

## RUSSIAN EDUCATION SYSTEM

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### 1. GENERAL OVERVIEW

The **system of education** in the Russian Federation comprises:

successive **educational programs** and the **State educational standard**;

**educational institutions** in which educational programs and the State educational standard are implemented;

**administrative and other bodies and organizations** which govern the educational system.

In the Russian Federation, all educational programs are of two types:

- general education;
- professional education.

General education comprises:

- pre-school education;
- primary general education;
- basic general education;
- secondary (complete) general education.

Since in the Russian Federation all programs, except general education programs, lead to diplomas or to diplomas and degrees as well as to professional qualifications and give the right to exercise professions, they are called professional education programs. Thus professional education covers the following:

- vocational education (nachalnoe professionalnoe obrazovanie);
- non-university level higher education (srednee professionalnoe obrazovanie);
- university level higher education (vysshee professionalnoe obrazovanie);
- doctoral study programmes (aspirantura and doktorantura) upgrading, retraining and other LLL (poslevuzovskoe professionalnoe obrazovanie)

## 2. LANGUAGES OF INSTRUCTION

The principal **language of instruction** is **Russian**. The study of Russian as the state language of the Russian Federation in all State-accredited education institutions, except pre-school institutions, is regulated according to the State educational standard.

The citizens of the Russian Federation have the right to be instructed on basic general education in their **native languages** as well as to choose their languages of instruction within the range of possibilities offered by the educational system. The language (languages) in which education and training are conducted are selected by the founder(s) of given educational establishments.

## 3. MANAGEMENT AND ADMINISTRATION

Through August 1996, there were two federal bodies that exercised management and administration over the educational system in the country: **the Ministry of Education of the Russian Federation** and **the State Committee of the Russian Federation for Higher Education**.

**The Ministry of Education** was in charge of the elaboration and implementation of state policy in the field of pre-school, general, and vocational education as well as of complementary education at the corresponding levels. **The State Committee for Higher Education** was responsible for the elaboration and implementation of state policy in the field of post-secondary education: non-university and university level higher education, doctoral studies, as well as of complementary education at the corresponding levels.

In August 1996, these two federal bodies were merged into one ministry with combined functions called the Ministry for General and Professional Education of the Russian Federation. In 1999 it was renamed for The Ministry of Education.

The following main functions come under the terms of reference of the federal management and administrative bodies:

- the establishment of the procedures for the setting up, reorganization, and dissolution of educational establishments;
- the setting up, reorganization, and dissolution of educational establishments under federal subordination;
- the elaboration of the procedures for different forms of quality control (licensing, attestation, and state accreditation of educational institutions) and their execution;
- the identification of the federal components of the State educational standard;
- recognition matters and the nostrification of diplomas obtained abroad;
- the elaboration of the attestation (evaluation) procedures for the teaching and administrative staffs of educational institutions and the setting of requirements for their qualifications;
- the design of the list of professions and specialties covered by professional education;
- the direct funding of educational establishments set up under their authority;
- the working out of the state standards and norms for the financing educational institutions and for their material and technical provision as well as for the provision of the teaching-learning process;
- control over the execution of legislation in regard to education, over the State educational standard, as well as over budgeting and financing.

In addition to the Ministry of Education the state bodies for education in the constituent parts (republics, territories, regions, etc.) of the Russian Federation, and the local (municipal) administrative bodies are responsible for development of education. All of these bodies have administrative responsibilities for the educational establishments which they set up.

In the state higher education institutions, routine activities are supervised by Academic Councils that are headed by rectors. The term of offices of an Academic Council is five years. In the non-

state educational establishments, supervision is the responsibility of their founders or of a trusteeship council (committee) appointed by the founders.

The direct administration of a higher education institution is the responsibility of the rector. The statute of the institution defines the demarcation between the functions of the Academic Council and of the rector of the institution.

Depending upon the structure of a given institution, Academic Councils may be set up in the faculties. The members are elected from among the academic staff. The terms of reference of Academic Councils are defined in the statutes of the institutions in question. Each faculty is headed by a dean who is elected by the Academic Council of the institution. Faculties are normally composed of chairs that are administered by their heads.

