



Primary and  
secondary education

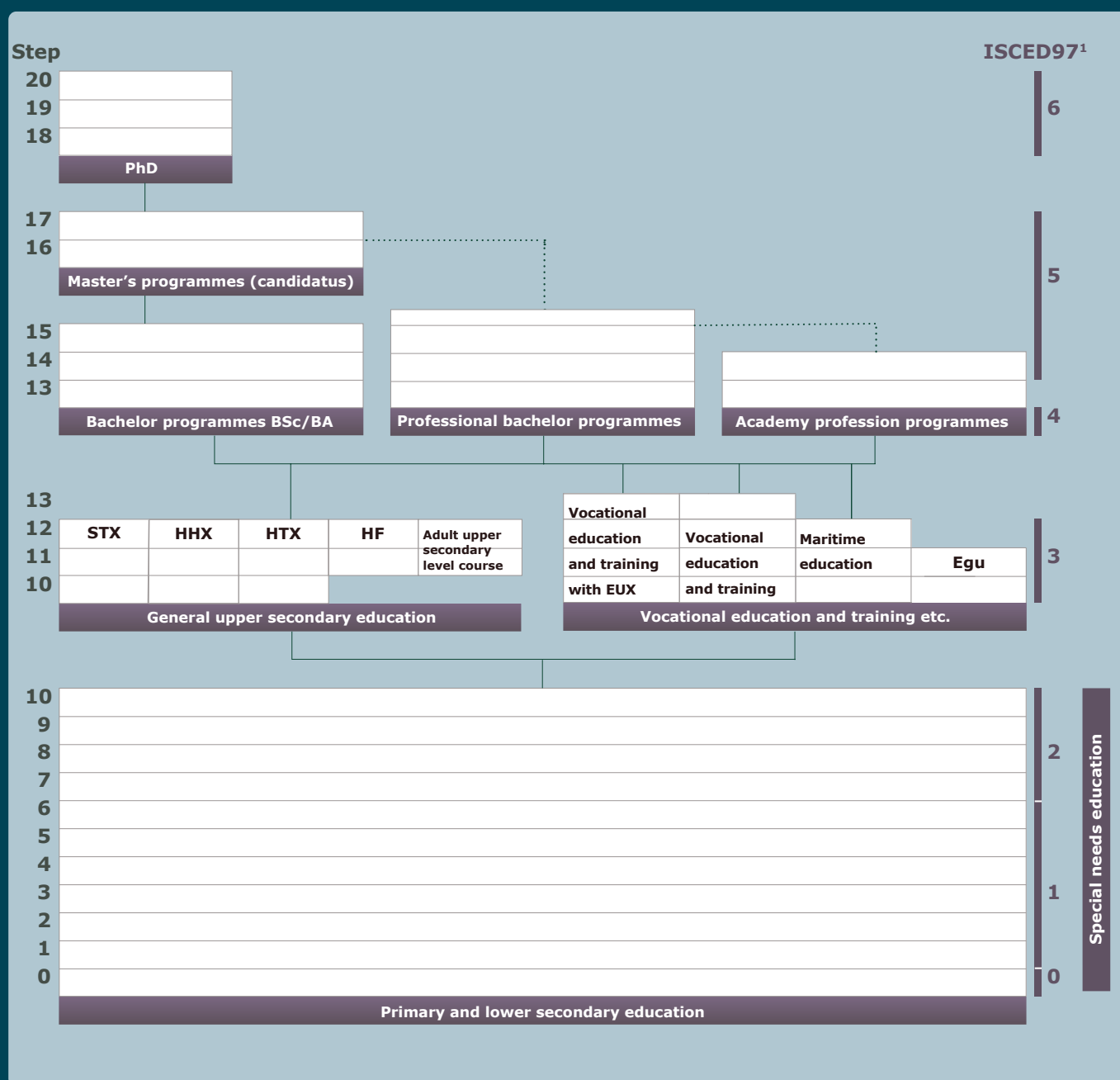
# The Danish Education System

Vocational education  
and training

Higher education  
and lifelong learning



# The Danish Education System



For a presentation of adult education, see page 10

<sup>1</sup> International Standard Classification of Education (UNESCO).

