



Structures of Education, Vocational Training and Adult Education Systems in Europe

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Information provided by:

EURYDICE UNIT
Ministry of Education, Science and Culture
Division of Evaluation and Supervision
Eurydice Unit
Sólhvolsgata 4
IS – 150 Reykjavik

MENNT
samstarfsvettvangur atvinnulífs og skóla
General Director

EDUCATE - Iceland
Laugavegi 51
Adalheidur Jónsdóttir
IS-101 REYKJAVÍK
Project Manager
Tel. (354) 511 26 60
alla@mennt.is
Fax (354) 511 26 61
<http://www.mennt.is>

If you wish to have more detailed information on education systems in Europe we warmly recommend that you consult the EURYBASE database (<http://www.eurydice.org>) and the CEDEFOP monographs (<http://www.cedefop.eu.int>)

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INTRODUCTION

Europe is characterised by a very wide variety of education and training systems. In order that this diversity should be fully appreciated, EURYDICE, the information network on education in Europe, the European Centre for the Development of Vocational Training (CEDEFOP) and the European Training Foundation (ETF) regularly update a set of national monographs entitled *Structures of Education, Vocational Training and Adult Education Systems in Europe*.

Descriptions relating to individual countries in turn include basic information on the administration and structure of their systems of education and initial vocational training at all levels (from pre-primary to tertiary). Also included are descriptions of initial vocational education and training in alternance and adult education and training within provision for lifelong learning. The initial and in-service training of teachers and their status are also considered.

The information is set out in accordance with a common structure to facilitate inter-country comparisons while ensuring that special features peculiar to each system are duly emphasised.

The description for each country is preceded by a diagram of its education system. Here again, the way the diagrams are presented has, as far as possible, been standardised so that common – and differing – features of the various systems can be more easily identified and compared.

The first chapter within each country section is devoted to a short presentation of the country concerned, together with the basic principles governing its education and training, the division of responsibilities and then more specific information (relating to administration, inspection, financing, private schooling and advisory bodies). The major reforms of education systems are also considered.

The other chapters deal in turn with pre-primary education, compulsory and post-compulsory education (general, technical and vocational provision entirely within schools). The way these chapters are structured depends on each national context. Where pre-primary education is not in reality separate from primary education, or where compulsory education spans different levels, no artificial division has been created. In the case of all countries, a brief description of the aims and structure of the level of education concerned is followed by further headings devoted to the curriculum, assessment, teachers and statistics.

Initial vocational education and training in alternance is the subject of a chapter in its own right. It includes all education and training for young people that is not essentially school-based, and thus covers for example apprenticeships based on the 'dual system' pattern, sandwich course training and any other initiatives and experiments with major elements of 'on-the-job' experience.

This is followed by a chapter on tertiary education, in which a summary description is supplemented by sections on admission, tuition fees, the academic year, courses, qualifications and assessment. The chapter includes any initiatives implemented as part of the Bologna process.

The last chapter deals with continuing education and training for adults (whether in or outside the labour market, employed or unemployed). It provides information on the political, legislative and financial framework of this kind of education, on the authorities concerned and their responsibilities, as well as on the general organisation of training for adults (types of institution, access requirements, programme objectives, the curriculum and quality assurance). There is also a brief description of guidance/counselling services, as well as of questions relating to assessment and accreditation including the recognition of non-formal kinds of learning.

The situation regarding teachers is dealt with in a specific section for each level of education discussed. Also provided are national statistics on the number of pupils, students, teachers and educational institutions and, where figures are available, on pupil or student/teacher ratios, attendance and attainment rates or, yet again, on the choice of branches of study or areas of specialisation.

The National Units in the EURYDICE Network have drafted the descriptions for their countries, each using the same proposed outline of content as a common framework. The information on initial vocational education and training in alternance, and on adult education has been prepared in close collaboration with members of the CEDEFOP REFER Network (in the case of the European Union and EFTA/EEA countries) and the National Observatories of the European Training Foundation (ETF) in the case of the 12 candidate countries. We are extremely grateful to them and to all those who were involved in this project in the EURYDICE European Unit in Brussels, CEDEFOP in Thessaloniki, and the ETF in Turin for their invaluable contribution to this fundamental source of information which is vital to a better understanding of education and training systems in Europe.

