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Chapter 5

ISCED 2011 level 3:

Upper secondary education

Programmes at the upper secondary education level are more specialised than those at lower secondary and offer students more choices and diverse pathways for completing their secondary education. The range of subjects studied by a single student tends to be narrower than at lower levels of education, but the content is more complex and the study more in-depth. Programmes offered are differentiated by orientation and often by broad subject groups.

Programmes classified at ISCED level 3 may be referred to in many ways, for example: secondary school (stage two/upper grades), senior secondary school or (senior) high school. For international comparability purposes, the term 'upper secondary education' is used to label ISCED level 3.



DESCRIPTION

Definition

(§162)¹ Programmes at ISCED level 3 – upper secondary education – are typically designed to complete secondary education in preparation for tertiary education or provide skills relevant to employment, or both.

(§163) Programmes at this level offer students more varied, specialised and in-depth instruction than programmes at ISCED level 2. They are more differentiated, with an increased range of options and streams available. Teachers are often highly qualified in the subjects they teach, particularly in the higher grades.

Classification criteria (§166)

Main criteria

a. Content

(§167) Programmes which form the second/final stage of secondary education may be either general or vocational programmes. Some of these programmes allow direct access to ISCED level 4, and/or level 5, 6 or 7.

b. Entry requirements

(§168) ISCED level 3 requires the completion of lower secondary education (ISCED level 2) or the ability to handle ISCED level 3 content through a combination of prior education as well as life and work experiences. A specific ISCED level 2 qualification or a specific level of achievement may be required for entering some or all ISCED level 3 programmes.

c) Cumulative duration since the beginning of ISCED level 1

(§164) ISCED level 3 begins after 8-11 years of education since the beginning of ISCED level 1. Pupils enter this level typically between ages 14 and 16. ISCED level 3 programmes usually end 12 or 13 years after the beginning of ISCED level 1 (or around age 17 or 18), with 12 years being the most widespread cumulative duration. However, exit from upper secondary education may range across education systems from usually 11 to 13 years of education since the beginning of ISCED level 1.

Subsidiary criteria

a) Programme transition point

(§169) The transition from ISCED level 2 to ISCED level 3 coincides with the transition point in an education system at which programmes offer students more varied, specialised and in-depth instruction in specific subjects or fields. Typically programmes are more differentiated, and an increased range of options and streams are available.

b) Teacher qualifications

(§170) Standards for teacher qualifications may be different at ISCED level 3 compared to ISCED level 2. In addition to pedagogical training, teachers may be more qualified with respect to the subject matter they teach.



Complementary dimensions

(§174) Two dimensions differentiate programmes at ISCED level 3.

(§175) Programme orientation:

- General; and
- Vocational.

(§176) Level completion:

- *No completion of ISCED level 3*: short, terminal programmes (or sequence of programmes) with a duration of less than 2 years at ISCED level 3 or which end after less than 11 years of cumulative duration since the beginning of ISCED level 1.
- *Partial completion of ISCED level 3*: programmes representing at least 2 years at ISCED level 3 and a cumulative duration of at least 11 years since the beginning of ISCED level 1, and which are part of a sequence of programmes at ISCED level 3 but are not the last programme in the sequence.
- *Completion of ISCED level 3 without direct access to first tertiary programmes at ISCED level 5, 6 or 7*: programmes with duration of at least 2 years at ISCED level 3 and that end after at least 11 years cumulative duration since the beginning of ISCED level 1. These programmes may be terminal or give direct access to ISCED level 4 only.
- *Completion of ISCED level 3 with direct access to first tertiary programmes at ISCED level 5, 6 or 7*: any programmes that give direct access to first tertiary programmes at ISCED level 5, 6 or 7 regardless of their duration at level 3 or their cumulative duration since the start of ISCED level 1.

(§178) This level can include some second-cycle vocational programmes in cases where the transition points at the end of the second cycle correspond to transition points between levels in other, mainly general, pathways offered in the system.

(§179) This level also includes upper secondary-level second chance or re-integration programmes. Such programmes usually target individuals who:

- left school before completing upper secondary education, allowing them to re-enter the education system and complete upper secondary education; or
- completed upper secondary education but wish to enter a programme or occupation for which they are not yet qualified.

CORRESPONDENCE BETWEEN ISCED 2011 AND ISCED 1997

The coverage of ISCED level 3 is virtually identical in the 1997 and 2011 versions of ISCED, with the following exception included in ISCED 1997 level 4:

(§190) Programmes designed to review the content of ISCED level 3 programmes – for example, with the aim of preparing students for tertiary education entrance examinations – should be included in ISCED [2011] level 3.

