



GUIDE OF THE COLOMBIAN EDUCATIONAL SYSTEM AND ASPECTS TO BE CONSIDERED WHEN UNDERTAKING HIGHER EDUCATION STUDIES IN COLOMBIA

INTRODUCTION

The Colombian Ministry of National Education (*Ministerio de Educación Nacional - MEN*) has been working on the creation of guides of educational systems from different countries. These instruments may make the where and what to study decision-making process easier, as well as illustrate the procedure and requirements for the recognition of higher education degrees in Colombia.

The Office of Higher Education Quality at MEN (*Dirección de Calidad de la Educación Superior del MEN*) examined the guides of foreign educational systems which are already published on this website. In the exercise, the need of bringing the technical language of education closer to the citizen was highlighted, as well as generating an interactive instrument. In this order of ideas, MEN, in agreement with the Colombian Association of Universities (*Asociación Colombiana de Universidades – ASCUN*), updated and redesigned these guides.

For the creation of this guide, information from various official sources was consolidated, originating a practical and relevant instrument for the citizen. Pertinent information on four central aspects is therefore included: (1) a description of the higher education system; (2) the quality assurance of institutions and higher education programs; (3) the legality of higher education programs and institutions; and, 4) steps for the recognition of higher education degrees from abroad.

All information here presented considers different accessibility requirements of tools and web products, facilitating the access for people in a condition of disability. This work was made possible by an invaluable teamwork with the National Institute for the Blind (*Instituto Nacional para Ciegos – INCI*).



1. SISTEMA DE EDUCACIÓN DE COLOMBIA

1.1. A brief look at initial, basic and secondary education in Colombia

Formal education in Colombia begins from preschool (by law a minimum degree of preschool education is compulsory), followed by two cycles of basic education (five grades of primary basic education and four grades of secondary basic education) and two grades more of secondary education, which can be academic (this is the one offered in most institutions) or technical. The degree received is that of bachelor's degree.

The inspection and supervision of basic and secondary education institutions is carried out, in each jurisdiction, by the governor or mayor of the certified territorial entities, exercising these functions through the education secretariats.

More detailed information on basic and secondary education in Colombia can be found in 1994 Law 115 (General Education Law):

http://www.secretariasenado.gov.co/senado/basedoc/ley_0115_1994.html

and in 2015 Decree 1075:

https://www.anm.gov.co/sites/default/files/decreto_1075_de_2015.pdf



Grades and cycles of pre-school, basic and secondary education		(ISCED) ** 2011 and 2013	CAB Equivalences***
High school	Technical or academic secondary	3	10 a 11
Basic education	(2 years)	2	6 a 9
	Junior high	1	1 a 5
Preschool (minimum 1 year - mandatory) Kindergarten – (not mandatory)		0	Preschool

*Based on UNESCO (2011 and 2013) and Andrés Bello Agreement (2019)

**International Standard Classification of Education (ISCED).

Andrés Bello Agreement

1. SABER - State Tests

The Colombian Institute for the Evaluation of Education (Instituto Colombiano para la Evaluación de la Educación - ICFES) is responsible, among other functions, for constructing and implementing standardized national assessments that evaluate the performance achieved by students, according to the basic competencies defined by the Ministry of National Education - MEN.

There are currently six tests that are applied to students in Colombia: in the third grade of basic primary (Saber 3° Test), at the end of the basic primary (Saber 5° Test), at the end of the basic secondary (Saber 9° Test), at the end of the secondary education (Saber 11° Test), at the end of programs of professional and technological or technical education (Saber TyT Tests) and, at the end of university professional programs (Saber PRO).

More information:

https://www.mineducacion.gov.co/1759/w3-article-397384.html?_noredirect=1#:~:text=Las%20tests%20Saber%20son%20evaluation,%20Ministerio%20de%20Educaci%C3%B3n%20National.

1. Access to higher education in Colombia

For the admission to higher education in Colombia, it is necessary to have obtained the bachelor's degree and taken the Saber 11° exam. In addition, admission requirements defined by the respective Higher Education Institutions (Instituciones



de Educación Superior - IES) within the framework of their autonomy must be met and, in the case of foreign students, migration provisions must be complied with.

In any case, for the admission to undergraduate programs at the professional technical level, candidates must prove that they have completed the basic secondary education and be over 16 years old or, alternatively, having obtained the Certificate of Professional Aptitude (Certificado de Aptitud Profesional - CAP), issued by the National Service of Learning (Servicio Nacional de Aprendizaje - SENA), as established in article 7° of 2002 Law 749.

More information:

https://www.mineducacion.gov.co/1621/articles-86432_Archivo_pdf.pdf

1.3. Programas académicos de educación superior en Colombia

1992 Law 30 and 2002 Law 749 define the options for undergraduate academic programs in higher education:

- Professional technician (with an approximate duration of 2 years)
- Technologist (approximate duration of 3 years)
- University professional (approximate duration of 4 to 5 years).

