

Portugal

■ Introduction to higher education

Total enrolments in higher education of 20-year-olds have increased by 15% over the last three years (2005-2008), reaching about 35% of this age-group (compared to 30% in 2005). There are now 282,438. 000 students enrolled in higher education. In other words, one in three of all 20-year-olds in Portugal are enrolled in higher education. 90% of those enrolled in higher education are in the age group 18 to 21 years of age.

Higher education in Portugal is organised in a dual system, including university and polytechnic education administered by public, non-public or co-operative schools of higher education.

The MCTES Framework refers to Short Cycle Diplomas of 120 credits but provides no descriptor for these qualifications and it is understood that these have not been widely issued by the higher education institutions (HEIs). According to the International Committee on the verification of compatibility of the Portuguese framework for Higher Education with the qualifications framework of the European higher education area these diplomas appear to be largely “exit” diplomas, or marks of partial completion of the first cycle¹. Higher education institutions can also run non-higher education, e.g. post-secondary courses, for specialised vocational training purposes, called CET courses. Those who have passed these courses are eligible to apply to higher education, with the higher level training, in their courses, credited in their prospective courses.

In order to apply for access to higher education via the national system, pupils must fulfil the following requirements: they must have passed an upper-secondary education course or legally equivalent qualification; they must have taken the necessary entrance exams for the course that wish to attend with a minimum mark of 95 points; they must have satisfied the necessary pre-requisites (if applicable) of the course they are applying to. Entrance to each higher education institution is subjected to numerus clausus.

In higher education the following academic qualifications are given: First-degree (licenciado), Master’s degree (mestre) and PhD (doutor). University and polytechnic institutions confer First-degrees and Master’s degree. The polytechnic mestrados should certify that the specialization obtained is of a professional nature.

Studies that lead to a licenciado degree from a polytechnic normally involve a minimum of 6 semesters that correspond to 180 credits. The study cycle that leads to a licenciado degree from a university normally lasts from a minimum of 6 to 8 semesters, which corresponds to 180 or 240 credits. The study cycle that leads to a Master’s degree lasts for between 3 and 4 semesters, which corresponds to 90 or 120 credits.

¹ <http://www.dges.mctes.pt/NR/rdonlyres/90DBE647-5CB6-4846-B88F-101180D9E425/5414/FHEQCommitteeReportFinal30MAIO2012.pdf>

The degree of doutor is only conferred by universities and to those who have passed all the units of the PhD course, when applicable, and who have successfully defended their thesis. Fees are set by each higher education institution, depending on the type and quality of the course.

■ **Organisation of SCHE in Portugal**

In Portugal, as in many other European countries, some higher education qualifications are available to students who have undertaken a programme of study within the FQ-EHEA first cycle, which do not represent the full achievement of this cycle. These qualifications are referred to as higher education short cycle diplomas (within or linked to the first cycle) and may prepare students for employment (also providing preparation for the subsequent completion of the first cycle). These qualifications are also positioned at level 5 of the EQF for LLL.

At a post-secondary level, higher education institutions can also provide qualifications associated with Technological Specialisation Courses (CETs), leading to a Technological Specialisation Diploma. By their nature and objectives, these qualifications are also short cycle programmes, with the main goal of preparing students for employment, but also providing preparation for, and access to, the first cycle and are also at level 5 of the EQF for LLL.

The CET or post-secondary non higher education courses² leading to DET allow the access to first cycle and concede credits depending on the CET concluded and the 1st cycle course of destiny (one CET may give access to more than one 1st cycle course, allowing different credits).

Polytechnic institutions provide technological specialisation courses (CET), which are technical, practical and vocational in nature. In order to recapture the interest of young people who are unmotivated by formal education and give them training more suited to their needs, other forms of subsidiary training have been created, focused on working life: education and training courses for young adults and post-secondary training paths, the technological specialisation courses.

Decree No 782/2009 raised CET to level 5 but did not revoke or altered Decree-Law No. 88/06. Decree-Law No. 88/06, of 23rd May, regulated the technological specialisation courses (CET), non-higher, post-secondary training that aimed to confer a Level 4 vocational qualification.

The CET-courses aim at individuals who wish a level 5 vocational qualification, in order to their integration in the specialized labour market. Each course lasts for a minimum of 1 200 hours and a maximum of 1 560 hours. This type of professional qualification is obtained through a combination of general or professional secondary studies and technical post-secondary studies. The completion of a CET guarantees a DET diploma (technological specialization diploma). The CET has been integrated into level 5 of the Portuguese NQF.