# Primary and lower secondary education

## The public system

The public municipal school, the Folkeskole, is a comprehensive, integrated school covering primary and lower secondary education (ISCED 1 and 2) without streaming.

In the school year 2008/2009, 81% of all pupils in primary and lower secondary schools attended the Folkeskole, 13% attended private schools, 4% attended the private residential schools, Efterskoler, and 1% attended special schools. Education is compulsory for ten years starting the year the child turns six. It is education itself that is compulsory, not schooling.

Apart from the compulsory forms 0 to 9, the Folkeskole comprises an optional form 10. In the school year 2008/2009, 53% of pupils attending form 9 also attended form 10.

The average number of pupils per class in the Folkeskole is 20.2, while the figure for private schools is 16.7 (2008/2009).

School usually starts at 8 a.m. The younger pupils finish at around noon or 1 p.m., and the older pupils finish at around 2 or 3 p.m. The younger pupils (6-10 years old) may spend their leisure time in a municipal leisure-time care facility at school, Skolefritidsordning (SFO), or at a recreation centre, Fritidshjem. Both are fee-based facilities.

According to the Folkeskole Act, schools must provide pupils with subject-specific qualifications and prepare them for further education. Moreover, it stipulates that schools should prepare pupils for their role as citizens in a democratic society. The Folkeskole builds on the principle of differentiated teaching. Teaching is organised so as to strengthen and develop interests and qualifications while catering for the needs of the individual pupil. At the same time, it aims at developing cooperative skills among the pupils.

Pupils are continuously evaluated. Teachers write individual learning plans for the pupils which are updated regu-

larly. National computer-based tests have been introduced in a number of subjects in forms 2 to 8. Progression to the next form is usually automatic. School-leaving examinations are taken in forms 9 and 10 and the examinations are compulsory. Moreover, pupils in form 9 write a one week project assignment.

## Other possibilities

Parents may choose a private school for their children. Private schools are self-governing institutions required to measure up to the standards of the municipal schools.

There are many different types of private schools and some are based on a specific philosophy, a special pedagogical line or religious belief.

Continuation schools, Efterskoler, are private residential schools for pupils in forms 8 to 10. In addition to normal subjects, emphasis in these schools is typically on social learning and fields such as sports, music, nature or ecology.

Most private schools receive a substantial state subsidy based on the number of pupils in these schools.



# General and vocational upper secondary education



In Denmark, upper secondary education programmes (ISCED 3), also referred to as youth education programmes, can be divided into:

- General upper secondary education programmes, which primarily prepare for higher education.
- Vocational upper secondary education and training programmes, which primarily prepare trainees for a career in a specific trade or industry.

In 2008, 241,000 pupils were enrolled in upper secondary education programmes. Approximately 49% were enrolled in a general programme at 149 institutions,

while 51% were enrolled in a vocational programme at 109 institutions.

## General upper secondary education programmes

There are four academically oriented general upper secondary programmes:

- The 3-year Upper Secondary School Leaving Examination (STX);
- The 3-year Higher Commercial Examination (HHX);
- The 3-year Higher Technical Examination (HTX); and
- The 2-year Higher Preparatory Examination (HF).

All four programmes prepare pupils for further studies and, at the same time, develop the pupils' personal and general competencies. The programmes aim at enhancing the pupils' independent and analytical skills as well as preparing them to become democratic and socially conscious citizens with a global outlook.

Each of the education programmes has its specific range of compulsory subjects that are common for all pupils taking the programme. With regards to the STX, HHX and HTX, each school also offers a number of different specialized studies programme (packages normally containing three subjects) and elective subjects

for pupils to choose between. The specialized study programme is of a longer duration than the basic programme.

With regards to the HF programme, pupils make their choices from among the electives offered by the school.

The curriculum and examinations must follow national standards and are subject to external evaluation. The curricula of the HHX and the HTX differ from those of the STX and the HF in the sense that the HHX besides some general upper secondary subjects include financial and business subjects and the HTX technical subjects.

