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Chapter 9

ISCED 2011 level 6:

Bachelor's or equivalent level

Programmes at ISCED level 6, or Bachelor's or equivalent level, are longer and usually more theoretically-oriented than ISCED level 5 programmes. They are often designed to provide participants with intermediate academic and/or professional knowledge, skills and competencies, leading to a first degree or equivalent qualification.

They typically have a duration of three to four years of full-time study at the tertiary level. They may include practical components and/or involve periods of work experience as well as theoretically-based studies. They are traditionally offered by universities and equivalent tertiary educational institutions.

Programmes classified at ISCED level 6 may be referred to in many ways, for example: Bachelor's programme, licence or first university cycle. For international comparability purposes, the term 'Bachelor's or equivalent level' is used to label ISCED level 6.



DESCRIPTION

Definition

(§224)¹ First programmes at ISCED level 6, or Bachelor's or equivalent level, are longer and usually more theoretically-oriented than ISCED level 5 programmes. They are often designed to provide participants with intermediate academic and/or professional knowledge, skills and competencies, leading to a first degree or equivalent qualification. Programmes at this level are typically theoretically-based but may include practical components and are informed by state of the art research and/or best professional practice. Programmes at ISCED level 6 do not necessarily require the preparation of a substantive thesis or dissertation.

(§226) Upon completion of ISCED level 6 programmes, individuals may continue their education at ISCED level 7 (Master's or equivalent level), although not all ISCED level 6 programmes provide access to ISCED level 7. ISCED level 6 programmes do not usually give direct access to programmes at ISCED level 8 (doctoral or equivalent level).

Classification criteria (§228)

Main criteria

- a) Theoretically- and/or professionally-based content

(§224) Programmes at this level are typically theoretically-based but may include practical components and are informed by state of the art research and/or best professional practice.

- b) Entry requirements

(§226) Entry into these programmes normally requires the successful completion of an ISCED level 3 or 4 programme with access to tertiary education.

- c) Minimum cumulative duration of (first-degree) programme

(§229) First-degree programmes at this level typically have a minimum cumulative duration of three years of full-time study at the tertiary level. For systems in which degrees are awarded by credit accumulation, a comparable amount of time and intensity would be required.

- d) Position in the national degree and qualification structure

(§230) Programmes at this level typically lead to first degrees. Programmes leading to a second or further degree may be included in ISCED level 6 if they are equivalent in complexity of content to programmes already classified at this level in the same education system *and* fulfil the other main criteria.

Subsidiary criteria

- a) Staff qualifications

(§225) Instruction at this level often takes the form of lectures by staff who are typically required to have attained ISCED levels 7 or 8 or have achieved experience as a senior professional in the field of work. (§231) Where appropriate, the requirement of ISCED level 8 qualifications for some of the teaching staff may be a good proxy criterion for education programmes at this level in education systems where such a requirement exists. This can serve to distinguish ISCED level 5 programmes from ISCED level 6 programmes.



b) No direct access to ISCED level 8 programmes

(§225) Programmes at this level do not necessarily involve the completion of a research project or thesis, but if they do, it is less advanced, less independent or is undertaken with more guidance than those at ISCED level 7 or 8. (§226) ISCED level 6 programmes do not usually give direct access to programmes at ISCED level 8 (doctoral or equivalent level).

Complementary dimensions

(§233) Two dimensions may differentiate programmes at ISCED level 6.

(§234) Programme orientation:

- Academic; and
- Professional².

(§235) Programme duration and position in the national degree and qualification structure:

- *Stage (or programme) within a first tertiary degree at Bachelor's or equivalent level* with a cumulative theoretical duration (at tertiary level) of less than three years, therefore insufficient for completion of ISCED level 6;
- *First tertiary degree programme* with a cumulative theoretical duration (at tertiary level) of three to four years, at ISCED level 6 (Bachelor's or equivalent level);
- *Long first degree programme* with a cumulative theoretical duration (at tertiary level) of more than four years, at ISCED level 6 (Bachelor's or equivalent level); and
- *Second or further degree programme, following successful completion of a Bachelor's or equivalent programme*, at ISCED level 6 (Bachelor's or equivalent level).

CORRESPONDENCE BETWEEN ISCED 2011 AND ISCED 1997

See correspondence section in the tertiary education chapter.