#### **4. QUALITY ASSUARANCE**

In order to ensure quality and efficiency, a new national mechanism for quality control and assessment was introduced. This mechanism includes:

- the state educational standard;
- licensing;
- state attestation and accreditation;

##### **The State Educational Standard**

The State educational standard is a set of nationally recognized requirements laid down by the State which determines a mandatory minimum for the contents of educational programs, the maximum work loads assigned to students, as well as general course loads and requirements to be met by graduates. The State Educational Standard of Higher Professional Education was developed by Teaching and Methodological Associations. These Associations are formed of experts from higher education institutions in relevant fields of study on the basis of a competition organized by the State Committee for Higher Education and approved by Decree No. 940 of 12 August 1994 of the Government of the Russian Federation.

##### **Licensing**

Licensing is a procedure whereby an educational institution is granted the right to carry out educational programs in relevant fields of study (specialities) and at corresponding levels of education. It consists of the recognition of expertise, the taking of decisions, and the issuing of a duly worded authorization, i.e., a license.

##### **State Accreditation**

State accreditation is the formal recognition of the status of an education establishment by the State on the basis of solid evidence that its activities conform to nationally established requirements. The procedure results in the granting to the educational institution concerned the right to award Diplomas of the state format certifying the successful completion of an education program, to use a State seal of the Russian Federation, and to be included in the financing scheme of the State budget. State accreditation is applicable both to state educational establishments and to private institutions. For higher education institutions, State accreditation is regulated by a decree of the Ministry of Education. The accreditation procedure includes both a self-evaluation and a peer review.

#### **5. GENERAL EDUCATION**

General education comprises three stages corresponding to the levels of educational programs:

- primary general education (as a rule, the standard duration is 4 years);
- basic general education (the standard duration is 5 years);
- secondary (complete) general education (the standard duration is 2 years).

General education programs comprise eleven years of studies. The extension of total duration occurred at the expense of an earlier school enrollment at the age of 6 -7. So students normally finish secondary (complete) general education at the age of 17-18.

At present, the system of general education includes 67 thousand educational establishments in which 21 million students are enrolled. Several hundreds of private schools have been established over the last years. The official name of general education schools is the Secondary General School.

General education curricula normally stipulate thirty-four weeks of study per year and, as a rule, twenty-seven to thirty-eight hours of study per week. The school year starts on 1 September and runs through the beginning of June. School examinations are scheduled in June. For certain categories of students, the stipulated period of study can be changed according to the specific State educational standard. Starting from 2001 Common State Examinations for 11-th form graduates are experimented.

A Basic Curriculum for General Education has been developed which lays down the State requirements as to the minimum content of education and the workload of students. The Basic Curriculum designates the compulsory fields of study (Humanities with a special emphasis on Russian Language, Literature, Social Sciences, and Physical Education; Natural Sciences with priority given to Mathematics; and Technology). The Social Sciences can include such subjects as Foreign Languages, Russian History, World History, Economic and Social Geography, Law, Political Science, Economics, etc. The Natural Sciences can cover Biology, Physics, Astronomy, Chemistry, Ecology, etc. Technology normally includes Drawing and a number of disciplines for the imparting of certain professional skills: basic skills of general utility for pupils (Home Economics, Sewing, Cooking, Metal Work, Carpentry, etc.) and, in upper grades, basic skills for the exercise of certain professions.

In addition to these required fields of study, the Basic Curriculum provides for disciplines which could be added because of being specific to the particular region in which the school is located as well as optional disciplines in accordance with the interests of pupils.

In practice, each school designs its own curriculum, basing it upon the Basic Curriculum.

Russia has well-developed networks of schools offering advanced programmes which are based on the Basic Curriculum and can be offered in a number of ways:

- through schools offering advanced programmes in selected disciplines such as foreign languages, mathematics, physics, etc.;
- through schools with developed out-of-school activities giving a profound mastery of fine arts, philosophy, economics, sports, and other fields;
- through schools in which senior grades work under the auspices (and tutorship) of higher education institutions and use the academic staff and facilities of the latter.