Given the number of countries now covered ⁽¹⁾ and the amount of data available, the description of each system of education and training may be consulted solely electronically on the website of the EURYDICE Network (<http://www.eurydice.org>), which brings it to the attention of the largest possible number of people and enables it to be updated on a more regular basis.

Patricia Wastiau-Schlüter
Head of the EURYDICE
European Unit

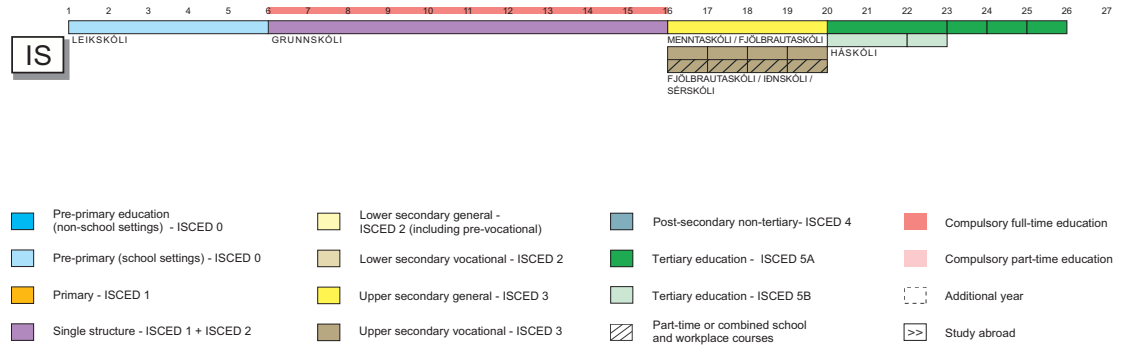
Johan van Rens
Director of CEDEFOP

Peter de Roij
Director of the ETF

June 2003

⁽¹⁾ The 30 European countries taking part in the EU Education Programme, Socrates.

Organisation of the education system in Iceland, 2003/04



Source: Eurydice.

1. RESPONSIBILITIES AND ADMINISTRATION

1.1 Background

Iceland is an island in the North Atlantic Ocean, on the borders of the temperate and the Arctic zones. Iceland's total area is approximately 103,000 km² of which only 23% are arable land.

Iceland is a republic with a parliamentary democracy. The President *Forseti* is elected by popular vote for a four-year term. Executive power lies with the cabinet formed by the political parties. The government must have the direct or indirect support of the majority of the Icelandic parliament, which has 63 members. Parliamentary elections are held at intervals of four years. Local government is exercised by 105 municipalities.

As of the 31st of December 2002, the population of Iceland was 288,201 with a population density of approximately 2.8 inhabitants per km². Icelandic is the national language. The Evangelical Lutheran Church is the official state church.

The principal employment sectors are: fishing and fish processing, manufacturing, whole-sale, retail trade, repairs, health services and social work. At the end of 2001, 22.6% of those in employment worked in industry, 7.8% in agriculture and fishing and 69.6% in services, there of 7.4% in the field of education.

In the first quarter of the year 2003, 3.9% of the workforce was unemployed. In the last few years the rate of inflation has been approximately 2.0%.

1.2 Basis of the education system: Principles legislation

Icelandic parliament is legally and politically responsible for the educational system. It determines its basic objectives and administrative framework. The education system is divided into four levels: pre-primary *leikskóli*, compulsory *grunnskóli*, upper secondary *framhaldsskóli* and higher education level *háskóli*.

A fundamental principle of Icelandic education is that everyone should have equal opportunities to acquire an education, irrespective of sex, economic status, residential location, religion, possible

handicap, and cultural or social background. Everyone is entitled to free education at compulsory upper secondary and higher education level.

At the pre-primary school level, teaching and education are based on a child-centred ideology, where emphasis is placed on childhood as a separate stage of development with special qualities.

The main purpose of compulsory schooling is to prepare pupils for life and work in a continuously developing, democratic society. The organisation of the school as well as its work shall, therefore, be guided by tolerance, Christian values and democratic cooperation.

At the upper secondary level, the primary aims are to prepare students for life and work in a democratic society by offering them suitable opportunities to learn and develop individually, and prepare them for employment through specialised studies leading to professional qualifications or further study.

Higher education institutions are entrusted with the task of carrying out research and offering higher education programmes in different subjects, as stipulated by the legislation governing each institution.

The main purpose of adult education is to encourage equality of opportunity among adults without regard to location, age, gender, occupation or previous education.

