

Education in Syria

Quick Facts:

- **Population** 17.064.854
- **Compulsory education** : 9 Years (Grade 1-9)
- **Language of instruction:** Arabic
- **Academic Year** : September- June

BASIC EDUCATION

Age of Admission

Age six

Length

Nine years, divided into a first cycle (four years), and a second cycle (five years).

General Information

The Ministry of Education is the primary governing body for basic education, which runs from grades 1-9 (ages 6 to 15). Basic education is compulsory and free.

SECONDARY EDUCATION

Age of Admission

Age 16

Length

Three years

Admission Requirements

All students who pass the national exam at the end of basic education qualify for secondary education. However, students' test results determine whether they qualify for general/academic secondary schools or vocational/technical secondary schools.

In 2012, 57 percent of students continued on to secondary school, down from 98 percent the previous year. Of those, 23 percent enrolled in technical/vocational schools."

Structure

The Ministry of Education is the primary governing body for secondary schools.

Secondary education lasts three years and is offered at general/academic secondary schools and technical/vocational schools. Students attend secondary schools from grades 10-12 (ages 16-18). Secondary education is not compulsory.

General/Academic Branch

All students pursuing the general/academic branch follow the same curriculum in grade 10. After that they must choose between two academic streams:

- **Science: Biology, chemistry, informatics, logic and humanities, math, and physics**
- **Literature: Arabic society (including principles of economics and general philosophy,) art, geography, and statistics**

Students who complete the general/academic branch and pass a national qualifying exam are eligible for higher education at universities or higher institutes. Students who scored low on the national exam have the opportunity to retake the exam once in order to qualify.

Technical/Vocational Branch

Students pursuing the technical/vocational branch choose between the following specializations:

- **Commercial: Accounting, administration, advertising, book-keeping, commercial law, computing, economics, financial math, secretarial skills, statistics, and tax**
- **Feminine Arts: Carpet-making, childcare, clothing and textiles, dressmaking, embroidery, and home economics**
- **Industrial: Computing, circuitry, electronics, television and radio, satellite maintenance (TV), and video recorders**

Graduates of technical/vocational secondary schools can choose to start employment immediately or to continue onto two-year technical institutes (also referred to as intermediate institutes) where they can work towards an associate degree.

Graduation Requirements

Both secondary school branches end with a national exam administered by the Ministry of Education, and all students who pass – regardless of branch – are awarded a general secondary education certificate, which is equivalent to a high school diploma in the U.S. and Canada. Diplomas have different names depending on the subject area (i.e., General Secondary Education Certificate, Industrial Secondary School Diploma, Secondary School of Commerce Diploma). Students who do not pass the national exam have the opportunity to retake it one time.

HIGHER EDUCATION

Access

The Ministry of Higher Education oversees the higher education sector in Syria. By law, holders of a general secondary school certificate qualify for access to higher education.

Admission Requirements

Admission into higher education is highly competitive. Although all students with a general secondary school certificate are guaranteed admission to higher education, the institution to which they are admitted depends on the scores they receive on the secondary-school examination.

Grades from previous years of secondary school are not factored into admissions. Instead, a centralized University Admissions Committee within the Ministry of Education determines how students will be distributed, factoring in both examination results and student preferences. Students typically select programs that correspond to their upper-secondary specialization; for instance, students who pursue the science track at the secondary level might select an engineering program at the tertiary level, while students who pursue the humanities track might continue on in a humanities program at the tertiary level.

Recognition/Accreditation

Because institutions of higher education cannot operate without government approval, all operating institutions are assumed to have formal recognition or accreditation. A list of recognized higher education institutions (in Arabic) can be found at mohe.gov.sy/mohe.

Length

Length is dependent on program type:

- Associate degrees require two years.
- Bachelor's degrees typically require four years. (Some disciplines require additional years.)
- Master's degrees require two years, although extensions are available.
- Doctoral degrees require a minimum of three years.