Primary general education and basic general education are compulsory. On the completion of basic general education (a nine-year programme), students take final examinations (the procedure is called the State final attestation) and are awarded, if they pass, the Certificate of Basic General Education (Attestat ob Osnovnom Obshchem Obrazovanii). As a result of the State final attestation, students may or may not be encouraged to continue their education. The Certificate entitles its holder to be admitted either to secondary (complete) general education or to vocational education, as well as to non-university level higher education.

The Certificate of Secondary (Complete) General Education (Attestat o Srednem (Polnom) Obshchem Obrazovanii; before 1993, the Attestat o Srednem Obrazovanii - Certificate of Secondary Education) is awarded after the completion of an eleven-year school programme and the successful passing of the State final attestation (final examinations). The number of disciplines subject to final examinations should not be fewer than five: two federal compulsory written examinations (composition and mathematics) and no less than three optional examinations at the choice of the student. In addition to the results of the final examinations, school leaving certificates include a

supplement listing the grades obtained by students in all the subjects taught during the whole period of education. The old version of the certificate (Attestat o Srednem Obrazovanii) has no supplement, and the grades are listed on the certificate itself. The number of subjects may vary from seventeen to twenty. Final and annual examinations are two-thirds written and one-third oral; examinations taken during the learning process are in the reversed proportion.

The school leaving certificate (Certificate of Secondary (Complete) General Education) entitles its holder to pursue professional education: either vocational education, or both non-university and university level higher education.

In the last few years, numerous private schools have been established. The authorization to grant nationally recognized certificates (certificates of the State format) is linked to success in the State accreditation procedures. Certificates awarded by non-accredited institutions (of non-State format) do not grant the right to be admitted to higher education institutions.

## **6. VOCATIONAL EDUCATION**

Vocational education (nachalnoe professionalnoe obrazovanie) is the initial stage of professional education. It is aimed at the training of skilled workers, usually on the basis of basic general education. Vocational training for certain occupations may be based on secondary (complete) general education. Educational programmes for persons wishing to take up vocational education after basic general education are different from those offered to persons who have finished secondary (complete) general education.

A total of 3,9 thousand education institutions, some of which are private, with an enrollment of 1,6 million students offer course programmes in vocational education in the country. Admission to vocational education institutions normally does not require any entrance examinations.

Two kinds of vocational education can be distinguished:

The first kind of vocational education is offered by vocational education institutions called Professional Schools (Professionalnoe Technicheskoe Uchilishche). In these institutions, educational programmes are aimed at the acquisition of professional qualifications and mainly cover subjects for professional training. The duration of these educational programmes depending on prior schooling is:

- 1 to 2.5 years, following completion of basic general (9 grades) education;
- 1 to 1.5 years, following completion of secondary (complete) general (11 grades) education.

There are 3 types of basic programmes in Professional Schools respectively:

1. After 9-th school grade with duration up to 1,5 years. After passing the State final attestation, graduates are awarded Diplomas that give them the right to exercise a profession (qualified worker). Such a Diploma also entitles its holder to pursue non-university level higher education (in case studies are pursued in the same profile, educational programmes can be shortened), however this type of vocational education does not give the right of access to university level higher education.
2. Vocational education programmes offered by education institutions called Professional Lycei (Professionalnye Litsei). In these institutions, educational programmes, in addition to the professional education component, also include a general education component (educational programme of the tenth and eleventh grades). After passing the State final attestation, graduates of a Professional Lycei are awarded Diplomas that not only give them the right to exercise a profession but also to enter to HE institutions. It is indicated in Diplomas that graduates have completed secondary (complete) general education.
3. Vocational education programmes following completion of secondary (complete) general (11 grades) education.

Licensing, accreditation and attestation for institutions of Nachalnoe Professionalnoe Obrazovanie are realized completely by local entities of governance of educational sector. The procedures are more or less the same, that used in Srednee Professionalnoe Obrazovanie.

## **7. HIGHER EDUCATION**

There are two kinds of higher education in the Russian Federation:

non-university level (Srednee Professional'noe Obrazovanie): education educational programmes not leading to university degrees; university level higher education (Vyshee Professional'noe Obrazovanie): educational programmes leading to university degrees.