There is also the possibility of postgraduate programs at the following levels:

1. Doctorates.
2. Master's degrees (deepening or research) / Medical and surgical specializations.
3. Specializations: professional, technical, technological and university.

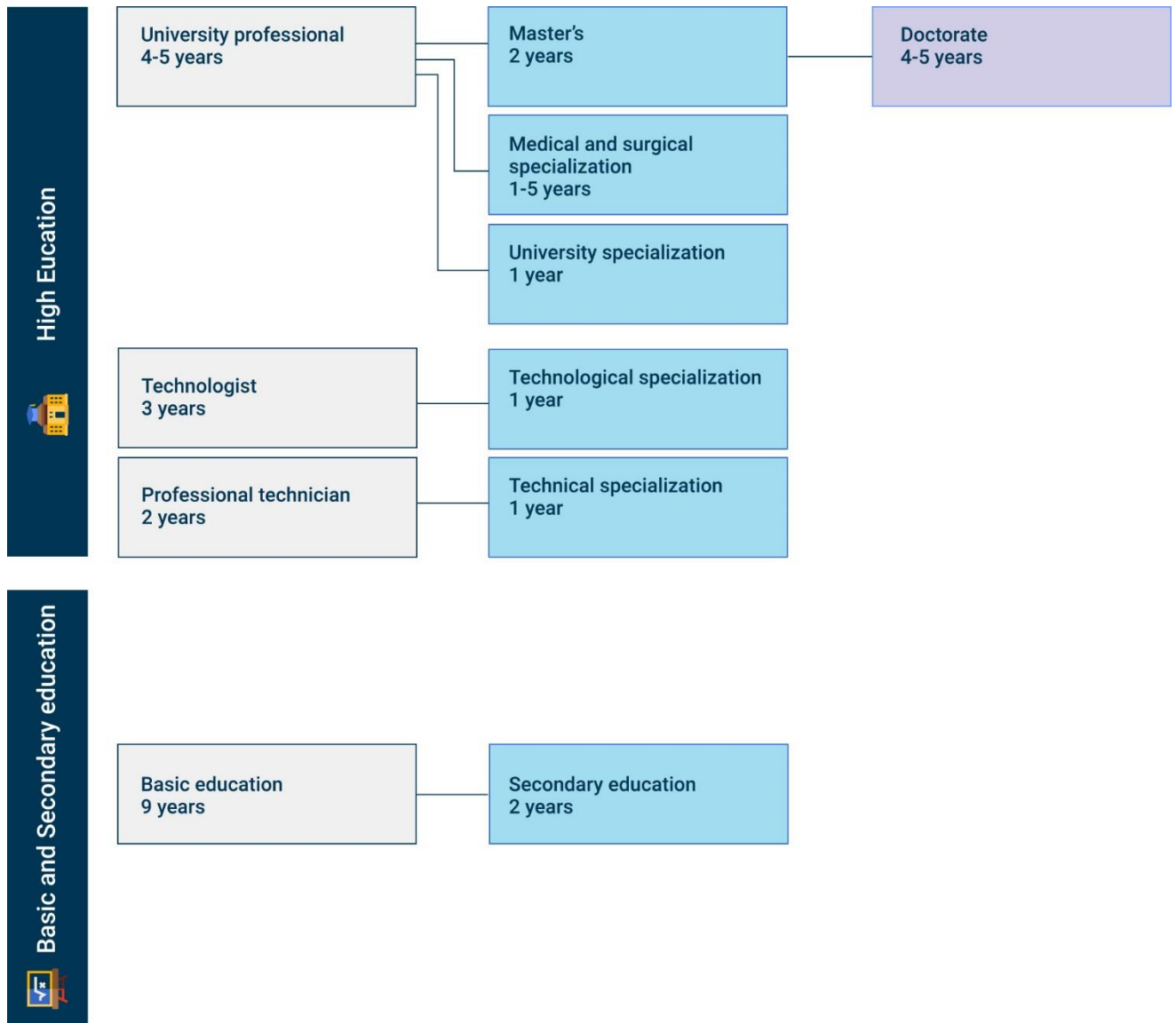
All academic programs of higher education in Colombia must hold a qualified registration, and this must be renewed every seven (7) years.

For more information, please visit:

<https://www.mineducacion.gov.co/sistemasdeinformacion/1735/propertyvalue-41698.html?acceso=fin>.



Structure of the Colombian Education System





1.4. Comparison of the Colombian education system with ISCED 2011/2013

ISCED 2011/2013			COLOMBIA	
LEVELS	CATEGORY	YEARS	CATEGORY	YEARS
8	Doctoral level or equivalent	Minimum 3 years - full-time	Doctorate	4 - 5
7	Master's level, specialization or equivalent	1 to 4 years	Master's degree	2
			Medical and surgical specialization	1 - 5
6	Tertiary education degree or equivalent	3 and 4 years or more	University professional	4 - 5
			University specialization	1
5	Short-cycle tertiary education	Minimum 2 years	Professional technician	2
			Technologist	3
			Technical specialization	1
			Technical specialization	1

*Based on UNESCO (2011 and 2013)

For more information on levels and types of programs, please visit the link: <https://www.mineducacion.gov.co/1759/w3-propertyvalue-55275.html? noredirect=1>.

