

# **EURYDICE**

Upplýsinganet um menntamál í Evrópu

## **GAGNAGRUNNUR UM ÍSLAND** (á ensku)

2006

Desember 2007

Iceland (2006/07)

1. Political, Social and Economic Background and Trends
  2. General Organisation of the Education System and Administration of Education
  3. Pre-Primary Education
  4. Single Structure Education
  5. Upper Secondary and Post-Secondary Non-Tertiary Education
  6. Tertiary Education
  7. Continuing Education and Training for Young School Leavers and Adults
  8. Teachers and Education Staff
  9. Evaluation of Educational Institutions and of the Education System
  10. Special Educational Support
  11. The European and International Dimension in Education
- Legislation
- Bibliography

# 1. Political, Social and Economic Background and Trends

## 1.1. Historical Overview

Iceland was settled from Norway and by Norse settlers from the British Isles in the 9th and 10th centuries. There were no formal ties with any other state during the first two-and-a-half centuries after the settlement (the Commonwealth or Free State period), but in 1262-1264 allegiance was sworn to the Norwegian crown. In 1383 the Danish and Norwegian crowns were united, and Iceland was thereafter part of the Danish- Norwegian Monarchy. In 1660 an absolute monarchy was proclaimed in Denmark, and Iceland followed suit two years later. The absolute monarchy was abolished in Denmark 1848 and in 1874 Iceland received its first constitution. This constitution established a Ministry for Iceland in Copenhagen, but there was pressure from the start to have it moved to Iceland. In 1904 the first Minister to sit in Iceland was appointed. With the centre of administration moved to Iceland, there was increased demand for full political independence from Denmark, and in 1918 a joint Danish-Icelandic committee reached an agreement whereby Iceland was proclaimed a sovereign state in personal union with Denmark. Under this agreement Denmark remained in charge of Iceland's foreign affairs, and the King was the joint head of state for both countries. This treaty was to remain in effect for 25 years, but either nation could request its revision after 1940. During World War II Denmark was occupied by Germany, and the Icelanders chose to take all their affairs into their own hands, which culminated in severing the remaining ties with Denmark. A motion to this effect was passed by Parliament Althingi and put to a referendum, in which the motion was passed virtually unanimously (97.35% in favour). Iceland was duly declared an independent republic on 17 June 1944. Iceland and Denmark work together with the other Nordic countries through the Nordic Council (established in 1952).

Since 17 June 1944, Iceland has been a republic with a written constitution and a parliamentary form of government. In accordance with the constitution, Parliament Althingi and the President jointly exercise legislative power. The President is head of state and is elected for a term of four years by direct vote of the electorate. Parliament is composed of 63 members, elected for four years by proportional representation. The government holds executive power and is headed by the Prime Minister.

Iceland was almost exclusively an agricultural society until the late 19th century, when fisheries gradually came to replace animal husbandry as the mainstay of the economy, a development mirrored in the history of politics.

The campaign for independence was the decisive element in Icelandic politics throughout most of the late 19th and early 20th centuries. There was, however, a change from about the time of World War I, with increased urbanisation, whereby class considerations gradually replaced the independence movement as the focus of political attention, and the roots of the party system of today can be traced to that time.

The first parties to be formed along these lines, i.e. class factors, were the Social Democratic Party and, as an answer to it, the Progressive Party, which was to represent farmers' interests. Both were founded in 1916. The Independence Party, representing business and middle-class interests, was formed in 1929, and has traditionally been the largest party represented in Parliament. The People's Alliance, a radical left-wing party, was originally formed as a league between elements of the Social Democrats and the Socialists for the elections in 1956, but became an established political party in 1968.

The Social Democratic Party, the Progressive Party, the Independence Party and the People's Alliance were the principal political parties in Iceland during the 20th century. There have been other parties, generally formed as splinter groups from these four, but none of them has survived. The only political force to have emerged in recent years which has survived more than two parliamentary elections was the Women's Alliance, founded in 1983 in order to represent women's views and to increase their participation in politics and decision-making.

Before the parliamentary election of 1999 some changes took place on the left wing of Icelandic politics. The Social Democrats, the People's Alliance and the Women's Alliance formed an election alliance, and then merged to form a formal political party, the Alliance. The more radical elements of the People's Alliance and various others did not participate in the Alliance and formed the Left-Green Movement.

Iceland has participated actively in international co-operation. It co-operates extensively with other Nordic countries, for instance in the Nordic Council. Iceland joined the European Free Trade Association (EFTA) in 1970. In 1994 Iceland and the other EFTA countries signed the European Economic Area (EEA) Agreement with the European Union. Since the implementation of the EEA Agreement Iceland is an equal partner with full rights and obligations in the SOCRATES and LEONARDO DA VINCI programmes. See [11.4.2](#).

Bibliography: Frá einveldi til lýðveldis

Institutions: Althingi / Alþingi

Legislation: The Constitution of the Republic of Iceland

---

### 1.1.1. The Current Political Scene

The present political parties in Parliament Althingi are: The Alliance, the Independence Party, the Left-Green Movement, the Liberal Party, and the Progressive Party.

Parliamentary elections, which are held every four years, were last held in May 2003. Of the 63 seats in Parliament, the Independence Party gained 22 seats with 33.7% of the vote, the Progressive Party 12 seats with 17.7%, the Alliance 20 seats with 31.0%, the Left-Green movement 5 seats with 8.8%, and the Liberal Party 4 seats with 7.4%. Women constitute 30% of members of Parliament.

After the parliamentary elections of 2003 the coalition between the Independence Party and the Progressive Party, formed in 1995, was renewed for another four-year term. Prime Minister since 15 June 2006 is the leader of the Independence Party.

Institutions: Althingi / Alþingi

---

### 1.2. Main Legislative and Executive Bodies

Iceland is a representative democracy with an elected president. The current constitution came into effect on 17 June 1944, when Iceland achieved its independence from Denmark. The Icelandic system of government is based on the principle of three-way separation of power. According to the Constitution of Iceland, the Althingi and the President jointly exercise legislative power. The President of Iceland and other governmental authorities are entrusted with executive power. Judges exercise judicial power. See [1.2.1](#) and [1.2.2](#).

Institutions: Althingi / Alþingi

Legislation: The Constitution of the Republic of Iceland

---

### 1.2.1. The President

The President is the constitutional head of state, and is elected by popular vote for a four-year term.

The office is non-political, and the President exercises his/her powers through the ministers. The powers of the President lie in having the authority to commission the leader of one of the political parties to form a government. In case of failure, the mandate is given to another party leader.

The President of Iceland is one arm of legislative power and Parliament the other. All legislation passed by Parliament must receive presidential consent before it comes into force. According to the Constitution, the President also holds supreme executive power, but entrusts his authority to the ministers. In the President's absence his/her office is entrusted to the Prime Minister, the Speaker of Parliament and the President of the Supreme Court. The current president is the fifth since the establishment of the republic.

Legislation: The Constitution of the Republic of Iceland

---

### 1.2.2. The Parliament

The name of the Icelandic Parliament is the Althingi. It takes its name from the old assembly of the Commonwealth period, which was founded in 930 and eventually abolished in 1800. The modern day Parliament dates from 1845, when the old Althingi was re-established as a consultative body. It gained legislative powers under the constitution of 1874.

Parliament comprised an upper and a lower house, but with a change in the constitution on 31 May 1991 a single chamber was established. This change was intended to increase the efficiency of the Parliament and to speed up the legislative process. The number of standing committees was reduced from 23 to 12, and each bill now receives three readings before being put to the vote, instead of having to pass through three readings in each house, as was the case previously.

The electoral law of 1987 provides for a Parliament Althingi of 63 members, who are elected for a period of four years by general, direct, secret ballot; in which all Icelandic citizens aged over 18 have the right to vote. Participation in parliamentary elections is usually around 85-90%.

The number of parliamentary seats allotted to each constituency varies from a maximum of nineteen to a minimum of five members, the seats depending in part on the number of inhabitants.

The institution of the Althingi has parliamentary immunity. Members swear allegiance to the Constitution, and the Rules of Procedure of the Parliament specify the right and duties of parliamentarians.

The Government governs by virtue of a mandate from the Parliament. The main task of the Parliament is legislation. By adopting a parliamentary resolution, the Althingi can declare its position on an issue without passing legislation. Parliamentary questions may be addressed to ministers, who reply orally or in writing. Ministers also report to the Parliament on official issues, either on their own initiative or at the request of the assembly. Parliament controls national finances, i.e. taxation and financial allocations. Furthermore Parliament appoints members of boards and councils of some state institutions.

Linked to the Althingi is the post of Parliamentary Ombudsman. Those citizens who feel they have been unjustly treated by the administration may contact him to seek redress for the injustice they feel they have suffered.

The Icelandic parliament is legally and politically responsible for the education system. It determines its basic objectives and administrative framework. All education is under the aegis of the Ministry of Education, Science and Culture, with the exception of two colleges specialising in the field of agriculture, which are under the aegis of the Ministry of Agriculture.

Institutions: Althingi / Alþingi

Institutions: The Althing Ombudsman

Institutions: The Ministry of Agriculture

Institutions: The Ministry of Education, Science and Culture

Legislation: The Constitution of the Republic of Iceland

---

### 1.2.3. Central Government

Executive power lies with the cabinet, formed by the political parties following parliamentary elections. The Government must have the support, direct or indirect, of the majority of the Parliament. Icelandic electoral law is based on the principle of proportional representation, and since 1944 all governments have been coalition governments. The present government (2003-2007) is a coalition between the Independence Party and the Progressive Party. The Prime Minister is the leader of the Independence Party. The present government is composed of twelve ministers, responsible for fifteen ministries. Four of the ministers are women, including the Minister of Education, Science and Culture.

The judicial system is two-tiered, consisting of district courts, whose magistrates are appointed by the Minister of Justice; their decisions are subject to appeal to the Supreme Court, which has nine permanent members, also appointed by the Minister of Justice. The judges, holders of judicial power, are autonomous and independent of the executive and legislative branches.

Under the auspices of the Prime Minister's Office, wholly independent, is the post of Ombudsman for Children, which was established in January 1995. The Ombudsman's role is to ensure that matters relating to children's social and emotional well-being are given a fair hearing.

The Ministry of Education, Science and Culture issues National Curriculum Guidelines for compulsory schools (for ages 6 to 16) and upper-secondary education. These guidelines are intended both to provide the detailed objectives necessary to implement the laws and to offer direction as to how they should be carried out in practice. Furthermore, the Ministry issues

National Curriculum Guidelines for pre-primary schools that specify the aims that pre-primary schools are to follow and describe the basic means and principles that apply in the education of young children.

The educational system has to a large extent been decentralised with regard to responsibilities and decision-making. This reflects a general trend in Icelandic society. Local municipalities are responsible for the operation of pre-primary, primary and lower-secondary schools. On the other hand, the state runs the upper-secondary schools and higher education institutions.

Institutions: Ombudsman for Children

Institutions: The Ministry of Education, Science and Culture

Legislation: National Curriculum Guidelines for Compulsory Education. General section

Legislation: National Curriculum Guidelines for Upper Secondary Education

Legislation: National Curriculum Guidelined for Pre-primary Schools

---

#### 1.2.4. Local Government

In 2007 Iceland comprised 79 municipalities. The municipal councils are elected by universal suffrage at four years' interval, by proportional representation in municipalities with over 300 inhabitants, and in others by simple majority.

There is great disparity in population; the largest municipality, the capital Reykjavík, had 116.446 inhabitants as of 1 December 2006, while some of the smaller rural districts had populations of fewer than 100.

Municipalities are responsible for all the operations of pre-primary schools and compulsory schools (primary and lower secondary education). Apart from being represented on the school boards of upper-secondary schools, local authorities have no administrative responsibilities at the upper-secondary level or the higher education level.

Other responsibilities of local authorities are defined in the Local Government Act of 1998.

Bibliography: Landshagir 2006

Legislation: Local Government Act

---

#### 1.3. Religions

The national church of Iceland is Evangelical Lutheran. The ministers of the church are civil servants and receive their salaries from the state. The head of the church is the Bishop of Iceland, who is the supreme authority in internal matters. The state and the national church of Iceland are not legally separated. External matters relating to the church are under the jurisdiction of the central government and are under the aegis the Ministry of Ecclesiastical Affairs (traditionally combined with the Ministry of Justice).

As of 1 December 2006, 82.1% of the population were members of the National Lutheran Church, while approximately 2.6% did not belong to any religious community. There is freedom of religion in Iceland.

Bibliography: Landshagir 2006

---

#### 1.4. Official and Minority Languages

Icelandic is the native tongue of Iceland. It belongs, along with Norwegian and Faeroese, to the West Scandinavian branch of the North Germanic family of languages. Morphologically it has remained the most conservative of the Scandinavian languages, retaining, for example, three genders and a full system of case endings for nouns and adjectives.

During the long period of Danish rule, the language borrowed many foreign words, but the independence movement in the 19th century was accompanied by a drive towards linguistic purity, and new Icelandic terms were (and continue to be) formed on the basis of the original vocabulary, rather than through the borrowing of international terms. There is widespread awareness in the country of the difficulties facing a language spoken by a small population. Language policy in modern Iceland is characterised by two central elements: on the one hand it supports the preservation of the language, its form and its central vocabulary, and on the other hand it encourages further development of the modern Icelandic language, not least through the coining of new words in order to adapt the language to modern times. Icelanders are, however, also aware of the dangers of linguistic isolation, and foreign-language teaching is an important part of education.

In compulsory education children learn English and Danish (or Norwegian or Swedish in certain cases instead of Danish), and those who continue into upper secondary schooling add at least a third language, usually German, French or Spanish. There are no minority languages in Iceland.

The teaching language in Iceland is Icelandic.

---

#### 1.5. Demographic Situation

The 20th century saw great demographic changes in Iceland, both as regards the number of inhabitants and their place of settlement.

---

##### 1.5.1. Physical and Human Geography

Iceland is an island in the North Atlantic Ocean, on the borders of the temperate and the Arctic zones. Its extreme northern point touches the Arctic Circle. Its nearest neighbour to the west is Greenland, at a distance of 278 km. The Faeroe Islands lie 420 km to the southeast.

Iceland's weather is variable and unstable. The island lies in the path of atmospheric lows, on the borders margins of westerly and Arctic winds. One branch of the Gulf Stream flows northwards to the western shores of Iceland, bringing warmth that makes Iceland habitable. The mean temperature in January is  $-2^{\circ}\text{C}$  and in July  $10.5^{\circ}\text{C}$ .

Iceland's total area is approximately 103,000 km<sup>2</sup>, of which only about 23% is covered by vegetation. About 11.5% (11,922 km<sup>2</sup>) is covered by glaciers, and lakes account for a further 3%. The remainder is largely uninhabitable.

As of 1 December 2006 the population of Iceland was 307,261, with a population density of approximately 2.9 inhabitants per km<sup>2</sup>.



Bibliography: Landshagir 2006

---

### 1.5.2. Population

In pre-industrial times the population of Iceland seldom exceeded 50,000. When the first general census was taken in 1703, the population numbered 50,358, women outnumbering men by just under 5,000 (27,491 females to 22,867 males); the surplus of women, in many other countries caused by wars, was in Iceland instead due to the toll taken by the sea. By 1950, however, equilibrium had been reached, and since then men have outnumbered women.

Age distribution has been subject to frequent fluctuations, partly because famines and epidemics of earlier centuries often had a disproportionate impact on some particular age group, while the birth rate also varied according to general conditions in the country. In 2004 about 24% of the total population were aged 0-15 years, 66% of the population were aged 16-66 years and about 10% of the population were aged 67 and over. It is estimated that by 2030 the population will have reached 342,000.

The overall fertility rate dropped from 4.1 children in 1956 to 2.0 in 2005. The life expectancy of Icelanders has also changed. In the period 1850-1860, life expectancy at birth was 32 years for men and 38 years for women. In 2004 the respective figures were 78.9.2 and 82.8 years, among the highest in the world.

Bibliography: Landshagir 2006

---

### 1.5.3. Settlement Patterns

Until the 20th century the population of Iceland was almost entirely rural. Urbanisation was slow, and in 1850 the inhabitants of Reykjavík, the largest urban settlement, constituted only 1.94% of the total population. By 2004, however, approximately 92.7% of the population lived in communities of over 200 inhabitants (60 localities), with around 62,4% of the country's inhabitants living in the Greater Reykjavík Area (including Reykjavík proper and the surrounding communities). Only 6.1% of the population was registered as living in rural areas in 2004. This development mirrors the economic changes which have taken place during the last century, as increasing industrialisation, especially in the fisheries and the fishing industry, led to the growth of urban settlements, with a corresponding decrease in the importance of agriculture.

Bibliography: Landshagir 2006

---

## 1.6. Economic Situation

Today a free-market economy prevails in Iceland, marking a change from earlier times when government intervention was frequent. One of the greatest problems in Icelandic economic life during the 1970s and 1980s was rampant inflation; however, this period also saw a steady rise in the gross national product (GNP). As in much of the rest of Europe, this trend has now been reversed, and since 1990 there has been a decline in both GNP and GDP. In 2004 GDP per capita was 43,137 USD (current exchange rate). In the last few years the rate of inflation has been kept under control, and in 2004 averaged 3.2%.

Bibliography: Landshagir 2006

---

### 1.6.1. Unemployment

Although until recently demand for labour generally exceeded the supply, there has always been a tendency toward seasonal unemployment, especially in the fishing industry. In 1987 unemployment reached an all-time low of less than 0.4%. In 1987-1989 it rose to 1.7%. In 2006 it was 2.9%.

Bibliography: Landshagir 2006

---

### 1.6.2. Production and Natural Resources

The fishing industry employs 6,4% of the work force. At the same time, however, about 60% of all exports in 2004 were fish products.

Apart from fish, Iceland's most significant resource is its vast natural-energy potential, comprising hydro and geothermal power.

Bibliography: Landshagir 2006

---

## 1.7. Statistics

Please refer to the subdivisions for more details.

---

### 1.7.1. Area

Area of Iceland, km <sup>2</sup>	103,000
Vegetation	23,805
Lakes	2,575
Glaciers	11,922
Barren land	64,538

Source: Statistics Iceland



Bibliography: Landshagir 2006

Institutions: Statistics Iceland

---

## 1.7.2. Population

	1982	1998	2006
Total population	235,500	275,264	307,672
Males	118,641	137,874	156,576
Females	116,812	137,390	151,096

	1990	2005
Population density	2.48	2.90

Settlement patterns	2000	2005
Urban	93.6 %	92.8 %
Rural or localities with fewer than 200 inhabitants	6.4 %	7.2 %

	1990	2005
Live birth rate per 1000 population	18.8	14.5
Crude death rate per 1000 population	6.7	6.2
Net immigration of foreign citizens	0.3	13.0

Population Age	1995	2006
0 - 15	25.9 %	23 %
16 - 66	64.3 %	67 %
67 - >	9.8 %	10 %

Source: Statistics Iceland

Bibliography: Landshagir 2006

Institutions: Statistics Iceland

---

## 1.7.3. Municipalities by Size

Population	Municipalities	Percentage of Population
200 inhabitants or more	69	92.8 %
199 inhabitants or less	36	7.2 %

Source: Statistics Iceland

Bibliography: Landshagir 2006

Institutions: Statistics Iceland

---

## 1.7.4. Rate of Unemployment by Sex and Age Groups

Population	2000	2005
Males and females	2.3 %	2.9 %
16 - 24 years old	4.7 %	8.2 %
25 - 54 years old	1.7 %	1.8 %
55 - 74 years old	2.0 %	1.5 %
<b>Males</b>	<b>1.8 %</b>	<b>2.7 %</b>
16 - 24 years old	5.7 %	8.9 %
25 - 54 years old	1.1 %	1.7 %
55 - 74 years old	0.7 %	1 %
<b>Females</b>	<b>2.9 %</b>	<b>3.1 %</b>
16 - 24 years old	3.6 %	7.6 %
25 - 54 years old	2.5 %	2.0 %
55 - 74 years old	3.8 %	2.1 %

Source: Statistics Iceland



Bibliography: Landshagir 2006  
Institutions: Statistics Iceland

### 1.7.5. Gross Domestic Product per Capita

	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005
GDP per capita in USD	27,432	30,599	37,410	44,612	54,427

Source: Statistics Iceland



Bibliography: Landshagir 2006  
Institutions: Statistics Iceland

### 1.7.6. Public Expenditure on Education as a Percentage of GDP

	2005
Primary and lower secondary education	3.18 %
Upper-secondary level	2.55%
Tertiary education	1.46 %

Source: Statistics Iceland



Bibliography: Landshagir 2006  
Institutions: Statistics Iceland

## **2. General Organisation of the Education System and Administration of Education**

---

School levels in Iceland are four: Pre-primary, compulsory (single structure - primary and lower secondary education), upper-secondary and higher education. Municipalities are responsible for the operation of pre-primary and compulsory schools, whereas the operation of upper secondary schools and higher education institutions is the responsibility of the State. All education comes under the jurisdiction of the Ministry of Education, Science and Culture with the exception of institutions specialising in the field of agriculture which come under the Ministry of Agriculture.

Education in Iceland has traditionally been organised within the public sector, and there are few private institutions in the school system. Almost all private schools receive public funding.

Bibliography: The Educational System in Iceland

Institutions: The Ministry of Agriculture

Institutions: The Ministry of Education, Science and Culture

---

### 2.1. Historical Overview

There has been formal schooling in Iceland for 900 years, or ever since a school was founded at the bishoprics at Hólar at the beginning of the twelfth century. For a long time, schools only existed for a small elite, and it was not until late in the nineteenth century and the beginning of the twentieth century, that schools were established for the general public. Before that, education that the general public received was not carried out at school but in the homes.

From the middle of the eighteenth century, the law required that the clergy provide children with religious education, and during the 1790s, it became one of their tasks to see to it that parents taught their children how to read. In 1880, an Act was passed in Iceland concerning the instruction of children in reading, writing and arithmetic. Parents were responsible for this instruction, but all supervision was placed in the hands of the ministers of the State Church.

During the nineteenth century there was a general movement towards public education and an interest in educational affairs as well. The development of a modern school system at the close of the century can reasonably be seen as one of the fruits of this movement.

In 1907, the first law on formal schooling for children aged ten to fourteen years was passed. This legislation marked the beginning of state involvement in educational affairs in Iceland, and education free of charge became the legal right of every child in the country from the age of ten to fourteen. Another feature of the 1907 School Act was the founding of the Office of Education and the appointment of the first Director of Education. In 1929, legislation was enacted concerning the establishment of state-run lower secondary district schools, and in accordance with this legislation eight district boarding schools were established in different parts of the country. Most of these schools offered a two-year educational programme. In 1936 a new legislation on instruction for children was passed, extending compulsory schooling for children aged seven to fourteen. The 1936 law contained provisions for number of school weeks and class lessons for every age cohort. Children aged 7 to 9 years old had

compulsory schooling for 33 weeks and 500 class lessons each school year and children and adolescents aged 10 to 14 had compulsory schooling for 24 weeks and 700 class lessons. See [4.1.](#)

Grammar schools in Iceland have a tradition that goes back to the Middle Ages, to the schools that were operated at the bishoprics at Skálholt and Hólar. The Reykjavík Grammar School was for a long time the only school in the country that prepared pupils for university studies, but in 1930 another grammar school was founded in Akureyri, the Akureyri Grammar School.

Formal training for the certified trades began in the nineteenth century. A law concerning training for the certified trades was passed in 1893 and in 1904 the Reykjavík Technical School was founded. In the next few decades, industrial vocational schools were also established outside Reykjavík.

Around 1880, two secondary schools Althingi were founded, one in the north and the other in the south. Towards the end of the nineteenth century, a few vocational schools were also founded, for example an agricultural college and a fishermen's and seamen's college. Various other schools were founded during the first decades of twentieth century, such as a commercial school, a marine engineering school, a school of nursing and an art college. See [5.1.1.](#) [5.1.2.](#) and [5.1.3.](#)

The foundation of the University of Iceland in 1911 marks the beginning of the modern Icelandic system of higher education. This first national university was founded by merging three professional schools established during the previous century: A school of theology, a school of medicine and a law school, and establishing a new faculty of arts. Before that time, Icelandic students had almost exclusively travelled to Denmark for their higher education. See [6.1.](#)

In 1946, a law concerning the educational system and the state's obligations in education was passed. According to this legislation the educational system was divided into four levels: Primary, lower-secondary, upper secondary, and higher education. Compulsory education was lengthened by one year, i.e. to fifteen years of age.

Legislation on grammar schools was passed in 1946. See [5.1.1.](#) and [5.1.4.](#) With the passing of a law in 1955, the state took over the operation of industrial vocational schools, which had previously been run by the associations of master craftsmen. See [5.1.2.](#) and [5.1.4.](#) Since 1971, special evening programmes have made it possible for adults to study for matriculation examinations in upper secondary schools. These programmes have enabled adults to combine job and study. See [7.1.](#) The first law on pre-primary schools was passed in 1973. See [3.1.](#)

With a law passed in 1973, a new type of schools, upper secondary comprehensive schools, came into being. These were established in various places throughout the country. At the same time, the number of traditional grammar schools grew. Most of the upper secondary comprehensive schools were created by merging general secondary programmes with the programmes offered by the industrial vocational schools. The new schools were intended to provide specialised forms of vocational training, a variety of new programmes of study and traditional grammar-school education, all in the same school. See [5.1.4.](#)

A Compulsory School Act, passed in 1974, stipulated nine years of compulsory (primary and lower secondary level) schooling from the age of seven to sixteen and gave all children the

right to attend school from the age of six, if the parents so wished. This law stipulated that nine years of compulsory schooling would be put into effect within ten years of its passing and in 1984, nine years of compulsory education came fully into force. The 1974 law provided for the division of the country into eight educational regions, and from 1977 nationally co-ordinated examinations at the completion of compulsory school replaced the previous nationally co-ordinated entrance examinations. What mainly characterised this legislation was its emphasis on equal opportunities in education. See [4.1](#).

In 1988, a new law on upper secondary schools replaced older laws concerning grammar schools and industrial vocational schools. See [5.1.4](#).

A new law on compulsory education was passed in 1991. This law contained provisions for an increased measure of decentralisation, more parental influence and the introduction of educational counselling. Compulsory schooling was extended from nine to ten years, i.e. it was now mandatory for all children to start school at the age of six. See [4.1](#).

In 1992, the first legislation concerning adult education was passed. See [7.1](#).

The present law on pre-primary schools was passed in 1994. With that legislation the pre-primary school became the first school level, making the educational system a four level system. See [3.1](#). Pre-primary schools have traditionally been financed by the municipalities.

With the passing of a compulsory school act in 1995, the local municipalities took over all the operation of schools at the compulsory level, and thereby their financing. The state ensures that educational laws and regulations are carried out. See [4.3](#).

In 1996, an upper secondary school act was passed. The act defines the framework for education at that level, its aims, the role and responsibility of the state and local municipalities, as well as other parties involved in providing education at this level. See [5.3](#).

In 1997, a universities act was passed. The act establishes the general framework for the activities of higher education institutions, including administration, financing, recognition of degrees and quality control. See [5.3](#). A Higher Education Act was passed in 2006. This Act put a new emphasise on quality work and quality assurance in Higher Education.

Bibliography: Barnavinafélagið Sumargjöf 25 ára 1924 - 11. apríl - 1949

Bibliography: Barnavinafélagið Sumargjöf 50 ára

Bibliography: Frá einveldi til lýðveldis

Bibliography: Iceland 1986, handbook

Bibliography: Saga Háskóla Íslands

Bibliography: Saga Reykjavíkurskóla

Bibliography: Skólar á Íslandi (sérprentun úr Ísland, atvinnuhættir og menning)

Bibliography: The Modern Icelandic School System in Historic Perspective

Bibliography: Þróun starfsmenntunar á framhaldsskólastigi

Institutions: Akureyri Grammar School

Institutions: Althingi / Alþingi

Institutions: The Reykjavik Technical School

Institutions: The Reykjavík Grammar School

Institutions: University of Iceland

Legislation: Compulsory School Act

Legislation: Compulsory School Act  
Legislation: Law on general adult education  
Legislation: Law on grammar schools  
Legislation: Law on permission to establish comprehensive upper secondary schools  
Legislation: Law on the education of children  
Legislation: Law on the education of children  
Legislation: Law on the education system and the state's obligation to provide schooling  
Legislation: Law on the instruction of children in writing and arithmetic  
Legislation: Law on vocational education  
Legislation: Law on vocational training  
Legislation: The Compulsory School Act  
Legislation: The Pre-Primary School Act  
Legislation: Universities Act  
Legislation: University Act  
Legislation: Upper Secondary School Act  
Legislation: Upper Secondary School Act.

---

## 2.2. Ongoing Debates and Future Developments

The Ministry of Education, Science and Culture is working on a reform of general academic programmes leading to matriculation. This reform aims at reducing the duration of these programmes from four years to three. See [5.2](#). This reform will affect the content of education at the compulsory level, especially at the lower-secondary level. See [4.2](#). The National Curriculum Guidelines (NCG) for compulsory education are under revision. The following NCG's have already been updated: National Curriculum Guidelines for compulsory education: general section, NCG for home economics, NCG for physical education, NCG for religious studies and NCG for arts and craft.

The new Higher Education Act of 2006 fully implements the Bologna Process into Icelandic Higher Education. Another aspect of the new Higher Education Act is a new emphasis on quality work and quality assurance in Higher Education. All institutions that are currently operating must apply for accreditation in each field of study before July 2008.

Institutions: The Ministry of Education, Science and Culture  
Legislation: National Curriculum Guidelines for Compulsory Education. General section  
Legislation: University Act

---

## 2.3. Fundamental Principles and Basic Legislation

A fundamental principle of the Icelandic education system is that everyone shall have equal access to education irrespective of sex, economic status, geographic location, religion, and cultural or social background. This principle is stated in the Constitution of the Icelandic Republic as well as in the various laws pertaining to the different educational levels. Education is compulsory (primary and lower secondary education) from age six through age sixteen, i.e. for ten years. Emphasis is placed on providing the opportunity for upper secondary education for all and everyone has the legal right to enter school at that school level, irrespective of results at the end of compulsory schooling.

One of the aims of educational policy in Iceland in recent decades has been to raise the general level of education.



According to the laws that govern different educational levels, handicapped pupils, at pre-primary, compulsory and upper secondary school levels, are entitled to the same education as other pupils. The main policy is integration rather than segregation. Schools are expected to provide handicapped pupils with appropriate opportunities. Only the most severely handicapped are in special schools which only operate at the compulsory level. No legislation deals with special needs or disabled students in higher education. However, the University of Iceland and the University of Akureyri have an official policy on how to meet the students' special needs, such as dyslexia, physical disabilities and psychological problems. See [10.5.2](#).

Laws governing the educational system in Iceland are: The Pre-primary School Act from 1994, The Compulsory School Act from 1995, The Upper Secondary School Act from 1996 and The Higher Education Act of 2006. The various institutions that offer higher education are also governed by individual laws passed separately for each institution.

Institutions: The University of Akureyri

Institutions: University of Iceland

Legislation: Compulsory School Act

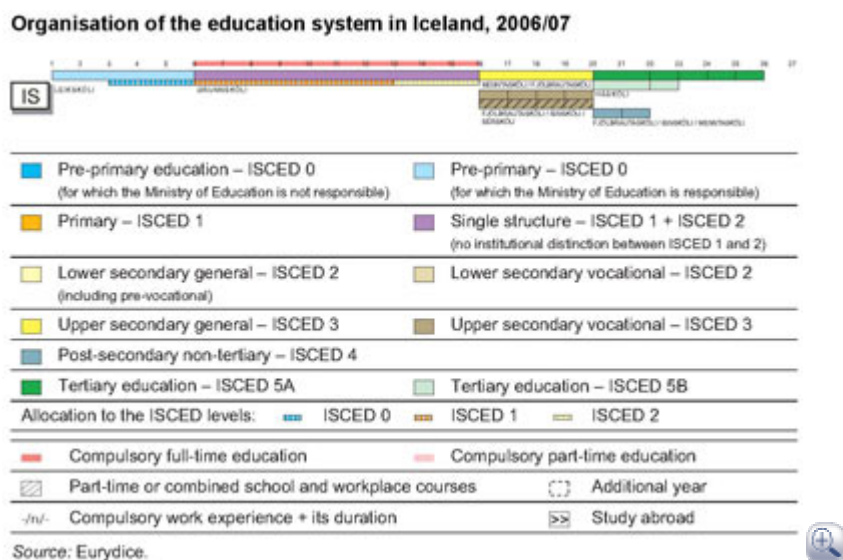
Legislation: The Pre-Primary School Act

Legislation: The Constitution of the Republic of Iceland

Legislation: University Act

Legislation: Upper Secondary School Act

## 2.4. General Structure and Defining Moments in Educational Guidance



The educational system is divided into four levels: Pre-primary, compulsory (single structure primary and lower secondary education), upper secondary and higher education.

The pre-primary school level is intended for children up to the age at which compulsory school begins.

Education is compulsory for children from six to sixteen years of age.

The upper secondary level normally includes the sixteen- to twenty-year age group. Anyone who has completed compulsory education or has turned eighteen has the right to enter a course of studies at the upper secondary school level. A regulation on the enrolment of pupils defines the requirements for each upper secondary branch of study.

Students at the higher education level are generally required to have passed the matriculation examination, stúdentpróf or its equivalent.

Continuing and adult education is provided by public authorities, private institutions, companies and organisations. See [7.5](#).

Bibliography: The Educational System in Iceland

Legislation: Regulation on registration of pupils in upper secondary schools

---

## 2.5. Compulsory Education

According to the law of 1995 on compulsory education, local municipalities are responsible for the education of children and adolescents in the compulsory school age bracket.

Education is compulsory from the age of six to sixteen. All pupils are to attend school full-time. The law concerning compulsory education makes it the duty of parents to see to it that their children register for and attend school, and it also specifies that it is the duty of local municipalities to see to it that instruction, as decreed by law, be given. The state ensures that educational laws and regulations are carried out.

Bibliography: The Educational System in Iceland

Legislation: Compulsory School Act

---

## 2.6. General Administration

The Icelandic Parliament is legally and politically responsible for the school system. The Parliament determines the basic objectives and administrative framework of the educational system. All education comes under the jurisdiction of the Ministry of Education, Science and Culture with two exceptions, e.g. the institutions that specialise in agriculture and come under the Ministry of Agriculture.

Bibliography: The Educational System in Iceland

Institutions: Althingi / Alþingi

Institutions: The Ministry of Agriculture

Institutions: The Ministry of Education, Science and Culture

---

### 2.6.1. General Administration at National Level

The Ministry of Education, Science and Culture is responsible for the implementation of legislation at all school levels from pre-primary and compulsory education through the upper secondary and higher education levels, in addition to continuing and adult education. The Ministry is, among other things, in charge of making curriculum guidelines for pre-primary, compulsory and upper secondary schools, issuing regulations and planning educational reforms.

The Ministry of Education, Science and Culture is directed by a Permanent Secretary who acts on the instruction of the Minister of Education, Science and Culture. The Minister is assisted by his political advisor and special advisors on individual projects.

The Ministry is divided into three departments and the Minister's offices which are responsible for the daily administration of the educational system, cultural affairs and the development of educational and cultural policies:

- Minister's Offices are divided into four sub-offices:
  - Office of Administration
  - Office of Financial Affairs
  - Office of Evaluation and Analysis
  - Office of Legal and Public Affairs.
- Department of Education
- Department of Higher Education and Science
- Department for Cultural Affairs.

Bibliography: The Educational System in Iceland

---

#### 2.6.1.1. General Administration at National Level of Pre-primary Education

According to the legislation on pre-primary schools from 1994, the Ministry of Education, Science and Culture issues National Curriculum Guidelines for pre-primary education at the national level. The professional operation of pre-primary schools is supervised by the Ministry of Education, Science and Culture.

Bibliography: The Educational System in Iceland

Institutions: The Ministry of Education, Science and Culture

Legislation: National Curriculum Guidelined for Pre-primary Schools

Legislation: The Pre-Primary School Act

---

#### 2.6.1.2. General Administration of Compulsory Education at the National Level

The Ministry of Education, Science and Culture issues National Curriculum Guidelines for compulsory (single structure, primary and lower secondary) education. The National Curriculum Guidelines are intended both to provide the detailed objectives necessary to implement the law and to offer instructions as to how they should be carried out in practice. The professional operation of compulsory schools is supervised by the Ministry of Education, Science and Culture.

Bibliography: The Educational System in Iceland

Institutions: The Ministry of Education, Science and Culture

Legislation: National Curriculum Guidelines for Compulsory Education

---

#### 2.6.1.2.1. The National Centre for Educational Materials

The National Centre for Educational Materials, under the auspices of the Ministry of Education, Science and Culture, develops and publishes educational materials and distributes them free of charge to pupils at the compulsory level (single structure).

Bibliography: The Educational System in Iceland  
Institutions: The Ministry of Education, Science and Culture  
Institutions: The National Centre for Educational Materials (Námsgagnastofnun)

---

#### 2.6.1.2.2. The Educational Testing Institute

The Educational Testing Institute is an independent institution funded by the state and under the auspices of the Ministry of Education, Science and Culture. Its main task is to compose, organise and mark all nationally co-ordinated examinations at compulsory and upper secondary level. It is also to participate in and carry out international comparative research in the field of education with special emphasis on projects that can produce practical and/or scientific knowledge relevant to assessment or evaluation.

Bibliography: The Educational System in Iceland  
Institutions: The Educational Testing Institute  
Institutions: The Ministry of Education, Science and Culture

---

#### 2.6.1.3. General Administration at National Level of Upper Secondary Education

The Ministry of Education, Science and Culture is responsible for the National Curriculum Guidelines for upper secondary education. The curriculum guidelines specify the aims of upper secondary education as well as the aims of individual branches of study and subjects. The professional operation of upper secondary schools is supervised by the Ministry of Education, Science and Culture.

Bibliography: The Educational System in Iceland  
Institutions: The Ministry of Education, Science and Culture  
Legislation: National Curriculum Guidelines for Upper Secondary Education

---

#### 2.6.1.3.1. Upper Secondary School Co-operation Committee

A committee, comprised of all the head teachers of upper secondary schools and chaired by the Minister of Education, Science and Culture or a representative, shall discuss issues common to upper secondary schools and co-ordinate their activities.

Institutions: The Ministry of Education, Science and Culture

---

#### 2.6.1.4. General Administration at National Level of Higher Education

The lines of administrative authority are laid out in the Higher Education Act of 2006. Public higher education institutions are independent national institutions under the administrative authority of the Ministry of Education, Science and Culture. Both private and public institutions operate in accordance with this new framework act of 2006, regardless of their operational form and it is proposed that the Minister of Education, Science and Culture will licence these institutions, given that they fulfill certain conditions. The new Higher Education Act states that each institutions governance is the responsibility of the institutions council and rector in accordance with provisions in regulations for administration, in its charter or in other institution foundation documents.

According to the Higher Education Act of 2006, the Minister of Education, Science and

Culture is responsible for monitoring of quality of research and teaching. All higher education institutions are to apply for an accreditation based on fields of study. The quality assurance of the Ministry of Education, Science and Culture is to ensure that the qualification framework description of the structure for studies and degrees is fulfilled, that teaching and research is improved and that the institutions take more responsibility for their own operation.

Bibliography: The Educational System in Iceland  
Institutions: The Ministry of Education, Science and Culture  
Legislation: University Act

---

#### 2.6.1.4.1. The Co-operation Committee for the Higher Education Level

The Co-operation Committee for the Higher Education Level is appointed on the basis of the Higher Education Act and is made up of the institution rectors. The Committee has an advisory role on matters that are referred to it by the Minister of Education, Science and Culture or individual higher education institutions.

Legislation: University Act

---

#### 2.6.2. General Administration at Regional Level

In Iceland there is a two-tiered system, central government and municipalities. There is no administration of schools in Iceland at regional level.

---

#### 2.6.3. General Administration at Local Level

Local level refers here to municipalities.

As of the 1 November 2006, there were 79 municipalities in Iceland, i.e. towns, villages and rural areas. Municipalities are responsible for the operation of schools at pre-primary and compulsory level. Apart from being represented in the school boards of upper secondary schools, municipalities have no administrative responsibilities at the upper secondary level. Municipalities have no administrative responsibilities at the higher education level nor concerning adult education. A few of the larger municipalities, however, operate schools for adults. See [7.5](#).

Bibliography: Landshagir 2006

---

#### 2.6.3.1. General Administration at Local Level of Pre-primary Education

Municipalities are responsible for all operation of pre-primary schools.

Pre-primary education is controlled by the pre-primary board which supervises pre-primary educational in the municipality concerned. The pre-primary board is comprised of representatives appointed by the political parties or organisations that have been elected to the local government. The number of members varies according to the size of the community, but most often there are five politically appointed representatives. In addition, teachers' and parents' representatives are entitled to attend the pre-primary board meetings, with the right to speak and make proposals. In municipalities where the same body is responsible for both pre-

primary and compulsory education, a school board is appointed which supervises educational affairs at both school levels.

The larger communities have pre-primary school advisors that are employees of the municipalities in question. The pre-primary school advisor works in co-operation with the pre-primary board or school board and the director of the pre-primary school. His or her role is to give advice, monitor the operation of the pre-primary schools within that municipality and promote co-operation between the individual pre-primary schools.

---

#### 2.6.3.2. General Administration at Local Level of Compulsory Education

Municipalities are responsible for all operation of schools at the compulsory level, as well as the construction, operation and maintenance of facilities in accordance with the Compulsory School Act from 1995.

Within each municipality, matters concerning compulsory schools come under the authority of the school board, which is in charge of educational affairs in the municipality in question. Representatives of political parties or organisations that have been elected to run the municipalities are represented on school boards. The number of members on school boards varies depending on the size of the municipality, but most often it will have five politically appointed representatives. In addition, teachers' representatives, head teachers and parents are entitled to attend school board meetings, with the right to speak and to make proposals.

With the law from 1995 concerning compulsory education, the role of school boards is increased, particularly with respect to the work that goes on in the schools.

Legislation: Compulsory School Act

---

#### 2.6.4. Educational Institutions, Administration, Management

The administration of schools varies according to school levels.

---

##### 2.6.4.1. Educational Institutions, Administration and Management at Pre-primary Level

A pre-primary school is administered by a head that represents the parties that operate the pre-primary school in question. The head is responsible for making plans for the educational work that goes on in the school and for having regular meetings with the staff concerning the operation of the school and the welfare of each child. It is a matter of negotiation between the head of a pre-primary school and the local municipality in question whether the head also works in a department, as described below. Pre-primary schools are divided into departments and each department usually has a supervisor who, in co-operation with the head of the pre-primary school, is responsible for the work in that department.

---

##### 2.6.4.2. Educational Institutions, Administration and Management at the Compulsory Level

Each compulsory school has a head teacher who administers the school and is responsible for the work in the school under the supervision of the school board and the local municipality. In his or her work, the head teacher consults with teachers, the school board, see 2.6.3.2. and if

need be the local municipality. It depends on the size of the school whether the head teacher has teaching duties.

The head teacher calls staff meetings at least once a month.

In a compulsory school with 12 or more full-time employees in addition to the head teacher, an assistant head teacher is to be appointed. The assistant head teacher acts as a deputy in the absence of the head teacher.

With the 1995 law on compulsory school, the professional responsibility of head teachers has been increased.

In those schools where there are at least eight teaching posts in addition to the head teacher, a teachers' council made up of three teachers has an advisory role in administrative affairs. In other schools with fewer posts, the general staff meeting replaces the teachers' council.

In most schools, heads of age cohorts and heads of subjects are responsible for the organisation and co-ordination of teaching in individual age cohorts and subjects.

Legislation: Compulsory School Act

---

#### 2.6.4.3. Educational Institutions, Administration and Management at the Upper Secondary Level

According to the Upper Secondary School Act from 1996, the daily operation of an upper secondary school is conducted by a head teacher who sees to it that its operation is in accordance with laws, regulations, curriculum guidelines and other existing statutes at each time. He or she is also responsible for adhering to the budgetary plans of the school. The head teacher is the executive officer of the school board and hires teachers, school counsellors, school librarians and other members of staff after consultation with the school board. In managing the affairs of the school, the head teacher has an assistant who represents the head teacher in his or her absence. In upper secondary schools there are heads of departments and supervisors of individual fields of study. In upper secondary schools operating according to a unit-credit system there is also a course director.

Legislation: Upper Secondary School Act

---

##### 2.6.4.3.1. The School Board

In every upper secondary school there is a school board with five members: three representatives nominated by the Minister of Education, Science and Culture and two representatives nominated by the respective municipality. Representatives of teachers and students have the right to attend meetings and state their opinions and make proposals.

The School Board shall determine the emphases in school activities. Each year it shall draw up an annual operating and financial plan for the school for a three-year period, which is subject to the approval of the Minister of Education, Science and Culture. At the beginning of each year the School Board shall prepare a budget in accordance with final budget provisions and ensure that it is followed. School boards also approve and see to the execution of individual school working guides. The head teacher attends the school board meetings, and

has the right to speak and make proposals. He shall serve the board in an executive function.

Institutions: The Ministry of Education, Science and Culture

---

#### 2.6.4.3.2. The School Council

The head teacher is the chairman of the school council which, in addition to the head teacher, the assistant head teacher and the course director (of the unit-credit system), is to include representatives of the teaching staff and the pupil body. The school council shall assist the head teacher in the directing of the school.

Detailed provisions on the composition of the school council, its role, term and working practices, are prescribed in a given regulation.

---

#### 2.6.4.4. Educational Institutions, Administration and Management at Higher Education Level

According to the Higher Education Act of 2006, the administration of public higher education institutions is in the hands of the Senate and the rector. The rector is appointed by the Minister of Education, Science and Culture on the recommendation of the Senate.

There are no provisions in the framework laws that prescribe how the higher education institution's board is comprised. However, there are provisions on access for staff and students to institution meetings, which shall be held by all institutions at least once a year. The objective is to ensure that interested parties, teachers, students and other staff have a say in the institutions academic policy making. The Higher Education Act of 2006 applies to institutions that provide higher education that leads to degrees at tertiary level. They reiterate the independence of institutions and say that institutions enjoy autonomy to decide their own affairs. The purpose of reiterating the autonomy is to ensure that government does not interfere with academic work within institutions and that it should respect freedom of research and its academic independence. It is however the institutions duty to set conditions and be responsible for the activities that take place under their aegis.

Faculties are autonomous in their internal affairs, within limits specified in the laws and regulations of each institution. The administration of faculties is in the hands of the deans, faculty meetings and faculty councils.

Legislation: University Act

---

### 2.7. Internal and External Consultation

Participation of educational staff and pupils as well as external bodies varies between school levels and institutions but is relatively common in the administration of education in Iceland.

---

#### 2.7.1. Internal Consultation

Pre-primary head teachers shall hold regular meetings with the staff concerning the functioning of the school and the welfare of each child attending them.

The head teachers of a compulsory school shall hold meetings of the teaching staff as often as



necessary and no less frequently than once a month. Teachers and other specialised school personnel shall attend meetings of the teaching staff. A meeting of the teaching staff shall also be held if one-third of the school's teachers so request.

Consultation between heads of age cohorts and heads of subjects in compulsory schools takes place during regular meetings.

Pupils at compulsory school are allowed to form a pupils' council which deals with matters that concern extra-curricular activities, pupils' interests and issues to improve pupils' lives. One member of the teaching staff is to act as a consultant for the pupils' council.

At least twice each year the head teacher of a compulsory school shall hold a joint meeting of the teachers' council, parents' council and pupils' council to provide them with information on school activities and discuss matters of concern to these bodies.

A general teachers' meeting in an upper secondary school shall discuss the formulation of policy on school operations, the structure of studies, instructional practices, including evaluation, and other activities, and submit its proposals to the school board and school council. A teachers' meeting shall be held no less frequently than four times each school year. The head teacher must hold a teachers' meeting if the teachers' representatives on the school council or one-third of the school's permanent teachers so request.

In each upper secondary school there is to be a pupils' council to look after the pupils' interests. The council has the right to express an opinion and make proposals concerning study objectives, study materials and the organisation of instruction in their respective schools.

---

### 2.7.2. Consultation involving Players in Society at large

The means of co-operating with acting parties outside the schools varies from one school level to the next.

---

#### 2.7.2.1. Consultation Involving Players at Pre-primary Level

Pre-primary head teachers are obliged to promote collaboration between the parents of the children attending the schools and the staff of the schools. In most pre-primary schools there are parents' associations, but as a rule they do not directly influence the administration of the school.

The pre-primary school board, or the school board where applicable, is in charge of the affairs of pre-primary schools in a local municipality, and parents' representatives have the right to attend the board's meetings, speak and make proposals. See also 2.6.3.1.

---

#### 2.7.2.2. Consultation Involving Players at Compulsory Level

According to the legislation concerning compulsory education from 1995, every compulsory school shall have a Parents' Council. The parents' council shall be comprised of three parents who are not in the employ of the school and the head teacher. Parents of compulsory school

children elect representatives to the Parents' Council for a two-year term at a time. The Parents' Council shall discuss and express its opinion to the school and school board on the school curriculum guidelines and other planned school activities, ensure that parents receive notification of plans and supervise their implementation.

The principal shall take part in the activities of the parents' council and provide it with information on school activities. Parents of children at compulsory school are also permitted to form their own associations to support the work that goes on at the school and to strengthen the ties between the home and the school. See also 2.6.3.2.

---

#### 2.7.2.3. Consultation involving Players at Upper Secondary Level

An upper secondary school co-operation committee, comprised of all the head teachers of upper secondary schools and chaired by the Minister of Education, Science and Culture or a representative, shall discuss issues common to upper secondary schools and co-ordinate their activities.

According to the Upper Secondary School Act from 1996, an eighteen-member Co-operation Committee for vocational study at the upper secondary level is to be a forum for comprehensive policy-making in the affairs of vocational training and to give advice on the setting of common rules on matters relating to vocational education. The committee is appointed by the Minister of Education, Science and Culture.

The Minister of Education, Science and Culture appoints occupational councils for occupational groups or individual occupations. The councils are to be composed of representatives from the labour market and one representative from the Ministry of Education, Science and Culture. Occupational councils are to define the skills that the labour market demands of employees in individual trades. They are to specify the aims of the training and make proposals regarding its organisation.

School boards at upper-secondary schools are permitted to establish one or more advisory committees that include a representative of the local business community, in order to promote the best possible co-operation between the school in question and local industries.

Institutions: The Ministry of Education, Science and Culture  
Legislation: Upper Secondary School Act

---

#### 2.7.2.4. Consultation Involving Players at the Level of Higher Education

According to the Higher Education Act of 2006, there are no longer stipulations as to who is to be consulted at the level of higher education. There is however stated that parties concerned, such as students and staff should be represented in the institution's meeting. The Higher Education Act of 2006 is a framework law that includes a clause saying that the public higher education institutions should be governed in accordance to specific codes of each institution.

There are three private institutions of higher education in the country. These institutions have representatives from the commercial sector on their boards.

Different institutions have different relationships with acting parties in society and the labour market. Some institutions regularly set up developmental committees with representatives from the public sector and industry.

Through research institutions and liaison offices, higher education institutions also work to strengthen ties with external acting parties such as industry. Research liaison offices maintain a register of the fields of expertise of the higher education institution's staff and distribute information on the research activities of the institution to Icelandic businesses and organisations. The offices also negotiate and draw up contracts between the higher education institution and businesses.

Legislation: University Act

---

## 2.8. Methods of Financing Education

Local municipalities pay for the construction and the operation of pre-primary schools and compulsory schools. State contributions towards the operation of schools at the upper-secondary and at the tertiary level are determined in the annual State budget as passed by Parliament each year.