### **Non-University Level, First stage of tertiary education, level 5B.**

There are 2,5 thousand state and municipal non-university level higher education establishments in the country enrolling over 2,1 million students. More than hundred private institutions offering education programmes in such fields as law, economics, and management have been established.

Education institutions of non-university level are generally known as Tekhnikums or Uchilishcha. Since 1989, a new type of institution has emerged, namely, the College. Colleges can be independent educational institutions or constituent parts of a university, academy, or institute. They offer educational programmes of non-university HE level of advanced type. At present, there are about 680 colleges in the country.

The admission procedure for a college is regulated by Decree No. 1 of 16 March 1995 of the State Committee for Higher Education. Admission is competitive, and applicants have to pass entrance examinations.

The main prerequisite for admission is the completion of secondary (complete) general education (grade 11). However, a number of educational establishments offer course programmes following completion of basic general education (grade 9).

### **The Duration of Programmes**

In a Tekhnikum (Medical, Pedagogical Uchilishche): 2 to 3 years after secondary (complete) general education (grade 11); no less than 3 years after basic general education (grade 9).

In a College: 3.5 to 4 years after secondary (complete) general education (grade 11); 4 to 4.5 years after basic general education (grade 9).

On the successful completion of studies, students are awarded the corresponding Diploma. The Diploma supplement contains the list of subjects learnt during the studies and the grades earned.

Licensing in Srednee Professionalnoe Obrazovanie is fully a prerogative of the local authorities. It involves a formal assessment by a visiting expert group to ensure that the institution meets the state and local requirements, including building, sanitation, equipment, staff and some others. Each newly introduced program must also be assessed and licensed.

Accreditation is an act allowing the institution to issue state recognized diplomas.

Procedures of Attestation is a confirmation of the quality of educational programs and consequently of the standard of the diplomas. Accreditation and attestation for institutions of Srednee Professionalnoe Obrazovanie are realized by the Ministry of Education and some other federal ministries-founders of respective (submitted) institutions; local authorities-founders of submitted institutions.

Approximately 60% of Srednee Professionalnoe Obrazovanie institution are founded by the federal ministries and 40% - by local (Oblast) entities of governance.

### **University Level Higher Education**

According to the Law On Education of 1996 university level HE institutions are classified as following:

University is an institution which are aimed at the development of education, science, and culture through the conducting of fundamental and applied research and the offering of training programmes at all levels of higher, postgraduate, and continuing education in a wide range of natural and social sciences and the humanities. A university must be the leading research and methodological centre in the areas of its activity.

Academy is a HE institution which activities are aimed at the development of education, science, and culture through the conducting of fundamental and applied research and the offering of training programmes at all levels of higher, postgraduate, and continuing education in a single major area of science, technology, or culture. An academy must be the leading research and methodological centre in its area of activity.

Institute is an autonomous HE institution or university's (academy's) division providing programmes at all levels of higher, postgraduate, and continuing education and conducting researchs.

The total enrollment in 2001/2002 was 5.7 million students, including 3,1 million fulltime students (in 1995: 2, 77 and 1,75 million respectively).

Along with the state sector, there is also a sector of municipal higher education establishments run by local and regional authorities as well as a sector of non-state HE establishments run by private, public, and religious organizations. In 2002 657 state and about 400 non-state HE institutions were operating in Russia.

### **Admission Requirements**

Admission to university level HE institution is based on presentation of school leaving certificate or its equivalent and passing entrance examinations.

After the changes of the early 1990's, higher education institutions have been authorized to allocate a portion of their places to fee-paying students. Since competition for these places is not as high as for the places financed by the state, admission requirements may be lower, and students may be admitted with lower grades.

### **Course Programme Structure**

Russian higher education institutions may confer the following **degrees and diplomas**:

- an Intermediate Diploma Nepolnoe vysshee (at least two years of study);
- a Bakalavr Diploma (at least four years of study);
- a Specialist Diploma (five to six years of study);
- a Magistr Diploma (six years of study).

#### ***The Intermediate Diploma***

The first function of the Intermediate Diploma (Diplom o nepolnom vysshem obrazovanii) awarded after at least two years of studies for the Bakalavr or Specialist Diplomas, is to certify that the student has successfully finished the first two years of basic higher education in a particular field of study.