Reforms

The educational system has been decentralised to a large extent in recent years, both with regard to responsibilities and decision-making.

The Ministry of Education, Science and Culture *Menntamálaráðuneytið* lays down the framework and policy for pre-primary schools. The local municipalities *sveitarfélög* bear the responsibility for implementing the law on pre-school education. The law concerning pre-primary schools was amended in 1981 and 1989. The changes in the law stipulated a new division of labour between the state and the local municipalities' *sveitarfélög* and gave the Ministry of Education, Science and Culture *Menntamálaráðuneytið* the task of deciding educational policy for Pre-primary schools. In 1991 a new law concerning Pre-primary schools confirmed its policy in education. The latest law concerning pre-primary schools is from 1994. With that legislation, the pre-primary school became the first school level, making the education system a four level system.

In 1991, a new law concerning compulsory education replaced the one from 1974. 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. 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.

New legislation concerning compulsory schools *lög um grunnskóla* was passed in 1995. In comparison with previous legislation, the greatest change was that local municipalities took over the operation of schools at the compulsory level as of 1st of August 1996 and now they pay for instruction, administration and specialists' services as well as establishing and running schools at the compulsory level.

In 1988, new legislation on upper secondary schools replaced older laws concerning grammar schools and vocational schools. A new law concerning upper secondary schools passed in 1996 is to be fully enacted in the academic year 2003/04. The Upper Secondary School Act *lög um framhaldsskóla* primarily 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 that are involved in providing education at this level.

Legislation on higher education institutions enacted in 1997 establishes the general framework for the activities of these institutions. According to the law, the Ministry of Education, Science and Culture determines whether and to what extent institutions shall engage in research. The role of each higher education institution is further defined in separate legislation on their activities and in performance-related contracts that the state draws up with all higher education institutions.

In 1992, the first legislation concerning adult education was passed. This legislation was replaced by the law on upper secondary education passed in 1996. According to the law, schools at that level are allowed to offer special programmes, including evening classes, for mature students (18 years or older).

1.3 Distribution of responsibilities for the organisation and administration of the education and training system

All education comes under the jurisdiction of the Ministry of Education, Science and Culture, with the exception of a few specialised schools.

The Ministry issues an educational programme for pre-primary institutions *Aðalnámsskrá leikskóla* and the National Curriculum Guidelines for compulsory *Aðalnámsskrá grunnskóla* as well as for upper secondary *Aðalnámsskrá framhaldsskóla* education.

Local municipalities *sveitarfélög* are responsible for the full operation of pre-primary schools and compulsory schools. Apart from being represented in the school boards of upper secondary schools, local municipalities have no administrative responsibilities at the upper secondary level, or at the higher education level.

Pre-primary schools and compulsory schools are governed by a school board *skólanefnd* which supervises educational affairs in the municipality concerned. The board is comprised of representatives appointed by the political parties, which have been elected to the local administration. The number of members varies according to the size of the community, but most often there are five politically appointed representatives, in addition to the representatives of parents, the directors of pre-primary schools and compulsory schools who have the right to attend meetings and state their opinions or make suggestions. In some municipalities, there are special pre-primary school boards.

The Ministry of Education, Science and Culture lays down the framework and policy for pre-primary school education, including its educational role and sets the general policy regarding the methods used. The Ministry is to issue an educational programme 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 provided in pre-primary schools blends in smoothly with the education that children receive in the first years of compulsory education.

Local municipalities have the responsibility of implementing the law on pre-primary school education. According to the law, the construction and operation of pre-primary schools are to be funded and administered by local municipalities, which are to establish and operate pre-primary schools for children and manage the schools in accordance with the law. They are, furthermore, expected to employ pre-primary school representatives who advise on matters that pertain to such schools and supervise their operation.

A pre-primary school is administered by a head *leikskólalastjóri*, who is hired by the municipality in question. The head is responsible for making plans concerning 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.

Pre-primary schools are not required to assess the performance or the progress of each individual child where progress is normal.

Each compulsory school has a head teacher *skólastjóri* who is hired by the municipality in question, as are its teachers. He administers the school and is responsible for the work that goes on there under the supervision of school board and the local municipality.

Examinations and other forms of assessment are carried out by individual teachers and schools. At the end of the tenth and final year of compulsory education, optional nationally coordinated examinations are held, i.e. the pupils can choose if and how many nationally coordinated examinations they take. These examinations comprise six subjects, i.e. Icelandic, English, Danish, mathematics, natural sciences and social sciences. These examinations are composed, marked and organised by The Educational Testing Institute *Námsmatsstofnun*.