In Colombia, the term undergraduate is used to refer to the formation of levels 5 and 6 of the International Standard Classification of Education – ISCED 2011 and 2013. The term degree is used for basic training – first grade, second grade, etc. – and, bachelor's degree, is used to refer to level 6 specific training in education programs.

In Colombia there is also the possibility of studying programs in propaedeutic cycles. When in these, an IES can recognize the credits of the professional technician level to continue in a technological program, and the credits obtained in a technological



program to continue with a university undergraduate. At this time, the recognition is preferably given within the same IES and, in any case, it must be related to academic programs with qualified registration, which is granted by the MEN (2008 Law 1188 and 2015 Decree 1075, modified by 2019 Decree 1330).

Health training, in addition to being regulated by 1992 Law 30 and Decree 2015 1075, is also governed by regulations with specific provisions such as 2007 Law 1164, 2011 Law 1438 and 2018 Law 1917 (National System of Medical Residencies). Besides, by 2016 Decree 780 (Single Regulatory of the Health sector and Social Protection).

Para the training of human talent and, specifically in health, please visit the link:
<http://ontalentohumano.minsalud.gov.co/Paginas/Inicio.aspx>

1.5. Higher education institutions (IES) in Colombia

1992 Law 30 and 1994 Law 115 have defined four types of higher education institutions (IES) in Colombia:

- Professional technical institutions
- Technological institutions
- University institutions or technological schools
- Universities.

All IES in Colombia must be non-profit, and are regulated by the Ministry of National Education (MEN).

1992 Law 30 founds the objectives of higher education institutions (IES) and differentiates them in relation to the levels of the programmes they can offer, as follows:

- Professional technical institutions may, in principle, only offer programmes of this type. They will be able to offer programs of the technological and professional university levels as long as being organized by propaedeutic cycles.



- Technological institutions can offer the professional technical programs plus the technological ones, and will be able to offer programs of the university professional level if they are organized by propaedeutic cycles.
- University institutions can offer all programs up to the level of specialization. Exceptionally, they may offer master's degrees and doctorates if they comply with the legal requirements established for this purpose (1992 Law 30, article 21).
- Universities can offer all higher education programs, including doctorates.

In Colombia, university autonomy to "modify statutes, designate academic and administrative authorities, create, organize and develop academic programs, define and organize formative, academic, educational, scientific and cultural tasks, grant titles, select professors, admit students and adopt their corresponding regimes, is recognized. Similarly, the autonomy to establish, arbitrate and apply resources for the fulfillment of their social mission and institutional function" (Art. 69 of the 1991 Political Constitution of Colombia, articles 28 and 29 of 1992 Law 30).

More information:

http://www.secretariassenado.gov.co/senado/basedoc/constitucion_politica_1991.html
<https://www.mineduccion.gov.co/1759/w3-article-231240.html? noredirect=>

Public IES can be municipal, departmental or national, and private IES can be foundations, corporations or solidarity economy institutions, all non-profit. According to data from the National Information System of Higher Education (Sistema Nacional de Información de la Educación Superior - SNIES), in Colombia there are about 300 active IES. Most of them are university institutions (more than 40%), followed by universities (close to 30%) and, in a lower number, technological institutions and technical-professional institutions (which represent less than 30% of IES in the country).

For up-to-date information on higher education statistics in Colombia, please visit the link:

<https://snies.mineduccion.gov.co/portal/ESTADISTICAS/>.



1.6. How is an academic credit in higher education programs measured in Colombia?

In Colombia, academic credits have been compulsory since 2010 (since the issuance of 1295 Decree that same year). Currently, they are defined by 2015 Decree 1075, which was partially modified by 2019 Decree 1330 (articles 2.5.3.2.4.1 to 2.5.3.2.4.3), stating that, in Colombia, an academic credit is the unit of measurement of the student's academic work, indicating the effort to be made for the achievement of the expected learning outcomes.

The credit is equivalent to 48 (forty-eight) hours for an academic period, and IES determine the ratio between the direct relationship with the teacher and the student's independent practice, justified in agreement within the learning process and learning outcomes foreseen for the programme. IES express in academic credits all training activities that are included in the curriculum.

The number of credits of an academic activity in the curriculum is that which results from dividing the total number of hours that the student must employ to successfully meet the learning goals into forty-eight (48), in an academic period. This figure is always expressed in integers.

In order to establish the number of credits in a programme, according to the modality, level and methodology, each IES has institutional guidelines applied to discriminate between hours of independent work and those of direct accompaniment of the teacher. The aim of this study is to highlight, among other things, the expected learning outcomes and the possibilities for national and international mobility of students.

1.7. Government entities directly related to higher education in Colombia

From the central sector, the main regulatory body for higher education in Colombia is the Ministry of National Education.