The STX and HF programmes are offered by general upper secondary schools. This sort of school is called Gymnasium. Business and technical colleges offer the HHX and the HTX programmes, respectively. Some schools are mixed schools offering various types of programmes.

Admission requirements for the STX, HHX and HTX are a Leaving Certificate of the Folkeskole as well as certain subject requirements. For the HF, admission requirements are 10 years of basic school or the equivalent thereof. The STX, HHX and HTX are for those aged 16-19, whereas the HF attracts both young people and adults. The HF programme can be taken on a single-subject basis and is also taught in evening classes.

Starting from the school year 2010/2011, a new youth programme is offered to young pupils - EUX. It is a general upper

secondary education STX programme which VET students can attend while completing their VET programme. Not all VET programmes will be able to offer this combination. The programme is to be adapted so it fits each of the VET programmes with regard to duration and subjects. EUX gives general access to higher education.

### Vocational Education and Training (VET)

Vocational education and training (VET) includes a vast range of programmes. The duration varies from 1½ to 5½ years, the most typical being 3½ to 4 years. VET programmes are sandwich-type programmes in which theoretical and practical education at a vocational college (approximately 1/3 of the time) alternates with practical training in an approved company or organisation (approximately 2/3 of the time). The dual training principle ensures that the trainees acquire theoretical, practical, general and personal skills which are in demand on the labour market.

Vocational education and training consists of a basic course and a main course. The basic course is flexible in duration and depends on the individual pupil's prior qualifications. The typical length of a basic course is between 20 and 25 weeks followed by the main course, which is based on the alternating principle. This typically takes 3 - 3½ years, but can be shorter or longer for certain programmes. In order to complete the main course, the VET student must have a training agree-

ment with an approved company which offers training. The agreement can cover all or parts of the basic course, but is compulsory for the main course.

VET programmes are normally completed with a journeyman's test or a similar examination testing vocational skills and knowledge.

The majority commence their VET programme with an initial basic programme at a vocational college, but some students choose to begin with a period of in-company training before they enter the basic programme. Also, students who prefer practical training to school attendance can commence their vocational education in a company which offers practical training. Also referred to as the "New Apprenticeship". The student enters a training agreement with a company and during the first year must acquire the same knowledge and qualifications as the students who have followed the basic programme at a college. This requires flexible adaptation on the part of the student, the company and the college.

There is a choice of 12 vocational clusters which lead to the related vocational programme:

- Motor vehicles, aircraft and other means of transportation
- Building and construction
- Construction and user service
- Animals, plants and nature
- Body and style
- Human food
- Media production
- Business
- Production and development
- Electricity, management and IT
- Health, care and pedagogy
- Transport and logistics

Admission to vocational education and training requires completion of compulsory education. All programmes qualify trainees for labour market entry as skilled workers. In addition, some programmes can qualify trainees for admission to certain types of higher education programmes.



## Basic Vocational Education and Training (EGU)

A special option for young people in a difficult educational or employment situation is the vocational basic training programme (EGU). The EGU is an individually designed programme focused on a specific trade, or composed of elements from several trades/programmes.

The EGU alternates between school-based periods and periods of practical training in one or more companies. The main focus is on practical training and an individual

programme is designed for each trainee depending on his or her needs and interests. Trainees are offered individual guidance during the entire programme.

In most cases, the trainees finish their EGU after two years but it may be extended by up to one more year.

A completed EGU gives access to employment and also allows the trainees to continue in a VET programme.

## Production schools

Production schools are schools for young people under the age of 25 who have not completed a youth education programme and who belong to the target group of production schools. The purposes of the production schools are to enhance pupils' personal development and to improve their future possibilities in the education system and on the labour market.

There are around 90 production schools in Denmark, often placed in small and medium-sized towns. Production schools are based on practical work in workshops, ranging from carpentry or metalwork to media or theatre workshops.

Teaching is aimed at providing the young people with qualifica-

tions which will enable them to complete a vocationally qualifying educational programme after leaving the production school. Pupils are offered individual guidance on a day-to-day basis to support their efforts to clarify their future choice of education, training and job. There are no examinations at production schools.

Production schools have continuous intake. Pupils typically stay for an average of 5 months; approximately 30% for more than 6 months. A pupil is entitled to a maximum of one year at a production school.