The complementary dimensions for ISCED level 3 are different in the latest version of ISCED. (§278)

a) Programme orientation

ISCED 1997 defines three types of orientation: general, pre-vocational and vocational. In ISCED 2011 there are only two orientations at ISCED level 3: general and vocational. Programmes previously classified as pre-vocational (in ISCED 1997) do not provide labour market-relevant qualifications and are now mainly classified as general education.



b) Level completion and programme destination

ISCED 1997 classified programmes according to the programmes and levels to which they were designed to lead (the programme destination). At ISCED level 3, three destinations were defined:

- A = programmes giving access to tertiary education at ISCED 1997 level 5A (i.e. programmes on a direct pathway to doctoral or equivalent programmes);
- B = programmes giving access to tertiary education at ISCED 1997 level 5B but not to 5A (i.e. programmes giving access to more professionally-oriented tertiary education); and
- C = programmes without direct access to tertiary education (i.e. terminal programmes or programmes giving access to other programmes at ISCED 1997 levels 3 or 4 only).

ISCED 2011 classifies programmes according to the type of completion of the level and access to other programmes and levels. ISCED 1997 destinations A and B are combined into a single category in ISCED 2011: (full) completion of ISCED 2011 level 3 with direct access to tertiary education. ISCED 1997 destination C is sub-divided into three categories in ISCED 2011:

- (full) completion of ISCED 2011 level 3 with no direct access to tertiary education;
- partial completion of ISCED 2011 level 3 with no direct access to post-secondary education; and
- insufficient for level completion or partial level completion of ISCED 2011 level 3.

GUIDELINES FOR CLASSIFYING PROGRAMMES AND QUALIFICATIONS AT ISCED LEVEL 3

Programmes at the upper secondary level are more specialised than those at lower secondary and offer students more choices and diverse pathways for completing their secondary education (§163). The range of subjects studied by a single student tends to be narrower than at lower levels of education, but the content is more complex and the study more in-depth.

Programmes offered are differentiated by orientation (§167) and often by broad subject groups.

General programmes are usually designed for students planning to continue to academic or professional studies at the tertiary level. Students will often begin to specialise in specific fields, such as the sciences, humanities or social sciences, even if they are expected to continue to take some courses in basic subjects like the national language, mathematics and, perhaps, a foreign language. The successful completion of these programmes is nearly always the entry requirement for first degrees at university or equivalent level (**Examples Group 1**). There can also be general programmes at ISCED level 3 which do not provide access to tertiary education, but these are comparatively rare. An example has, however, been included in **Examples Group 10**.

In some countries, the entry requirements for ISCED level 6 programmes are different from those for ISCED level 5. Where this is the case, both qualifications should be classified in ISCED level 3.

Vocational programmes exist both to offer options to young people who might otherwise leave school without any qualifications from an upper secondary programme (**Examples Group 2**) as well as for those wishing to prepare for skilled worker and/or technician-level jobs (**Examples Group 3**).

Second chance or re-integration programmes which either review material already covered in upper secondary programmes (**Examples Group 4**) or provide opportunities for young people to change streams or enter an occupation requiring an upper secondary-level attainment or qualification for which their existing studies did not qualify them (**Examples Group 5**) are classified at ISCED level 3 (§179).

By contrast, programmes following successful completion of upper secondary education which are either designed to broaden the options for progression to the tertiary level or are second-cycle vocational programmes should be classified at ISCED level 4 (§185). Second-cycle vocational programmes which run in parallel to other programmes at the upper secondary level (mostly general programmes) should be normally classified at ISCED level 3 (§179).

Upper secondary education lasts between two and five years, with three years being the most common. Programmes at this level may be shorter than this in some countries where a sequence of programmes within the level may exist, each leading to a different nationally-recognised qualification. Sequential programmes at the upper secondary level may exist where the end of compulsory education occurs within upper secondary education or where there are common



exit points from education during the level which need to be documented by a recognised qualification (for example, in order to seek employment or further training). Where such a sequence exists, it is most commonly a sequence of general programmes though a vocational sequence is also possible (**Examples Group 7**).

Programmes that span upper secondary education and another ISCED level

Special consideration is needed for programmes that span upper secondary education and the levels before or after. In these cases, only those grades, stages or cycles that correspond to the criteria for the respective levels (ISCED levels 2, 3, 4 or 5) should be attributed to those levels. (§171)

(§173) If the theoretical duration of a vocational ISCED level 3 programme is two or more years longer than the theoretical duration of a general ISCED level 3 programme in the same education system, the programme should be regarded as spanning upper secondary education (ISCED level 3) and post-secondary non-tertiary education (ISCED level 4) or short-cycle tertiary education (ISCED level 5). The grades, stages or cycles which extend beyond the general ISCED level 3 programme should be classified as ISCED level 4 or 5 depending on the complexity of their content. (**Examples Group 6**).

