



## World Education News and Reviews

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### Practical Information

# Education in Algeria

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**A**t independence in 1962 the Algerian education system was highly exclusive and geared toward the training of a French colonial elite. With the creation of the Ministry of Education in 1963, the process of building an inclusive and open national education system was set in motion. Officials charged with developing the education system placed their focus on a number of goals, primary among which were the “Arabization” of curriculum and faculty, the upgrading of teaching skills at all levels, and the promotion of a skilled class of workers and technicians through the emphasis of technical and vocational education.

In the early 1960s, French was replaced by Arabic as the language of instruction at the primary level, and later in the 1960s Arabic was standardized as the language of instruction at the secondary level. French continues to be used in technical fields at many post-secondary institutions, despite a 1991 law mandating the use of Arabic in all sectors and at all levels. Arabic is, however, used as the language of instruction at the post-secondary level in most non-technical faculties.

An education reform passed in 1971 introduced the nine-year basic education program. Further reforms in 1976 extended the period of compulsory education from six years to 10 years while also guaranteeing that education at every level be provided free to all. In addition to guaranteeing tuition-free instruction, the reforms of 1976 mandated that education be the exclusive domain of the state. As a result, the private sector has had little impact on education and training in Algeria; however, private instruction has been offered on a limited basis since the early 1990s and may soon play a bigger role. Reacting to a need to reduce the burden on the state, the government passed an executive decree in 2004 that amended the 1976 reforms and explicitly allowed for the establishment of private institutions of education under well-defined regulations. Private education in Algeria still remains, however, very much a nascent industry.



The structure of the school system is based on 6+3+3 model: six years of primary school, three years of lower secondary school and another three years of upper secondary school. Together, the nine years of primary and lower secondary education constitute the compulsory basic education phase. The number of children completing a primary education has been rising steadily through the 1990s, especially among female students. In 1990, 80 percent of students beginning primary education graduated (74 percent female, 87 percent male), while in 2003 93 percent of students finished primary school (both male and female). Net primary enrollment rates (as a percentage of school-age children) stood at 95 percent in 2003. Although enrollment rates are relatively high at the primary level, only 59 percent of the relevant age cohort enrolled in secondary studies in 1999. In the tertiary sector, total student enrollments have grown exponentially since independence: 2,809 (1962), 19,213 (1970), 79,351 (1980), 258,995 (1989), and 423,000 in 1999.

The Ministry of Higher Education lists a total of 57 public institutions of higher education: 27 universities, 13 university centers, 6 national schools (*écoles nationales*), 6 national institutes (*instituts nationaux*), and 4 teacher-training institutes

(*écoles normales supérieures*). The structure of university studies is currently being reformed from a 3-4-5-7 system to a 3-5-8 system based on a three-year *licence*, two-year *master* and a three-year *doctorat* (see "LMD Reforms" section below).

The Ministry of National Education is responsible for the supervision of basic and secondary education; the Ministry of Higher Education and Scientific Research, and the Ministry of Professional Education in collaboration with various other relevant ministries regulate the tertiary sector.

### PRIMARY EDUCATION (*Enseignement Fondamental*)

The first nine years of schooling, comprising the basic education cycle, is compulsory for all children of school age (usually age six and above). It is divided into three cycles of three years (*de base, d'éveil* and *d'orientation*). The first two cycles are taught at primary schools (*écoles primaires*) and the third cycle at middle school (*école complémentaire*). In addition, there are integrated schools (*école fondamentale intégrée*) teaching all nine years of basic education under the same roof.

In academic year 1992-93, English was introduced alongside French as a first foreign language to be taught from the beginning of the second three-year cycle. Prior to this, French was the only foreign language taught at the primary level. Students pick up either French or English as their second foreign language in the eighth grade.

In the first six years of basic education students attend class for 27 hours a week and from 32 to 35 hours a week in the final three-year cycle. Students are assessed on the results of their coursework, and progression between grades is based on these results. Students who perform poorly in key subjects are required to take make-up classes, or to retake the year if they have an overall average below 50 percent. Promotion to the third cycle of basic education is based exclusively on student performance in the sixth grade. In the third cycle, students are assessed and promoted to successive grades based on their coursework; an average of 50 percent (10 out of 20) or better is required for progression.

