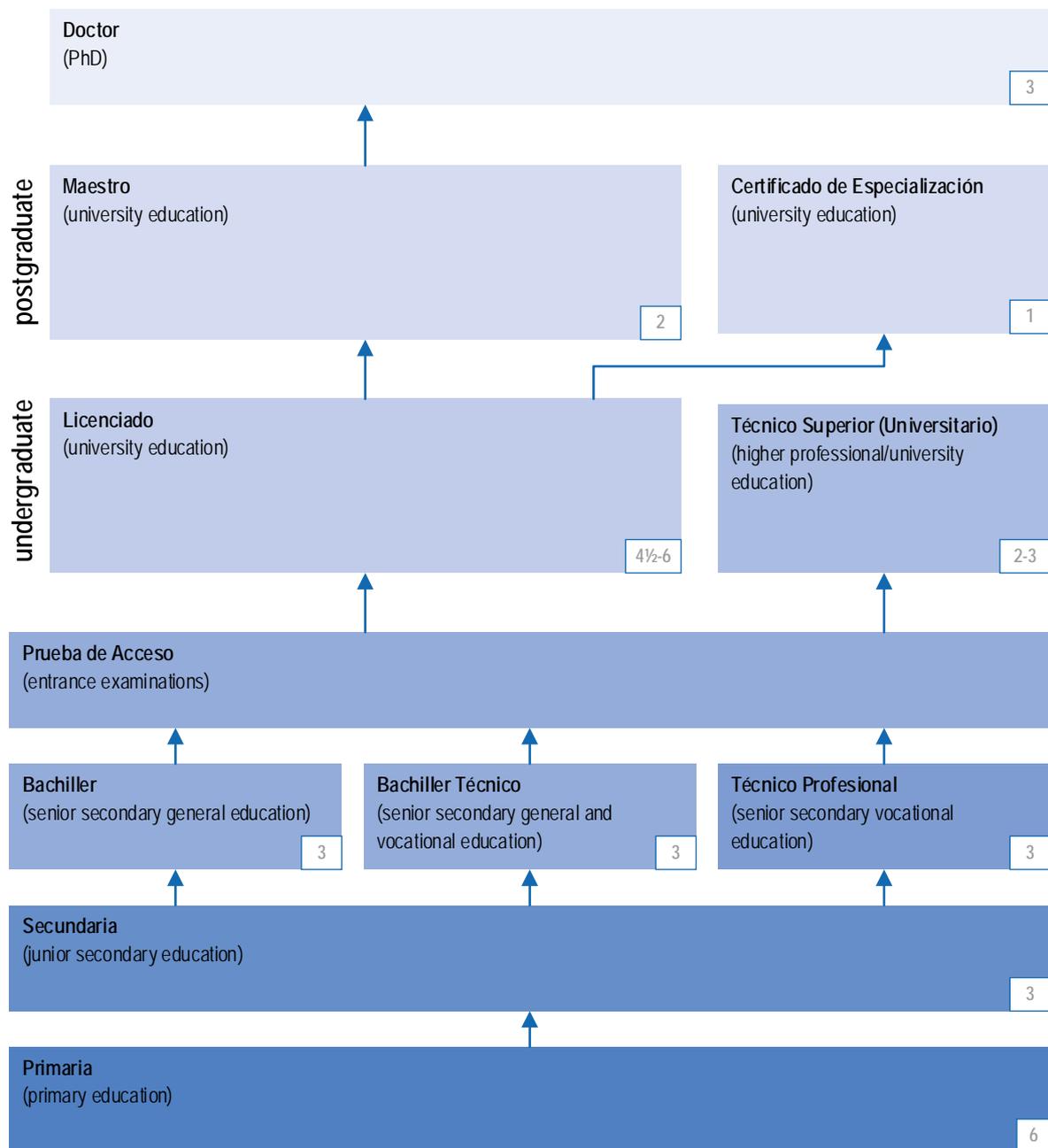
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We assemble the information for these descriptions of education systems with the greatest care. However, we cannot be held responsible for the consequences of errors or incomplete information in this document.



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## Education system Mexico



0 Duration of education

## Evaluation chart

The left-hand column in the table below lists the most common foreign qualifications applicable to admission to higher education. The other columns show the Dutch equivalent along with the comparable levels in the Dutch and European qualifications frameworks.