² CET see :

<http://www.ccisp.pt/Documentos/Estudos%20e%20Estatisticas/Document%20about%20portuguese%20higher%20education.pdf>

The study plan of the CET includes general and scientific training component, technological training component and work context training component. The training in a work context lasts between 360 and 720 hours and is organized in the framework of a partnership with industry / commerce/ trade. Excluding the training in work context, the other components last globally from between 840 to 1020 hours and each of them, respectively, occupies 15% and 85% of the total time. Most CET's are organized in 80 ECTS (duration of approximately 18 months – or three semesters). The general and scientific component (general subjects) represents around 9-10 ECTS (150 contact hours), the technological component (technical subjects) represents an average of 50-51 ECTS (850 contact hours) and the work context training component represents around 20 ECTS (520 hours of placement).

The institution is responsible for the signing of protocols that, ensuring the development of this training with other entities, are best suited to the specific nature of the training area, as well as the characteristics of the job market.

The technological specialization courses are provided by higher education institutions, by the network of state, private and cooperative schools, professional schools and centres managed wholly or partially by IEFP (Institute of Employment and Vocational Training) , or other formally accredited bodies , in conjunction with the community, such as local and regional authorities and associations, companies and other stakeholders. In terms of internal political management most CET are provided by higher education institutions. Only recently other institutions got clearance to provide CET. In order to get this clearance, these institutions (that are not HEI) must have a signed agreement with higher education institutions that allows the students to continue their studies in 1st cycle courses provided by them.

One of the ongoing debates and/or future challenges is the development and expansion not only of non-higher education, post-secondary training, but also the institutions which provide it, focusing more on middle-ranking professionals, as a demand of the growing needs of the economy and businesses. Moreover many HEI's are convinced that the CET courses are in fact short cycle higher education courses but the problem is that they fall short of the 120 ECTS for this type of courses. This opinion is shared by the experts of the International Committee on the verification of compatibility of the Portuguese framework for Higher Education with the qualifications framework of the European higher education³.

At the beginning of 2010 the Ministry for Science, Technology and Higher Education signed a contract with the Portuguese Council of Polytechnic Institutes but also with several universities regarding the sector's development program for the four year period between 2010 and 2013. Some of the 11 key features of the programme are:

- to increase the number of placements in CET programs to more than 10 000.
- to double the amount of places in courses offered after working hours (evening school);
- to create the e-polytechnic with more than 1000 placements (i.e., distance learning for adults over 23 years of age and life long learning);

³ DGES. The Framework for Higher Education Qualifications in Portugal. Report of the International Committee on the Verification of Compatibility with the Qualifications Framework of The European Higher Education Area. p. 9

- to increase the number of places for adults over 23 years of age;
- to increase the academic staff with a PhD degree up to 50% of academic staff in the polytechnic sector; 736 of the present approx 3600 teachers or 37% have a Ph.D.
- to create Entrepreneurial Promotion Offices;
- to promote internationalisation.

■ **QF for Portugal**

A comprehensive 8 level national qualifications framework (NQF) (Quadro Nacional de Qualificações, QNQ) is being implemented in Portugal. Established by the Decree No 782/2009 (Portaria No 782/2009) (86), an outline of the framework (including levels and level descriptors) was published in July 2009. A Qualifications Framework for HE in line with the QF for EHEA has been put in place separately (Law 49/2005 and Decree law 74/2006) (87). The link between both frameworks will be discussed during the referencing process.

Level 5 of the NQF is seen as the bridging level between VET and HE. In this level there are VET qualifications as well as HE qualifications; the VET qualifications are called technological specialisation courses and there are short-cycle qualifications within the first cycle in the QF for HE. Thus level 5 of the NQF can be said to be equivalent to level 5 of the EQF.

Higher education qualifications in Portugal	Corresponding FQ-EHEA cycle	EQF levels
Doctoral degrees	Third cycle qualifications	8
Doctoral course diplomas	-	-
Master's degrees	Second cycle qualifications	7
Integrated Master's degrees		
Master's course diplomas	-	-
<i>Licenciatura</i> degrees	First cycle qualifications	6
Higher education short cycle diplomas	Short cycle qualifications (within or linked to the first cycle)	5
Technological Specialisation Diplomas	Short cycle qualifications (within or linked to the first cycle)	

Source: A new landscape for Science, Technology and Tertiary Education in Portugal⁴

⁴ Ministry of Science, Technology and Higher Education, Portugal, *A new landscape for Science, Technology and Tertiary Education in Portugal* http://www.dges.mctes.pt/NR/rdonlyres/90DBE647-5CB6-4846-B88F-101180D9E425/4832/New_landscapes_v18Jun20102.pdf

■ **Access to SCHE/CET and transition to bachelor studies**

Thus a diploma of upper secondary education in any scientific-humanistic courses will give access to higher education courses in fields of knowledge related to each area of studies or to non-higher education post-secondary courses, named technological specialisation courses.