At the end of basic education (grade 9) students take the national basic education certificate examination. Students who are successful on the examination and in their final year of studies are awarded the **Brevet d'Enseignement Fondamental** (BEF), which grants them access to one of the three streams (*troncs communs*) of the first year of secondary studies. In 2001/02, 43 percent of 600,848 students passed the BEF.

In 2005, a total of 6,617,976 students were enrolled in grades one through nine.

**Duration:** Nine years divided into three three-year cycles.

**Curriculum:**

#### Weekly hours by discipline and grade

	Cycle de base			Cycle d'éveil			Cycle d'orientation		
	1st yr	2nd yr	3rd yr	4th yr	5th yr	6th yr	7th yr	8th yr	9th yr
<b>Arabic</b>	14	14	12	9	7.5	7.5	6	5	5
<b>Islamic studies</b>	2	2	2	1.5	1.5	1.5	1	1	1
<b>Political education</b>	-	-	-	-	-	1.5	1	1	1
<b>History/ geography</b>	-	-	-	-	-	-	2	2	2
<b>Mathe-</b>									

maths	6	6	6	5	5	5	5	6	5
Natural sciences	-	-	-	-	-	-	3	3	3
Social studies	-	-	2	2.5	4	4	-	-	-
Technology	-	-	-	-	-	-	3	2	2
Manual work	1.5	1.5	1.5	1.5	1.5	1.5	-	-	-
1st foreign language	-	-	-	5	5	5	5	4	4
2nd foreign language	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	4	5
Art	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1
Music	1	1	1	-	-	-	1	1	1
Physical education	1.5	1.5	1.5	1.5	1.5	1.5	2	2	2
Total	27	27	27	27	27	27	31	32	32

### Leaving Certificate: *Brevet d'Enseignement Fondamental*

### SECONDARY EDUCATION (*Enseignement Secondaire*)

Students choosing to pursue the *baccalauréat*, the national competitive school-leaving examination, are streamed into one of two branches: technical/vocational or general and specialized. Secondary studies leading to the *baccalauréat* are three years in duration and offered at general, technical and combined schools (*lycées d'enseignement général, technique* and *lycées polyvalents*).

The main objective of the general secondary stream is to prepare students for further studies. Students graduating from the technical/vocational stream also have the option of furthering their studies at an institution of higher education; however, training is mainly geared toward professional pursuits, often in conjunction with business, public institutions and labor unions. Specialized professional training programs of one to four years in duration are also available to holders of the *Brevet d'Enseignement Fondamental* who do not wish to pursue the *baccalauréat*.

Students in the first year of secondary studies follow one of three core curriculums: languages and social studies (*lettres*); sciences (natural and physical); and technology (mathematics, physical sciences and technology). In the second and third year of studies, students specialize further although remain within the framework of the general or technical *baccalauréat* streams. In total, there are 15 concentrations (*séries*) that branch from the three first-year core curriculums.

- In the general education stream there are five main concentrations: hard sciences; natural and life sciences; liberal arts and literature; literature and foreign languages; religious studies.
- In the technical/vocational stream students follow one of six concentrations: electronics; electrotechnology; mechanics; public works and construction; chemistry; and accounting.
- Hybrid concentrations exist in the following fields: mechanical technology; electrical technology; civil technology; and business and management. Students following these concentrations are awarded the ***Baccalauréat de***

### ***l'Enseignement Secondaire, option "Technologie".***

Students are streamed according to their personal preferences, the opinion of their teachers and counselors, their results on the *Brevet d'Enseignement Fondamental* exam, their overall performance in grade nine, and the number of slots available in each specialization. Promotion to successive grades is based on student performance through the year.

Students sit for the *baccalauréat* examinations at the end of the third year of secondary education, and admission to tertiary-level institutions is based on student performance in these exams. Students are examined in each subject studied during their final year and earn the *baccalauréat* if they score a combined average of over 50 percent (greater than 10 on a 20-point scale) in all subjects. Failure rates are high and a majority of students take the exam at least twice before passing. In 2001/02, just 35 percent of 349,795 students passed the main summer exams and of the 230,233 that retook in September 18,524 (9 percent) passed. Just over 90 percent of test takers were enrolled in the general stream.