Foreign degree or qualification	Dutch equivalent and NLOF level	EQF level
<i>Técnico (Profesional)/ Profesional Técnico</i>	MBO diploma (qualification level 2, 3 or 4)	2-4
<i>Bachiller Técnico</i>	Approximately HAVO diploma	4
<i>Bachiller</i>	Approximately HAVO diploma	4
<i>Técnico Superior (Universitario)/ Profesional Asociado</i>	2 years of HBO	5
<i>Licenciado (at least 4½ years)</i>	approximately WO bachelor's degree or HBO bachelor's degree	6
<i>Certificado de Especialización</i>	at least WO bachelor's degree, or HBO master's degree	6-7
<i>Maestro(a)</i>	in most cases WO master's degree	7

### NB

- The information provided in the table is a general recommendation from which no rights may be derived.
- NLOF = Netherlands Qualifications Framework. EQF = European Qualifications Framework.
- The EQF/[NLOF level](#) is not so much a reflection of study load or content; rather, it is an indication of a person's knowledge and skills after having completed a certain programme of study.
- Information about Dutch equivalent qualifications can be found on our website: [the Dutch education system](#).
- [The Cooperation Organisation for Vocational Education, Training and the Labour Market \(SBB\)](#), evaluates statements on foreign qualifications and training at VMBO and MBO level. The evaluation may vary if SBB evaluates the diploma for admission to VET schools or the labour market in the Netherlands.

## ■ Introduction

**Mexico is a federation of 31 independent states, all in various stages of economic and social development. With its 20 million inhabitants, the capital of Mexico City has independent status.**

The Ministry of Education (*Secretaría de Educación Pública*, SEP) is the official body responsible for education. The Ministry shares this responsibility with various national and regional bodies. Each state, for example, has its own Ministry of Education.

The Mexican education system is based on Section 3 of the Mexican constitution and on the *Ley General de la Educación*. Higher education mainly has its roots in the *Ley de la coordinación de la educación superior*, the *Ley de profesiones* (which regulates the recognition of professions) and in the *Ley orgánica de la administración pública general*. Mexico is still implementing the 1995-2000 educational plan, which effects several reforms at various levels of education.

In 1993, education was made compulsory for children aged 6-16 (encompassing primary school and junior secondary school). The Federal government's right to set the curricula for primary education, junior secondary education and teacher training programmes was also established at that time. The language of education is Spanish.

The academic year runs from August until June.

## ■ Primary and secondary education

Basic education is primarily provided by the state (i.e. 93 percent), but there are also private schools for basic education. Basic education is made up of pre-school (*preescolar*) (age category 5-6 years), primary school (*educación primaria*) with a nominal duration of 6 years (age category 8-12 years), and junior secondary school (*secundaria*), with a nominal duration of 3 years (age category 14-15 years) (between 24 and 28 contact hours per week). Junior secondary school consists of general education (*educación secundaria*) and vocational education (*educación secundaria técnica*).

To improve the quality of education the *Plan de Estudios 2011 – Educación Básica* has been drawn up with cooperation of academic staff of the *Dirección General de Desarrollo Curricular*, which is part of the *Subsecretaría de Educación Básica de la Secretaría de Educación Pública*, *La Reforma Integral de la Educación Básica – RIEB* (the primary education reform), and the *Plan de Estudios 2011* in particular, represents a major step forward for schools to be better prepared for specific educational needs of each student.

The requirement for entry into senior secondary school is the certificate of basic education. Many schools also have an entrance examination. Universities (*escuelas preparatorias*) also offer the *bachillerato*, i.e. the final years of general senior secondary education.

Senior secondary education (*educación media superior*) has a nominal duration of 3 years (each semester lasts 20 weeks, of which 16 weeks of effective teaching and 4 weeks in between. Since 1993 senior secondary education has offered the following three types of education:

- general senior secondary education (*propedeútica/preparatoria/bachillerato*), which prepares pupils for higher education and culminates in the *Bachiller* certificate.
- general senior secondary education with a vocational component (*bachillerato tecnológico*), also known as the *bachillerato bivalente*. This type of education also provides admission to higher education, and culminates in the *Bachiller Técnico* certificate.

The words *Bachiller* and *Bachiller Técnico* appear on the *Certificado de Estudios* (list of marks). The list of marks is also a certificate.

In terms of level, the *Bachiller* or *Bachiller Técnico* is approximately comparable to a HAVO diploma.

- purely vocational education (*educación profesional técnica or terminal*), which grants no admission into higher education. This type of education also last 3 years (although shorter programmes are in existence). Upon completion of the programme, students are awarded the *Técnico* certificate, also known as *Técnico Profesional* or *Profesional Técnico*.

In terms of level, the *Técnico*, *Técnico Profesional* or *Profesional Técnico* is comparable to an MBO diploma at qualification level 2, 3 or 4 in a similar specialization, depending on the duration and the specialization of the programme.

