

GUIDE TO THE VENEZUELAN EDUCATION SYSTEM AND ASPECTS TO BE CONSIDERED FOR THE RECOGNITION OF HIGHER EDUCATION DEGREES 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 the information here presented includes the different accessibility requirements of tools and web products, facilitating the access for people in a condition of disability. This work was made possible by the invaluable teamwork with the National Institute for the Blind (**Instituto Nacional para Ciegos – INCI**).

UNIVERSITY EDUCATION SYSTEM OF VENEZUELA

According to the Organic Law on Education (Ley Orgánica de Educación), published in the Extraordinary Official Gazette of the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela (Gaceta Oficial Extraordinaria de la República Bolivariana de Venezuela) N° 5.929, 2009, the country's education system comprises levels and modalities. These are levels: initial education, primary education, diversified and technical secondary education, and university education. The modalities are: special education, youth, adult and adult education, education on borders, rural education, arts education, military education, intercultural education and bilingual intercultural education, among other.

Two ministries are responsible for education in the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela: The Ministry of People's Power for University Education (Ministerio del Poder Popular para la Educación Universitaria - MPPEU), responsible for university education (undergraduate and postgraduate), and the Ministry of People's Power for Education (Ministerio del Poder Popular para la Educación), for the educational levels of pre-school education, basic education, and diversified and technical secondary education.

The level to be addressed in this opportunity is university education, which includes undergraduate studies leading to degrees, and postgraduate studies leading to academic degrees.

Undergraduate studies are governed by the Law on Universities (Gaceta Oficial Extraordinaria de la República Bolivariana de Venezuela, N° 1.429, 1970) and by the resolutions issued by the National Council of Universities (Consejo Nacional de Universidades - CNU), a body attached to the Ministry of People's Power for University Education, whose main function is to evaluate, consider and submit for approval, by the President of the Republic, the opening of university education institutions through a Presidential Decree, as well as the approval of the programs of Higher Technician and Bachelor.

Postgraduate studies are governed by the General Regulations of Postgraduate Studies (Normativa General de los Estudios de Postgrado) for universities and institutes properly authorized by the CNU (Official Gazette N.; 37.328 of November 20, 2001). These studies include those of a formal nature leading to academic degrees such as technical specialization, specialization, master's degree and doctorate.

- Higher education institutions

University education is regulated by the Law on Universities (1970), the Regulations on University Colleges and Institutes (Decree No. 865, Official Gazette of 31 October 1995), the Presidential Decree on the Sucre Mission (Decreto Presidencial sobre la Misión Sucre - Decree No. 2,601 of 8 September 2003) and the Act on Community Service for Higher Education Students (Ley de Servicio Comunitario del Estudiante de Educación Superior - 2005), as well as by the Regulations of the Ministry of Popular Power for University Education and the Organic Law of Education (Ley Orgánica de Educación - published in the Official Gazette 5.929 of August 15, 2009).

According to article 3 of the Law on Universities (2009):

"Universities must play a leading role in education, culture and science. To accomplish this mission, their activities will be directed to the creation, assimilation and dissemination of knowledge through research and teaching; to the completion of the comprehensive training undertaken in previous educational cycles; and to structure the professional and technical teams that the Nation needs for its development and progress."

University education includes vocational and postgraduate training, and can be pursued in universities, specialized experimental universities, territorial experimental universities, experimental universities, and research institutes or centers such as university colleges, university institutes, university institutes of technology, ecclesiastical university institutes, pedagogical university institutes, polytechnic university institutes (public or private management) and, in general, in those institutions that meet the objectives set out by the Law and the requirements for their creation and operation.

University studies are grouped into eight areas of knowledge: basic sciences, engineering, architecture and technology, agricultural and marine sciences, health sciences, education sciences, social sciences, humanities, letters and arts, and military arts (www.loe.opsu.gob.ve).

National universities directly award their degrees and titles, while private universities require the MPPEU approval.