EDUCATIONAL ATTAINMENT AT ISCED LEVEL 3

For the purposes of measuring educational attainment, ISCED 2011 distinguishes between full and partial completion of upper secondary education.

Partial level completion has a very specific meaning and is not synonymous with either “incomplete studies” or “some study” at the level. A programme leading to “partial level completion” is one which results in a qualification recognised by the relevant national education authorities which is awarded to successful completers of the programme at a specified point within the sequence of programmes but is not equivalent to the qualification conferred by successful completion of the full sequence. The programme is one of a sequence of programmes within the ISCED level but is not the last programme in the sequence. The programme also has to represent a minimum of eleven years of cumulative study since the start of primary education and at least two years of (cumulative) study within upper secondary education (**Examples Group 7**). Note that partial level completion is also different from the sub-category no completion of the level. The latter refers to programmes that do not meet the duration requirements for partial or full level completion and therefore result in an educational attainment at the level below the level of the programme (see **Examples Group 9**).

(§182) For educational attainment, recognized qualifications from ISCED level 3 programmes which are not considered as sufficient for ISCED level 3 completion [or partial completion] are classified as ISCED level 2.

(§183) Similarly, recognized qualifications from ISCED level 4 programmes which are insufficient for consideration as ISCED level 4 completion are classified as ISCED level 3.

If the programme does not lead to any recognised qualifications (or if successful completion is not otherwise formally recognised by the relevant national authorities), the concept partial level completion does not apply. In such cases, educational attainment of ISCED level 3 can only be allocated at the end of the whole sequence of programmes when the corresponding qualification is obtained.

Programmes at ISCED level 3 that do not give direct access to a higher ISCED level and that represent fewer years of study either since the start of primary education (i.e. less than eleven) or within upper secondary education (i.e. less than two) or both are regarded as insufficient for either partial completion or full completion of upper secondary education, and result in educational attainment at the lower secondary level (**Examples Group 8**).

Vocational programmes leading to full completion of upper secondary education are further sub-divided within ISCED into those which lead to tertiary education (**Examples Group 9**) and those which do not (**Examples Group 10**). Both give rise to attainment at the upper secondary level. The latter group of programmes may or may not give access to post-secondary non-tertiary education.



In some cases a programme can lead to several different qualifications. The programme itself should be classified according to the characteristics of the qualification granting the most access to further studies thereafter. The educational attainment of persons who have completed such a programme should be determined with respect to the highest qualification that is awarded to the individual (**Examples Group 11**).

Users of the classification who wish to disseminate results according to a simplified set of educational attainment categories than are acceptable in ISCED-A (i.e. at 1-digit ISCED level) may need to decide how to treat partial level completion. Depending on the main purpose of the analyses to be made, two different approaches are possible:

- i) Some users may want to know what percentage of the population of interest has successfully completed each ISCED level of education (in the case of sequential programmes successful completion of the final programme in the sequence within the ISCED level). To do this they would need to classify partial level completion at the level below the level of study (i.e. at lower secondary level in the case of partial completion of upper secondary education).
- ii) Other users may be interested to measure at least some recognised successful study at a given level – especially where this may represent a potential exit point from the education system or “first-time” graduation within a given ISCED level. They would classify partial level completion at the same ISCED level as the level of study (i.e. at the upper secondary level in the case of partial completion of upper secondary education).

Both approaches are valid. It is for the user/analyst to decide which is the more appropriate for their circumstances. It is recommended that treatment of the partial completion applied in the calculation of indicators on educational attainment is indicated in metadata accompanying such statistics.

EXAMPLES OF PROGRAMMES AND QUALIFICATIONS CLASSIFIED AT ISCED LEVEL 3

(§165) Programmes classified at ISCED level 3 may be referred to in many ways: secondary school (stage two/ upper grades), senior secondary school, or (senior) high school. For international comparability purposes the term “upper secondary education” is used to label ISCED level 3.