Institutions: Althingi / Alþingi

Legislation: State budget 2006

---

### 2.8.1. Methods of Financing Pre-primary Education

The construction and the running of pre-schools (including all salaries and operation cost) are by law at the expense and the responsibility of municipalities. Funds are allocated to the municipalities from the national income taxation to fund among other things the construction and the running of pre-schools. Local taxes may also be used for the financing. Parents contribute a substantial amount towards operating costs at the pre-primary level. The share that parents contribute varies from one municipality to another and in some cases depends on the circumstances of the parents. On the whole, parents contribute about a third of the operating costs of pre-primary schools.

When other parties than the municipalities are allowed to operate pre-primary schools the municipalities usually contribute to the cost of the operation but there are no nationwide coordinated rules concerning such contributions.

---

### 2.8.2. Methods of Financing Compulsory Education

The cost of education at this level is entirely born by local municipalities, except for educational materials. All decisions regarding the construction and maintenance of school buildings and facilities are made by the local municipalities in question. Funds are allocated to the municipalities from the national income taxation.

---

### 2.8.3. Methods of Financing Upper Secondary Education

Costs concerning new construction and initial capital investment for equipment at the upper secondary level are met in such a way that the state pays 60% and the local municipalities,

one or more, that are formally parties to the construction of the school, pay 40%. All other costs at the upper secondary level are allocated in the State budget.

Legislation: State budget 2006

---

#### 2.8.4. Methods of Financing Higher Education

Five higher education institutions are public and three institutions are run by private parties that receive government grants. Public and private higher education institutions receive individual appropriations from the State budget. Private institutions also charge tuition fees. The University of Iceland, which is by far the largest institution at this educational level, has substantial forms of income from a lottery that falls outside provisions made in the State budget.

Institutions: University of Iceland

Legislation: State budget 2006

---

#### 2.8.5. Methods of Financing Continuing and Adult education

The State finances in part various forms of continuing and adult education, such as the upper secondary schools' evening classes, distance learning and the lifelong learning centres. From the Job Education Fund, financed by the State, grants are given for continuing vocational training in business and industry. The State also allocates funds for the continuing education of its civil servants, e.g. for the in-service training of upper secondary school teachers. See also [7.8.](#) and [7.9.](#)

---

### 2.9. Statistics

Please refer to the subdivisions for details.

---

#### 2.9.1. Number of Schools and Pupils

Number of Schools and Pupils

	Schools	Pupils
Pre-primary schools 2005	262	16,864
Compulsory level 2005	177	44,336
- thereof special schools	4	155
Upper secondary level 2005	38	19,985 (in day-schools)
Higher education level 2005	8	17,063
Studying abroad 2005		2,237

(\* In addition, there were approx. 4,900 participants enrolled in adult education courses offered by upper secondary schools, including distance learning in the autumn of 2005.

Source: Statistics Iceland, 2007.



Bibliography: Landshagir 2006

Institutions: Statistics Iceland

---

### 2.9.2. Public Sector Expenditure

Public Sector Expenditure: The combined expenditure of the state and the local municipalities towards the system of education was 17,7% of total public expenditure in 2005.

Public expenditure on education as % of GDP was 7,66% in 2005.

Bibliography: Landshagir 2006

Institutions: Statistics Iceland

---

### 2.9.3. The 2006 State Budget

The 2006 State Budget

The 2006 State budget	Amount: million ISK
Total expenditure of the State	315,059.30000
Total to Ministry of Education, Science and Culture	41,135.400
Head Office	571.600
Compulsory schools	580.300
Upper secondary schools	14,205.300
Universities and research	12,669.000
Loans and grants to students	5,010.500
Arts (museums, funds etc.)	6,928.100
Other activities	1,179.600

\* Including The Icelandic Student Loan Fund which got 4,477.000 ISK in 2006 but also has its own income because of repayments.

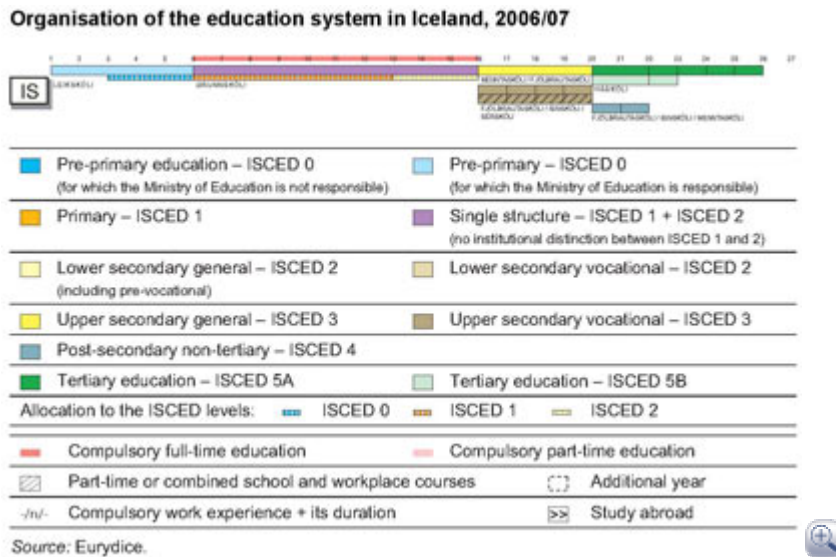


Bibliography: Landshagir 2006

Institutions: Statistics Iceland

Institutions: The Icelandic Government Student Loan Fund

### 3. Pre-Primary Education



Pre-primary education is the first level of the Icelandic educational system. Pre-primary schools in Iceland all operate in accordance with the Pre-primary School Act and follow an educational programme issued by the Ministry of Education, Science and Culture, see [3.3](#). Pre-primary schools are for all children in the age group of 1-6 years old.

In pre-primary schools children receive education and support for their all-round development, thus preparing them for compulsory school and life itself. At the pre-school level, the nucleus of the educational work is play.

Day care in private homes supervised by the municipality is an option for parents but is not considered to be part of the educational system. See [3.6](#).

Institutions: The Ministry of Education, Science and Culture

Legislation: The Pre-Primary School Act

#### 3.1. Historical Overview

The first all-year child-care centre was established in 1938 in Reykjavík. In 1946 there were 5 child-care centres operated 6 days a week, 4 - 8 hours a day, in Iceland. These centres were intended for children between the ages of 2 and 6 years old.

From the beginning the ideological foundation of the educational work that is carried out in these child-care centres and later pre-primary schools has always been child-oriented with an emphasis on games and a variety of creative tasks for the children to do.

The first legislation concerning pre-primary schools was passed in 1973 and amended in 1976, 1981 and 1989. The changes in the law stipulated a new division of labour between the state and the local municipalities and gave the Ministry of Education, Science and Culture the task of deciding educational policy for pre-primary schools. In 1991 a new act on pre-primary schools confirmed its policy in education and established a development fund under the auspices of the Ministry of Education, Science and Culture to promote innovations,

experiments and educational development projects. The latest legislation concerning pre-primary schools is from 1994.

The nursery teachers who were in charge of the first centres had been educated in Scandinavia and in the U. S. but in 1946, a benevolent society Sumargjöf which was interested in the welfare and education of young children, established a school to educate fóstrur. At the school, instruction was among other things based on the development of the Fröbel Nursery School and the progressivist movement as well as the ideology of Dewey (1859-1952) and his motto of learning by doing.

The state took over the operation of the school in 1973. The name of the school was the Icelandic College for Pre-Primary School Teachers.

Since the first legislation concerning the Icelandic College for Pre-Primary School Teachers and legislation concerning pre-primary schools was passed in 1973 the Ministry of Education, Science and Culture has been in charge of these institutions.

In the autumn of 1996 started a program for pre-primary school teachers at the University of Akureyri; it is a three-year program (90 credit units).

As of 1 January 1998 three colleges were merged with the University College of Education: a college for pre-primary school teachers, a college of physical education and a college of social pedagogy. The new institution, Iceland University of Education is divided into three departments: undergraduate studies, post-graduate studies and continuing education. The Icelandic College for Pre-Primary School Teachers therefore no longer exists as a separate institution.

Bibliography: Barnavinafélagið Sumargjöf 25 ára 1924 - 11. apríl - 1949

Bibliography: Barnavinafélagið Sumargjöf 50 ára

Institutions: The University of Akureyri

Institutions: Iceland University of Education

Institutions: The Ministry of Education, Science and Culture

Institutions: The Icelandic College for Pre-Primary School Teachers

Legislation: Law on Pre-Primary Schools

Legislation: Law on the Icelandic College for Pre-Primary School Teachers

Legislation: Law on the operation of pre-schools

Legislation: The Pre-Primary School Act

---

### 3.1.1. Education-oriented school institutions

All pre-primary schools in Iceland operate in accordance to the Pre-primary School Act from 1994 and are education-oriented institutions.

Legislation: The Pre-Primary School Act

---

### 3.1.2. Education-oriented non-school institutions

There are no education-oriented non-school institutions in Iceland.

---

### 3.1.3. Child-minders

Approximately 19% of children aged 0-2 years old are cared for in private homes by child-minders, *dagmæður* and 0.7% of the children in the ages 3-5 years old. These homes have permission from local municipalities to care for three to five children at a time and the parents pay fees to the child minders. This is not considered to be a part of the school system and comes under the auspices of the Ministry of Social Affairs.

Bibliography: Landshagir 2006  
Institutions: Félagsmálaráðuneyti

---

### 3.2. Ongoing Debates and Future Developments

Today, all parents of children attending pre-primary schools take some part in the cost of the pre-primary school level, see 3.7. However, there have been some discussions regarding the municipalities paying all cost for children at the age of 5.

---

### 3.3. Specific Legislative Framework

The present Pre-primary School Act was passed in 1994. The Act's first article defines pre-primary schools as the first level of the educational system and according to the Act, pre-primary schools are to provide education for children who have not reached the age at which compulsory education begins. Pre-primary school education is to be given by staff that has professional training in working with children at this level. It is not until 1994 in the above mentioned law on pre-primary schools that the title pre-primary school teacher is used officially, but it has not the status of a professional title.

The Pre-primary School Act puts the Ministry of Education, Science and Culture in charge of pre-primary schools. The Ministry is to formulate their educational policy, support experiments and development projects and to assess the quality of the work that takes place there. The Ministry of Education, Science and Culture shall issue a curriculum guidelines that specifies the aims that pre-primary schools are to follow and describes the basic means and attitudes that apply in the education of young children. The Ministry is also to see to it that the education that pre-primary schools provide blends smoothly in with the education that children receive in the first years of compulsory school.

According to the Act, the construction and operation of pre-primary schools are to be funded and administered by local municipalities. They are to establish and operate good pre-primary schools for children and manage the schools in accordance with the law. Municipalities also have the responsibility of seeing to it that this legislation is carried out. They are, furthermore, expected to employ pre-primary school advisors who advise on matters that pertain to such schools and supervise their operation.

Institutions: The Ministry of Education, Science and Culture  
Legislation: The Pre-Primary School Act

---



### 3.4. General Objectives

The Pre-Primary School Act from 1994 defines its main aim in education as follows:

- to provide children with safe conditions in which to play and a healthy environment in which to grow up;
- to give children the opportunity of participating in games and activities and to enjoy the more varied educational opportunities provided in groups under the direction of pre-primary school teachers;
- to place emphasis on encouraging, in co-operation with the parents, the all-round development of the children in accordance with the individual nature and needs of each child and to strive to offer them the emotional and physical support needed to enjoy their childhood;
- to encourage tolerance and open-mindedness of the children and to provide them with equal opportunities to develop;
- to support their Christian ethical development and lay the foundations for children to become independent, conscious, active and responsible participants in a democratic society which is constantly and rapidly changing;
- to foster the children's creative and expressive abilities in order to strengthen their self-image, feelings of security and ability to solve problems in a non-aggressive manner.

Legislation: The Pre-Primary School Act

---

### 3.5. Geographical Accessibility

All the larger local municipalities, i.e. towns and villages, operate pre-primary schools, but this does not mean that all children are able to attend pre-primary school when their parents so wishes, since demand for places, in some municipalities, is far greater than the municipalities can meet, see section 3.6. In some cases a rural municipality in the vicinity of a town makes an agreement with the town in question to the effect that children from the municipality are allowed to attend pre-primary schools in the town.

---

### 3.6. Admission Requirements and Choice of Institution/Centre

Pre-primary schools are for all children who have not reached the age at which compulsory school begins, i.e. the 1st of September of the year in which the child turns 6. However, few pre-primary schools accept children less than a year old, and the youngest children are usually at the age of 2. In municipalities where there may be insufficient room to accommodate all applicants, the children of single parents and students are often given a priority.

All handicapped children have the same right as other children to attend pre-primary schools, and in many cases are given a priority status in regard to admission. The programme for the handicapped children is the same as for other children, but adapted to their ability.

In many of the bigger municipalities there are waiting lists for places at pre-schools.

At the pre-primary level, parents can usually choose between pre-primary schools within their own municipality, i.e. if there is more than one pre-primary school to choose from.

---

### 3.7. Financial Support for Pupils' Families

Local municipalities pay for the construction and the operation of pre-primary schools. Parents contribute a substantial amount towards operating costs of the pre-primary school level. The share that the parents contribute varies from municipality to municipality and in some cases depends on the circumstances of the parents. In some municipalities' single parents and students pay substantially lower fees than others. Some municipalities offer reduction to parents who have two or more children attending schools at the pre-primary level. On the whole, parents contribute about a third of the operating costs of pre-primary schools.

---

### 3.8. Age Levels and Grouping of Children

The children are usually divided into separate divisions according to age. It is not uncommon, however, especially in smaller communities that children in different age brackets are kept together in a division. A child is not moved from one department into another at a particular time of the year. Such a change is made when the time is considered to be right for the child in question and the number of children in other divisions permits it.

In the main the structure of all Icelandic pre-primary schools is similar. Each school has 1-5 divisions with 18-24 children in each. Divisions where handicapped and other children are integrated have 14-18 children. The age range of the children is from 1 to 5.

Children are usually divided into different divisions according to their age. 1, 2 and 3 year old are usually together in a division and so are 3 to 5 year old. There are also divisions or pre-primary schools where brothers and sisters are together, in which case children from 1 to 5 are together in a group. Pre-primary schools are most often in buildings that are specifically designed and constructed for their operation, and they are situated in places where there is enough room to have a spacious playground approx. 30 – 40 square metres of space for each child. Indoors there are 6,5 square metres of space for each child. Pre-primary schools are intended equally for boys and girls, and each division has both sexes. Very few pre-schools in Iceland divide children into divisions according to sex, see [3.15](#). Instructions regarding maximum number of children per educational staff member are stipulated in a regulation on the operation of pre-primary schools.

Parents and/or private parties can operate a pre-primary school if they get a permission from the municipality concerned and the Ministry of Education, Science and Culture.

Institutions: The Ministry of Education, Science and Culture

Legislation: Regulation concerning the operation of pre-schools

---

### 3.9. Organisation of Time

At the pre-primary level, each municipality decides the length of the school day and the school year.

---

### 3.9.1. Organisation of the Year

Pre-primary schools normally operate for eleven months a year as they usually close for one month because of the summer holidays. There are, however, a few pre-primary schools, that operate the year round.

Pre-primary schools do not have Christmas or Easter holidays exceeding the holidays that the general public is given. Pre-primary schools have special preparation days, two to four a year, which the staff uses for preparation and the development of their work. On these days the pre-primary schools are closed for the children.

---

### 3.9.2. Weekly and Daily Timetable

Pre-primary schools commonly provide a period from four to nine hours a day for the child to stay at the school, and it is up to the parents to decide how long they deem it necessary for the child to stay there. However, it also varies from one municipality to another whether the wishes of the parents, regarding the length of stay at the pre-primary school, can be fulfilled.

The pre-primary schools open between 7.00 a.m. and 8.00 a.m. and close between 17.30 p.m. and 18.30 p.m. The head of the school and the staff determines the daily routine of a pre-primary school, and there are no co-ordinated rules to dictate how pre-primary schoolwork should be organised. Meal times, i.e. breakfast, mid-morning refreshments, lunch and afternoon refreshments are a permanent part of the pre-primary school routine. After lunch the younger children usually have a rest. All children are expected to play outside for a certain time every day.

---

### 3.10. Curriculum, Types of Activity, Number of Hours

The Pre-primary School Act stipulates that the Ministry of Education, Science and Culture issues an educational programme, which pre-primary schools are to follow. In 1999, the Ministry issued new national curriculum guideline for pre-primary schools. The new guidelines provide a policy outline for educational work in pre-primary schools and stipulate what demands are to be made in the upbringing and education of children.

The national curriculum guidelines for pre-primary schools:

- is a professional policy outline concerning upbringing and education in pre-primary schools
- is based on a child-oriented ideology which focuses on the needs and development of the child
- is a basis for evaluating pre-primary school education and the training of pre-primary school teachers
- is intended to ensure the quality of pre-primary education and to ensure equal opportunities in the upbringing of children
- emphasises the importance of a good relationship between the pre-primary school and the parents and cooperation between the play- and the compulsory school in the education of the child.

The national curriculum guidelines stress the importance of play in the education and upbringing of the child, comprehensive development in their education, discovery learning and creative work.

Individual pre-primary schools are required to formulate their own school curriculum on the basis of the national curriculum guidelines that the Ministry has issued. The school curriculum sets out the policy of the schools and describes how they intend to meet the educational aims that are stipulated by the national curriculum guidelines.

The national curriculum guidelines are divided into eight chapters:

- The aims of pre-primary education. In this chapter the general vision in education at pre-primary school is explained, its aims and the means of achieving those aims.
- Play and pre-primary school activities. In pre-schools children's play should be the route to their learning and maturing. This chapter deals with life skills and daily life; children's development and learning, their games, and the value of belonging to a group. Furthermore, it emphasises physical and mental care that are intertwined and interactive factors. Finally, it deals with the special needs of children, chronically ill children and children of foreign extraction.
- Learning Areas. Pre-school learning areas are aspects of emphasis in preschool education. These include motor development, language development, artistic creation, music, nature and environment, culture and society. The learning areas overlap and are an integral part of basic pre-school activities: play, daily care and general life-skills.
- Pre-primary schools and the homes. A close co-operation between parents and schools is to be developed. A pre-school director is obliged by the Pre-schools Act and the Regulation on Pre-school Activities, to encourage co-operation between homes and pre-primary schools.
- Pre-primary schools and compulsory schools. This chapter focuses on the co-operation between pre-primary schools and compulsory schools and the co-operation of these school levels with parents' organisations. The staff at pre-primary schools and compulsory schools is to be well acquainted with the ideas and practices at both school levels. Parents of children at the two levels are also encouraged to consult and co-operate.
- The school curriculum. Pre-primary schools are required to compose their own curriculum. They are to stipulate short term and long-term aims in education based on the curriculum guidelines issued by the Ministry of Education and the administrative policies of the pre-primary schools. The school curriculum is to make the work that goes on at the pre-primary school more visible and focused and to show comprehensively the education that it provides as well as the conditions that govern the operation of the school. The school curriculum informs the staff of the school of what is expected of them and it strengthens co-operation with parents and other organisations. Parents are to be made familiar with the school curriculum.
- Assessing the quality of work at the pre-primary school. This chapter deals with the importance of assessment, what is to be assessed and mentions a few evaluation procedures. Assessment is divided into internal and external assessment. Individual school shall develop means for internal assessment to evaluate educational work, administration and personal relations. The internal assessment is to be carried out by the school staff. An unrelated body, in some cases under the auspices of the Ministry of Education, carries out the external assessment.

- Innovations at the pre-primary school level. The law concerning pre-primary education requires the Ministry of Education, Science and Culture to provide annual grants for innovations at the pre-primary school level. This chapter deals with the aims and processes of the innovations.

Institutions: The Ministry of Education, Science and Culture

Legislation: National Curriculum Guideline for Pre-primary Schools

Legislation: The Pre-Primary School Act

---

### 3.11. Teaching Methods and Materials

The Pre-primary School Act and the national curriculum guidelines do not prescribe working methods. Each pre-primary school is expected to choose methods that are based on the ideology and aims that underlie the educational programme and the law. Models based on the ideology of Reggio Emilia, Montessori and Waldorf have been adapted to suit the conditions and aims of Icelandic pre-primary schools. Most models stress the area of work; i.e. that specific types of games are played in different locations. This applies to activities such as artwork, sorting and ordering games, role-play, motion games, music, water games etc.

Most pre-primary schools are eclectic in their approach to different ideologies and choose to adapt them to their circumstances. Free and organised play is emphasised, and so is linguistic and artistic, musical creativity as well as exercise.

Each pre-primary school provides the children with play materials, such as books and toys. There is no coordination across pre-primary schools concerning choice of material. Many pre-primary schools offer computer sessions on individual basis for the oldest children in order to enhance their computer skills.

In the pre-primary school, the child is first and foremost to learn through work and play by dealing with various tasks under normal and concrete circumstances. First hand experience is considered important. The role of a qualified pre-primary schoolteacher is therefore primarily to create proper and stimulating learning conditions. A great emphasis is placed on the interaction between the pre-primary school teacher and the children and a democratic form of co-operation, which is based on mutual respect, where children's growth are shaped by their communication and interaction with the environment.

Legislation: The Pre-Primary School Act

---

### 3.12. Evaluation of Children

Pre-primary schools are not required to assess the performance or the progress of each individual child. However, the pre-primary school staff or specialists make such an assessment, if any suspicion of deviation from normal development arises.

Head teachers of pre-primary schools are responsible for that self-evaluation is conducted on regular basis by the head and the teachers. The present law concerning pre-primary schools gives the Ministry of Education, Science and Culture the duty of carrying out a comprehensive external evaluation of their general educational performance.

Institutions: The Ministry of Education, Science and Culture  
Legislation: The Pre-Primary School Act

---

### 3.13. Support Facilities

The Pre-Primary School Act gives all pre-primary schools the right to have access to external professional counselling and psychological service. The role of this service is:

- to provide professional counselling and education for the staff of the pre-primary schools and the parents of the children,
- to provide primary diagnosis and/or refer cases to more specialised diagnostic facility,
- to carry out various types of research and other studies that relate this type of counselling.

Children of pre-primary school age who need special assistance or training are to be provided with the necessary training regardless of the type of the handicap (physical, emotional or social). The training is aimed at increasing the competence of the child and is under the auspices of the pre-primary school that they attend according to certain rules and under the supervision of a pre-primary schoolteacher, a social pedagogue or other specialists. The training is intended to increase the proficiency of the child and is executed in the school. All children who get special assistance or training are given regular check-ups to monitor their health and development.

The state and the local municipalities operate special counselling centres that employ psychologists, teachers in special education, pre-school consultants and other specialists.

Legislation: The Pre-Primary School Act

---

### 3.14. Private Sector Provision

Local municipalities have the power to allow parents or private parties to operate a pre-primary school with permission from the Ministry of Education, Science and Culture. All the private pre-primary schools get financial support from their local municipality, and therefore the private sector of the pre-primary level could be described as grant-aided private sector. Approximately 9% of all children in pre-primary schools attend privately run schools. It varies in which form private pre-primary schools are operated. There are, for example, parent-operated pre-primary schools where a special association is formed to carry out the operation of the school, and there are parochial pre-primary schools.

There are no differences in the provision of private education or in the legislative framework compared to the public sector.

Institutions: The Ministry of Education, Science and Culture

---

### 3.15. Organisational Variations and Alternative Structures

The Hjalli School Model on specific aims and uses segregated avenues in carrying out the work that goes on in the pre-primary school. Segregated avenues are meant to solve what the author of this policy believes to be the greatest difficulty in pre-primary school education; i.e. that boys and girls have the same rights to be educated, because discrimination between the

sexes tends to be obvious in integrated groups. The children are consequently divided into separate divisions on the basis of their gender most of the time but brought together in mixed groups at certain times during the day so that segregation and integration on the basis of the child's sex is used in a revolving fashion to obtain the best possible results for each individual. According to the Hjalli School Model School model, boys and girls need different types of exercise and different reactions. The Hjalli School Model tressesstresses clear rules of behaviour, care for other human beings and the environment and plain facilities without traditional toys which stimulate the children's own creative and imaginative powers.

### 3.16. Statistics

Please refer to the subdivisions for more details.

#### 3.16.1. Pre-primary schools and attendance

##### **Pre-primary school attendance, December 2005**

0 – 2 years of age	39.4% of the age group in question
3 – 5 years of age	93.9% of the age group in question
0 – 5 years of age	66.4% of the age group in question

	Dec. 2005	%
Pre-primary schools - total	262	
Pre-primary schools run by municipalities	234	
Private pre-primary schools	28	10.4% of pre-primary schools
Children in pre-primary schools - total	16.864	
Children in pre-primary schools run by municipalities	15.322	91% of children in pre-primary schools
Children in private pre-primary schools	1.542	9% of children in pre-primary schools

##### **Space per child according to regulation**

Space in playground per child	30-40 square meters
Indoor space per child	6.5 square meters

Source: Statistics Iceland 2006

Bibliography: Landshagir 2006

Institutions: Statistics Iceland

#### 3.16.2. Child minders and children cared for by child minders

##### **Child minders 2004**

Number of child minders	372
Full time children per child minder	4.0

### Children cared for by child minders

0 - 2 years of age	13.4% of the age group in question
3 - 5 years of age	0.2% of the age group in question

Source: Statistics Iceland 2005



Bibliography: Landshagir 2006  
Institutions: Statistics Iceland

---

### 3.16.3. Personnel in pre-primary schools

Educational personnel 2004	No.	%
Qualified pre-school teachers	1.370	33%
Teachers with other training	267	6%
Untrained educational personnel	2.518	61%
<b>Educational personnel - total</b>	<b>4.155</b>	<b>100%</b>
Personnel - total		
Educational personnel	4.155	88%
Non-teaching personnel	580	12%
<b>Personnel total</b>	<b>4.735</b>	<b>100%</b>

Source: Statistics Iceland

Children per pre-primary school teacher according to regulation	No.
0-2 years of age	4-5
3-5 years of age	6-10
Full-time children per staff member	4.8

Source: Statistics Iceland

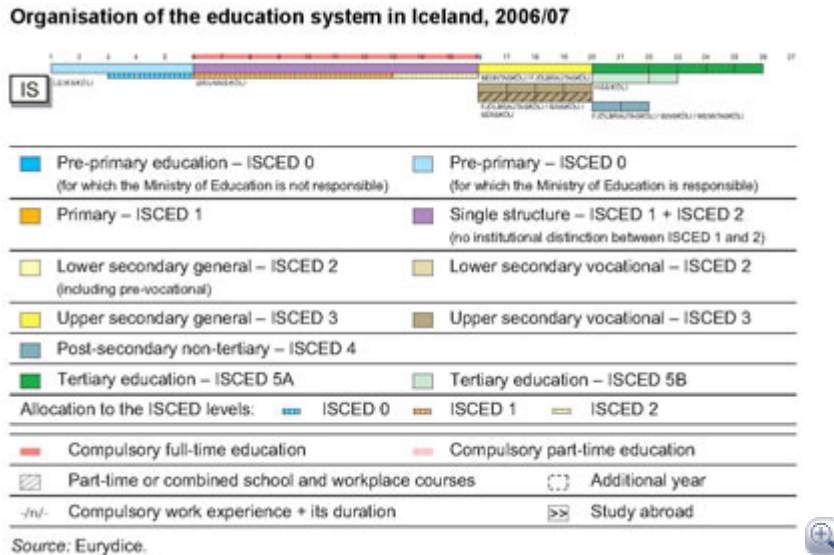


Bibliography: Landshagir 2006  
Institutions: Statistics Iceland



## 4. Single Structure Education

This chapter describes the compulsory education in Iceland which extends to primary and lower secondary levels and includes children from the ages of six to sixteen. Chapter 5. deals with upper secondary education.



### Bibliography: The Educational System in Iceland

#### 4.1. Historical Overview

In regulation from 1756 special requirements were made for the instruction of children as a necessary preparation for their confirmation. In 1880, a law was passed in Iceland concerning the instruction of children in reading, writing, arithmetic and the Christian doctrine of the Lutheran Church. Parents were responsible for this instruction, but all supervision was placed in the hands of the ministers of the State Church.

In the period between 1903 and 1904 there were 50 schools in the country and teaching was being provided in 800 homes. The first major school act was passed by the Icelandic Parliament in 1907. The School Act from 1907 established the basic direction and policy upon which educational practices have been built to the present. By this Act, a fixed regional and administrative structures was established with educational districts in the rural areas and school districts in towns and villages, each one with a school board. Another feature of the 1907 School Act was the founding of the Office of Education and the appointment of the first Director of Education. By the 1907 School Act, public education became compulsory and free of charge for all children between the ages of ten to fourteen. Before entering school all children were supposed to have learned to read and write at home. Primary schools were to be established in all towns and rural communities, and funded and run by local authorities, which subsequently could apply for funds from the government. The Office of Education, was responsible for supervision of all public education, provision of school books and equipment, administration of final examinations and appointment of inspectors. The Office of Education could also grant educational districts permission to order compulsory schooling for children younger than ten years of age but not for children who had not already turned seven. In 1908

the post of a Director of Education fræðslumálastjóri was established. The director's responsibility was to direct and supervise public education. The 1907 School Act marked the beginning of state involvement in educational affairs in Iceland, as education free of charge became available to all children in the country.

In 1929, a law was enacted concerning the establishment of state-run lower secondary district schools, and in accordance with this legislation eight district boarding schools were established in different parts of the country. Most of these schools offered a two-year educational programme.

In 1936, a new legislation on instruction for children was passed, extending compulsory schooling to include children from the ages of seven to fourteen (7th grade).

In 1946, a new law concerning the education system and the state's obligation in education came into effect. The length of compulsory education was extended to the age of fifteen and was divided into primary and lower secondary level. At the primary level, schools had six grades, for children from the age of seven to thirteen. The primary level was divided into two equally long stages, one for younger children, i.e. children younger than ten and the other for children who were ten and older. Final examinations for children who were ten and thirteen years of age took place under the supervision of an external examiner. The examinations were nationally co-ordinated, at least in mathematics and Icelandic, and were under the supervision of the Office of Education. Children who did not pass these examinations at the age of ten and thirteen had, as a rule, to remain at that stage and re-sit the examination a year later. The lower secondary level was a three year program with an extra fourth year for those who did not intend entering the grammar schools or who failed the examination at the close of the third year (ninth grade). At the lower secondary level there were two or three stages. The compulsory education was completed at the close of the upper primary school (eight grade). For further information see [2.1](#). Upon completion of compulsory education, pupils could enter the ninth school year and prepare for the nationally co-ordinated examination landspróf miðskóla which gained them entry to grammar school. At the end of the tenth school year, pupils could take the lower secondary school examination gagnfræðapróf which gave them right to enter all schools at the upper secondary level except the grammar school.

In 1974, a new Compulsory School Act was passed following an extensive debate on education in Iceland. It stipulated nine years of compulsory education from the age of seven to sixteen and gave all children the right to attend school from the age of six, if the parents wished. It was anticipated in the law, however, that nine years of compulsory schooling would be put into effect within ten years of the passing of the law and in 1984, the act's provision on nine years compulsory schooling came into force.

The Compulsory School Act from 1974 provided for the first time the division of the country into eight educational regions, each with its own educational committee and an office headed by a Regional Director of Education. The act also made the services of psychologists available to the schools, and from the year 1977 nationally co-ordinated examinations samræmd próf at the completion of compulsory school replaced the previous selection examination. What mainly characterises this legislation is its emphasis on equal opportunities in education. During the preparation of the 1974 legislation, extensive development work for the primary and lower secondary level (the compulsory level) was started, resulting in the revision of teaching materials and methods of teaching in practically all subjects.

In 1991, compulsory schooling was extended to ten years instead of nine, i.e. it became mandatory for all children to start school at the age of six.

In 1991, a new legislation on compulsory education replaced the one from 1974. Its objectives remained unaltered, the alterations were chiefly intended to adapt education to changing social trends. Thus the school hours of the youngest children were extended, and the intention of providing a single-shift education programme in all primary and lower secondary schools was announced. It also contained provisions for an increased measure of decentralisation, more influence of parents and the introduction of school counselling.

The first comprehensive curriculum for primary and lower-secondary schools gagnfræðaskóli was issued by the Ministry of Education, Science and Culture in 1960 and based on the law concerning compulsory education from 1946. This curriculum remained in effect until new laws concerning compulsory school were passed in 1974 at which point the writing of new national curriculum guidelines was begun. The National Curriculum Guidelines were issued in a series of booklets between 1975-1977. They were structured in such a way that the general section which described the main objectives of education at this level and teaching methods were together in one booklet and separate booklets for each subject were issued later. The National Curriculum Guidelines issued in 1989 emphasized the dual role of upbringing and instruction at the compulsory level, while also dealing with individual subjects and the organisation of school work. The latest National Curriculum Guidelines issued by the Ministry of Education, Science and Culture were published in 1999 and is now being revised.

Bibliography: Frá einveldi til lýðveldis

Bibliography: Iceland 1986, handbook

Bibliography: Saga Alþýðufræðslunnar á Íslandi

Bibliography: The Modern Icelandic School System in Historic Perspective

Institutions: Althingi / Alþingi

Institutions: The Ministry of Education, Science and Culture

Legislation: Compulsory School Act

Legislation: Law on regional boarding schools.

Legislation: Law on the education of children

Legislation: Law on the education of children

Legislation: Law on the education system and the state's obligation to provide schooling

Legislation: Law on the instruction of children in writing and arithmetic

Legislation: National curriculum guidelines for children at compulsory school age

Legislation: National Curriculum Guidelines for Compulsory Education

Legislation: The Compulsory School Act

Legislation: The National Curriculum Guidelines for compulsory schools

---

#### 4.2. Ongoing Debates and Future Developements

Since 2002 the Ministry of Education, Science and Culture has been working on a possible restructuring of general academic programmes leading to matriculation examination, and finding ways to reduce the duration of these programmes from four years to three. If the general academic programme in upper secondary education will take place it will lead to changes in the lower secondary level as well as it is foreseen that some courses that are now taught in the upper secondary schools will be moved to the lower secondary schools.

On 1 January 2007 the Compulsory Schools Act no. 98/2006 took effect. The Act, passed by

parliament in the spring of 2006, amends Act no. 66/1995 with subsequent amendments. The principal amendments to the Compulsory Schools Act which took effect on 1 January 2007 are as follows:

- The provision that the average duration of a teaching period shall be 40 minutes is removed. Provision is only made for minimum duration of weekly teaching, in minutes, and not in teaching periods. This amendment gives schools more flexibility to organise time in school otherwise than in conventional teaching periods.
- The mandated right of parents' committees to be heard is clarified, so that it extends to prospective major changes in school operations and activities.
- Special emphasis is placed upon the increased role of pupils in the work of the school, by legislation that each compulsory school shall have a student board, whose role is expanded.
- Rules of procedure are clarified, and the wording of certain articles has been altered or clarified.
- The Minister of Education was authorised to grant a pupil an exemption from compulsory education in a specified subject, and to recognise study outside compulsory school as equivalent to study in a compulsory subject. This authority is now transferred to the head teachers. By this amendment, Ministry intervention in cases of individual pupils in compulsory schooling is reduced, and head teachers are assigned to assess whether sufficient reason exists for an application for an exemption.

Since the beginning of 2006 a committee has been revising the Compulsory Schools Act. The committee has collaborated widely with stakeholders, and will submit proposals for a bill in early 2007.

A new General Section of the National Curriculum guide will take effect on 1 August 2007. The General Section is the first section of the National Curriculum Guide, and it will be followed by revised versions of the individual sections on each study subject, to be published during 2007. The National Curriculum Guide will now for the first time be published only in electronic form. On this occasion only minor changes are made to the Curriculum Guide, reflecting developments in schools' work, and changes in wording in accord with Act no. 98/2006.

The revised National Curriculum Guide lays a policymaking foundation for changes in the presentation of enabling (step-by-step) objectives in curriculum guides for each subject. The objectives will be placed in an appendix where applicable. They are presented as an example which the schools can use as a model, and are thus not binding. The main argument for changing the presentation of enabling objectives is to allow schools more scope for initiative in the application of the intermediate objectives of the National Curriculum Guide, in light of their own policies and emphasis in tuition.

A bill has been introduced to the Icelandic parliament, proposing changes to the legislation regarding the role of the state run National Centre for Educational Materials. The National Centre for Education Materials has been responsible for producing and distributing educational materials to compulsory schools, free of charge, based on quotas. If the bill is passed, independent publishers will have more opportunity to develop and offer educational materials to schools without the intervention of the National Centre, and schools will have more freedom to allocate their budget for educational materials.

Institutions: Althingi / Alþingi  
Institutions: The Educational Testing Institute  
Institutions: The Ministry of Education, Science and Culture  
Institutions: The National Centre for Educational Materials (Námsgagnastofnun)  
Legislation: Act nr 98/2006 with amendments to Act nr 66/1995 on Compulsory education  
Legislation: Compulsory School Act  
Legislation: National Curriculum Guidelines for Compulsory Education. General section

---

#### 4.3. Specific Legislative Framework

Education at compulsory level is governed by the Compulsory School Act from 1995. According to this Act the local municipalities are responsible for the operation of schools at the compulsory level.

The local municipalities pay for instruction (general teaching, substitute teaching, special education and the teaching of children in hospitals), administration and specialists' services as well as establishing and running schools at the compulsory level. The Act makes it the duty of parents to see to it that their children register for and attend school. The Compulsory School Act also specifies the duty of the state and local municipalities to see to it that instruction, as decreed by law, be given.

According to the Compulsory School Act the state monitors that educational laws and regulations are being carried out, it also continues to be responsible for the publication of educational materials. The state is in charge of co-ordinated school surveys, nationally co-ordinated examinations in core subjects in grade 4 and 7, and nationally co-ordinated examinations in six subjects in grade 10. Furthermore, the state is responsible for assessing individual schools and the educational work that is carried out there to ensure that all such activities are in compliance with existing laws and the National Curriculum Guidelines. See [9.4](#). Local education offices provide general pedagogical counselling, pedagogical counselling in respect to particular subjects, educational counselling for pupils and school psychology services. Where such services are not being offered by the local municipalities themselves, the local authority in question is under an obligation to negotiate with other local municipalities or with institutions, such as teacher training institutions or other parties which provide similar services. The 1995 Compulsory School Act stipulates mandatory education for children and adolescents between the ages of six and sixteen. The Act determines the length of the school year and the minimum number of lesson to be given each week and defines which subjects are obligatory. For information on how the basic legislation has developed see [4.1](#).

Institutions: The Ministry of Education, Science and Culture  
Legislation: Compulsory School Act  
Legislation: Law on the Educational Testing Institution  
Legislation: Regulation on nationally co-ordinated examinations in grade 10 in compulsory education  
Legislation: Regulation on the nationally co-ordinated examinations in grades 4 and 7 in compulsory education

---

#### 4.4. General Objectives

The main objectives of compulsory schooling as stated in the Compulsory School Act from 1995 are the following:

- to prepare the pupils for life and work in a continually developing democratic society. The organisation of the school and the work that takes place there is thus to be guided by tolerance, Christian values and democratic co-operation.
- to aim at conducting its operation in the fullest possible agreement with the nature and needs of its pupils and encourage the development, health and education of each and every individual.
- to give pupils an opportunity to acquire knowledge and skills and to cultivate working habits that promote a continuous interest in seeking education and self-development. School work is therefore to lay the foundation for independent thinking and to train pupils' ability to co-operate with others.

On basis of this Act, the Ministry of Education, Science and Culture issues regulations and National Curriculum Guidelines. These provide the details of how the law is to be implemented and define more clearly the educational role of compulsory schools and the main objectives of instruction in individual subjects in accordance with that role.

Legislation: Compulsory School Act

Legislation: National Curriculum Guidelines for Compulsory Education

---

#### 4.5. Geographical Accessibility

It is the duty of the local municipalities to see to it that all children from the age of six to sixteen have the opportunity to attend school.

There are schools all over the country for children of compulsory school age. It varies in different areas how long the children remain at school on a daily basis. It is customary for children living in rural areas to be bussed to and from school every day, free of charge, and as a rule this is done with children between the ages of six and nine.

The State funds Icelandic schools abroad, or instruction in Icelandic, in some countries where there are relatively large numbers of Icelanders working and living. Special grants are distributed for these purposes.

---

#### 4.6. Admission Requirements and Choice of School

The Compulsory School Act from 1995 stipulates that all children and adolescents between the ages of six and sixteen are required to attend school, and consequently there are no admission requirements for Icelandic compulsory schools. Under the law, compulsory education begins in the calendar year that the child turns six and ends at the close of the spring term the year in which the child reaches the age of 16. Parents can apply for their child to begin its schooling earlier or later than its peers or they may be asked to give their consent that the child begins its schooling earlier or later than its peers. According to the Act from 1995, heads of compulsory schools have the authority to grant such exemptions after having referred the case to the local education office and received their assessment.

Pupils, who are thought not able to attain the goals of the compulsory schooling, due to learning disabilities, are provided education in accordance with their abilities. Deaf, blind and otherwise disabled pupils are generally accommodated within a compulsory school or in special divisions within a school. For more information on education for children with learning disabilities see chapter 10. A child attends the school closest to its home. In local municipalities where there is more than one compulsory school, parents may request that their children be allowed to attend a school that is not in the school district where they live.

Legislation: Compulsory School Act

---

#### 4.7. Financial Support for Pupils' Families

The education at the compulsory level is free. Instruction, administration, bussing, maintenance of buildings and facilities etc. are paid by the local municipality in question. The cost of educational materials are paid by the state. Pupils in urban areas have the option of bringing their own lunch or buying, at a reduced price, a hot meal, sandwiches, milk or fruits during their lunch break. In the school year 2005-2006, 66% of pupils in the capital city bought a hot meal every school-day. Most schools outside the capital have canteens where the pupils receive a hot meal paid for, partly, by their parents. According to the Act from 1995, the local municipalities are supposed to offer all children one hot meal during school hours.

Family allowances are related to the number of children and are paid until the age of 16. They are paid according to family income, i.e. there is a maximum amount that may be decreased or abolished if the family income exceeds a certain amount.

Legislation: Compulsory School Act

---

#### 4.8. Age Levels and Grouping of Pupils

Schools are organised into classes by age from grade one to ten. Officially there is no selection or streaming by ability and children automatically go up from one grade to the next according to age. In the larger schools there are several classes for one yearly intake. The Compulsory School Act from 1995 does not contain any provisions concerning the maximum number of pupils within a single class as did the law from 1991. Even though the Act from 1995 does not have any such provisions, the Teachers' Organisation and the National Association of Local Authorities in Iceland, have made an informal agreement to that effect that the former provisions on maximum number of pupils in a single class, are to be respected. According to this informal norm the number of pupils in a class in grades 1 to 6 is not to exceed 24 and in grades 7 to 10 there may be 28 to 30 pupils. In smaller schools, mostly rural schools, several grades are grouped into a single class with one teacher.

In grades one to three, a class teacher teaches most of the subjects in his or her class. The borders between individual subjects at this age are not very clear. Teaching takes a variety of forms, class teaching, group work or individual tutoring. Teaching in these grades resembles the teaching in open-plan schools. This applies in particular to very small schools where pupils of various ages are together in the same class.

Classrooms are generally allocated to individual classes, i.e. each class has its own classroom and teachers move from room to room. Certain subjects in most compulsory schools, for

example arts and crafts, home economics and physical education, are taught in classrooms that are specially intended for them. Only the biggest and best-equipped schools have special physics and chemistry laboratories.

Bibliography: Kjarasamningur Launaneftndar sveitarfélaga og Kennarasambands Íslands fyrir Grunnskóla

Legislation: Compulsory School Act

Legislation: Compulsory School Act

---

#### 4.9. Organisation of School Time

The minimum annual operating time for compulsory schools, nine months, is defined in the law concerning this level of education and in the teachers' wage contract. See [8.2.12.1](#) and [8.2.12.2](#).

Bibliography: Kjarasamningur Launaneftndar sveitarfélaga og Kennarasambands Íslands fyrir Grunnskóla

Legislation: Compulsory School Act

---

##### 4.9.1. Organisation of the School Year

Compulsory schools operate for nine months a year. They usually begin on between the 21st of August and the 1st of September and end between the 31st of May and the 10th of June. There is a Christmas holiday for two weeks and an Easter holiday from Palm Sunday and up to and including the first Tuesday after Easter. The individual school may plan the holidays differently. If a school chooses to do so, it must be announced in the school working guide and it must be seen to that the pupils' holidays are never shorter than 15 weeks over the school year. Compulsory schools may also take a winter holiday, which is usually in February and lasts for one school week.

According to the law the minimum number of school days is 170 but following the teachers' wage-contract from 2001, the number of school days are 180. Classes are held five days a week. Schools at the compulsory level have a day off on 1 December (Independence Day), and 1 May, if these holidays fall on a weekday.

Bibliography: Kjarasamningur Launaneftndar sveitarfélaga og Kennarasambands Íslands fyrir Grunnskóla


Legislation: Compulsory School Act

---

##### 4.9.2. Weekly and Daily Timetable

In accordance to the Compulsory School Act from 1995, the number of lessons per pupil per week at compulsory schools are as follows:

Grades 1 to 4	30 lessons
Grades 5 to 7	35 lessons
Grades 8 to 10	37 lessons



Decisions about how daily workload is distributed over the day is made in each school. A



lesson at compulsory school normally lasts 40 minutes.

Length of school day, each day of the week

	Out-of-hours provision (before lessons)	Lessons (starting and finishing times in the morning)	Lunch break	Lessons (starting and finishing times in the afternoon)	Out-of-hours provision (after lessons)
Monday	8.00	9.00	40 min	14:30	16.00
Tuesday	8.00	9.00	40 min	14:30	16.00
Wednesday	8.00	9.00	40 min	14:30	16.00
Thursday	8.00	9.00	40 min	14.30	16.00
Friday	8.00	9.00	40 min	14:30	16.00
Saturday	No lessons				

Schools start between 8.00 - 9.00 a.m., but it varies how long into the day they operate. However, it may be assumed that most pupils have finished school between 15.00 p.m. and 16.00 p.m.

All compulsory schools operate on a single shift system and the pupils remain at school after regular teaching is over, to study, play, and have their hobbies.

Legislation: Compulsory School Act

---

#### 4.10. Curriculum, Subjects, Number of Hours

The Ministry of Education, Science and Culture issues National Curriculum Guidelines which are intended both to provide the more detailed objectives necessary to implement the Compulsory School Act from 1995 and offer instruction as to how it is to be carried out in practice.

In 1999, the National Curriculum Guidelines from 1989 were revised and new National Curriculum Guidelines were issued. The National Curriculum Guidelines are a further development of the law and have the legal status of a ministry regulation. They interpret the articles of the school act and further specify what is to be co-ordinated in all Icelandic compulsory schools. Furthermore, the National Curriculum Guidelines set the limits for each school and its staff in respect to organisation, execution and evaluation of education within that school. The National Curriculum Guidelines apply to all grades and subjects in compulsory schools.

The National Curriculum Guidelines from 1999 are now under revision as well as the School Act from 1995.

The curriculum in Icelandic schools is taught in Icelandic.

According to the Compulsory School Act, the staff of each school are obliged to write their own school working guide which is to be based on the National Curriculum Guidelines, but gives each school an opportunity to take into account its circumstances and special characteristics. The school working guide is to be an administrative plan for each school. It is to account for the school year and to include a calendar of the school year, the organisation of teaching, the objectives and content of the education offered, pupil assessment procedures, assessment of the work that goes on in the school, extra-curricular activities and other aspects of the operation of the school.

In addition to the National Curriculum Guidelines, the Ministry of Education, Science and Culture issues guidelines on the proportions of total teaching time to be devoted to individual subjects for each year. The number of hours of instruction varies according to the age of the pupils.

The number of lessons for each grade is as follows:

- Grade 1-4 (age 6-9 years) 30 lessons per week
- Grade 5-7 (age 10-12) 35 lesson per week
- Grade 8-10 (age 13-15) 37 lesson per week.

According to the National Curriculum Guidelines from 1999, the pupils' scheduled school time, at the conclusion of ten years of compulsory education will be divided among the various subjects in approximately the following manner:

- Icelandic approx. 19%
- Mathematics approx. 17%
- Natural sciences approx. 9%
- Social and religious studies approx. 10%
- Physical education approx. 10%
- Arts and crafts approx. 11%
- Modern languages approx. 11%
- Home economics approx. 4%
- ICT and technology approx. 6%
- Life skills approx. 2%.

The first five of the group above are subjects which all pupils study from grade 1 through grade 9. In the 10th and final grade, all pupils study Icelandic, mathematics, English, Danish, natural sciences, social studies, life skills and physical education, while other subjects and electives varies. The National Curriculum Guidelines states that Icelandic and mathematics are core subjects in compulsory education.

The goal of instruction in the subject Life skills is, among other things, to support goal-oriented factors in the general development of the pupils, to increase their ability to cope with an ever-changing and complex society, and to include important areas that fall outside the limits of traditional courses. These areas include consumer science, family education, sex education, handling personal finances, instruction in equal rights and human rights, and drug use prevention.

Instruction in the field of informational technology is intended to meet the technological advances and the computer revolution of the modern world. Teaching includes computer use, informational technology, innovation, and technical education. Computer skills can now be considered prerequisites for a favourable outcome in taking a course of study or acceptable functioning on a job. For this reason the educational system will meet pupil needs in this respect during the years of compulsory schooling so as to insure that all pupils are given the opportunity to obtain the minimum skills needed for the use and handling of computers, data acquisition, and processing and presenting information, as well as practice in various job skill requirements that the modern job market requires, such as typing and word processing.

Electives are a part of compulsory education. Compulsory schools are to define and clarify the aims of the electives that are offered. They are furthermore to submit teaching schedules, lists topics to be covered and decisions concerning the nature of assessment, and introduce these plans to pupils and their parents as soon as they have been approved by the local authority. As of 1 January 2007, individual schools are expected to organise up to 30 % of the total teaching time, in grades 8, 9 and 10, to electives, In these grades the schools are to offer their pupils the possibility of choosing between subjects and fields of study. The aim behind this increased freedom is to allow individual pupils to adjust their education according to their needs and to allow them in their studies to emphasise what they are interested in and how they see fit to plan their future in co-operation with their parents, teachers and educational counsellors. This has three benefits. Firstly, the notion of basic public education is retained as is evidenced by the presence of core subjects and timetable guidelines issued by the Ministry of Education, Culture and Science. Secondly, pupils are given a chance through their electives to concentrate on certain subjects in accordance with their interests and plans for the future. In the third place, pupils are permitted to exempt themselves from individual subjects or fields of study in which they are not interested or are found to be less necessary for their future plans. There are various course options in the last year of compulsory schooling which the pupil, his/her parents and teachers may jointly decide on in their search to obtain the best educational solution for that particular pupil.

The electives that are offered in grades 8, 9 and 10 may be divided into three main groups. Firstly, there are electives that prepare pupils systematically for the academic education programmes of secondary school. Secondly, there are electives that relate to specific preparation for a professional career, or for further education in the fields of arts or technology. In the third place, pupils are able to select subjects that broaden their horizon or that make their lives more meaningful.

Institutions: The Ministry of Education, Science and Culture

Legislation: Compulsory School Act

Legislation: National Curriculum Guidelines for Compulsory Education

Legislation: The National Curriculum Guidelines for compulsory schools

---

#### 4.11. Teaching Methods and Materials

Neither the curriculum nor laws and regulations contain instructions regarding teaching methods. Teachers are free to choose those methods and materials that suit their objectives and circumstances at any given time.

In grades one to three, a class teacher teaches most of the subjects in his or her class. The borders between individual subjects at this age are not very clear. Teaching takes a variety of forms, class teaching, group work or individual tutoring. Teaching in these grades resembles the teaching in open-plan schools. This applies in particular to very small schools where pupils of various ages are together in the same class.