The school year is 36 weeks long and divided into trimesters. Arabic is the language of instruction in all subjects except foreign languages. Students specializing in natural sciences, physical sciences and mathematics receive supplementary French-language classes to prepare them for training at the tertiary level which, in the sciences and mathematics, are still commonly taught in French.

In 2005, a total of 1,123,123 students were enrolled in grades 10 through 12.

**Duration of program:** Three years

#### **Curriculum:**

- In the first year of secondary studies (technical and general), all students take classes in the following subjects: Arabic, mathematics, history and geography, Islamic studies, physical sciences, two foreign languages (French and English), information technology, art and music, physical education. In addition, students take technical design, natural sciences, and a third foreign language depending on their stream.
- In the second year, students in the same streams take similar classes, but with different weightings depending on their concentration. For example, students studying in the five concentrations from the general education stream are all required to take classes in Arabic, mathematics, history and geography, Islamic studies, philosophy, two foreign languages, art or music, physical education and one of either physical or natural science. In the third year, students specialize to a greater degree in their area of concentration. In the second and third years of the technical stream, approximately two-thirds of all classes are focused on technical training and other technical subjects related to the specialization, with the remaining classes devoted to general academic subjects.

**Leaving Certificate:** *Baccalauréat de l'Enseignement Secondaire Général* (general studies), *Baccalauréat de Technicien* (technical studies).

## **HIGHER EDUCATION**

### **Admissions**

Access to postsecondary studies is open to holders of the *baccalauréat* or a foreign equivalent. In addition to passing the *baccalauréat*, students must also meet requirements set annually by the Ministry of Higher Education and Scientific Research based on the following considerations:

- Student choice
- Field of study in the *baccalauréat*
- Average score in specific fields on the *baccalauréat*
- The number of available seats in each field and jurisdiction.

In 2002, the National Information Institute, the organization responsible for processing university applications, received a total of 130,000 files.

### **Institutions**

Higher education in Algeria is offered at 27 universities, 13 university centers, 6 national schools, 6 national institutes, 4 teacher-training institutes and 2 university annexes. Universities and university centers are centrally administered by the

Ministry of Higher Education and Scientific Research, while specialized schools and institutes generally fall under the portfolio of the ministry to which its specialization is most closely related.

Most of Algeria's universities are located in the northern coastal regions and serve as umbrellas for a wide range of faculties, much like the French university system, which in turn are divided into academic departments. University centers tend to operate in more remote regions and have historically been limited in the number of programs they offer. Typically, programs at university centers focus on the particular manpower needs of the regions they serve by training professionals and technicians in specific professional fields. In recent years, many university centers have expanded the number of disciplines in which they offer programs to the extent that some have been upgraded to university status.

A list of universities and university centers is available at: [www.mesrs.dz/francais/unvf.asp?FileName=20041107150416\\_UNIVERf](http://www.mesrs.dz/francais/unvf.asp?FileName=20041107150416_UNIVERf)

Unlike universities and university centers, specialized schools and institutes fall under the joint control of the Ministry of Higher Education and Scientific Research and an associated ministry, i.e. agriculture, health, industry etc. National schools (*écoles nationales*) are highly selective and tend to specialize in the theoretical and applied sciences. Students are selected on the basis of their scientific *baccalauréat* scores, with places being reserved for those scoring top grades. National institutes have traditionally offered specialized professional training programs lasting two and a half years and leading to the award of the **Diplôme de Technicien Supérieur** (DTS). In an effort to meet the burgeoning demand for university education in Algeria, many of these institutes now offer a wider range of specializations as well as university-track awards. Some institutes now enroll *baccalauréat* holders into five-year engineering programs leading to the **Diplôme d'Ingénieur** and a number of institutes have recently been merged to form new universities.

A list of national schools and institutes is available at: [www.mesrs.dz/francais/Ecoles.htm](http://www.mesrs.dz/francais/Ecoles.htm)

Since 1991, the ministry has been phasing out the DTS in favor of the three-year **Diplôme d'Etudes Universitaires Appliqués** (DEUA), which, like the DTS, is primarily offered in technological fields in addition to some natural science fields and applied psychology, library science, statistics, and accounting. The DEUA is offered at both university and non-university institutions.