More information:

<https://www.mineducacion.gov.co/1759/w3-article-217737.html? noredirect=1>

From the decentralized sector, the MEN has three linked entities:

The Colombian Institute of Educational Credit and Technical Studies Abroad (Instituto Colombiano de Crédito Educativo y Estudios Técnicos en el Exterior - ICETEX): this is a State entity that promotes higher education through the granting of educational credits and the selection, jointly with third-party resources, of the population with the lowest economic prospects but good academic performance. It also facilitates access to educational opportunities offered by the international community to raise the quality of life of Colombian people and thus contribute to the economic and social development of the country.

More information about ICETEX can be provided at the following link:

<https://portal.icetex.gov.co/Portal/Home/el-icetex>

The Colombian Institute for the Evaluation of Education (Instituto Colombiano para la Evaluación de la Educación - ICFES): it is a state-owned social agency that offers education evaluation services at all levels (State exams). It also performs investigation of the factors that affect the quality of education, providing information that contributes to the improvement and decision-making in the quality of education, and performing other evaluation projects (specific tests) in accordance with national and international standards required by public or private entities.

More information about the ICFES at the following link:

<https://www.icfes.gov.co/>

1. **The Higher Education Development Fund (Fondo de Desarrollo de la Educación Superior - FODESEP):** it is a mixed economy organization, of private law, non-profit, with social interest, organized under the principles of solidarity economy, whose main function is to serve as an entity promoting financing of specific projects of higher education institutions, as well as



proposing economic programs and projects for the benefit of these institutions.

More information about FODESEP in the following link:

<https://www.fodese.gov.co/>

1.8. Information systems in Colombia with available data on the higher education system

Colombia has information systems where its educational offer, data on dropouts, labor linkage of its graduates and advances in Science, Technology and Innovation can be found:

One of the main higher education systems in Colombia is the **National Higher Education Information System (Sistema Nacional de Información de la Educación Superior - SNIES)**, where information on all IES and academic programs offered in the country can be found. In this system, it is possible to identify if the IES or the program is active, the type and level, area and core knowledge, department and municipality of the offer, among other data. General statistics on the higher education system are also available.

More information:

<https://snies.mineducacion.gov.co/portal/EL-SNIES/Que-es-el-SNIES/>

Information System of the National Ministry of Education on dropouts in higher education (Sistema de Información del Ministerio de Educación nacional sobre deserción en educación superior – SPADIES): this system is the tool to track dropout figures of students from higher education. With data provided by IES, the behaviors, causes, variables and risks determining dropouts, are identified and weighed. In addition, this information groups students according to their risk of dropping out.

More information:

<https://www.mineducacion.gov.co/sistemasinfo/spadies>



Other information systems with important data about the higher education system are:

Labor Observatory for Education of the Ministry of National Education (Observatorio Laboral para la Educación del Ministerio de Educación Nacional - OLE): it releases information and statistics of opportunities for graduates from higher education. At the same time, it monitors the labor market, contributing to the construction of educational policy, self-assessment of IES and determination of the relevance of Colombian academic offer.

Más información:

<https://ole.mineducacion.gov.co/portal/>

ScienTI Platform: information about science, technology and Innovation (CTI) can be found on this platform that depends on the Ministry of Science, Technology and Innovation (Minciencias). Over there, data from curricula of researchers, research groups, products and statistics of CTI in Colombia are available.

More information:

<https://minciencias.gov.co/sistemas-informacion/servicios-consulta>

Observatory of Science and Technology (Observatorio de Ciencia y Tecnología - OCyT): it is a non-profit association that supports Minciencias and the education sector with indicators and statistical data on CTI.

More information:

<https://www.ocyt.org.co/>

1.9. Legal framework of higher education in Colombia

Education in Colombia is directly regulated by 1994 Law 115, 1992 law 30, 2002 Law 749, and 2008 Law 1188. In 2015, the regulation of different sectors was compiled into single regulatory decrees. In this sense, it stands out the 2015 Decree 1075, unified regulation of the education sector, where information on the organization



of the sector and the provision of the service can be found. This same decree defines the conditions to offer a program through different modalities, among which are the face-to-face, remote, virtual, dual or other developments that combine and integrate previous modalities.

More information about all the regulations related to education in Colombia at:
<https://www.mineducacion.gov.co/portal/Normatividad/>

More information about 2015 Decree 1075 at:
<https://normograma.info/men/docs/arb/1002.htm>

1.10. Education for work and human development in Colombia (ETDH)

In Colombia, what was called non-formal education was renamed Education for Work and Human Development (ETDH) in 2006 (with Law 1064 of the same year), and is offered to update and supplement knowledge and training in academic or occupational aspects, leading to the obtaining of certificates of occupational aptitude (2015 Decree 1075, article 2.6.2.2). This type of education is monitored by the Education Secretariats of the certified territorial entities. In Colombia, this education is offered by the National Learning Service (SENA), a public institution, and by nearly 4,000 private institutions.