Instruction in clearly defined subjects characterises teaching in the later stages of compulsory education. In the upper grades of compulsory school, the borders between traditional subjects are clearly defined and teachers tend to be subject teachers teaching one or two subjects in many classes.

Instruction based upon the school's immediate environment generally takes place in the form

of special field trips which are most often linked to studies in traditional subjects. Studies of pollution in a nearby lake or river or studies of soil erosion and actions to make the situation better are examples of projects related to natural and social sciences.

There has been a tendency in recent years to offer different types of instruction in respect to the rate at which the syllabus is covered in grades eight to ten. Pupils select a group according to ability, i.e. the best pupils choose a group where they can accelerate in the subject, then there is a group for average pupils and the weakest pupils choose a group where the subject matter is covered more slowly.

A few schools at compulsory level in Iceland adhere to a particular ideology in education, although individual teachers are allowed to take note of different educational theories. These schools follow the main aims of the Compulsory School Act and take notice of the of the National Curriculum Guidelines.

Generally speaking schools are well equipped, and computerisation in Icelandic compulsory schools has been very rapid in recent years. The use of computers is very common among teachers and about 99% of all compulsory schools are linked up to Internet through the Icelandic Educational Network which allows teachers to communicate, exchange information, assignments, educational materials and ideas and to be linked to data banks throughout the world. The average ratio of computers per pupil in compulsory schools is one computer to every 15 pupils.

Official recommendations regarding homework do not exist.

Pupils are provided with teaching materials free of charge. A public institution, The National Centre for Educational Materials, is responsible for providing all children in compulsory schools with teaching materials and receives budget appropriation for this purpose. It is relatively expensive for a small nation to publish satisfactory teaching materials in its own language. For this reason there is no possibility of a choice from a variety of different textbooks for all subjects but the variety of teaching material has increased in recent years, for example audio-visual material and computer and multi-media programmes. Individual schools and teachers may choose which materials they use when alternatives are available.

Institutions: The National Centre for Educational Materials (Námshagstofnun)

Legislation: Compulsory School Act

Legislation: National Curriculum Guidelines for Compulsory Education

---

#### 4.12. Pupil Assessment

Examinations and other forms of assessment, usually written, are carried out by individual teachers and schools. Assessment is therefore not necessarily standardised between different schools and teachers. The way in which the reports on pupils' progress are written varies greatly: the assessment can be in the form of a number, a letter or a description either oral or written. Reports are given at regular intervals throughout the school year and at the end of each year. The purpose of assessment by the school and the teacher is above all to help improve learning and teaching and to provide both the parents and the children with information on how their studies are progressing.

Nationally co-ordinated examinations samræmd próf are given every year in the core subjects,

Icelandic and mathematics, in grades 4 and 7.

In the tenth grade at the end of the compulsory education, the nationally co-ordinated examinations samræmd próf in Icelandic, mathematics, English and Danish (Norwegian and Swedish), mathematics, natural sciences and social sciences are optional, i.e the pupils can choose how many nationally co-ordinated examination they take. They can even choose to take none. The Upper Secondary School Act from 1996 allows for varied admission requirements to different branches of study at the upper secondary level, according to what academic demands are required for the branch of study in question. How many nationally co-ordinated examinations in grade ten, pupils decide to take, may depend on which branch of study pupils plan to seek admission to.

These examinations are composed, marked and organised by The Educational Testing Institute, see [2.6.1.2.1](#). Marks ranging from one to ten are given based on referenced criteria. The purpose of the examinations in grade 10 is primarily to indicate the pupil's standing at the completion of his compulsory education and to assist him in choosing a course of upper secondary study. At the end of compulsory schooling all pupils get a certificate stating their marks on both the nationally co-ordinated examinations and all other courses completed in their final year at school.

When children start compulsory school at the age of six, emphasis is on diagnosing their standing. They are offered a test for dyslexia so it will be possible to support those who need it from the beginning of their school attendance. The weakest pupils are provided with special education, i.e. they get remedial teaching provided by an extra teacher in mathematics and Icelandic. See [9.4](#).

Institutions: The Educational Testing Institute

Legislation: Compulsory School Act

Legislation: Regulation on nationally co-ordinated examinations in grade 10 in compulsory education

Legislation: Regulation on the nationally co-ordinated examinations in grades 4 and 7 in compulsory education

Legislation: Upper Secondary School Act

---

#### 4.13. Progression of Pupils

Pupils at the compulsory level are automatically moved up from one grade to the next at the end of each year. Academically gifted pupils are, however, allowed to omit a grade. They can begin their schooling at the age of five or finish compulsory schooling in a shorter time than others. Very few pupils, however, choose to accelerate (0.5%) or lengthen (also 0.5%) their studies at this level. The main rule is that pupils are put into a class according to age, and the weakest pupils are provided with special education, i.e. they get remedial teaching provided by an extra teacher in mathematics and Icelandic.

---

#### 4.14. Certification

There are no certificates awarded for work at the compulsory level except at the completion of compulsory schooling. This certificate states the pupils' marks on both the nationally co-ordinated examinations samræmd próf and all other courses completed in the tenth grade.

---

#### 4.15. Educational Guidance

Compulsory schools generally offer educational counselling which, among other things, includes assistance in organising studies and study-related problems. Educational counselling also often involves helping students with their personal problems.

The Compulsory School Act stipulates that all children are to receive suitable instruction so that the nature of the pupil and his needs are taken into account and that the development, health and education of each individual are promoted. Pupils have the right to attend school in the area where they live, furthermore, the school is to undertake in a systematic fashion the integration of handicapped pupils in its catchment area into mainstream education.

There are medical examinations for all children when they start school, and in their fourth, seventh and ninth years at school. There are also medical examinations in other age groups, if it is deemed to be necessary. Every year all children at compulsory school are weighed. In grades 1, 4, 7 and 9 their height is measured and their vision tested. Tuberculin tests are carried out every other year. Hearing is tested in the first and ninth year. Their sense of color is tested in grade 7. The following vaccinations are carried out: in the first year against D.T., in the fourth and ninth years against polio, and in the seventh year, girls are tested for German measles and those who test negative are offered vaccination.

The main aim in bringing health care into the schools is to help children grow and develop under the best possible mental, physical, and social conditions and to teach them to be responsible for their own health. Children and their environment are carefully monitored and every effort is made to educate the children and their parents.

Legislation: Compulsory School Act

---

#### 4.16. Private Education

Compulsory schools that are established and owned by individuals or institutions must be accredited by the Ministry of Education, Science and Culture.

The school year 2005-2006 there were seven private schools at the compulsory level in Iceland. 1% of the pupil population of the school year 2005-2006 attended private schools.

All private schools receive considerable financial assistance from the municipalities and in addition their pupils pay school fees. Teaching in private schools follows the National Curriculum Guidelines that are in effect for compulsory schools and pupils take the same nationally co-ordinated examinations samræmd próf in the grades 4 and 7 and at the end of the tenth grade as their peers in state-operated schools.

Institutions: The Ministry of Education, Science and Culture

Legislation: Compulsory School Act

Legislation: National Curriculum Guidelines for Compulsory Education

---

#### 4.17. Organisational Variations and Alternative Structures

There are no provisions on education at home in the Compulsory School Act from 1995.

However, the Ministry of Education, Science and Culture has in recent years permitted education at home on a trial basis by issuing working rules for this kind of education. Education at home, however, takes place in very few cases.

Parents have to apply to the relevant municipality if they want to educate their children at home. If the parents meet the requirements set by the municipality, they can then apply to the Ministry for permission. If the permission is granted, the municipality has to make a contract with a compulsory school in the municipality concerning advice, supervision and various services.

Institutions: The Ministry of Education, Science and Culture

Legislation: Compulsory School Act

#### 4.18. Statistics

Please refer to the subdivisions for more details.

##### 4.18.1. Compulsory Schools

In the school year 2005-2006 there are 177 compulsory schools in Iceland, one fewer than previous year. There are 44,336 pupils in compulsory schools in the autumn 2005. It is expected that the number of pupils in compulsory education will be smaller in the coming years, as the age groups that will be starting compulsory education in the next years are smaller than the age groups that will be completing compulsory education. The largest school has 799 pupils and the smallest rural school has three pupils.

Schools 2005-2006	Number	Proportional
Total	177	100 %
Public schools	170	96 %
Small schools*	37	21 %
Private schools	7	4.3 %
Special schools		1.6 %

\*Schools with fewer than 50 pupils

Source: Statistics Iceland, 2006



Bibliography: Landshagir 2006

Institutions: Statistics Iceland

##### 4.18.2. Pupils in Compulsory Schools

School year 2005-2006

Pupils	Number	Proportional
Total	44.336	100 %
Male	22.823	51.5 %
Female	21.513	48.5 %
In public schools	43.718	98.6 %
In private schools	472	1 %
In special schools	146	0.3 %
Immigrants	1.594	3.5 %

Source: Statistics Iceland, 2006



Bibliography: Landshagir 2006  
Institutions: Statistics Iceland

---

#### 4.18.3. Pupils by Class Size

Bibliography: Landshagir 2006  
Institutions: Statistics Iceland

---

#### 4.18.4. Teachers in Compulsory Schools

School year 2005-2006

Teachers	Number	Proportional
Total	4,841	100 %
Male	1,057	21,8 %
Female	3,784	78,2 %
Qualified	4,197	86,7 %
Un-qualified	644	13,3 %

Average pupil-teacher ratio: Approx. 10.2. Source: Statistics Iceland, 2006.



Bibliography: Landshagir 2006  
Institutions: Statistics Iceland

School year 2005-2006

Grade	Number of classes	Number of pupils	Pupils per class
1	245	4,123	16,9
2	240	4,216	17,5
3	232	4,217	18
4	235	4,401	18,8
5	233	4,326	18,4
6	237	4,502	18,8
7	240	4,636	19,2
8	225	4,637	20,3
9	229	4,499	19,4
10	245	4,779	19,4
Total	2,361	44,336*	

\* Pupils in special schools and some very small schools are not included.

Source: Statistics Iceland, 2006

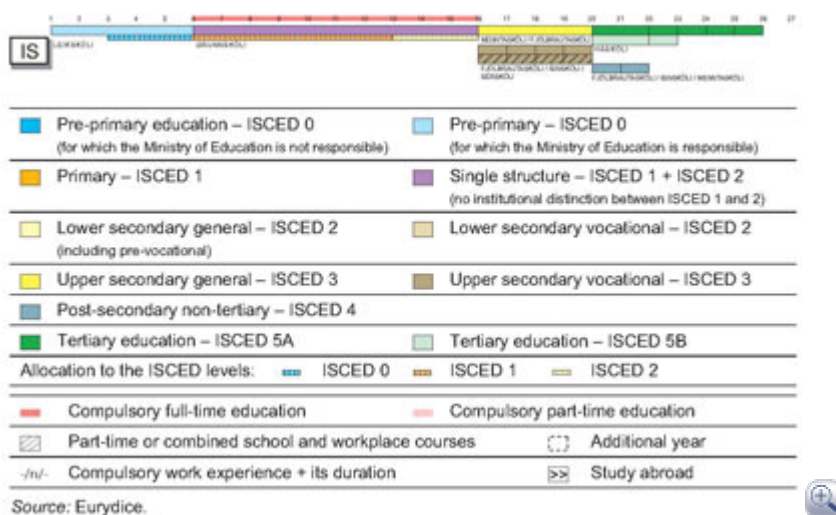




## 5. Upper Secondary and Post-Secondary Non-Tertiary Education

This chapter deals with upper secondary education. Lower secondary education is dealt with in chapter 4, as compulsory education covers both primary and lower secondary education in a single structure.

Organisation of the education system in Iceland, 2006/07



Upper secondary education is not compulsory, but the Upper Secondary School Act stipulates that anyone who has completed compulsory education has the right to enter a course of study at the upper secondary school level. All schools at that level, like other schools in Iceland, are co-educational. Pupils may complete their upper secondary education in a single institution. Education at this school level is generally provided on a full time basis. However, schools may accept individual pupils on a part-time basis.

The Upper Secondary School Act of 1996 stipulates that there should be four types of branches of study: academic branches of study leading to matriculation, vocational branches of study, fine arts branches of study and a short general branch of study. The branches of study are of differing lengths, from one to eight semesters, though most of them are four-year branches of study.

The organisation of teaching and studies may be different from one upper secondary school to another. Schools either have traditional classes or forms where all the pupils of a class follow a particular programme of study or they operate according to a unit-credit system with no rigid form structure, i.e. the pupil groups vary according to their choice of course units. The unit-credit system is the most common form of upper secondary education, both in general academic studies and vocational training. The National Curriculum Guidelines are in force for all schools, irrespective of their organisation.

On-the-job training is in most cases included in vocational study. In the certified trades, for example, an apprenticeship agreement is made between the pupil and a master craftsman or an industrial firm. See 5.11.2. All branches of study at the upper secondary school level are to lead to further education either directly or through defined additional studies.

Post-secondary education is mainly provided by a few industrial vocational schools or comprehensive schools at the upper secondary school level.

Bibliography: The Educational System in Iceland

Legislation: National Curriculum Guidelines for Upper Secondary Education

Legislation: Upper Secondary School Act

---

### 5.1. Historical Overview

The Icelandic upper secondary school has been moulded by two very strong traditions, on the one hand the educational legacy of the Latin schools, and on the other by traditions in training for the certified trades.

Bibliography: Iceland 1986, handbook

Bibliography: Skólar á Íslandi (sérprentun úr Ísland, atvinnuhættir og menning)

---

#### 5.1.1. Grammar Schools

Grammar schools in Iceland have a tradition that goes back to the Middle Ages, to the schools that were operated at the bishoprics at Skálholt and Hólar. Around the middle of the sixteenth century, after the Reformation, the State took over the operation of these schools and from that point onwards they were referred to as Latin schools. These schools remained largely unchanged until the nineteenth century. Their role was first and foremost to educate the clergy, and the subjects of instruction were mostly theology, Latin and Greek.

Around 1800, the schools at Skálholt and Hólar were moved to Reykjavík and united into a single institution. Shortly after that, the school was moved to Bessastaðir, in the vicinity of Reykjavík, and there it remained until 1846 when it was again moved back to Reykjavík and called the Learned School of Reykjavík. During the late nineteenth century, social changes and new waves in education brought about some changes in the school's curriculum. New subjects were introduced, among other things, such as Icelandic and more modern languages. Also, greater emphasis was placed on history, nature studies and mathematics. In 1904, radical changes were made in the operation of the school through an ordinance. The name was changed from Learned to General and the school was now called the General Grammar School of Reykjavík, later changed to the Reykjavík Grammar School. At that time, it was divided into upper and lower departments. In 1946, the lower department was abolished. The Reykjavík Grammar School was for a long time the only school in the country that prepared pupils for university studies, but in 1930 another grammar school was founded in Akureyri.

Bibliography: Frá einveldi til lýðveldis

Bibliography: Iceland 1986, handbook

Bibliography: Saga Reykjavíkurskóla

Bibliography: Skólar á Íslandi (sérprentun úr Ísland, atvinnuhættir og menning)

Institutions: Akureyri Grammar School

Institutions: The Reykjavík Grammar School

---

#### 5.1.2. Training for the Certified Trades

In Iceland, formal training for the certified trades began in the nineteenth century. It is the oldest form of organised vocational training, with the exception of the training of the clergy.

Although a system of guilds never really existed in Iceland, training for the certified trades was originally formulated according to the traditions of the Danish trade guilds which included a few years of training with a master craftsman.

In 1869, master craftsmen in Reykjavík instituted a few theoretical courses for vocational trainees. A law concerning training for the certified trades was passed in 1893 and in 1904 The Reykjavík Technical School was founded. In the next few decades, industrial vocational schools were also established outside Reykjavík but they tended to be small. In the beginning, industrial vocational schools were evening schools which the trainees attended alongside an apprenticeship with a master craftsman. Theoretical training did not become obligatory until the law concerning training for the certified trades was revised in 1927.

Bibliography: Frá einveldi til lýðveldis

Bibliography: Iceland 1986, handbook

Bibliography: Þróun starfsmenntunar á framhaldsskólastigi

Institutions: The Reykjavík Technical School

Legislation: Law on vocational training

---

### 5.1.3. Other Upper Secondary Schools

During the nineteenth century there was a general movement towards public education and an interest in educational affairs. Social and economic changes were accompanied by needs and demands for increased education. However, little was done towards this effect in Iceland and secondary schools for the general public were almost non-existent. Only a small number of well-to-do pupils graduated from the Learned School of Reykjavík.

For a long time, education for general public was not carried out at school but in the home. It was only towards the end of the century that changes began to occur. A school for girls was established in Reykjavík in 1874 and in its wake further schools for domestic science were founded throughout the country.

Around 1880, two secondary schools gagnfræðaskóli were founded, one in the north, Möðruvallaskólinn, and the other in the south, Flensborgarskólinn. In the beginning of twentieth century, two schools that operated in the spirit of the Scandinavian public school movement were also founded, but later these schools were changed to general secondary schools.

Towards the end of the nineteenth century, more vocational schools were also founded, for example an agricultural college and a fishermen's and seamen's college. Various other schools were founded during the first decades of twentieth century, such as a commercial school, a marine engineering school, a school of nursing and an art college.

Bibliography: Frá einveldi til lýðveldis

Bibliography: Iceland 1986, handbook

Bibliography: Þróun starfsmenntunar á framhaldsskólastigi

Institutions: The Reykjavík Grammar School

---

### 5.1.4. The Development of Upper Secondary Schools after 1946

New educational legislation passed in 1946 marked a turning point in educational affairs in Iceland. In the new law, compulsory schooling was lengthened from seven years to eight (from 7-14 to 7-15) and a new nationally co-ordinated entrance examination landspróf miðskóla to the grammar schools was introduced. The rationale for the new examination was to bring about greater equality with regard to grammar school places and to make it easier for young people to have access to a grammar school education. General secondary programmes were also strengthened and practical courses within these programmes were introduced. The decades that followed saw great social and economical changes and as a result the number of young people who completed secondary education and other forms of further studies increased. However, not many new schools were established, and during the mid-sixties there were only four grammar schools in the country.

New law concerning industrial vocational schools was passed in 1955. At that point the State took over the operation of such schools which had previously been run by the associations of master craftsmen. Industrial vocational schools then became day schools.

During the sixties, demands for different forms of education at the upper secondary level which would bring about greater educational opportunities for young people began to be voiced. A new legislation for education for the certified trades was passed in 1966 and in its wake, or around 1970, one-year basic training programmes were started at the industrial vocational schools. Later, training programmes in advanced classes were set up for some trades in industrial vocational schools. This opened another avenue in vocational training, i.e. training for the certified trades could be begun at school and without a formal contract with a master craftsman.

However, it was not until after 1970 that it became commonly accepted that general education for young people should be extended beyond the age of fifteen. Education at the upper secondary level went through great changes in the seventies and enrolment at upper secondary schools increased steadily as well. After the nationally co-ordinated entrance examination landspróf miðskóla and the secondary school-leaving examination gagnfræðapróf were abolished in 1976 and 1977, entering the upper secondary level was a good deal easier. Educational reforms in the seventies at the upper secondary level were mainly aimed at integrating general education and vocational training by establishing comprehensive schools, and co-ordinating a basic programme of academic studies intended for all pupils.

Law that permitted the establishment of upper secondary comprehensive schools was passed in 1973. New types of schools, comprehensive schools, came into being and were established in various places throughout the country. Most of the comprehensive schools came into being with the merging of general secondary schools gagnfræðaskóli and industrial vocational schools. The new schools were intended to provide traditional grammar-school education, as well as general and more specialised forms of vocational training and a variety of new branches of study, all in the same school. At the same time the number of traditional grammar schools grew. A new legislation concerning grammar schools was passed in 1970.

In the seventies, many of the upper secondary schools in Iceland adopted a unit-credit system, which since then has been the prevalent form of organisation for schools at this level. All comprehensive schools, for example, operate on a unit-credit system.

During the seventies and eighties, a few bills concerning the upper secondary school level were submitted to Parliament but despite repeated attempts no new comprehensive legislation

concerning this level was passed until 1988. The Upper Secondary School Act of 1988 replaced older laws concerning grammar schools, vocational schools and comprehensive schools. A new Upper Secondary School Act came into effect on 1 August. See 5.3. The Ministry of Education, Science and Culture first issued curriculum guidelines for upper secondary schools in 1986, and to begin with they were primarily intended as a framework for the schools to take note of in their work. Before that, individual schools or groups of schools had produced their own study guides. The latest National Curriculum Guidelines issued by the Ministry of Education, Science and Culture were published in 1999.

Bibliography: Iceland 1986, handbook

Bibliography: The Modern Icelandic School System in Historic Perspective

Bibliography: Þróun starfsmenntunar á framhaldsskólastigi

Institutions: Althingi / Alþingi

Institutions: The Ministry of Education, Science and Culture

Legislation: Law on grammar schools

Legislation: Law on industrial vocational schools

Legislation: Law on permission to establish comprehensive upper secondary schools

Legislation: Law on the education system and the state's obligation to provide schooling

Legislation: Law on vocational education

Legislation: National Curriculum Guidelines for Upper Secondary Education

Legislation: Upper Secondary School Act.

---

## 5.2. Ongoing Debates and Future Developments

Since 2002, the Ministry of Education, Science and Culture has been working on a possible restructuring of general academic programmes leading to matriculation examination, and finding ways to reduce the duration of these programmes from four years to three.

Traditionally the general academic programmes leading to the matriculation examination have been organised as 4-year programmes, from the age of 16 to the age of 20. Icelandic pupils complete their matriculation examination the year they turn 20, whereas in most other countries pupils finish comparable programmes at the age of 18 or 19. The reason for structuring general academic studies as 4-year programmes was mainly the short academic year in Icelandic schools. In recent years the school year has been lengthened considerably, both in compulsory education and upper secondary education.

Institutions: The Ministry of Education, Science and Culture

---

## 5.3. Specific Legislative Framework

Education at the upper secondary level is governed by the Upper Secondary School Act from 1996, and by amendments to that legislation from 1998, 1999, 2001 and 2006.

The Upper Secondary School Act primarily defines the framework for education at that level, its objectives, the role and responsibility of the State and local municipalities as well as other parties that are involved in providing education at this level.

More detailed provisions regarding the implementation of upper secondary education are to be found in the regulations which the Ministry of Education, Science and Culture issues on the basis of law that is in effect. In addition, the Ministry issues National Curriculum Guidelines which, among other things, describe the objectives and contents of individual

branches of study. The National Curriculum Guidelines are equivalent to a ministry regulation.

National Curriculum Guidelines for upper secondary schools in accordance with the legislation of 1996 were published in a series of booklets in spring 1999 and came into effect on 1 June 1999. The guidelines were to take full effect no later than five years after they were first implemented. The National Curriculum Guidelines related to some vocational branches of study are continually being revised by the different occupational councils.

Institutions: The Ministry of Education, Science and Culture

Legislation: National Curriculum Guidelines for Upper Secondary Education

Legislation: Upper Secondary School Act

---

#### 5.4. General Objectives

According to the Upper Secondary School Act, the objectives for all pupils are as follows:

The role of upper secondary schools is to promote the general development of all pupils in order to enable them, as well as possible, to actively participate in a democratic society. Furthermore, upper secondary school prepares pupils for work and further studies. Upper secondary school is intended to promote pupils' sense of responsibility, broadmindedness, initiative, self-confidence, tolerance and to train them in disciplined and independent ways of working and critical thinking. The role of the school is also to teach them to enjoy cultural values and to encourage them to seek lifelong knowledge.

The National Curriculum Guidelines issued by the Ministry of Education, Science and Culture further specify the educational objectives for individual branches of study and individual subjects.

Institutions: The Ministry of Education, Science and Culture

Legislation: National Curriculum Guidelines for Upper Secondary Education

Legislation: Upper Secondary School Act

---

##### 5.4.1. General Upper Secondary Education

General academic branches of study shall provide preparation for higher education study. See also general objectives in [5.4.](#)

---

##### 5.4.2. Vocational Upper Secondary Education

According to the legislation on upper secondary education, vocational study shall further the general education of pupils, prepare them for specific jobs and give them an understanding of the role of enterprises and workers in industry. At the same time, the study is intended to encourage pupils to maintain and extend their knowledge through continuing education or further study. See also general objectives in [5.4.](#)

Legislation: Upper Secondary School Act

---

## 5.5. Types of Institutions

The main types of schools offering upper secondary education are as follows:

- Grammar schools, which offer four-year general academic branches of study which conclude with a matriculation examination. Pupils who complete the course satisfactorily are entitled to enter higher education institutions in Iceland.
- Comprehensive schools, which offer an academic course comparable to that of the grammar schools, concluding with a matriculation examination. These schools also offer theoretical and practical courses, as in the industrial vocational schools (see below) and, in addition, some other courses providing vocational education. A few of the comprehensive schools also offer programmes to educate master craftsmen.
- Industrial vocational schools, which offer theoretical and practical branches of study in the certified and some non-certified trades. These schools also offer programmes to educate master craftsmen.
- Specialised vocational schools which offer specialised branches of study as preparation for specialised employment.

Upper secondary schools vary in size; the largest schools have around 1,500 pupils in day schools and the smallest less than 50. For the relative size of the various branches of study, see [5.21.3](#).

Bibliography: The Educational System in Iceland

---

## 5.6. Geographical Accessibility

Outside the capital area there are now 17 upper secondary schools, many of them relatively small, out of a total of around 38 schools at this level. It is however not uncommon that pupils who live out in the country attend schools in the capital area. Most of the upper secondary schools outside the capital area have boarding facilities and school transport.

---

## 5.7. Admission Requirements and Choice of School

All pupils who have completed compulsory education have the legal right to upper secondary education, regardless of their results in the 10th and last grade of compulsory school. However, the legislation of 1996 concerning upper secondary school allows for varied admission requirements to different branches of study at the upper secondary level, according to what academic demands are required for the branch of study in question. A regulation on the enrolment of pupils in upper secondary schools defines the requirements for each branch of study. The admission requirements relate mostly to the results in different subjects of the nationally co-ordinated examinations in the 10th grade of compulsory education, as well as to the results in school examinations.

It is relatively easy for pupils to transfer from one branch of study to another.

Pupils can apply to any school they wish, regardless of their legal residence. Thus the pupil's and/or parents' choice of an upper secondary school is unrestricted. The admission of pupils to individual schools is the responsibility of the headmaster who is to state the reasons for exclusion if asked.

Legislation: Regulation on registration of pupils in upper secondary schools  
Legislation: Upper Secondary School Act

---

#### 5.8. Registration and/or Tuition Fees

Education at the upper secondary level is, as such, free, but pupils pay enrolment fees to the school. These fees shall not exceed ISK 8,500 (around 100 euros) per school year. Pupils also pay the cost of their textbooks. Pupils in vocational education pay part of the costs of materials which must not exceed ISK 25,000 (around 300 euros) per semester. Financial contributions to pupils' organisations are optional. The medical services that exist in schools are free of charge.

---

#### 5.9. Financial Support for Pupils

Pupils who have to leave their legal residence for the purpose of studying have the right to non-refundable grants to cover expenses in this respect. This right is defined in a law and a regulation on study grants issued by the Ministry of Education, Science and Culture. In addition, pupils in the certified trades and in some other vocational branches of study have the right to receive study loans from the Icelandic Government Study Loan Fund.

Exemptions are not made from the payment of enrolment fees.

Family allowances are related to the number of children and are paid until the age of 16. They are paid according to family income, i.e. there is a maximum amount that may be decreased or abolished if the family income exceeds a certain amount.

Tax reliefs to parents to pay the cost of educating their children do not exist.

Institutions: The Icelandic Government Student Loan Fund  
Institutions: The Ministry of Education, Science and Culture  
Legislation: Regulations on Study Grants

---

#### 5.10. Age Levels and Grouping of Pupils

Schools that have traditional classes or form base the structure of their education around the academic year, whereas schools using the unit-credit system base theirs on the semester. In schools based on classes or forms, the pupils in a given class tend to be of the same age. In a unit-credit system, it is the pupil's rate of progress in a given subject which determines the group he or she goes into, and it is common that pupils between the ages of sixteen and twenty and even older are together in a group.

In schools which operate according to a class or form system, it is possible for a teacher in a given subject to continue with the form for more than one year, although this varies from school to school and within subjects. In the unit-credit system, a group is only functional for one semester, therefore teachers only teach that particular group for one semester.

The number of pupils in a group varies greatly, especially in schools which function according to the unit-credit system. The official recommendation and norm for the number of



pupils in a class or a group is 25 in general academic education and 12 in practical and theoretical subjects in vocational education. For the general short branch of study, the norm is 15 pupils in core subjects. Some variants of these norms exist.

---

#### 5.10.1. Age Levels and Grouping of Pupils in General Academic Education

Most pupils enter an academic branch of study in the year they turn sixteen. A pupil who progresses through the system of education at the upper secondary level at a normal rate is therefore between sixteen and twenty years old.

---

#### 5.10.2. Age Levels and Grouping of Pupils in Vocational Education

Relatively few pupils enrol in vocational branches of study at the end of their compulsory schooling at the age of sixteen. There are no available statistics concerning the average age of pupils registered in vocational training programmes, but it is clear that the age is considerably higher than the average age of pupils registered in general academic branches of study. Many pupils first enrol in general academic branches of study at the upper secondary level, complete those studies or drop out, and then begin their studies in vocational branches of study.

Besides, a small part of the student population drops out temporarily at the end of compulsory education and goes out to work before resuming their studies in vocational branches of study at the upper secondary level.

---

#### 5.11. Specialisation of Studies

Branches of study are of differing lengths, from one to eight semesters, but most of them are four-year branches of study. General academic education at the upper secondary level is primarily organised as a four-year course leading to a matriculation examination. Vocational education is divided between the school and the workplace or takes place exclusively in the school. A general short branch of study is intended for pupils who need further preparation for academic or vocational studies or for those pupils who are undecided as to what to do after compulsory education. There is also a three-year fine arts branch of study.

---

##### 5.11.1. General Academic Branches of Study

The Upper Secondary School Act from 1996 with an amendment from 2006 stipulates that academic branches of study leading to matriculation should be four: natural sciences, social sciences, foreign languages and business and economics. In addition, an ICT branch of study leading to matriculation has been run on an experimental basis. There are possibilities for specialisation within each branch of study.

Traditional grammar schools and comprehensive schools are virtually the only schools that offer education leading to matriculation. Subjects to be studied are divided into three groups: core subjects, elected fields and free selection. See [5.13.1.](#)

Legislation: Upper Secondary School Act

---

### 5.11.2. Vocational Branches of Study

Vocational education takes place in comprehensive schools, industrial vocational schools and specialised vocational schools. The length of the courses they offer varies and is generally between one and eight semesters, but most courses are three- or four-year courses.

Pupils in vocational branches of study can choose between training for the certified trades or vocational training in other areas, for example in the field of agriculture, in the travel industry, the fisheries, the food production industry, health, or commerce. In some of these fields, vocational training has only partially been organised, and it has been left up to employers to train their personnel. This has been the case in various branches of the manufacturing and service industries.

The Upper Secondary School Act stipulates that pupils in branches of vocational training are to be given the opportunity of doing additional studies in preparation for study at the higher education level. Thus, those who have completed vocational programmes have the possibility of doing additional studies to complete the matriculation examination.

Courses for master craftsmen are organised into evening classes. They differ in length and comprise general academic subjects, management subjects, theoretical vocational subjects and practical vocational subjects.

Bibliography: Þróun starfsmenntunar á framhaldsskólastigi  
Legislation: Upper Secondary School Act

---

#### 5.11.2.1. Training for the Certified Trades

Training for the certified trades takes three to four years. It involves taking a vocational branch of study at an industrial vocational school or a comprehensive school and a study contract with a master craftsman or an industrial firm. The pupil has the choice of one of the following avenues:

- 1. An apprenticeship agreement with a master craftsman.
- 2. A one-year programme of basic academic and practical studies, at an industrial vocational school or a comprehensive school, followed by an apprenticeship agreement with a master craftsman.
- 3. First, a one-year programme of basic academic and practical studies, then a one- to two-year programme of specialised academic and practical studies at an industrial vocational school or a comprehensive school, followed by an apprenticeship agreement with a master craftsman.

Both industrial vocational schools and comprehensive schools offer education with programmes or models of the same length and structure according to a common curriculum. Common to all three avenues listed above is that the school is responsible for basic education and the theoretical part of the course, whereas practical training takes place in the workplace in accordance with the contract made with a master craftsman. If practical training is carried out in school, the apprenticeship is shortened accordingly. The contract made between the apprentice and the master craftsman stipulates that the latter accepts responsibility for the practical training of the apprentice. On completion of his/her school education and practical training, the apprentice takes the journeyman's examination, which provides her/him with

qualifications to pursue the trade concerned. See 5.15.2. During the training period, pupils receive payment from the employer according to wage agreements.

Pupils can choose from eight different vocational fields in this sector of upper secondary education. These fields are printing, construction and woodwork, tailoring, vehicle and transport, food-related industries, metalwork, electricity related trades and cosmetic trades. Each field is subdivided into specialised branches of study. In addition to the above-mentioned fields, there are some trades where only a few skilled workers remain, and there are some that do not fall under the fields listed above.

A pupil who has completed his journeyman's examination can become a master craftsman after a certain period of work experience and advanced studies. A master craftsman has the right to supervise work in his field.

---

#### 5.11.2.2. Other Forms of Vocational Training within the General School System

Vocational training within the general school system is organised in different ways depending on subjects and generally takes from one to eight semesters. In most cases training takes place both in the school and in the work place. Studies in certain branches of vocational training give pupils professional rights to do particular work, for instance to work as an auxiliary nurse.

What follows is a list of the main branches of study and the average time it takes to complete them:

- A branch of study in marine engineering, 1st.- 4th. degree, 1-10 semesters.
- A graduated branch of study for officers aboard fishing and merchant navy vessels, 1st- 3rd degree, 2-6 semesters.
- A branch of study for doctors' receptionists, 4 semesters following matriculation.
- A branch of study in commerce, 4 semesters.
- A branch of study for dental assistants, 5-6 semesters.
- A branch of study in technical drawing, 6 semesters.
- A branch of study in computer studies, 6 semesters.
- A branch of study in subjects relating to the travel industry, 4-6 semesters.
- A branch of study for food technicians, 6 semesters.
- A branch of study for pharmaceutical assistants, 8 semesters.
- A branch of study for masseurs/masseuses, 8 semesters.
- A branch of study for auxiliary nurses, 6-7 semesters.
- A branch of study in social service, 4 semesters.
- A branch of study in horse breeding, 1st - 3rd degree, 2-6 semesters.
- A branch of study in market gardening, 6 semesters.
- A branch of study in greenhouse cultivation, 6 semesters.

---

#### 5.11.3. Short General Branches of Study

The Upper Secondary School Act provides for a general short branch of study (1-2 years of studies depending on individual pupils) for pupils who after compulsory school need further preparation for academic or vocational studies or for those pupils who are undecided as to

what to do after compulsory education. The objective of the general branch of study is to impart a solid preparation for the core subjects and at the same time to give the pupils the opportunity to take on varied topics in both academic and practical fields.

Legislation: Upper Secondary School Act

---

#### 5.11.4. Fine Arts Branches of Study

The Upper Secondary School Act provides for fine arts branches of study. Study of the arts is defined as a three-year branch of study which must provide preparation for further study in the arts. Emphasis is placed on design, visual arts and music.

Legislation: Upper Secondary School Act

---

#### 5.12. Organisation of School Time

The minimum annual operating time for upper secondary schools, nine months, is defined in the law concerning this level of education with more detailed information stated in a ministry regulation. See [5.12.1.](#) and [5.12.2.](#)

Legislation: Compulsory School Act

Legislation: Regulation on organisations of the school year in upper secondary schools

---

##### 5.12.1. Organisation of the School Year

The length of the school year for pupils in upper secondary schools is nine months and shall be organised within the period from 22nd August to 31st May. The academic year is divided into two semesters. According to the Upper Secondary School Act the minimum number of teaching days per school year is 145. The total number of teaching and examination days per year, 175 days, is prescribed in a ministry regulation. Examinations take place in December and May after teaching periods and may last up to 2-3 weeks each time. In addition, teachers have, according to a wage contract, four working days organised by individual schools before the beginning and/or after the end of the 9-month school year. Individual schools are open longer for administrative reasons, usually for a total of 10-10.5 months a year.

The above-mentioned regulation on schools' annual operating time stipulates pupils' leaves during the school year: Christmas holiday from December 21st to January 3rd, inclusive, and an Easter holiday from Palm Sunday and up to and including the first Tuesday after Easter. Other pupils' leaves are only on public holidays. However, individual schools may in addition organise short leaves (1-4 days) once or twice per school year.

Legislation: Regulation on organisations of the school year in upper secondary schools

Legislation: Upper Secondary School Act

---

##### 5.12.2. Weekly and Daily Timetable

All upper secondary schools operate a 5-day week system, i.e. from Monday to Friday.

The average number of lessons for pupils in general academic programmes is 35 per week. This may however vary from one year to another, these pupils normally being expected to

attend 30 - 36 lessons a week. The number of lessons for pupils in vocational education varies between branches of study and between semesters.

Each lesson in upper secondary schools lasts 40 minutes, but some schools plan their teaching around longer units.

Individual schools at the upper secondary level organise their timetables. They generally start between 8.00 a.m. and 8.15 a.m. Most schools will have finished their school day between 3.00 and 4.00 p.m.

LENGTH OF SCHOOL DAY, EACH DAY OF THE WEEK General academic education

An example

	Out of hours provision (before lessons)	Lessons (starting and finishing times in the morning)	Lunch break	Lessons (starting and finishing times in the afternoon)	Out-of-hours provision (after lessons)
Monday		8:10	40 min	14:30	
Tuesday		8:10	40 min	14:30	
Wednesday		8:10	40 min	14:30	
Thursday		8:10	40 min	13:45	
Friday		8:10	40 min	14:30	
Saturday		No lessons	-	-	

LENGTH OF SCHOOL DAY, EACH DAY OF THE WEEK Vocational education

An example

	Lessons (starting and finishing times in the morning)	Lunch break	Lessons (starting and finishing times in the afternoon)	Out-of-hours provision (after lessons)
Monday	9:50	45	16:25	
Tuesday	9:50	45	17:50	
Wednesday	8:10	45	14:40	
Thursday	8:10	45	14:40	
Friday	8:10	45	13:15	
Saturday	No lessons	-	-	

### 5.13. Curriculum, Subjects, Number of Hours

The Upper Secondary School Act contains fairly specific provisions concerning the National Curriculum Guidelines and school working guides. The National Curriculum Guidelines, issued by the Ministry of Education, Science and Culture in 1999, are, among other things, to define the objectives of individual subjects and branches of study. They are also supposed to describe the overall structure and the contents of individual subjects and branches.

Furthermore, the National Curriculum is to contain guidelines for school working guides and assessment of the work that goes on in the schools, see 9.4. The law stipulates that individual schools are to write their own school working guides which, among other things, are to specify what areas individual schools have chosen to emphasise, define the education they offer, teaching methods and administration. The National Curriculum Guidelines came into force 1 June 1999.

The intention underlying the National Curriculum Guidelines is to ensure that each individual pupil may be enrolled in a course of study suitable for him or her within the framework of the

upper secondary schools and that the speed at which the pupil completes his/her education is partly based on ability.

Most upper secondary schools operate according to a unit-credit system where the educational content of each subject is divided into a number of defined course units which last for one semester. Each course unit represents a fixed number of hours of instruction per week during one semester. At the end of every semester, the pupil decides on courses for the following semester according to certain rules and in accordance with his or her own study plans and results. Thus, each pupil is given his or her own personal timetable. Pupils in a given course form a group for that course unit only, and classes or forms in the traditional sense of the word do not exist. Those schools that have traditional classes or forms operate around the form or the class as a unit and organise their education by discipline.

Institutions: The Ministry of Education, Science and Culture

Legislation: National Curriculum Guidelines for Upper Secondary Education

Legislation: Upper Secondary School Act

---

### 5.13.1. General Academic Education

Within any given academic branch of study, three groups of courses are offered:

- core subjects, which all pupils are required to take,
- elected fields according to the aims of the branch of study in question and
- free selection.

Schools have a certain flexibility concerning the offer of courses for the elected fields and the free selection. For the matriculation examination, 140 credits are required. One credit is generally the equivalent of two lessons of instruction per week for one semester. Core subjects constitute 98 credits, elected fields 30 credits and free selection 12 credits. Studies leading to matriculation are organised as an eight semester course.

The National Curriculum Guidelines from 1999 allow for increased specialisation in academic studies leading to matriculation as compared to what has been offered. This complies with the clause in the law that requires that the content and structure of a course of study shall be in conformity with the final objectives of that branch of study. Core subjects constitute the required course in each academic branch of study and amount to 70% of the total course load.

Compulsory core subjects for all academic branches of study are Icelandic, English, Danish, a third foreign language (usually French, German or Spanish), mathematics, history, social sciences, natural sciences and sports. However, the number of courses in these subjects for each branch of study differs as the core subjects include special subjects within that branch together with subjects that provide and support general education. There are first-year comprehensive and cross-disciplinary units in the natural and social sciences for all branches of study. A course in life skills, is added to the requirements for all branches, with the goal of preparing pupils for life in a democratic society by deepening their understanding of that society, including the historical basis, working conditions, culture, family responsibilities, and the rights and responsibilities of the individual. A fourth foreign language is required in the foreign languages branch of study and a course in geography in the social sciences branch.

Elected fields constitute 21% of the total course load and cover specialisation in an area of the

branch of study, such as mathematics, physics and chemistry for the natural sciences branch of study, philosophy and psychology for the social sciences branch and Latin as well as any of the modern languages mentioned above for the foreign languages branch. Vocational training or recognized training in the arts may be assessed as counting as part of the specialised courses within general academic studies, provided certain conditions are met.

Free selection constitutes about 9% of the total course load and may include any of the subject courses on offer at the school including further deepening in a subject already studied, such as a foreign language.

ICT is used as a tool for teaching other subjects in the curriculum.

The teaching of modern languages is emphasised. For those pupils who intend to matriculate, English and Danish are compulsory subjects. In courses leading to matriculation, a third modern language is also compulsory, most commonly German or French. Pupils in the language branch study both these languages or another fourth language as a minimum. In some schools Spanish is also offered as a third compulsory language or as a fourth foreign language for the pupils in the language branch of study. Pupils, particularly pupils at schools that operate according to a unit-credit system, also have the opportunity of taking further modern languages as free selection or taking more advanced courses in the modern languages that they have been studying.

The short general branch of study, intended for pupils who are undecided as to what to do after compulsory education or need further preparation for academic or vocational studies, is to be defined in individual school working guides.

Legislation: National Curriculum Guidelines for Upper Secondary Education

---

#### 5.13.2. Vocational Education

In vocational education at the upper secondary level, study shall be both theoretical and practical and shall form as cohesive a whole as possible in order to enable pupils to better understand the connection between its theoretical and practical aspects. The content and educational objectives of individual branches of study are defined in the National Curriculum Guidelines. See 5.13. The subjects included in vocational branches of study can be divided as follows: general academic subjects, theoretical vocational subjects and practical vocational subjects. Emphasis shall be placed on having the content of study reflect the current needs of the employment sector concerning the professional qualifications of workers.

All vocational trainees must take a certain number of credits in general academic subjects; i.e. Icelandic, modern languages, social studies and mathematics. Physical education is also compulsory. One credit is generally the equivalent of two lessons of instruction per week for one semester. The number of theoretical vocational subjects and practical vocational subjects varies in different branches, as does the extent of practical training.

In the Upper Secondary School Act, there is a provision stipulating that pupils in branches of vocational training are to be given the possibility of doing additional studies in preparation for study at the higher education level. Thus, pupils in vocational programmes have the possibility of doing additional studies to complete the matriculation examination.

#### 5.14. Teaching Methods and Materials

Neither the curriculum guidelines nor laws and regulations contain instruction regarding teaching methods. Teachers are free to choose those methods that suit their aims and circumstances at any given time. Teachers are also free to choose their textbooks and other educational materials.

Generally speaking, the facilities at upper secondary schools are good and with regard to teaching aids and equipment they are fairly well supplied. In certain subjects, however, there is a shortage of suitable textbooks and other materials which causes considerable problems. This is partly due to the small size of the Icelandic market. Pupils buy their textbooks on the free market. Teachers commonly produce, translate and adapt teaching materials. Teachers can apply to the Ministry of Education, Science and Culture for grants for such work.

The use of new information and communication technologies in schools has grown rapidly in recent years and the use of overhead projectors, VCRs and stereo equipment is common. All upper secondary schools are connected to the Internet, which allows teachers to communicate, exchange information, assignments, educational materials and ideas and to be linked to data banks worldwide.

The Ministry of Education Science and Culture's Project Plan for e-Learning 2005-2008, Risk with Responsibility, entails like its former project plan 2001-2003 that information technology be utilised for the benefit of education. Measures have been taken to ensure that the opportunities inherent in new technology are taken advantage of. These measures have in particular included educational programmes for teachers in the use of ICT, development of educational software and the build-up of a technological infrastructure. Efforts have been made to develop distributed learning which involves cooperation of schools in providing education so that students can choose from different services offered by educational institutions. This development will demand new practices and the breaking down of traditional boundaries.

All upper secondary schools have libraries that serve both pupils and teachers. These libraries vary, but many of them can be said to be reasonably well equipped with respect to books and premises and many schools have made the libraries into aid centres for study and instruction.

Official recommendations regarding homework do not exist.

Institutions: The Ministry of Education, Science and Culture

---

##### 5.14.1. Teaching Methods in General Education

As a rule, teachers in general upper secondary education only teach one subject, yet in some cases, especially in small schools, teachers teach two or even more subjects. Teaching methods are mainly based around lectures, individual tutoring, discussions between the teacher and pupils and individual assignments that the pupils are required to do. Group work projects are sometimes assigned, but projects and teaching based on the integration of subjects are not very common.



---

#### 5.14.2. Teaching Methods in Vocational Education

On the practical side of pupils' training, an attempt is made to simulate conditions in the workplace. The trainees are usually given a demonstration with verbal explanations when there is a new problem to solve. They then practice either individually or in groups under the guidance of a teacher. In some cases the trainees follow instructions that the teacher has given them to take them through a particular process. Theoretical classes often precede the vocational practice.

Teaching methods in academic subjects in vocational education are based on lectures, individual tutoring, discussions between the teacher and pupils and individual assignments that the pupils are required to do.

Facilities at vocational schools vary considerably with regard to teaching aids and equipment. Efforts are increasingly being made to study how schools and businesses can share the same equipment. In certain subjects there is a shortage of suitable textbooks and other materials, which causes problems. This is partly due to the small size of the Icelandic market.

A few nucleus schools for individual trades or groups of trades have been appointed. In consultation with occupational councils, nucleus schools are to lead the development of educational materials, structures and methods of teaching in vocational education. Nucleus schools are to assist other schools and enterprises in improving teaching and training in their respective areas.

---

#### 5.15. Pupil Assessment

Icelandic upper secondary schools generally have examinations at the end of every semester, regardless of the type of school. These examinations are in most cases written. Pupils are obliged to take these if they wish to continue and complete their education. The examination period, including the time that it takes to mark the exams, is around three weeks each semester. Some grammar schools that have traditional classes or forms have more extensive final examinations at the end of the fourth school year (matriculation examination) than the ones described above. There are no formal comprehensive final examinations in schools that operate according to a unit-credit system.

Marks are given in whole numbers on a scale from one to ten in all schools, ten being the highest.

On receiving their marks, all pupils have the right to inspect their examinations in the presence of a teacher.

Assignments completed during the semester often count towards the final mark, but their weighting varies depending on circumstances. Certain courses have no final examination at the end of the semester and the grade is based on continuous assessment and on the assignments set. The continuous assessment is done by the teacher and is, for example, based on tests, pupil participation during lessons, and assignments. In schools with traditional classes or forms, the teacher usually gives a grade based on work the pupil has done during

the year, which counts as part of the final mark. This is also the case in some schools that operate on the unit-credit system.

---

#### 5.15.1. General Academic Branches of Study

In the general academic branches of study examinations are the responsibility of each individual school. They are written by the teacher or teachers in question and also marked by them. The examinations are supervised by the head of the department in question. There are no external examiners except in the event of a dispute between a teacher and a pupil. There are no nationally co-ordinated examinations, as far as final examinations are concerned or otherwise.

---

#### 5.15.2. Vocational Branches of Study

Pupil evaluation is carried out both by continuous assessment and final assessment at the end of each semester. The continuous assessment is decided by the teacher and is, for example, based on tests, homework and pupil participation during lessons. In the theoretical aspect of a course there are usually written examinations, but in practical courses assessment is based either on assignments that have been carried out during the semester or written and practical examinations.

For the certified trades there are journeyman's examinations. They are the responsibility of the trade in question. A committee with members from industry and the trade unions (employers and employees) define the requirements and oversee the journeyman's examination. This nationally co-ordinated examination consists of a practical and a theoretical part. A journeyman's examination can last from one to ten days, depending on the trade.

Apart from the journeyman's examination there are no nationally co-ordinated examinations in vocational training. Examinations are the responsibility of each individual school and are supervised by the head of the department in question. Examinations are written by an individual subject teacher or teachers and marked by them. External examiners are not called in except in the event of a dispute.

According to the law, occupational councils make proposals concerning assessment, including the journeyman's examination.

Bibliography: *Próun starfsmenntunar á framhaldsskólastigi*

Legislation: Upper Secondary School Act

---

#### 5.16. Progression of Pupils

In schools that operate according to the unit-credit system the pupils are given a certain number of credits for each course unit they complete. The pupil's progress is thus measured in credits. The passing grade for each course unit is five (on a 1-10 scale). Pupils in the above-mentioned schools who fail to receive a passing grade in any given course unit are not allowed to retake an examination at the end of the semester and have to repeat the course unit during the next semester in order to continue in that particular subject. Pupils are allowed three attempts to complete a given course unit. No average mark is calculated, but pupils must complete at least nine credits per semester. Studies leading to matriculation are organised as

an eight semester course but eleven semesters are allowed as a maximum length of time.

The unit-credit system which is the prevalent form of organisation of schools at the upper secondary level allows pupils to regulate the speed at which they complete their education, i.e. to accelerate their studies or take more time due to personal circumstances. It is not uncommon for pupils to complete a four-year branch of study in 3 to 3 1/2 years or spend 5 to 5 1/2 years doing so. One of the factors making this possible is the existence of courses in certain subjects which take a longer or shorter time to complete, and the possibility for pupils to decide for themselves to a certain extent the number of credits to be completed each semester. Pupils with high academic standards or those who are close to graduation may enrol in individual courses without attending lessons. These pupils take the examination at the end of the course unit and hand in those assignments that count towards a grade in the course in question. See 5.14.1. In schools that have traditional classes or forms a minimum grade of four (on a 1-10 scale) in every subject and a five average for all subjects is needed to be allowed to move up to the next year. Examinations can be retaken after the regular examinations at the end of the school year by those pupils who have failed to get a grade of four in individual subjects but whose grade average of all subjects is sufficient to pass. Those pupils whose grade average is under five or who do not reach a minimum grade of four in individual subjects after the retakes must repeat the year.

---

#### 5.17. Certification

At the end of each semester, pupils are given a transcript which shows their marks and present standing within the branch of study.

On completing a branch of study, pupils are issued with a certificate by the school which specifies which course units or subjects they have taken and the marks they have received. If the pupil graduates from a school that operates on a unit-credit system, the certificate also shows the number of credits completed in individual subjects and in the branch of study as a whole. These pupils are able to graduate at the end of both the autumn and spring semesters. The school-leaving certificate gives the pupil the right to enter other schools or confirms that the pupil has completed a certain amount of vocational training.