# Higher Education

Danish higher education institutions use the European Credit Transfer System (ECTS) for measuring study activities. 60 ECTS correspond to one year of full time study. There are four types of institutions offering higher education programmes, each with well-defined profiles and qualities.

## Academies of professional higher education (erhvervsakademier)

Academies of professional higher education offer academy profession programmes of 90-150 ECTS in fields such as business, technology and IT. The programmes prepare the students for performing practical, vocational tasks on an analytical basis and may lead to employ-

ment in middle-management positions. They combine theoretical studies with a practically oriented approach in form of work placement. Degree holders with a short cycle academy profession degree can obtain a professional bachelor degree within the same field of study with a top-up programme of 90 ECTS.

## University Colleges (professionshøjskoler)

University colleges and specialised colleges offer professional bachelor programmes of 180-240 ECTS in fields such as business, education, engineering and nursing. The programmes have a strong focus on professional practice and provide students with knowledge of theory and

the application of theory to professions and industries. The programmes include a period of work placement of at least 30 ECTS. Most programmes give access to further studies in the same field.

## Universities

All Danish universities are research-intensive institutions offering research-based study programmes in all three cycles up to PhD level. The bachelor degree (BSc/BA) is awarded after 180 ECTS and qualifies for a professional career and further studies at second cycle level. Most students choose to continue in a candidatus programme (MSc/MA) of 120 ECTS. They usually include one or two of the major fields of study of the bachelor programme.



Independent research activities and a master's thesis of at least 30 ECTS are required. The candidatus programmes qualify students for a professional career and for scientific work. The PhD degree is obtained after 180 ECTS and consists of research, participation in research courses, teaching and public defence of a thesis.

### University level institutions

A number of university level institutions are regulated by the Danish Ministry of Culture and offer first, second and third cycle degree programmes in subject fields such as music and fine and performing arts. The bachelor, master and PhD programmes at these institutions are awarded after 180, 120 and 180 ECTS, respectively. A higher education degree within theatre or filmmaking is awarded after 4 years of study (240 ECTS). Music Academies offer a specialist degree of 2 to 4 years following the master's degree.

### Admission

General access requirements to higher education are one of the general upper secondary school leaving examinations, or comparable qualifications. Access may also depend on specific requirements such as a particular subject combination in upper secondary school or a certain level of grades. Admission to some particular programmes requires entrance examination or submission of a portfolio of artistic work.

