



## **GUIDE OF THE EDUCATION SYSTEM IN ARGENTINA 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 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. THE HIGHER EDUCATION SYSTEM IN ARGENTINA

The Argentine Educational System (Sistema Educativo Argentino - SEA) is decentralized. The Argentine Republic is composed of 23 Provinces and the Autonomous City of Buenos Aires (Ciudad Autónoma de Buenos Aires - C.A.B.A.), which are responsible for the government and administration of education (planning, organization, control) with the National State. The latter is the one who establishes the educational policy and controls its compliance throughout Argentina, but without ignoring the peculiarities and provincial decisions.

For their part, provinces act through the ministry of education, offices or jurisdictional education, councils that have the obligation to guarantee and control a comprehensive, inclusive, permanent and high-quality education, in view of the needs, requirements and realities of the jurisdictions, such as ensuring the organization and articulation of levels, modalities of education and the national validity of degrees and certificates issued.

Likewise, the Federal Council of Education (Consejo Federal de Educación, created in 1972), composed of the 24 ministers of jurisdictional education and chaired by the Minister of National Education, aims at the consultation, planning and coordination of national education policy to ensure unity and articulation. As a result, the Financing Act was enacted in 2006.

Article 115, paragraph G, of the National Education Act No. 206, provides that the Ministry of Education has the duty of issuing general regulations on the equivalence of curricula and curriculum designs in jurisdictions, in accordance with Article 85 of the above-mentioned Law, conferring national validity to diplomas and certificates of study.



## - ***Educational Institutions***

Education in Argentina is made up of state management, private management, cooperative management and social management services in all jurisdictions of the country, including different levels, cycles and modalities of education. Its structure has four levels:

*Initial education*, which runs from 45 days to five years of age. Primary education, which begins from the age of six. Secondary education is divided into two cycles: a basic cycle, common to all, and an oriented cycle, diversified according to different fields of knowledge. Finally, there is higher education, which includes universities, university institutes and institutes of higher education, regulated by the national state, created by the legislature and financed by the executive. Only institutions in any of these three categories are legally authorized by the Ministry of Education to award official degrees.

In accordance with the 1995 Higher Education Act No. 24.521, articles 5 to 10, three broad categories of higher education institutions are established, and eight training modalities are defined, which become organizational and/or curricular options.

### **Higher Education Educational Centers**

1. *University institutes*, which offer careers in a single area of knowledge (e.g., health majors).
2. *Universities* that, unlike university institutes, have different departments (usually called faculties) that include various branches of higher education. Both award undergraduate and graduate degrees.



3. *Non-university* institutes, which offer short careers called technical courses (two to four years), issue undergraduate (non-university) degrees, giving students the necessary tools to start working in positions with a specialized qualification.

### **Access to education in Argentina**

1995 Law on Higher Education No. 24.521, article 7, establishes that the secondary degree is the requirement for admission to higher education. Those older than 25 years old who do not possess this diploma will be allowed to enroll after demonstrating, through evaluations, that they have the required preparation and work experience. In turn, article 29, paragraph J, and article 35, establish that each university institution, in use of its autonomy, may establish the regime and requirements for admission, permanence and promotion of students. In addition, article 50 considers that, in universities that have more than fifty thousand students, the conditions of admission may be defined by each faculty or academic unit.

The classification of the admission systems and modalities implemented by Argentine universities are classified into two main groups:

- *Admission without examinations:* in this case, all those who carry out the corresponding administrative registration procedure, are allowed to the institution. It may provide for the delivery of compulsory or optional courses or the fulfilment of other internal bodies, for example, tutorials, or none of them.
- *Admission with exams:* access to institutions occurs after the approval of some type of evaluation instance. Two options are proposed: the offering, by the institution, of some entrance course, or the presentation of the candidate to the exam.



Most universities have modalities of admission with some type of compulsory course and examinations (whether these are diagnostic, eliminatory, or with promotional modality by means of partials, among other).