Examples Group 1:

General programmes giving access to first degree programmes at tertiary level (ISCED 2011 levels 6 or 7) [ISCED-P: 344; ISCED-A: 344]

Egypt – *الثانوية العامة* (General secondary). This general secondary education programme requires the possession of *شهادة التعليم الأساسي* (Basic education certificate), which is awarded upon successful completion of basic education (ISCED 2). The general secondary programme lasts three years, after which the graduates are awarded the general secondary certificate which gives access to higher levels of education including tertiary and non-tertiary education. (ISCED-P/ ISCED-A: 344)

Estonia – *Üldkeskharidus* (General secondary education). This is a three-year programme leading to the general upper secondary leaving certificate which gives direct access to programmes *Bakalaureuseõpe* (Bachelor’s study programmes). Students enter the programme having successfully completed lower secondary education typically at the age of 16 years. (ISCED-P/ISCED-A: 344)

France – *Enseignement de second cycle général du second degré conduisant au baccalauréat général ou technologique ou au brevet de technicien* (Secondary general education (second cycle), preparing towards a *Bac général, technologique* or *Brevet de technicien*). This is a three-year programme following successful completion of lower secondary education. It is the typical route to tertiary education and nearly all holders of these qualifications continue to such programmes of study. (ISCED-P/ISCED-A: 344)

Germany – *Allgemeinbildende Programme im Sekundarbereich II* (Upper secondary schools, general). These are three-year upper secondary general programmes (*Gymnasiale Oberstufe*), comprising Grades 10 to 12 or 11 to 13, which lead to the *Hochschulreife* (university entrance qualification). Such programmes in *Gymnasium* (including *Berufliches Gymnasium*), *Integrierte Gesamtschule* or *Freie Waldorfschule* (grammar, comprehensive or Waldorf schools) are attended by students who have earned the *Mittlerer Schulabschluss* (lower secondary certificate with access to upper secondary). Successful graduates of these programmes are entitled to enter ISCED level 6 or 7 programmes. (ISCED-P/ISCED-A: 344)



Saudi Arabia – *التعليم الثانوي العام* (General secondary education). This is a three-year full-time general education programme that requires the completion of intermediate education (ISCED 2). On completion of the programme, graduates are awarded the national general secondary certificate, which leads to tertiary education. (ISCED-P/ ISCED-A: 344)

Swaziland – *Senior Secondary Certificate*. This is a two-year upper secondary programme offered to lower secondary graduates which gives direct access to all post-secondary programmes. The official entrance age is 16 years. (ISCED-P/ ISCED-A: 344)

Switzerland – *Gymnasiale Maturität, maturité gymnasiale, maturità* (Schools leading to the school-leaving certificate). These are 3.5-year general programmes designed for young people who have successfully completed lower secondary education and wish to continue their studies at university level. It prepares them for the university entrance exam. (ISCED-P/ISCED-A: 344)

Examples Group 2:

Vocational programmes designed for young people wishing to enter the labour market directly or who might otherwise leave school without any qualifications from an upper secondary programme

[ISCED-P: 351 or 353; ISCED-A: 254 or 353]

Bulgaria – *Profesionalni programi – parva stepen na profesionalna kvalifikatsiya sled 8 klas* (TVET programmes after completion of the 8th grade leading to a first-level professional qualification). These are two-year vocational programmes after completion of lower secondary education leading to *Profesionalni programi- parva stepen na profesionalna kvalifikatsiya* (First-level professional qualification). The programmes do not lead to the upper secondary school-leaving certificate – *Sredno obrazovanie* – which gives direct access to tertiary education. Since the programme represents only ten years of study since the start of primary education, it is insufficient for completion or partial completion of ISCED level 3. (ISCED-P: 351; ISCED-A: 254)

Slovenia – *Nižje poklicno izobraževanje* (Short-term vocational upper secondary education). This is a two- to three-year vocational programme designed for young people who have successfully completed nine years of basic (compulsory) education or who have completed a modified education programme for children with special educational needs. The programme is also available to those who have attended basic school for nine years but failed to complete it successfully (i.e. they have satisfied the “basic school obligation”). According to the law, these programmes last from two to three years, ending with a final exam. Students’ general knowledge acquired in the last years of basic school is reinforced, whilst new general and vocational knowledge and qualifications for simple jobs are gained. (ISCED-P/ISCED-A: 353)

Examples Group 3:

Vocational programmes preparing for skilled worker or technician-level jobs

[ISCED-P: 353 or 354; ISCED-A: 353 or 354]

Australia – *Certificate III*. These are advanced vocational courses for recognised trades, technicians and other skilled professions. There are no formal minimum entry requirements but young people entering the programme are typically aged 15 or 16 years. These programmes typically have a duration of 1 to 2 years at ISCED level 3 or 14 to 15 years since the start of ISCED level 1. Successful completers do not have access to tertiary education but may enter Certificate IV programmes at ISCED 2011 level 4 or enter the labour market. (ISCED-P/ISCED-A: 353)