### Programmes and courses taught in English

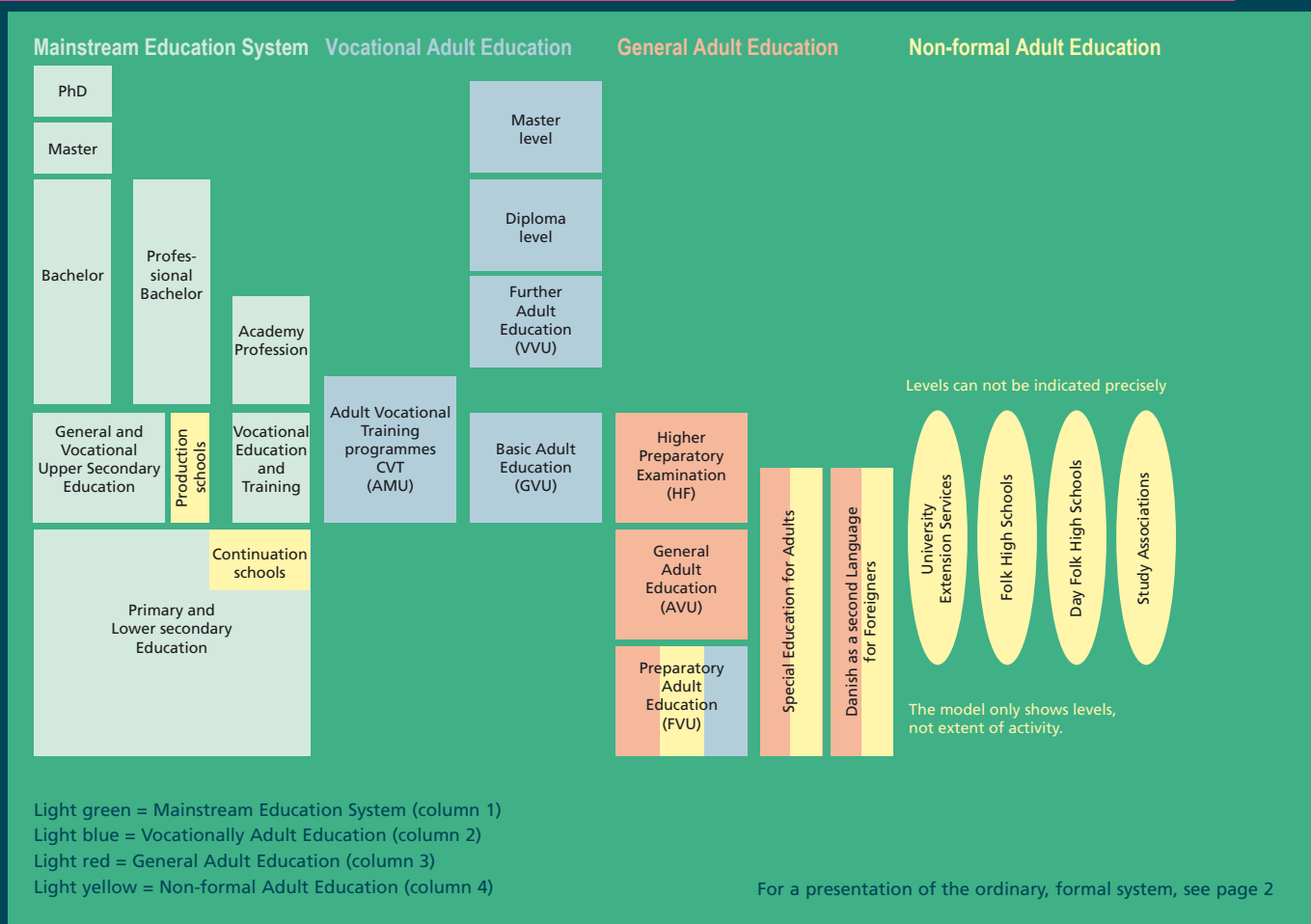
Danish higher education institutions offer more than 500 degree programmes (most of them at candidatus level) and over 1,000 individual modules taught entirely in English. For more information about courses and programmes in English and courses in Danish language and culture, please see [www.studyindenmark.dk](http://www.studyindenmark.dk).

### Other educational programmes

There are educational programmes which do not belong under the mentioned headings. These are for example programmes within the police force, some programmes within the area of defense and the maritime area, where admission requirements can differ between e.g. completion of compulsory schooling, VET programmes to relevant experience.



# Adult education and continuing training



Denmark has a long-standing tradition of lifelong learning. In 2008, nearly one in three of the population in the age bracket 25 – 64 years participated in educational activity, counting both publicly funded and workplace internal and private education programmes and courses in connection with employment or in some form of leisure-time education.

## Education and training for adults at all levels

Adult general education and vocational education and training range from non-formal education to qualifying general education and continuing vocational

training. Generally, the syllabus and examinations are adapted to the experience and interests of adults and in some cases they may obtain recognition for prior formal and non-formal learning.

Adult courses leading to formal qualifications qualifying for further education or for the labour market include:

- Preparatory adult education (FVU, offered to improve basic literacy and numeracy skills of adults who do not have sufficient qualifications to follow education and training or cope with the demands of working life).
- General adult education (AVU, general education at lower secondary level).
- Higher preparatory single-subject courses (HF, general education at upper secondary level).
- Adult vocational training (AMU, the main target group is unskilled and skilled workers on the labour market who need to develop their competencies. The programmes are developed and adapted according to the needs of the labour market).
- Basic adult education (GVU, based on credit for former experience and qualifications of the individual participant supplemented with selected courses

from the vocational training programme leading to the same level and same final test as students who complete a corresponding youth education).