---

##### 5.17.1. Certification in General Academic Education

The matriculation certificate gives the pupil the right to enter schools at the higher education level.

---

##### 5.17.2. Certification in Vocational Education

Many forms of vocational training give the pupils legal certification for certain types of employment. This applies to studies in the certified trades and also, for example, to the course for auxiliary nurses and the course that qualifies sea-captains.

In the certified trades, the pupil's training ends with a journeyman's examination, see 5.15.2, which is a pre-requisite to working in a certified trade. Rights to practise a certain trade, that is where there is question of a right to practice, are issued by the ministry that handles matters relating to the trade in question.

Those who have completed the journeyman's examination can become master craftsmen after a certain period of work experience and advanced studies. Master craftsmen receive their qualification certification from the local chief of police or sheriff.

Bibliography: Þróun starfsmenntunar á framhaldsskólastigi

---

#### 5.18. Educational/Vocational Guidance, Education/Employment Links

Upper secondary schools offer educational counselling which, among other things, includes assistance in choosing a branch of study, assistance in organising studies and making a study plan, assistance with study-related problems and informing about career opportunities. Educational counselling also often involves assisting pupils with their personal problems.

All pupils at upper secondary schools have a particular teacher as their educational supervisor. The teacher assists them in making their study plans, monitors their progress and attendance and acts as an intermediary between the pupil and other teachers or the school authorities.

All upper secondary schools are to provide health care, but how this is carried out varies greatly. Most schools have school doctors who monitor the health of the pupils, but generally speaking organised health-care services cannot be said to be extensive.

There is a strong tradition in Iceland for pupils at the upper secondary level to be employed during their summer vacation. This has given pupils the opportunity of becoming familiar with a variety of jobs, such as in fish processing, in construction, and work in the travel industry. In recent years, pupils have also commonly had a part-time job in addition to their studies. Pupils have thus had a relatively close relationship with the employment market. This is probably one of the reasons why there has been relatively little effort on behalf of schools offering general academic education to systematically introduce pupils to the labour market or to send them into the workplace. In vocational education there are ties and co-operation between the schools and the labour market, as a part of the pupil's branch of study usually takes place in the workplace. The school and the workplace co-ordinate their efforts in many ways, for example through committees consisting of representatives from the trade unions, industry and the school. With regard to examinations, the labour market is involved in the journeyman's examination. See [5.15.2.](#)

---

#### 5.19. Private Education

Education in Iceland has traditionally been organised within the public sector. There were six grant-aided private upper secondary schools in the country in the school year 2005-2006. These schools operate in accordance with the same legislation as the public schools and are subject to the same supervision. The public funds they receive are determined in the State budget.

Legislation: State budget 2006

Legislation: Upper Secondary School Act

---

#### 5.20. Organisational Variations and Alternative Structures

In recent years the availability of distance learning courses through the Internet at the upper secondary level has been increasing. Some schools offer distance learning in a variety of academic subjects, thus offering pupils the opportunity of completing a matriculation examination through distance learning.

---

## 5.21. Statistics

Please refer to the subdivisions for details.

---

### 5.21.1. Upper Secondary Education Statistics

Upper secondary education statistics October 2005:

Number of pupils in day schools:	19,985
Number of pupils in evening classes	1,749
Number of pupils in distance learning courses	1,611
Number of upper secondary schools:	38
Number of private schools:	6
Average pupil-teacher ratio:	11
Number of qualified teachers (Nov. 2005):	1,468
Number of instructors (lacking full qualification) (Nov. 2005):	340

Source: Statistics Iceland



Bibliography: Landshagir 2006  
Institutions: Statistics Iceland

---

### 5.21.2. Percentage of Age Groups Enrolled 2005/2006

Percentage of age groups enrolled October 2005:

16 years	94%
17 years	84%
18 years	73%
19 years	69%

Source: Statistics Iceland



Bibliography: Landshagir 2006  
Institutions: Statistics Iceland

---

### 5.21.3. Percentage of Pupils in the Various Branches of Study in Day Schools

Percentage of pupils in the various branches of study in day schools October 2005:

General programmes	13%
Languages	7%
Fine and applied arts	5%
Pedagogical and physical programmes	2%
Social science programmes	20%
Commerce, economics	5%
Natural science programmes	23%
Crafts and technical trades	17%
Agriculture, food and service trades	5%
Health	3%

Average drop-out rate in upper secondary school from autumn 2004 to autumn 2005 was around 16%.

Source: Statistics Iceland



Bibliography: Landshagir 2006  
Institutions: Statistics Iceland

---

### 5.21.4. Graduation Rates

In the school year 2004-2005, 5,281 pupils graduated from upper secondary schools. The graduation rates among these are as follows:

General programmes	5%
Languages	5%
Fine and applied arts	3%
Pedagogical and physical programmes	2%
Social science programmes	16%
Commerce, economics	11%
Natural science programmes	19%
Crafts and technical trades	24%
Agriculture, food and service trades	11%
Health	4%

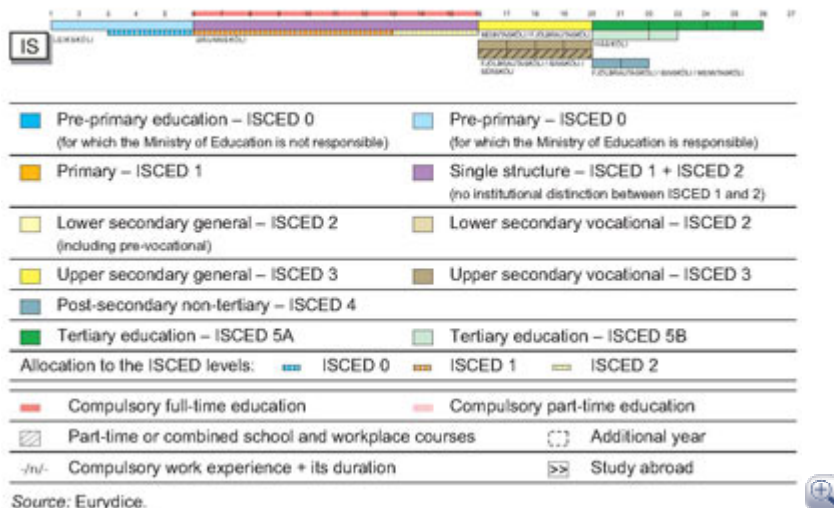
Source: Statistics Iceland



Bibliography: Landshagir 2006  
Institutions: Statistics Iceland

## 6. Tertiary Education

Organisation of the education system in Iceland, 2006/07



The higher education level in Iceland comprises eight higher education institutions. All the institutions are subject to the provisions of the Higher Education Act of 2006, except for two which are under the auspices of the Ministry of the Agriculture. In the Higher Education Act the Icelandic term háskóli is used to refer both to those higher education institutions which have a number of faculties, permanent research organisation and undergraduate and graduate programmes, and institutions that do not have research responsibilities. Consequently there is no formal distinction between non-university and university institutions in Icelandic; but by law, the Minister of Education, Science and Culture determines the title of each institution in foreign language, i.e. determines whether it is to be called university or university college.

Bibliography: The Educational System in Iceland

Institutions: The Ministry of Agriculture

Institutions: The Ministry of Education, Science and Culture

Legislation: University Act

### 6.1. Historical Overview

The foundation of the University of Iceland in 1911 marks the beginning of the modern Icelandic system of higher education. This first national university was established by merging three professional schools founded during the previous century – a school of theology, a school of medicine and a law school – and adding a new faculty of arts. Before that time Icelandic students had mainly travelled to Denmark for higher education. The University of Iceland has grown rapidly during the past century.

In the last three decades the higher education system has grown more diverse. New higher education institutions have been established and several post-secondary institutions have been upgraded to the higher education level. Thus four teacher-training institutions merged at the beginning of 1998 to form the Iceland University of Education under a 1997 law, and three art colleges merged into one in 1999 when the Academy of the Arts was founded. The Technical College of Iceland, established in 1964, gained university status under the Technical

University of Iceland Act in 2002, and in 2005 it merged into Reykjavík University.

In July 2006, a new Higher Education Act was put into practice. The new Act is a framework law, covering all kinds of Higher Education Institutions, see 6.3. Laws and regulations, covering each institution within the framework Act of 2006, are currently under revision. With the Higher Education Act of 2006, the regulations of the Bologna Process are fully implemented.

A new organisation for science and technology policymaking and implementation was established in Iceland in 2003. The Icelandic Research Council, which had functioned for 62 years, was superseded by the Science and Technology Policy Council, which is headed by the Prime Minister of Iceland and includes three other ministers, i.e. the Ministers of Education and Science, of Industry and Trade, and of Finance. Fourteen other representatives of the science and industrial community sit on the new Council. The secretariat of the previous Research Council, retains its well-known acronym (RANNÍS) and logo and continues its operational support for scientific research and innovation under the new system. It will for example handle the grants allocation of the Research Fund (created by merging the previous Science Fund and the Technology Fund) under the Ministry of Education, Science and Culture, as well as the new Technology Development Fund under the Ministry of Industry and Trade.

Bibliography: Frá einveldi til lýðveldis

Bibliography: Iceland 1986, handbook

Bibliography: Saga Háskóla Íslands

Institutions: Iceland Academy of the Arts

Institutions: Iceland University of Education

Institutions: Ministry of Industry and Trade

Institutions: Reykjavík University

Institutions: Science and Technology Policy Council

Institutions: Technical University of Iceland

Institutions: University of Iceland

Legislation: University Act

---

## 6.2. Ongoing Debates and Future Developments

The Ministry of Education, Science and Culture supervises the implementation of the Bologna process. The Ministry appointed in 2003 a National Bologna working group to coordinate and conduct the process and to provide input and make proposals for possible legislative reforms and regulations in order to ensure successful implementation of the process. The group consists of representatives from the ministry, from all the higher education institutions, and a student representative.

The new Higher Education Act of July 2006 fully implements the Bologna Process into Icelandic higher education. The means that the Icelandic HEI's and the countries system is fully compatible with those of other Bologna member states. The Higher Education Act, enacted in July 2006, establishes the general framework for the activities of higher education institutions under the auspices of the Ministry of Education, Science and Culture. The role of each public higher education institution is further defined in a separate act of parliament on its activities. The charters of private institutions define their engagement in research, internal organisation, etc. The charters and the special legislations concerning each individual



institution are under revision.

Another aspect of the new Higher Education Act is a new emphasis on quality work and quality assurance in Higher Education. All institutions that are currently operating are must apply for accreditation in each field of study before July 2008.

In recent years there has been a significant rise in the number of students in higher education, followed by an increase in the availability of higher education programmes of various lengths. In relation to this, there is ongoing debate about the finances of higher education institutions. Private institutions receive state support and can also charge tuition fees. Public institutions are only authorised to charge registration fees.. This problem has though been partly resolved by a great increase of government funding towards the HEI's in late 2006.

Institutions: The Ministry of Education, Science and Culture

Legislation: Regulation on accreditation of Higher Education Institutions

Legislation: University Act

---

### 6.3. Specific Legislative Framework

The Higher Education Act, enacted in July 2006, establishes the general framework for the activities of higher education institutions under the auspices of the Ministry of Education, Science and Culture. The role of each public higher education institution is further defined in a separate act of parliament on its activities. The charters of private institutions define their engagement in research, internal organisation, etc.

At present a special legislation applies to each higher education institution. These legislations are under revision, see [6.2.](#)

Two higher education institutions are under the auspices of the Ministry of Agriculture, Hólar University College and the Agricultural University of Iceland. The Agricultural Education Act, enacted in 1999, establishes the framework for educational institutions at the upper secondary and higher education level in the field of agriculture. At present the following law applies to the higher education institutions under the auspices of the Ministry of Agriculture: The Agricultural Education Act (1999).

Legislation on the Science and Technology Policy Council was enacted in 2003 with the purpose of strengthening science, research education and technical development in the country. A council appointed by the prime minister is to make a policy declaration for science and technology for a three-year period.

Institutions: The Ministry of Agriculture

Institutions: The Ministry of Education, Science and Culture

Legislation: Agricultural Education Act

Legislation: Law on Iceland University of Education

Legislation: Law on the Science and Technology Policy Council

Legislation: Law on the University of Akureyri

Legislation: Law on the University of Iceland.

Legislation: University Act

---

## 6.4. General Objectives

Under the Higher Education Act the general objectives of higher education institutions are to serve as scientific research and educational institutions, to provide students with education preparing them for working independently in science, innovation and the arts and to fill the various employment positions in society that require higher education. Higher education institutions are also to educate the public and to serve society through their knowledge. More specific objectives are outlined in legislation on individual higher education institutions.

---

## 6.5. Types of Institutions

At present there are eight higher education institutions in Iceland. Higher education institutions include both traditional universities and institutions which do not carry out research. Five higher education institutions are operated by the state, while private parties with state support operate three institutions. Institutions of higher education vary in the extent to which they engage in research and the number of programmes of study offered. The HEIs can also be categorised into five groups according to their specialisation: two agricultural institutions, one academy of arts, one institution of education, one business school, and three institutions offering a wide ranges of studies. Other differences include the number of enrolled students, the mix of programmes offered, and the level of education and research activity.

Three institutions of eight at the higher education level operate outside the capital and its vicinity. Apart from these institutions, all other institutions at this level are located in Reykjavík. Students who come other regions may have access to student housing, but many choose to find their own accommodation through the private market.

## Bibliography: The Educational System in Iceland

---

## 6.6. Admission Requirements

As a main rule, students enrolling in higher education institution must have completed matriculation examination or equivalent study. Higher education institutions can accept students who possess equivalent level of maturity and knowledge as assessed by the respective higher education institution. It must be ensured that higher education institutions' admission requirements and study standards correspond to those demanded in certified higher education institutions within similar fields in other countries. The Higher Education Act allows higher education institutions to set specific admission requirements for students enrolling in study at higher education level, such as requiring students, who meet with the aforementioned demands, to pass an entrance examination or assessment.

Students enrolling in studies at second cycle (Master's studies) shall have completed a Bachelor's degree or equivalent three year study at higher education level. Students are expected to enrol in a study programme that is based on learning outcomes which they have acquired during studies at first cycle.

Students that enrol in doctorate studies are normally required to have completed Master's degree or Candidatus degree. Higher education institutions that intend to apply for permission to offer studies leading to Doctorate degree shall set specific rules for their doctorate studies,

including stipulations on students' admission. Doctorate studies in higher education institutions shall be organised according to regulations for doctorate studies that cover the demands and conditions that a higher education institution must fulfil in order to be granted permission to establish studies at doctorate level, according to paragraph 4, article 7 of the Higher Education Act no. 63/2006.

Admission of mature students to higher education institutions on the basis of professional qualifications and work experience without further tests is in the hands of each higher education institution.

The University of Iceland has no general restrictions on admission for those who have passed the matriculation examination. However, in the Faculty of Medicine there is a selection procedure for students of medicine and physiotherapy at the point of entry. Competitive examinations at the end of the first semester are held in the Faculties of Nursing and of Odontology. The number of students allowed to continue after a competitive examination is limited (numerus clausus). For admission to the Faculty of Pharmacy or of Science, students are required to have matriculated from a mathematics, physics, or natural sciences programme of an upper secondary school.

Higher education institutions other than the University of Iceland and the University of Akureyri have exercised selection in their admission of students and often give priority to students with particular work experience. The Academy of the Arts, Department of Drama, holds an entrance examination.

To enter a postgraduate programme a first university degree (B.A., B.S. or B.Ed. degree) in the area of study is required. In some master's programmes the admission requirement is a B.A./B.Sc. degree with a 7.25 grade average on a scale of 1 to 10 (the highest grade is 10). Admission is based on selection by the respective faculties. The same goes for the PhD programmes offered. In research-oriented programmes students must reach an agreement with a supervisor on a research project for their master's thesis, and then file a joint application with that supervisor for a specific research project. The project must then be accepted by a review committee for the student to be allowed to enter the programme.

The Icelandic NARIC/ENIC office is situated at the Office for Academic Affairs, at the University of Iceland. Its role is to answer questions regarding the recognition of foreign credentials or qualifications. Certified copies of official transcripts or diplomas have to be enclosed with enquiries regarding recognition. The NARIC/ENIC office offers a guiding assessment, but the final decision on academic recognition is taken by each individual university, faculty or institution.

Institutions: University of Iceland

Institutions: The University of Akureyri

Institutions: Iceland Academy of the Arts

Institutions: The Icelandic NARIC/ENIC Office

Legislation: University Act

---

## 6.7. Registration and/or Tuition Fees

Under the Higher Education Act of 2006, access to public educational institutions is free of charge apart from registration fees. The payments are made directly to the higher education

institution in question.

Registration fees for public institutions are approx. ISK46,000 for each academic year, and the fee is the same for all fields of study. Included in the registration fee is a financial contribution for the institution's student union. In most fields of study, students can make voluntary financial contributions to student organisations in their fields of study in addition to the payment of fees.

Legislation: University Act

---

## 6.8. Financial Support for Students

The government has operated the Student Loan Fund for several decades, with the aim of providing equal access for students with different socio-economic backgrounds and, based on the same principle, provides free tuition at public institutions.

The Fund offers student loans that are sufficient to cover costs incurred by the studies (tuition fees, books and materials, travelling expenses, etc.) as well as the cost of living.

The Fund provides assistance for the period of study or generally for two semesters of equal length for full-time studies (60 ECTS). For the academic year 2005-2006 basic living costs are estimated at €1,031 per month. The amount takes into consideration the size of the student's family. For example, for a student cohabiting with a partner and with one child costs are calculated as 125% of the basic living costs, or €1,289 per month. All income forming the student's tax base will be subtracted by 14% of the amount of assistance during the study period. The rates of support for students living with low-income parents may be raised to 100% if the income of both parents is under the prescribed threshold.

In order to receive loans, students are obliged to complete at least 75% of full-time studies according to the programme of the educational institution, approved by the board of the Fund. Assessment of academic progress takes place each semester and if a student does not meet the required standards the loans will be reduced proportionally. For example, the loan to a student who completes 83% of full-time studies will be reduced by 17%.

Repayment of loans begins two years after the completion of studies. The interest rate on loans made by the Fund is 1% but can vary, although it is at no time higher than 3% per annum on the principal of the debt. Student loans are index-linked, based on changes in the consumer price index of the Central Bank of Iceland. The annual repayment of loans comprises two elements: one fixed annual sum, €85 (ISK 70,837) in 2005, and one supplementary payment of 3.75% of the person's income, calculated on the previous year's tax base for municipal income tax purposes.

In accordance with the EEA Agreement, individuals from the European Union member states and the EEA-EFTA countries (Norway and Liechtenstein) who are residents in Iceland in connection with their work, their families, and others who are or have been supported by them, are entitled to student loans from the Fund. One condition for receiving loans from the Fund is that the applicant has been domiciled in Iceland for two continuous years, or has been domiciled in Iceland for three of the ten years preceding the beginning of the period for which the student loan is applied.

Students from the Nordic countries, who are permanent residents in Iceland and are registered at an Icelandic institution of higher education, are also eligible for student loans if they are not supported financially by their own country.

The Icelandic Student Loan Fund may grant loans to other foreign students if reciprocal agreements have been concluded between their countries of origin and Iceland.

The Ministry of Education, Science and Culture annually offers a limited number of scholarships to foreign students to pursue studies in Icelandic language and literature at the University of Iceland.

Grants are available for postgraduate, research-oriented studies at higher education institutions in Iceland. The grants are awarded on the basis of a research proposal submitted jointly by a student and a faculty member.

Institutions: The Ministry of Education, Science and Culture

Institutions: The Icelandic Government Student Loan Fund

Institutions: University of Iceland

---

## 6.9. Organisation of the Academic Year

In most institutions of higher education, the academic year is formally defined as lasting from August or September to the same time the following year. The teaching year usually lasts from September to May and is divided into two semesters, autumn and spring. The autumn semester starts at the beginning of September and lasts until approximately December 20. The spring semester lasts from the beginning of January until the end of May. Some institutions have summer sessions that last from May to August.

The holiday periods in higher education institutions are usually the following:

- Christmas holiday approx. two weeks
- Easter holiday approx. one week
- Summer holiday approx. three months for students.

In addition to this there is no teaching activity in most higher education institutions on December 1 and other official holidays.

Each institution at the higher education level organises its own timetable. The timetable can vary depending on the structure of the course. In Iceland, the Higher Education Institutions are bound by law to use the ECTS system, in accordance with the Bologna process. Studies are organised in course units each requiring a specified number of credit units, 60 credit units constituting one academic year of full-time studies, 30 credit units constituting one semester of full-time studies.

---

## 6.10. Branches of Study, Specialisation

Below is an overview of the main branches of study at each higher education institution:

Branches of study	University of Iceland	Iceland University of Education	University of Akureyri	Reykjavik University	Bifröst School of Business	Iceland Academy of the Arts	Hvanneyri University of Agriculture	Hólar University College
Languages, humanities	X	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Fine and applied arts	-	-	-	-	-	X	-	-
Teacher-training, education science	X	X	X	X	-	X	-	-
Social sciences, jurisprudence	X	-	X	X	X	-	-	-
Economics, business administration	X	-	X	X	X	-	-	-
Natural sciences, mathematics	X	-	-	-	-	-	- X	-
Engineering	X	-	-	X	-	-	-	-
Agriculture, food sciences	X	-	-	-	-	-	X	X
Medicine, nursing, etc.	X	-	X (nursing)	-	-	-	-	-

All higher education institutions in Iceland, accredited by the Ministry of Education, Science and Culture according to the Higher Education Act no. 63/2006, shall follow The National Qualification Framework for Iceland. The NQF for higher education and degrees are a description of the structure for studies and degrees, where emphasis is placed on a description of a student's knowledge and competence at the end of a course of study. \*The NQF has a clear guidelines for the structure of courses of studies and for the degree the universities will award. According to the framework, there are three subsequent cycles of higher education: Bachelors degree, Masters and Candidatus degree; and Doctorate degree. As each cycle can cover different qualification objectives, the cycles are divided into levels.

As a general rule, studies at the higher education level in Iceland are divided into three degree programmes:

- a bachelor's degree, which normally takes three to four years to complete (180 – 240 ECTS credits),
- a 60- to 120-credit master's degree (MA, MSc, MBA, MEd, MPAed, etc.) with a duration of one to two years,
- a doctoral degree, with a duration of three years.

Traces of the old professional degree system (Candidatus degrees of 4-6 years) remain. Below is an overview of the main stages of study in each higher education institution:

Stages of study	University of Iceland	Iceland University of Education	University of Akureyri	Reykjavik University	Bifröst School of Business	Iceland Academy of the Arts	Hvanneyri University of Agriculture	Hólar University College
Diploma	X	X	-	X	X	X	-	X
Bachelor	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Candidatus	X	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Postgraduate diplomas	X	X	-	-	-	-	-	-
Master's	X	X	X	X	X	-	X	-
Ph.D	X	X	-	-	-	-	-	-

## Diploma courses

In a number of higher education institutions a diploma or certificate is awarded after one or two years' study in various subjects, such as pedagogy, business and languages. The diploma courses are short, practically-oriented and theory-based. It is not common for these courses to be combined with placement (in industry).

## Bachelor's degrees

The Bachelor's degree is a three to four year study programme providing 180-240 credits at cycle 1, level 2. Full workload in one year should correspond to 60 credits. Admission requirements are matriculation examination or equivalent education. Higher education institutions can set specific demands as to the combination and focus of the matriculation examination. Bachelor's degree provides access to further studies at level 3 and 4, or Master's and Candidatus study programmes. Still, higher education institutions and departments can demand certain minimum grades for access to level 3 and 4 studies.

On completion of a Bachelor's degree, the following criteria shall be fulfilled, in addition to the criteria fulfilled at the former level:

### Knowledge and understanding

- Students possess a general understanding of theories, criteria, concepts and methods within a specific subject.
- Students can apply their knowledge and understanding to their theoretical practice, or within their profession, and have competences to sustain theoretical and practical solutions in the relevant subject.

### Type of knowledge

- Students have adopted extensive knowledge and understanding in one or more specialised areas within their subject. The scope of the knowledge shall cover the most recent findings in the subject.

### Practical skills

- Students can analyse practical, complex subjects in a professional context and are able to justify decision on a professional basis.
- Students can work in an autonomous and organised manner on subjects.
- Students can set goals for their work, devise a work schedule and follow it through.
- Students are capable of acquiring further knowledge and maintain their knowledge in their field of study.

### Theoretical skills

- Students have the competences to formulate and describe complex theoretical subjects and research outcomes.
- Students can apply scientific and critical methods in analysing their subject.

- Students have acquired understanding and insight into main theories and concepts within the subject and can evaluate the methods used in an autonomous manner.

#### Communication skills and information literacy

- Students can participate actively in cooperation within their field of study, share their competences, ideas and knowledge, and can lead work groups.
- Students are capable of interpreting and presenting outcomes in the relevant subject.
- Students can apply relevant technology and software, which are useful for their study and profession.
- Students have improved their moral and social competences for active participation in a democratic society.

#### Learning skills

- Students have developed the necessary learning skills and autonomy that enables them to continue to further studies.
- Students have adopted broad-mindedness and originality of thought which will be useful for study and/or occupation.

#### The candidatus degree

Candidatus degree entails a five or six year studies providing 300-360 credits at cycle 1 and 2, levels 1-3. Full workload in one year should correspond to 60 credits. Admission requirements are matriculation examination or equivalent study. Higher education institutions can set specific demands as to the combination and focus of the matriculation examination. Candidatus degree provides access to further study at cycle 3 in the relevant field of study.

#### Postgraduate diplomas

Postgraduate diplomas in upper-secondary teacher education, social work, student counselling, journalism and mass communication are offered after one year of postgraduate study in the field in question (after a bachelor's degree). The diplomas in social work and upper-secondary teacher education are professional qualifications.

#### Master's degrees

Degrees belonging to this definition can vary in duration and content. Therefore, the definitions in the list below apply only when referring to full two-year study at master's level. Study cycle leading to diploma or other final examination belongs only partly to this definition, so the list below is structured accordingly. The criteria for each category are put forth according to depth of content. Various degrees should assumingly comply with at least one item from each category according to duration and extent of the study programme.

The graduate studies at master level entail half year to two year study programme, providing 30-120 credits at cycle 2, level 3. Full workload in one year should correspond to 60 credits. Admission requirements are final examination from cycle 1, level 2, or equivalent. First class grade is usually required. Higher education institutions and departments can decide on further admission requirements for studies at level 3.



Vocational degree at master's level normally does not provide access to further studies at cycle 3.

Degrees that come under this definition provide various access points to further study at cycle 2 depending on the content of the study. Higher education institutions or departments can decide on specific admission requirements based on minimum grade before granting access to studies at levels 3 and 4.

On completion of graduate study at master level in addition to first cycle studies, the following criteria shall be fulfilled, in addition to the criteria fulfilled at former level(s):

#### Knowledge and understanding

- Students have acquired a general understanding of theories, ideology, concepts and methods within a specific field of study. In addition to the knowledge criteria for first cycle, students at second cycle shall have deepened or widened the knowledge obtained at former cycles.
- Students can use their knowledge and understanding in a professional manner and have the ability to reason and substantiate solutions to problems within the relevant subject/profession.
- Students have acquired systematic understanding of the most recent findings available within specific field of study and/or profession. In addition to the criteria for first cycle, students at second cycle shall have deepened or widened the knowledge obtained at former levels.

#### Type of knowledge

- Students have acquired knowledge by attending courses and/or carrying out research in an area of expertise.
- Students have general knowledge and comprehension about theoretical subjects and problems being dealt with at the time within the relevant field of study/profession.
- Students possess significant understanding of problems and subjects, based on the most recent information and research in the relevant field of study.

#### Practical skills

- Students have adopted work methods which are accepted within the relevant profession.
- Students can make decisions in an independent, professional manner and sustain them on the basis of a field of study/profession.
- Students possess the knowledge and skills that enable them to develop and utilise ideas in an original way within a professional context of a relevant field of study.
- Students have the ability and skills to evaluate, analyse and gather scientific data.
- Students can understand and tackle complex subjects in a professional context/occupational environment.
- Students can recognise innovation and developments which are based on relevant studies, theories and/or experiments.
- Students can apply studies and methods of a field to formulate, develop and complete projects in the subject and/or occupation.

## Theoretical skills

- Students can utilise their knowledge, understanding and problem solving skills in new and unfamiliar situations in a broad or interdisciplinary context connected with the relevant field of study.
- Students can demonstrate increased and deeper understanding, and more extensive perspective of their area of expertise than contained in studies at first cycle.
- Students can make autonomous assessments, when different methods of analysis and complex theoretical issues are appropriate.
- Students can apply their knowledge and competences to tackle new and unfamiliar subjects or situations within the relevant field of study.
- Students are capable of integrating knowledge, tackling complex subjects and formulating opinions based on limited information.
- Students can apply their knowledge and skills to tackle complex subjects that demand integration, insight and professional decision making based on limited information.
- Students are familiar with research methods in their field of study and comprehend research and research outcomes.

## Communication skills and information literacy

- Students have adopted necessary skills to use techniques and software which is useful for the relevant profession/field of study.
- Students possess skills and knowledge to analyse and communicate statistical data.
- Students can initiate projects in a field of study, manage those projects and take responsibility for the work of individuals and groups.
- Students can communicate theoretical information, ideas, problems and solutions, to specialists as well as to the general public.
- Students can communicate, clearly and unambiguously, complex theoretical subjects and/or theoretically supported conclusions to specialist and non-specialist audiences, individually or in cooperation with others.
- Students can take responsibility for the work of individuals or groups, initiate projects and complete them.
- Students can assume major responsibility for the work of individuals and groups, lead and initiate projects.
- Students are aware of ethics of science.

## Learning Skills

- Students have adopted the necessary learning skills and work methods to undertake further study, where significant autonomy and independence is demanded.
- Students have developed the necessary learning skills and autonomy to continue to further study which are largely based on autonomy and independence.

## Master's degree (level 4)

The Master's degree is a one and a half to two year study programme providing 90-120 credits at cycle 2, level 4. Full workload in one year normally corresponds to 60 credits. Admission requirements are final examination from level 2 or equivalent. First class grade is usually required. Higher education institutions and departments can decide on further admission requirements for studies at level 4.

Master's degree provides access to doctorate studies at cycle 3. Higher education institutions can demand a minimum final grade for admission. The scope of research and/or final project shall cover at least 30 credits.

On completion of a Master's degree, the following criteria shall be fulfilled, in addition to the criteria fulfilled at former level(s):

#### Knowledge and understanding

Students have acquired systematic understanding of the most recent knowledge available within the relevant field of study/profession. In addition to the knowledge criteria for first cycle, students at second cycle shall have deepened or widened the knowledge base obtained at former levels.

Students can use their knowledge and understanding in a professional manner and have the ability to reason and substantiate solutions to problems within the relevant field of study/profession.

#### Type of knowledge

- Students possess significant understanding of problems and subjects, based on the most recent information and research in the relevant field of study.
- Students have acquired knowledge by attending courses and/or carrying out research in an area of expertise.

#### Practical skills

- Students can make decisions in an independent, professional way and sustain them on the basis of a field of study/profession.
- Students have the ability and skills to evaluate, analyse and gather scientific data.
- Students can develop projects and put them in context by applying methods based on relevant studies, theories and/or experiments.
- Students can understand and tackle complex subjects in a professional context.

#### Theoretical skills

- Students can make autonomous assessments, when different methods of analysis and complex theoretical issues are appropriate.
- Students can demonstrate increased and deeper understanding, and more extensive perspective of their area of expertise than in studies at first cycle.
- Students can utilise their knowledge, understanding and problem solving skills in new and unfamiliar situations in a broad or interdisciplinary context connected with the relevant field of study.
- Students are capable of integrating knowledge, tackling complex subjects and formulating opinions based on limited information.
- Students are familiar with research methods in their field of study and comprehend research and research outcomes.
- Students can apply the research process in an effective way and carry out

## Communication skills and information literacy

- Students can initiate projects in a field of study, manage those projects and take responsibility for the work of individuals and groups.
- Students can communicate, clearly and unambiguously, complex theoretical subjects and/or theoretically supported conclusions to specialist and non-specialist audiences, individually or in cooperation with others.
- Students possess skills and knowledge to analyse and communicate statistical data.
- Students have adopted necessary skills to use techniques and software which is useful for the relevant profession/field of study.
- Students are aware of ethics of science.

## Learning skills

- Students have developed the necessary learning skills and independent work methods to be able to continue to further study at cycle 3 which is largely based on autonomy and independence.

## Doctorate Degree (level 5)

The Doctorate degree is a three to four year study providing 180-240 credits at cycle 3, level 5. Full workload in one year normally corresponds to 60 credits. Admission requirements are research based Master's degree, Candidatus degree or equivalent final examination from cycle 2, level 4. Higher education institutions can demand a certain minimum grade for admission.

Higher education institutions are assumed to set specific rules regarding the organisation and structure of their doctorate studies.

On completion of a Doctorate degree, the following criteria shall be fulfilled, in addition to the criteria fulfilled at former level(s).

## Knowledge and understanding

- Students possess extensive and in-depth understanding of main theories, principles, concepts and of the latest findings available within a specific field of study or profession. The knowledge shall be more in-depth than that acquired at cycle 1 and 2.
- Students have contributed important innovation to the field of study in the form of new knowledge or significant adaptation, innovative utilisation or interpretation of existing knowledge.

## Type of knowledge

- Students possess knowledge and understanding which they have acquired from research carried out on individual basis.
- Students' research findings shall contribute in a significant way to the development of the relevant field of study or profession
- Students have initiated new knowledge, and its interpretation, with research or other acknowledged scholarly activities which measure up to reviews and critique of other scholars in the relevant field.

## Practical skills

- Students can apply critical analysis, evaluation and integration to new and complex projects.
- Students can tackle complex tasks which widen and/or redefine existing methodology in the relevant field of study.
- Students can apply in an extensive way the basic skills, technology, methods, material and sources connected with the relevant field of study.
- Students can utilise, on a broad basis, general and specialised research equipment and research technology.
- Students can organise and carry out research and explore or develop projects which tackle new problems and subjects within a subject.
- Students shall demonstrate originality and creativity in developing and utilising new knowledge, understanding and methods.

## Theoretical skills

- Students have carried out innovative research or developed work methods which add to, or widen the existing knowledge of a relevant subject.
- Students have presented an important and well organised dissertation which is suitable for publishing in a peer-reviewed publication at national or international level.
- Students can tackle very complicated and/or new subjects and formulate an autonomous and informative opinion.

## Communication skills and information literacy

- Students can communicate, in an effective way, with their peers, other scholars and the general public about their area of expertise.
- Students can demonstrate extensive professional autonomy and initiative in their professional work.
- Students can take full responsibility for their own projects as well as assuming responsibility for the work of others.
- Students are able to present technological, social and cultural progress, connected with the knowledge society, in a theoretical setting.
- Students can participate in critical debate, initiate and lead theoretical discourse.
- Students can use software to support and enhance work in the relevant field of study, and can specify specialised software for the improvement of methods and work processes.
- Students can assess statistical and graphical data in a critical way.
- Students shall demonstrate their awareness of ethics of science and that they have formed a considered opinion regarding their own research, and that of others, based on their own ethical consciousness.

## Learning skills.

- Students have adopted a critical stand towards knowledge.

Institutions: Iceland Academy of the Arts

Institutions: Iceland University of Education

Institutions: Reykjavík University

Institutions: The Bifröst School of Business  
Institutions: The Ministry of Education, Science and Culture  
Institutions: The University of Akureyri  
Institutions: University of Iceland  
Legislation: National Qualification Framework  
Legislation: Rules on doctoral studies in universities  
Legislation: University Act

---

### 6.11. Curriculum

Higher education institution that come under the Higher Education Act no. 63/2006 shall define learning outcomes for each study programme. The higher education institutions' definition shall be a specialised description relevant to the study programmes offered. The higher education institutions should preferably demonstrate in which way the objectives of the definition are attained by each course or each study level, i.e. by defining their learning outcomes.

Higher education institutions shall specify, in their Diploma Supplements, to which cycle and level each study programme belongs to, according to National Qualification Framework for Iceland.

Higher education institutions have a significant degree of academic freedom and autonomy; as a result the institutions largely determine the nature and structure of their educational curricula and courses.

Higher education institutions vary in terms of their course offerings. The University of Iceland offers a variety of degree courses of different types and levels in a wide range of subjects. Other institutions are more specialised.

Specialisation in a subject begins right at the start of higher education studies, i.e. higher education studies do not include a general studies component. This general background knowledge is obtained in upper secondary schools.

Icelandic is the language of instruction in higher education institutions. However, in recent years some institutions have started to offer courses in English. Textbooks are in many cases in English or another foreign language (mostly Scandinavian languages).

Bibliography: Kennsluskrá Háskóla Íslands  
Bibliography: Kennsluskrá Háskólans á Akureyri  
Bibliography: Kennsluskrá Kennaraháskólans  
Institutions: University of Iceland  
Legislation: National Qualification Framework  
Legislation: University Act

---

### 6.12. Teaching Methods

The governing bodies of each institution are responsible for the organisation of teaching, learning and assessment. Teaching methods are decided by the individual teacher, department, faculty, institution or a combination of these. Teaching methods vary somewhat between programmes and level of study. In most cases there is a combination of lectures, seminars,

individual assignments and group work. In technical and science programmes laboratory work and practical training are more prevalent. Teaching materials are also decided by the individual teacher, department, faculty, institution or a combination of these.

Increasingly instructors integrate the newest information technology with their teaching methods. For example they use WebCT and other teaching software to post course-related material and interact with students on the Internet. Some programmes are offered by distance learning via the Internet and/or through video conferencing.

At the graduate level much emphasis is placed on students gaining practical experience in scientific work by engaging them in research under the supervision of a professor. Teaching also takes place through seminars, lectures, individual tutoring and individual training in thesis writing.

Most higher education institutions offer courses for new teachers as well as more specific courses for example on information technology.

---

### 6.13. Student Assessment

Student assessment at the higher education level is generally based on written, oral or practical examinations, semester papers and assignments carried out throughout the whole course of study. Teachers are responsible for assessment, but each department provides the overall organisation of the examinations within the regulatory framework of the institution. In some cases there are external examiners. Examinations are generally held at the end of each semester. Degrees are only awarded after students have written a final dissertation or completed a research project.


At oral examinations an external examiner is often present, but written examinations are marked by the teacher in question. Teachers are required to explain the basis of their assessment to students upon request. Students who fail an examination can request that the head of the respective department appoint an external examiner to review his or her examination.

At the University of Iceland competitive examinations are held in the Faculties of Nursing and of Odontology at the end of the first semester. The number of students allowed to continue after this examination is limited. Students who pass examinations in all subjects of the first semester of the first year are ranked, and the students with the highest grades go on to the second semester. Competitive examinations are also held in the Department of Nursing at the University of Akureyri. For all competitive examinations the Ministry of Education, Science and Culture appoints an external examiner for a three-year term on the recommendation of the educational institution.

As a general rule grades are awarded on a scale of 0-10, where the passing grades are 5 and above, or by the assessment pass/fail. Course grades are usually given in increments of 0.5, and averages computed to two decimal places.

Most higher education institutions classify grades as follows:

Grade	Classification
9.0 - 10	Distinction (Honours)
7.25 – 8.99	First Class
6.0 – 7.24	Second Class
5.0 – 5.99	Third Class
< 5	



Institutions: University of Iceland

Institutions: The University of Akureyri

Institutions: The Ministry of Education, Science and Culture

---

#### 6.14. Progression of Students

Rules regarding progression of students vary between institutions and faculties. In the professional programmes towards the candidatus degree students have to pass all examinations, or a certain percentage of each year's examinations, in order to be able to continue to the next. Students are allowed to repeat examinations in an individual course once. Students who fail to meet the requirements have to repeat the whole year of study, but can do so only twice during their studies.

In the programmes for the bachelor's degree there is more flexibility, but there is a limit on the overall time spent on studies towards a degree.

Special rules for progression between years apply to the competitive examinations held at the end of the first semester in dentistry and nursing. Only a limited number of students are allowed to continue after the competitive examinations, but those students who fail the examination may repeat the first semester the next year. For the competitive examination a predetermined number of students is allowed to continue (*numerus clausus*). Based on the weighted mean of grades from written examination in several subjects, the predetermined number of students selected is allowed to continue on to the second semester.

Transfer from one course of study to another or from one institution to another is always subject to the approval of the academic authorities of the receiving faculty or institution. The receiving faculty decides how many credits can be transferred towards a new programme, usually on recommendations made by study committees, composed of students and teachers in each department. Transfers between subjects within the same faculty are usually easily arranged, but may involve some loss of credits earned. Intermediate qualifications from higher education institutions may in some cases be recognised as part of a degree course, usually as a minor subject. See [6.9](#).

---

#### 6.15. Certification

Higher education institutions offer courses which lead to the granting of a certificate and/or a degree or a title. Examination results and assessment are stated on the certificate, as is the degree/title to which the course gives entitlement. These are awarded when the student successfully completes the examinations, projects or dissertation described by the subject regulations. A dissertation or research project is almost always a pre-requisite for obtaining a degree. Some degree courses may lead directly to professional qualifications, while in other cases additional training specific to the profession, such as additional specialised study



programmes, sometimes combined with practical training, is required.

Bachelor's degrees do usually not confer professional qualifications, except in nursing (BSc) and teaching (B.Ed.) The bachelor's degree constitutes a formal qualification for post-graduate study. The ministries in question issue certification for different professions. For example the Ministry of Education, Science and Culture issues certification for teachers.

As required by law, and subject to review by the Ministry of Education, Science and Culture, higher education institutions are responsible for issuing certificates and defining the content and examination methods of courses leading to certification.

To improve international transparency and facilitate academic and professional recognition of qualifications, all higher education institutions have since spring 2005 introduced the Diploma Supplement (DS) for graduates.

Under the Universities Act, the Ministry of Education, Science and Culture is to issue a list of degrees recognised by the Ministry, and their content.

Institutions: The Ministry of Education, Science and Culture

Legislation: University Act

---

#### 6.16. Educational/Vocational Guidance, Education/Employment Links

Student counselling centres are operated at most higher education institutions. Counselling centres provide courses and counselling for students regarding the choice of programmes, the organisation of their studies, career opportunities, as well as personal problems. Some higher education institutions offer preparation courses e.g. in mathematics before student start their higher education.

Permanent faculty members have regular office hours for students and are available during those hours to give educational advice. No set rules apply for the educational counselling provided by teachers or regarding the referral of students to other counselling parties.

All foreign exchange students in Iceland may use the support services offered by the Office of International Education.

In the professional disciplines, students are required to gain practical experience in their field of study. A part of this experience is frequently achieved through employment, and the respective higher education institution often serves as the mediator for the placement of students for practical training.

Research institutions at the higher education institutions hire students to work on research projects that have been negotiated with state and private agencies. At the University of Iceland students also run a company that does contractual work for outside agencies where students are hired to work on projects related to their field of study. The Icelandic Students' Union at the University of Iceland also runs a placement service for students for summer work, where an effort is made to place students with employers in their field. Thus relations with possible future employers are cultivated.

Faculty members, companies or entrepreneurs can apply to an Innovation Fund, established

by the Ministry of Education, Science and Culture, to hire students to work on defined projects. The Fund pays the student salaries, while the company or the supervisor for the project provides workspace and materials. This gives students the opportunity to gain practical experience that may open future job opportunities and promotes innovation.

Institutions: University of Iceland

Institutions: The Ministry of Education, Science and Culture

---

### 6.17. Private Education

There are three private higher education institutions (government-dependent private institutions) in Iceland (of eight institutions at this level). Private institutions receive considerable financial assistance from the state under service contracts made with each institution. The institutions are subject to the provisions of the Universities Act but they also operate according to their individual charters, which are confirmed by the Ministry of Education, Science and Culture.

The institutions have private boards and they have a significant degree of autonomy, and can for example decide such matters as admission requirements, progression of students from one year to the next, certification etc. These matters do not differ much between public and private institutions.

The tuition fees for private institutions vary between higher education institutions and fields of study. The tuition fees for undergraduate programmes are approx. ISK 120,000 – 350,000 for each school year. In private institutions students pay additional payments to student organisations.

Private institutions are recognised by the Ministry of Education, Science and Culture and are subject to the same provisions as public institutions concerning external reviews and quality control.

The private higher education institutions are:


- Bifröst School of Business
- Reykjavík University
- Iceland Academy of the Arts

The distinction between public and private HEIs is mainly based on legal differentiation. The role of public institutions is defined in separate laws and regulated by the Ministry of Education, Science and Culture or Ministry of Agriculture. Additionally, the public institutions are legally obliged to follow various laws and regulations applying specifically to them, such as laws on budgetary responsibilities, access to information and transparency, and recruitment procedures. The private institutions also operate under the Universities Act and in accordance with an individual charter that is confirmed by the Ministry of Education, Science and Culture.

The Universities Act stipulates internal financial and management autonomy of the HEIs. The formal relationship with the Ministry of Education, Science and Culture is further defined in performance-related agreements with public institutions and service contracts with private institutions. The private institutions receive more than 50% from core funding for teaching

and facilities from the central government, according to the same funding formula as the public institutions. In addition they charge students tuition fees, whereas the public institutions do not have the legal authority to do so. The research allocation is based on a three-year agreement between the Ministry of Education, Science and Culture and individual institutions under its auspices. The institutions differ in the extent to which they engage in research. In 2002 the income ratio of the University of Iceland was balanced between research and teaching, whilst the other institutions received most of their income for teaching. Furthermore, all institutions operate on a non-profit basis.

Institution	Separate law	Charge tuition fees	Funding formula
Public	Yes	No	
Private	No	Yes	Yes



Institutions: University of Iceland

Institutions: Reykjavík University

Institutions: The Ministry of Agriculture

Institutions: Iceland Academy of the Arts

Institutions: The Ministry of Education, Science and Culture

Institutions: The Bifröst School of Business

Legislation: University Act

#### 6.18. Organisational Variations, Alternative Structures

In recent years providing access to higher education via distance learning has become an increasingly important aspect of the Icelandic higher education system. Most of the higher education institutions offer distance learning courses in some areas of study. There is no specific legislative framework for distance learning at higher education level.

There are no international schools operating at higher educational level in Iceland. However, some higher education institutions offer programmes and/or courses in cooperation with foreign higher education institutions.

#### 6.19. Statistics

See subdivisions.

### 6.19.1. Total number of students studying at higher education level, autumn 2005

Total	Males	Females
16,626	6,190	10,436
Day courses		
13,676	5,178	8,498

Number of students at tertiary level by degree, 2005

	ISCED97	2005
Tertiary level non-degree programmes	ISCED5B	497
Short diploma programmes	ISCED5A	246
First university degree	ISCED5A	11,907
Additional study after first university degree	ISCED5A	864
Master's degree	ISCED5A	2,086
Ph.D.	ISCED6	155

Source: Statistics Iceland



Bibliography: Landshagir 2006

### 6.19.2. Number of students at Higher Education Institutions, autumn 2005

Institution	Total
Public institutions:	
University of Iceland	9,275
Iceland University of Education	2,044
University of Akureyri	1,523
Hvanneyri Agricultural University	248
Hólar Agricultural University college	102
Private institutions:	
Bifröst School of Business	685
Reykjavik University	2,557
Iceland Academy of the Arts	401
Total	

Source: Statistical Iceland



Bibliography: Landshagir 2006

Institutions: Iceland Academy of the Arts

Institutions: Iceland University of Education

Institutions: Reykjavík University

Institutions: The Bifröst School of Business

Institutions: The University of Akureyri

Institutions: University of Iceland

### 6.19.3. Percentage of students by field and gender, autumn 2005

Area of study	Total % students	% male students	% female students
Languages, humanities	13,5%	12%	15%
Fine and applied arts	3%	3%	3%
Teacher-training, education science	18%	3%	24%
Social sciences, jurisprudence	17%	16%	17%
Economics, business administration	18%	22%	16%
Natural sciences, mathematics	9,2%	13%	7%
Engineering	9,4%	20%	3%
Agriculture, food sciences	1,9%	2%	2%
Medicine, nursing, etc.	10,3%	4%	14%
Total	100%	100%	100%

Source: Statistics Iceland



Bibliography: Landshagir 2006

### 6.19.4. Number of students in day courses in higher education by programme of studies and age group, autumn 2005

Area of study	Total	17-19 years	20-24 years	25-29 years	30-39 years	40 years and over
Languages, humanities	2,128	12	795	487	387	447
Fine and applied arts	468	15	220	151	65	17
Teacher-training, education science	1,507	2	482	395	377	251
Social sciences, jurisprudence	2,788	19	1,362	700	414	293
Economics, business administration	2,615	4	796	637	746	432
Natural sciences, mathematics	1,385	11	698	362	228	86
Engineering	1,076	15	680	260	96	25
Agriculture, food sciences	159	-	52	47	43	17
Medicine, nursing, etc.	1,550	9	696	410	227	208
Total	13,676	87	5,781	3,449	2,583	1,776

Source: Statistics Iceland



Bibliography: Landshagir 2006

### 6.19.5. Students in higher education by domicile, autumn 2005

Domicile	Number	Percentage
Reykjavik	8,590	45,6%
Capital area excluding Reykjavik	4,137	22%
Sudurnes	620	3,3%
West	662	3,5%
West Fjords	316	1,7%
Northwest	350	1,9%
Northeast	1361	7,2%
East	461	2,4%
South	894	4,7%
Abroad	1472	7,8%
Total	18,863	100%

Source: Statistics Iceland



Bibliography: Landshagir 2006

---

### 6.19.6. Enrolment rates of age cohorts 20-29, autumn 2005

Age	Percentage
20 years	53%
21 years	53%
22 years	51%
23 years	46%
24 years	41%
25 years	34%
26 years	30%
27 years	25%
28 years	20%
29 years	19%

Source: Statistics Iceland



Bibliography: Landshagir 2006

---

### 6.19.7. Graduation by programmes of studies, diplomas and degrees 2004/2005

Area of study	Total	Males	Females
Languages, humanities	307	101	206
Fine and applied arts	108	33	75
Teacher-training, education science	880	159	721
Social sciences, jurisprudence	354	109	245
Economics, business administration	582	250	332
Natural sciences, mathematics	291	164	127
Engineering	346	250	96
Agriculture, food sciences	115	43	72
Medicine, nursing, etc.	325	37	288
<b>Total</b>	<b>8,589</b>	<b>3,678</b>	<b>4,911</b>
Diplomas and degrees	Total	Males	Females
Tertiary level, non-university diploma	394	173	221
First university degree	2,184	705	1,479
Diploma after first university degree	295	50	245
Master's degree	292	123	169
Ph.D	14	7	7

Source: Statistics Iceland



Bibliography: Landshagir 2006

### 6.19.8. Number of Icelandic students studying abroad autumn 2005 by geographic area

Area	Number	Percentage
Nordic countries	1,250	55.9%
United Kingdom	302	13.5%
European Continent	347	15.5%
North America	328	14.7%
Other	14	0.6%
<b>Total</b>	<b>2,237</b>	<b>100%</b>

Source: Statistics Iceland



Bibliography: Landshagir 2006

### 6.19.9. Educational staff at higher education level in November 2005

	Total	Number		Percentage	
		Male	Female	Male	Female
Rector	10	8	2	80%	20%
Assistant rector	5	2	3	40%	60%
Professor	212	175	37	83%	17%
Associate professor	211	147	64	70%	30%
Lecturer	259	123	136	47%	53%
Other teachers	964	490	474	53%	47%
<b>Total</b>	<b>1 661</b>	<b>945</b>	<b>716</b>	<b>57%</b>	<b>43%</b>

Source: Statistics Iceland



Bibliography: Landshagir 2006

## 7. Continuing Education and Training for Young School Leavers and Adults

---

Continuing education is an extensive sphere in Icelandic society and is provided by various parties such as public authorities, private institutions, companies and organisations. The continuing education and training dealt with in this chapter mostly concerns educational and training opportunities defined in laws and regulations and/or financially supported by public authorities. The educational opportunities provided by public authorities are open to all, although with certain restrictions in some cases. They are intended to serve everyone according to their needs, especially young school leavers and adults who want to improve their basic education, general knowledge or professional capabilities, or who want to cultivate their hobbies.