Undergraduate and postgraduate ex-students must register their academic degrees and titles at the Office of the Main Registry-Offices attached to the Autonomous Registry and Notary Service (Oficina del Registro Principal - Oficinas adscritas al Servicio Autónomo de Registros y Notarías - <http://www.saren.gob.ve>).

Subsequently, graduates must register with the University Procedures Management System (Sistema Gestión de Trámites Universitarios - GTU) of the Ministry of Popular Power for University Education (citavirtual.mppeu.gob.ve), requesting appointment to carry out the process of legalization of academic documentation.

After legalization, it is required to apostille the academic documentation before the Ministry of People's Power for Foreign Relations (Ministerio del Poder Popular para las Relaciones Exteriores). This is a necessary requirement for the recognition of studies in other countries. The procedure is carried out through the Legalization and Apostille System (<http://legalizacionve.mppre.gob.ve/>).

Access to university education

Young people in their final year of high school, and people generally interested in entering university education in Venezuela, do so through a centralized system called the National Entry System (Sistema Nacional de Ingreso), which comprises five phases (<http://www.opsu.gob.ve/>).

In addition to this form of admission, which is free and compulsory, applicants on their own initiative may take admission examinations that some universities offer, in an additional way, to enable them to gain access to university education, as a supplementary admission mechanism.

Levels of education



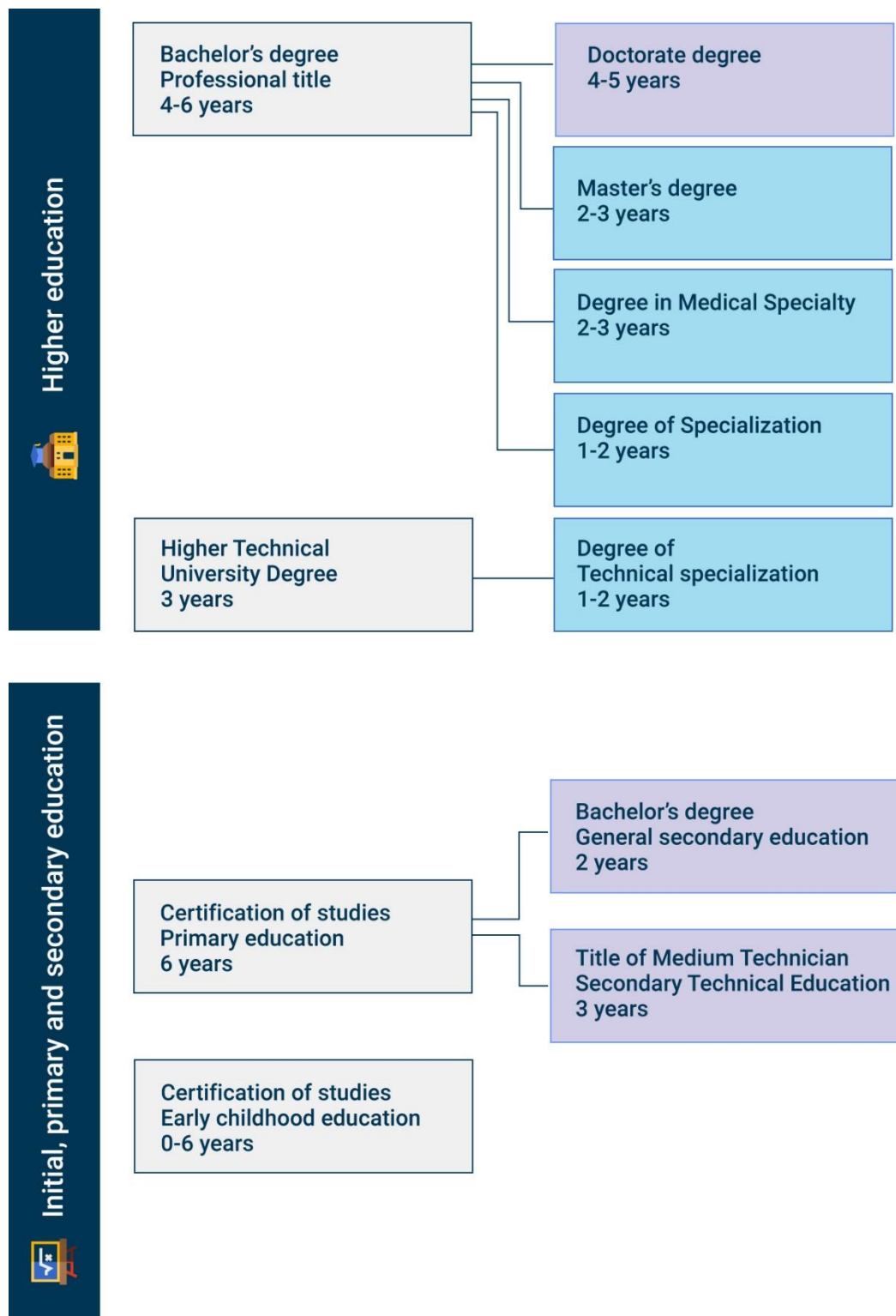
In Venezuela, undergraduate degrees are awarded (backed by a diploma). Superior University Technician (TSU), with a duration of 3 years, and graduate or equivalent (economist, lawyer, doctor, among others), vary between four and six years of stay.