GUIDELINES FOR CLASSIFYING PROGRAMMES AND THEIR RELATED RECOGNISED QUALIFICATIONS AT ISCED LEVEL 6

Programmes at ISCED level 6, or Bachelor's or equivalent level, are longer and usually more theoretically-oriented than ISCED level 5 programmes. They are often designed to provide participants with intermediate academic and/or professional knowledge, skills and competencies, leading to a first degree or equivalent qualification (§224).

They may include practical components and/or involve periods of work experience as well as theoretically-based studies (§230).

They are traditionally offered by universities and equivalent tertiary educational institutions (§224).

It is important to note that programmes with a similar name to "Bachelor" should only be included in ISCED level 6 if they are equivalent in complexity of content and fulfil the other main criteria (§227).

Entry into first programmes at Bachelor's or equivalent level normally requires the successful completion of an ISCED level 3 or 4 programme with access to tertiary education. Entry may depend on subject choice and/or grades achieved at ISCED levels 3 and/or 4. It may also be necessary to take and succeed in entrance examinations. Entry or transfer into ISCED level 6 is also sometimes possible after the successful completion of ISCED level 5 (§226) (see *Examples Group 4 at ISCED level 5*).

Programmes at this level typically lead to first degrees and equivalent qualifications in tertiary education (although individuals may have completed an ISCED level 5 qualification prior to enrolling in an ISCED level 6 programme) (§230). They typically have a duration of three to four years of full-time study at the tertiary level. For systems in which degrees are awarded by credit accumulation, a comparable amount of time and intensity would be required (§229). (**Examples Group 1**)



Long first degrees of more than four years' duration are included at this level if equivalent to Bachelor's programmes in terms of complexity of content (§230). **Examples Group 2.** However, long first degrees in highly-specialised professional studies (e.g. medicine, dentistry, veterinary studies and, in some cases, law or engineering) are usually classified at ISCED level 7 (§247). They are typically substantially longer than other first degrees classified at ISCED level 6 and cover – both in depth and in breadth – more complex content of a type more similar to Master's or equivalent level.

Programmes which require a Bachelor's degree to enter should be classified as second or further degrees (even if they do not lead to a degree). Such programmes at this level are typically of one to two years' duration, often professionally-oriented and offering more specialisation than the first degree but do not include substantially more complex content (§230). **Examples Group 3.** Programmes following a Bachelor's which have a substantial research component should normally be classified at ISCED level 7.

Upon completion of ISCED level 6 programmes, individuals may continue their education at ISCED level 7 (Master's or equivalent level), although not all ISCED level 6 programmes provide access to ISCED level 7 (§226). Programmes which require the successful completion of a programme at ISCED level 7 for entry should not be classified at ISCED level 6 regardless of their duration.

EDUCATIONAL ATTAINMENT AT ISCED LEVEL 6

Educational attainment at ISCED level 6 requires the successful completion – leading to a recognised qualification – of a programme representing a minimum duration at ISCED level 6 of at least three years. In the countries of the European Higher Education Area, this would be equivalent to at least 180 European Credit Transfer System credits.

(§238) For educational attainment, recognised intermediate qualifications from the successful completion of stages of programmes (prior to the first degree) which are insufficient for ISCED level 6 completion are classified at ISCED level 5.

The successful completion of programmes representing less than three years' study within ISCED level 6 normally gives rise to educational attainment at ISCED level 5 (even in countries which do not have any ISCED level 5 programmes).

Examples Group 4.

(§239) Recognised intermediate qualifications from the successful completion of programmes (prior to the first degree) which are insufficient for ISCED level 7 completion are classified at ISCED level 6 for educational attainment.

Honorary degrees awarded by universities on the basis of other considerations and not any research work are not recognised for the purposes of educational attainment.

EXAMPLES OF PROGRAMMES AND QUALIFICATIONS CLASSIFIED AT ISCED LEVEL 6

(§227) Programmes classified at ISCED level 6 may be referred to in many ways, for example: Bachelor's programme, licence, or first university cycle. However it is important to note that programmes with a similar name to 'Bachelor' should only be included in ISCED level 6 if they satisfy the criteria described in [ISCED 2011] Paragraph 228. For international comparability purposes, the term 'Bachelor's or equivalent level' is used to label ISCED level 6.