The Educational Testing Institute is an independent institution funded by the state through the Ministry of Education, Science and Culture. The institution is responsible for organising, setting and grading the nationally coordinated examinations and for undertaking comparative analysis of the educational system through participation in international surveys.

In every upper secondary school there is a school board *skólanefnd* with five members: three representatives appointed by the Minister of Education, Science and Culture and two representatives from the municipality, the board is appointed by the Minister of Education, Science and Culture *Menntamálaráðherra*. Representatives of teachers and students have the right to attend meetings and state their opinions or make suggestions. An upper secondary school is administered by a headmaster or a principal *skólameistari* who is appointed by the Minister of Education, Science and Culture for a five year term at a time. Teachers are paid by the state and hired by the school.

Examinations are set and graded in each school by subject teachers and supervised by the head of the department.

Institutions that educate teachers are under the supervision of the Ministry of Education, Science and Culture. The Iceland University of Education *Kennaraháskóli Íslands*, the University of Akureyri *Háskólinn á Akureyri* and the University of Iceland *Háskóli Íslands* are responsible for education and training of teachers.

At the Iceland University of Education, a council supervises the course of study that is offered. It is composed of the rector *rektor*, representatives of the teaching staff, and representatives of students and other staff. Iceland University of Education is divided into departments supervised by a department council.

At the University of Iceland, the organisation of studies leading to teaching qualifications takes place within the Faculty of Social Sciences. Within any

faculty the supreme decision-making power rests with a faculty meeting.

The University Council *Háskólaráð*, chaired by the rector, is responsible for the work carried out at the University of Akureyri. The University Council organises the coordination of work within the various faculties and with organisations outside the university, approves annual budget proposals and has, within existing laws and regulations, supreme decision making powers concerning the university. At faculty council meetings decisions are made concerning organisation and teaching and annual budgetary proposals are put forward for consideration by the University Council.

The organisation of study in each teacher training institution is in the hands of each institution.

Assessment in the programme for teacher trainees 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.

The National Curriculum Guidelines *Aðalnámsskrá leikskóla* and the law concerning pre-schools do not prescribe working methods. Each pre-school is expected to choose methods that are based on the ideology and aims that underlie the educational programme and the law.

The National Centre for Educational Materials *Námshagstofnun*, (under the auspices of the Ministry) develops and publishes educational materials for compulsory schools. Furthermore it is responsible for providing all children in compulsory schools with teaching materials free of charge, and receives budget appropriation for this purpose. Neither the curriculum nor laws and regulations contain instructions regarding teaching methods.

Neither the curriculum nor laws and regulations contain instruction regarding teaching methods for the upper secondary school level. 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.

Regarding the level of higher education, 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.

University teachers are employed by the state.

1.4 Inspection/Supervision/Guidance

There is no inspectorate system as such in Iceland. In the Ministry of Education, Science and Culture

Menntamálaráðuneytið the Department of evaluation and supervision *mats- og effirlitsdeild* is responsible for evaluation and supervision of the school system. The Ministry has monitoring duties throughout the country, which include the gathering and processing of data.

According to legislation and regulations on pre-primary school education, the Ministry is responsible for carrying out a comprehensive evaluation of pre-primary schools. Heads of pre-primary schools see to it that the educational work that takes place in their school is evaluated on a regular basis. The larger municipalities have pre-primary school representatives who are employees of the municipalities in question. The pre-primary school representative works in cooperation with the pre-primary school and its director, giving advice, monitoring the operation of the pre-primary schools within that municipality and promoting cooperation between the individual pre-primary schools.

Legislation adopted in 1995 on compulsory education and in 1996 on upper secondary education stipulates that all compulsory and upper secondary schools are to adopt methods of evaluating school activities, including instruction and administrative practices, internal communication and external relations. The Ministry of Education, Science and Culture is to investigate the self-evaluation methods used by the schools at five-year intervals.

Local education offices provide general pedagogical counselling, pedagogical counselling in respect to particular subjects, educational counselling for students and school psychology services at compulsory level. 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. There are now 33 local education offices.