## ■ Admission to higher education

Candidates who wish to take the entrance examination for higher education must possess a *Bachiller* or *Bachiller Técnico* certificate. There are no other general national requirements. Some universities also offer the *bachillerato*; students of these universities are then automatically granted access (*pase reglamentario*) to a university programme.

Students from other schools must take an entrance examination. At other universities, everybody must take an entrance examination which, in addition to general education, also tests behaviour and IQ. Some universities have their own entrance examination, however most use the standard *EXANI II*, designed by the *Centro Nacional de Evaluación para la Educación Superior* (Ceneval).

## ■ Higher education

Higher education is made up of the universities, technical universities, institutes of technology and teacher-training institutes for basic education (*escuelas normales*). The quality of education may vary considerably.

Mexico has around 600 government institutions and around 1100 private institutions of higher education. The oldest private institutions are the *Universidad Autónoma de Guadalajara*, *Universidad Iberoamericana* and the *Instituto Tecnológico y de Estudios Superiores de Monterrey*. Approximately 174 government and private institutions are located in the capital. Over 70 per cent of the student population attend government institutions, most of which are autonomous.

Most private higher education institutions are not recognized. These types of private institutions usually offer programmes in the 'less exact' sciences, which require few investments such as laboratories, etc. The tremendous growth of private institutions is the result of a shortage of capacity at the government institutions, meaning that students who cannot afford the expensive elite institutions are forced to attend this cheaper type of institution. Another significant factor was the decentralization of accreditation in the 1980s, making SEP no longer the only organization for the accreditation of study programmes and recognition of institutions.

## ■ University education

At universities, instruction is provided in the following scientific fields: physics and the exact sciences, educational studies and humanities, agriculture and aquaculture, health sciences, technology, and social sciences and economics. In Mexico, higher professional programmes (such as nursing) are part of university education. Universities also offer *cursos de actualización* – additional training courses for graduates, in their own discipline.

There are two levels at the Mexican universities: *pregrado* and *posgrado*.

### **Pregrado programmes**

*Pregrado* programmes include *técnico superior universitario* and *licenciatura*, the latter of which has a nominal study duration of at least 9 semesters.

Following completion of the theoretical part of a university programme, at some universities students can also attain the *Egresado* certificate, sometimes also called *Egresado Pasante* or *Pasante*. These concepts mean 'graduated'. In general, the *Licenciado(a)* degree is awarded following successful completion of the *examen de profesional* and presentation of a final paper.

In addition to the *Licenciado* degree, professional qualifications are also used such as *Abogado* (lawyer), *Ingeniero* (engineer) and *Arquitecto* (architect). Students who have studied at a government institution must thereafter complete a period of social service (*servicio social*) as compensation for their study fees.

The procedure for obtaining the *célula profesional* (professional identity card) is centralized at the *Dirección de Profesiones* of the SEP, where the title is registered. This department issues the identity card once a number of obligations have been fulfilled, such as submission of the final paper (*tesis, tesina, monografía*), and for government institutions, completion of a certain period of social service.

In terms of level, the *Licenciado* degree following a programme of at least 4½ years is approximately comparable to a WO bachelor's degree or to an HBO bachelor's degree, depending on the specialization.

### **Posgrado programmes**

*Posgrado* programmes include *especialización, maestría* and *doctorado*.

#### **Especialización**

The *Certificado de Especialización* is awarded following the completion of a nominal 1-year post-graduate programme (60 credits). This programme should not be confused with the medical specializations, which last 3 to 5 years.

In terms of level, the *Certificado de Especialización* is comparable to at least a WO bachelor's degree or, for professional programmes, an HBO master's degree.

#### **Maestro(a)/Magister**

A *Maestro(a)* degree is awarded following a nominal 2-year post-graduate university programme (110 credits), which is completed with a final paper. The *Maestro(a)* degree grants admission to a PhD programme. It is also used for primary school teachers, which is the reason why in Mexico the English term *Master* is also used to indicate completion of a post-graduate university course.

In terms of level, the *Maestro(a)* degree is in most cases comparable to a WO master's degree.

### Doctor

On average, the *doctorado* programme has a duration of 3 years (195 credits), and is a research programme that culminates in the defence of a dissertation (*tesis de doctorado*) based on independent research.

## Higher professional education

Mexico does not have a binary system as in the Netherlands. Universities also provide short professional programmes which lead to the degree of *Técnico Superior Universitario*, also called *Profesional Asociado*. Some universities regard this title as an intermediate degree. There are also *Institutos Tecnológicos* which provide higher professional education programmes with a nominal duration of 2 to 3 years, culminating in the degree of *Técnico Superior*.