Examples Group 1:

First degree programmes at Bachelor's or equivalent level (three to four years)

[ISCED-P: 645, 655 or 665; ISCED-A: 640, 650 or 660]

Djibouti – *Enseignement supérieur de cycle long* (Long cycle tertiary education). This is a four-year tertiary programme that requires the completion of upper secondary education with access to tertiary education as the minimum condition for admission. After completion, graduates receive a Bachelor's equivalent degree (*Licence* or *Maitrise*) in the relevant field of study. (ISCED –P: 665; ISCED-A: 660)



Finland – *Ammattikorkeakoulututkinnot* (Polytechnic Bachelor's degree programme). These programmes (three to four years in duration) prepare for occupations with high skill requirements. They combine theoretical studies (basic and professional studies) with work and practical training. The programmes involve completion of a large research project or thesis. Students must have completed upper secondary education prior to entry. (ISCED-P: 665; ISCED-A: 660)

Germany – *Fachhochschulen* (Universities of Applied Sciences). This is a four-year programme at the university level that prepares for occupations which require the application of scientific findings and methods. Students must at least have completed *Fachoberschule* (ISCED 3 or 4) or equivalent. It leads to a first tertiary degree, *Diplom* (FH). (ISCED-P: 645; ISCED-A: 640)

Japan – *Koutou senmon gakko Senkoka, Tokurei Tekiyou Senkoka* (College of Technology, NIAD-UE validated advanced course). This programme follows the successful completion of the five-year *Koutou senmon gakko* (Colleges of Technology) programme (first three years: ISCED-P 354, last two years: ISCED-P 554). Although by law these programmes must have a minimum duration of at least one year, all *Koutou senmon gakko Senkoka* programmes extend over two years, and provide an advanced-specialised engineering education. Students who successfully complete *Tokurei Tekiyou Senkoka* (College of Technology, NIAD-UE validated advanced course), which is recognised as equivalent to an undergraduate programme by the National Institution for Academic Degrees and University Evaluation (NIAD-UE), may be awarded a Bachelor's degree and may progress to graduate school. (ISCED-P: 665; ISCED-A: 660)

Kyrgyzstan – *Высшее профессиональное образование, ведущее к поступлению в программы продвинутых научных исследований и получению диплома бакалавра* (Bachelor's degree education programme). This is a four-year tertiary programme which requires the certificate of upper secondary education to enter. After successful completion, graduates are awarded a Bachelor's degree in the relevant field of education. (ISCED-P: 665; ISCED-A: 660)

Netherlands – *Hoger beroepsonderwijs (HBO)* (Professional Bachelor's degree programmes). *HBO* programmes provide theoretical and practical training for occupations for which a higher vocational qualification is required. In these four-year higher professional education programmes, teaching is of a more practical nature than in universities. The most common fields studied are agriculture, teacher education, social work and community education, health care and the arts. (ISCED-P: 655; ISCED-A: 650)

Spain – *Diplomatura Universitaria* (University education – first degree (first cycle)). This is a first three-year university degree programme leading to the *Diplomado Universitario, Arquitecto Técnico or Ingeniero Técnico* in a particular field. Holders of these qualifications may enter the labour market directly or be admitted to second-cycle university education. (ISCED-P: 665; ISCED-A: 660)

Switzerland – *Fachhochschule, haute école spécialisée* (Bachelor's degree programme). These three- to four-year programmes require a "*Berufsmaturität/maturité professionnelle*" (ISCED 3 vocational education of three or four years' duration with a substantially enlarged general education component) for entry. They prepare students for highly-skilled professions in fields of study such as architecture, engineering, business administration, design, health, social work, arts and education. (ISCED-P: 645; ISCED-A: 640)

Thailand – *Vocational Education and Training programmes at Bachelor's level (continuing education)*. These two-year programmes are offered within the context of continuing education. Admission to these programmes requires the completion of a two-year vocational diploma that is classified as short-cycle tertiary education (ISCED level 5). The programme therefore represents a total cumulative duration of four years' study at tertiary level. Upon successful completion, graduates are awarded a Bachelor's equivalent degree. (ISCED-P 665; ISCED-A 660)