People who obtain their academic qualifications have a professional permit and can legally exercise. However, they have to comply with the requirement of registering their degree with the Main Registry Office (Oficina del Registro Principal) and, where professional colleges are available, graduates go to the corresponding college to register. Regulated professions include engineering, accounting and financial auditing, economics, dentistry, medicine, law, and psychology.

At the postgraduate academic level, the degrees of Senior Specialist Technician are awarded, with a maximum extent of three years; Specialist and Masters, with a maximum extent of four years; and Doctor, with a maximum extent of five years. The extent of these programs must be in accordance with the General Regulations for Postgraduate Studies (Normativa General de los Estudios de Postgrado) for universities and institutes duly authorized by the National Council of Universities (Official Gazette 37,328 dated 20 November 2001).

Medical specialties last from two to three years. Their certification is awarded through a diploma from the Ministry of People's Power for Health (Ministerio del Poder Popular para la Salud), or academic degree awarded by the University of Health Sciences or university authorized for that purpose.

Structure of the Venezuelan education system



COMPARATIVE CHART OF EDUCATIONAL LEVELS IN VENEZUELA AND COLOMBIA

It is important to know the particularities of each of the educational levels, both in Venezuela and in Colombia. This is why a comparative table of the two education systems is presented.

The comparison in this table approximates the study of both educational systems and the duration in years. There are two concepts to consider: a) Academic credits and b) CINE-UNESCO levels.

- a) In both Colombia and Venezuela, the estimated time of academic activity of the student according to the academic competencies that the program is expected to develop, is expressed in units called academic credits.

Academic credits in Venezuela

In Venezuelan universities there is an annual, semi-annual or quarterly regime in undergraduate and postgraduate university curricula. The reference for estimating academic credit was established by the National Council of Universities for the semester regime, obliging the other regimes to adopt this reference.

"A credit in a subject is equivalent to one hour per week of theoretical class or seminar; or two hours of practical or laboratory lessons over a period of 16 weeks. The credits corresponding to other types of activities will be determined in each case and approved by the corresponding agency" (Standard for the Accreditation of Studies for Graduates of the National Council of Universities - Norma para la Acreditación de Estudios para Graduados del Consejo Nacional de Universidades 1983).

Academic credit in Colombia

It is a unit of measurement of the student's academic work, which indicates the effort to achieve the results of previous learning. It is equivalent to forty-eight (48) hours for an academic period. Institutions should determine the ratio between the direct relationship with the teacher and the independent practice of the student, justified according to the learning process and learning outcomes, foreseen for the programme.

Institutions must express in academic credits all training activities that are part of the curriculum (Decree 1330 of 2019, article 2.5.3.2.4.1).



b) The International Standard Classification of Education (CINE), proposed by the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), is a reference framework for internationally compiling and analyzing comparable statistics in the field of education.