In addition to traditional bricks and mortar universities, *L'Université de la Formation Continue* (University of Continuing Education) has, since 1990, offered non-*baccalauréat* holding students the opportunity to pursue post-secondary education by special entrance examinations, in addition to offering open admissions to holders of the *baccalauréat*. The institution offers short three-year programs in 18 subject areas leading to the DEUA. Courses are offered through a network of 51 study centers and also by correspondence and via the Internet. Students are required to pay tuition.

In 2003, almost 6000 foreign students were enrolled in an Algerian institution of higher education, of which 4000 were from French-speaking Africa.

## PROGRAMS AND DEGREES

### Current System

The specific degrees awarded by institutions of higher education, whether of the university or non-university type, are determined by the field of study and not the institution, therefore, there is often a fair degree of overlap between the credentials offered by universities and institutes. In general, however, students graduating from university programs tend to do so from long-cycle programs, whereas those graduating from non-university institutions typically do so from short programs. All awards are issued by the Ministry of Higher Education and Scientific Research or in professional/vocational fields by the associated ministry.

### University Programs

**Stage I:** At the undergraduate level, programs are offered on two parallel tracks. The first is the short three-year track, which in most cases does not give access to further studies. Students graduating from short-track programs are awarded the *Diplôme d'Etudes Universitaires Appliqués* (DEUA). More common are four- to five-year long programs leading to the **Licence** or **Diplôme d'Etudes Supérieures** (both four years) or, in technological institutes the **Diplôme d'Ingénieur** (five years), which is awarded in technological fields and some natural and earth sciences. The *Licence* is awarded in the humanities and social sciences to graduates of universities, teacher-training institutes and specialized institutes. The *Diplôme d'Etudes Supérieures* is awarded in scientific and technological fields.

Other five-year degrees include the **Diplôme d'Etat d'Architecte**, **Diplôme de Pharmacien** and the **Diplôme de Doctor**



**Vétérinaire.** In fields such as engineering, students who have completed a DEUA in a related field can enter the third year of a *Diplôme d'Ingenieur* program. The ***Diplôme de Docteur en Médecine*** requires seven years of study.

**Stage II:** The first research degree (*diplôme de postgraduation*) offered to graduates of relevant first-tier long programs (*Licence, DES*) is the two year ***Diplôme de Magister***. Students take core practical and theoretical classes in addition to classes and electives in their area of specialization. Students are also required to study a foreign language and conduct original research culminating in the preparation and defense of a thesis. If they plan to become educators, students are required to take pedagogical classes. In addition to completing a long first-tier program, students must pass an entrance examination to enroll in a *magister* program. In most cases the diploma certificate will mention the field of studies, specialization, overall grade and thesis title. *Magister* programs are offered at both universities and institutes with qualified faculty.

**Stage III:** The Doctoral degree is the highest degree awarded in Algeria. It is open to holders of the *magister* and requires three to five years of original research, publication of at least one article in a scholarly journal and the preparation and defense of a dissertation. A grade of *honorable or très honorable* on the dissertation is required for acceptance.

### “LMD” Reforms

The Algerian framework of university degrees is currently under reform with the traditional system, modeled on the French structure, to be gradually replaced with a three-tier system deemed to be more internationally compatible. The reform, known as the “L.M.D.,” is set to introduce a degree structure based on the new French model of bachelor’s, masters and doctoral degrees (*Licence, Master, Doctorat*). Introduced by executive decree in 2004, the reforms are being undertaken as a pilot project at 10 Algerian universities, which are working in consultation with a number of European universities. The new degree framework is similar in structure to the reforms being undertaken in Europe through the Bologna Process:

- The *licence*, corresponding to three years of study beyond the *baccalauréat* (bac+3);
- The *master*, corresponding to two years further study beyond the *licence* (bac+5);
- The *doctorat*, corresponding to three years of research beyond the *master* (bac+8).

It is hoped that the new system will make program offerings from Algerian universities more compatible with those around the world, thereby increasing the international mobility of Algerian faculty and students. In addition, the reforms are aimed at increasing student flexibility in choosing and transferring courses and credits; making the system more efficient as relates to the time it takes for students to graduate; increasing lifelong learning opportunities; and increasing institutional autonomy while producing learning outcomes more attuned to the needs of the labor market.