With regard to postgraduate studies, the university of destination may admit the interested party only by carrying out the curricular study of his degree. In the case of applicants from other countries, it is not necessary to revalidate or validate the foreign university degree of the previous level. In accordance with Ministerial Resolution No. 416/00, university institutions may recognize complete degree studies approved abroad, exclusively for the purposes of the pursuit of postgraduate studies in the institution that carries out the respective recognition, provided that the postgraduate curriculum does not require, in its development, the professional exercise of the student, case in which the prior procedure of validation by the ministry is necessary.

- ***Types of degrees***

In Argentina, three ways to award a university degree are recognized (Resolution 2385/2015, Annex Title I, Article 3).

a) *Single degree*: a single degree awarded by a university institution, as a result of having fulfilled all the requirements required for a given program.

b) *Joint Degree*: a single degree awarded by two or more Argentine or Argentine and foreign university institutions that, by agreement, have defined the development of an inter-institutional career and both appear as signatories of a single diploma, expressly stating their liaison in it.

c) *Multiple degree*: degrees awarded by one or more Argentine university institutions and one or more foreign institutions that, by agreement, have defined the



development of an inter-institutional career, issuing the Argentine single diploma referring to all institutions participating in the inter-institutional agreement.

- ***Degrees and titles***

Argentine university institutions award undergraduate and graduate degrees. Each of them is described below:

***1. Undergraduate level***

Degree: university technician, analyst, assistant, among other names.

Characteristics: they must have a minimum duration of two and a half years and a minimum hourly load of 1600 clock hours.

***2. Grade level***

Degree: bachelor or equivalent professional degrees (engineer, doctor, architect, lawyer, among other).

Characteristics: minimum hourly load of 2600 classroom hours developed in a minimum of four academic years, issued by university higher education institutions with official recognition. These degrees qualify for professional practice and direct access to the postgraduate level (specialization, master's degree - academic or professional - and doctorate) (1997 Ministerial Resolution No. 6, Articles 1, 2 and 3).

***3. Postgraduate level***

In order to start postgraduate training, in accordance with the provisions of Article 39 of the Higher Education Law No. 24.521, the applicant must be holder of a non-university degree or higher level of at least four (4) year-duration and meet the prerequisites determined by the academic committee or equivalent authority. In exceptional cases of applicants who are outside the preceding terms, they may be



admitted provided that they demonstrate their preparation, experience, knowledge and skills in accordance with the postgraduate studies they intend to start.

### 1. ***Medical specialties***

For the processes of admission to postgraduate programs in areas of health, it is necessary that the applicant performs the process of provisional validation of his/her degree (undergraduate), in accordance with the criteria established in Ministerial Resolution No. 351/13. The recognition is carried out through the validation procedure and is channeled through the National Direction of Management and University Supervision (Dirección Nacional de Gestión y Fiscalización Universitaria - DNGyFU) of the Secretariat of University Policies of the Ministry of Education of the Nation.

Excluded from this process is the modality of training of residences of the health team, for whose admission, the requirement of validation for professional practice and definitive registration for all purposes is maintained, in accordance with article 13 of the aforementioned resolution.

In Argentina, health programs are accredited by the National Residency Accreditation System of the Health Team – (Sistema Nacional de Acreditación de Residencias del Equipo de Salud - SNARES and CONEAU). Both entities are responsible for training programs for specialists in the health area, through residences (SNARES) or postgraduate courses (CONEAU). In this context, it should be considered that, for the accreditation and official recognition of diplomas, postgraduates must undergo an evaluation process by CONEAU and that, in the case of residences, there is an accreditation by SNARES.

It is important to note that residence allows the obtaining of a complete residence certificate. With this certificate, the concerned person can approach the Ministry of Health, where the certificate of specialist, granted by the Ministry of Health, will be provided. In the event that, during the residency, the student has completed in



parallel the career of university specialist (which requires registration in a university), and passes the final exam, the student will receive the title of university specialist. The specialist degree is recognized in Colombia only if it has been certified by a university higher education institution that has a program duly created and accredited by the Ministry of Education of Argentina.

**Specialization:** the minimum hourly load is 360 clock hours, not counting those dedicated to the preparation of the final work, and it must include hours of practical training (Resolution No. 1168/97).