Continuing adult education and training is provided both as general adult education for unqualified young people and adults and as continuing vocational training for young people and adults who are already qualified for a given profession. See monograph for Iceland prepared by CEDEFOP.

Bibliography: The Educational System in Iceland

---

### 7.1. Historical Overview

The first adult education institution in Iceland, the Reykjavík Municipal Evening School was established in 1939. Before that time some attempts had been made by different individuals and organisations to offer courses for adults. The programme offered by the School was primarily intended for leisure study. It offered adults an opportunity to attend hobby-related courses as well as to pursue academic and practical training in the evenings. Gradually, some of the larger local municipalities began offering similar programmes. With time, the need for formal qualifications increased and in 1972 the Reykjavík Municipal Evening School began offering preparatory courses for adults who intended to take secondary school leaving examinations miðskólapróf or gagnfræðapróf. These courses were offered in the evening. In the 1970s the school also started offering courses that prepared individuals for the labour market, such as a commercial course and courses for unskilled employees.

In 1971, the Hamrahlíd Junior College began offering evening courses for adults at the upper secondary level, in preparation for the matriculation examination. The target group consisted of adults, i.e. people over 20 years of age. Gradually, other upper secondary schools started offering similar adult education programmes, most of them leading to the matriculation examination. Such programmes made it possible for adults to combine work and study.

Vocational training became accessible to adults in 1981 when the Breiðholt Upper Secondary Comprehensive School began offering adult education programmes. In 1985, the Reykjavík Technical School also began offering such vocational courses for adults.

The Iceland University of Education has since 1978 offered special programmes of study leading to full teaching qualifications for unqualified teachers at the compulsory and upper secondary levels. The courses have been specifically organised to enable the students to be employed while they complete their education. The institution started to offer courses for unqualified teachers at the pre-primary level in 2000.



Since 1989, the Institute of Continuing Education at the University of Iceland has offered formal programmes of study for adults in selected areas, such as in business administration and real estate assessment. See [7.10](#). In 1992, the first legislation concerning adult education was passed. This legislation was abolished and replaced by provisions in the act on upper secondary education passed in 1996.

In 1997, the first lifelong learning centre was established in Iceland on the basis of provisions in the act on upper secondary education. There are now nine lifelong learning centres outside the capital area, with one in each of the main regions of the country. One such centre, specialising in courses for the health sector, was established in 2001 in Reykjavík by the Ármúli Upper Secondary School.

Upper secondary and higher education institutions have in recent years increasingly been offering distance education programmes for adults, often in co-operation with the lifelong learning centres.

Bibliography: Þróun starfsmenntunar á framhaldsskólastigi

Institutions: Hamrahlíð Junior College

Institutions: Iceland University of Education

Institutions: Iceland University of Education

Institutions: Institute of Continuing Education at the University of Iceland

Institutions: The Breiðholt Upper Secondary Comprehensive School

Institutions: The Reykjavik Municipal Evening School

Institutions: The Reykjavik Technical School

Institutions: The Ármúli Upper Secondary School

Legislation: Law on general adult education

Legislation: Upper Secondary School Act

---

## 7.2. Ongoing Debates and Future Developments

In recent years a growing need has been developing among adults in regions outside the capital area to have better access to education, especially education at the higher education level. The educational opportunities for this target group have mainly been provided through distance learning, often facilitated by the lifelong learning centres.

Today stakeholders of the labour market place emphasis on increased access to education for those who have no qualifications. The focus here is on basic skills. This need has, for example, been met by the national authorities through the establishment of the Education and Training Service Centre in 2002, – a body founded by the Icelandic Federation of Labour and the Confederation of Icelandic Employers and funded partly by the State Budget. In addition, a decision was taken in 2005 and 2006 by the government regarding important allocations of the funding of courses and educational counselling over the next 3 years for those who have little education, including those who have literacy problems.

Validation of non-formal education is an emerging phenomenon in Iceland. The existence of centres for lifelong learning in Iceland, the discussion on lifelong learning within the EU, and pressure from individuals and labour unions for a system of validation for non-formal and informal learning has led to steps being taken towards such a system. Recognition has been given to the vast human resources existing in society and to society's benefit in making them visible.

The issue of validation of non-formal and informal learning in Iceland has been taken forward in a decisive manner by the The Education and Training Service Centre (see above) . The Centre receives public funding to sustain its operation. According to a service agreement with the Ministry of Education the Centre is amongst other things expected to assist the Ministry in developing ways and means to validate non-formal and informal learning for people who have not finished an upper secondary school degree. Still to be decided is how to broaden this initiative, how to press for acceptance and legitimacy in the labour market and within the formal school system, and who should mainly be responsible for validating non-formal and informal learning.

Institutions: The Education and Training Service Centre

Institutions: The Ministry of Education, Science and Culture

---

### 7.3. Specific Legislative Framework

No comprehensive legislation applies to continuing or adult education in Iceland. The Upper Secondary School Act of 1996, however, covers several aspects of adult education, such as evening classes for adults and lifelong learning centres.

According to the above-mentioned act on upper secondary education, schools at that level are allowed to offer special programmes, including evening classes, for adults who are unable to avail themselves of regular instruction within the upper secondary schools but wish to complete studies comparable to the programmes offered by them. The law also permits anyone who has turned eighteen to take individual courses during regular school hours.

According to the same act, schools can also, in co-operation with such parties as municipalities, employers, employees' organisations and companies, establish lifelong learning centres offering courses and educational counselling.

The aim of a law on vocational training in business and industry passed in 1992 is to stimulate increased vocational training in these sectors. The act shall cover studies or courses followed by participants in order to increase their skills and knowledge for the jobs in which they work or intend to work. The Educational Council is responsible for the implementation of the act. Its function, among others, is to allocate grants from the Job Education Fund and advise the government on policy formulation and procedures in the field of job-related lifelong learning.

A law on labour market measures from 1997 provides the right of the unemployed to study in connection with a job-seeking plan compiled by regional employment centres in consultation with the job seeker. A law from 1997 on unemployment benefits is in force.

On the basis of laws on individual higher education institutions, these institutions may run continuing education institutions and offer distance-learning programmes for adults.

In Iceland, adults generally do not have legal right to leaves of absence for the purpose of studying at compulsory, upper secondary or university levels. There are, however, exceptions to this. Primary and secondary school teachers have, for example, the legal right to paid leaves of up to one year to attend in-service training or further education once in their career. Educational leaves may also be available to employees and civil servants according to various wage contracts. Wage contracts contain in many cases provisions that guarantee employees

and civil servants the right to continuing education as well as provisions on funds for continuing education. Provisions may also in some cases guarantee travel and subsistence costs. They may also contain provisions guaranteeing higher salaries for those who gain qualifications.

Continuing education in Iceland does not come under any single ministry. The Ministry of Education, Science and Culture, however, has overall supervision of educational affairs and is in charge of virtually all education that takes place within the school system, including adult education and continuing education. The Ministry of Social Affairs also has responsibilities concerning vocational continuing education and training in business and industry, as well as concerning unemployment benefits. Other ministries may be involved in continuing education in their areas of concern, either through the continuing education of employees or through the organisations pertaining to them.

A committee on lifelong learning was in December 2004 appointed for 3 years by the Minister of Education, Science and Culture. This body is consultative. Its role is, among other things, to make proposals for policy making in lifelong learning, including non-vocational (formal and non-formal) adult education. The committee replaces a similar committee appointed for 5 years by the Minister of Education, Science and Culture in 1997.

Institutions: Félagsmálaráðuneyti

Institutions: The Ministry of Education, Science and Culture

Legislation: Law on measures in the labour market

Legislation: Law on unemployment compensation

Legislation: Law on vocational training in business and industry

Legislation: Upper Secondary School Act

---

#### 7.4. General Objectives

As no comprehensive legislation applies to continuing or adult education in Iceland, no uniform objectives exist in the teaching of adults and young school leavers. Generally speaking, the objective is to ensure access to education for adults and young school leavers so that they can acquire and renew skill required for active participation in society. Specific objectives vary depending on target groups, institutions and the course in question. They are stated in different laws and regulations. See [7.3](#).

---

#### 7.5. Types of Institutions

Continuing education and training for young school leavers and adults is offered by public institutions at the upper secondary and higher education levels including lifelong learning centres. Many of these institutions provide for distance learning. Adult education may also be provided by private schools, companies or organisations.

A few local municipalities have municipality schools for adults. Most municipality schools offer courses for employees that relate to their work, courses in Icelandic for immigrants and hobby-related courses. The Reykjavík Municipal Evening, which is the largest of its kind, also offers courses at the compulsory and preparatory courses for upper secondary schools.

General and vocational upper secondary schools offer adult education through evening

classes. They operate on a unit-credit system. The courses offered by different schools vary, depending on what sort of courses make up their regular programme, but at the upper secondary level in adult education most courses lead to a matriculation examination. Many of the upper secondary comprehensive schools and industrial vocational schools offer vocational training programmes which are also offered as a part of adult education if there is sufficient demand. If a particular course cannot be offered as a part of the adult education programme, students may attend the course during regular school hours.

Continuing education in certain trades is conducted in a few upper secondary schools.

Upper secondary schools can, in co-operation with parties such as municipalities, employers, employees' organisations and companies establish lifelong learning centres to provide courses and counselling. Nine lifelong learning centres are operated outside the capital area.

Most higher education institutions offer distance learning. Lifelong learning centres co-ordinate distance learning courses from the various higher education institutions.

The Institute of Continuing Education at the University of Iceland offers 1-2 years programmes for adults in several areas, see [7.10](#). The Iceland University of Education organises pre-school and compulsory school teacher training for adults. This training normally takes three years but is organised over a four-year period in this format so that students have an opportunity of attending school as well as working part-time. The school offers a combination of distance learning and in-class teaching.

The teaching organisation of the Icelandic Federation of Labour operates the Trade Union College of the Icelandic Federation of Labour and the Mímir Centre for Adult Education.

The Technological Institute of Iceland has a special department for the Icelandic business community and organises various courses for both skilled and unskilled industrial workers.

The size of these institutions varies.

Bibliography: The Educational System in Iceland

Institutions: Iceland University of Education

Institutions: Institute of Continuing Education at the University of Iceland

Institutions: The Mímir Centre for Adult Education

Institutions: The Reykjavik Municipal Evening School

Institutions: The Technological Institute of Iceland

Institutions: The Trade Union College of the Icelandic Federation of Labour

---

## 7.6. Geographical Accessibility

Some of the upper secondary schools outside the capital area run evening classes for adults. These schools offer programmes comparable to the programmes offered in day school. A few upper secondary schools have offered Internet-based distance learning in several academic subjects leading to the matriculation examination.

Nine lifelong learning centres are operated, with one in each of the main regions of the country. They offer a variety of courses, such as job-related courses and courses in Icelandic for immigrants. The lifelong learning centres also facilitate distance education at the upper

secondary and higher education levels by providing technical and organisational facilities, such as videoconferencing and enrolment of students.

---

### 7.7. Admission Requirements

According to the law on upper secondary education people having reached the age of 18 have access to mainstream education at that school level, both day school courses and special evening classes for adults. No particular academic qualification is required.

In the National Curriculum Guidelines for Upper Secondary Education there are provisions, which are in force for all pupils, both those attending daytime courses and evening classes, concerning the recognition of prior learning. It is the responsibility of individual schools to assess former studies in mainstream education. Prior learning outside the mainstream education (non-formal learning) may also be recognized in upper secondary schools and is the responsibility of individual head teachers.

Placement tests are held twice a year for the upper secondary level and are organised on behalf of national educational authorities in foreign languages and mathematics. These examinations enable schools to recognise knowledge and measure competence of pupils, especially knowledge and competence acquired outside the school system.

There are no admission requirements for adults to attend compulsory level courses.

Admission requirements for adults at the higher education level vary. Most often students are required to have passed the matriculation examination or have comparable education. There are, however, exceptions to this rule.

Legislation: National Curriculum Guidelines for Upper Secondary Education  
Legislation: Upper Secondary School Act

---

### 7.8. Registration and/or Tuition Fees

Funds for adult education programmes and distance learning in upper secondary schools are determined by Parliament in the annual State budget. For these programmes the State pays two thirds of the cost of tuition, while students pay one third.

The running costs of operating lifelong learning centres are provided for by allocations in the annual State budget. Course participants are responsible for tuition fees. See [7.9](#). Participants at courses run by the Institute of Continuing Education at the University of Iceland pay tuition fees that vary according to the length and the scope of the courses for which they enrol. The programmes for adults at the Iceland University of Education are paid for by the State, however, there are enrolment fees. See [7.9](#). Municipality schools receive financial support from the local community in question but have to rely on tuition fees to make up for the rest of their costs.

Generally, there are no compulsory financial contributions, such as for student organisations or medical services.

Special funds, such as the Job Education Fund, see [7.3](#), allocated in the annual State budget,

mainly provide for the financing of courses for the unemployed and for vocational training in business and industry.

Non-vocational non-formal adult education courses are generally paid by participants. However, a few larger municipalities may partly fund some non-vocational non-formal adult education courses. Participants pay tuition fees.

Institutions: Althingi / Alþingi

Institutions: Iceland University of Education

Institutions: Institute of Continuing Education at the University of Iceland

Legislation: State budget 2006

---

## 7.9. Financial Support for Learners

Unions, companies, institutions or organisations often pay the tuition fees for individuals participating in adult education courses on their behalf. This may include in some cases non-vocational non-formal adult education courses. Tuition fees may also be financed partly or fully by the State, as is the case for courses in Icelandic for immigrants, the unemployed, and some courses for business and industry. Increasingly, professions and unions have training funds at their disposal. As a rule, the employer pays a certain proportion of salaries into these funds.

An individual job-seeking programme for the unemployed includes training and education free of charge. The financing of the programme is provided for in the State budget and by the income of the Unemployment Insurance Fund. See 7.3. Student loans are not common in continuing education. Grants may be available from some unions' funds, such as teachers' association funds.

Legislation: State budget 2006

---

## 7.10. Main Areas of Specialisation

Municipality schools offer courses for adults at the compulsory school level and preparatory courses for upper secondary schools, as well as job-related courses, courses in Icelandic for immigrants and leisure courses.

In evening classes for adult education at the upper secondary level, the courses offered by different schools vary, but most courses lead to a matriculation examination. See [5.11.1](#). Academic branches of study leading to matriculation are four: foreign languages, natural sciences, social sciences and business and economics. Some of the upper secondary comprehensive schools and industrial vocational schools offer vocational training programmes as a part of adult education if there is sufficient demand. In vocational education at the upper secondary level, pupils can choose between training for the certified trades or vocational training in other areas, for example in the travel industry, the food production industry, and the health sector. See [5.11.2.1](#) and [5.11.2.2](#).

The organisation of studies at the upper secondary level is flexible and students are generally allowed to change their courses or area of specialisation during their education.

All students enrolled in regular education programmes at the upper secondary level must take

some courses in English and Danish, and those who finish the matriculation examination have to take a third foreign language additionally.

Lifelong learning centres offer job-related courses, courses in Icelandic for adult immigrants, some upper secondary and higher education courses, mainly as distance education, and leisure courses.

The Iceland University of Education organises pre-school and compulsory school teacher training for adults.

The Institute of Continuing Education at the University of Iceland offers a variety of short, professional courses and three-semester diploma programmes in areas such as business administration, human resources and international marketing. The institute also offers programmes for real estate professionals, cognitive therapy programmes and pastoral counselling programmes. The above-mentioned programmes are organised in such a way that participants are able to attend the courses parallel to being employed. The institute also offers a variety of leisure-related courses and graduate courses in collaboration with a number of departments of the University of Iceland. Courses in Icelandic as a second language for adult immigrants are organised by various parties, such as lifelong learning centres, municipality schools and companies.

ICT is both taught as a subject in its own right and as a tool for teaching other subjects in the curriculum.

There is no provision in the laws or regulations on functional literacy; however the Ministry of Education, Science and Culture funds courses for adults with problems relating to literacy. These courses are organised by the Mímir Centre for Adult Education and the lifelong learning centres. See [7.5](#).

Institutions: Institute of Continuing Education at the University of Iceland

Institutions: Iceland University of Education

Institutions: The Mímir Centre for Adult Education

Institutions: The Ministry of Education, Science and Culture

Institutions: University of Iceland

---

### 7.11. Teaching Methods

Neither the curriculum nor laws or regulations contain instructions regarding teaching methods. Teachers are free to choose the methods that suit their aims and circumstances at any given time.

In the instruction of adults participating in compulsory level courses as well as in the selection of teaching materials, an attempt is made to adapt teaching methods to the age, the experience and the needs of the students each time.

When organising their teaching in the adult education programme at the upper secondary school level, teachers must take into account that the student only receives half the number of lessons per course that pupils in the day school do. That means, among other things, that content has to be covered more quickly and that there is more homework for the student. These adult education programmes are structured by modules in a unit-credit system. This

means that the educational content of each subject is divided into a number of defined course units which last for one semester. The students are given a certain number of credits for each course unit they complete. Each credit in the adult education programmes usually corresponds to one lesson a week for one semester.

Teaching at the higher education level takes place in the form of lectures, assignments and distance learning, to name a few. In some cases, practical training is part of the course.

Distance learning facilities offered by some upper secondary schools and lifelong learning centres have in recent years facilitated access of adults to education.

The Ministry of Education, Science and Culture has issued a guide on the teaching of Icelandic as a second language for adults.

The Ministry of Education, Science and Culture's policy in e-Learning entails that information technology be utilised for the benefit of education, including continuing education. Measures have been taken to ensure that possibilities offered by new technology are utilised.

Institutions: The Ministry of Education, Science and Culture

---

#### 7.12. Trainers

Adult education is not an academic discipline at graduate and/or post-graduate levels. However, a few optional courses at post graduate level related to adult education are offered at the University of Iceland and at the Iceland University of Education.

In upper secondary schools, those who teach in the adult education programmes usually also teach in regular day programmes. Consequently they are subject to the same rules as all upper secondary school teachers where qualifications are concerned.

Not all teachers of basic skills courses at the compulsory school level for adults are fully qualified, as some of them are employed by municipality schools which do not necessarily demand formal qualifications. The same applies for training courses in continuing vocational education.

Institutions: University of Iceland

Institutions: Iceland University of Education

---

#### 7.13. Learner Assessment/Progression

Assessment of students studying at the compulsory school level is carried out by the teachers concerned. These students do not take the nationally co-ordinated examinations organised at the end of compulsory education, since those who have reached the age of eighteen have the right to begin their studies in the adult education programme at the upper secondary level where no special demands concerning qualifications are made.

Generally speaking, adult students like other students at the upper secondary level take an examination at the end of each semester. Often various assignments and projects count towards the final grade. The students' progress is measured in credits. See [5.15](#). Students at the



upper secondary level are allowed to choose the length of time they want to award to their studies, in order to allow them to be employed while studying, for example. Assessment of students at the higher education level is carried out in different ways depending on what individual institutions decide. Adult students at the higher education level are expected to take examinations like other students at that level, but assignments or project work are often included in the final assessment.

Assessment of other students varies and depends on individual institutions and courses.

Work is in progress concerning the formulation of special rules for the validation of non-formal education. See [7.2](#).

---

#### 7.14. Certification

As a general rule qualifications achieved by adults through participation in formal adult education are equivalent to those in mainstream education. This relates to all educational levels.

Students at the compulsory level receive a certificate from the institution stating that they have completed a certain course of study.

At the end of each semester, students in adult education programmes at the upper secondary level are given a transcript which shows his/her marks and present standing within the programme. On completing a branch of study at the upper secondary level, students are issued a certificate by the school which specifies which course units or subjects they have taken and the marks they have received. The certificate also shows the number of credits the students have completed in individual subjects and in the programme as a whole. Students are able to graduate at the end of both the autumn and spring semesters. The certificate is delivered by the school and is equivalent to the one delivered to the pupils attending normal upper secondary school.

Lifelong learning centres issue certificates stating which courses of study students have completed.

Those adult students who complete their education at the higher education level receive from the institution a certificate which confirms that they have completed their education. In some cases the certificate gives them the right to work in a certain field of employment, as is the case with the teachers' certificate.

---

#### 7.15. Education/Employment Links

Public and private institutions at the upper secondary and higher education level generally offer educational counselling. The educational counselling services consist for example of assisting in choosing courses, organising studies, informing about study and career opportunities and supporting learners in the event of failure. Many services also assist students with their personal problems. Lifelong learning centres also offer educational counselling.

Some institutions may in various ways facilitate people's access to the labour market. Where

practical training is part of the study programme, such as in the certified trades, ties between the institution and the labour market facilitate access to the labour market.

---

#### 7.16. Private Education

Different private institutions, companies and organisations provide continuing education and training. Most of them are fully private, but some of them can apply on a yearly basis for grants for some of their courses from public funds, such as the Job Education Fund, see 7.3. and the Development Fund for upper secondary education and adult education. These courses are in that sense partially grant-aided. Examples of private continuing education are language schools, schools offering ICT courses, workplace courses, hobby-related courses and the Mímir Centre for Adult Education.

A grant-aided institution, the Centre for education, training and production, is operated for young people aged 16 to 24, who have dropped out of education and not found a place for themselves on the labour market. The objective is to provide a range of training and education for the young people who work there, for which they are paid a salary equivalent to unemployment benefits.

The Education and Training Service Centre was established in December 2002 by the Icelandic Federation of Labour and the Confederation of Icelandic Employers. The Centre is a grant-aided institution and operates in accordance with a service agreement with the Ministry of Education, Science and Culture. The role of the Centre is to be a collaborative forum of the founding parties for adult education and vocational training in co-operation with other education bodies operating under the auspices of the member associations Icelandic Federation of Labour and the Confederation of Icelandic Employers. The Centre targets those who have not completed the upper secondary level of education.

Institutions: Fjölsmiðjan

Institutions: The Education and Training Service Centre

Institutions: The Ministry of Education, Science and Culture

Institutions: The Mímir Centre for Adult Education

---

#### 7.17. Statistics

There were approximately 4,900 participants enrolled in adult education programmes at the upper secondary level including distance education in the autumn of 2005. Participants in shorter and longer courses, including distance education courses at the lifelong learning centres, were approximately 7,200 in 2005, autumn and spring semesters. Statistics for qualification rates or for other kinds of adult education are not available.

Source: Statistics Iceland and Ministry of Education, Science and Culture.

Institutions: Statistics Iceland

Institutions: The Ministry of Education, Science and Culture

## 8. Teachers and Education Staff

---

This chapter describes the initial and in-service training and condition of service of pre-primary, compulsory level, upper secondary level and higher education teachers as well as of school heads and other education staff.

---

### 8.1. Initial Training of Teachers

Training to become a pre-primary school teacher is a three year course (180 credits) offered by Iceland University of Education and by the University of Akureyri, which graduate students with a B.Ed. degree (concurrent model). Iceland University of Education also qualifies pre-primary school teachers through a distance learning course which takes four years.

A general course (concurrent model) which leads to a B.Ed. degree for teacher trainees who intend to teach at the compulsory level (primary and lower secondary level) takes three years (180 credits). This course is offered by two institutions: Iceland University of Education and the University of Akureyri. Iceland University of Education also graduates teachers through a distance learning programme which takes four years. The College of Physical Education has been part of the Iceland University of Education since 1998. Teachers who work with children with special educational needs are educated at Iceland University of Education either in a one year diploma program or a 2 years programme leading to M.Ed degree. The University of Iceland also offers a teaching certification programme that qualifies students who have a B.A. or B.Sc. degree to teach at the compulsory level. See also [8.1.1](#) and [8.1.3](#). Specialist teachers in art and craft subjects were trained in the College of Arts and Crafts up to 1998 when it merged into the Iceland University of Education. Specialist teachers in music were trained in the Reykjavik College of Music until that college merged into the Academy of the Arts in 1998.

To qualify as a teacher at the upper secondary level 60 credits in pedagogy and didactics are required in addition to a B.A. or B.Sc. degree as a minimum (consecutive model) or to a diploma in vocational training. Three universities offer programmes of study that give such qualification: the University of Iceland, Iceland University of Education and the University of Akureyri. Teachers who have completed these programmes are also qualified to teach at the lower-secondary level.

Most of the teachers at the university level seek their education abroad. Senior lecturers and professors at institutes of higher education have a Ph.D., other university teachers are usually required to have at least an M.A. or comparable education in their subject. At the Iceland University of Education applicants must also have completed studies in pedagogy and didactics, or have a comparable pedagogical background.

Bibliography: Saga Alþýðufræðslunnar á Íslandi

Institutions: Iceland Academy of the Arts

Institutions: Iceland University of Education

Institutions: The College of Arts and Crafts

Institutions: The Icelandic College of Physical Education and Sport

Institutions: The University of Akureyri  
Institutions: University of Iceland

---

### 8.1.1. Historical Overview

Formal training for fóstur nursery teachers, later pre-primary school teachers, was started in 1946 with the foundation of a school in Reykjavík to prepare trainees for work in child-care centres and playgrounds. Initially, the school was run by a group of private organisations, but in 1973 it was turned into a state-operated school, the Icelandic College for Pre-Primary School Teachers. To begin with the school offered a two year programme. Practical training took place in the nurseries. To be admitted into the school, students had to be 18 years of age and have completed at least two years of upper secondary or comparable education. Since 1996 a three year course for pre-primary school teachers has been offered by the University of Akureyri. See [3.1](#) for further historical overview. As of 1 January 1998 the Icelandic College for Pre-Primary School Teachers merged into Iceland University of Education.

The Teachers' Training College was founded in 1908 and was an upper secondary school. It offered a three year course of study, and in the beginning the college usually also offered spring courses, mainly for teachers who had teaching experience but no qualifications. In 1943 the programme of the college was extended to four years.

A law passed in 1971 upgraded the Teachers' Training College giving it university status (The University College of Education now Iceland University of Education). Along with this came changes in the structure and content of the programme of education for teachers, such as an increased emphasis on subjects relating to pedagogy and didactics.

The Icelandic College of Physical Education was founded on the basis of a law passed in 1942 and began its operation in 1943. To begin with the college only offered a 9 month course, but a law from 1972 extended its programme to two years. In 1991 the curriculum of the college was revised to co-ordinate its programme with that of the University College of Education. Since 1998 the Icelandic College of Physical Education is part of Iceland University of Education. See [8.1.1](#) and [8.1.3](#). The College of Arts and Crafts in Iceland has trained teachers in a variety of subjects: a department to qualify teachers of woodwork was set up in 1939; a department for art teachers in 1941; a department for needlework teachers in 1947; a department for teachers of handicraft in 1956 and a department for the teaching of weaving in 1959. The departments for teachers of woodwork art and needlework were abolished when the Teachers' Training College set up its own department for teachers of arts and crafts in 1951. A department that qualifies teachers of art and weaving was established at the College of Arts and Crafts in accordance with a law that was passed in 1965. In 1959 the Reykjavík College of Music was allowed to offer a 2 year course to graduate music teachers. The course of study is now three years. In 1998 the College of Arts and Crafts and the Reykjavík College of Music emerged into the Iceland Academy of the Arts.

On the basis of a regulation from 1942, the Training College of Home Economics was founded, and in 1985 the school was made part of the University College of Education.

The University of Akureyri has offered a three year programme for compulsory school teachers since 1994.

On 1 January 1998, the University College of Education, Icelandic College for Pre-Primary

School teachers, Icelandic College of Social Pedagogy and Icelandic College of Physical Education and Sport were merged into one institution at university level, the Iceland University of Education.

Formal training of teachers at the University of Iceland began in 1934 with teachers of Icelandic. A course in pedagogy and didactics for teachers was first offered in 1951, and the first students graduated a year later. The programme was then under the auspices of the Faculty of Philosophy. With the foundation of a Faculty of Social Sciences in 1976, the course was transferred to that body. To qualify as a teacher at the upper secondary level a programme of 30 credits in pedagogy and didactics are required in addition to a B.A. or B.Sc. degree.

In 1975 the University College of Education offered for the first time a programme leading to full teaching qualifications for teachers of the arts and vocational subjects at the upper secondary level. This course of study has also been attended by unqualified instructors of academic subjects.

From the autumn of 1996 the University of Iceland has offered a two year M.A. programme in Education. This 60 credit programme emphasises research in education.

For in-service training, see [8.2.10.](#)

Bibliography: Barnavinafélagið Sumargjöf 25 ára 1924 - 11. apríl - 1949

Bibliography: Barnavinafélagið Sumargjöf 50 ára

Bibliography: Frá einveldi til lýðveldis

Bibliography: Fóstra

Bibliography: Iceland 1986, handbook

Bibliography: Saga Alþýðufræðslunnar á Íslandi

Bibliography: Saga Háskóla Íslands

Bibliography: The Educational System in Iceland

Institutions: University of Iceland

Institutions: Iceland Academy of the Arts

Institutions: Iceland University of Education

Institutions: The College of Arts and Crafts

Institutions: The Icelandic College for Pre-Primary School Teachers

Institutions: The Icelandic College of Physical Education and Sport

Institutions: The Icelandic College of Social Pedagogy

Institutions: The Training College of Home Economics

Institutions: The University of Akureyri

Legislation: Law on Iceland University of Education

Legislation: Law on Teachers Education and Training 1971

Legislation: Law on the Icelandic College for Pre-Primary School Teachers

Legislation: Law on the University of Akureyri

Legislation: Universities Act

---

### 8.1.2. Ongoing Debates and Future Developments

A new organisation of teacher education in Iceland University of Education will come into effect in the fall of 2007. The main change is that students will be able to start their M.A., M.S. or M.Ed. study directly after finishing B.A., B.S. or B.Ed. degree. There will be two

lines of study at the graduate level, a practical line and a line with emphasis on research.

A bill has been introduced to the Icelandic parliament, proposing fundamental changes in the education of teachers in pre-primary and compulsory schools. The bill proposes that the Iceland University of Education will emerge into the University of Iceland. If the bill is passed, the coalition will take place on 1 July 2008.

Institutions: University of Iceland

Institutions: Iceland University of Education

---

### 8.1.3. Specific Legislative Framework

Iceland has no comprehensive legislation pertaining to the training of teachers; instead such training is defined by the various laws that apply to individual institutions.

Law on the University College of Education was first passed in 1971. The tasks that come under its auspices were increased with a legislation from 1988 and minor amendments passed in 1994.

A new law on the Iceland University of Education was passed in 1997 and came into force on 1 January 1998.

According to this law the University College of Education, the Icelandic College for Pre-Primary School Teachers, the College of Physical Education in Iceland and the College of Social Pedagogy in Iceland have been amalgamated into Iceland University of Education. See [8.1.1](#). In 1998 the College of Arts and Crafts and the Reykjavík College of Music emerged into the Iceland Academy of the Arts.

A law concerning The University of Akureyri was passed in 1992 and a regulation which was issued in 1994 provides for an Education Department which offers a three year programme for compulsory school teachers.

The University of Iceland was founded in 1911 and operates according to a law from 1999.

Institutions: Iceland University of Education

Institutions: The College of Arts and Crafts

Institutions: The Icelandic College for Pre-Primary School Teachers

Institutions: The Icelandic College of Physical Education and Sport

Institutions: The Icelandic College of Social Pedagogy

Institutions: The University of Akureyri

Institutions: University of Iceland

Legislation: Law on Iceland University of Education

Legislation: Law on Teachers Education and Training 1971

Legislation: Law on the University of Akureyri

Legislation: Law on the University of Iceland.

Legislation: Regulation for the University of Akureyri

---

### 8.1.4. Institutions, Level and Models of Training

For details on institutions and models of training, please see subsections below [8.1.4.1.](#)  
[8.1.4.2.](#) [8.1.4.3.](#) and [8.1.4.4.](#)

---

#### 8.1.4.1. Institutions, Level and Models of Training for Teachers at Pre-primary Level

Training to become a pre-primary school teacher is a three year course (90 credits) offered by the Iceland University of Education and by the University of Akureyri, which graduate students with a B.Ed. degree (concurrent model). Iceland University of Education also qualifies pre-primary school teachers through a distance learning course which takes four years. Practical training is 13 credits at the Iceland University of Education and 14 credits in the University of Akureyri of the entire course.

Institutions: Iceland University of Education

Institutions: The University of Akureyri

---

#### 8.1.4.2. Institutions, Level and Models of Training for Teachers at Compulsory Level

A general course (concurrent model) which leads to a B.Ed. degree for teacher trainees who intend to teach at the compulsory level (primary and lower secondary level) takes three years (90 credits). This course is offered by two institutions: the Iceland University of Education and the University of Akureyri. The Iceland University of Education also graduates teachers through a distance learning programme which takes four years. In the general course for teacher trainees at the Iceland University of Education teaching practice accounts for 12 credits. In the general programme for teacher trainees at the University of Akureyri most teaching practice is carried out in one semester in the final year of the course and equals 13 credits.

The University of Iceland also offers a teaching certification programme that qualifies students who have a B.A. or B.Sc. degree to teach at the compulsory level. See also [8.1.1.](#) and [8.1.3.](#) The length of the practical training in the course is 10 weeks.

Institutions: Iceland University of Education

Institutions: The University of Akureyri

Institutions: University of Iceland

---

#### 8.1.4.3. Institutions, Level and Models of Training for Teachers at Upper Secondary Level

To qualify as a teacher at the upper secondary level 30 credits in pedagogy and didactics are required in addition to a B.A. or B.Sc. degree as a minimum (consecutive model) or to a diploma in vocational training. Three schools offer programmes of study that give such qualification the University of Iceland, the Iceland University of Education and the University of Akureyri. Teachers who have completed these programmes are also qualified to teach at the lower-secondary level.

Institutions: University of Iceland

Institutions: The University of Akureyri

Institutions: Iceland University of Education

---

#### 8.1.4.4. Institutions, Level and Models of Training for Teachers at Higher Education Level

Most of the teachers at the university level seek their education abroad. Senior lecturers and professors at institutes of higher education have a Ph.D., other university teachers are required to have at least an M.A. or comparable education in their subject. At the Iceland University of Education applicants must also have completed studies in pedagogy and didactics, or have a comparable pedagogical background.

Institutions: Iceland University of Education

---

#### 8.1.5. Admission Requirements

Those who have completed their matriculation examination from an upper secondary school have the right to apply to teacher training institutions. There are two teachers training models in Iceland, the concurrent model and the consecutive model. In institutions that provide teacher training, teaching takes place in the form of lectures, classroom sessions, seminars, tutorials, independent project work, group work, demonstration lessons, micro-teaching and teaching practice. As there are limited number of places available for teachers trainees at the teacher training institutions, the institutions use a selection procedure when admitting applicants to the course of training. The types of selection criteria used are good academic results with a particular emphasis on Icelandic, additional training, work experience, experience from working in social organisations and references.

General admission requirements to the Iceland University of Education is a matriculation examination. The University also allows for 10% of the available places to incoming students be allotted to students 25 years of age or older who are without a matriculation examination but have study or work experience which the school deems relevant and suitable. For the physical education programme there is an upper age limit, i.e. students over the age of 26 are not admitted. There is also emphasis on the students' athletic experience (programmes, courses or participation in sports).

The University of Akureyri requires a matriculation examination or comparable education for admission to its Education Department. Exemptions may be granted to students with work experience in the field and who also have satisfactory basic education.

To be admitted into the teacher training programme at the University of Iceland applicants must have a B.A. or a B.Sc. degree.

To be admitted into the education programme of the Iceland Academy of Art a matriculation examination or comparable education is required.

Anyone who has completed a B.A. or a B.Sc. degree in an academic subject has the right to apply for studies leading to teacher qualifications at the University of Iceland.

At the Iceland University of Education there is a special programme for unqualified teachers at the upper secondary level. This applies mainly to teachers with a diploma in vocational subjects. Only teachers who teach at this level with training in a particular subject who teach at this level but are without formal qualifications in pedagogy and didactics have the right to apply for admission to this programme. This programme is also offered as a distance learning course.



Bibliography: Kennsluskrá Háskóla Íslands  
Bibliography: Kennsluskrá Háskólans á Akureyri  
Bibliography: Kennsluskrá Kennaraháskólans  
Institutions: Iceland Academy of the Arts  
Institutions: Iceland University of Education  
Institutions: The University of Akureyri  
Institutions: University of Iceland

---

#### 8.1.6. Curriculum, Special Skills, Specialisation

In institutions that provide teacher training, teaching takes place in the form of lectures, classroom sessions, seminars, tutorials, independent project work, group work, demonstration lessons, micro-teaching and teaching practice.

The way in which teaching practice is arranged differs between the institutions and between the various courses of study as well.

Teacher trainers in each school are required to write a formal assessment of the trainees' performance.

---

##### 8.1.6.1. Curriculum, Special Skills, Specialisation in Initial Training for Pre-primary School Teachers

The initial training for pre-primary school teachers at the Iceland University of Education is three years (90 credits) leading to a BEd. degree. The Iceland University of Education also graduates pre-primary school teachers through a distance learning programme which takes four years. These courses of study are both academic and practical.

The 3 year pre-primary school teachers' programme at the Iceland University of Education consist of training in social science subjects (90 credits), Icelandic, health studies and ecology, art, music, and literature. Subjects taught at the school include psychology, pedagogy, sociology, Icelandic, history of education, behaviour studies, health studies, nutrition science, ecology, family law, children's literature, music, drama, diction and vocalism, art, children's drawing, puppetry, first aid, theme studies and vocational training. The school emphasises the importance of combining theoretical knowledge and methodological training in educational institutions. These practical training is 14 credits of the entire course.

The Educational Department of the University of Akureyri offers a 3 year course (90 credits) leading to a B.Ed for students wishing to become pre-primary school teachers. In their first year most courses the students take are the same as those students taking an initial teacher training course as compulsory teachers. The course of study is both academic and practical. Emphasis is however placed on the following: Working methods; the importance of play in the education and the development of the child; the interrelation of the arts to other activities carried out at the pre-primary school; field trips; education on the environment and the nature; the interrelation between various activities carried out at pre-primary school and the theoretical knowledge of the student. Practical training is equal to 14 credits of the entire course.

For pre-primary school teacher trainees, practical training takes place in pre-primary schools, school day-care centres or other educational establishments where the trainees are monitored by a supervisor.

Institutions: The University of Akureyri

Institutions: Iceland University of Education

---

#### 8.1.6.2. Curriculum, Special Skills, Specialisation in Initial Training for Compulsory School Teachers

Teacher trained at the Iceland University of Education and the University of Akureyri are trained according to a concurrent model. The structure and the curricula of the courses are determined by each individual institution.

Teachers trained in the concurrent model at the Iceland University of Education and the University of Akureyri are trained as semi-specialists and have permission to teach all subjects in compulsory education. Teachers trained in the consecutive model at the University of Iceland are specialists with permission to teach their specific subject at lower-secondary and upper secondary level.

A general programme (concurrent model) which leads to a B.Ed. degree for teacher trainees who intend to teach at the compulsory level (primary and lower secondary level) takes three years (90 credits). Subjects within the teacher training programme at the Iceland University of Education are divided into three groups: Pedagogy, didactics, and electives. The course in pedagogy mainly includes educational studies, the history of education, the sociology of education, educational philosophy, psychology, education theory, curriculum studies, the making of educational materials, teaching techniques and methodology. Areas of Information and communication technology (ICT) are compulsory in initial teacher training. The aim of the course is both to enlarge the personal knowledge that the teacher trainees have of ICT and to focus on particular teaching applications. A two credit course in ICT is compulsory as well as a 10 credit course in ICE in the core curriculum. Management and administration is in many ways included in several courses. Areas which are compulsory are organizational skills, time management and public relations. Integration of children with special needs is included in a compulsory four credit course.

During the final year of their studies, students complete a final essay on a pedagogical or an educational project of their own choice.

The course in didactics emphasises the importance of introducing students to the nature and contents of education at all the stages of compulsory school. Special attention is given to Icelandic, mathematics, social and natural sciences, arts and crafts subjects and environmental studies and to the different working methods that apply in the various stages of compulsory school. In the curriculum for the general training of teachers the aim is to link special education to all the main aspects of the course. Students are also given some opportunities to deepen their knowledge of the tasks that come under compulsory education through individual projects of their own choice.

Teaching practice is an important part of the didactics course, and care is taken to make certain that students become familiar with school activities and teaching at all levels of

compulsory schooling.

The third main component of the general course for teacher trainees at the Iceland University of Education are electives, of which there are 15, all in all: Icelandic, Danish, physics and chemistry, English, sociology, history, home economics, P.E., religious studies, geography, biology, art, woodwork, maths, textile studies and music. Each student may choose two subjects, each of 12 1/2 credits.

In the B. Ed. programme at the University of Akureyri special emphasis is given to Icelandic and maths, field studies and critical assessment of theories in education. Special fields are: a) general studies with an emphasis on the needs of rural schools, b) science, c) art d) music. The University offers a compulsory three credit course in ICT. There is also a special course of two credits in the integratin of children with special needs. Management and administration is included in several courses.

Students in the general programme for teacher trainees at the Iceland University of Education can choose P.E. as an optional course of study. The main subjects in that course are anatomy, physiology, sports psychology, special education, sports training studies, kinetics, methodology, history of sport, nutrition science, in addition to practical subjects which are mainly the types of sports that are taught at compulsory school. This course of study provides teaching qualifications at the compulsory school level.

Students in the general programme for teacher trainees at the Iceland University of Education can select music as an optional course of studies. The main components of the course are skills oriented subjects (playing the piano, vocalism, singing, ear training, playing the recorder), music theory, the history of music, musical education and conducting a choir.

The programme for P.E. teachers includes psychology, education, teaching practice, physiology and anatomy, kinetics, health studies, history of sport, music, first aid, P.E., gymnastics, swimming, ball games, athletics, dancing and games, in addition to electives. Students write a final essay on a subject related to sports and education.

The way in which teaching practice is arranged differs between institutions and between the various courses of study as well. Teacher trainers are required to write a formal assessment of the trainees' performance. All teacher training institutions emphasise teaching practice and micro-teaching as an important part of their programmes.

In the general course for teacher trainees at the Iceland University of Education, teaching practice accounts for 14 credits (one credit equals a full course of study, 40 to 60 hours, for one week). Students have teaching practice from one to four weeks during most semesters of their programme, in total 12 weeks of teaching practice.

In the general programme for teacher trainees at the University of Akureyri most teaching practice is carried out in one semester in the final year of the course. The students have 15 weeks of teaching practice.

Institutions: University of Iceland

Institutions: The University of Akureyri

Institutions: Iceland University of Education

### 8.1.6.3. Curriculum, Special Skills, Specialisation in Initial Training for Upper Secondary Teachers

Teachers trained at the University of Iceland are specialists, trained according to a consecutive model. They have a permission to teach their specific subject at lower and upper secondary level. One third of the education programme that qualifies teachers from the University of Iceland consists of micro-teaching and teaching practice in grades 8 - 10 of compulsory school and at an upper secondary school. The length of the professional training is 10 weeks.

At the University of Iceland there is a one year programme (30 credits) that qualifies teacher trainees who have as a minimum a B.A or a B.Sc. degree. The programme centres around courses on general educational theory, educational psychology, the educational theory of individual subjects, the sociology of education, developmental psychology, as well as studies relating to upper secondary schools, electives and practical training. This education qualifies the students to teach both at the compulsory and the upper secondary levels. Their preparation as teacher trainees, however, is geared to the last three years of compulsory school (lower secondary education) and to upper secondary school.

The programme that leads to full qualifications for unqualified teachers at the upper secondary level at the Iceland University of Education is 30 credits. It is a part-time course carried out over a period of two years. The programme is mainly based on courses in group dynamics, group psychology, the history of education, education and the community, methodology and statistics, educational theory, teaching techniques, educational psychology and developmental psychology, in addition to teaching practice. A similar programme is offered at the Education Department of the University of Akureyri.

The structure and the curricula of the courses are determined by each individual institution.

Institutions: University of Iceland

Institutions: The University of Akureyri

Institutions: Iceland University of Education

---

### 8.1.7. Evaluation, Certificates

Each institution is responsible for the criteria for evaluation and award of qualifications.

Evaluation in the programme for teacher trainees is based on written and/or oral exams, essays, small or large projects, oral, written or practical. Assessment is carried out by the staff of the institution in question, but in some cases extensive oral exams or projects require the presence of an external examiner. In the event of a dispute, students have the right to call for an external examiner. Formal assessment usually takes place at the end of each semester.

Grades are usually given on a scale from 0 to 10 (where 10 is the highest) in whole and half numbers. In order to pass any course a minimum grade of 5 is usually required.

The Ministry of Education Science and Culture gives a letter of accreditation to those who meet the qualification requirements that are specified in the law concerning the protection of the professional title and professional rights of compulsory school teachers, upper secondary school teachers and head teachers.

### 8.1.8. Alternative Training Pathways

Alternative training pathways are integrated in the consecutive and the concurrent models. For pre-primary teachers see [8.1.](#) for compulsory school and upper secondary teachers see [8.1.](#) and [8.1.5.](#)

---

## 8.2. Conditions of Service of Teachers

The working conditions of teachers vary considerably at different levels of the educational system.

Teachers at pre-primary school level are employed by the municipalities and employed according to a law on civil servants' wage contracts passed in 1986.

The same condition apply for compulsory school teachers and furthermore compulsory school teachers fall under the law on rights and duties of teachers and head teachers of 1996. A law from 1998 defines who is permitted to use the professional title teacher and head teacher, applies for both compulsory and upper secondary school teachers.

Teachers at upper secondary and tertiary levels are state employees and are employed according to the law of 1996 concerning the rights and duties of state employees and the law passed in 1986 concerning wage contracts for public employees.

Higher education teachers are state employees and are also employed according to the above mentioned law from 1986. A new law on universities from 2006 provides for rules concerning the evaluation of university teachers' qualifications. Further provision on qualifications of teachers are stated in a regulation on accreditation of higher education institutions and special legislation, statutes, charters or treaties for each higher education institution.

Legislation: Law on the protection of the professional titles and rights of compulsory school teachers, upper secondary school teachers and compulsory school head teachers

Legislation: Law on the rights and duties of state employees

Legislation: Law on wage contracts for public employees

Legislation: University Act

---

### 8.2.1. Historical Overview

For the historical overview of conditions of service of teachers, please refer to the subsections for each individual level.

---

#### 8.2.1.1. Historical Overview of Conditions of Service of Teachers at Pre-primary School Level

The first contract concerning wages and conditions for the pre-primary teachers was signed in 1948. In 1950, the first union for nursery teachers was founded. This Union of Nursery Teachers at Child Care Centres functioned until 1965 when a decision was made to change

the union into a professional association, the Icelandic Association of Teachers at Child Care Centres Fóstrufélag Íslands. As a result, negotiations concerning salaries and conditions became the responsibility of the unions of employees in the local municipalities. In 1988, the Icelandic Association of Teachers at Child Care Centres (now the Icelandic Association of Pre-Primary School Teachers, again became a trade union with full negotiating rights.

Bibliography: Fóstra

---

#### 8.2.1.2. Historical Overview of Conditions of Service of Teachers at Compulsory School Level

The oldest statutes that affect the work and career of teachers concern the foundation of a primary school in Reykjavík in 1860. Another statute, that was written for the school in 1862, states that only those who are twenty years of age and could qualify as clergymen in Iceland or have a degree from a teachers' training college can become teachers.

The first legal provisions concerning the career of primary school teachers are to be found in a law from 1919 on the appointment of teachers and their salaries. This law states that those who have a teaching certificate can be appointed to positions at primary and itinerant schools. The law also permitted people with certain qualifications to be appointed as teachers, such as those who had a matriculation examination or a letter of reference from their parish clergyman and the regional or school board. This exemption was abolished in 1936.

In 1934 a law was passed concerning the right to employ teachers of games and gymnastics in state-aided schools. Only those who had qualified in pedagogy, done a course in anatomy or gymnastics and completed their teaching practice could be employed.

A law on the protection of the professional title teacher and the professional rights of teachers was passed in 1986 and took effect on 1 January 1987. A new law was passed in 1998.

Following the law of 1995 concerning compulsory school, a new law was passed concerning the rights of compulsory school teachers and head teachers in 1996.

Bibliography: Saga Alþýðufræðslunnar á Íslandi

Legislation: Compulsory School Act

Legislation: Law concerning the rights and duties of compulsory school teachers and head teachers

Legislation: Law on the protection of the professional titles and rights of compulsory school teachers, upper secondary school teachers and compulsory school head teachers

Legislation: Law on the protection of the professional titles and rights of compulsory school teachers, upper secondary school teachers and compulsory school head teachers

---

#### 8.2.1.3. Historical Overview of Conditions of Service of Teachers at Upper Secondary Level

In the law on grammar schools from 1946, there were provisions to the effect that applicants for positions at grammar schools should be qualified as teachers in their subject and have completed their teaching practice. In the law on grammar schools that was passed in 1970, these provisions were further clarified. A law concerning the protection of the professional titles teacher and head teacher and the professional rights of teachers and head teachers was passed in 1986. A new law in this respect was passed in 1998.

Legislation: Law concerning the rights and duties of compulsory school teachers and head teachers

Legislation: Law on grammar schools

Legislation: Law on the protection of the professional titles and rights of compulsory school teachers, upper secondary school teachers and compulsory school head teachers

Legislation: Law on the protection of the professional titles and rights of compulsory school teachers, upper secondary school teachers and compulsory school head teachers

---

#### 8.2.1.4. Historical Overview of Conditions of Service of Teachers at Higher Education Level

The foundation of the University of Iceland in 1911 marks the beginning of the modern Icelandic system of higher education. University teachers are state employees and until 1986, their conditions of service were decided by the "State's salary arbitration court". In 1986 the first trade union of university teachers was founded. As there is not one single union for teachers at the university level, teachers at each institution have their own union, and each union is responsible for negotiating its own contract concerning salaries and working conditions. The conditions of service for teachers at the higher education level can vary between different educational institutions.

Since 1997 the State Salary Commission decides the salaries of professors.

Bibliography: Saga Háskóla Íslands

Institutions: University of Iceland

---

#### 8.2.2. Ongoing Debates and Future Developments

There is no ongoing debate concerning particular aspects of conditions of service in the teacher profession. The wage-contracts are relatively new and the Icelandic Teachers' Union has only just finished negotiations with the municipalities concerning higher salaries for compulsory school teachers in 2007 and 2008.

---

#### 8.2.3. Specific Legislative Framework

Pre-primary school teachers are all employees of the municipalities and come under the law on the rights and duties of public servants.

Compulsory school teachers are since August 1st. 1996 employees of the municipalities and come under a law concerning the rights and duties of compulsory school teachers and head teachers from 1996.

Upper secondary teachers are state employees and come under the law on the rights and duties of civil servants and under the law on upper secondary education.

University teachers are state employees and come under the law concerning the rights and duties of civil servants.

Various provisions that affect the work of university teachers are also to be found in the laws for the individual institutions.

According to the law on the rights and duties of civil servants, there are several laws that deal in one way or another with the working conditions of civil servants, for example a law on maternity leave, a law on the equality of the sexes and a law on pay negotiations for public servants. Other laws that affects this issue is a law on conditions and health and safety in the work place and law on pre-primary schools.