For more information on education for work and human development please visit the following link:
<https://www.mineducacion.gov.co/1759/w3-propertyvalue-57273.html?noredirect=1>

And to find ETDH institutions and programs, please check the Information System of Education for Work and Human Development - SIET in the following link:
<http://siet.mineducacion.gov.co/siet/>

Some training courses in ETDH could be classified in Level 4 ISCED 2011 and 2013 (post-secondary non-tertiary education). However, others are located in previous levels (0 to 3), in level 9 (not classified elsewhere), or in non-formal education although, in Colombia, that is not considered non-formal education.



1.11. Higher Normal Schools

It is important to mention that, in Colombia, there are the Higher Normal Schools, which are institutions to provide educational service at the pre-school, basic and secondary levels and are authorized to train initial education, pre-school and basic primary education teachers as well as rural directors, through a supplementary training programme. These teacher training colleges must comply with quality conditions for their operation, regulated by 2015 Decree 1075 (modified by 2020 Decree 1236), and are monitored by the Education Secretariats of the certified territorial entities. However, they are not part of higher education nor do their programs have a qualified registry.

Más información en:

<https://asonen.org/documentos/>

2. QUALITY ASSURANCE OF HIGHER EDUCATION IN COLOMBIA

All academic programs of higher education in Colombia must have the qualified registration, which is the authorization of the MEN so that such programs can be offered and developed. Unlike pre-school, basic and secondary education, and ETHR, higher education has a fully centralized quality assurance system run by the MEN.

2.1. General processes that are part of the quality assurance system of higher education in Colombia

In Colombia, the Quality Assurance System for Higher Education (Sistema de Aseguramiento de la Calidad de la Educación Superior - SACES) includes three general processes:

1. The process for the creation of public and private IES, considering that, according to the legal nature of these HEIs, they have a different scope and particularities.

More information at:

https://www.mineducacion.gov.co/1759/w3-article-196475.html?_noredirect=1



2. A process to obtain and renew the required permit that all academic programs must have to admit students, called Qualified Registration. This must be renewed every seven (7) years by all higher education programs. If not renewed, the program will not be allowed to admit new students.

3. A voluntary process for the public recognition of high institutional quality of programs called High Quality Accreditation. The times of institutional accreditation and accreditation of academic programs vary, according to the results obtained, between six (6) and ten (10) years.

Please visit the following link for more information:

<https://www.mineducacion.gov.co/sistemasdeinformacion/1735/propertyvalue-41698.html>

To know if an institution or academic program has high a quality accreditation and an active Qualified Registry, please visit the SNIES:
<https://snies.mineducacion.gov.co/portal/CONSULTAS-PUBLICAS/>

Or the SACES:

<https://saces.mineducacion.gov.co/cna/Buscador/BuscadorInstituciones.php>

<https://saces.mineducacion.gov.co/cna/Buscador/BuscadorProgramas.php?Mostrar=Si>

2.2. Main advisory and coordinating bodies that lead the quality assurance of higher education in Colombia

The advisory and coordinating bodies for quality assurance in higher education in Colombia are: the Higher University Council (Consejo Superior Universitario – CESU), the Intersectoral Commission for Quality Assurance in Higher Education (Comisión Intersectorial para el Aseguramiento de la Calidad de la Educación Superior – CONACES) and the National Accreditation Council (Consejo Nacional de Acreditación - CNA).

CESU: The Higher University Council is the chief collegiate and representative body for the orientation of public policies in higher education in Colombia.



More information:

<https://www.dialogoeducacionsuperior.edu.co/1750/w3-article-323876.html>

CONACES: it advises the MEN in the evaluation of procedures for the creation of private IES, the granting and renewal of qualified registry of programs and the recognition of foreign degrees, through its evaluation rooms classified by nine areas of knowledge, plus the evaluation room of institutional procedures and the evaluation room of technical and technological programs. In addition to the eleven evaluation rooms, CONACES has the coordinators' room and the general room.

More information:

<https://www.mineducacion.gov.co/sistemasdeinformacion/1735/article-227123.html>

CNA: for the accreditation of high institutional quality (and high quality of single programs higher education programs), the MEN is advised and supported by the National Accreditation Council (CNA).

More information:

www.cna.gov.co

Tanto los integrantes de las salas de la CONACES, como los integrantes del CNA, emiten los conceptos académicos y técnicos de verificación de las condiciones de calidad que deben reunir las IES y los programas académicos, dirigidos al MEN.

1. Inspection and supervision

In addition to quality assurance, the Ministry of National Education carries out preventive and sanctioning activities, in specific cases, to guarantee the quality and continuity of the public service of higher education.

More information:

<https://www.mineducacion.gov.co/portal/micrositios-superior/Inspeccion-y-Vigilancia/>



3. ASPECTS TO BE CONSIDERED FOR THE PROCESS OF RECOGNITION OF HIGHER EDUCATION DEGREES OBTAINED ABROAD

2019 Resolution 10687 of the Ministry of National Education regulates the recognition of higher education diplomas awarded abroad, identifying the quality assurance systems of the countries where the diplomas were obtained.