- Further adult education (VVU, corresponding to the level of academy profession programmes).
- Diploma programmes (Diploma degree, corresponding to the level of bachelor programmes).

- Master's programmes (Master degree, corresponding to the level of candidatus programmes).

### Non-formal education

A wide range of different schools operate within the framework of non-formal adult education (folkeoplysning). The most well-known are the Folk High Schools, which are residential schools providing general and non-formal education. The length

of courses vary – from one week to up to almost a year – and are attended by adults of all ages. They are non-qualifying courses meant to broaden general, social and democratic competencies. Other programmes of non-formal adult education are offered by Adult Education Associations and Day Folk High Schools, or can be university extension courses.



# Grading scale

In Denmark, a new grading system was implemented in 2006: the 7-point grading scale. In tests and examinations students are given an assessment on the basis of

the grading scale below. According to the rules governing the individual study programmes, the grades must be documented by test, examination or leaving

## 7-point grading scale

Grade	Description	ECTS	Old scale (00-13)
12	For an excellent performance displaying a high level of command of all aspects of the relevant material, with no or only a few minor weaknesses	A	13 11
10	For a very good performance displaying a high level of command of most aspects of the relevant material, with only minor weaknesses	B	10
7	For a good performance displaying good command of the relevant material but also some weaknesses	C	9 8
4	For a fair performance displaying some command of the relevant material but also some major weaknesses	D	7
02	For a performance meeting only the minimum requirements for acceptance	E	6
00	For a performance which does not meet the minimum requirements for acceptance	Fx	5 03
-3	For a performance which is unacceptable in all respects	F	00

# Financing and ownership

The education system is financed by the state or the municipalities. Some institutions are self-governing, while others are owned by the state or the municipalities. The table below illustrates the sources of funding and forms of ownership for selected groups of institutions. In addition to public financing, tuition fees are

charged at private schools and there is user payment for a number of adult education programmes.

## Taximeter financing

The central government's system of financing education and training is almost exclusively based on the so-called taxi-

meter system, a comprehensive financing system based on per capita grants (cash per student) to institutions. The grants are calculated primarily on the recorded number of students passing examinations. The taximeter rate varies according to subject field and level of education.

	State institutions	State-funded/supported, self-governing institutions	Institutions funded by the municipalities	Tuition fee
The Folkeskole			x	No
Free elementary schools		x <sup>1</sup>		Yes
Continuation schools		x <sup>2</sup>		Yes
Gymnasium		x		No
Commercial colleges		x		No
Technical colleges		x		No
Maritime schools	x			No
Schools of marine engineering	x			No
SOSU colleges		x		No
Academies of professional higher education		x		No
Specialised colleges and university colleges		x		No
Universities		x		No
Schools of architecture	x			No
Academies of music	x			No
Adult education centres		x		Yes
Labour market training courses		x		Yes
Folk High Schools		x		Yes
Evening schools			x	Yes

<sup>1</sup> Public contribution to free elementary schools: 85% of the State's operational grant per pupil, excluding expenditures for pensions.

<sup>2</sup> Continuation schools depend on a large degree of State funding. Pupils at continuation schools do have to pay a tuition fee but the amount varies – and is subsidised by the State – depending on the parents' income. Average annual tuition fee per pupil amounts to DKK 25,000 excluding state subsidies (2005).

# Education grants and loan scheme

Through the State Educational Grant and Loan Scheme (SU), the Danish state provides financial support to all Danes over the age of 18 enrolled in a youth or higher education programme. There are two main support programmes:

- Pupils following a youth education programmes
- Students enrolled in higher education programmes

In combination with both types of grants, students can also make use of supplementary state loans. Around 50 per cent of all students make use of these loans.

Danish students can obtain support for studies abroad if the courses meet the same conditions for recognition as Danish courses and programmes.

Foreign students are normally not entitled to educational support, however there are exceptions.

The state also provides financial support for adults in adult education and continuing training.

For more information, please see [www.su.dk](http://www.su.dk)

## Career guidance

Provision of high quality guidance services is important at all levels of the education system. Starting with general career education in form 1 of in the Folkeskole and delivering of guidance from form 7, pupils are gradually prepared for making their first educational and vocational decisions.