According to the Universities Act and regulations from 1999 regarding quality control of university instruction, universities are to set up a formal quality system. The Ministry of Education, Science and Culture takes the initiative to conduct an external evaluation of higher education programmes or institutions. The Ministry is also responsible for approving new degrees.

1.5 Financing

Financing varies from one level of the educational system to the next. 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 university level are determined in the annual budget as passed by Parliament each year. The determining factor for these state allocations is the number of students. The State finances the building of schools at the upper secondary level with the participation of municipalities. Local municipalities pay 40% of the cost of construction; the state exchequer contributes the remaining 60%.

Parents contribute a substantial amount towards operating costs at 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. On the whole, parents contribute about a third of the operating costs of pre-primary schools.

Education at the compulsory level is free for the pupils. The state pays for all educational materials.

Education at the upper-secondary level is free, but students pay enrolment fees and the cost of their textbooks. Students in vocational training pay a materials fee, which must not be higher than 50,000 Isk. per school year.

State institutions at the higher education level charge registration fees, which are between 30,000 and 35,000 Isk. Private institutions charge tuition fees. Instruction in state institutions at the higher education level is considered to be free for students, who also have in most cases access to loans from the Icelandic Government Student Loan Fund *Lánasjóður íslenskra námsmanna*. These loans cover students' cost of living during their time of study for the most part.

1.6 Advisory and consultative bodies

In most pre-primary schools there are parents' associations *foreldrafélög*, but they do not directly influence the administration of the school. The pre-primary school board or the school board is in charge of the affairs of pre-primary schools in a local municipality, and parent representatives have the right to attend meetings, speak and make proposals.

According to the law concerning compulsory education from 1995, every compulsory school shall have a Parents' Council *Foreldraráð* made up of three representatives of the parents

According to the law concerning upper secondary schools from 1996, an eighteen member Cooperation Committee *samstarfsnefnd um starfsþróun á framhaldsskólastigi* concerning vocational education at the upper secondary level is to be a forum for comprehensive policy-making in the affairs of vocational training and is to give

advice in the setting of common rules on matters relating to vocational training. It is appointed by the Minister of Education, Science and Culture.

The Minister of Education, Science and Culture appoints occupational councils *starfsgreinaráð* for individual branches of industry or groups of such branches. In the councils there are to be representatives from the labour market and one representative from the Ministry. 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 cooperation between the school in question and local industries.

The kind of relationship institutions at higher education level have with social actors and the labour market varies. Some institutions regularly set up Development Committees with representatives from the public sector and industry. Through research institutions and liaison offices, universities also work to strengthen ties with external actors e.g. industry.

1.7 Private sector

Education in Iceland has traditionally been organised within the public sector and there are very few private schools in the country.

Local municipalities can allow parents or private parties to operate a pre-primary school with a permission from the Ministry of Education, Science and Culture. Almost all the private pre-primary schools get financial support from their local municipality. In December 2002 there were 23 private pre-primary institutions, which is equivalent to 9% of the entire pre-primary institutions. Approximately 6% of all children attend privately run pre-primary schools. It varies in which form private pre-primary schools are operated. There are, for example, parent-operated pre-primary schools and

parochial pre-primary schools.

Compulsory schools that are established and owned by individuals or institutions must be accredited by the Ministry of Education, Science and Culture. In the school year 2001/02, there were six private schools at the compulsory level in Iceland. That is equivalent to 3% of all compulsory schools in Iceland. All of them receive considerable financial assistance from the municipalities and in addition their pupils pay school fees. Four of the schools are in Reykjavík. These schools are for pupils in different age groups. Teaching follows the curriculum guidelines that are in effect for compulsory schools. 1.2% of the pupil population of the school year 2001/02 attended private schools.

There were three state-supported private schools at the upper secondary level in the school year 2001/02, which is equivalent to 12% of all schools at that level. They follow the main aims of the law on upper secondary schools and operate in accordance with existing curriculum guidelines and regulations. Approximately 5.3% of all students at this school level attended private schools. The schools are operated semi-privately, i.e. they receive sufficient funding from the state to pay for their operating costs, but students also pay tuition fees.

There are three privately run institutions of higher education in Iceland. These institutions amount to 37.5% of all the institutions of higher education. These institutions receive considerable financial assistance from the state according to contracts made with each institution. These institutions must operate in accordance with a formal charter and are recognised by the Ministry of Education, Science and Culture. About 12% of the student population in autumn 2001, attended private institutions.