Tunisia – *الإجازة التطبيقية* (Applied degree). This is a three-year first university degree programme which requires the completion of upper secondary education with access to tertiary education as the minimum condition for admission. Upon completion, graduates receive the applied degree (*Licence appliquée*) in a particular field of education leading to the labour market and to a higher level of education. (ISCED-P: 665, ISCED-A: 660)

United Kingdom – *Honours degree – Bachelor's degree programme*. This is a first tertiary degree, awarded usually after three years of study. Students usually have to satisfy examiners in a series of annual examinations or by a system of continuous assessment, as well as sit for a final degree examination at the end of the programme. The honours degree usually comprises the study of one main and one subsidiary subject only. (ISCED-P: 665; ISCED-A: 660)



United States – *Bachelor's degree programme*. This is typically a four-year programme undertaken at colleges or universities. These undergraduate programmes typically require a high school diploma or equivalent for entry. Bachelor's degree recipients can enter the labour force or continue their education in graduate (Master's or PhD) or first professional (law, medicine, dentistry) degree programmes. (ISCED-P: 665; ISCED-A: 660)

Examples Group 2:

Long first degree programmes at Bachelor's or equivalent level (more than four years)

[ISCED-P: 646, 656 or 666; ISCED-A: 640, 650 or 660]

Algeria – مهندس دولة (State engineer). This is five-year tertiary programme that is offered to graduates from upper secondary education. Upon completion, graduates from this programme receive a state engineer degree (*Ingénieur d'état*) in different fields of education. (ISCED-P: 666, ISCED-A: 660)

Colombia – *Título Universitario* (University degree). These programmes are long first university degrees (at least four years in duration, usually five), which provide the student with a professional title or a title in a specific subject. Admission to the programme requires the completion of upper secondary education (ISCED level 3), as well as success in the State examination for entry into tertiary education. (ISCED-P: 666, ISCED-A: 660)

Denmark – *Mellemlange videregående uddannelser – professionsbachelor* (Tertiary education, medium cycle, professional Bachelor's). These five-year programmes are entered following successful completion of upper secondary education (ISCED level 3). They prepare students for professional work in certain fields such as engineering. The degree obtained is considered similar to the level of other Bachelor's degrees, which are three to four years long. Upon completion, students may enter the given profession and may also have the possibility to enter a Master's programme. (ISCED-P: 656, ISCED-A: 650)

Mexico – *Licenciatura universitaria* (University Bachelor's, five years). The entry requirement for these university programmes is the *Bachillerato* (upper secondary certificate). While the duration of other *Licenciatura* programmes in the country are one year less, the five-year degrees obtained are considered to be similar and are all at the level of ISCED 6. Upon completion of these programmes, students may enter a *Maestría* (Master's level programme, ISCED 7). (ISCED-P: 646, ISCED-A: 640)

Syrian Arab Republic – برامج الهندسة التقنية (Technical engineering programmes). These are five-year tertiary education programmes in the fields of engineering that require the completion of upper secondary as a minimum condition for admission. After successful completion, graduates are awarded a Bachelor's degree in engineering. (ISCED-A: 666; ISCED-A: 660)

Examples Group 3:

Second or further degree (following successful completion of a Bachelor's or equivalent programme)

[ISCED-P: 647, 657 or 667; ISCED-A: 640, 650 or 660]

Côte d'Ivoire – *Enseignement universitaire général : 2^e cycle (Maîtrise)* (General university education, second cycle leading to the *Maîtrise*). This is a second degree programme following successful completion of a *License*, a Bachelor's equivalent programme. The programme lasts for only one year and has no substantive research component. (ISCED-P: 667, ISCED-A: 660).

India – *Bachelor of Education (B.Ed)*. This is a one-year tertiary programme in education which is offered to holders of a Bachelor's degree from different disciplines who are interested in pursuing a career in teaching. A Bachelor of Education degree is awarded at the end of the programme. (ISCED-P: 667, ISCED-A: 660)

Ireland – *Higher Diploma*. This diploma is normally awarded following completion of a programme of one year's duration in a recognised higher education institution. The entry requirement for a Higher Diploma programme is typically an Honours Bachelor's degree, but Ordinary Bachelor's degrees can also provide access. Successful completers of the Higher Diploma may progress to a Post-graduate Diploma, Master's degree or, in some cases, programmes leading to a doctoral degree. (ISCED-P: 667; ISCED-A: 660)