The process of recognition of higher education diplomas in Colombia is part of the Quality Assurance System for Higher Education, which allows society to guarantee that, as well as the national offer, that from other countries is officially recognized by the states where the certificates were issued.

IMPORTANT: if an undergraduate degree is in law, accounting, education, or part of the health sciences, additional requirements must be verified, stipulated in chapters one and two of 2019 Resolution 10687 of the Ministry of National Education, available at the following link: https://www.mineducacion.gov.co/1759/articles-401316_archivo_pdf.pdf.

It is worth recalling that it is not compulsory to advance the process of validation of higher education diplomas obtained in other countries. Recognition is required in the following cases:

1. For regulated professions where recognition is required by professional bodies.
2. For persons wishing to work in the public sector as contractors or civil officers.
3. For participating in public tenders where specifications indicate it as necessary.
4. For teachers in public education institutions to be properly graded.

More information:

- <https://www.mineducacion.gov.co/portal/convalidaciones/Convalidaciones-Educacion-Superior>

In case of having obtained a degree issued by a higher education institution abroad, and recognition be required in Colombia, the following questions and answers can help understand the process:



1. When is it necessary to recognize a foreign higher education degree? The answer to this question can be found at the following link:
<https://www.mineducacion.gov.co/portal/convalidaciones/Convalidaciones-Educacion-Superior/350670:Know-the-process>
2. What is the difference between homologation and recognition? The answer to this question can be found at the following link:
<https://www.mineducacion.gov.co/portal/convalidaciones/Convalidaciones-Educacion-Superior/355353:Preguntas-Frecuentes>
3. In case of doubt, who can help? The answer to this question can be found at the following link:
<https://www.mineducacion.gov.co/portal/convalidaciones/Convalidaciones-Educacion-Superior/355353:Preguntas-Frecuentes>
4. What are the steps for the recognition of higher education diplomas? The answer to this question can be found at the following link:
<https://www.gov.co/ficha-tramites-y-servicios/T366>
5. What are the costs of the process of validation of higher education diplomas? The answer to this question can be found at the following link:
<https://www.mineducacion.gov.co/portal/convalidaciones/Convalidaciones-Educacion-Superior/350995:Cost-and-duration>.

In case of more questions regarding the process, the following link might help:
<https://www.mineducacion.gov.co/portal/convalidaciones/Convalidaciones-Educacion-Superior/355353:Preguntas-Frecuentes>.



4. ADDITIONAL INFORMATION ABOUT COLOMBIA FOR FOREIGNERS INTERESTED IN ACADEMIC EXPERIENCES

Colombia's educational system, people, places, natural and cultural diversity, allows transformative experiences for individuals, groups and communities.

Colombia is a multicultural and multi-ethnic country, where more than 100 indigenous, black or Afro-Colombian, Raizal, Palenquera and Rom (recognized as Gypsy) communities coexist. In addition, there is a great cultural and linguistic diversity in each region of the country. Freedom of religion and belief is promoted in Colombia. It is a country recognized for its gastronomy, living ancestral traditions and festivals which join the quality of its academic offer and its important contributions in science, technology, innovation and cultural creation.

A sample of its diversity is experienced in the 147 official festivals that are held throughout the year in all departments of the country. Some have been designated as Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity by UNESCO, such as the Black and White Carnival, and the Barranquilla Carnival, where striking cultural and artistic displays are involved. In Colombia, numerous archaeological sites distributed in seven areas can be found.

More information:

<https://www.colombia.co/cultura-colombiana/>

<https://www.icanh.gov.co/?idcategoria=5367>

4.1. Información general de interés de Colombia para quienes decidan cursar estudios de educación superior en este país

Political-administrative division

At present, Colombia is territorially organized by departments, municipalities and districts. Other special divisions are provinces, indigenous territorial entities and collective territories. To date, Colombia has 32 departments, 11 districts (with



characteristics different from the municipalities, among which are Bogotá the capital district, seven special districts, three more identified as districts for their tourist, historical, cultural, industrial, commercial characteristics, among other), and 1123 municipalities. The state is governed by a central government with some decentralized functions.

Más información:

<https://www.colombia.co/pais-colombia/estructura-del-estado-colombiano/como-es-la-organizacion-politico-administrativa-de-colombia/#:~:text=En%20la%20actualidad%2C%20Colombia%20est%C3%A1,ind%C3%ADgenas%20y%20los%20territorios%20colectivos.>

Population

According to the information provided by the DANE in the National Census conducted in 2018, Colombia has a population close to 49 million inhabitants. 51.2% are women and 48.8% men, mostly between the age of 15 and 65, and mainly located in urban areas.

Currently, more than two million people are enrolled in higher education programs, which implies a coverage of 53%, according to the National Information System in Higher Education of the Ministry of National Education, with population projections derived from the 2018 National Population and Housing Census.