France – *Enseignement de second cycle professionnel des écoles sociales conduisant aux diplômes de moniteurs éducateurs et équivalents* (Vocational secondary education (second cycle) in health and care schools preparing for qualifications of *Moniteur éducateur* (and equivalent)). These are two-year vocational programmes in certain social services (e.g. *moniteur éducateur, technicien de l'intervention sociale et familiale* – instructor-educator, social and family intervention professional) designed for older students who have successfully completed lower secondary education. The resulting qualifications are equivalent to the *baccalauréat* and give access to programmes at the tertiary level. (ISCED-P/ ISCED-A: 354)

France – *Enseignement de second cycle professionnel du second degré conduisant au Baccalauréat Professionnel ou équivalent* (Vocational secondary education (second cycle) preparing for the *Bac Professionnel*). This programme of three years takes place mainly in an educational/training institution but includes training periods in an enterprise and



prepares participants to enter working life. It is also possible to earn the *Bac professionnel* by apprenticeship, with instructional time shared between an educational/training institution and an enterprise. The qualification gives direct access to the labour market. A minority of graduates continue to higher studies mainly to earn the *Brevet de technicien supérieur (BTS)* (Advanced Technician Diploma) at ISCED level 5. (ISCED-P/ISCED-A: 354)

Germany – *Berufsschulen (Duales System) Erstausbildung* (Vocational Schools (Dual System) Training). This is a 2-, 3- or 3.5-year special form of apprenticeship which comprises education and training both at a vocational school and in an enterprise. In the majority of cases the duration is three years. Students must have completed ISCED level 2. The programme leads to a *Lehrabschluss* (Qualification of the Dual System). Graduates qualify for *Fachoberschulen* (one year), *Fachschulen* or for entry into the labour market. (ISCED-P/ISCED-A: 354)

Lebanon – *الثانوية المهنية* (vocational secondary). This programme requires the completion of ISCED 2 (either general or vocational) and it lasts three years on a full-time basis. Normally participants are aged between 15 and 17 years. This vocational secondary programme, which is considered as full completion of ISCED 2011 level 3, does not provide any direct access to a higher ISCED level. (ISCED-P/ISCED-A: 353)

Slovak Republic² – *Stredná odborná škola - štúdium s maturitou* (Specialised secondary school – leading to the matura). This is a four-year programme providing both general education and vocational training oriented towards execution of more demanding professional activities. Successful completers receive both a general qualification – *Vysvedčenie o maturitnej skúške* (matura) – and a vocational qualification – *Výučný list* (apprenticeship certificate) – and may proceed either to tertiary education or to the labour market. (ISCED-P/ISCED-A: 354)

Examples Group 4:

Programmes designed to review the content of ISCED level 3 programmes – for example, with the aim of preparing students for tertiary education entrance examinations [ISCED-P: 344 or 354; ISCED-A: 344 or 354]

Australia – *Enabling courses*. These are short (less than one year) bridging or supplementary programmes provided by universities to disadvantaged students who need additional preparation prior to commencing a formal award course or for university students to strengthen their backgrounds in a particular field of study. The programmes are designed to reinforce studies already undertaken at the upper secondary level to ensure that participants are fully prepared to begin their studies at the tertiary level. (ISCED-P/ISCED-A: 344)

Examples Group 5:

Second chance or reintegration programmes for students who have not yet completed upper secondary education [ISCED-P: 343, 344, 353 or 354; ISCED-A: 343, 344, 353 or 354]

Morocco – *التكوين المهني : مستوى تقني* (Vocational training: technician level). This two-year vocational programme is offered to students who reached the last grade of upper general secondary education. It gives a second chance to those who wish to change to the vocational track. By the end of the programme, graduates are awarded a *دبلوم تقني* (technical diploma), which provides direct access only to the labour market. (ISCED-P/ISCED-A: 353)

Netherlands – *VAVO-HAVO en VAVO-VWO* (Senior general secondary education for adults). These are one- to three-year part-time programmes leading to the *hogere algemeen voortgezet onderwijs* (HAVO) and *voorbereidend wetenschappelijk onderwijs* (VWO) qualifications which give direct access to programmes at the tertiary level. They are second chance programmes and are the part-time counterparts of the full-time initial programmes of two years for HAVO and three years for VWO. Entry requirements are completion of lower secondary education. The adult programmes lead to the same qualifications as the initial programmes but with a somewhat older entry age, typically 18 instead of 16 years. (ISCED-P/ISCED-A: 344)