Legislation: Law concerning the rights and duties of compulsory school teachers and head teachers

Legislation: Law on conditions, health and safety in the workplace

Legislation: Law on maternity and parental leave

Legislation: Law on the Equality of the Sexes

Legislation: Law on the rights and duties of state employees

Legislation: Law on wage contracts for public employees

Legislation: Upper Secondary School Act

---

#### 8.2.4. Planning Policy

In 1999 the Ministry of Education, Science and Culture appointed a committee to define the need for teachers in compulsory (primary and lower secondary) schools to the year 2010 and make proposals about fulfilling the need. The committee investigated the necessity of renewal in the teaching profession, estimated the need on yearly basis, the number of fully qualified teachers were now employed and how many newly qualified teachers entered in the profession each year. The committee also took into consideration the development of number of pupils of this educational level and the fact that all compulsory schools were to operate on shingle shift basis from the school-year 2003-2004. The estimation on the development of number of pupils was based on statistical projections. The implementing measure taken in accordance with the committee's recommendations was to make more places available for teachers trainees at teacher training institutions.

Institutions: The Ministry of Education, Science and Culture

---

#### 8.2.5. Entry to the Profession

For details on entry to the teaching profession, please refer to the subdivisions for each individual level.

---

##### 8.2.5.1. Entry to the Profession at Pre-primary School Level

According to the law on pre-primary schools from 1994, the education staff is to be qualified pre-primary school teachers. Pre-primary school teachers are usually appointed by municipalities according to a contract that does not specify the length of their employment. There is, however, a mutual three-month period to give notice.

Bibliography: Kjarasamningur Launefndar sveitarfélaga og Kennarasambands Íslands vegna Félags leikskólakennara

Legislation: The Pre-Primary School Act

---



#### 8.2.5.2. Entry to the Profession at Compulsory School Level

Compulsory school teachers are employees of the municipalities. They are employed either to teach at a particular school or appointed to teach at schools in a given school district. They are hired on open recruitment procedure.

A person who wishes to teach at a compulsory school must meet the qualification requirements that are specified in the law concerning the protection of the professional title and professional rights of compulsory school teachers, upper secondary school teachers and head teachers. If those conditions are met, the teacher can be given a letter of accreditation by the Minister of Education, Science and Culture.

Although the above-mentioned law does not permit the hiring or the appointment of a teacher without full teaching qualifications, as specified in the law, it does contain a statute of exemption to this main rule. If no fully qualified person applies for a post at a given school after repeated advertisements, the head may apply for an exemption to hire an unqualified person. The application is sent to a special committee, which operates under the auspices of the Ministry of Education, Science and Culture. Only temporary exemptions, one year at a time, are allowed.

In addition to those teachers who have a formal contract of employment, there are sessional teachers at most schools.

Compulsory school teachers apply to a municipality for permanent appointment, and it is the municipality in question to decide if the appointment is to be made.

Compulsory school teachers are appointed to a particular school district. The law allows for teaching positions to be moved from one school to another within the same school district. A teacher who is permanently appointed to work in a particular school district cannot transfer such an appointment to another district. If a teacher wants to transfer from one school to another, a new permanent appointment must be sought.

The forms of appointment for legally qualified compulsory school teachers are as follows:

- An indeterminate appointment. The most common form of appointment for teachers nowadays is an indeterminate appointment. There is a mutual three-month period to give notice. In order to be permanently appointed at a compulsory school, the applicant must have the consent of the Ministry of Education, Science and Culture to use the title "compulsory school teacher" as a professional title.
- A temporary appointment. This form of an appointment for a teacher (qualified and non-qualified) is usually a one-year contract from 1 August to 31 July.

Non-qualified and sessional teachers are always given a temporary appointment.

A teacher who has been given a temporary appointment for two years continuously has the right to have it changed to an indeterminate appointment with a mutual three-month period to give notice.

Bibliography: Kjarasamningur Launanevndar sveitarfélaga og Kennarasambands Íslands fyrir Grunnskóla

Institutions: The Ministry of Education, Science and Culture

Legislation: Law on the protection of the professional titles and rights of compulsory school teachers, upper secondary school teachers and compulsory school head teachers

---

### 8.2.5.3. Entry to the Profession at Upper Secondary School Level

Upper secondary school teachers are employees of the state. They are employed to teach at a particular school and are hired on open recruitment procedure.

A person who wishes to teach at a upper secondary school must meet the qualification requirements that are specified in the law concerning the protection of the professional title and professional rights of upper secondary school teachers, upper secondary school teachers and head teachers. If those conditions are met, the teacher can be given a letter of accreditation by the Minister of Education, Science and Culture.

Although the above-mentioned law does not permit the hiring or the appointment of a teacher without full teaching qualifications, as specified in the law, it does contain a statute of exemption to this main rule. If no fully qualified person applies for a post at a given school after repeated advertisements, the head may apply for an exemption to hire an unqualified person. The application is sent to a special committee, which operates under the auspices of the Ministry Education, Science and Culture. Only temporary exemptions, one year at a time, are allowed.

In addition to those teachers who have a formal contract of employment, there are sessional teachers at most schools.

Upper secondary school teachers are appointed to a particular school. If a teacher wants to transfer from one school to another, a new appointment must be sought.

The forms of appointment for legally qualified upper secondary school teachers are as follows:

- An indeterminate appointment. The most common form of appointment for teachers nowadays is an indeterminate appointment. There is mutual three-month period to give notice. In order to be indeterminately appointed at a upper secondary school, the applicant must have the consent of the Ministry of Education, Science and Culture to use the term "upper secondary school "teacher" as a professional title.
- A temporary appointment. This form of an appointment for a teacher is usually a one-year contract from 1 August 31 July. Non-qualified and sessional teachers are always given a temporary appointment.

A teacher who has been given a temporary appointment for two years continuously has the right to have it changed to an indeterminate appointment with a mutual three-month period to give notice.

Bibliography: Kjarasamningur Kennarasambands Íslands og fjármálaráðherra f.h. ríkissjóðs

Institutions: The Ministry of Education, Science and Culture

Legislation: Law on the protection of the professional titles and rights of compulsory school teachers, upper secondary school teachers and compulsory school head teachers

---

#### 8.2.5.4. Entry to the Profession at Higher Education Level

In order to be appointed as a professor, associate professor, lecturer and adjunct lecturer, a master degree at least or equivalent knowledge and experience as reviewed by an evaluation committee, is required. Furthermore, they shall have demonstrated sufficient achievement in their work to enjoy recognition in the respective field of study. At the Iceland University of Education applicants must also have completed studies in education and methodology, or have a comparable pedagogical background.

The forms of appointment for legally qualified university teachers are as follows:

- permanent appointment,
- indeterminate appointment,
- temporary appointment.

In addition to those teachers who have a formal contract of employment, there are sessional teachers at most institutions.

- **Permanent Appointment for Teachers at the Higher Education Level:** At the higher education level special committees evaluate the qualifications and ability of applicants to be appointed to positions at that level. The Minister of Education, Science and Culture appoints university teachers other than professors, who are appointed by the President of Iceland. University teachers are appointed to a particular institution. There is no particular application period for a permanent appointment.
- **Indeterminate Appointment for Teachers at the Higher Education Level:** The most common form of appointment for teachers at higher education level nowadays is indeterminate appointment.
- **Temporary Appointment for Teachers at the Higher Education Level:** A temporary appointment for a teacher is a one-year contract, from 1 August 31 July.

Non-qualified and sessional teachers are always given a temporary appointment.

A teacher who has been given a temporary appointment for two years continuously has the right to have it changed to an indeterminate appointment with a mutual three-month period to give notice.

Institutions: Iceland University of Education

Legislation: University Act

---

#### 8.2.6. Professional Status

Teachers at all education level have the status of civil servants.

Most pre-primary school teachers are employed by the municipalities. The term "pre-primary school teacher" has not been defined as a professional title under the law.

Compulsory school teachers are employees of the municipalities. They are employed either to teach at a particular school or appointed to teach at schools in a given school district. They are hired on open recruitment procedure.

Upper secondary school teachers are state employees. At the upper secondary level, teachers are only appointed to individual schools.

In the law on the protection of the professional title compulsory school teacher, upper secondary school teacher and head teacher, which specifies the professional rights of these groups, there are provisions as to what kind of education a person must have to use the title compulsory or upper secondary school teacher.

There are no private temping agencies that employ teachers in Iceland. Compulsory school teachers are employees of the municipalities. They are employed either to teach at a particular school or appointed to teach at schools in a given school district. There have been several changes in the status of employment contracts over the years. Contracts have changed from being confined to teaching, assessment of pupils, preparation for teaching and a few meetings, and now involve a whole working plan in the school, from a week plan to a year plan. Overtime payment was linked to extra teaching but is now connected to the overall plan of each teacher, involving all the schoolwork to be done, and the salary has been adjusted accordingly. Compulsory teachers are employed either to teach at a particular school or appointed to teach at schools in a given school district. If a teacher wants to be transferred to another school within the same school-district, he would have to apply to the municipality for a transfer. This would be done in cooperation with the school head of both schools in question. There has been no threat to job security. Earlier teachers had to spend a probationary or trial year before they were appointed to a permanent post. Now the period is three months.

University teachers are state employees. At the higher education level teachers are appointed to individual institutions.

Legislation: Law on the protection of the professional titles and rights of compulsory school teachers, upper secondary school teachers and compulsory school head teachers

---

#### 8.2.7. Replacement Measures

In case that a teaching post remains vacant following ordinary recruitment procedure, the school head recruits additional staff following an open recruitment procedure.

Replacement measures for temporarily vacant teaching posts may both include the employing of new qualified teachers and the relying on educational staff in service, depending on the situation. If new teachers are employed for temporarily replacing teachers in the event of absence, the general rule is to advertise the post publicly. However, in the case of short-term absence it is possible to hire replacement teachers without an open recruitment procedure.

Bibliography: Key Topics in Education in Europe, volume 3, report I

---

#### 8.2.8. Supporting Measures for Teachers

Each school head in compulsory and upper secondary schools can alter the workload between teaching and other kinds of work within the school if necessary, with the teacher's consent. Workload can also change according to the teacher age and length of service. This means less teaching and other kind of school work to fill the obligations of a full-time positions.

New entrants to the teaching profession get special support and supervision in the school

where they teach for their first year of teaching. The type of support can be formal/informal meetings to discuss progress or problem areas, advice, information and informal feed-back, assistance in lesson planning and pupil appraisal. New entrants teach one hour less than other teachers their first year of teaching. Same support can be given to teachers in service when needed.

Bibliography: Key Topics in Education in Europe, volume 3, report II

---

#### 8.2.9. Evaluation of Teachers

In Iceland individual teachers are not the specific focus of evaluation.

---

#### 8.2.10. In-service Training

There is no single comprehensive legislation that applies to the in-service training of teachers and further education for them.

Provisions concerning in-service training for pre-primary, compulsory and upper secondary teachers are to be found in their wage-contracts, in laws and regulations for individual teacher training institutions and in laws on individual school levels.

In recent years emphasis has been placed on making it possible for teachers to have access to in-service training or further education. Teacher training institutions offer such programmes.

Educational authorities have adopted the policy of encouraging teachers themselves to bring about innovations and initiate developmental and in-service training projects. In-service training projects are often initiated by the associations of teachers of a particular subject and in some cases by local education offices.

According to laws on compulsory and upper secondary education there are provisions on sabbaticals for teachers. Teachers have to apply for leave of absence to the respective authorities. There are comparable provisions in the wage-contract between the municipalities and the Association of Icelandic Pre-primary School Teachers.

At university institutions, lecturers, senior lecturers and professors receive a one year sabbatical every six years or a six month sabbatical every three years. They also receive a yearly travel grant to travel abroad for research or continuing education.

The Department of In-service Training at University of Iceland is in charge of what the institution offers in the area of in-service training.

At Iceland University of Education further education is organised by the Faculty of Educational Science.

The in-service training of teachers is carried out by Iceland University of Education and the University of Akureyri. The associations of teachers of a particular subject also come into various in-service projects.

For further information on how in-service training is organised on each school level, see

8.2.10.1., 8.2.10.2. and 8.2.10.3.below.

Institutions: Iceland University of Education

Institutions: Institute of Continuing Education at the University of Iceland

Institutions: The University of Akureyri

Legislation: Compulsory School Act

Legislation: Law on Iceland University of Education

Legislation: The Pre-Primary School Act

Legislation: Law on the University of Akureyri

Legislation: Regulation for the University of Akureyri

Legislation: University Act

Legislation: Upper Secondary School Act

---

#### 8.2.10.1. In-service Training for Pre-primary School Teachers

Iceland University of Education provides since January 1998 in-service training and further education for pre-primary school teachers. In-service training for pre-primary school teachers is also provided by the University of Akureyri. In-service training is not compulsory for pre-primary school teachers.

Initially the Icelandic College for Pre-school Teachers was operated by a private benevolent organisation called Sumargjöf This organisation, and later the college, offered in-service training courses and other forms of education for pre-primary school teachers. In the mid eighties the College greatly strengthened its in-service programme and since then has offered a variety of courses in that area every year. The Association of Icelandic Pre-primary school Teachers and its predecessors have also been very active in matters of in-service training. Local municipalities have also organised in-service training courses and other forms of education for employees of educational institutions.

The in-service committee of the University of Akureyri is, among other things, to meet the in-service needs of specialist groups connected to the faculties of the university. Representatives from all the faculties at the university have seats on the in-service committee.

The Association of Icelandic Pre-primary school Teachers and local municipalities have also organised in-service training courses. In addition the University of Akureyri offers in-service training for pre-primary school teachers.

All pre-primary school teachers and pre-primary school head teachers who are employed can apply to be enrolled in an in-service course.

Those teachers who have full educational qualifications to teach at pre-primary schools, compulsory or upper secondary schools have the right to apply to enrol in the M.A. programmes of the Iceland University of Education. Applicants are required to have two years of work experience and are judged on the basis of their training and work in the field of education in relation to the subject in which they wish to specialise.

In recent years in-service training courses for pre-primary school teachers have included courses on ethics and education, options and choices in education, counselling and support for parents, administration, educational development, gender studies, guidance, behaviourism, music, ecology, and games and activities. Courses of this kind are usually from 12 to 30 hours

of instruction.

In courses for teachers, instruction is given in the form of lectures, through direct teaching, seminars, independent projects, group work, demonstration lessons and micro-teaching. Course work is often linked to problems that the participants have to solve when they have returned to school.

In further education the emphasis is placed on seminars, independent projects, development projects and research.

Teachers who attend short courses receive a certificate that confirms their participation. As a rule, 80% attendance is required. Course participation gives points to teachers that can, following certain rules, raise their salaries. See also [8.2.9](#). Those who have completed a programme of further studies get considerable salary raise and they improve their position in regard to obtaining senior or administrative posts or being employed by service-related institutions that are linked to the school system.

Institutions: The University of Akureyri

Institutions: Iceland University of Education

Institutions: The Icelandic College for Pre-Primary School Teachers

---

#### 8.2.10.2. In-service Training for Compulsory School Teachers

All teachers and head teachers who are employed can apply to be enrolled in in-service courses.

In-service training for teachers have remained optional in Iceland, but in the teachers wage-contract, they are expected to spend 150 hours per year in in-service training, preparation and other duties outside presence in school. The Department of In-Service Training of Iceland University of Education is in charge of in-service training at the institution.

Courses that have been offered include the teaching of very young learners, teaching techniques, information technology, computer networking, the writing of educational materials, the writing of exams, assessment, diction, drama and role-play, special education, teaching methods at different levels of the school system, gender and education, integration, education for immigrants, team teaching in small schools, school development projects, ecological studies, nature study field trips, ethics, field studies, reading and literacy, dancing and human rights studies.

Some courses are held in co-operation with teachers' organisations or their professional associations.

Teachers who attend short courses receive a certificate that confirms their participation. As a rule, 80% attendance is required. Course participation gives points to teachers that can, following certain rules, raise their salaries.

Some in-service training courses give credits. Participants are then required to hand in some particular piece of work that can be evaluated.

Teachers at the compulsory level can acquire further education from two institutions in

Iceland: The Iceland University of Education and the University of Iceland. It is also common for teachers to go abroad, in particular to Scandinavia, Britain or the United States for further education.

At the University of Iceland, students who have completed a B.A. or a B.Sc. degree, or equivalent training, have the right to apply to be enrolled in a post-graduate programme. The applicant is expected to have a 7.25 grade average, although that in itself does not automatically guarantee that the student will be accepted.

Those who have full educational qualifications to teach in compulsory schools have the right to apply to be enrolled in the M.A. programmes at the University of Iceland. Applicants are required to have two years of work experience. Applicants are judged on the basis of their training and work in the field of education in relation to the subject in which they wish to specialise. Students who wish to enrol in programmes of study that lead to an M.A. degree must have a grade point average of at least 7.25 on a scale of 10 (where 10 is the highest) to be admitted.

Since 1998 the Iceland University of Education has offered a course of study leading to a diploma in education and post-graduate programmes of studies leading to M.Ed. degree.

In courses for teachers, instruction is given in the form of lectures, through direct teaching, seminars, independent projects, group work, demonstration lessons and micro-teaching. Course work is often linked to problems that the participants have to solve when they have returned to school.

In post-graduate studies assessment varies, but it is usually based on exams and projects. In order to complete individual courses of further education at the Iceland University of Education, a minimum grade of 5 (on a scale of 10) is required. In order to complete the first part of the programme and obtain a diploma an average of 6 is required and in order to be admitted into the M. Ed. programme a minimum of 7.25 is required. To be awarded an M. Ed. degree this average (7.25) is also necessary, and the same applies to an M. Ed. thesis or an M. Ed. exam.

Those who have completed a programme of further studies improve their position regarding the possibility of obtaining senior or administrative posts or to be employed by service-related institutions that are linked to the school system.

A teacher with further training (a 30 credit course) in special education at Iceland University of Education is qualified to teach special education in an ordinary school and having completed a 60 credit course is qualified to teach in a special school.

Institutions: University of Iceland

Institutions: Iceland University of Education

---

### 8.2.10.3. In-service Training for Upper Secondary School Teachers

Law on upper secondary schools stipulates teachers' right to paid leave in order to improve their education or professional skills and guarantee funds for the in-service training of the heads of schools and teachers.



Teachers and heads of schools at upper secondary level apply to the Ministry of Education, Science and Culture for a one year leave of absence to be used to improve their knowledge and skills. Teachers must have held some form of appointment for at least five years in order to be granted a paid leave of absence to spend certain time on in-service courses offered.

The In-Service Training Institute of the University of Iceland offers in-service training of teachers at the upper secondary level in co-operation with the teachers unions.

Since 1987 a Joint Committee on In-service Training for Teachers at Upper Secondary Schools has been in charge of courses and administered the funds that have been available for the in-service training of teachers at this level. The committee is made up of representatives from the union of teachers in upper secondary schools, the Ministry of Culture and Education and the University of Iceland. The committee works in close co-operation with the Director of In-Service Training at the University and consults with various teachers' associations regarding individual courses.

In recent years four main options of in-service training have been available to upper secondary school teachers: a) subject based courses, b) itinerary courses, c) training projects that are jointly offered by the In-Service Training Institute of the University of Iceland and its counterpart at Iceland University of Education, d) field studies.

The Faculty of Social Sciences at the University of Iceland offers an M.A. in education. This is a 60 credit programme to be completed in four semesters. The course involves training in working scientifically. A final thesis, 30-40 credits, is the largest component of the programme. The programme is partly based on course work and partly on independent study which includes the study and discussion of materials under the guidance of a teacher. There are three kinds of courses. In the first place there are courses on methodology, secondly theory-based courses and finally traditional specific subject courses.

The Faculty also offers a course in educational counselling (32 credits) which is intended for teachers as well as others. Students are expected to have completed a B.Ed., a B.A. in education or psychology, or a B.A. in a particular subject as well as education. The programme is based on courses on educational and vocational counselling, interviewing techniques, assessment and evaluation and study problems, in addition to practical training, a final project and special projects. Furthermore the Faculty of Social Sciences offers a one year course for teachers and librarians in library and information technology.

The Faculty of Arts of the University of Iceland offers M.A. programmes and also an M.Pd. programme in Icelandic. The programme includes courses both in the study of Icelandic and education.

In courses for teachers, instruction is given in the form of lectures, through direct teaching, seminars, independent projects, group work, demonstration lessons and micro-teaching. Course work is often linked to problems that the participants have to solve when they have returned to school.

In further education the emphasis is placed on seminars, independent projects, development projects and research.

Teachers who attend short courses receive a certificate that confirms their participation. As a

rule, 80% attendance is required. Course participation gives points to teachers that can, following certain rules, raise their salaries.

Institutions: Institute of Continuing Education at the University of Iceland

Institutions: Social Science Research Institute

Institutions: The Ministry of Education, Science and Culture

Institutions: University of Iceland

Legislation: Upper Secondary School Act

---

#### 8.2.10.4. Further Education for Teachers at Universities

Teachers in higher educational institutions must usually go abroad for further training.

Lecturers, senior lecturers and professors receive a one year sabbatical every six years or a six months sabbatical every three years. They also receive a yearly travel grant to travel abroad for research or continuing education.

The contents and the structure of further education for teachers at the higher education level is mainly decided by the faculty councils and meetings of the faculties in question.

---

#### 8.2.11. Salaries

For details on salaries for teachers, please refer to the subdivisions below for each education level.

---

##### 8.2.11.1. Salaries of Pre-primary School Teachers

Most pre-primary school teachers are members of the Icelandic Association of Pre-Primary School Teachers and are paid according to contracts that are made between the association and the local municipality. The contract in function is valid from 1 October 2006 - 30 November 2008.

The pay groups into which pre-primary school teachers are put depend on their teaching qualifications and their education. Each pay group is divided into three steps. The step that an employee is put into depends on the age of the employee.

- 1st step: Younger than 34 years of age.
- 2nd step: From 35 years of age.
- 3rd step: From 40 years of age.

There are 70 pay groups. The pay group of an individual pre-primary school teacher depends on working responsibilities, administrative responsibilities, and additional education. Additional education can lead to a pay group promotion of three pay groups. See also [2.8.1](#).

Bibliography: Kjarasamningur Launefndar sveitarfélaga og Kennarasambands Íslands vegna Félags leikskólakennara

---

### 8.2.11.2. Salaries of Compulsory School Teachers

The salaries of compulsory teachers are paid according to a contract that was negotiated by their unions with the municipalities in 2005 and is valid until 31 December 2007. Compulsory school teachers are members of the Teachers' Trade Union of Iceland.

In essence the salary system contains five predominant components. First, the different professional titles within the school and the possibilities for advancement for teachers. Second, salary funds in the schools that the school head allocates according to workload and competence of teachers. Third, age-related salary increments if the teacher is active in the school's in-service plans. Fourth, salary scale increments because of a further education. Fifth, salary scale increment according to the teacher age. There are 19 pay-groups that qualified compulsory school teachers can be placed into. It depends on teachers' education, both initial education and further education into which group they are placed. There are additional two more pay groups for unqualified teachers. Within each pay group there are four steps. It depends on age and/or years of employment where a teacher is placed on the scale.

- 1st step: Younger than 30 years of age.
- 2nd step: From 30 years of age.
- 3rd step: From 40 years of age.
- 4th step: From 45 years of age.

Special payments are made for certain tasks, assignments and responsibilities, for example being a form teacher, being a head of a particular year, being a subject head, being a special teacher and educational counsellor.

Some municipalities, where there is a shortage of teachers, offer various fringe benefits such as inexpensive housing, re-location grants and higher salaries in order to attract teachers.

Head teachers of compulsory schools are put into pay groups on the basis of a scale which converts the number of pupils at their school into points. See also [2.8.2.](#)

Bibliography: Kjarasamningur Launefndar sveitarfélaga og Kennarasambands Íslands fyrir Grunnskóla

---

### 8.2.11.3. Salaries of Upper Secondary Teachers

Teachers at the upper secondary level are state employees and as such are subject to negotiations concerning salaries and benefits between the State Negotiating Committee and the teachers' trade unions. Upper secondary school teachers belong to the Teachers' Trade Union of Iceland. The salaries of upper secondary teachers are paid according to a contract that was negotiated by their unions with the state in 2005 and is valid until 30 April 2008.

There are 48 pay groups that upper secondary school teachers can be placed into. It depends on teachers' education, both initial education and further education into which group they are placed. Within each pay group there are six scales.

Special payments are made for certain tasks and assignments, for example being a form teacher, a department head, and the marking of written assignments.

Upper secondary school teachers have some possibilities of adding to their income by teaching more hours than they are required, but the possibility of overtime of this kind varies greatly between schools.

Head teachers do not belong to the teachers' unions. Their salaries are determined by a special committee, depending partly on the size and complexity of the school in question. See also [2.8.3.](#)

Bibliography: Kjarasamningur Kennarasambands Íslands og fjármálaráðherra f.h. ríkissjóðs

---

#### 8.2.11.4. Salaries of Higher Education Teachers

Sessional teachers, lecturers and senior lectures at state institutions at the higher education level are subject to negotiations concerning salaries and benefits between the State Negotiating Committee and the teachers' trade unions. According to a recent arrangement, professors are in a special position and are to receive a salary according to a decision made by the State Salary Commission. The salary of sessional teachers is based on the salary of lecturers and senior lecturers excluding research duties.

The salary of lecturers and senior lecturers is based on two frames: B and C. Within each frame there are six pay scales, movement between scales giving a pay increase. Lecturers and senior lecturers are placed in a particular scale according to age. Teachers can also go up by one pay group within a given frame according to certain rules that have been made in a special contract within each institution. Thus faculties and institutions at the University of Iceland can set their own regulations on points given for research, teaching and administration all of which have an effect on pay increases within and between frames. In order to move from one frame (professional title) to another, demands are made concerning research which is evaluated by a committee of specialists to determine whether the person qualifies for promotion. When a senior lecturer is promoted to professor their salary is determined by the State Salary Commission. A university teacher is expected as a rule to spend 40% of his work on research, 48% on teaching and 12% on administration. A faculty may, however, change the proportional weight of research, teaching and administration for an individual teacher for a given period of time. See also [2.8.4.](#)

---

#### 8.2.12. Working Time and Holidays

For details on working time and holidays for teachers, please refer to the subdivisions below for each individual education level.

---

##### 8.2.12.1. The Working Time and Holidays of Pre-primary School Teachers

Pre-primary school teachers work a 40-hour week. They are expected to spend four out of the forty hours on preparation. The preparation time is intended for making work plans, meeting with parents, analysing behaviour patterns and preparing field trips.

The length of pre-school teachers' summer holidays varies from 24 to 30 work days depending on age or years of employment.

Bibliography: Kjarasamningur Launanevndar sveitarfélaga og Kennarasambands Íslands vegna Félags leikskólakennara

8.2.12.2. The Working Time and Holidays of Compulsory School Teachers

The yearly work load of compulsory school teachers is 1,800 hours which is comparable to other professions, although their work is divided into fewer weeks because of the time frame in which compulsory schools operate, i.e. nine and a half month a year.

The school year for pupils is 180 days. Schools can put a winter break in their school working guide and decide separately when to start the school year, i.e. within the period 20 August to 10 June.

Teachers' working time according to the wage-contract from 2005:

Teaching		
Full time teaching	27 lessons per week	(40 minutes)
55 years old	24 lessons per week	(40 minutes)
60 years old	19 lessons per week	(40 minutes)

Weekly teaching (28 lessons)	18.00 hours
Coffee break	2.8 hours
Lesson break	2.92 hours
Administration	9.14 hours
Preparation and related work	10 hours
Preparation out of school hours	64
Working time per week	42.86 hours
Working time per year	42.86x 37 weeks =1585.82 hours

In-service training, preparation and other duties outside presence time	150 hours per year
Preparation and work before and after the school year under management of the school head	64 hours per year
Total working time	1582.82+150+64 = 1800 hours

During the months of June to August there are 12 days that teachers must work at school. These 12 days are included in the yearly workload of compulsory teachers, i.e. the 1800 hours they are required to work per year. In addition they are expected to spend time (150 hours) on preparation and in-service training. The actual summer holiday is thus 24-30 days, depending on years of employment, which is similar to other public employees.

Bibliography: Kjarasamningur Launanevndar sveitarfélaga og Kennarasambands Íslands fyrir Grunnskóla

8.2.12.3. Working Time and Holidays of Upper Secondary Teachers

The yearly work load of upper secondary school teachers is 1,800 hours, and is thus comparable to other professions although their work is divided into fewer weeks due to the time frame in which upper secondary schools operate. Upper secondary schools operate for nine months, the school year is normally from 22 August to 31 May. There are 145 teaching days a year, and 30 days are set aside for examinations. In addition, teachers in upper secondary schools attend school 4 days, before and after the school year commences. According to the wage-contract between the state and the Upper Secondary Teachers' Union from 2005, upper secondary teachers work 40 hours per week. The work load is divided into for example work at school under the head teacher's supervision, teaching and teaching-

related work organised by the teacher himself, work during the six examination weeks, and further education outside the school year (70 hours). The head teacher may negotiate with individual teachers to undertake work related for example to innovation, distance-learning and ICT.

The actual summer holiday of an upper secondary school teacher is 24-30 days, depending on years of employment, similar to other public employees. The Christmas holiday is from 21 December to 3 January and the Easter holidays is from Palm Sunday and up to and including the Tuesday after Easter. Other holidays are national holidays. These are the First Day of Summer (a Thursday in late April), 1 May, Ascension day and Whit Monday.

Bibliography: Kjarasamningur Kennarasambands Íslands og fjármálaráðherra f.h. ríkissjóðs

---

#### 8.2.12.4. The Working Time and Holidays of Teachers at the Higher Education Level

Iceland University of Education may be taken as an example of the work load of university teachers. At that institution the annual work load of a teacher is reckoned to be 1,650 hours at the beginning of his or her career, 1,626 hours after 10 years of employment or when the teacher is 40, and 1,602 hours after 18 years of employment or when the teacher is 50. 48% of this work load is spent on teaching, 12% on administration and 40% on research. The work load of full-time sessionals is 65% on teaching and 35% on administration and research. A maximum of 720 hours of overtime for teaching is paid per year.

In most university institutions, teaching and administrative duties of university teachers can be reduced or cancelled altogether for one or two semesters at a time to make it possible for them to spend more time on their research.

Teachers at the higher education level get the same holidays as the general public. The length of university teachers' annual holidays is, as a minimum, equivalent to 24 working days for those who have been employed full-time for a year.

Institutions: Iceland University of Education

---

#### 8.2.13. Promotion, Advancement

For details on promotion and advancement for teachers, please refer to the subdivisions below for each individual education level.

---

##### 8.2.13.1. Promotion, Advancement for Teachers at Pre-primary Level

There is no formal system of promotion for teachers at the pre-primary school level. Pre-school teachers can advance in their profession by applying for more senior posts, such as that of a department supervisor, assistant head teacher, or a head of a pre-primary school. They can also become pre-primary school representatives, working for one or more municipalities.

---

##### 8.2.13.2. Promotion, Advancement for Teachers at Compulsory Level

A compulsory school teacher has the possibility of becoming an assistant head or the head of a school. Promotion of this kind does not take place automatically. The posts in question are

advertised. Formal administrative training is not a prerequisite for these posts. It is, however, considered to be an advantage if the applicant has administrative training or administrative experience.

Each municipality appoints head teachers after having received proposals and references from the school board.

To help make their vacant posts more attractive, the municipalities have offered incentives such as cheap housing, free removal, supervision that boost salaries, and overtime work.

---

#### 8.2.13.3. Promotion, Advancement for Teachers at Upper Secondary Level

An upper secondary school teacher has the possibility of becoming a head teacher or an assistant head teacher. He can also become an administrative director of the unit-credit system or a teaching supervisor (supervisor of individual subjects or fields of study) or a department head. The recruitment for both these posts follows an open recruitment procedure. It is the Ministry of Education, Science and Culture that appoints the head teacher after having consulted the school board. The recruitment of the assistant head teacher is the responsibility of the head teacher and the school board.

The posts of administrative directors of the unit-credit system teaching supervisors (supervisors of individual subjects or field of study) or department heads, are advertised within each school and decided by the school head in consultation with the school board.

Institutions: The Ministry of Education, Science and Culture

---

#### 8.2.13.4. Promotion, Advancement for Teachers at Higher Education Level

In most institutions at the higher education level there is a tenure-track system, and Iceland University of Education may be taken as an example of how such a system works. A lecturer who has taught at the university for three years may apply to be promoted to senior lecturer, and after five years he or she has the right to insist that this promotion request be dealt with. A senior lecturer who has had a full-time position for five years can apply to become a professor. A three-member committee is appointed to evaluate the qualifications and the ability of the applicant. The conclusion of the evaluating committee is binding. There is a secret ballot by members of the school council as to whether the applicant's promotion is to be recommended.

Deans, university councils and faculty councils assign various important tasks to teachers. These include administering projects, being subject or department heads and heading research or service institutes that operate on behalf of the schools.

Institutions: Iceland University of Education

---

#### 8.2.14. Transfers

For details on transfer for teachers, please refer to the subdivisions below for each individual education level.

---

#### 8.2.14.1. Transfers at Pre-primary Level

In most cases a pre-primary school teacher is hired by the municipality to a particular school. It is relatively easy for pre-primary school teachers to transfer from one pre-primary school to another.

---

#### 8.2.14.2. Transfers at Compulsory Level

Compulsory school teachers are employed either to teach at a particular school or appointed to teach at schools in a given school district. Compulsory school teachers who wish to transfer to another school can apply for a position that has been advertised at that school. At the compulsory school level, there is a shortage of teachers in many rural areas. Therefore if a teacher applies for a transfer to a rural area, he usually gets the position. In urban areas, there is less mobility in the teaching profession. If a teacher wants to be transferred to another school within the same school-district, he would have to apply to the municipality for a transfer. This would be done in cooperation with the school head of both schools in questions. There has been no threaten to job security. Earlier teachers had to spend a probationary or trial year before they were appointed to a permanent post, see [8.2.5.2](#). Now the period is three months.

---

#### 8.2.14.3. Transfers at Upper Secondary Level

Upper secondary school teachers who wish to transfer must apply for a position at another school.

---

#### 8.2.14.4. Transfers at Higher Education Level

University teachers who wish to transfer to another institution must apply for a position at another institution.

---

#### 8.2.15. Dismissal

The law concerning the rights and duties of public employees contains articles concerning dismissal. However, it is very rare that public servants are dismissed, and it may be said that in most cases only gross neglect in the work performance of the employee would lead to dismissal. If a public employee is suspected of gross neglect in his or her work, the employee may be temporarily suspended while the case is investigated, and during that time the employee retains half of his or her salary and is fully reimbursed if the investigation leads to the conclusion that there were insufficient grounds for dismissal.

A person who has been appointed to a position can resign if three months' notice is given. If unforeseeable circumstances make the employee unable to do his or her job, shorter notice is permitted. A public employee must be released from his contract if this is sought in a legal manner. If, however, so many employees seek to be released from their contracts at the same time, or at about the same time, that there would be chaos in their field of employment if the request of each of them was granted, a government body may insist on longer notice of resignation, i.e. up to six months.



If the position of a teacher who has been appointed is abolished and the employee has been in the service of the state for less than fifteen years, the teacher has a right to retain the same salary for up to six months from the time when his or her employment ended. If the employee's service has been longer than fifteen years and provided that he or she does not reject another comparable position with the state in the meantime, the employee retains the same salary for twelve months. If the same position is re-established within five years, the teacher normally has a right to it.

Changes in the work of university teachers lie primarily in the possibilities that the tenure track system gives, in addition to job opportunities that are linked to various administrative and seniority posts within university institutions.

Legislation: Law on the rights and duties of state employees

---

#### 8.2.16. Retirement and Pensions

Pensions for pre-primary school teachers are comparable to those of compulsory, upper secondary and university teachers, although pre-primary school teachers belong to a different pension fund.

Although compulsory school teachers are employed by the municipalities they belong to the Civil Servants' Pension Fund.

In December 1997 the Civil Servants Pension Fund adopted a new system of payment for new civil servants. Other employees had to choose between continuing in the old system or transferring to the new one. In the old system 10% of the wages of the members of the Civil Servants' Pension Fund is paid into the fund in such a way that the employee pays 4% and the employer 6%. No payments are made for overtime work. Payments stop after a full time member has contributed to the fund for 32 years. Members receive a pension which is based on the basic salary that they received for their last form of employment, and the pension changes in relation to the salary changes that occur within that field of employment. If a member of the fund had a higher paid position for at least ten years, the pension is based on the higher paid position.

In general, employers pay into the fund for 32 years. Full time teachers acquire 2% worth of pension rights per year which means that if they have paid into the fund for 32 years, their pension will be 64% of their full-time salary. Any member of the Civil Servants' Pension Fund who has reached the age of 65 and retired has a right to a pension. Members who have been paying into the fund for 32 years before they reach the age of 65 have the right to be paid a pension from the fund. 1% worth of pension rights is added to that person's pension right for every year of full employment up to the age of 65. After that, 2% of pension rights are added for each year of full-time employment up to the age of 70. According to the "95-year rule" an employee can retire at the age of 60 if the combined age of the person and the time that he/she has been paying dues adds up to 95 years.

The two systems are supposed to be equally valuable in terms of pension rights in general. In the new system, however, payments are also made for overtime work. The percentage paid by the employer is 11,5% and 4% by the employee. In the new system, the employees can retire between the age of 60 to 70. If teachers retire between the age of 60 and 65, their pension

decreases by 6% for each year not worked after the age of 60 to 65. On the other hand, if teachers retire between the ages of 65 and 70, an extra 6% is added to their pension for each extra year worked after the age of 65.

---

### 8.3. School Administrative and/or Management Staff

For descriptions of different types of school administrative and management staff, please see [2.6.4](#). The requirements for appointments as school head and conditions of service by each education level are described in the subdivisions below.

---

#### 8.3.1. Requirements for Appointment as a Head Teacher

For the historical overview of conditions of service for school administrative and/or management staff, please see [8.3.1.1.](#), [8.3.1.2.](#), [8.3.1.3.](#) and [8.3.1.4.](#)

---

##### 8.3.1.1. Requirements for Appointment as a Head Teacher in a Pre-primary School

The qualifications required to become a head teacher of a pre-primary school are those of teachers at the relevant level, see [8.1.](#) and [8.1.6.1.](#) In many cases, the qualification in the field of school administration is preferred. A head teacher responsibilities comprise administrative, financial and educational tasks. It is a matter of negotiation between the head teacher of a pre-primary school and the local municipality concerned whether the he also teaches. The head teacher of a pre-primary school is employed and appointed by the municipalities on the basis of an open recruitment procedure (applications/interviews). The selection process varies according to the rules laid down by each municipality, which determines this procedure. They have the status of civil servants. The same qualifications are required of the substitute/assistant to the head teacher and the recruitment procedure is the same.

---

##### 8.3.1.2. Requirements for Appointment as a Head Teacher in a Compulsory School

The qualifications required to become a head teacher in a compulsory school are those of teachers at the relevant levels, see [8.1.](#) and [8.1.6.2.](#) and teaching experience at the relevant levels. Their tasks comprise administrative, financial and educational responsibilities. They are selected on the basis of an open recruitment procedure (applications/interviews) which varies according to the rules laid down by each municipality, which determines the term of the appointment. The teaching duties of the head teacher depends on the number of pupils in the school. The head teacher is employed by the municipality and has civil servant status. The same qualifications are required of a assistant head teacher in a compulsory school and the recruitment procedure is the same. Their tasks and duties are defined by head teacher in each school.

---

##### 8.3.1.3. Requirements for Appointment as a Head Teacher in a Upper Secondary School

The qualifications required to become a head teacher in a upper secondary school those of teachers at the relevant levels, see [8.1.](#) and [8.1.6.3.](#) and teaching experience at the relevant levels. Experience in teaching, administration and further qualifications in school

administration are also taken into account. The head teachers in upper secondary schools ensure that schools operate in accordance with laws, regulations, national curriculum guidelines and other existing statutes and are also responsible for ensuring compliance with the school budget. They have no teaching duties. The head teacher is the executive officer of the school board. (S)he employs teachers, school counsellors, school librarians, and other members of staff, on the recommendation of the board. They are employed for a 5-year period and appointed by the Minister of Education, Science and Culture on the basis of an open recruitment procedure (applications and recommendation from the school board). All vacant posts must be advertised. The staff concerned have the status of civil servants. The qualifications required of an assistant head teacher in upper secondary education school are the same as those of teachers at the relevant level. They are selected on the basis of an open recruitment procedure (applications after advertisement of a vacant post). They are appointed to their post for a 5 year period by head teacher after consulting with the school board. S(he) may represent the head teacher in his or her absence and has a status of civil servants. The teaching duties of the substitute depends on the number of pupils in the school.

The head teacher in upper secondary school can select and appoint a *áfangastjóri* within the school after having advertised the post within the school. *Áfangastjóri* is appointed for a four year period. He is responsible for pupils' records and assessment within the unit credit system. He also has teaching obligations. They have civil servants status.

Institutions: The Ministry of Education, Science and Culture

---

#### 8.3.1.4. Requirements for Appointment as a rector in a Tertiary Education Institution

Rector *rektor* is a head of tertiary education institutions. At state institutions only full-time professor *prófessor* or associate professor *dósent* qualify as candidates for this post. (S)he assumes administrative, educational and financial responsibility for the institution, and represents it in dealings with outside players. *Rektor* is appointed and employed for a 5-year period by the Minister of Education, Science and Culture on the basis of the results of an election (all full-time staff and students of the institution have a right to vote). They have the status of civil servants

The head of university faculty in a tertiary education institution has a administrative, financial and educational responsibility within the faculty. Each faculty (full-time teaching staff and student representatives) elects its own head of faculty. To be elected as a head of a faculty one has to be a full-time professor *prófessor* or a associate professor *dósent* at the relevant faculty. They are employed by the state and have civil servant status.

---

#### 8.3.2. Conditions of Service

For details on conditions of service for school administrative and management staff, please refer to the subdivisions below for further information.

---

##### 8.3.2.1. Historical Overview of Conditions of Service

For the historical overview of conditions of service for school administrative and/or management staff, please see [8.2.1.1.](#), [8.2.1.2.](#) and [8.2.1.3.](#) The specific legislative framework regarding school heads is a part of the general legislative framework for teachers, see [8.2.3.](#)

All school heads and teachers who are employed at pre-primary, compulsory and upper secondary level, can apply to be enrolled in in-service courses, for further information please see [8.2.10.1.](#), [8.2.10.2.](#) and [8.2.10.3.](#) There is no single comprehensive legislation that applies to the in-service training of teachers and further education for the higher education level. Provisions concerning these issues are found in laws and regulations for the individual training institutions and in laws on each individual education level.

For details on working time and holidays for each individual education level, please see [8.2.12.1.](#), [8.2.12.2.](#) and [8.2.12.3.](#) For details on retirement for each individual education level, see [8.2.16.](#)

---

#### 8.4. Staff involved in Monitoring Educational Quality

As a part of its general supervisory responsibilities, the Ministry of Education, Science and Culture is to evaluate schools' activities. Such evaluations are carried out by an outside party and can cover specific aspects of school activities, e.g. instruction in a specific subject or a subject field, or can involve an overall evaluation of the activities of individual schools.

There are two approaches to external evaluation organised by the Ministry of Education, Science and Culture, evaluation of schools or specific aspects of school activities and evaluation of internal evaluation methods. Several methods may be used for internal evaluation since it is the responsibility of individual schools to choose their own methods and procedures.

The current school acts concerning compulsory and upper secondary schools (from 1995 and 1996) include clear provisions for schools to introduce internal methods to evaluate their own work, including teaching, administration and management. According to the Acts, the schools themselves are free to determine what methods they use for internal evaluation. The Acts also make provision for an evaluation to be carried out at five-year intervals by an outside party on the initiative of Ministry of Education of the internal evaluation methods used by schools.

The approaches to evaluation of compulsory and secondary schools follow the same principles. The approaches to evaluation of pre-schools are similar, with the exception that there is only one aspect of external evaluation. The pre-schools' internal evaluation methods are not subject to external evaluation.

The same laws and regulations apply to schools that offer special education as to other schools.

The Ministry of Education, Science and Culture has several means to ensure the quality of study programmes offered by the higher education institutions. According to the University Act and a regulation regarding quality control of university instruction, higher education institutions are obliged to set up a formal internal quality system. This consists of a systematic evaluation of teachers' work, for example, assessment of teaching by students, teachers' self-evaluation and the formal reaction of the governing body in question, with the purpose of improving the quality of teaching. Higher education institutions have to send a description of their quality systems to the Ministry of Education, Science and Culture and publish them officially. The Ministry of Education can also take the initiative to conduct an external evaluation. For this task an external, independent group of international specialists is

appointed to implement the evaluation.

Institutions: The Ministry of Education, Science and Culture

Legislation: Compulsory School Act

Legislation: Rules on Quality Control in Higher Education

Legislation: University Act

Legislation: Upper Secondary School Act

---

#### 8.4.1. Requirements for Appointment as an Inspector

This section does not apply to the Icelandic school system.

---

#### 8.4.2. Conditions of Service

See [8.4.1.](#)

---

### 8.5. Educational Staff responsible for Support and Guidance

The qualifications of the educational support staff for teachers at pre-primary education institutions is usually similar to that of teachers at the relevant level, but they may have further qualifications in the same field. Their task is to assist the school head and teacher in organising the work of school. They do not teach. They are appointed on the basis of an open recruitment procedure, employed by the municipality and have the status of civil servants.

The local education offices hire educational support staff to assist teachers at compulsory education institutions. Their task is to assist and advise teachers in organizing the work of school. They are usually trained as teachers at the relevant level and may have further education in that field. They are employed by the municipality in question and have the status of civil servants. They are appointed on the basis of an open recruitment procedure.

Educational counsellors at compulsory, upper secondary schools and tertiary education institutions help students with their choices in regard to education and future employment, provide educational and vocational orientation and advise pupils in personal matters.

Their main task is to assist pupils/students with study related problems and provide them with educational guidance and advice. They are usually educated as teachers at the relevant level and have further qualifications in educational counselling (one year programme at University of Iceland).

- At compulsory level, they are employed by the municipality on the basis of an open recruitment procedure and have the status of civil servants. They can either work at one school or several schools.
- At upper secondary level, they are appointed by the school head on the basis of an open recruitment procedure. The state is their employer and they have the status of civil servants.
- In tertiary institutions, educational counsellors are part of the administration team and are recruited on the basis of an open recruitment procedure (application/interviews). They are employed by the institution. They have the status of civil servants.

- In upper secondary schools and higher education institutions educational counsellors are usually placed in the schools/institutions. In primary and lower secondary schools they can serve one or more schools.

Teachers in special education are hired by most compulsory and upper secondary schools to teach and to advise.

---

## 8.6. Other Educational Staff or Staff working with Schools

The following personnel, other than teachers, do work that relates to education in schools:

- Speech therapists are also hired by many compulsory schools or work within an educational region serving more than one school.
- Social Pedagogues are often hired to look after students with special needs.
- Psychologists, education advisors and teachers in special education are often hired by local education offices.
- Librarians with teaching qualifications are employed to run the school

Individual teachers in compulsory and upper secondary schools are also in charge of various tasks related to teaching such as the supervision of equipment, dorms, and social life or hobbies of the students. These tasks are usually carried out along with teaching duties in overtime.

Librarians with teaching qualifications are employed to run the school libraries.

Local education offices have psychologists, education advisors and teachers in special education.

At the pre-primary school level the parents are responsible for the health care of the children. In compulsory schools doctors and nurses provide health care. In most upper secondary schools doctors provide health care.

At the higher education level the main personnel, who do work that relates to education at that level are people in the posts of specialists, heads of university institutes, educational counsellors, librarians, computer specialists and directors of examinations and teaching.

---

## 8.7. Statistics

Statistics for different levels are to be found in subdivisions [8.7.1.](#) to [8.7.4.](#)

---

### 8.7.1. Pre-primary level 2005

Educational staff as % of total labour force
3%

Statistics Iceland 2006

Full-time equivalents as % of educational staff at pre-primary level
83%

Educational personnel by gender (%)

Males	Females
3%	97%

School management staff by gender (%)

	Males	Females
Head teacher	1%	99%
Assistant head teacher	1%	99%
Heads of department	4%	96%

Educational personnel by age groups (%)

Younger than 20	20 - 29	30 - 39	40 - 49	50 - 59	60 - 66	67 and older
2.5%	32.4%	27.5%	22.7%	12.4%	2.3%	0.2%

Any member of the pension fund for educational personnel at pre-primary level who have reached the age of 65 has a right to a pension and retire latest at the age of 70.

According to the 95 – year rule, an employee can retire at the age of 60 if the combined age of the person and the time that he/she has been paying dues to the pension fund adds up to 95 years. Hence there are 0.2% of the educational staff that indisputably has a right to a pension, and 2.3% that may already have earned the right to retire.

Statistics Iceland 2006

Bibliography: Landshagir 2006  
Institutions: Statistics Iceland

## 8.7.2. Compulsory Education level 2005

Educational staff as	
	4,5%
Full-time equivalents as % of educational staff at compulsory level	
	91,5%

educational personnel by gender (%)

	Males	Females
	19%	81%

School management staff by gender (%)

	Males	Females
Headmaster	51%	49%
Assistant headmaster	38%	63%

Educational personnel by age groups (%)

Younger than 24	25-29	30-34	35-39	40-44	45-49	50-54	55-59	60-64	65 and older
2%	10%	14%	15%	15%	14%	15%	9%	4%	2%

Any member of the Civil Servants Pension Fund who have reached the age of 65 has a right to a pension and retire latest at the age of 70.

According to the 95 – year rule, an employee can retire at the age of 60 if the combined age of the person and the time that he/she has been paying dues to the pension fund adds up to 95 years. Hence there are 2% of the educational staff that indisputably has a right to a pension, and 4% that may already have earned the right to retire.

Source: Statistics Iceland 2006



Bibliography: Landshagir 2006  
Institutions: Statistics Iceland

## 8.7.3. Upper-secondary Level

### Upper secondary level 2005

Educational staff as % of total labour force	
	1,5%
Full-time equivalents as % of educational staff at upper secondary level	
	98,8%

Source: Statistics Iceland 2006

Educational personnel by gender (%)

	Males	Females
	49%	51%

School management staff by gender (%)

	Males	Females
Head teacher	76%	24%
Assistant head teacher	79%	21%
Manager	65%	45%

Educational personnel by age groups (%)

Younger than 29	30 - 39	40 - 49	50 - 59	60 and older
7%	17%	29%	31%	14%

Statistics Iceland 2006





Bibliography: Landshagir 2006

Institutions: Statistics Iceland

Any member of the Civil Servants Pension Fund who have reached the age of 65 has a right to a pension and retire latest at the age of 70.

According to the 95 – year rule, an employee can retire at the age of 60 if the combined age of the person and the time that he/she has been paying dues to the pension fund adds up to 95 years. Hence there is 14% of the educational staff that before long will reach or already have reached the retirement age.

---

#### 8.7.4. Higher Education Level, March 2004

Educational personnel by gender (%)

	Males	Females
	48%	52%


Statistics Iceland 2006

Educational personnel by gender (%)

	Males	Females
Professors	82%	17%
Associate professors	69%	31%
Lecturers	47%	53%
Other teachers	51%	49%

Educational personnel by age groups (%)

	30 - 39	40 - 49	50 - 59	60 and older
Younger than 29				
12,5%	26%			



## 9. Evaluation of Educational Institutions and of the Education System


---

The Ministry of Education, Science and Culture is responsible for the evaluation and supervision of educational institutions and of the entire educational system in Iceland.

Two approaches to external evaluation are organised by the Ministry of Education, Science and Culture: Evaluation of schools/institutions and evaluation of internal evaluation methods of compulsory and upper secondary schools.