Morocco – برامج تكوين أساتذة التعليم الابتدائي (Primary education teacher training programme). This is a one-year programme that requires the completion of a Bachelor's equivalent programme (*Diplôme de Licence d'études fondamentales (LEF)*)



for entry. Following the completion of the teacher training programme, students are awarded the *Certificat d'études normales d'instituteurs (CENI)*, which enables holders to practise as qualified teachers in primary education. (ISCED-P: 667 and ISCED-A: 660)

Norway – *Videreutdanning* (Specialisation courses). These programmes include a variety of vocationally-oriented specialisations, particularly for paramedical professions and teachers, the longest being in midwifery (two years after qualification as a nurse). They build on a Bachelor's degree but do not lead to a Master's degree. (ISCED-P: 647; ISCED-A: 640)

Saudi Arabia – *برامج الدبلوم العالي* (Higher diploma programmes). These are one- to two-year tertiary programmes which require the completion of a Bachelor's degree (*درجة البكالوريوس*) as the minimum entry requirement. Mostly offered in the field of education, these programmes lead to a higher diploma (*دبلوم عالي*) that is considered nationally below the level of a Master's degree. (ISCED-P: 667 and ISCED-A: 660)

Switzerland – *Fachhochschule Nachdiplom, haute école spécialisée diplôme postgrade* (Master of Advanced Studies). After the first degree, universities offer Master's degree programmes or specialisation programmes not leading to a research degree (Master of Advanced Studies). They typically last one year or 60 ECTS credits. Examples include business administration for engineers or specialisation in environmental aspects for chemical engineers. The cumulative duration at ISCED level 6 ranges from 4-6.5 years, depending on the specific programme. The resulting qualification is considered to be at a level similar to the first Bachelor's degree. (ISCED-P: 647; ISCED-A: 640)

Examples Group 4:

Programmes at ISCED level 6 insufficient for level completion therefore leading to educational attainment at ISCED level 5 [ISCED-P: 641, 651 or 661; ISCED-A: 540, 550 or 560]

Burkina Faso – *Diplôme universitaire d'études générales (DEUG)* (University diploma in general studies). This is a two-year tertiary programme that requires the completion of upper secondary education (ISCED level 3). Following the *DEUG*, students may proceed to a one-year *Licence* (Bachelor's) programme or a three-year engineering diploma. (ISCED-P: 661; ISCED-A: 540).

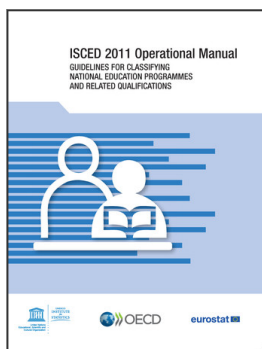
Burundi – *1^{er} cycle de l'enseignement supérieur* (First cycle of tertiary education). This is a two-year programme forming the first cycle of a Bachelor's degree programme (or *Licence*). The second cycle can either be two or three years long depending on the field of education. Following the successful completion of the first cycle, which requires the completion of upper secondary education with access to tertiary for entry, students can proceed to the second cycle. (ISCED-P: 661; ISCED-A: 540).

Canada – *University Transfer Programmes*. These are programmes of one or two years' duration offered by non-university institutes under special arrangements with universities whereby the college offers the first year(s) of a university degree programme. Students who complete these programmes at the colleges can then transfer their credits toward university Bachelor's degree programmes. Although enrolment in these programmes count at ISCED level 6, students who complete these programmes are not reported as ISCED level 6 graduates. Their educational attainment is at ISCED level 5. (ISCED-P: 641; ISCED-A 540).

Norway – *Høgskolekandidat* (University college degree). The university college degree is a tertiary programme of two years. Students must have completed upper secondary education (ISCED level 3) prior to entry. This degree often becomes an integrated part of the full Bachelor's programme upon graduation. (ISCED-P: 641; ISCED-A: 540)

Notes

1. Paragraph numbers are references to the main ISCED 2011 classification document. See more details in the Reader's Guide.
2. Although there are as yet no internationally-agreed definitions of academic and professional orientations, some countries are applying their national definitions and making use of these codes in their ISCED mappings.



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