#### ***The Bakalavr Degree***

The Bakalavr degree is conferred after at least a four-year course of study. Bakalavr programmes can cover all disciplines except medicine. The function of the Bakalavr degree is to provide a more academically rather than professionally oriented education. The Bakalavr degree is a prerequisite for admission to Magistr studies.

The State final attestation includes the defense of a thesis prepared over a period of four months and State final examinations. Following a successful attestation, a State Diploma is issued attesting conferral of the Bakalavr degree. The Diploma supplement includes the list of disciplines, the

number of hours, the grades, practical training, and the results obtained on the final state examinations and in the defense of the thesis.

### ***The Specialist Diploma***

The traditional qualification of Specialist Diploma has two functions. It opens access to professional practice (e.g., to engineers, teachers, chemists, etc.), and it is also the traditional prerequisite for admission to doctoral studies. The qualification of Specialist Diploma is conferred after studies lasting five years. The diploma is awarded in all fields of study (specialities).

The State final attestation for a Specialist Diploma covers the defense of a project or a thesis and State final examinations. The procedure for the State final attestation and for the award of the Diploma as well as the content of Diploma supplement are the same as for the Bakalavr degree.

### ***The Magistr Degree***

A Magistr programme is at least a two-year course focused more around research activities in comparison with Specialist program.

The State educational standard defines only general requirements for Magistr educational programmes and not the requirements regarding the content of education. Higher education establishments in Russia introducing Magistr degree programmes are free to make their own decisions regarding the contents of programmes.

Access to Magistr studies is open to the holders of the Bakalavr degree. For the holders of the Bakalavr degree wishing to pursue a Magistr programme in the same field of study (speciality), the higher education institutions themselves set up admission procedures (examinations, interviews, etc.). Those holders of the Bakalavr degree wishing to pursue the Magistr programme in another field of study (speciality) must pass an additional test which reflects the requirements for the Bakalavr programme in the speciality corresponding to the chosen Magistr programme.

**Medical Sciences** The duration of study in the medical sciences is the following:

- five years in dentistry and pharmacy;
- six years in medicine;
- four years in nursing following completion of vocational education and two-and-a-half years following completion of non-university level higher education.

The medical sciences are the only area in which diplomas of university level HE do not give the right to their holders to exercise their professions independently. In order to be admitted to the medical professions, the holders of university level HE diplomas must undertake further in-depth professional training:

- a one-year course programme (called the ***internatura***) or
- a two- to three-year course programme (called the ***ordinatura***).

Training in the internatura or the ordinatura takes place on the premises of the best hospitals, clinics, and research medical institutes. Graduates from the internatura or ordinatura are awarded certificates that specify their specialization areas and entitle them to exercise their professions independently.

## **8. DOCTORAL PROGRAMMES**

The hierarchy of advanced scientific degrees in Russia traditionally includes Doctor's degrees of two levels: **the Candidate of Sciences** (Kandidat Nauk) and **the Doctor of Sciences** (Doktor Nauk). The Candidate of Sciences degree normally requires at least three years of study after the award of the Specialist or the Magistr diploma. The Doctor of Sciences degree can be earned after a period of further study following the award of the Candidate of Sciences degree. In reality, to earn a Doctor of Sciences degree requires five to fifteen years beyond the award of the Candidate of Sciences degree.

Both university level higher education establishments and research institutions have the right to set up doctoral study programmes. Two national bodies, the Education Ministry and the Russian Academy of Sciences are responsible for supervision of doctoral studies in higher education establishments and research institutions, respectively. Upon the decision of these two bodies,



doctoral study programmes (***aspirantura*** - for the Candidate of Sciences degree and ***doctorantura*** - for the Doctor of Sciences degree) can be opened in those higher education establishments and research institutions that possess the required personnel as well as scientific and financial resources. Higher education institutions must be accredited, and research institutions must have a license granting them the right to carry out educational activities.

The two doctoral degrees can be earned in two ways: as a result of studies in the aspirantura and doctorantura or independently.