**Master's degree (academic or professional):** it aims at providing an academic and/or professional education. It deepens the theoretical, methodological, technological, managerial or artistic knowledge, according to the state of development corresponding to a discipline, interdisciplinary area or professional field. For graduation, it requires the presentation of an individual and written final work, whose approval leads to the granting of the title of "Master". There are two types of master's degree: academic master's degree and professional master's degree. The minimum hourly load is 700 clock hours, of which 540 hours will be face-to-face, while the remaining hours will be assigned to final paper or other complementary activities (Resolution No. 1168/97).

**Doctorate:** it aims at training postgraduates who can make original contributions in an area of knowledge, within a framework of academic excellence, through a primary focus on research. The doctorate culminates with an individual thesis that is carried out under the supervision of a director. It leads to the awarding of the title of "Doctor", with precise specification of a discipline or interdisciplinary area. There are no minimum hourly loads, which must be determined by each university institution.

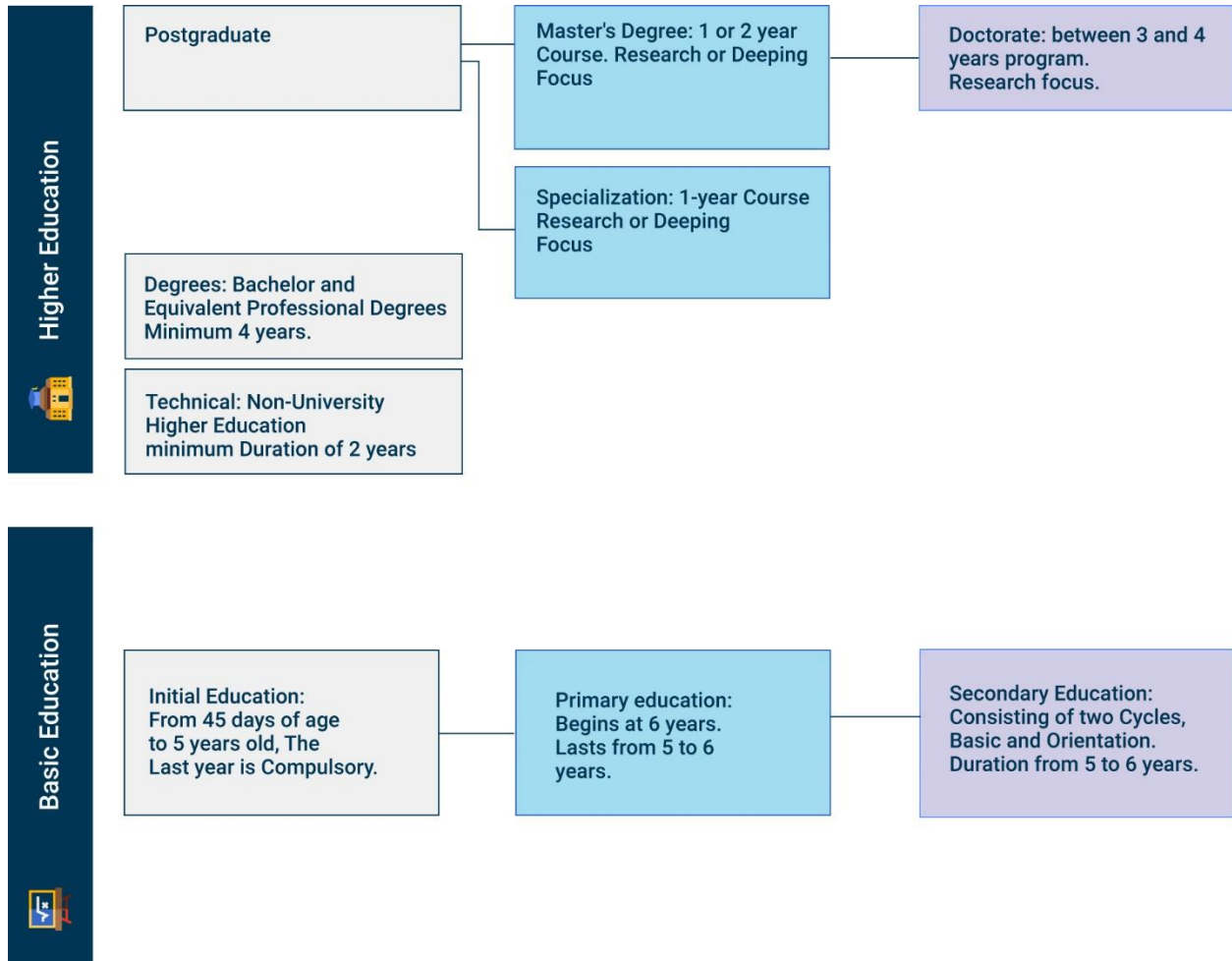
In terms of postgraduate levels, it is important to note that they are not articulated, so it is not necessary to have a master's degree to pursue a doctorate, nor