There are various kinds of private schools offering adult education. Some courses provide preparation for a particular kind of work. The operation of these schools is entirely the responsibility of their owners.

Same assessment and certification arrangements apply for private schools at pre-primary school, compulsory, upper-secondary and higher education level, but no such arrangements for private schools offering adult education.

2. PRE-PRIMARY EDUCATION

The present legislation concerning pre-primary schools *leikskólar* was passed in 1994. The first article of the law defines pre-primary schools as the first level of the educational system. According to the law, pre-primary schools are to provide education for children who have not reached the age at which compulsory education begins.

The law concerning pre-primary schools defines their 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 cooperation with parents, the all-round development of 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 in 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 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.

Pre-primary schools are for all children who have not reached the age at which compulsory school *grunnskóli* begins, i.e. the 1st of September of the year in which the child turns six. However, very few pre-primary schools accept children less than one year old, and the youngest children are usually two years of age. In local municipalities *sveitarfélög* where there may be insufficient room to accommodate all applicants, the children of single parents and students are often given priority. Parents have to apply for admission for the child at a pre-primary school. In many municipalities there are waiting lists for places at pre-primary schools.

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 handicapped children is the same as for other children, but adapted to their abilities.

Pre-primary schools are most often in buildings that are specifically designed and constructed for their operation, and they are to have a playground with approximately 30 to 40 square metres of space for each child. Indoors, 7 square metres of space are required for each child. Pre-primary schools are intended for both boys and girls, and with only one exception, pre-primary schools in Iceland are coeducational.

2.1 Organisation

Most pre-primary schools are established and run by the municipalities. Other parties may also operate a private pre-primary school in consultation with the municipality.

Children can stay at the pre-primary school from four to nine hours a day. It is up to the parents to decide how long they deem it necessary for the child to stay there. The pre-primary schools open between 7.00 a.m. and 8.00 a.m. and finish between 17.30 p.m. and 18.30 p.m. The daily routine of a pre-primary school is determined by the head of the school *leikskólastjóri* and the staff, and there are no coordinated rules to dictate how pre-primary school work should be organised. Meal times are a permanent part of the pre-primary school routine. The children are expected to be outside for a certain time every day. Pre-primary schools usually close for summer vacation, sometimes for three to five weeks.

Each school has 1-5 departments with 18-24 children in each. Departments 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 departments in mixed age-groups. 1, 2 and 3 year olds are usually together in a department and so are 3 to 5 year old. The size of pre-primary schools varies; in rural areas there are schools with 10-20 children, but in urban areas they have as many as 150.

Parents pay fees at pre-primary schools. In some municipalities, children 0-5 years old are cared for in private homes by child minders, *dagmæður*, which have permission from local municipalities to care for 3-4 children at a time, for a certain fee from the parents.

2.2 Curriculum

As the Pre-primary School Act, *Lög um leikskóla*, stipulates, the Ministry of Education, Science and Culture issues an educational programme which pre-primary schools are to follow. On July 1st, 1999, the Ministry issued new National Curriculum Guideline for pre-primary schools, *Aðalnámskrá leikskóla*. 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 education and the training of pre-primary school teachers

- is intended to ensure the quality of pre-primary school 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, *skólanámskrá*, 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 guideline and the Pre primary School Act 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 Act. Models based on the High school and Kamii/DeVries systems 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 art work, sorting and ordering games, role play, motion games, music, water games etc. Iceland has pre-primary schools that work in the spirit of Reggio Emilia, Montessori and Waldorf.

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.

2.3 Assessment

Pre-primary schools are not required to assess the performance or the progress of each child. However, such an assessment is made by the pre-primary school staff or specialists if any suspicion of deviation from normal development arises within the pre-primary school. Heads of pre-primary schools see to it that the educational work that takes place in their school is evaluated on a regular basis. The present Act concerning pre-primary schools gives the Ministry of Education, Science and Culture the duty of carrying out a comprehensive assessment of their general educational performance. The Act on compulsory education 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 Act, compulsory education begins in the calendar year that the child turns six. 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 legislation from 1995, heads of compulsory schools *grunnskólastjóri* have the authority to grant such exemptions after having referred the case to the local education office and received their assessment.

2.4 Teachers

Pre-primary school teachers *leikskólakennari* are required to complete a three-year course of studies at the Iceland University of Education or at the University of Akureyri. Most of the students who enter this college have completed matriculation examinations.