The following chart refers to higher education levels:

Level 8: Doctoral level or equivalent.

Level 7: Master's level, specialization or equivalent

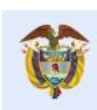
Level 6: Tertiary education degree or equivalent

Level 5: Short-cycle tertiary education

Comparative table of educational levels in Venezuela and Colombia:

DENOMINATION OF LEVELS IN VENEZUELA	NUMBER OF YEARS	DENOMINATION OF LEVELS IN COLOMBIA	NUMBER OF YEARS	CINE- UNESCO LEVELS
Doctorate	4-5	Doctorate	4-5	8
	1-4	Medical and surgical specialization	1-5	7
Medical specialization	2-3	Medical specialization	2	7
Master's degree	2-4	Master's degree	2	7
Specialization	1-4	University specialization	1	6
Bachelor's degree or equivalent	4-6	University degree	4-5	6
-	-	Technological specialization	<1	5
Technical specialization	3	Technical specialization	1	5
		Technologist	3	5
Senior university technician	3	Professional technician	2	5

Source: Prepared on the basis of information available from the education systems of Colombia and Venezuela.



In Venezuela, in addition to the medical specializations leading to academic degrees, offered by universities, there are also Programmed Postgraduate Care Residences, offered by hospitals, and endorsed by the Ministry of People's Power for Health. The General Directorate of Research and Education for Comprehensive Health (Dirección General de Investigación y Educación para la Salud Integral) established the act "Normative, organizational and functional structure of the Ministry of People's Power for Health's programmed postgraduate care homes" (Estructura normativa, organizativa y funcional de las residencias asistenciales programadas de postgrado del Ministerio para el Poder Popular para la Salud), which regulates these scheduled residences. The diploma obtained is endorsed by the General Directorate of Research and Education for Integral Health.

QUALITY ASSURANCE OF UNIVERSITY EDUCATION INSTITUTIONS AND PROGRAMMES

Quality assurance includes the study leading to the authorization of a new institution, undergraduate or postgraduate program. This process is carried out by the National Council of Universities (CNU), an organization to which all applications are sent, both from institutions and from undergraduate and graduate programs. It should be noted that there is also, nominally, the System of Evaluation, Supervision, Accompaniment and Accreditation (Sistema de Evaluación, Supervisión, Acompañamiento y Acreditación - SESA), approved in the framework of the National Council of Universities, on January 27th, 2021.

As for postgraduate studies, there has been a quality assurance procedure in Venezuela since 1983, when the quality and performance criteria for a postgraduate programme were defined. In 1996, the rules and procedures for authorizing new postgraduate programs were approved, and revised in 2001 (CNU, 2001). This procedure covers two areas: the first concerns the authorization or creation of new programs, and the second concerns the voluntary accreditation of the programme. Programs that have been voluntarily accredited are valid for a period between two and five years.

LEGALITY OF UNIVERSITY EDUCATION PROGRAMMES AND INSTITUTIONS

To be able to operate in Venezuela, university education institutions and their programs are created through a presidential decree, once they have the endorsement of the National Council of Universities, body attached to the Ministry of People's Power for University Education.

For a university education institution to be recognized, it must comply with the provisions of the Law on Universities:



Article 8: Universities are national or private. National universities will acquire legal nature with the publication, in the Official Gazette of the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela, of the decree of the National Executive by which they are created. Private universities require the state authorization for their operation.

Article 10: In accordance with the provisions of the Education Act, the National Executive, having heard the opinion of the National Council of Universities, may establish experimental national universities for the purpose of testing new guidelines and structures in higher education. These universities shall enjoy autonomy within the special conditions required by educational experimentation. Its organization and functioning shall be established by executive regulation and subject to periodic evaluation in order to take advantage of the beneficial results for the renewal of the system, and to determine the continuation, modification or deletion of its status.

Article 173: The National Executive, after receiving the favorable opinion of the National Council of Universities, may authorize, by decree and in each case, the operation of universities founded by private natural or legal persons.