Slovenia – *Poklicni tečaj in poklicna matura* (Vocational course leading to vocational Matura). This is a one-year vocational course providing a bridge between general and vocational education. It allows graduates from general, classical and other gymnasiums (or those who have finished the final year of these programmes without passing the general Matura examination) to obtain an initial vocational qualification. Vocational courses leading to the vocational Matura examination, as a rule, lead to the same qualifications as four-year technical upper secondary programmes which give access to tertiary education as well as to the labour market. (ISCED-P/ISCED-A: 354)



Examples Group 6:
Programmes that span ISCED level 3 and another ISCED level

Austria – *Berufsbildende höhere Schule* (Higher technical and vocational college). Five-year vocational programme spanning ISCED level 3 (years 1 to 3) and ISCED level 5 (years 4 to 5). The entry requirement for this programme is lower secondary education. The successful completion of the third year is equivalent to a secondary vocational qualification (ISCED level 3) and the final qualification (after five years) is directly equivalent to other qualifications classified at ISCED level 5. It also gives credit for transfer into programmes at ISCED levels 6 or 7 in related fields. The programme qualifies students to exercise a higher-level occupation in the fields of engineering, trade, arts and crafts, tourism, commerce, domestic services, teaching in kindergarten and others. (Years 1 to 3: ISCED-P/ISCED-A: 354; Years 4 to 5: ISCED-P: 554; ISCED-A: 550)

Kazakhstan – *Техническое и профессиональное образование по подготовке кадров по массовым профессиям технического и обслуживающего труда* (Technical and vocational training in technical professions). These are three- to four-year programmes following the completion of lower secondary education. They are designed to train skilled workers and provide them with both the certificate of upper secondary level completion (*аттестат об общем среднем образовании*) after the first two years and a technical and vocational diploma with a technical qualification (*диплом о техническом и профессиональном образовании с присвоением технической квалификации*) following the completion of the third or fourth years. These programmes span ISCED levels 3 and 4 with the first two years classified at ISCED level 3 and the third and fourth years at ISCED level 4. (Years 1 to 2: ISCED-P/ISCED-A: 353; Years 3 to 4: ISCED-P/ISCED-A: 454)

Kazakhstan – *Техническое и профессиональное образование по подготовке специалистов среднего звена и предусматривающие овладение сложными (смежными) профессиями и практическими навыками выполнения работ во всех отраслях экономики, связанными с высокими технологиями и профессиональной деятельностью* (Technical and vocational training of middle managers including mastering complex professions and skills involving a high level of technology). These are four- to five-year programmes following the completion of lower secondary education. The programmes are designed to provide participants with professional knowledge and skills for professions that require some education at tertiary level. They offer both the certificate of upper secondary level completion (*аттестат об общем среднем образовании*) after the first two years and a technical and vocational diploma with a professional qualification (*диплом о техническом и профессиональном образовании с присвоением профессиональной классификации*) following the completion of the fourth or fifth years. These programmes span ISCED levels 3 and 5 with the first two years classified at ISCED level 3, and the third to fifth years at ISCED level 5. (Years 1 to 2: ISCED-P/ISCED-A: 354; Years 3 to 4/5: ISCED-P: 554; ISCED-A: 550)

Examples Group 7:
Programmes leading to partial level completion (or qualifications resulting in partial level completion)
[ISCED-P: 342 or 352; ISCED-A: 342 or 352]

Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia³ – *Strucno osposobuvanje* (Vocational training). This is a two-year vocational programme after the end of lower secondary education. Successful completers are awarded a diploma and may continue their studies in the three-year or four-year vocational programmes at the upper secondary level (*Sredno obrazovanie – redovno* or *Sredno obrazovanie – redovno strucno*). The latter programme gives direct access to tertiary education. The two-year vocational training programme is designed to give access to other programmes at the upper secondary education level and is therefore part of a sequence of programmes within the ISCED level. (ISCED-P/ISCED-A: 352)

Lithuania – *Profesinio mokymo programa, skirta asmenims, turintiems pagrindinį išsilavinimą ir nesiekiantiems vidurinio išsilavinimo* (Vocational education programmes for persons with basic education who are not trying to obtain the maturity certificate – *Brandos atestatas* – at the end of secondary education). These are two-year programmes designed for successful completers of lower secondary education leading only to a vocational qualification certificate (*Profesinės kvalifikacijos pažymėjimas*). Successful completers of this programme can continue to the three-year vocational programme (*Profesinio mokymo programa, skirta asmenims, turintiems pagrindinį išsilavinimą ir siekiantiems vidurinio išsilavinimo*) leading also to the maturity certificate (*Brandos atestatas*). Although the successful completers of the two-year vocational programme can already join the labour market, the programme is designed to give access to another programme which completes upper secondary education. The two-year programme can thus be treated as part of a sequence of programmes within the ISCED level. (ISCED-P/ISCED-A: 352)