Teachers at *leikskóli* have civil servant status and are employed and appointed to a specific pre-primary school by the municipality on an open recruitment procedure.

It has become quite common for qualified pre-primary school personnel to supplement their education after having worked for a minimum of three years in a pre-primary school. In-service training for pre-primary school teachers is not required by law.

Pre-primary school education is to be given by staff who has professional training in working with children at this level. It was not until the 1994 law on pre-primary school education that the title Pre-primary school teacher was used officially, but it has not the status of a professional title.

2.5 Statistics

Pre-primary school attendance Dec. 2001

0-2 years of age	28.9% of the age group in question
3-5 years of age	92% of the age group in question
0-5 years of age	60.8% of the age group in question

Children cared for by child minders *dagmæður* Dec. 2000

0-2 years of age	19.6% of the age group in question
3-5 years of age	1.3% of the age group in question

Child minders in 2000	
Number of child minders	530
Full time children per child minder	3.8

Pre-primary schools	Dec. 2001	%
Pre-primary schools	2613	
Private pre-primary schools centres	22	8.0% of pre-primary school centres
Children in pre-primary school centres	15,578	
Children in pre-primary schools run by municipalities	14,427	94.1% of children in pre-primarieschools
Children in private pre-primary schools	1,120	5.6% of children in pre-primary schools
Children in pre-primary schools run by hospitals	31	0.2% of children in pre-primary schools

Space per child according to regulation about the operation of pre-primary schools:

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

Teachers positions in pre-primary schools Dec. 2001

Qualified pre-primary school teachers	1065	30% of staff
Teachers with other training	162	4.5% of staff
Untrained personnel	2.348	65.5% of staff

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	4.6 (Approx. figure for 2001)

3. COMPULSORY EDUCATION AND TRAINING (BASIC SCHOOL)

There is no division between primary and lower secondary education. They form part of the same school level and usually take place in the same school

The Compulsory School Act, *Lög um grunnskóla*, stipulates mandatory education for children and adolescents between the ages of six and sixteen.

The main aims of compulsory education, as stated in the law of 1995, are the following:

- to prepare 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 cooperation.
- to aim at conducting its operations in the fullest possible accordance with the nature and needs of its pupils and to encourage the development, health and education of each individual.
- to give pupils an opportunity to acquire knowledge and skills and to cultivate work habits that promote a continuous interest in seeking education and self-development. Schoolwork is therefore to lay the foundation for independent thinking and to train pupils' ability to cooperate with others.

Compulsory school *grunnskóli* is divided into ten grades. Three types of schools are the most common: schools that have all ten grades, schools that have grades one to seven and schools that have grades eight to ten. Schools that have grades eight to ten are often merger schools, i.e. they take in pupils from more than one school in the catchment area that has grades one to seven. All compulsory schools are coeducational, i.e. pupils of both sexes attend. The size of schools varies. The largest schools are in the capital and its suburbs and have about 800-900 pupils. In rural areas, outside Reykjavík and its suburbs, there are many small schools, some with fewer than 10 pupils. One-half of all compulsory schools have fewer than 100 pupils. There are no entrance requirements at this school level, and all children are accepted at the age of six years. The enrolment rate is 100%.

There is no charge to pupils for compulsory education. Local municipalities *sveitarfélög* operate compulsory schools and pay for

instruction, general teaching, substitute teaching, administration and specialists' services. They also pay for the establishment and running of schools at the compulsory level, and the provision of special education, including the teaching of children in hospitals and the operation of a school attached to the state psychiatric ward for children.

3.1 Organisation

As from the school year 2002/03 all compulsory schools are operate on single shift system. Pupils can remain at school after regular teaching is over, to study, play and have their hobbies. Schools are organised into classes by age from grades one to ten. Officially, there is no selection or streaming by ability. In the larger schools, there are several classes for one yearly intake. The law from 1995 does not contain any provisions concerning the maximum number of pupils within a single class. In smaller schools, mostly rural schools, several grades will continue to be grouped into a single class with one teacher.

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.

3.2 Curriculum

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

In 1999, the 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 Compulsory 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 principle changes that the National Curriculum Guidelines from 1999 entails regarding compulsory education are the following: instruction in English now begins in the 5th grade or at 10 years of age; instruction in a new subject, Life skills, that teaches necessary skills for general living in the modern world; and teaching information technology has become more goal-oriented. pupil. The pupils can choose whether or not they take the nationally co-ordinated examinations on completion of the compulsory education.