specialization to pursue a master’s degree (regardless of whether a particular PhD programme may apply, in the criteria for admission of doctoral candidates, for the Master’s degree) (Resolution No. 1168/97).

### Structure of the Education System of Argentina





### Comparative table of educational levels for Argentina and Colombia

It is important to know the particularities of each of the educational levels, both in Argentina and in Colombia. A comparative analysis of the two higher education systems is therefore presented in the following diagram, considering the following 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.

**Table comparing educational levels in Argentina and Colombia**

CINE – UNESCO LEVELS	LEVELS IN ARGENTINA	NUMBER OF YEARS	LEVELS IN COLOMBIA	NUMBER OF YEARS
8	Doctorate	N - A	Doctorate	4 - 5
7	Master’s degree	1-2	Master’s degree	2
7	N - A	N - A	Medical specialization	2
7	N - A	N - A	Medical - surgical specialization	1
6	Degree	4-6	University degree	4



6	Specialization	N - A	University specialization	1
5	Undergraduate degree	2-3	Professional technician	2
5	N - A	N - A	Technologist	3
5	N - A	N - A	Technical specialization	1
5	N - A	N - A	Technological specialization	< 1

\* \* Based on UNESCO Institute for Statistics (2013) and the link:  
<http://marcificacionestp.mineduc.cl/credenciales-del-mctp/>

It is important to highlight the measurement of the time of instruction corresponding to educational levels and their comparison with international standards:

a) Academic credits: in both Colombia and Argentina, 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 credit in Argentina:**

In Argentina, there is no credit system at the national level. Each institution establishes the minimum hours with respect to a credit. However, for engineering, there is an Argentine Credit Transfer System. A SATC credit is equal to 25-30 hours of study (Law No 24.521, Article 42).



**- Academic credit in Colombia:**

It is a unit of measurement of the student's academic work, indicating the effort to achieve the learning results. 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 the learning outcomes expected for the programme.

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

## **LEGALITY OF HIGHER EDUCATION PROGRAMMES AND INSTITUTIONS**

The Ministry of Education, by 2010 resolution 51, establishes the mechanism for the official recognition and national validity of undergraduate and postgraduate degrees.

The Ministry of Education grants temporary official recognition and consequent national validity for special cases of newly created programs.

The favourable outcome of the process of accreditation of a program, in the terms of Article 7 of Decree 499/95, shall imply the continuation of the official recognition granted for the period laid down in the relevant accreditation decision or until the first call after its expiry. In an unfavorable case, the automatic expiry of the official recognition operates.

To know which higher education programs offered in Argentina are legal, the link provided by the University Information System of Argentina – SIU can help: [http://sipes.siu.edu.ar/buscar\\_titulos.php](http://sipes.siu.edu.ar/buscar_titulos.php).



There, it is possible to find the database of degrees with official recognition and their consequent national validity granted by the Ministry of Education of the Nation. The consultation can be made by institution, modality or level of academic formation.

## **QUALITY ASSURANCE**

In Argentina, the university evaluation and accreditation system are organized by the National Commission for University Evaluation and Accreditation (Comisión Nacional de Evaluación y Acreditación Universitaria - CONEAU), a decentralized agency that operates under the jurisdiction of the Ministry of Education. It was created to contribute to the improvement of university education. CONEAU, since 1996, evaluates institutional projects, annual reports from university institutions with provisional authorization, and applications for final recognition. In addition, it conducts external evaluations and accredits postgraduate degrees.