The defense of doctoral dissertation is carried out before a Dissertation Council. Dissertation Councils are organized by the Supreme Certifying Committee (Vysshij Attestatsionnyj Komitet, VAK) of the Russian Federation to accept dissertations in given fields of science for hearing in accredited HE and research institutions.

The public defense of the dissertation is held in the form of a public presentation and a scientific debates.

## 9. RECOGNITION

In the Russian Federation, two national bodies deal with the recognition of diplomas and degrees. **The Education Ministry** in charge of the recognition of diplomas and degrees related to higher professional education, and **the Supreme Certifying Committee** is responsible for the recognition of doctoral degrees.

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See also: [Recognized Universities](#)

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## 10. GUIDELINES FOR RECOGNITION OF RUSSIAN QUALIFICATIONS IN OTHER EUROPEAN COUNTRIES

### 1. Doctoral Degrees

In countries with a two-tier system of doctoral degrees, the degree of Kandidat Nauk should be considered for recognition at the level of the first doctoral degree.

In countries with only one doctoral degree, the degree of Kandidat Nauk should be considered for recognition as equivalent to this degree.

In countries with a two-tier system of doctoral degrees, the degree of Doktor Nauk should be considered for recognition at the level of the second doctoral degree.

In countries in which only one doctoral degree exists, the degree of Doktor Nauk should be considered for recognition at the level of this degree.

### 2. Access to Doctoral Studies

The holders of the degrees of Diplom-Specialist and Magistr should be considered for access to doctoral studies in the host country with the same specific requirements that have to be fulfilled by the national diploma holders of the host country.

### 3. University Level Degrees

In countries with a two-tier system of university degrees, the degree of Bakalavr should be considered for recognition at the level of the first degree.

In countries with only one university degree, the degree of Bakalavr should be considered for recognition on an individual basis.

In countries with a two-tier system of university degrees, the degree of Diplom-Specialist should be considered for recognition at the level of the second or Master's degree.

In countries with only one university degree, the degree of Diplom-Specialist should be considered for recognition at the level of this university degree.

In countries with a two-tier system of university degrees, the Magistr degree should be considered for recognition at the level of the second or Master's degree.

In countries with only one university degree, the Magistr degree should be considered for recognition at the level of this university degree.

#### **4. Access to Higher Education**

Certificates giving access to higher education institutions in the Russian Federation should be considered in general for access in the host country, unless substantial differences can be demonstrated between the study programmes leading to the respective diplomas or between additional requirements concerned with access to higher education institutions. In evaluating these differences in qualifications, two years or more of duration in the programme(s) leading to access to higher education institutions may generally be considered as a substantial difference.<sup>2</sup> Even then, on an individual basis, this qualification may be considered for access.

### **11. GUIDELINES FOR THE RECOGNITION OF QUALIFICATIONS FROM THE OTHER EUROPEAN COUNTRIES IN THE RUSSIAN FEDERATION**

#### **1. Doctoral Degrees**

For countries with a two-tier system of doctoral degrees, the first doctoral degree should in general be considered for recognition at the level of the Kandidat Nauk degree.

For countries with a two-tier system of doctoral degrees, the second degree should be considered for recognition at the level of the Doktor Nauk degree.

For countries with a one-tier system of doctoral degrees, this doctoral degree should be considered for recognition at the level of the Kandidat Nauk degree. A holder could apply, in exceptional cases, on an individual basis, for recognition of this degree at the level of the Doktor Nauk degree.

#### **2. Access to Doctoral Studies**

The holders of a degree giving access to doctoral study programmes in the home country should be considered for access to the aspirantura with the same admission requirements that have to be fulfilled by the holders of the Diplom-Specialist and of the Magistr degrees.

#### **3. University Level Degrees**

For countries with a two-tier system of university degrees, the first university degree should be considered for recognition at the level of the Bakalavr degree.

For countries with a two-tier system of university degrees, the second university degree should be considered for recognition at the level of the Magistr or of the Diplom-Specialist degrees.

For countries with a one-tier system of university degrees, the university degree should be considered for recognition at the level of the Diplom-Specialist or of the Magistr degrees.

#### **4. Access to Higher Education**

Qualifications giving access to higher education in the home country should be considered for access in the Russian Federation on the same terms as for citizens of the Russian Federation.