

The Portuguese Educational System

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Introduction

The Ministry of Education (primary and secondary education) and the Ministry of Science, Technology and Higher Education (higher education) are the responsible for the entire Portuguese education system, and are supported by the Ministry of Labour and Social Solidarity in providing pre-school education.

The Ministry is responsible for:

- * General policy
- * Educational law
- * National Curriculum guidelines
- * Publication of educational materials
- * National exams
- * Teacher in-service training

The Portuguese Educational system covers:

Pre-school education

- It is for children between the ages of 3 and 5;
- It is still optional;
- It is provided by kindergartens, which are run by a variety of State organisations, charitable institutions, private schools and cooperatives, unions and other organisations.

Compulsory Schooling: Basic Education

- * It is compulsory and free;
- * It lasts for 9 years, covering children and young people between 6 and 15 years old;
- * It comprises 3 consecutive cycles:
 - * the 1st cycle - (4 years) provides a general education, with a single teacher, sometimes supported in specialised areas;
 - * the 2nd cycle - (2 years)
 - * the 3rd cycle - (3 years) are taught by a single teacher per subject or multidisciplinary educational field.

Basic Education

1st cycle	6-10 years old	4 years	National Exam at the end of the cycle - Portuguese and Maths
2nd cycle	10-12 years old	2 years	National Exam at the end of the cycle - Portuguese and Maths
3rd cycle	12-15 years old	3 years	National Exam at the end of the cycle - Portuguese, Maths and English

A school for all: inclusive education

- * Pupils with disabilities;
- * Pupils with learning difficulties;
- * Pupils whose language is not the Portuguese language - students from different nationalities have additional Portuguese lessons.

Post-compulsory Schooling: Secondary Education

- This comprises 3 years of education (10th, 11th and 12th years of schooling);
- It is for students who intend to continue studies or to join the labour market;
- It includes science and humanities and specialised artistic, technological or vocational training courses, and is provided by secondary schools and vocational schools.

Higher Education

Higher education in Portugal involves universities and polytechnics;

- * The academic qualifications of Graduate (1st cycle), Master (2nd cycle) and Doctor (3rd cycle) can be obtained by university and polytechnic students;
- * Undergraduate courses last for 3 years on average, and Masters from 1 to 2 years;
- * Admission to higher education institutions depends on the number of vacancies available, which is regulated by the national entrance exam organised by the *Direcção Geral do Ensino Superior* [Directorate-General for Higher Education].
- * Applications are normally submitted in July and early August to the admission services in the applicant's area of residence or through the Internet (electronic applications available via the website of the *Direcção Geral do Ensino Superior* [Directorate General for Higher Education]).
- * In order to be accepted, EU/EEA nationals must present an academic qualification equivalent to the 12th year of schooling.