CONEAU also authorizes external entities to develop assessment and accreditation processes under section 44 of the Higher Education Act. Currently, two entities are recognized, the Argentine Foundation for University Evaluation and Accreditation (Fundación Argentina para la Evaluación y Acreditación Universitaria - FAPEYAU) and the Foundation Accreditation Agency of the Americas (Fundación Agencia Acreditadora de las Américas), approved to carry out the external evaluation of institutions, academic units or functions in formative evaluation processes.

CONEAU is required to accredit all undergraduate and postgraduate courses offered in Argentina. For undergraduate courses, periodic calls are made, by disciplinary areas. In the case of postgraduate programs, they are not disciplinary, but general (with the exception of the area of medicine).

With regard to postgraduate programmes, Ministerial Resolution No. 1168/97, which establishes accreditation standards, sets out the criteria for evaluating the three types of postgraduate programmes. For specialization and master's degree, a minimum number of hours is established, not so for the doctorate. Decree No.



160/11 and Ministerial Resolution No. 2385/15 modified the original standards. There are two major developments in these standards. On the one hand, the possibility of professional master's degrees being accredited, in addition to academic ones, differentiating the programs by the profile of the curriculum and teachers, the associated activities, and the type of evaluation.

Accreditation decisions for undergraduate and postgraduate careers can be found at the following links:

CONEAU: <https://www.coneau.gob.ar/coneau/>

Degree programs: <https://www.coneau.gob.ar/searchers/grado/grado>

Graduate programs: <https://www.coneau.gob.ar/searchers/postgraduate/>

There are relevant data such as academic program or career, institution, academic unit, resolution and annexes.

As the accreditation process is dynamic and the Commission approves new procedures, a recently adopted resolution may not yet be found through the search engine. To deepen, validate information or make queries, the email account is available: [directioncredit@coneau.gob.ar](mailto:directioncredit@coneau.gob.ar).

It is important to note that, starting in 2013, CONEAU launched the Accredited Postgraduate Course Guide for the entire university system, which is available at the link: <https://www.coneau.gob.ar/coneau/publications/catalogo-de-posgrados/>.

#### **4. ASPECTS TO BE CONSIDERED FOR THE PROCESS OF RECOGNITION OF HIGHER EDUCATION DEGREES OBTAINED IN ARGENTINA**



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.f](https://www.mineducacion.gov.co/1759/articles-401316_archivo_pdf.pdf.f).

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.

To study in Argentina and, subsequently, to obtain recognition of the degree in Colombia, the following must be considered:

1. Studies must have been advanced at a legal higher education institution in the home country.
2. Have the respective apostille or legalization chain in the documents.



*Apostille* is a stamp issued by a competent authority in the country where the document is issued, for the purpose of confirming the authenticity of a signature, stamp or seal on a public document. In the case of Argentina, individuals and companies who require the international validation of their documentation, can do it online, sending all paperwork to the proper tab in the following link: <https://tramitesadistancia.gob.ar>.

The documentation of studies carried out in Argentina (certificate of approved subjects, degrees or diplomas, study programs, records of courses carried out, certificates of residencies, etc.) must have, for this process, the proper chain of legalizations, approved by the Ministry of Education or the Ministry of Health, as appropriate.

Degrees, analytical certificates and other certifications issued by university institutions prior to January 1, 2012, must be legalized by the Public Information Directorate (Dirección de Información al Público), under the Office of the Under-Secretary for Coordination of the Ministry of the Interior, Public Works and Housing (Subsecretaria de Coordinación del Ministerio del Interior, Obras Públicas y Vivienda), provided that the National Directorate of University Management (Dirección Nacional de Gestión Universitaria) intervenes, reporting to the Secretary of University Policies (Secretaria de Políticas Universitarias) of the then Ministry of Education of the Nation.

Degrees, analytical certificates and other certifications issued by university institutions after 1st January 2012 shall correspond to the university institutions. The procedure is established by the National Directorate of University Management, which reports to the Secretariat for University Policies of the Ministry of Education, to ensure its verification and authenticity.





There are different recognition criteria, according to the program and the higher education institution that awards the degree.

If having a degree issued by a higher education institution in Argentina, and recognition in Colombia be needed, 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>.

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