Schools/institutions at all educational levels are to conduct internal evaluations. See [9.4.](#) and [9.4.1.](#) Overview of the varied approaches to evaluating Icelandic educational institutions:

Educational institutions	Internal evaluation	External evaluation of internal evaluation methods	External evaluation of schools/institutions
Pre-primary schools	Yes	No	Yes
Compulsory schools	Yes	Yes	Yes
Upper secondary schools	Yes	Yes	Yes
Higher education institutions	Yes	Yes	Yes



There are nationally co-ordinated examinations samræmd próf in grades 4, 7 and 10 at the compulsory school level.

The Icelandic Minister of Education, Science and Culture shall report to Parliament at three-year intervals on compulsory and upper secondary school operations.

Bibliography: Evaluation of Schools providing Compulsory Education in Europe

Bibliography: The Educational System in Iceland

Institutions: The Ministry of Education, Science and Culture

---

### 9.1. Historical Overview

Laws from the nineties for pre-primary, compulsory and upper secondary schools and higher education institutions emphasise the evaluation, supervision and gathering of information to a greater extent than previous legislations. Before that time, evaluating the educational system mainly took the form of nationally co-ordinated examinations.

In 1946 an Education Act divided the school system into four levels: primary, lower secondary, upper secondary, and higher. Between 1946 and 1974 the education system placed considerable emphasis on screening students by means of examinations at the end of each level. Most important was the nationally co-ordinated entrance examination to the upper secondary level of grammar schools landspróf miðskóla The matriculation examination (not nationally co-ordinated, however, controlled by censors) was considered the main means of selection for the level of higher education.

At the primary level there were schools with six grades, for pupils aged from seven to thirteen (the year that the pupil turned thirteen). Children who did not achieve minimum standards in an examination at the end of primary education were usually required to remain for another year before moving to the lower secondary level.

In this system, secondary school was divided into three stages. The lower secondary level was of two years' duration (grades 7-8; ages 13-15), completed by a national examination which marked the end of compulsory schooling. Upon completion of the lower secondary level, pupils were allowed to enter a ninth school year in order to prepare for the nationally co-ordinated entrance examination landspróf miðskóla (age 16) giving the right to enter grammar school. Those who did not elect for the nationally co-ordinated entrance examination could take a third-year examination (age 16) to continue through a fourth year before taking the secondary-school leaving examination gagnfræðapróf (age 17), which provided admission to all schools at the upper secondary level other than grammar schools.

A 1974 law on compulsory education brought about considerable changes in the structure and content of compulsory education in Iceland. Instead of the previous division between the primary and lower secondary level, an integrated school level (single structure) was established for compulsory education.

Since 1977, pupils have taken nationally co-ordinated examinations samræmd próf at the end of compulsory school. From 1980, these examinations were as a general rule in Icelandic, mathematics, English and Danish. Since 2001 nationally co-ordinated examinations at the end of compulsory education have been optional and, in addition to the subjects mentioned above, there are examinations in natural and social sciences. Nationally co-ordinated examinations are also given in Icelandic and mathematics in the 4th and 7th grades of compulsory school. Since 1993 an independent institute, the Educational Testing Institute, has been responsible for the development, implementation and grading of the nationally co-ordinated examinations. See [2.6.1.2.2](#).

Like many other countries, Iceland has been affected in the last few decades by a growing interest in the evaluation of schools/institutions. From the beginning of the mid-eighties, considerable interest in the evaluation of schools/institutions has been evident among teachers and administrators at all educational levels. Progress in actually implementing evaluation did not really begin until the nineties, through legislation on pre-primary, compulsory, upper secondary and higher education. See [9.3](#).

Through legislation and regulations, National Curriculum Guidelines and nationally co-ordinated examinations samræmd próf the Government and Parliament exercise influence and control over education.

Bibliography: Frá einveldi til lýðveldis

Bibliography: Iceland 1986, handbook

Bibliography: Saga Alþýðufræðslunnar á Íslandi

Bibliography: Sjálfsmat skóla -Leikskólar, grunnskólar og framhaldsskólar

Bibliography: The Modern Icelandic School System in Historic Perspective

Institutions: Althingi / Alþingi

Institutions: The Educational Testing Institute

Legislation: Compulsory School Act

Legislation: Compulsory School Act

Legislation: Law on the education system and the state's obligation to provide schooling

Legislation: National Curriculum Guidelines for Compulsory Education

Legislation: Regulation on nationally co-ordinated examinations in grade 10 in compulsory education

Legislation: Regulation on the nationally co-ordinated examinations in grades 4 and 7 in compulsory education

Legislation: The Pre-Primary School Act

Legislation: Universities Act

Legislation: Upper Secondary School Act

---

## 9.2. Ongoing Debates and Future Developments

Nationally co-ordinated examinations in grade 10 in compulsory education have in recent years increasingly become controversial, especially among teachers and head-teachers who have pointed out that the examinations have too much influence within school work in lower secondary education. Teachers and head-teachers claim that the examinations serve, first and foremost, as criteria for upper secondary schools to select pupils. Accordingly, it has been pointed out that if the examinations are to serve the objectives of compulsory education properly, they should be held in grade 9, thereby giving compulsory schools an opportunity to improve their instruction and guide pupils.

---

## 9.3. Administrative and Legislative Framework

Laws from 1994 on pre-primary education and from 1995 on compulsory education stipulate that the Ministry of Education, Science and Culture develop comprehensive evaluation at these school levels. The rationale for this was to gather reliable information concerning factors such as quality control in operating schools, the educational achievement and careers of pupils, teaching practices and their impact on educational achievement, communication within schools, and relationships with parties outside schools. A regulation from 1997 on the supervision of upper secondary schools provides for external evaluation of schools by the Ministry of Education, Science and Culture. Provisions for quality control in higher education were laid down in the 2006 Higher Education Act. In legislation on pre-primary, compulsory (primary and lower secondary level), upper secondary and higher education, strong emphasis has been placed on regular internal evaluation by each institution. The internal evaluation methods at compulsory and upper secondary schools are subject to regular external evaluation by the Ministry of Education, Science and Culture. See [9.4](#). The monitoring, evaluation and quality assurance in formal adult education is subject to the same laws and regulations as mainstream education for compulsory, upper secondary and higher education.

Legislation on compulsory education provides for nationally co-ordinated examinations at the end of compulsory education, as well as in the 4th and 7th grades.

Institutions: The Ministry of Education, Science and Culture

Legislation: Compulsory School Act

Legislation: The Pre-Primary School Act

Legislation: University Act

---

## 9.4. Evaluation of Schools/Institutions

Schools/institutions at all educational levels may be subject to an external evaluation organised by the Ministry of Education, Science and Culture. This evaluation is conducted by external evaluators whom the Ministry hires for each task. See [9.4.2](#). The purpose of evaluating schools/institutions externally is to obtain an overall picture of each school's or

institution's activities or of specific aspects there at any given time. Attention is directed towards various features of the school's or institution's internal activities, such as administration, teaching, development work, co-operation and communications within the school/institution, study achievements and the connection between the school or institution and society.

Schools/institutions at all educational levels are to carry out internal evaluation of their work. At five-year intervals, the compulsory and upper secondary schools' internal evaluation procedures are subject to evaluation and validation by an external party with experience and knowledge of the school level in question and of quality management. See 9.4.2. The purpose of the external evaluation is to provide information on how schools fulfil legal provisions on evaluating school activities. These evaluations do not imply a detailed description of specific aspects of school activities or a comparison between schools, but are intended to examine whether the methods applied for internal evaluation fulfil the requirements laid down by the Ministry of Education, Science and Culture. These requirements stipulate that the self-evaluation method be formal, comprehensive, reliable, co-operative, improvement-oriented, performance-linked, institutionally and individually oriented, descriptive, analytical and public.

Methods of internal evaluation in pre-primary schools and institutions of higher education have so far not been subject to external evaluation.

#### Evaluation of Pre-Primary Schools at National Level

Ministry of Education, Science and Culture is responsible for carrying out a comprehensive evaluation of at least one pre-primary school annually. This is done in order to assess general educational performance with regard to national objectives and to the educational plans of the relevant pre-primary school. Generally, two to four pre-primary schools are evaluated per year.

According to a law and regulation on pre-primary education dating from 1994, the head of each pre-primary school is in charge of developing methods for the regular internal evaluation of educational activities, administration, and internal and external lines of communication.

#### Evaluation of Compulsory and Upper Secondary Education at National Level

The Ministry of Education, Science and Culture is responsible for the regular external evaluation of the compulsory (primary and lower secondary) and upper secondary schools. The purpose of this evaluation is to assess the quality of the educational system and to identify areas in need of improvement. To that purpose, reliable information is gathered on such matters as school management, academic achievement, the academic experience of the pupils, teaching methods and their influence on academic achievement, and communications within the school and between the school and parents as well as other acting parties outside the school.

Every compulsory and upper secondary school is expected to implement methods to evaluate its work, including its teaching and administrative methods, internal communications, and contacts with parties outside the school. Schools are free to choose among systems that each develops for its own use or more common quality-management procedures, but should in any case include significant elements of internal monitoring. At five-year intervals, the school's

internal evaluation methods are subject to evaluation and validation by an external party. See [9.4.2.](#)

### Evaluation of Higher Education at National Level

The Ministry of Education, Science and Culture is responsible for the supervision of higher education. In keeping with the Higher Education Act, the Ministry of Education, Science and Culture has laid down rules on quality control in higher education. These rules include provisions on monitoring the internal quality systems in institutions of higher education and on regular external evaluations of defined units within the institutions or of the institutions as a whole.

The Ministry of Education, Science and Culture takes the initiative in conducting external evaluations at the level of higher education and decides when they will be carried out and what their focus will be. For this task an external, independent group of experts is appointed to implement the evaluation. External evaluations carried out in recent years have mainly focused on specific programmes or faculties in one institution or among institutions. Institutional evaluations have also been conducted focusing on administration and on the management. Quality audits may be conducted in the future.

Bibliography: Evaluation of Schools providing Compulsory Education in Europe

Bibliography: Sjálfsmat skóla -Leikskólar, grunnskólar og framhaldsskólar

Institutions: The Ministry of Education, Science and Culture

Legislation: Regulation concerning the operation of pre-schools

Legislation: Rules on Quality Control in Higher Education

Legislation: The Pre-Primary School Act

Legislation: University Act

---

#### 9.4.1. Internal Evaluation

Legislation on pre-primary, compulsory (primary and lower-secondary level), upper secondary and higher education places strong emphasis on regular internal evaluation by schools/institutions.

##### General objective

The main objective of internal evaluation is to make it easier for staff to work towards the school's/institution's objectives, to assess whether they have been achieved, to review them and to promote improvements. This applies to objectives provided for in laws, regulations and the National Curriculum Guidelines, as well as to local objectives which the school includes in its school curriculum guide. At the same time, internal evaluation creates an objective basis for improvements. Part of the internal evaluation process is the collecting of comprehensive information on school/institution activities, and to provide information on the extent to which the achievements of the activities are in accordance with their objectives.

##### The evaluators

Internal evaluation is a co-operative task within the school/institution. Everyone who is connected to the school/institution and its activities are participants in the internal evaluation, such as administrators, teachers, other staff members, pupils and parents. Because of the

nature of the task the participation of each group varies but the head teacher /rector has the overall responsibility for internal evaluation to be carried out in the school/institution. The evaluation tasks are divided among people, and these parties are not involved in the whole evaluation procedure but might take part in some aspects. The ones that participate in the evaluation have to have a common understanding of the division of labour, responsibility, methods and time limit. A special steering group is often set up, or some kind of "quality group" which drafts the internal evaluation/working plan for the school and leads the work. It depends on the municipality, the school/institution or individual teacher as to whether the internal evaluators receive special training.

The procedure used to gather information:

Each school/institution can choose its own evaluation methods and decide the procedures. No one specific method is recommended by the Ministry since choosing the method used should according to the law be in the hands of each school. It is up to each school/institution to decide whether to seek assistance from experts in their internal evaluation.

Frequency of evaluation

According to legislation for schools/institutions at all education levels, schools/institutions are obliged to carry out regular internal evaluation. Internal evaluation must be part of a continuous effort. It has a long-term perspective, rather than being an isolated action.

The procedure for communicating judgements

Compulsory and upper secondary schools' self-evaluation reports are made public, for example on school websites. Higher education institutions shall promulgate a description of its quality work, it is to be made public in the institution's annual report and the Ministry may at any time request information relating to the internal quality systems.

The use made of the evaluation results

The internal evaluation results are intended for use by the school/institution to improve different aspects of its own performance and activities as well as to call attention to good practices and results in the work of the school/institution.

Bibliography: Evaluation of Schools providing Compulsory Education in Europe

Bibliography: Sjálfsmat skóla -Leikskólar, grunnskólar og framhaldsskólar

Legislation: Compulsory School Act

Legislation: The Pre-Primary School Act

Legislation: University Act

Legislation: Upper Secondary School Act

---

#### 9.4.2. External Evaluation

The professional operation of the education system is supervised by the Ministry of Education, Science and Culture. Municipalities operate pre-primary and compulsory schools, and external evaluation at these school levels may be initiated at local level by the municipality.

## General objectives

The external evaluations of schools/institutions and their work which are initiated by the Minister of Education, Science and Culture aim to ensure that the activities of the school/institution comply with the provisions of laws and regulations and of the National Curriculum Guidelines.

The main purpose of evaluating schools/institutions externally is to obtain an overall picture of each school or institution's activities or of specific aspects there at any given time. Attention is directed towards various features of the school's or institution's internal activities, such as administration, teaching, development work, co-operation and communications within the school, study achievements, and the connections between the school and society.

The Compulsory School Act and the Upper Secondary School Act stipulate that the internal evaluation methods of schools are subject to external evaluation at five-year intervals, sponsored by the Ministry of Education, Science and Culture and carried out by an outside party (individuals, institutions or companies). The evaluators' task is to assess the internal evaluation methods used by the school and to establish the extent to which these methods fulfil the requirements laid down by the Ministry. See [9.4](#).

## The evaluators

The evaluators of schools' activities are expected to have thorough knowledge and experience of the school level in question as well as to have experience and/or training in the field of educational evaluation or quality management. The evaluators can be, for example, former teachers or head teachers. However, the Ministry of Education, Science and Culture does not hire practising teachers or head teachers at the educational level in question. The status of the evaluators is contractual.

For assessing internal evaluation methods in schools, the Ministry of Education, Science and Culture has invited applications from persons/parties with experience of the school level in question and of quality management. The Ministry of Education, Science and Culture has hired teams of evaluators, each consisting of 2-3 persons.

For external evaluations at the higher education level the Minister appoints a peer review group/evaluation team, consisting of three to six individuals. As a minimum one has to come from abroad. Students have one representative in the group. No team member may have any links to the institution evaluated.

## The procedures used to gather information

The evaluators work in accordance with recommendations laid down by the Ministry of Education, Science and Culture. Usually, evaluators start their work by collecting relevant information from the school/institution in question. They visit the school/institution and interview the headteacher/rector, teachers, pupils and parents. They also meet other staff and representatives from the municipality and the school board.

Evaluations of the school's internal evaluation methods are based for instance on the internal evaluation reports of the school in question, a site visit, and interviews with the administrators, staff and pupils' representatives. To obtain as clear a picture as possible of the



internal evaluation process, the evaluators must check what documentation the school has based its internal evaluation upon, how the data has been processed and what methods the school has used for internal evaluation. As examples of school data, one could mention information on time management, performance in examinations, parent-teacher co-operation, and the education and continuing education of staff. The Ministry's requirements for internal evaluation work serve as the basis for assessing internal evaluation methods. See 9.4. When the evaluators have collected information from the school, they formulate their judgement upon analysing the data. They fill out a checklist designed by the Ministry of Education, Science and Culture and write a short report (one page) summarising the main results. After giving the head teacher/rector an opportunity to make substantive comments they send the checklist in a special electronic format to the Ministry of Education, Science and Culture, along with the short report. The overall results are then made public on the Ministry's website. The Ministry of Education, Science and Culture reports to the relevant school/institution as well as the municipality in the case of pre-schools and compulsory schools on what needs to be improved in the school's activities.

#### Frequency of evaluation

The external evaluation of a school/institution is carried out at the initiative of the Ministry of Education, Science and Culture or upon a formal request from an outside party. The formal request might for example come from a municipality, a school board or the administration of a higher education institution. No provisions are to be found in laws or regulations on the frequency of the external evaluations of schools/institutions.

The external evaluations of internal evaluation methods are to be conducted systematically in every school providing compulsory and upper secondary education. According to law, the external assessment of internal evaluation methods used by schools is to be organised by the Ministry of Education, Science and Culture at five-year intervals. These external evaluations took place for the first time in the period of 2001-2003. The second round will take place in 2007-2009.

#### Procedures used to communicate conclusions

See above "Procedures used to gather information" and below "Utilisation of evaluation results".

#### Utilisation of evaluation results

The results of externally evaluating educational institutions are to be used by the school or other institution to improve its work. Educational authorities also make use of evaluation results. At pre-primary and compulsory school levels, the municipality is responsible for implementing any improvements. It is up to the municipality and the school to decide whether and how they present the results to stakeholders (parents, pupils, the community, the school board, etc.). The Ministry of Education, Science and Culture is responsible for carrying out follow-up evaluations at all educational levels. Comprehensive evaluation reports are sent to the school/institution and published on the Ministry's website.

Bibliography: Evaluation of Schools providing Compulsory Education in Europe  
Institutions: The Ministry of Education, Science and Culture

Legislation: Compulsory School Act  
Legislation: Upper Secondary School Act

---

## 9.5. Evaluation of the Education System

Several ways are used to evaluate the education system.

### Nationally co-ordinated examinations

At the end of compulsory (primary and lower secondary) education, pupils have the option of choosing between nationally co-ordinated examinations *samræmd próf* in six subjects (Icelandic, mathematics, English, Danish, social sciences and natural sciences). These examinations are prepared, graded and organised by the Educational Testing Institute. Marks are given ranging from one to ten and based on referenced criteria. The purpose of these examinations is primarily to indicate the pupil's standing upon completing his or her compulsory education. At the end of compulsory schooling all pupils get certificates stating their marks on both the nationally co-ordinated examinations and school examinations in all subjects.

The results of the nationally co-ordinated examinations at the end of compulsory education are distributed. Thus pupils receive their own marks; moreover, the mean figures are distributed to the public for each examination at every compulsory school in the country as well as for each region.

In addition to the nationally co-ordinated examinations given at the end of compulsory school nationally co-ordinated examinations *samræmd próf* in core subjects are held in grades 4 and 7. National objectives have been made more precise in order to render instruction more focused and assessment more valid and reliable. The subjects examined are Icelandic and mathematics. The results of these examinations are distributed. Thus pupils receive their own marks; moreover, the mean figures for every compulsory school as well as for every region are distributed to the public.

The journeyman's examination for the skilled trades is the only nationally co-ordinated examination at the upper secondary school level. School examinations are held in every upper secondary school at the end of each term, and teachers teaching the same subject may collaborate between schools on testing.

### Comprehensive reports

Every three years, the Minister of Education, Science and Culture is to deliver comprehensive reports to Parliament on the situation in the compulsory and upper secondary education system, based on systematically-gathered information, research (both national and international) and evaluation.

### International surveys

Iceland participated in the IEA study of reading in 1991 and also joined the 1995 IEA study of mathematics and the natural sciences for the compulsory school level (TIMSS). Iceland is currently taking part in the OECD PISA and PIRLS studies. Also, Iceland participates on a regular basis in OECD work on developing student-achievement indicators. The Icelandic

educational system has been regularly reviewed by OECD experts, most recently in a report published in 1997. Iceland also participated in the OECD thematic review of tertiary education that the OECD Education Committee agreed to carry out in late 2003. The report on the Icelandic system: Thematic Review of Tertiary Education, Iceland country note, was published by OECD in April 2006.

Bibliography: The Educational System in Iceland

Institutions: The Educational Testing Institute

Institutions: The Ministry of Education, Science and Culture

---

#### 9.6. Research on Education linked to the Evaluation of the Education System

The Educational Testing Institute is an independent institution, under the auspices of the Ministry of Education, Science and Culture and funded by the state. Its main task is to prepare, organise and grade nationally co-ordinated examinations. The Institute is also to participate in and carry out international comparative research in the field of education, with special emphasis on projects that can produce practical and/or scientific knowledge that is relevant to assessment. International participation in comparative educational studies has increased in recent years.

Institutions: The Ministry of Education, Science and Culture

Institutions: The Educational Testing Institute

---

#### 9.7. Statistics

The Educational Testing Institute is responsible for publishing, every year, the results of the nationally co-ordinated examinations in grades 4, 7 and 10 of compulsory education samræmd próf i.e. the mean figures for each school and other relevant information concerning the examinations.

The Statistics Iceland is responsible for gathering and publishing data on all school levels used to monitor the education system.

Institutions: Statistics Iceland

Institutions: The Educational Testing Institute

## 10. Special Educational Support

---

There is no separate legislation for special education at any of the four levels of education. There is however a separate legislation on the affairs of the disabled in general passed in 1992. The educational policy in Iceland is to integrate as far as possible all pupils in inclusive compulsory schools within mainstream education. In this chapter this system is described as well as the existing special provision outside the mainstream system.

Legislation: Law on the Affairs of the Handicapped

---

### 10.1. Historical Overview

The first disability group to receive teaching was the deaf. Between 1890 and 1904 a special school, the School for the Mute, was operated for them. In 1922 a law provided for the education of the language impaired, blind and mentally retarded children in one school but a national centre for children with a variety of disabilities never became a reality. The School for the Mute that continued to operate as a school for the deaf was also used for severely mentally retarded children for whom there was no schooling to be had elsewhere. Later it became exclusively a school for the deaf. Gradually homes for retarded children were established and in 1933 a unit for the blind started in Reykjavik. After the Second World War, parents and professionals put considerable pressure on the government and local authorities to improve the educational, social and health conditions offered to "abnormal" children and adults. A special school for mildly retarded was established as well as a variety of special classes and units within ordinary schools. In 1974 a Compulsory School Act was passed which introduced the "basic school". According to the law all children 7-16 years old were ensured "appropriate education" irrespective of their disability.

There is no separate legislation for special education at any of the four levels of education. There is, however, a separate legislation on the affairs of the disabled in general, passed in 1992. It stipulates that all individuals with handicap (defined as mental retardation, psychiatric illness, physical disability, blindness and/or deafness as well as disabilities resulting from chronic illness and accidents) shall be enabled to live and function in a normal community along with other people. For this purpose, where the disabled person's needs are not covered by general services within the fields of education, health and social services, special services, detailed in the law, shall be provided.

The development in the last decades has been from separate provision to integration and inclusion in the educational system as well as in other parts of society. But separate special schools are still operating. A few special schools are run to serve those with severe mental or multiple disabilities, socio-emotional difficulties and psychiatric disabilities. The schools present a choice for the family between mainstream education and special provision.

In 1994 Iceland ratified the Salamanca Declaration on special-needs education, and its ideology is clearly reflected in the general section of the National Curriculum Guide for Compulsory Schools of 1999. It says: "The compulsory school shall endeavour to have its work accord as well as possible with the nature and needs of pupils, supporting the all-round development of each of them. Compulsory schools are to welcome all children, no matter what their physical or mental capabilities, their social and emotional situation or linguistic development. This applies to both handicapped and non-handicapped children, children of exceptional intelligence or mentally handicapped intelligence and everything in between".

The legal environment, regulations based on the legislation and the National Curriculum Guide support the concept of inclusion (School for All), and of all pupils receiving as equal opportunities as possible for study. The Act states:

"The objectives of study and instruction, and the working practices of compulsory schools, shall be such as to prevent discrimination on the basis of origin, gender, residence, class, religion or handicap. All school activities shall take into account the varied personality, maturity, talent, ability and interests of pupils."

Bibliography: The Educational System in Iceland

Legislation: Compulsory School Act

Legislation: Law on the Affairs of the Handicapped

Legislation: Law on the Education of the Deaf and Dumb

Legislation: National Curriculum Guidelines for Compulsory Education

---

## 10.2. Ongoing Debates and Future Developments

The ongoing debate is mainly on further pupil integration and transition from school to work.

Integration on all four levels of education is now the main focus. Schools, on all levels, are developing and looking for ways to minimise barriers and to meet the needs of all pupils. To support inclusion to greater effect attention now needs to be given to teacher training and professional development for teachers.

---

## 10.3. Definition and Diagnosis of the Target Group(s)

Most children with severe disabilities are identified at pre-primary age (0-5 years of age) by medical person, health visitors or pre-school teachers. They are generally referred to the State Diagnostic and Counselling Centre for medical examination, psychological assessment and evaluation by social workers as well as physical- and occupational therapists. The Icelandic Low Vision and Rehabilitation Centre, which is a national agency monitoring all blind and visually impaired persons in the country, is responsible for the diagnosis of blind and visually impaired children. A corresponding facility exists for deaf and hearing impaired children and adults. It is now being discussed that these two institutions will be merged in one institution for both target groups. Children and adolescents with serious emotional and psychiatric problems are referred to the Child and Adolescent Psychiatric Unit of the National Hospital for diagnosis and treatment.

According to laws children and adolescents who need special education because of specific learning difficulties or because they have emotional or social problems and/or they are disabled, (defined as mental retardation, psychiatric illness, physical disability, blindness and/or deafness as well as disabilities resulting from chronic illness and accidents) have a right to special support in instruction in their studies. The law also stipulates support for those children who have insufficient knowledge of the Icelandic language. The municipalities are given the responsibility to assess if children have dyslexia and to give them the support needed.

Institutions: National Hearing and Speech Centre

Institutions: The Icelandic Low Vision and Rehabilitation Centre  
Institutions: The State Diagnostic and Advisory Centre  
Institutions: University Hospital Child and Adolescents Psychiatry  
Legislation: Compulsory School Act

---

#### 10.4. Financial Support for Pupils' Families

The municipalities supply their compulsory schools with finances for special equipment for disabled pupils. The schools also offer equipment for teaching such as computers and textbooks. Transport to and from school is free. Parents of disabled children and those suffering from illnesses, developmental disorders or behavioral problems can apply for grants from the social system which covers medical expenses as well as monthly payments to parents or guardians to make it possible to stay at home and take care of the child. This is granted for maximal five years and is not dependent on family income.

In upper secondary schools all educational equipment such as computers and computer programmes are paid by the school but pupils buy their own books.

---

#### 10.5. Special Provision within Mainstream Education

According to the Pre-primary School Act from 1994 children who, because of their disabilities or because of emotional or social difficulties, need special assistance or training, are provided with such support, according to certain rules, in their own pre-primary school. This is done under the supervision of a pre-primary teacher, a developmental therapist or other specialists. All children are given regular check-ups to monitor their health and development.

The law on compulsory education stipulates 10 years of schooling for all children between the ages of six and sixteen. The term "special education" is, however, nowhere to be found in the law. The ideology is that the compulsory "basic school" shall be inclusive, catering for special educational needs as well as other educational needs of its pupils. The regulation for special education in compulsory schools deals with all special needs teaching at the compulsory school level. The integration is practiced as far as possible. The instruction can be on a one to one basis or take place in a group within or outside the regular classroom or in special departments within the school.

As a general rule a disabled pupil has a right to obtain his education in his local mainstream school. Many ordinary schools accept pupils with disabilities into their regular curriculum, including pupils with severe mental and multiple disabilities. This occurs most often at pre-primary and compulsory school level, not the least outside of the capital and is also the case at upper secondary school level. There are, however, some special schools at the compulsory school level and special classes/departments within local schools and some special units at the pre-primary, compulsory and upper secondary school level. There are no special schools at the upper secondary school level but a few pupils with multiple disabilities get a prolonged school offer in a special school after they have reached upper secondary school age. The number of schools and units differ from one time to another because the units are run on a temporary basis.

Everyone is entitled to education at the secondary school level (age 16-20). The regulation for

special education in upper secondary education deals with special need teaching at the upper secondary level. Disabled pupils (as defined in the law on the affairs of the disabled) are to be provided with instruction and special support in their studies. Specialist advice and suitable conditions are to be ensured. In their studies disabled pupils are to follow the ordinary curriculum with other pupils as far as possible. The law also provides for the possibility of establishing special units within upper secondary schools for disabled pupils. Many secondary schools in the country have special programs for pupils with mental disabilities where they are taught according to individual curriculum. When possible the disabled pupils take courses from other programs in the school. The law on upper secondary school stipulates that deaf pupils have right to a special instruction in the Icelandic language.

Legislation: Compulsory School Act

Legislation: The Pre-Primary School Act

Legislation: Law on the Affairs of the Handicapped

Legislation: Regulation on special education for schools at the compulsory level

Legislation: Regulation on teaching of disabled students in upper secondary schools.

Legislation: Upper Secondary School Act

---

#### 10.5.1. Specific Legislative Framework

The Law on the Affairs of the Disabled, passed in 1992, stipulates that all individuals with handicap (defined as mental retardation, psychiatric illness, physical disability, blindness and/or deafness as well as disabilities resulting from chronic illness and accidents) shall be enabled to live and function in a normal community along with other people. For this purpose, where a disabled person's need are not covered by general services within the fields of education, health and social services, special services, detailed in the law, shall be provided.

Legislation: Law on the Affairs of the Handicapped

---

#### 10.5.2. General Objectives

The general aims of the laws for each school level refer to all pupils including those with disabilities and special needs. The general objectives at the pre-primary level also refer to pupils with disabilities and special needs. However, teaching objectives vary a great deal for pupils according to their disabilities.

The Pre-primary School Act defines its main aim in education as follows:

- to provide a safe and healthy environment for children to play and grow up in
- to give children the opportunity to participate in work and play and to enjoy all the educational advantages of being with other children under the guidance of a pre-primary teacher
- to make every effort, in co-operation with the parents of the child, to stimulate its overall development in accordance with the nature of each child, and to care for the child mentally and physically in such a way that it may enjoy its youth
- to promote tolerance and open-mindedness in children and to give them, in every respect, equal chances of growing and developing
- to promote Christian ethics in the child and to lay the foundation of making it an independent, thinking, active and responsible citizen in a rapidly developing democratic society

- to encourage the child's creative powers and its ability to express itself in order to strengthen its self-image, its feeling of security and its ability to solve problems in a peaceful manner.

#### General Objectives at Compulsory Level

- to prepare the pupils for life and work in a continuously developing democratic society. The organisation of the school and the work that takes place there is thus to be guided by tolerance, Christian values and democratic co-operation.
- to aim at conducting its operation in the fullest possible agreement with the nature and needs of its pupils and encourage the development, health and education of each and every individual.
- to give pupils an opportunity to acquire knowledge and skills and to cultivate working habits that promotes a continuous interest in seeking education and self-development. School work is therefore to lay the foundation for independent thinking and to train pupils' ability to co-operate with others.

On basis of this law, the Ministry of Education, Science and Culture issues regulations and National Curriculum Guidelines. These provide the details of how the law is to be implemented and define more clearly the educational role of compulsory schools and the main objectives of instruction in individual subjects in accordance with that role.

Those general objectives apply to all pupils and include the education of pupils with special needs. In general, pupils with special needs in the mainstream schools work towards the same objectives as other pupils, but through a different route. Each school is obliged to write a school curriculum plan for every school year, where for example schools describe their policy concerning pupils with special educational needs.

#### General Objectives at Upper Secondary Level

According to the law on upper secondary schools the objectives are as follows:

The role of upper secondary schools is to promote the general development of all pupils in order to enable them, as well as can possibly be done, to actively participate in a democratic society. Furthermore, upper secondary school prepares pupils for work and further studies. Upper secondary school is supposed to promote pupils' sense of responsibility, broadmindedness, initiative, self-confidence, tolerance and to train them in disciplined and independent ways of working and critical thinking. The school is also to teach them to enjoy cultural values and to encourage them to seek knowledge for the rest of their lives.

A curriculum guideline for a four year special programme at the upper secondary level for pupils with mental disabilities has been established by the Ministry. In addition to the general objectives these guidelines present objectives that emphasise strengthening of the individual's ability to take independent decisions and to increased responsibility of his/her own life. During the last two years of schooling the aim is to prepare the pupil for the world of work and the transition from school to work or to other activities.

#### Special Legislative Framework at University Level

No legislation deals with special needs or disabled students in higher education. However, the



generally universities have an official policy on how to meet students with special needs. Students can apply for special study circumstances and special examination procedures.

Institutions: The Ministry of Education, Science and Culture

Legislation: Compulsory School Act

Legislation: The Pre-Primary School Act

Legislation: National Curriculum Guidelines for Compulsory Education

Legislation: National Curriculum Guidelines for Upper Secondary Education

Legislation: National Curriculum Guidelined for Pre-primary Schools

Legislation: Upper Secondary School Act

---

### 10.5.3. Specific Support Measures

Each school decides how the special teaching is organised. Pupils with disabilities, specific learning difficulties, emotional or social difficulties are given special support. It depends on the individual needs how the remedial teaching is organised. It includes additional support by specialist teachers, special teaching methods, special teaching materials, teaching in small groups or individual teaching, increased use of computers and adapted curriculum.

---

### 10.6. Separate Special Provision

There are five segregated special schools at the compulsory level that serve pupils with disabilities. These are: three schools for children with psychiatric and social difficulties and two schools for children with mental disabilities and multiple disabilities.

None of the above-mentioned schools offer boarding facilities. Some of these schools also have the role to provide mainstream schools with advice and to act as resource centres. It is planned that the two last mentioned schools shall be united in one and will serve those with mental disabilities and multiple disabilities and also serve as a counselling centre for other schools.

These schools, like all other compulsory schools are run by the municipalities.

#### Upper secondary schools

No special schools for pupils with disabilities exist at the upper secondary school level. Extra teaching hours are provided to schools wishing to give special support to individuals or groups of pupils so that they can either follow the ordinary curriculum or a special programme.

Many upper secondary schools operate special units for mentally disabled pupils. These units were first organised as a two year programmes, in the school year 2000-2001 the third year was added and since 2001 the programmes are four years (16-20 year old pupils). This means that all pupils have the right to schooling from the age of 6 to the age of 20.

Some upper secondary schools now provide extra support to pupils who have difficulties with reading and writing. They also adjust the examination procedures for those with special need e.g. extension of exam time, private exams or oral exams.

## Higher education

Higher institutions offer counselling for disabled students. The universities have formalised their services to students with disabilities or special needs. Students can apply to the Counselling Service for special study circumstances and special examination procedures. Special study circumstances include the provision of information on curriculum in good time to allow sufficient preparation, flexibility in programme arrangements and personal progress, recording of lectures and a choice of suitable location for instruction. Adjustment of examination procedures include the extension of exam time, private exams, reading and writing assistance and finally alternative examination form, such as multiple choice, brief written responses or oral exams instead of long essay-type examinations. The universities also offer technology which is customized to the needs of disabled students or students with dyslexia.

## Adult Education for the Disabled

The state finances an independent institute, Adult Education for the Disabled, Fjölmennt which operates some centres or units offering education for adults. The institute employs 53 teachers and offers free-standing courses to individuals over 20 years of age who are mentally disabled and do not have access to other educational opportunity. In 2005 about 700 students attended courses in the three centres. Most of the courses last for one term; their content includes training in living skills, the use of leisure time, preparation for further study, sport, artistic expression etc. Fjölmennt is also responsible for education for adults with psychological difficulties and in 2005 about 20 students attended courses.

## Other Special Education Services

There are facilities available for children who are hospitalised in two national paediatric wards. This is sometimes counted as segregated special education, but is more akin to short-term home support teaching for sick children. There are also several special units managed by individual municipalities and mostly located in regular schools.

Adolescents who are in detention are taught where they are placed, in prison, small group homes or individual placements with families. Adult prisoners have the opportunity to study at upper secondary level through a special arrangement between their prisons and neighbourhood upper secondary schools. This applies to a prison for men, the prison for mentally incompetent criminals, a prison for women and a rehabilitation unit for addicts.

The Government Agency for Child Protection is responsible for eight institutions and treatment homes for children with behavioural and emotional problems, delinquency (acting out, criminality) and substance abuse.

Long term treatment facilities are for the most part in rural surroundings and some are situated on farms. Besides individual as well as group therapy, a major responsibility is providing education, for children up to 18 years old, both at compulsory level and upper secondary level. Other areas of emphasis are healthy leisure activities such as horseback riding and fishing, as well as participating in farming work or taking on other responsibilities. There are up to 51 places in these long term facilities for 13-17 years old children. These treatment facilities work in close connection with the nearest school.

Institutions: Government Agency for Child Protection  
Institutions: Adult Education for the Disabled

---

#### 10.6.1. Specific Legislative Framework

There is no law on special schools but regulations on special schools on compulsory and secondary school level have been issued. According to the regulation on compulsory education municipalities can start special provision in special schools or special units alone or in cooperation with other municipalities. They issue working rules with the consent of the Ministry of Education, Science and Culture and operate according to the main objectives in the curriculum guidelines for compulsory schools. Each school is to write its own school curriculum plan and define the objectives. The educational objectives are adapted; the schools use different educational material and also different teaching methods.

Institutions: The Ministry of Education, Science and Culture  
Legislation: Regulation on special education for schools at the compulsory level  
Legislation: Regulation on teaching of disabled students in upper secondary schools.

---

#### 10.6.2. General Objectives

In the special schools and units, teaching objectives vary a great deal depending on the kind of disabilities the school or unit caters for. Special schools, as all other primary schools, are in the process of developing their school working guide. Previously they defined their objectives mainly in terms of the three Rs, i.e. reading, writing and arithmetic, more recently they have moved towards developmental, experiential and practical objectives. This process of change is now finding a balance in an attempt to reclassify teaching objectives in terms of mainstream subject areas.

An example is Öskuhlíðarskóli a special compulsory school for children with mental disabilities. The school curriculum plan offers a framework for the school curriculum based on three main parts, the individual, the national curriculum and activities of daily life. The subjects are e.g. home economics, Icelandic, religion, art, social studies, natural sciences, sport, mathematics, music, English, life skills and information technology. The school curriculum plan defines objectives for different levels in every subject.

---

#### 10.6.3. Geographical Accessibility

The special schools in the country are situated in the most populated areas. In the rural areas the children don't have the possibility to attend a special school and most disabled children are transported to the nearest common school. Usually the home school is very flexible to fulfil the various needs of children with special needs, and receives counselling from resource centres.

---

#### 10.6.4. Admission Requirements and Choice of School

Most children with severe disabilities are identified at pre-primary age (0 - 5 years of age) by medical personnel, health visitors or pre- school teachers. They are then generally referred to the State Diagnostic and Advisory Centre for a medical examination, psychological assessment and evaluation by social workers as well as physical- and occupational therapists.

The Icelandic Low Vision and Rehabilitation Centre, which is a central agency monitoring all blind and visually impaired persons in the country, is responsible for the diagnosis of blind and visually impaired children. A corresponding facility, the National Hearing and Speech Centre, exists for deaf and hearing impaired children and adults. Children and adolescents with serious emotional and psychiatric problems are referred to the Child and Adolescent Psychiatric Unit of the National Hospital for diagnosis and treatment.

Children with suspected disabilities at pre-primary school can be referred by pre-primary teachers for diagnosis to the specialist services operated by social departments of the municipalities. At the compulsory level special educators and guidance counsellors located in the schools provide counselling to their fellow teachers and parents. Children can also be referred by teachers and parents to the compulsory school specialist services of the local municipalities. In addition the law provides for the establishment of a so-called pupil protection committee in each school for the purpose of improving the collaboration of professionals dealing with individual pupils with special needs. These can include head of school, school guidance counsellors and professionals from health services and local education offices.

When children enter primary school at the age of 6, a report and evaluation are produced by the pre-school on handicapped pupils and those who require special support in school. With regard to handicapped children, those with severe speech disorders and those with mental and behavioural disorders, assessment is generally carried out by psychologists, physicians and specialists at diagnostic facilities run by the State. They use medical and psychological diagnostic tools on the basis of the ICD-10 diagnostic standard. A medical diagnostic model is thus predominant with regard to handicapped pupils, and those with disorders. At the State Diagnostic and Counselling Centre, which carries out diagnosis of handicapped children other than those with sensory handicaps (visual or hearing impairments), cross-disciplinary teams of physicians, physiotherapists, developmental and occupational therapists, sociologists and speech therapists carry out the assessment.

A detailed report accompanies the child into primary school. In the pre-school a report is also prepared evaluating the status of the pupil and explaining his/her overall development and social development. In all larger communities, the evaluation documents of the relevant pupil are examined by a cross-disciplinary team of the relevant local education authority.

The law concerning compulsory education underlines the right of every child to receive appropriate education in a mainstream school nearest to its home. However, parents have the right to apply for a special school for their child should the mainstream school fail to provide education suited to his or her needs.

Decisions as to who is eligible for education at a segregated facility are, in the case of pupils at the compulsory level, reached in consultation between the head teachers and their special educators, parents and the local specialist services or other specialists. The parents have the legal right to choose between different services.

Guidance counsellors are employed by upper secondary schools who deal with learning and personal problems presented by individual pupils. For more complicated matters they direct pupils to specialised services outside the school. The secondary schools in the most populated areas have developed a certain amount of specialization concerning special education and special units. Pupils are not guaranteed a placement in the school of their choice but they all

have the right to four years of upper secondary schooling (age 16-20).

Policies of local government with regard to implementation of the legislation are variable. In Reykjavik, where over one-third of pupils in compulsory schooling live, the city authorities have created a policy of individual-oriented study in an inclusive school (School for All). In order to pursue the policy in the work of the schools, various measures have been applied. Several items are mentioned here, but the list is not exhaustive:

- Funding has been increased for special-needs teaching, especially for handicapped children studying in mainstream schools
- New professions have been brought into primary/lower secondary schools, e.g. developmental therapists, who bring new assessment tools and approaches
- Teachers are offered more opportunities for continuing education in flexible teaching methods and diverse assessment of pupils' status
- School administrators are offered far more opportunities for continuing education on individual-oriented study, flexible teaching methods and diverse assessment tools
- Schools are required to establish problem-solving teams within each school, to work with teachers if problems arise.

In this manner, it is believed that teaching methods and assessment in school work can evolve towards inclusion (School for All), and assessment which is adapted to the ability and needs of the pupil.

Institutions: National Hearing and Speech Centre

Institutions: The State Diagnostic and Advisory Centre

Institutions: University Hospital Child and Adolescents Psychiatry

Legislation: Compulsory School Act

Legislation: Regulation on Specialist Services for Schools

---

#### 10.6.5. Age Levels and Grouping of Pupils

Children at the compulsory level attending special schools and units are classified according to their primary disability (deafness, blindness, physical disability, mental and multiple disabilities and socio-emotional/ psychiatric problems). Within the larger schools and units, they are grouped roughly by age, but in smaller schools they are taught together irrespective of age. The size of the groups range from individual teaching to a maximum of approximately ten pupils, the average being between four to six. Most children in special units located in mainstream schools are integrated for part of the time into regular classes and this makes the sizes, and composition of the groups' variable during the day. Youngsters in special units in upper secondary schools are divided into groups of 2-12 persons. They differ in size according to the individual needs of students. They are integrated into mainstream groups whenever possible.

---

#### 10.6.6. Organisation of the School Year

The organisation of the school year is the same as in mainstream schools, i.e. same number of lessons every week, school days annually, same holiday regulation and same regulations in general. In addition to the daily hours in class there is a school day care after regular classes where children spend their time in other activities until late afternoon. In mainstream schools

these services are mainly for children from age 6-9, but in special schools these after school activities are also for older children, up to the end of compulsory education at the age of 16. See [4.9.1.](#) and [4.9.2.](#)

---

#### 10.6.7. Curriculum, Subjects

The National Curriculum for Compulsory Schools, which has the status of a regulation, applies to disabled pupils and non-disabled pupils alike. Thus there is no special national curriculum for the disabled at the compulsory level. Special education is not dealt with separately in the National Curriculum Guidelines for compulsory schools but the rights of pupils with disabilities to appropriate education are the main aim. In 2004 National Curriculum Guidelines for special units in upper secondary schools was issued with a definition for a four years program for mentally disabled youngsters. For more detailed information, please refer to the subsection for respective education level.

Legislation: National Curriculum Guidelines for Upper Secondary Education, study programme for disabled students 2004

---

##### 10.6.7.1. Curriculum, Subjects at Pre-primary level

The National Curriculum Guidelines for pre-primary schools state the educational and pedagogical aims and theoretical rationale and outlines how these aims should be reached in pre-primary schools. The main curricular areas are learning through play about daily living; language and language development; visual art; music; movement; environment and society. The programme emphasises the importance of inclusive education for all children irrespective of the children's disability coupled with individual support and consideration for the non-disabled children. There is a section in the curriculum about children with special educational needs.

---

##### 10.6.7.2. Curriculum, Subjects at Compulsory level

The National Curriculum Guidelines for the compulsory level apply to disabled pupils and non-disabled pupils alike. There is thus no special national curriculum for the disabled. The National Curriculum Guidelines from 1999 outline aims, objectives and curriculum content but leaves curriculum details, structure and teaching methods to the schools and individual teachers to decide. Special education is not dealt with separately in the guidelines, the main aim is inclusive education but the rights of pupils with disabilities to appropriate education and the compulsory schools are entitled to educate all children. The National Curriculum state the right of every pupil to get suitable educational programme, according to her/his needs and abilities. There is also a section about equality and education and the obligations to organise inclusive education.

According to the regulation on special education it is the responsibility of special education teachers to write individual education plans for pupils with disabilities and organise the teaching. These education plans are generally reviewed at least annually. This goes for compulsory special schools and special units within the compulsory schools and upper secondary schools.

The curriculum guidelines for compulsory school contain a provision concerning special

instruction in Icelandic for pupils whose mother tongue is not Icelandic. The guidelines also contain a provision concerning special instruction in Icelandic for deaf and hearing impaired pupils and for instruction in sign language for the deaf. The aims of instruction in Icelandic for the children of immigrants and the deaf and instruction in sign language for the deaf are included in the curriculum guidelines for Icelandic in compulsory school.

The curriculum guidelines require schools to offer deaf children a chance to study and develop in their own way in order for them to be able to learn Icelandic. Sign language is of basic importance for the development of speech, personality and thought for a deaf pupil. For deaf persons, sign language is their most important source of knowledge and at the same time a means of participating in cultural activities in Icelandic and the culture of the deaf. Sign language is of great importance in everything that happens at school and in the lives and the work of these pupils.

Legislation: National Curriculum Guidelines for Compulsory Education

---

#### 10.6.7.3. Curriculum, Subjects at Upper Secondary level

According to law concerning upper secondary schools, a regulation on the teaching of disabled pupils was issued by the Ministry of Education, Science and Culture in 1998. According to the regulation disabled pupils are to be taught with other pupils whenever possible. They receive additional help in their studies. For those who cannot follow the regular curriculum special units can be established. The pupils in special units follow individual education plans.

The National Curriculum Guidelines for special units in upper secondary schools were published in 2004. The special units operating in upper secondary schools define special curriculum to meet the needs of mentally disabled pupils. The programme offered by these units lasts four years. The curriculum guideline defines three different programs but each school can define how their special unit is organised and the main emphasis is on individual curriculum. The first two years pupils take general subjects such as language, math, use of computers, social studies, health education, art and craft, housekeeping, sewing, woodwork and activities of daily life. In the latter two years the main emphasis is on preparation for work by in-school or on-the-job training in vocational subjects. In the last two semesters the schools, in cooperation with the social sector, aim at finding a future job for most pupils, either on the job market or in sheltered workshops.

In ordinary classes at upper secondary schools pupils with disabilities are assisted with their studies, by for example sign language interpreters, co-pupils acting as scribes or other assistants, but in other respects they are subject to the same rules as other pupils.

Legislation: National Curriculum Guidelines for Upper Secondary Education, study programme for disabled students 2004

Legislation: Regulation on teaching of disabled students in upper secondary schools.

---

#### 10.6.8. Teaching Methods and Materials

Teaching takes place either in small groups or individually with group sizes ranging from two to ten pupils according to individual needs. Computer assisted teaching is common both for the purpose of teaching a specific content but also to train pupils in the use of computers as a

working tool. Teaching is also frequently supplemented by video programmes and audio materials. A great deal of personal guidance is provided in all the schools and units to enhance pupil confidence and interpersonal skills and co-operation with parents is also intensive.

Teaching methods vary a great deal depending on the type of disability and the schools concerned. Sign language is the major medium of communication and teaching of deaf children as indicated in the National Curriculum Guidelines from 1999. The teaching of the blind and visually impaired relies mostly on "Braille" for the same purpose. The units for autistic pupils base some of its work on the American "TEACCH" programme. Pupils at the unit for the physically disabled are involved in the Hungarian "Conductive Education". A school for adolescents with socio-emotional problems emphasises personal emotional support and the use of group discussion as well as direct teaching and the school uses also the ART method. (Aggression Replacement Training). The schools for pupils with developmental disabilities use a variety of methods to suit the pupils' needs including direct teaching, project work, excursions, total communication, "Pictogram", "sign accompanied language", "Bliss", "Waldon" and many other internationally known methods and recently more data supported education.

The National Centre for Educational Materials provides compulsory schools with educational materials, books educational software, video and audiotapes. All material is free of charge for pupils in compulsory schools. Increasingly schools can get teaching material from other sources, for example by using the Internet. Blind and visually impaired pupils and those with reading problems can at the upper secondary level get tapes and daisy books from a state institution.

Institutions: The National Centre for Educational Materials (Námsgagnastofnun)  
Legislation: National Curriculum Guidelines for Compulsory Education

---

#### 10.6.9. Progression of Pupils

Apart from age no formal conditions are set at the compulsory level for the promotion of a pupil from one grade to the next. A class is never repeated. Formative assessment in special schools or units lay the foundation for continuous evaluation of the possibility to transfer individual pupils from one special facility to another or from a special school or segregated unit to a mainstream school. Decisions concerning such changes are reached after consultation with the schools, the parents, a special education administrator and a specialist such as a psychologist on the basis of the assessment made by the child's teacher, a special educator and a psychologist. Guidance to parents and pupils in these matters is in the hands of any or all of these professionals, according to the parents' wishes. In some cases pupils are 11 years in compulsory education if the school, the parents and the municipality agree on it.

---

#### 10.6.10. Educational/ Vocational Guidance, Education/Employment Links

All pre-primary schools have the right of access to outside professional counselling and psychological service, employing psychologist, special education teachers, pre-primary consultants and other specialists, which may be operated jointly with counselling services for the compulsory school.

According to the law on the compulsory school and a regulation on specialist services for



schools, issued in June 1996, local municipalities are obliged to provide their compulsory schools with specialist services. This involves general curricular advice, specialist advice on the teaching of the main school subjects, guidance for pupils and psychological counselling. The focus shall be on support for teachers and head teachers on day-to-day school work, including how to meet special educational needs, but also on teachers' projects aimed at school improvement. The purpose is to strengthen the professional capacity of the school to solve its own problems. Specialists of the service, being teachers, psychologists and other specialists are also expected to assess pupils with psychological or social problems, should these difficulties impede their education. Some advice to parents is also envisioned.

Segregated special schools provide consultation to mainstream schools and parents concerning two tasks: Inclusion of pupils with disabilities into their local schools and the transfer of pupils from mainstream to special schools and vice versa. The consultation is to be carried out in close collaboration with the local specialist services. The local authorities of Reykjavik took over this service in 1996 when compulsory education was transferred to the municipalities and is jointly financed by the municipalities.

At the upper secondary school level many of the special units include preparation for the life of the adult this includes training for a job, either at the labour market, in sheltered workshops or in other facilities that are organized for the disabled. The aim is to find a permanent job for the pupils.

Mainstream and special schools introduce employment opportunities and the rules of work to their final year pupils with the aim to have a successful transition from school to work.

