

Appendix D. International Standard Classification of Education (ISCED-97)

X: No schooling

Less than one year of schooling

Level 0: Pre-primary education

Programmes are designed primarily to introduce children, aged at least three years, to a school-type environment; they are school- or centre-based.

Level 1: Primary education or first stage of basic education

Programmes are designed on a unit or project basis to give students a sound basic education in reading, writing and mathematics along with an elementary understanding of other subjects such as history, geography, natural science, social science, art and music; religious instruction may also be featured. The customary or legal age of entrance is between five and seven years. This level covers in principle six years of full-time schooling. Literacy programmes for adults are also included at this level.

Level 2: Lower secondary or second stage of basic education

Programmes are designed to complete the provision of basic education begun at Level 1. They are usually on a more subject-oriented pattern, often with teachers conducting classes in their field of specialization. The end of this level often coincides with the end of compulsory education where it exists.

Programmes can be subclassified according to the subsequent education or destination for which they have been designed:

2A: direct access to Level 3 (3A or 3B) in a sequence leading ultimately to tertiary education;

2B: direct access to Level 3C;

2C: direct access to the labour market.

Programmes at Level 2 can also be subdivided into three categories according to their orientation: (i) general education, mainly designed to lead to a deeper understanding of a subject or group of subjects, especially (but not necessarily) in preparation for further education; (ii) pre-vocational or pre-technical education, designed as a preparation for entry into vocational or technical education programmes; (iii) vocational or technical education, mainly designed to lead to the acquisition of skills necessary for employment in a particular occupation or trade, the successful completion of which leads to a labour-market-relevant vocational qualification.

Level 3: Upper secondary education

Educational programmes typically require the completion of 9 years of full-time education (since the beginning of Level 1) and the completion of Level 2 for admission; the entrance age is thus typically 15 or 16 years. More specialization may be observed and teachers more qualified or specialized.

As at Level 2, programmes can be subclassified according to the subsequent education or destination for which they have been designed:

3A: direct access to Level 5A;

3B: direct access to Level 5B;

3C: not designed to lead directly to Levels 5A or 5B, but rather to the labour market or to Level 4 or other Level 3 programmes.

The programme orientation categories are the same as for Level 2.

Level 4: Post-secondary non-tertiary education

Level 4 captures programmes that straddle the boundary between upper-secondary (Level 3) and post-secondary education. Due to their content they cannot be considered as tertiary programmes as they are often not significantly more advanced than Level 3 programmes but serve to broaden the knowledge of participants who have successfully completed Level 3 programmes. They have a typical full-time equivalent duration of between six months and two years. Programmes can be subclassified into two categories according to the subsequent education or destination for which they have been designed:

4A: preparation for entry to Level 5;

4B: not giving access to Level 5 (primarily designed for labour market entry).

The programme orientation categories are the same as those for Levels 2 and 3.

Level 5: First stage of tertiary education (not leading directly to an advanced research qualification)

Entry to Level 5 programmes normally requires the successful completion of Level 3A or 3B or a similar qualification at Level 4A. Level 5 programmes are subdivided into two distinct categories:

5A: Programmes are largely theoretically based and are intended to provide sufficient qualifications for gaining entry into advanced research programmes and professions with high skill requirements (e.g. medicine, dentistry, architecture, etc.). They have a minimum cumulative theoretical duration of three years full-time equivalent, although typically they are four or more years.

5B: Programmes are practically oriented/occupationally specific and mainly designed to permit the acquisition of the practical skills and know-how necessary for employment in a particular occupation or trade; successful completion usually provides participants with a labour-market-relevant qualification. Programmes are typically shorter than in 5A with a minimum duration of two years full-time equivalent and they do not provide direct access to advanced research programmes.

Level 6: Second stage of tertiary education (leading to an advanced research qualification)

Programmes are devoted to advanced study and original research and are not based on course-work only. They typically require the submission of a thesis or dissertation of publishable quality which is the product of original research and represents a significant contribution to knowledge.

?: Level not stated

Notes

¹ The full text of ISCED-97 is available in English, French, Spanish and Russian on UNESCO's website (www.uis.unesco.org).

² In order to maintain parallel structure to the educational and labour market destinations at Level 3, it has been proposed that Level 4 be split into 3 sub-categories, 4A, 4B and 4C. Although not formally part of ISCED-97 a sub-category 4C is used in the joint UNESCO/OECD/EUROSTAT Data Collection on Education Systems.

Appendix D (continued). International Standard Classification of Education (ISCED-76)

X No schooling

Less than one year of schooling.

Level 0: Education preceding the first level

Education delivered in kindergartens, nursery schools or infant classes attached to primary schools.

Level 1: First level

Programmes are designed to give the students a sound basic education in reading, writing and arithmetic along with an elementary understanding of other subjects such as national history, geography, natural science, social science, art, music and religious instruction. Children enter these programmes when they are 5 to 7 years old. Literacy programmes for adults are also to be classified under Level 1.

Level 2: Second level, first stage

The basic programmes constituting the first level are continued, but usually on a more subject-oriented pattern. Some small beginnings of specialization may be seen at this level with some students having the opportunity to direct their attention more particularly to certain types of subjects, e.g. commercial or technical subjects. Vocational programmes designed to train for a specific occupation and often associated with relatively unskilled jobs, as well as apprenticeship programmes for skilled trades and crafts that provide further education as part of the programme, are also included.

Level 3: Second level, second stage

General education continues to be an important constituent of the programmes, but separate subject presentation and more specialization are found at this level. Also to be classified under Level 3 are programmes

consisting of subject matter mainly with a specific vocational emphasis on apprenticeship programmes, an entrance requirement of eight full years of education, or a combination of basic education and vocational experience that demonstrates the ability to handle subject matter of that level.

Level 5: Third level, first stage, leading to an award not equivalent to a first university degree

Programmes of this type are usually "practical" in orientation in that they are designed to prepare students for particular vocational fields in which they can qualify as high level technicians, teachers, nurses, production supervisors, etc.

Level 6: Third level, first stage, leading to a first university degree or equivalent qualification

Programmes of this type comprise those leading to typical first university degrees such as a "Bachelor's degree", a "Licence", etc., as well as those which lead to first professional degrees such as "Doctorates" awarded after completion of studies in medicine, engineering, law, etc.

Level 7: Third level, second stage

Programmes leading to a post-graduate university degree or equivalent qualification. Programmes of this type generally require a first university degree or equivalent qualification for admission. They are intended to reflect specialization within a given subject area.

Level 9: Education not definable by level

Programmes for which there are no entrance requirements.

?: Level not stated