Formore information please visit the link:

<https://www.dane.gov.co/index.php/estadisticas-por-tema/demografia-y-poblacion>

Economy

The official currency in Colombia is the Colombian Peso COP(\$). The national economy is diversified, with a strong component in services. The cost of living in Colombia is variable, depending on the department, city or municipality. The exchange rate depends on the Market Representative Rate (TRM), which is fluctuating. As in other countries, the cost of living in Bogotá, the capital city, might be higher than in the rest of the country.



For more information, please visit the link: <https://www.banrep.gov.co/>.

Health system

In Colombia, there is the General System of Social Security in Health (Sistema General de Seguridad Social en Salud – SGSSS) governed by the state, through the Ministry of Health and Social Protection, which acts as a coordinating, directing and controlling body. Health Promotion Entities (EPS), are responsible for the affiliation and collection of contributions and for guaranteeing the provision of the Compulsory Health Plan to members. Health Care Institutions (IPS), which are hospitals, clinics and laboratories, among other, are responsible for providing health care to users. The SGSSS also includes Territorial Entities and the Nacional Super Intendency of Health. Both Colombians and foreigners, and Colombian returnees, can access this system if they meet the requirements requested in each case.

For more information, please visit the link:

<https://www.minsalud.gov.co/proteccionsocial/Paginas/afiliacion-al-sistema-de-seguridad-social-en-salud-de-extranjeros-y-colombianos-retornados.aspx>

4.2 Offer of higher education programs in Colombia

According to information from SNIES, Colombia has an educational offer of more than 300 IES and more than 12,000 academic programs in all areas of knowledge, at the undergraduate level with professional, technological and professional technical programs; and at the graduate level, with specialization, master's and doctoral programs.

More information:

<https://www.mineducacion.gov.co/portal/Educacion-superior/Sistema-de-Educacion-Superior/231240:Instituciones-de-Educacion-Superior>

In Colombia, higher education programmes must have a qualified registry to be offered to the public, in accordance with the quality assurance processes made available by the Ministry of National Education.



More information:

https://www.mineducacion.gov.co/1759/articles-357048_recurso_1.pdf

4.3. Learning or mastering Spanish in Colombia

Colombia is a destination country to improve or practice Spanish. IES offer programs and have agreements specifically designed for foreign students. This educational offer is an entrance to the knowledge of Romance languages.

More information:

<https://spanishincolombia.caroycuervo.gov.co/quienes-somos/programa-ele-colombia/#gsc.tab=0>

<https://ascun.org.co/red/detalle/red-de-espanol-como-lengua-extranjera-enredele#:~:text=EnRedELE%20es%20una%20Red%20de,Extranjera%20y%20como%20Segunda%20Lengua%2C>

4.4. Colombia as a place of scientific and academic cooperation

Colombian IES, through their functions of extension, research, internationalization and entrepreneurship, among other, offer courses, stays, scientific collaborations and other ideal options for academic exchange with people from other countries.

IES are part of the National System of Science, Technology and Innovation that accelerates the technological development and social and productive transformation of the country, promoting a culture that values and manages knowledge, innovating in a comprehensive approach to complex problems. This system includes more than 5,200 research groups, more than 500 indexed journals and thousands of academic actors, entrepreneurs and involved citizens. In recent years, there has been evidence of a growing amount of Colombian scientific production, as well as an increase in its international visibility and greater scientific impact.

More information:

<https://minciencias.gov.co/>

<https://www.ocyt.org.co/>



4.5. Access to state of the art information at Colombian IES

The Colombia Consortium supports the higher education system and the science, technology and innovation system, which allows nationals and foreigners linked to some of the Colombian higher education institutions and research institutes to access state of the art publications from the best publishing houses in the world.

More information:

<https://www.consorciocolombia.co/>

4.6. Cultural diversity and higher education in Colombia

The MEN has developed some guidelines of inclusive education with which it seeks to "encourage IES in the definition of actions and strategies for the strengthening of a differential approach in the access, permanence and conditions of quality" (<https://www.mineduacion.gov.co/1759/w3-article-340146.html?noredirect=1>, consulted in February 2021), focused on populations of special constitutional protection (population victim of the armed conflict, in condition of disability, ethnic - indigenous groups, black communities, Rom and border population).

The country's IES have responded to this need with a wide variety of strategies for differentiating access and support for permanence and graduation with an inclusive approach.

More information:

<https://www.mineduacion.gov.co/1759/w3-article-357277.html?noredirect=1>

4.7. Biodiversity and support for sustainability promoted by higher education in Colombia

According to the Ministry of Environment and the Humboldt Institute, Colombia has 91 types of ecosystems and two immense oceans. Colombia is home to the largest moorland in the world, with three mountain ranges full of biodiversity and fog forests characterized by palm trees that reach great heights. Colombia is the second most



biodiverse country in the world, the first in species of birds and orchids, the second in species of plants, amphibians, butterflies and freshwater fish, and the third in palms and reptiles.