Malaysia – *Menengah Atas* (Upper secondary). This is a two-year upper secondary general programme following the completion of lower secondary education. At the end of form 5, the last grade of this programme, students take the Malaysian certificate of education examination (*Sijil Pelajaran Malaysia (SPM)*) leading to *Pra Universiti*, which is a two-year upper secondary programme leading to tertiary education. The *SPM* is taken after 11 years of education since the start of ISCED level 1. (ISCED-P/ISCED-A: 342)

United Kingdom – *General Certificate of Secondary Education (GCSE)*. This is a two-year general programme after the end of lower secondary education. Until recently it marked the end of compulsory education in the country and hence was the first major exit point from the education system. Students study a number of GCSEs – typically 8 to 10 - in different subjects, each of which is separately assessed both via coursework and terminal examinations. Each subject is assigned a grade from A* (the highest) to G (the lowest) or U (unspecified) in the case of failure. The country considers that five or more subjects passed at grades A*-C represents successful partial level completion of the upper secondary-level. This is the typical minimum entry requirement to further studies at the upper secondary level – either vocational or general – giving access to tertiary education and/or specific occupations in the labour market. The GCSE programme is in a sequence within the ISCED level and is not the last in the sequence. It represents eleven years of study since the start of primary education and two years of study in upper secondary education. Five or more “passes” at high grades covers a reasonable range of the upper secondary curriculum and therefore is considered as a recognised qualification. The qualification does not give access either to post-secondary non-tertiary or to tertiary education. (ISCED-P/ISCED-A: 342)

Examples Group 8:

Programmes at ISCED level 3 insufficient for level completion or partial level completion therefore leading to educational attainment at ISCED level 2 [ISCED-P: 341 or 351; ISCED-A: 244 or 254]

Bangladesh – *Secondary school vocational certificate*. This is a two-year vocational programme that requires the completion of *Junior Secondary* (ISCED level 2). By the end of the programme, which is offered in both public and non-governmental technical schools and colleges, graduates receive the *Secondary School Vocational Certificate (SSC-Voc)*. The cumulative duration since the start of ISCED level 1 is only ten years. The programme is therefore insufficient for level completion or partial level completion of ISCED level 3. (ISCED-P: 351; ISCED-A: 254)

Bulgaria – *Profesionalno obuchenie za vazrastni – treta stepen PK* (Vocational training for adults – third level professional qualification). This vocational programme foreseen for adults has a duration of 1.5-years. It is designed to lead to direct entry to the labour market. (ISCED-P: 351; ISCED-A: 254)

New Zealand – *Year 11 – National Certificate of Educational Achievement 1 (NCEA 1)*. This is the first of three sequential one-year general programmes which make up the typical general pathway within upper secondary education. The NCEA 1 marks the first major exit point from the education system. The NCEA 1 is part of a sequence of programmes representing eleven years of study since the start of primary education but only one year of study in upper secondary education. The qualification does not give access either to post-secondary non-tertiary or to tertiary education. (ISCED-P: 341; ISCED-A: 244)

Zambia – *Trade Test Level II Certificate*. This vocational programme is offered to learners who complete lower secondary education and have at least one year's working experience or learners who hold a primary education certificate and have at least three years' working experience. The duration of the programme varies from six months to one year which is insufficient for ISCED 3 level completion. (ISCED-P: 351; ISCED-A: 254)

Examples Group 9:

Vocational programmes/qualifications giving access to tertiary education [ISCED-P: 354; ISCED-A: 354]

Japan – *Koutou senmon gakko* (Colleges of Technology, years 1-3). Entrance into *Koutou senmon gakko* is possible after completion of compulsory education. The purpose of the programme is to nurture promising practical engineers and to study general education through a five-year programme (first 3 years: ISCED-P 354, fourth and fifth years: ISCED-P 554). Most of the students who have completed the first three years of *Koutou senmon gakko* will advance to the fourth year (ISCED-P 554), but students will also have the qualification to enter universities (ISCED 6 or 766). (First three years of *Koutou senmon gakko*: ISCED-P/ISCED-A: 354)



Kuwait – برنامج دبلوم التمريض (Nursing diploma programme). This vocational programme requires the successful completion of at least Grade 9, which is the last grade of lower secondary education. Although the theoretical entrance age is 15 years, the typical entrance age is 17 years due to multiple repetitions. The programme, which lasts three years, is considered a full completion of the level. Upon graduation, participants can proceed to tertiary education. (ISCED-P: 354; ISCED-A: 354)