Following completion of these programmes, students can continue on to university to obtain the *Licenciado* degree. The year of the *licenciatura* in which students can enter varies. The *Bachiller* and *Bachiller Técnico* grant admission to these programmes.

In terms of level, the *Técnico Superior Universitario*, *Técnico Superior* or *Profesional Asociado* degree is comparable to 2 years of higher professional education (HBO) in a similar specialization.

## Assessment systems

Mexico does not have a standardized assessment system. In both secondary and higher education, the grades 0-10 are used with 6 as the pass grade; sometimes 0-100 or descriptions are also used.

Numerical grade	Description	Meaning
9-10 or 90-100	<i>Muy bien (MB)</i>	Very good
8 or 80-89	<i>Bien (B)</i>	Good
6-7 or 60-79	<i>Satisfactorio, Suficiente (S)</i>	Satisfactory
0-5 or 0-59	<i>Reprobado (R)</i>	Unsatisfactory

The study credits system also differs per university. In general, a programme with a nominal study duration of 4½ years is equal to 424 credits. Each credit represents a number of contact hours.

## ■ Quality assurance and accreditation

Mexico has a quality assurance system based on the European model. In 1990 the *Comisión nacional de la evaluación de la educación superior* (CONAEVA) was founded to set up the quality assurance system. The system initially consisted of self-evaluation according to CONAEVA's commission, followed by an inspection for each institution by the *Comités interinstitucionales para la Evaluación de la Educación Superior* (CIIES), special committees, and lastly a meta-evaluation of the entire higher education system.

The evaluation and accreditation of higher education programmes is the responsibility of CIIES and of the *Consejo para la Acreditación de la Educación Superior* (COPAES).

An overview of accredited undergraduated programmes is available from the website of COPAES and of postgraduated programmes from the website of the *Consejo Nacional de Ciencia y Tecnología* (CONACYT) in the *Padrón Nacional de Posgrado*. See under [Useful links](#).

Higher education institutions may only award degrees if SEP or an autonomous government institution of higher education has accredited their specializations. In this context, the *Universidad Nacional Autónoma de México* (UNAM) is also an accreditation body. Since the 1980s, private institutions have been able to apply for accreditation (*Reconocimiento de Validez Oficial de Estudios*, RVOE) to SEP, at federal level or at state level of the state where the institution is located, as well as to several autonomous and/or government institutions of higher education.

## ■ International treaties

Mexico is a signatory to the recognition agreement among Latin American countries, including the Caribbean. Under the North-American Free Trade Agreement, Mexico has concluded recognition agreements with the United States and Canada.

## ■ Composition of file

A list of marks (*certificado de estudios*) is issued at the end of secondary school, stating the type of *bachillerato* taken by the pupil. This certificate can be issued by a secondary school or by a university. The certificates are presented to SEP for certification.

The *Egresante* certificate is awarded upon completion of the theoretical component of a university programme and, once the student has satisfied all requirements, he/she is awarded the certificate for the *Licenciado/Licenciada* degree or a professional qualification. Certificates contain a photograph of the graduate. The accompanying list of marks also indicates the course programme that was taken.

## ■ List of higher education institutions

- [Website](#) of ANUIES with an [overview](#) of government and private institutions.
- [Website](#) of the *Subsecretary of Higher Education (SES)* of the SEP with an [overview](#) of all public institutions.
- [Website](#) of FIMPES with an [overview](#) of affiliated private institutions.

## ■ Useful links

- [Website](#) of the Nuffic NESO office in Mexico.
- [Website](#) of SEP, *Secretaría de Educación Pública*, the Mexican Ministry of Education.
- [Website](#) van SES, *Subsecretaría de Educación Superior*, the division Higher Education of the Ministry of Education.
- [Website](#) of ANUIES, the *Asociación Nacional de Universidades e Institutos de Educación Superior*, the association for institutions of higher education. ANUIES was established in 1950 and its members include a total of 165 governmental and private institutions.
- [Website](#) of FIMPES, *Federación de Instituciones Mexicanas Particulares de Educación Superior*, the association for higher education institutions established in 1981, encompassing 110 private higher education institutions.
- [Website](#) of CONACYT, *Consejo Nacional de Ciencia y Tecnología*, including an overview of accredited postgraduate programmes.
- [Website](#) of COPAES, *Consejo para la Acreditación de la Educación Superior*, including an overview of accredited undergraduate programmes.
- [Website](#) of the *Registro Nacional de Profesionistas*, the national register of professionals.