More information:

- <https://www.minambiente.gov.co/index.php/noticias-minambiente/4711-10-ecosistemas-para-enamorarse-de-colombia>
- <https://colombia.travel/es/informacion-practica/clima>
- <http://www.siac.gov.co/biodiversidad>
- <http://www.humboldt.org.co/es/>

This condition has led the country to assume a firm commitment with the 2030 Agenda and the Sustainable Development Goals, approved in September 2015 by the United Nations General Assembly, as well as with international agreements for the sustainability of the planet and its inhabitants. IES of the country have been generating and strengthening their proposals for training, research and extension or social projection directly and indirectly related to the study and promotion of biodiversity and sustainability.

More information:

<https://ascun.org.co/proyectos/index/documentos-agenda-2030-y-ods>

4.8. Mobility options and scholarships in Colombia for foreigners

The Colombian Institute of Educational Credit and Technical Studies Abroad (Instituto Colombiano de Crédito Educativo y Estudios Técnicos en el Exterior - ICETEX) is the governmental entity in charge of the reciprocity program for foreigners in Colombia, which includes calls for scholarships for foreigners, for specialization studies, Master's degrees and doctorates in Colombian public and private higher education institutions.

Reciprocity scholarships are intended for foreign citizens of any nationality who do not possess dual nationality (including Colombian), who are not residing in Colombia, who have not been beneficiaries of the same programme in previous calls, and who already hold a professional or bachelor's degree.



For more information, please visit: <https://becas-sin-fronteras.com/beca/beca-colombia-para-extranjeros-icetex-a1157/>

4.8. Mobility programs and agreements with the Colombian Association of Universities (Asociación Colombiana de Universidades – ASCUN) and university networks for the internationalization of higher education in Colombia

The Colombian Association of Universities - ASCUN, which comprises 90 per cent of public and private universities in all regions of the country, has developed mobility agreements and programmes for Colombians and foreigners, in which Latin American, European and Canadian universities participate. Among them, the Latin American Academic Exchange Program (PILA), the Brazil-Colombia Student Exchange Program (BRACOL) and eleven (11) more international cooperation agreements have been signed.

More information at: <https://www.ascun.org.co/internacionalizacion>

In addition, one of ASCUN's nine university networks is the Colombian Network for the Internationalization of Higher Education (Red Colombiana para la Internacionalización de la Educación Superior – RCI), which promotes internationalization processes among member institutions (currently more than 100 IES), fostering cooperation among them and with the rest of the world. The RCI is a diverse and inclusive solidarity network that promotes and facilitates scenarios, actions and cooperation projects to strengthen the internationalization of higher education in Colombia, improving the quality of member IES while deepening their national and international relationship.

More information at: <https://www.ascun.org.co/red/detalle/red-colombiana-de-internacionalizacion-rci>

There is also a network in the country, named Colombia Challenge Your Knowledge (CCYK). This is a non-profit network, composed of 31 Colombian universities, both public and private, with presence throughout the country and accredited in high



quality by the Ministry of Education, having as main mission the promotion of Colombia as an international destination for higher education and quality research (<https://www.ccyk.com.co/>).

More information at:

<https://www.ccyk.com.co/>

In addition, each IES in the country offers scholarships and reciprocity options with foreign institutions.

More information on the IES pages:

<https://www.ascun.org.co/organizacion/index/universidades-asociadas>

<https://www.colombia.co/extranjeros/estudiar-en-colombia/>

4.9. Foreign applicants who wish to study higher education programs or develop academic exchange programs in Colombia

Foreign applicants who wish to study at an IES in Colombia must comply with the stipulations of 2015 Decree 1067, the Unified Regulation of the Foreign Relations Sector, and the procedures defined by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs for obtaining and renewing visas and alien cards. Likewise, it is essential to have completed the legal steps or apostille study titles that need to satisfy this requirement. So indispensable is also to carry out the process of recognition of foreign degrees through the MEN.

For more information, please visit: https://www.cancilleria.gov.co/tramites_servicios

The recognition of basic education qualifications is essential for accessing higher education. Recognition of basic and higher education qualifications, in some cases, is necessary to participate in employment offers, both in the formal and private sectors.

For more information, please visit:

<https://www.mineducacion.gov.co/portal/convalidaciones/Convalidaciones-Educacion-Superior>



Additionally to recognition by the MEN, IES autonomously define supplementary requirements for admission, permanence and homologation of academic credits, and graduation.

Note: For a document issued by a country that is a party to the Hague Convention to be valid in Colombian territory, it must be apostilled by the competent entity of the country of origin.

Member countries of the Hague Apostille Convention:
https://www.cancilleria.gov.co/sites/default/files/Fotos2016/paises_apostillantes.pdf
<https://www.hcch.net/es/instruments/conventions/authorities1/?cid=41>

For those who are interested in short stays in Colombia, being foreigners residing in Mexico, Chile or Peru, within the framework of the Pacific Alliance it has been agreed, among other aspects, the abolition of tourism and business visas among the four countries and the short-stay visa waiver.

For more information, please visit:
<https://www.cancilleria.gov.co/international/consensus/pacific-alliance>.