It is also possible to access higher education outside the National Application through special applications, which are meant for students with specific qualifications. Places available are determined annually by each higher education institution. The following candidates may apply through special application:

- maiores de 23 – candidates that are over 23 and will only be admitted after completing and passing an exam that assesses the candidates' capacity. The exam must take place in the institution the candidate intends to apply to;
- people with a higher education degree;
- people with a DET (technological specialization diploma).

■ **Profile of teachers and students**

5832 students or 6% of the overall 96.374 students attended CET courses in 2009. Of those 3565 students were in 2008 in the polytechnics. It is hoped to have around 5800 students in CET in the polytechnics in 2013. There is an increasing demand for evening courses. The increasing demand for evening courses is mostly related with a question of offer, induced by a change of policy. This policy's main objective is to allow a considerable percentage of population to gain access to professional and scholar qualifications. Enhancing the offer of evening courses, allows the active population to have access to different qualification opportunities.

The key stone in this matter (increasing evening courses) is not so much related to low SES public or a disadvantaged background, but in the national policy of rising up of the average qualification of Portuguese general population, by the diversification of offer of qualification courses, not only introducing different typologies, but also enhancing the offer of evening courses. It is therefore not surprising that many students are mature students.

As far as the profile of teachers or lecturers is concerned, Decree-Law No. 88/06's 46th article states that the teaching body in CET should mainly be constituted by professional teachers related to the higher education institution. However, the same article states that HEI may recur to part time teachers. This may happen when the expertise brought by these part time teachers (due to their experience in industry or institutional background) constitutes an extra value to the course's subjects and to the knowledge transmitted to students.

However, these part time teachers should mandatorily have certified pedagogic competences.

■ **QA and accreditation**⁵

The new legal framework for the assessment of higher education (Law no. 38/2007, of 16th August) and the creation of the Higher Education Evaluation and Accreditation Agency (Decree-Law no. 369/2007, of 5th November) were developed. Both were designed to ensure the quality of higher education through the assessment and accreditation of higher education institutions and their cycles of studies, according to the best international practices, in which independent external assessment is mandatory.

Following similar practices in Europe, auditors and reviewers appointed independently will look at how institutions align the academic standards of their degrees. They will also ascertain whether institutions have means of ensuring that degrees and qualifications are of an academic standard consistent with European standards.

■ **Internationalisation**

New regulations were introduced for mobility of students between national higher education institutions, from the same or different subsystems, as well as between national and foreign higher education institutions, based on application of the European Credit Transfer and Accumulation System (ECTS). The diploma supplement is given to all students involved in mobility.

The polytechnic sector aims at strengthening relations in the first place with Portuguese speaking countries and promote exchange initiatives and promote mobility programmes involving student and academic staff (like ERASMUS)⁶.

■ **Employability and multilingualism**

Although there isn't official data regarding employability on CET graduates, the general perception is that there is a good acceptance by the industry and institutional framework.

Regarding this matter, two factors must be taken into account:

- 1 – As the CET allow the access to 1st cycle studies in higher education institutions, there is a considerable percentage of the public of these courses that uses them as an alternative path of access to higher education, and not necessarily to employment purposes;
- 2 – Most of CET public is already employed and thus the important factor to study is if the qualifications attained in the course allowed an internal progression in terms of functions, responsibility, autonomy and income.

⁵ A new landscape for Science, Technology and Tertiary Education in Portugal , MCTES, 2010;
http://www.dges.mctes.pt/NR/rdonlyres/90DBE647-5CB6-4846-B88F-101180D9E425/4832/New_landscapes_v18Jun20102.pdf

⁶ CCISP Documents 2010
<http://www.ccisp.pt/Documentos/Estudos%20e%20Estatisticas/Document%20about%20portuguese%20higher%20education.pdf>

In terms of multilingualism the government's policy is to promote the use of English language throughout the different levels of qualification, beginning on primary school until the higher levels.

Regarding the CET's there is an effort to include the English language at a technical / commercial / professional level (Technical English / English applied to Tourism /Commercial English) in most of the courses curricula.

■ **Collaboration with local industry and social commitment**

Registering a new CET implies that the higher education institution must present to the Ministry of Technology and Higher Education a group of agreements with companies, industries and institutions that guaranties the work context training component (placement) to every student.

This placement component doesn't always take place at the end of the course.

The course organization may include "alternate training" that intercalates moments of training in classroom and training in work context throughout the course.

During the course students are often involved in study visits that allow them to have contact with local industries or institutions, and enhance the students vision of reality in terms of employment and work context.