Netherlands – *WEB-middenkaderopleiding, voltijd bol en bbl* (Vocational education, middle management training (level 4); full-time school-based and dual-system education programmes). This is a three-year vocational programme following successful completion of, typically, a four-year pre-vocational lower secondary education programme (*Voorbereidend middelbaar beroepsonderwijs (VMBO) (beroepsgerichte, gemengde en theoretische leerwegen)*). A part-time programme leading to the same qualification (*MBO niv.4: middenkaderfunctionaris*) also exists but participants are generally older than in the full-time programme. (ISCED-P/ISCED-A: 354)

Examples Group 10:

Programmes/qualifications leading to (full) completion of upper secondary education but not giving access to tertiary education [ISCED-P: 343 or 353; ISCED-A: 343 or 353]

Afghanistan – *Talimata Takhniki wa Maslaki* (Technical and Vocational Education (Grades 10 to 14)). The theoretical duration of this vocational programme is five years following the successful completion of Grade 9 (ISCED 2). By the end of the programme, graduates are awarded the *Shahadat Naama* (certificate), which provides direct access to the labour market and to programmes at the tertiary level. The first three grades of the programme are classified at the upper secondary level. (Grades 10 to 12: ISCED-P/ISCED-A: 353; Grades 13 to 14: ISCED-P/ISCED-A: 454)

Germany – *Beamtenausbildung (mittlerer Dienst)* (Training for Civil Servants (Medium Level)). This programme has a duration of two years and provides training for future civil servants at middle management level. It requires the intermediate school certificate or a recognised equivalent for admission. The programme is offered both in institutions of public administration at all regional levels (*Bund, Länder, Regierungsbezirke, Kreise, Gemeinden*) and in special schools for public administration. Graduates take up employment in the civil service upon completion of the programme. The programme does not give access to tertiary education. (ISCED-P/ISCED-A: 353)

Israel – *Batey sefer taasiyatiim le hanihim, misrad ha-kalkala, tlat shnati* (Apprenticeship and industrial schools, Ministry of Economy, three-year education). This is a three-year vocational programme following successful completion of lower secondary education. Successful completers can continue their studies in short preparatory programmes of 7 to 10 months for engineers or similar professions (*Mechina kdam handasaim*) though most go directly to the labour market. A small number of successful completers continue their studies at the post-secondary non-tertiary level. (ISCED-P/ISCED-A: 353)

Seychelles – *Upper secondary education programme*. This is a two-year upper secondary general programme following the completion of lower secondary education. Upon completion of the programme, students obtain the Secondary Five National Examination Certificate or IGCSE (Cambridge) or DELF Scolaire (*Diplôme d'Études en Langue Française*), which give direct access to post-secondary non-tertiary education but not to tertiary education. (ISCED-P/ISCED-A: 343)

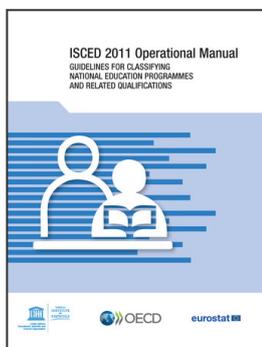
Examples Group 11:

Programmes leading to more than one qualification (and their resulting attainment levels) [Any ISCED-P or ISCED-A codes at ISCED level 3]

Poland – *Trzyletnie liceum ogólnokształcące* (General upper secondary school). This is a three-year programme following successful completion of lower secondary education. It leads to a school-leaving certificate (*Świadectwo ukończenia liceum ogólnokształcącego (wykształcenie średnie)*) awarded to all students who successfully complete the programme. Students wishing to go to university may also take a matriculation certificate (*Matura – świadectwo dojrzałości*). Entry to university is not possible without the *Matura* certificate. The programme is classified as ISCED-P 344 as it is a general programme designed to give access to university (and a majority of students aim to obtain the *Matura*). However, the educational attainment of successful completers depends on the qualifications gained at the end of the programme. The school-leaving certificate is not sufficient for entry to tertiary education so it is classified as ISCED-A 343 whereas the *Matura* certificate is coded as ISCED-A 344. (ISCED-P: 344; ISCED-A: 343 or 344)

Notes

1. Paragraph numbers are references to the main ISCED 2011 classification document. See more details in the Reader's Guide.
2. The UNESCO Institute of Statistics (UIS) and the European Union (EU) use "Slovakia" as the official name of "Slovak Republic".
3. The UNESCO Institute of Statistics (UIS) uses "The former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia" as the official name of "Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia".



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