At adult education level, an independent institution, Hringsjá offers job training and preparation for further learning to people over the age of 18 with disabilities as rehabilitation, (no severe developmental disabilities however). The unit is run by the Association of Societies of the Disabled but financed by the Ministry of Social Affairs. In 2005 the programme offers training to 44 up to 50 people and includes such subjects as computers, business studies, social studies, book keeping, languages, mathematics, artistic appreciation and expression, job experience and study techniques. The study is organised as a three term programme and taught by part-time teachers who come from business, industry and upper secondary schools. The centre also runs short courses, mostly the use of computers and book-keeping for about 100 individuals a year.

Institutions: Félagsmálaráðuneyti

Institutions: Hringsjá - vocational training of disabled adults

Legislation: Compulsory School Act

Legislation: Regulation on Specialist Services for Schools

---

#### 10.6.11. Certification

The regulation assessment of pupils who deviate for normal development allows each school to make their own rules on evaluation for children who lack maturity to take standardized tests. The school curriculum plan shall describe aims and objectives and define how individual curriculum or group curriculum will be organised. Instead of standardized tests the pupils receive certificates where subjects are listed and it is testified how well the pupil has mastered his individual curriculum.

Individual curricula are drawn up by special-needs teachers, developmental therapists and teachers, based on diverse diagnosis by specialists. Pupils with learning difficulties are generally diagnosed by special-needs teachers and psychologists in consultation with the teacher. Standardised diagnostic assessment tools are used. Individual-oriented study, continuous assessment by teachers, checklists and portfolios are the growth areas at this time.

In pre-primary schools the ideology of early intervention, or service for children under the age of 6, is applied. The Early Intervention Services Assessment Scale has been translated and adapted, and it is used in pre-schools to assess the quality of early intervention for children with developmental deviations and their families. Physicians, psychologists and other specialists at diagnostic facilities run by the State are involved in initial assessment of the status of handicapped children and those with extensive special needs. The ICD-10 diagnostic standard is used. A range of medical and psychological diagnostic tools are used in initial assessment at diagnostic facilities.

Children are regularly assessed by pre-school teachers and specialised consultants. Factors such as linguistic development, social and communication skills, motor development and skills of daily life are assessed.

When children enter primary school at the age of 6, a report and evaluation is produced by the pre-school on handicapped pupils and those who require special support in school. With regard to handicapped children, those with severe speech disorders and those with mental and behavioural disorders, assessment is generally carried out by psychologists, physicians and specialists at diagnostic facilities run by the State. They use medical and psychological diagnostic tools on the basis of the ICD-10 diagnostic standard. They use e.g. WPPSI-R, WISC-3, and the ADHD Rating Scale.

In accordance with the regulation on special education for schools at the compulsory level, the special educational needs of each pupil are assessed in relation to what pupils of the same age are offered in respect to objectives, contents, methods and conditions at regular school. The regulation further stipulates that individual education plans should be based on a total assessment of the pupil's special needs and circumstances. No formal conditions are set for regular reviews, but there is an understanding that individual evaluation should be on-going as a part of the regular programme evaluation and in practice these plans are reviewed annually. Formative as well as summative assessment in this sense is the primary responsibility of the child's form teacher.

At the compulsory and upper secondary level, allowances of various kinds are made for pupils with special needs as regards evaluation. Pupils diagnosed as dyslexic are given extended examination time or cassettes to listen to examinations, or in the case of serious problems with second language subjects, given exemption from these altogether. Deaf and physically disabled pupils are allowed to take oral exams in place of written ones and provided with interpreters or scribes as well as extra time. In a regulation from 1996 there are provisions for monitoring the achievements of pupils in special schools and other pupils at compulsory school age who are considered to deviate from normal development to such extent that examinations are unsuited for their needs. The national exams in 10th grade in compulsory schools are free of choice for pupils.

In the year 2000 the Ministry of Education, Science and Culture organised a national program to use screening tests at the beginning of 1st and 2nd grade (6 - 7 years old) to find pupils that

are likely to have reading problems. This program has been evaluated and the outcomes are positive and it is an ongoing successful task in most schools.

Assessment of pupils' status in primary/lower secondary schools may in principle be divided into five factors:

- Standardised medical/psychological assessment
- Standardised educational assessment for children with learning difficulties, e.g. in reading and mathematics
- Informal educational assessment, carried out by teachers individually or in collaboration, e.g. continuous assessment or performance tests in individual study topic, checklists of various kinds used in class work, assessment of diligence and communication skills
- Formal in-school assessment twice to three times a year, linked to the intermediate objectives of the National Curriculum Guidelines
- Nationally co-ordinated examinations in years 4, 7 and 10: standardised examinations are taken in order to assess whether pupils have achieved the intermediate objectives stated for them in the National Curriculum Guidelines for their age group. Nationally co-ordinated examinations are intended to provide pupils, parents, school staff and educational authorities with information and criteria on a nationwide basis.

There are no specific rules concerning certificates for pupils with special educational needs. Pupils in special units at upper secondary schools are evaluated according to their individual curriculum. They are given statements which certify how well they have fulfilled the requirements set forth in their individual educational plan. They have the right to attend a four year course adapted to their personal and educational needs.

Institutions: The Ministry of Education, Science and Culture

Legislation: Regulation on special education for schools at the compulsory level

Legislation: Regulation on assessment of pupils who deviate from normal development to such extent that national coordinated examinations are unsuited for their needs

---

#### 10.6.12. Private Education

Private special schools do not exist. Some pupils with socio-emotional difficulties stay temporarily with private families and are taught there then there is a close collaboration with the nearest compulsory school. See [10.6.3](#). These homes are run by the Government Agency for Child Protection, the teaching is financed by educational authorities and partially by social authorities at upper secondary school level.

---

#### 10.7. Special Measures for the Benefit of Immigrant Children/Pupils and those from Ethnic Minorities

Pre-primary pupils with other mother tongue than Icelandic receive special language instruction in Icelandic in most pre-primary schools and schools are developing methods to integrate immigrant children.

Compulsory school pupils, whose mother tongue is not Icelandic have the right to special education in Icelandic. In most cases they are given two additional hours a week in Icelandic.

The school is responsible for the organisation. In the country there are few reception classes for migrants, 9-15 years old. Usually pupils stay for one year in a reception class where they get special instruction in Icelandic as a second language as well as in other subjects. After this year they go to their home school and attend regular classes with extra hours in Icelandic. These pupils often do not learn Danish as a foreign language in schools, but instead learn better English or get some instruction in their own mother tongue or their knowledge in their own language is acknowledged. Pupils whose mother language is not Icelandic can be exempt from the nationally co-ordinated examinations in grades 4 and 7 if they have attended schools in Iceland for less than a year.

Legislation: Regulation concerning the teaching of Icelandic for pupils with another mother tongue than Icelandic

---

## 10.8. Statistics

Statistical data are from year 2005.

Compulsory schools: The number of pupils placed in special classes, units or schools in Iceland has always been a small proportion of the total number of children in mainstream schools. In 2005 146 pupils attended the four special schools at the compulsory school level and approx. 50 pupils attended the specialized units in ordinary schools.

There are also about 40 children at compulsory school level in long term institutions and treatment homes for children with behavioural and emotional problems, delinquency, up to one year, but they usually go to the neighbouring primary school.

Pupils in special provision in compulsory schools are within 1% of the total school population.

Number of teachers in compulsory special schools: 75

Teacher pupil ratio in compulsory special schools: 1.6 pupils pr. teacher.

Secondary schools: Special units in secondary schools: 23 units with approx. 265 pupils which is approximately 1% of the school population. Additionally there are 10 pupils in long term institutions and treatment homes with behavioural and emotional problems.

Institutions: Statistics Iceland

## 11. The European and International Dimension in Education

---

Good, intensive and well-functioning co-operation with other countries is crucial for education at all levels and a necessity for small countries. For this reason international dimension is an essential part of Icelandic policy objectives. Co-operation with other countries dates back decades and is becoming increasingly important.

---

### 11.1. Historical Overview

Iceland has a long tradition of co-operating with other countries in the field of higher education, and this applies to European countries in particular. This tradition is partly based on the fact that there was no university in Iceland until 1911. The University of Iceland had a few faculties from the start and developed gradually. In the early years students interested in other subjects than law, medicine, theology and humanities had to go abroad.

Iceland was a dependency of Denmark and became a sovereign state in 1918, and most Icelanders went to Denmark for their university education. Between the World Wars Icelanders also started to go to Norway, Sweden, and Germany, Great Britain and other European countries as well as the United States for their university education. During this time, however international co-operation in this field was for most parts unorganised and based on individual initiative.

The University of Iceland, established in 1911, has expanded considerably, in particular since the 1970's. Since the late 1980's the number of Icelandic HEI's has increased and today there are several institutions offering university level education, private as well as public, besides the University of Iceland, which remains by far the largest institution of its kind in the country. Nevertheless, the number of Icelandic students studying abroad still remain high. These students are mostly working towards their second or third university degree. For the present, the opportunities for studying towards a second and a third university degree and research training in Iceland are expanding rapidly and this development has become a major objective of the present policies.

Bibliography: Frá einveldi til lýðveldis

Bibliography: Iceland 1986, handbook

Bibliography: Saga Háskóla Íslands

Institutions: University of Iceland

---

### 11.2. Ongoing Debates and Future Developments

Further expansion of opportunities to study and the great increase in number of students within the country reinforces the universities as research institutions but this may be at the cost of reducing of the extensive contacts we have with counterparts in other countries. See [6.2.](#)

---

### 11.3. National Policy Guidelines/Specific Legislative Framework

The general legislation for Higher Education Institutions in Iceland entered into force in 2006. This is a framework legislation for all Higher Education Institutes and particular legislation is

in force for each individual public HEI's. Privately run universities and colleges are governed by their respective charters and the need a permit for operation issued by the Minister of Education, Science and Culture. Their operation is in being put into full compliance with the general legal framework of 2006.

No specific law has been passed regarding international co-operation in the field of education. Individual schools are free to admit foreign students who meet pre-defined criteria for admission. Similarly, Icelandic students can take parts of their studies abroad and the results are included in their final degrees.

The legislation provides for great independence of the Higher Education Institutions and all institutions have increasing international co-operation high on their agenda. This means that incremental changes can be implemented at the level of institutions without having to amend the overall framework. The role of the Ministry in this context is to provide for opening up opportunities which can be seized by the different institutions of higher education. The present legal situation described above is of course a synthesis of political objectives, own experience and adaptation of good practices from abroad. Iceland has been a member of the Council of Europe since 1951, member of the Nordic co-operation since the early start, the OECD since 1963, EFTA since 1972, and the EEA Agreement since 1994. The participation in this international co-operation, along with the fact that most of our experts in the field of education have acquired their second and third degree at foreign universities, has contributed to the development of the present legal framework, the implementations and practices. See [11.4.2.](#) for further information on the different programmes covered by these memberships and agreements.

Legislation: University Act

---

#### 11.4. National Programmes and Initiatives

The administration of international co-operation in the field of education is the responsibility of the Ministry of Education, Science and Culture. In co-operation with the University of Iceland, the Ministry operates the Office of International Education. The Office, serving all institutions at the tertiary level, handles student exchange both through agreements with individual institutions abroad and the student exchange programmes which form a part of the Nordic co-operation and the co-operation with the European Union, in which Iceland participates being a party to the Agreement on the European Economic Area.

The Icelandic Government Study Loan Fund supports Icelandic students going abroad for studies, in particular for studies towards a second and a third degree. The fund grants student loans that are estimated sufficient to cover living expenses. Tuition fees are eligible for regular loans for graduate studies, while loans to cover tuition fees at undergraduate level are available at going market interest rate. Repayment of regular loans begins two years after the completion of studies.

There are no specific national programmes or initiatives for facilitating international co-operation of universities. The opportunities are opened up by multilateral or bilateral agreements and the institutions receive budget appropriations in order to make use of the opportunities opened up by the existing agreements. However, there is a number of fellowships awarded to students of foreign countries for studies in Iceland. These schemes are operated on a reciprocal basis. The legal framework for the higher education institutions

provides for their own initiatives in entering into international co-operation.

Before the expansion of research based training in the country, students in many disciplines had to go abroad to complete their studies. This system was based on agreements between institutions in Iceland and abroad. Today some of these possibilities remain open and are used by a few institutions, e.g. for MBA studies, engineering and in agricultural sciences.

Institutions: Office of International Education at the University of Iceland

Institutions: University of Iceland

Institutions: The Icelandic Government Student Loan Fund

Institutions: The Ministry of Education, Science and Culture

---

#### 11.4.1. Bilateral Programmes and Initiatives

The general policy of the Ministry has been to entrust the institutions for entering into agreements with counterparts abroad. This explains that there are almost no bilateral agreements in force between Iceland and other countries in this field. However recently, Icelandic and French authorities signed a Programme of Integrated Actions (PAI) which is an administrative agreement on changed practice for implementing a bilateral agreement between Iceland and France that has been in force since 1982.

Following the policies of entrusting the institutions themselves to organise their international co-operation, Icelandic higher education institutions have entered into co-operation based on agreements with a number of universities abroad. This includes also membership in ISEP and the MAUI – Utrecht net for student exchange with universities in the US, Utrecht – East Europe and participation in the Australian European Network. Extensive agreements exist with Canadian higher education institutions and the total number of bilateral agreements is more than 300. These agreements include provisions for student exchange, exchange of academic staff and researchers.

---

#### 11.4.2. Participation in Multilateral Programmes and Initiatives

##### Council of Europe

Iceland is a member of the Council of Europe and has been an active participant in its work in the field of education for several decades. In addition to participating in various projects at all levels of the educational system, Icelandic teachers have also benefited from the Teacher Bursary Scheme of the Council of Europe, which offers in-service courses for teachers in member countries. Iceland regularly participates in meetings of the administrative committees of the Council of Europe in the field of education and Ministerial Conferences. Iceland is a party to the Bologna process and the grading system used is the ECTS system.

Iceland is a party to the treaty of the Council of Europe regarding mutual recognition of examinations given by upper secondary schools, and on this basis Icelandic students have an easy access to European universities.

In 1998 Iceland joined the European Centre for Modern Languages, which is operated under the auspices of the Council of Europe. The interest among language teachers and schools is increasing as this activity becomes better known.

## OECD

Iceland has been a member of the OECD since the organisation was founded. The responsible authority for the Icelandic participation in OECD activities in the field of education is the Ministry of Education, Science and Culture (<http://www.menntamalaraduneyti.is>). Icelandic officials participate in the work of the OECD in the field of education through meetings of its Education Committee. The OECD has evaluated the Icelandic educational system twice. Iceland has participated in the PISA surveys. Participation in a OECD wide university evaluation survey is pending.

Nordic co-operation in the field of education has a long tradition. The Nordic Committee for Cultural Affairs was established in 1947 and the Nordic Council in 1952. In recent decades, the formal basis for co-operation has been the Nordic Treaty on Cultural Affairs which was signed in 1971. The Nordic Council of Ministers, which was set up in the same year, supervises co-operation between the governments in this field. In the field of education and research the work is carried out by the Nordic Committee of Senior Officials for Educational and Research Issues, and for higher education the this committee has a specific body called the Nordic Advisory Committee on Higher Education.

### Nordic co-operation

Nordic co-operation is extensive in a number of fields, including education. Primarily, the co-operation is based on projects within university, upper secondary, compulsory and adult education. Entities from all the Nordic countries participate. There is in force a system for reciprocal admittance of Nordic students to universities which does not require transfer of money between institutions.

In 2004, the Nordic Ministers of education signed a declaration on the recognition of certificates of higher education, called the Reykjavik Declaration. It states that the Nordic Countries commit themselves to equal recognition of comparable education between their countries.

The Nordic Academy of Advanced Study (NorFA) provided exchange of ideas and human resources seeking to develop Nordic research and research training. NorFA has been heavily engaged in disbursing grants for students who want to take parts of their education at another university or college in a Nordic country. NorFA granted fellowships to students in advanced studies, and post docs as well. Acting upon an initiative by the Council of Ministers, NorFA is running a number of Nordic Research Schools and Nordic Centres of Excellence in research.

As of January 2005 NorFA and the Nordic Research Policy Advisory Council merged into a new Nordic institution called NordForsk. The new institution reports to the Nordic Council of Ministers for education and research. Its main objective is the responsibility for Nordic co-operation on research and education of researchers. Further the NordForsk is responsible for cooperation and coordination with Nordic Centre for Innovation (NICE) and the development of Nordic policies in this field. Priority is given to areas in research and research training where the Nordic countries together show considerable strength in an international comparison.

The Nordplus system of grants was established by the Nordic Council of Ministers in 1988.



This is a part of the co-operation on education among the Nordic countries. The aim of the Nordplus scheme is to strengthen the Nordic region as one market for education. Grants awarded through Nordplus go mainly to those who are studying at higher education institutions, but grants are also given to participants in joint research projects. The Nordic research co-operation is the subject for special schemes not detailed further in this context.

Nordplus grants are awarded to students studying in another Nordic country for a part of the year, i.e. one, two or three semesters. The recipient of a grant is entitled to all the services provided for native students and the Nordplus grants are to be regarded as financial aid to cover extra expenses incurred while studying abroad. These studies abroad become a part of the student's undergraduate or graduate programme. Students may apply for a grant for any type of educational programme. In the awarding of grants, however, factors where Nordic co-operation plays a special role are given special consideration. Grants for practical and vocational training are awarded on the same basis as for other studies. Students who are advanced in their studies normally enjoy priority.

Nordplus-junior is another grants system set up by the Nordic Council of Ministers. The target group for Nordplus-junior are pupils between the ages of sixteen and nineteen attending upper secondary school and for teachers for this age group. Nordplus-junior is intended to encourage the exchange of pupils and teachers and to promote co-operation between upper secondary schools in the Nordic countries. The grants cover travel expenses and contribute towards the initiation and preparation of joint projects. Nordplus-junior grants are awarded for a minimum of two weeks and a maximum of two months. The teachers participating in projects retain their salaries. The students are supported partly for their expenses. The subjects studied at the school to be visited have to be recognised as a part of the student's education at home. Icelandic participants have, on the average, been awarded 10-15 grants annually.

The participating schools need to have an agreement on the rights and duties of teachers and pupils. If the co-operation involves practical vocational training, an agreement is made between the workplace, where such practical training is to be given, and either the school or the authorities of the country in question. Schools participate in this co-operation at their own initiative. A variety of different projects are eligible for Nordplus-junior grants. The project does not need to involve exchange of pupils or teachers.

The Nordic Council of Ministers decided in 1993 to set up a Nordic School Network on Internet to facilitate Nordic co-operation. The Nordic School Network was launched in 1994. The network carries i. a. information on the school system in the Nordic countries and Nordic co-operation projects. Each country provides information to the net.

Co-Operation with the European Union:

Iceland co-operates in several education and research programmes on the basis of the Agreement on the European Economic Area.

When the Agreement on the European Economic Area came into force participation in education programmes became a part of the co-operation under the Agreement. According to the relevant articles of Protocol 31 to the EEA Agreement, the EFTA/EEA countries participate in all actions and programmes of the European Union in the field of education with equal rights and obligations as of those of the EU Member States with a few exceptions.

Since Iceland is a party to the Agreement on the European Economic Area, European Union directives concerning mutual recognition of examinations and degrees have been incorporated into Icelandic law.

#### - SOCRATES

Iceland is an equal partner with full rights and obligations in the SOCRATES 2000-2006 programme. The Office of International Education is the national Agency for SOCRATES (<http://www.ari.hi.is/>). According to the number of applications the office has received, the promotion seems to have reached the right target groups in the country.

One of the main hindrances of receiving more students in Iceland was in the beginning perceived to be the language barrier. However, as Icelandic HEIs have gradually been increasing the number of courses taught in English, Iceland has experienced a significant rise in the number of incoming Erasmus students. These students enroll for studies in a number of subjects, including Icelandic for foreign students.

The participation in Socrates included all relevant sub-programmes, such as Erasmus, Comenius, Grundtvig, etc.

#### - LEONARDO DA VINCI

Since the entry into force of the EEA-Agreement, Iceland participates in the Leonardo da Vinci programme under the same conditions as apply for the participation in the Socrates programme. Participation in the LEONARDO DA VINCI programme has proved quite successful for Icelandic institutions.

The national agency for the participation in Leonardo da Vinci is the University of Iceland Research Liaison Office.

Iceland's partners in Leonardo da Vinci projects come from all participating countries. The most frequent partner countries are Denmark, UK, Spain, Belgium, Germany, Italy, Ireland and the Netherlands. Icelandic institutions also participate in several projects lead by partners from other countries.

#### - ARION

Iceland participates in the ARION programme of the European Union. ARION is a programme that gives financial support to specialists and administrators in the field of education to allow them to attend courses in other European countries.

---

### 11.5. European/International Dimension through the National Curriculum

As a part of the European Dimension, European history and geography are taught in Iceland at every level of the school system. In the teaching of these subjects, emphasis is placed on introducing the culture of the various European nations to Icelandic students and on the importance of communication between European nations. These aspects are also stressed in various parts in the National Curriculum Guidelines.

Iceland has a population of around 308.000 and co-operation with other countries is providing important and valuable impact. As a result, great emphasis is placed on having a good command of foreign languages. The teaching of foreign languages is very important at all levels of the school system, and at the end of compulsory education, pupils are expected to have acquired considerable competence in at least two foreign languages, i.e. one Nordic language and English. English has recently succeeded Danish as the first foreign language. At the upper secondary level, students preparing for matriculation examination must add at least one other foreign language; usually either German or French. At the university level instruction is offered in all Nordic languages, as well as most EU languages, in addition to other languages. In Adult Education the provisions on international or European issues in curricula for adult education are comparable to that of upper secondary education.

---

#### 11.5.1. European Dimension in the Pre-primary Curricula

The curriculum for the pre-primary education level does not include specific provisions on international or European dimension in the education activities. However circumstances in the different groups may call for these issues to be addressed, in particular when the pupils are of a foreign lineage.

---

#### 11.5.2. European Dimension in the Compulsory Curricula

At the compulsory level international features, including European, are gradually introduced. This is done through different subjects such as geography, history and of course teaching of foreign languages at the later stages of the primary education level. At this level there is a specific subject called Life Skills. The major aim with this subject is to improve the capacity of the young students to face the different challenges of growing up, teach them to have respect for themselves and their own life and for other people, their culture, religion etc, including those who are disadvantaged in any sense. The students at the compulsory education level often participate in joint projects with classes of similar age in other countries. This may result in mutual study visits.

---

#### 11.5.3. European Dimension in the Upper secondary Curricula

At the upper secondary level there is a stronger emphasis on science and language learning, European history, geography, etc. Social sciences are also to be considered in this respect including the subject Life Skills. Co-operation with students in other countries, e.g. through Nordic and European schemes on well defined projects is also quite common.

---

#### 11.5.4. European Dimension in the Tertiary education Curricula

At the tertiary level participation in international co-operation is very common. At this stage the number of opportunities for participating in international collaboration is high and for certain subjects such co-operation is essential. Academic staff almost without exception spends sabbatical leaves abroad participating in specialised studies or research projects. Such projects may receive additional support.

---

#### 11.5.5. European dimension in Teacher training Curricula

In teachers' education in Iceland, international co-operation is quite extensive.

---

#### 11.5.6. European dimension in Adult education Curricula

The provisions on international or European issues in curricula for adult education are comparable to that of upper secondary education.

---

### 11.6. Mobility and Exchange

For information on mobility and exchange for pupils/students and teaching and academic staff, please refer to the respective subdivisions.

---

#### 11.6.1. Mobility and Exchange of Pupils/ Students

Compulsory and upper secondary levels: Student exchange and other forms of co-operation with other countries at the compulsory and upper-secondary school levels in Iceland is mainly tied to Scandinavia, but exchanges with other European countries, e.g. the France and the UK, are also emerging. Between 700 and 800 pupils from the age of thirteen to seventeen come to Iceland every year from the other Nordic countries, and this number of pupils is growing.

Tertiary level: Icelandic students abroad according to estimates are around 2.100. In addition a number of students is attending HIE's in other countries without the assistance of the Student Loan Fund.

The greatest number of foreign students in Iceland is enrolled at the University of Iceland, which offers the greatest variety of subjects. The total number of foreign students at universities in Iceland is around 5% of all students enrolled. The greatest number of foreign students is coming from European countries, but quite a number is coming from overseas and the students are altogether of over 60 nationalities.

The number of students coming to Iceland is higher than expected and while humanities is the most popular faculty, receiving 50% of the incoming foreign students, other subjects are also attractive to foreign students, including natural sciences, social sciences and business and economy. A large proportion of the foreign students in the humanities are enrolled in a two year programme in the Icelandic language and literature.

The high number of exchange students, both outgoing students but especially incoming students confirms the relevance of participating in international co-operation.

Institutions: University of Iceland

Institutions: The Icelandic Government Student Loan Fund

---

#### 11.6.2. Mobility and Exchange of Teaching and Academic Staff

In the teacher scheme of the Erasmus programme 35 teachers participated during the academic year 2003/2004. They came from six universities and colleges and went for studies

in 11 European countries. The average duration of stay was 11 months and out of the 35, 21 were women. 22 of the teachers came from the University of Iceland. The teachers schemes remain popular.

Institutions: University of Iceland

### 11.7. Statistics

Erasmus:

The number of Icelandic students who received exchange grants in the academic year 2002/03 was 167 while 190 Erasmus students came to study in Iceland. In the academic year 2003/04 216 Icelandic exchange students went abroad but 223 came to the country. The most popular countries among Icelandic students are Denmark, Germany, France, Spain and Italy. The assistance of the Erasmus scheme remains a very important opportunity. During 2003/04 altogether 56 teachers went abroad under the Erasmus scheme. The total number of Erasmus students from Iceland studying abroad in 2004-2005 was 199.

NordPlus:

The figures below show the number of NordPlus students coming to Iceland and the number of Icelandic students participating in the NordPlus scheme 2001-2004.

	2001/2002	2002/2003	2003/2004
NordPlus to Iceland	100	121	95
NordPlus from Iceland	70	71	70

Icelandic participation in Leonardo da Vinci during 2000-2006 was as follows:

Year	Vocational trainees	University students	Young workers	Human resource managers	Total:
2000	26	10	54	57	147
2001	49	3	29	91	172
2002	55	0	73	115	243
2003	22	15	64	108	209
2004	64	12	39	114	229
2005	72	10	54	118	254
2006	42	14	66	114	236

Number of Leonardo da Vinci pilot projects lead by Icelandic institutions and organisaions 2000-2006 was as follows:

Year	Number of projects
2000	2
2001	2
2002	2
2003	3
2004	5
2005	3
2006	3

Source: University of Iceland

tests  
finedoc

---

## **Legislation :**

Act nr 98/2006 with amendments to Act nr 66/1995 on Compulsory education (Law):  
December 2006, 98, Stjórnartíðindi A, 2006, Menntamalaraduneyti.is (20/06/07)  
Act nr 98/2006 with amendments to Act nr 66/1995 on Compulsory education

Agricultural Education Act (Law): 19/03/1999, 57/1999, Reykjavík, Stjórnartíðindi A,  
Althingi.is

Law concerning agricultural education at the two Higher Education Institutions that come  
under the auspice of the Ministry of Agriculture

Compulsory School Act (Law): 21/05/1974, 63/1974, Stjórnartíðindi A, 1974, Althingi.is  
(19/06/07)

Law on compulsory education in the age bracket 7 to 16 years

Curriculum guidelines for compulsory schools: General section (Regulation): 27/09/1976,  
Stjórnartíðindi

General section of the Curriculum guidelines for compulsory education

Curriculum Guidelines for special education branches in upper secondary schools. (Status of a  
Regulation): 21/03/2005, <http://bella.mrn.stjr.is/utgafur/starfsbrautir2005.pdf> (25/06/2007)  
Curriculum Guidelines for special education branches in upper secondary schools.

Law concerning the rights and duties of compulsory school teachers and head teachers (Law):  
11/06/1996, 72/1996, Stjórnartíðindi A 1996, Althingi.is (20/06/07)

Law concerning the rights and duties of compulsory school teachers and head teachers

Law on conditions, health and safety in the workplace (Law): 28/05/1980, 46/1980,  
Reykjavík, Stjórnartíðindi A 12, No. 34-49, 9. June, 1980., Althingi.is (19/06/07)

Law on conditions, health and safety in the workplace

Law on educational grants (Law): 26/03/2003, 79/2003, Stjórnartíðindi A, 2003, Althingi.is  
(20/06/07)

Law on grants for students at the upper secondary level, either studying far from their  
domiciles and/or having financial difficulties.

Law on general adult education (Law): 01/06/1992, 47/1992, Reykjavík, Stjórnartíðindi A 7,  
No. 30-53, 10. June, 1992, 19/06/07

General law on adult education in the school system. Abolished and replaced by provisions in  
the Upper Secondary School Act 1996

Law on grammar schools (Law): 07/05/1946, 58/1946, Stjórnartíðindi A, Reykjavík, 1946,  
Althingi.is (20/06/07)

Law on general academic education concluding with matriculation examination

Law on Iceland University of Education (Law): 18/11/97, 137/1997, Stjórnartíðindi A, 1997,  
<http://www.althingi.is/lagas/nuna/1997137.html> (19.06.2007)

Law on Iceland University of Education

Law on industrial vocational schools (Law): 16/05/1955, 45/1955, Reykjavík, Stjórnartíðindi A, 1955, Althingi.is

With the passing of this law the State took over the operation of the industrial vocational schools

Law on maternity and parental leave (Law): 22/05/2000, 95/2000, Stjórnartíðindi A 2000, Althingi.is (20/06/07)

Law on maternity and parental leave

Law on measures in the labour market (Law): 13/3/1997, 13/1997, Stjórnartíðindi A, 1997, Althingi.is (20/06/07)

Law on measures in the labour market

Law on Parliamentary Elections (Law): 16/10/1987, 80/1987, Reykjavík, Stjórnartíðindi A 11, no. 78-82, Althingi.is (20/06/07)

Law on Parliamentary Elections

Law on permission to establish comprehensive upper secondary schools (Law): 13/04/1973, 14/1973, Reykjavík, Stjórnartíðindi A 7, no. 8-39, 14. may, 1973, Althingi.is (20/06/07)

Law on permission to establish comprehensive upper secondary schools

Law on Pre-Primary Schools (Law): 1991, 48, Stjórnartíðindi A, <http://Althingi.is> (3/7/07)

Law on Pre-Primary Schools

Law on regional boarding schools. (Law): 14/06/1929, 37/1929, Reykjavík, Stjórnartíðindi A, 1929

Law on the establishment of state-run lower secondary district boarding schools

Law on Teachers Education and Training 1971 (Lög): 1971, Stjórnartíðindi A 1971, <http://Althingi.is> (22/06/07)

Law on teachers education and training. The school was upgraded to university level

Law on the Affairs of the Handicapped (Law): 02/06/1992, 59/1992, Stjórnartíðindi A, 1992, <http://www.althingi.is/lagas/133a/1992059.html> (25/06/2007)

Law on the affairs of the handicapped

Law on the educational system (Law): 21/05/1974, 55/1974, Reykjavík, Stjórnartíðindi A 20, No. 30-58.5. June, 1974, Althingi.is (20/06/07)

The organisation of the educational system into 3 levels

Law on the Educational Testing Institution (Law): 2000, 168, Stjórnartíðindi A 2000, Althingi.is (20/06/07)

Law on management and activities of the Educational Testing Institution, responsible for the nationally co-ordinated examinations and Iceland's participation in international surveys such as PISA

Law on the education of children (Law): 23/06/1936, 94/1936, Reykjavík, Stjórnartíðindi A, 1936

Law on compulsory education for children aged 7-14

Law on the Education of the Deaf and Dumb (Law): 19/06/1922, 24/1922, Reykjavík, Stjórnartíðindi A, 1922, Althingi.is (20/06/07)

Law on the education of the deaf and dumb

Law on the education system and the state's obligation to provide schooling (Law):

10/04/1946, 22/1946, Reykjavík, Stjórnartíðindi A, 1946, Althingi.is (20/06/07)

The organization of the educational system into 4 levels. Compulsory education was extended by one year, i.e. 7 - 15 years

Law on the Equality of the Sexes (Law): 27/03/1991, 28/1991, Reykjavík, Stjórnartíðindi A 6, No. 15-49, 17. April, 1991., Althingi.is (20/06/07)

Law on the equality of the sexes

Law on the Icelandic College for Pre-Primary School Teachers (Law): 06/04/1973, 10/1973, Reykjavík, Stjórnartíðindi A 7, No. 8-39, 14 May, 1973, Althingi.is (20/06/07)

Law on the Icelandic College for Pre-School Teachers which at that time was part of the upper secondary school level. Abolished in 1998 when the school merged into the Iceland University of Education

Law on the instruction of children in writing and arithmetic (Law): 09/01/1880, 2/1880, Reykjavík, Stjórnartíðindi A, 1880, althingi.is (20/06/07)

Law on the instruction of children in writing and arithmetic

Law on the operation of pre-schools (Law): 1973, 29, <http://Althingi.is> (3/7/07)

Law on the operation of pre-schools

Law on the protection of the professional titles and rights of compulsory school teachers, upper secondary school teachers and compulsory school head teachers (Law): 1986, 48, Stjórnartíðindi A, 1986, <http://Althingi.is> (3/7/07)

Law on the protection of the professional titles and rights of compulsory school teachers, upper secondary school teachers and compulsory school head teachers

Law on the protection of the professional titles and rights of compulsory school teachers, upper secondary school teachers and compulsory school head teachers (Law): 16/06/1998, 86/1998, Stjórnartíðindi A 1998, Menntamalaraduneyti.is (19/06/07)

Law on the protection of the professional titles and rights of compulsory school teachers, upper secondary school teachers and compulsory school head teachers

Law on the rights and duties of state employees (Law): 11/06/1996, 70/1996, Stjórnartíðindi A, 1996, Althingi.is (20/06/07)

Law on the rights and duties of state employees

Law on the Science and Technology Policy Council (Law): 03/02/2003, 2/2003, Stjórnartíðindi A, 2003, <http://www.althingi.is/lagas/nuna/2003002.html> (19.06.2007)

Law on the Science and Technology Policy Council

Law on the Technical University of Iceland (Law): 08/05/2002, 53/2002, Stjórnartíðindi A, 2002, <http://www.althingi.is/lagas/nuna/2002053.html> (19.06.2007)

Law on the Technical University of Iceland



Law on the University of Akureyri (Law): 01/06/1992, 51/1992, Reykjavík, Stjórnartíðindi A 7, No. 30-53, 10. June, 1992, <http://www.althingi.is/lagas/nuna/1992051.html> (19.06.2007)  
Replaced by law nr. 40/1999 art. 19

Law on the University of Iceland. (Law): 22/03/1999, 41/1999, Stjórnartíðindi A, 1999, <http://www.althingi.is/lagas/133a/1999041.html> (19.06.2007)  
Law on the University of Iceland.

Law on unemployment compensation (Law): 13/3/1997, 12/1997, Stjórnartíðindi A, 1997, Althingi.is (19/06/07)  
Law on unemployment compensation

Law on vocational education (Law): 16/05/1955, 45/1955, Reykjavík, Stjórnartíðindi A, 1955, Althingi.is  
Law making the State responsible for the operation of industrial-vocational schools

Law on vocational training (Law): 31/05/1927, 11/1927, Reykjavík, Stjórnartíðindi A, 1927, Althingi.is (20/06/07)  
This law provides among other things for obligatory theoretical training for trainees in the certified trades

Law on vocational training in business and industry (Law): 29/05/1992, 19/1992, Stjórnartíðindi A 1992, Althingi.is (20/06/07)  
The act covers the study of courses in order to increase skills and knowledge in business and industry

Law on wage contracts for public employees (Law): 31/12/1986, 94/1986, Reykjavík, Stjórnartíðindi A 17, No. 72-94, 31. December, 1986, Althingi.is (20/06/07)  
Law on wage contracts for public employees

Local Government Act (Law): 03/06/98, 45/1998, Stjórnartíðindi B, 1998, Althingi.is (20/06/07)  
Local Government Act

National Curriculum Guideline for Pre-primary Schools (National Curriculum): 04/05/1999, 315/1999, Stjórnartíðindi B 1999, [menntamalaraduneyti.is](http://menntamalaraduneyti.is)  
National Curriculum Guideline for Pre-primary Schools

National curriculum guidelines for children at compulsory school age (Regulation): 16/09/1960, Námsskrá fyrir nemendum á fræðsluskilyldualdri, Reykjavík, Menntamálaráðuneytið 1960  
National curriculum guidelines for children at compulsory school age based on the law from 1946 on the education system and the State's obligation to provide schooling

National Curriculum Guidelines for Compulsory Education (Regulation): 1999, Stjórnartíðindi B 1999, [Menntamalaraduneyti.is](http://Menntamalaraduneyti.is) (19/06/07)  
National Curriculum Guidelines for Compulsory Education

National Curriculum Guidelines for Compulsory Education. General section (Regulation): 2006, Stjórnartíðindi B, 2006, [menntamálaráðuneyti.is](http://menntamálaráðuneyti.is) (21/06/07)

National Curriculum Guidelines for Compulsory Education. General section

National Curriculum Guidelines for Upper Secondary Education (Regulation): 31/03/1999, Stjórnartíðindi B 1999, Menntamalaraduneyti.is (19/96/07)

National Curriculum Guidelines for Upper Secondary Education, both general academic and vocational education

National Curriculum Guidelines for Upper Secondary Education, study programme for disabled students 2004 (Regulation): 2004, Stjórnartíðindi B, <http://>

National Curriculum Guidelines for Upper Secondary Education, study programme for disabled students 2004

National Curriculum Guidelines for Upper-Secondary Schools (Regulation): 01/04/1986, Menntamálaráðuneytið, framhaldsskóladeild. April, 1986

National Curriculum Guidelines for Upper-Secondary Schools, both general and vocational education

National Qualification Framework (Regulation): 08.02.2007, 80/2007, Stjórnartíðindi B, 2007, <http://>

National Qualification Framework

Regulation on organisations of the school year in upper secondary schools (Regulation): 2001, 6, Stjórnartíðindi B, <http://menntamalaraduneyti.is> (3/7/07)

Regulation on organisations of the school year in upper secondary schools

Regulation on accreditation of Higher Education Institutions (Regulation): 07.12.2006, 1067/2006, Stjórnartíðindi A, 2006, <http://>

Rules on accreditation of Higher Education Institutions according to Art. 3 of Higher Education Act no. 63/2006

Regulation concerning the operation of pre-schools (Regulation): 06/04/1995, 225/1995, <http://www.menntamalaraduneyti.is/log-og-reglugerdir/>,

<http://www.menntamalaraduneyti.is/log-og-reglugerdir/> (25/06/2007)

Regulation concerning the operation of pre-schools

Regulation concerning the teaching of Icelandic for pupils with another mother tongue than Icelandic (Regulation): 04/07/1996, 319/1996, <http://www.menntamalaraduneyti.is/log-og-reglugerdir/>, <http://www.menntamalaraduneyti.is/log-og-reglugerdir/> (25/06/2007)

Regulation concerning the teaching of Icelandic for pupils with another mother tongue than Icelandic

Regulation for the University of Akureyri (Regulation): 27/06/1994, 380/1994, Stjórnartíðindi B, 1994

Regulation for the University of Akureyri

Regulation on assessment of pupils who deviate from normal development to such extent that national coordinated examinations are unsuited for their needs (Regulation): 23/12/1996, 709/1996, <http://www.menntamalaraduneyti.is/log-og-reglugerdir/>,

<http://www.menntamalaraduneyti.is/log-og-reglugerdir/> (25/06/2007)

Regulation on assessment of pupils who deviate from normal

Regulation on nationally co-ordinated examinations in grade 10 in compulsory education (Regulation): 2000, 414, Stjórnartíðindi B 2000, Menntamalaraduneyti.is (21/06/07)  
Regulation on organisation and implementation of the nationally co-ordinated examinations in grade 10 in compulsory education

Regulation on registration of pupils in upper secondary schools (Regulation): 2000, 98, Stjórnartíðindi B 2000, Menntamálaráðuneyti.is (21/06/07)  
Regulation that defines the requirements for each branch of study at the upper secondary level

Regulation on special education for schools at the compulsory level (Regulation): 26/08/1996, 389/1996, Stjórnartíðindi B, 1996, menntamalaraduneyti.is  
Regulation on special education for schools at the compulsory level

Regulation on Specialist Services for Schools (Regulation): 26/06/1996, 386/1996, <http://www.menntamalaraduneyti.is/log-og-reglugerdir/>,  
<http://www.menntamalaraduneyti.is/log-og-reglugerdir/> (25/06/2007)  
Regulation on specialist services for schools

Regulation on teaching of disabled students in upper secondary schools. (Regulation): 09/06/1998, 372/1998, <http://www.menntamalaraduneyti.is/log-og-reglugerdir/>,  
<http://www.menntamalaraduneyti.is/log-og-reglugerdir/> (25/06/2007)  
Regulation on teaching of disabled students in upper secondary schools.

Regulation on the nationally co-ordinated examinations in grades 4 and 7 in compulsory education (Regulation): 2000, 415, Stjórnartíðindi B 2000, Menntamalaraduneyti.is (21/06/07)  
Regulation on the organisation and implementation of the nationally co-ordinated examinations in grades 4 and 7 in compulsory education

Regulations on Study Grants (Regulation): 2003, 692, Stjórnartíðindi B, <http://>  
Regulations on Study Grants in upper secondary schools

Rules on doctoral studies in universities (Regulation): 17.01.2007, 37/2007, Stjórnartíðindi B, 2007, <http://>  
Rules on doctoral studies in universities according to art. 7 of Universities Act.n. 63/2006

Rules on Quality Control in Higher Education (Status of a Regulation): 12/09/2003, 666/2003, Reykjavík, Stjórnartíðindi B  
Rules on Quality Control in Higher Education

State budget 2006 (Law): 2005, Stjórnartíðindi A, 2005, <http://Althingi.is> (20/6/07)  
State budget for the year 2006

The Compulsory School Act (Law): 1991, Stjórnartíðindi A 1991, Althingi.is (20/06/07)  
Law on compulsory education for children in the age bracket 6 to 16 years

The Constitution of the Republic of Iceland (Constitution): 08/03/1944, 33/1944, Stjórnartíðindi - AB 1944 Reykjavík No. 33/1944, stjornarskra.is (18/06/07)  
Constitution

The National Curriculum Guidelines for compulsory schools (Regulation): 28/04/1989, Aðalnámskrá Grunnskóla, Menntamálaráðuneytið, May, 1989, menntamalaraduneyti.is (19/06/07)

The National Curriculum Guidelines for compulsory schools from 1989

The Pre-Primary School Act (Law): 19/05/1994, 78/1994, Reykjavík, Stjórnartíðindi A, 1994, <http://www.althingi.is/lagas/133a/1994078.html> (25/06/2007)

Law concerning establishing pre-primary schools as the first educational level of the educational system.

Universities Act (Law): 18/12/1997, 136/1997, Stjórnartíðindi A 1997, <http://www.althingi.is/lagas/nuna/1997136.html>

University Act, replaced by laws nr. 63/2006.

Universities Act in the Arts (Law): 07/03/95, 43/1995, Stjórnartíðindi A, 1995, <http://www.althingi.is/lagas/nuna/1995043.html> (19.06.2007)

Universities Act in the Arts

University Act (Law): 13.06.2006, 63/2006, Stjórnartíðindi A, 2006, <http://www.althingi.is/lagas/nuna/2006063.html> (19.06.2007)

University Act

Upper Secondary School Act (Law): 11/6/1996, 80/1996, Stjórnartíðindi A, 1996, menntamalaraduneyti.is (19/06/07)

Law on upper secondary education, both general academic and vocational education

Upper Secondary School Act. (Law): 19/05/1988, 57, Reykjavík, Stjórnartíðindi A 10, no 47-73, 8. June, 1988., Althingi.is (19/06/07)

Law on general and vocational upper secondary education

## Bibliography

---

Barnavinafélagið Sumargjöf 25 ára 1924 - 11. apríl - 1949= The "Sumargjöf" benefactor association for children, 25 years anniversary / Guðmundsson, Gils. - Reykjavík : The children's benefactor association, 1949.

The "Sumargjöf" benefactor association for children, 25 years anniversary

Barnavinafélagið Sumargjöf 50 ára= The childrens benefactor association, 50 years anniversary / Sigurðardóttir, Valborg, Þorláksson, Guðmundur (editor). - Reykjavík : [s.n.], 1976. - , 201.

The childrens benefactor association, 50 years anniversary

Evaluation of Schools providing Compulsory Education in Europe= Mat í grunnskólum í Evrópu / Eurydice. - Brussel : Eurydice, 2004. - , 155.

Evaluation of Schools providing Compulsory Education in Europe  
2-87116-364-2

[http://www.eurydice.org\(4/7/07\)](http://www.eurydice.org(4/7/07))

Fóstra: Saga fóstrustéttarinnar og starfsemi Fósturfélags Íslands= "Fóstra", the history of child

nurses and their union / Guðnadóttir, Kristín. - : The Icelandic Union of "Fóstrur" (pre-school teachers), 1981. - , 36.

"Fóstra", the history of child nurses and their union

Frá einveldi til lýðveldis= From monarchy to democracy / Þorleifsson, Heimir. - 3rd ed. - Reykjavík : Bókaverslun Sigfúsar Eymundssonar, 1986.

The history of Iceland after 1830

Iceland 1986, handbook / The Central Bank of Iceland ; Nordal, Jóhannes and Kristinsson, Valdimar (editors). - Reykjavík : The Central Bank of Iceland, 1986.

The handbook contains among other things information about compulsory and upper secondary education in Iceland

Kennsluskrá Háskóla Íslands= Curriculum for University of Iceland / University of Iceland, Kristinsson, Þórður (Editor). - Reykjavík : University of Iceland, 2004. - (Kennsluskrá Háskóla Íslands )

;02566559

<http://www.gegnir.is/F/KR9M7L4LV2G4NBJNJB3LLQV2SU8MM64KXSC1VCLGNE7BV/FFIBM-00389?func=full-set->

[set&set\\_number=954332&set\\_entry=000001&format=999](http://www.gegnir.is/F/KR9M7L4LV2G4NBJNJB3LLQV2SU8MM64KXSC1VCLGNE7BV/FFIBM-00389?func=full-set-set&set_number=954332&set_entry=000001&format=999)(19.06.2007)

Kennsluskrá Háskólans á Akureyri= Curriculum for University of Akureyri / University of Akureyri. - Akureyri : University of Akureyri, 2004. - (Kennsluskrá Háskólans á Akureyri )  
The University of Akureyri

<http://www.gegnir.is/F/KR9M7L4LV2G4NBJNJB3LLQV2SU8MM64KXSC1VCLGNE7BV/FFIBM-00263?func=item-global->

[exp&doc\\_number=000443214&item\\_sequence=000030&sub\\_library=HAKHN](http://www.gegnir.is/F/KR9M7L4LV2G4NBJNJB3LLQV2SU8MM64KXSC1VCLGNE7BV/FFIBM-00263?func=item-global-exp&doc_number=000443214&item_sequence=000030&sub_library=HAKHN)

Kennsluskrá Kennaraháskólans= Curriculum for Iceland University of Education. - Reykjavík : The Iceland University of Education, 2004. - (Kennsluskrá Kennaraháskólans )

[http://www.gegnir.is/F/KR9M7L4LV2G4NBJNJB3LLQV2SU8MM64KXSC1VCLGNE7BV/FFIBM-00573?func=full-set-set&set\\_number=954424&set\\_entry=000001&format=999](http://www.gegnir.is/F/KR9M7L4LV2G4NBJNJB3LLQV2SU8MM64KXSC1VCLGNE7BV/FFIBM-00573?func=full-set-set&set_number=954424&set_entry=000001&format=999)

Key Topics in Education in Europe, volume 3, report I: Initial training and transition to working life / Eurydice. - Brussels : European Commission, 2002. - 3, 129. - (The teaching profession in Europe: Profile, trends and concerns )

A comparative study of the initial training of lower secondary teachers in Europe

2-87116-341-3

[eurydice.org](http://eurydice.org)

Key Topics in Education in Europe, volume 3, report II: Supply and demand / Eurydice. - Brussels : European Commission, 2002. - 3, 139.

A comparative study of supply and demand of lower secondary teachers and what measures have been taken in order to attract new recruits or to alleviate the problem of teachers shortage

2-87116-344-8

[eurydice.org](http://eurydice.org)

Kjarasamningur Kennarasambands Íslands og fjármálaráðherra f.h. ríkissjóðs= Wage contract between the Icelandic Teachers' Union and the Ministry of Finance. - Reykjavík, 2005.

Wage contract for upper secondary school teachers. The contract is still valid the year of 2008

Kjarasamningur Launanevndar sveitarfélaga og Kennarasambands Íslands fyrir Grunnskóla= Wage contract between the municipalities' wage committee and the Icelandic Teachers' Union on behalf of the Association of the compulsory school teachers. - Reykjavík, 2005.

The contract is valid until 2007

[ki.is](http://ki.is)

Kjarasamningur Launanevndar sveitarfélaga og Kennarasambands Íslands vegna Félags leikskólakennara= Wage contract between the municipalities' wage committee and the Icelandic Teachers' Union on behalf of the Association of the pre-primary school teachers. - Reykjavík, 2006.

The contract is valid until 2008

[ki.is](http://ki.is)

Landshagir 2006= Statistical Yearbook of Iceland / Statistics Iceland. - Reykjavík : Hagstofa Íslands -Statistics Iceland, 2006. - , 367.

Statistical Abstract of Iceland.

9979-770-25-2;1017-6683

<http://www.hagstofa.is/?PageID=421&itemid=345cd41e-39fc-4000-8b66-0ba4951fa08b>(19.06.2007)

A key publication of Icelandic official statistics.

Saga Alþýðufræðslunnar á Íslandi= History of Public Education in Iceland / Magnús, Gunnar M.. - Anniversary edition - Reykjavík : The Icelandic Union of Primary-school Teachers, 1939.

History of primary school education in Iceland

Saga Háskóla Íslands: Yfirlit um hálfra aldar starf / Jónsson, Guðni. - : The University of Iceland, 1961. - , 306.

History of the University of Iceland; a summary of 50 years of work

Saga Reykjavíkurskóla: Historia scholae Reykjavicensis= History of the Reykjavík Grammar School / Þorleifsson, Heimir. - Reykjavík : Sögusjóður Menntaskólans í Reykjavík, 1975.

History of the oldest grammar school in Iceland

Sjálfsmat skóla -Leikskólar, grunnskólar og framhaldsskólar= Self evaluation in School- Pre-primary, compulsory and upper secondary schools / Ministry of Education, Science and Culture. - 1 - Reykjavík : Ministry of Education, Science and Culture, 1997. - , 21.

Guidelines for self-evaluation in schools

9979-821-76-0

[Menntamalaraduneyti.is](http://Menntamalaraduneyti.is)

Skólar á Íslandi (sérprentun úr Ísland, atvinnuhættir og menning)= Schools in Iceland (a special print from: Iceland, work and culture) / Óskarsdóttir, Gerður, G.. - Reykjavík : Ministry of Education, Science and Culture, 1990.

A short overview of schooling in Iceland

The Educational System in Iceland / The Ministry of Education, Science and Culture. - Monograph 6 - Reykjavík : Ministry of Education, Science and Culture, 2002. - , 46.

Overview of the educational system in Iceland  
9979-882-82-4  
[menntamalaraduneyti.is](http://menntamalaraduneyti.is)

The Modern Icelandic School System in Historic Perspective / Jósefsson, Bragi. - Reykjavík :  
Námsháskólaáhrif, 1985. - , 74.

Historical overview of the school system in Iceland

Þróun starfsmenntunar á framhaldsskólastigi= The development of Vocational Education in  
Upper Secondary Education / Guðmundsson, Gestur. - Reykjavík : The Icelandic Ministry of  
Education, Science and Culture: Sammennt, 1993.

The development of Vocational Education in Upper Secondary Education