Two types of independent guidance centres provide guidance in relation to the transitions from one level of the education system to another:

- 47 Youth Guidance Centres (Ungdommens Uddannelsesvejledning) focus on the transition from compulsory to youth education.
- 7 Regional Guidance Centres (Studievalg) deal with the transition from youth education to higher education.

A national guidance portal – the “Education Guide”: [www.ug.dk](http://www.ug.dk) – provides comprehensive information on education and training possibilities at all levels, pro-

fessions, labour market conditions and statistics. A national e-guidance centre provides users with online guidance service seven days a week. It is established in relation to [www.ug.dk](http://www.ug.dk)

For more information about career guidance in the Danish education system, please see [en.iu.dk/euroguidance/publications](http://en.iu.dk/euroguidance/publications)



# Quality assurance

The standard and quality of educational provision in the Danish education system are assured by a number of elements, including:

- Common rules and guidelines (curricula) specifying the aims, contents and duration of programmes and individual subjects.
- Testing and examination system, with the use of external examiners.
- Ministerial approval of provision and inspection in a varying degree within the different education areas.
- Quality rules, which have been introduced in a number of educational fields.
- The Danish Evaluation Institute (EVA) and the Accreditation Agency ACE Denmark, which both play an important role in the national system of quality assurance.

Private education institutions at primary and secondary level may operate without any state approval. However, if they wish for their pupils to be eligible for state study grants they must accept an accreditation procedure.

For all higher education programmes, accreditation is mandatory and a precondition for attaining public funding. The accreditation system is based on the 2007 Act on the Accreditation Agency for Higher Education. The Act aims to create a system with a view to ensuring and documenting the quality and relevance of higher education in the Danish educational institutions.

According to the Accreditation Act, the Accreditation Council is the specific unit

which makes the decisions regarding accreditation of all higher education study programmes. Decisions are made on the basis of accreditation reports prepared by accreditation operators:

- For university study programmes under the Danish Ministry of Science, Innovation and Higher Education, ACE Denmark prepares the accreditation reports.
- For higher education study programmes under the Danish Ministry of Children and Education and the Danish Ministry of Culture, EVA prepares the accreditation reports.

EVA also carries out systematic evaluations within the area of early childhood education as well as evaluations of programmes, teaching and learning in compulsory schooling and in youth programmes.

For more information, please see [www.eva.dk](http://www.eva.dk) and [www.acedenmark.dk](http://www.acedenmark.dk)

## Internationalisation

Great importance is attached to the internationalisation of education and training in Denmark. The objective is to prepare pupils and students to meet the challenges of a globalised world by including intercultural understanding and international competencies in the entire educational system.

It is the aim of the Danish government to make Denmark a leading entrepreneurial and knowledge-based society offering educational programmes which rank among the best in the world and to create the best possible opportunities for citizens and businesses to realize the vision about Denmark as a network society. In order to face the challenges of globalization, it is of

high priority to have top-level educational institutions with strong academic environments which can attract talented national and international students and researchers and provide the foundation for a vibrant societal development.

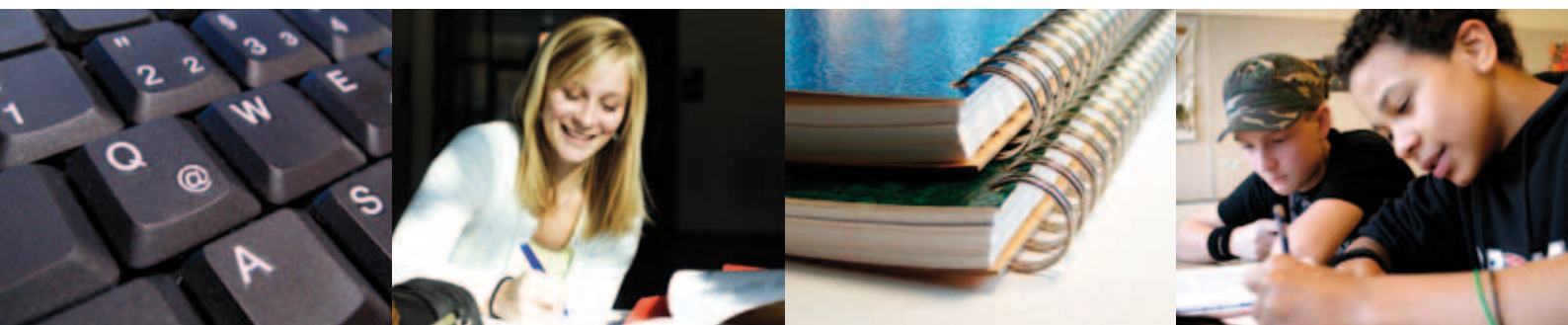
At governmental level, Denmark is an active partner in the educational cooperation of the EU, the Council of Europe, the OECD, UNESCO and the Nordic countries. Furthermore, Denmark is a member of the ENIC Network (European Network of Information Centres) and the NARIC Network (National Academic Recognition Information Centres).