Article 174: For the purposes of authorization by the National Executive, the promoters of any private university shall apply to the Ministry of Education, attaching the following documents:

- a) Certified copy of the legal title by which the university was established.
- b) Draft of organizational statute.

Article 175: With the authorization of the National Executive, private universities shall acquire a legal status by filing an application at the Ministry of Education stating the place where it will operate, the corresponding documents specified in the previous article, and the authorization of the National Executive.

To identify the institutions and programs of university education in Venezuela, which have official recognition by the Ministry of Popular Power for University Education, the following link is available: <http://loe.opsu.gob.ve/>.

ASPECTS TO BE TAKEN INTO ACCOUNT TO INITIATE THE PROCESS OF RECOGNITION OF UNIVERSITY EDUCATION DEGREES OBTAINED IN VENEZUELA

2019 Resolution 10687 of the Ministry of National Education (***Resolución 10687 de 2019, del Ministerio de Educación Nacional***) regulates the validation of higher education diplomas awarded abroad, recognizing the quality assurance systems from the countries where the diplomas were issued.

The recognition of higher education diplomas in Colombia is part of the Quality Assurance System for Higher Education (***Sistema de Aseguramiento de la Calidad de la Educación Superior***), which guarantees that, as well as what happens with our national offer, that from other countries has been officially recognized by the states where such certificates were issued.

IMPORTANT: If the undergraduate degree is in law, accounting, education or the health sciences area, additional requirements must be verified. They are stipulated in chapters one and two of 2019 Resolution 10687 by the Ministry of National Education (***Resolución 10687 de 2019 del Ministerio de Educación Nacional***), available at the following link: https://www.mineducacion.gov.co/1759/articles-401316_archivo.pdf

Aspects to be considered for the process of title recognition

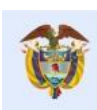
The title recognition of higher education diplomas issued abroad is not mandatory, except in the following cases:

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.

In order to study in the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela and subsequently obtain recognition of the degree in Colombia, the following must be considered:

1. Studies must be advanced in a higher education institution recognized by the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela.
2. Have the apostille of the documents.

The apostille is a certification by which the government of the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela, through the Ministry of People's Power of Foreign Affairs, legalizes the authenticity of the signature and the title with which a Venezuelan official subscribes a document issued in the country, and which will have legal effect before a country that is a member of the Hague Convention.



The general requirements for apostille in the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela are:

1. Undergraduate and postgraduate graduates must first register their academic degrees and titles at the Main Registry Office (Oficina del Registro Principal) or offices linked to the Autonomous Registry and Notary Service (Servicio Autónomo de Registros y Notarías - <http://www.saren.gob.ve>).
2. Graduates must register with the University Procedures Management System (Sistema Gestión de Trámites Universitarios - GTU) of the Ministry of Popular Power for University Education (citavirtual.mppeu.gob.ve), and request an appointment to carry out the process of legalization of academic documentation.
3. After legalization, graduates need to apostille the academic documentation at the Ministry of People's Power for Foreign Relations. This is a necessary requirement for recognition of studies in other countries. It can be developed through the Legalization and Apostille System (<http://legalizacionve.mppre.gob.ve/>).

The costs associated with each of the procedures can be reviewed on the three previously mentioned websites.

- The Ministry of People's Power of Foreign Affairs only apostilles documents issued by authorities of the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela.
- Only original documents and/or certified copies with the signature of the competent authority, previously registered, are apostilled.
- If the country to which the document is to be presented requires its translation, it will also have to be apostilled.
- Documents must include the previous signatures required by the Ministry of People's Power of Foreign Affairs, before being apostilled.

However, if you already have a degree issued by a university education institution in Venezuela, and recognition of the degree is required, the following FAQ will help you understand the process:

- 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.mineduccion.gov.co/portal/convalidations/Convalidations-Education-Superior/350670:Know-the-process>



- 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>
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- 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>
- 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>
- 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/convalidations/Convalidations-Education-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>

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