Central to the plan of increasing student mobility is the introduction of a unit- and credit-accumulation system. Under the plan, classes are grouped into modules (*unités d'enseignement*) that comprise core classes specific to the general field of study (*unité d'enseignement fondamentale*); required classes for particular subjects of study (*unité d'enseignement découverte*); and electives outside the student’s area of specialization (*l'unité d'enseignement transversal*). Instruction and assessment for each module is organized on a semester, rather than yearly, basis and is composed of a certain number of academic credit hours which are transferable as part of the overall module of study. One credit is equal to a student workload of 20 to 25 hours, and one semester of full-time study constitutes 30 credit hours. In line with the newly introduced European Credit Transfer System (ECTS), credit loads under the new academic structure are as follows:

- *Licence* (Bac+3, bac+6 semesters) = 180 crédits
- *Master* (licence + 2years, licence + 4 semesters) = 120 crédits

### NON-UNIVERSITY/PROFESSIONAL HIGHER EDUCATION

Postsecondary non-university instruction is offered at national institutes of professional higher education (*institus nationaux de formation supérieure* (INFS)), which fall under the joint control of the associated ministry and the Ministry of Higher Education. As in the academic sector, administration of the non-university sector is highly centralized, and the ministries are responsible for determining — among other things — admission requirements, length of studies, and program and institutional recognition.

Instruction at the undergraduate level (*graduation*) is offered through long and short programs. At the lower level, 2.5- to 3-year short programs (*cycle de court durée*) are open to *baccalauréat*-level students who have completed 12 years of schooling. Graduates are awarded the ***Diplôme de Technicien Supérieur***, which takes five semesters to complete, or more commonly the three-year ***Diplôme d'Etudes Universitaires Appliqués*** (DEUA). The DEUA is awarded in

technological fields, natural and earth sciences, in addition to a small number of economics and management fields

The long five-year program leads to the award of the *Diplôme d'Ingénieur* and is open to students who have completed a secondary education and passed the baccalaureate examination. In addition, professional *diplôme* programs are offered in the fields of architecture, dental surgery, pharmacy, medicine, and veterinary science. All programs are five years except in medicine, which is seven years.

The long program is considered of university level and grants access to graduate studies (*postgraduation*) while the short program is generally a terminal degree, although graduates with relevant professional experience or top marks may join the third year of studies of a related long-cycle program.

At the graduate level, programs are offered in the academic stream as described above (Stage II & III) and are open to holders of a long-cycle degree. In addition, *Diplômes de Postgraduation Spécialisées* (specialized professional graduate diplomas) are also awarded. Normally 12 months in duration, these programs provide job-specific training organized by institutions of higher education in conjunction with employers. They are open to holders of a first-level degree with at least three months of professional experience. Graduates from these programs may continue on in a *magister* program.

## TEACHER TRAINING

Students wishing to enroll at an *école normale supérieure*, which trains basic and secondary school teachers, must have passed the *baccalauréat* examination.

### *Basic Education Teachers*

Basic education teachers train for three years to earn the *Diplôme de Maître d'Enseignement Fondamental* or for four years for the award of the *Diplôme de Professeur d'Enseignement Secondaire*. The final year of these programs is normally reserved for practical teacher-training placements combined with pedagogical and theoretical training. In the first two to three years of the teacher-training program, students generally take classes in their subject area specializations.

### *Secondary Education Teachers*

Secondary school teachers are required to train for five years. Successful completion of the five-year program leads to the award of *Diplôme de Professeur d'Enseignement Secondaire*. As with the training for basic education, the final year of training for secondary school teachers is generally reserved for practical and theoretical methodology classes and practical in-school training.

**WES Grade Conversion Guide** [www.wes.org/gradeconversionguide/](http://www.wes.org/gradeconversionguide/)

Suggested scale for **Algeria**

Scale	Grade Description	U.S. Grade Equivalents
15+	Très Bien (Very Good)	A+
13 - 14.9	Bien (Good)	A
12 - 12.9	Assez Bien (Quite Good)	B+
11 - 11.9	Passable (Satisfactory)	B
10 - 10.9	Moyen (Sufficient)	C

8 - 9.9	-	*
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\* May be considered passing grade if entire year is passed.

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