The Copenhagen and Bologna processes and the overall objective that Europe will become one large higher education area also play important roles in the development of Danish education and training. At institutional level, schools and institutions actively participate in international cooperation and exchange programmes, both within Europe and worldwide.

Internationalisation at all levels of the education and training system is supported and promoted by the Danish Agency for Universities and Internationalisation – an agency within the Ministry of Science, Innovation and Higher Education. Please read more about the Agency at [www.ui.dk](http://www.ui.dk).



# Education in a knowledge society



## Education for all

Provision of high quality education at all levels is essential to ensure competitiveness in today's global society. Thus, Danish education aims to ensure that all young people acquire knowledge and competencies which will qualify them to take active part in – and to contribute to the further development of – the knowledge society. Education is open to all and generally free of charge. Other characteristic features of the Danish education system include:

- **High standards**

The quality of Danish education is assured in many ways. It is mainly regulated and financed by the state and all public educational institutions are approved and evaluated on an ongoing basis.

- **Lifelong learning**

Lifelong learning is a key principle in Denmark. The idea goes all the way back to the 19th century Danish clergyman and philosopher N.F.S. Grundtvig, who argued that a prerequisite for active participation in a democratic society is education for all citizens on a lifelong basis.

- **Active participation**

Treating pupils and students as independent people with a right to form their own opinion and a duty to participate actively in discussions is a matter of course in Danish education.

- **Project work**

At all levels of the education system, pupils and students attend classes, however, they also carry out project work, either on an individual basis or in small groups. Interdisciplinary activities are also an integrated part of Danish education.

## Facts & figures

- Population: 5.4 million (2010).
- Percentage of a year group completing a youth education programme: 84.4% (2008).
- Percentage of a year group completing a higher education programme: 46.6% (2008).
- Percentage of a year group of women completing a higher education programme: Approximately 55% (2008).
- Percentage of a year group of men completing a higher education programme: Approximately 38% (2008).
- Percentage of total national expenditure spent on education (incl. SU grants): 15.6% (2009).

For more facts & figures, please see <http://www.e-pages.dk/uvm/26/>.

## The Danish Agency for Universities and Internationalisation

is an agency within the Danish Ministry of

Science, Innovation and Higher Education with the core tasks of

- Creating optimum conditions for the university sector and fostering knowledge in research, education and public-sector services.
- Contributing to strengthening Denmark's position in global society by promoting internationalisation of study programmes, intercultural understanding, integration and a global outlook.

The Agency is the national agency for two EU education programmes, Lifelong Learning and Youth in Action, as well as for other similar programmes, including Nordic and Danish education programmes. The Agency is also the central institution responsible for assessment and recognition of foreign qualifications. Furthermore, the Agency is responsible for the promotion of Denmark as a study destination.

### Further information

- The Danish Agency for Universities and Internationalisation [www.ui.dk](http://www.ui.dk)
- Study in Denmark [www.studyindenmark.dk](http://www.studyindenmark.dk)
- The Ministry of Children and Education [www.uvm.dk](http://www.uvm.dk)
- The Ministry of Science, Innovation and Higher Education [www.fivu.dk](http://www.fivu.dk)
- The Ministry of Culture [www.kum.dk](http://www.kum.dk)