Beginning instruction in English in the 5th grade means a one-fourth increase in the number of hours of English teaching over the present requirement. The beginning of instruction in Danish, on the other hand, has been delayed by one year and now begins in the 7th grade. No change was made, however, in the amount of Danish offered in compulsory schooling. The pupils will receive the same number of class hours in Danish as before but teaching will be for a shorter time and therefore more condensed.

The goal of instruction in the courses 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.

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.

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.

In the grades 9 and 10, individual schools are expected to organise up to 30% of their total time. 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.

The electives that are offered in grades 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.

According to the 1995 Act on compulsory

education, the staff of each school are obliged to write their own school working guide, *skólanámskrá*, 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 Culture and Education 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 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 which came into effect in the school year 1999-2000, states that Icelandic and mathematics are to core subjects in compulsory education.

Pupils are generally expected to cover the same subject material at roughly the same speed. Individuals having difficulty are provided with remedial teaching, primarily in Icelandic and mathematics, but remain with their class for most of their lessons. Teachers choose teaching methods suited to their pupils, their instructional aims and the conditions under which they teach. In general, an attempt is made to provide as much variety as possible.

Pupils are provided with teaching materials free of charge. A public institution, The National Centre for Educational Materials *Námsgagnastofnun*, is responsible for providing all children in compulsory schools with teaching materials and receives a 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 of 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 programmes. Individual schools and teachers may choose which materials they use when alternatives are available.

3.3 Assessment

Examinations and other forms of assessment, usually written, are carried out by individual teachers and schools. Assessment is therefore not standardised between different schools and teachers. The way in which the reports on pupils' progress are written varies greatly: the assessment could be in the form of a numerical or letter grade, or an oral or written commentary. Reports are given at regular intervals throughout the school year and at the end of each year.

Since 2001 the nationally co-ordinated examinations, *samræmd próf*, in Icelandic, mathematics, English and Danish (Norwegian and Swedish), mathematics and natural sciences at the end of the compulsory education, are optional, i.e. the pupils can choose how many nationally co-ordinated examination they take. They can even choose to take none.

Nationally co-ordinated examinations, *samræmd próf*, are given every year in core subjects in the fourth and the seventh grade and in the above mentioned subjects in the tenth grade at the end of compulsory education. These examinations are composed, marked and organised by The Educational Testing Institute, *Námsmatsstofnun*. 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.

A new policy has been formed in matters concerning pupils with reading difficulties at all school levels. When children start compulsory school at the age of six, emphasis is on diagnosing their standing and 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 Ministry of Education, Science and Culture is also to produce for the survey examinations and standardised proficiency examinations, which measure the academic standing of pupils.

The Educational Testing Institute is an independent institution funded by the state and responsible to 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 that is relevant to assessment/evaluation.

Children at the compulsory level are automatically moved up from one grade to the next at the end of each year, with the weakest pupils receiving ongoing remedial teaching. Academically gifted children 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 or lengthen their studies at this level.

Home-room or advisory teachers, who are required for each class by law, are intended in particular to offer pupils advice on their studies and their study choice. Special school counsellors are relatively rare and are found primarily in the larger schools.

3.4 Teachers

At primary level (grades 1-7), the same teacher instructs a class in most subjects. At lower secondary level (grades 8-10), teachers generally teach one or more subjects to a number of different classes. Teachers may or may not

continue with the same group from one year to another.

To qualify as a compulsory schoolteacher, *grunnskólakennari*, a three-year course at a teacher training university is required.

Teachers at *grunnskóli* have civil servant status and are employed by the municipalities on open recruitment procedure. They work either full-time or part-time and are appointed to a specific *grunnskóli*.

Participation in in-service training or continuing education is not compulsory, but collective bargaining agreements provide for teachers to attend training courses. Each year, teacher training institutions offer a variety of courses, both during the school year and in the summer.

3.5 Statistics

Compulsory schools 2002/03

Schools 2002/03	Number	Proportional
Total	192	
Single shift schools	192	100%
Private schools	6	3.2%
Special schools	6	3.2%
Small schools – (with less than 100 pupils)	67	34%

Pupils in compulsory schools 2002/03

Pupils	Number	Proportional
Total	44.695	
Male	23.093	51.6%
Female	21.602	48.4%
in small schools	3.140	7%
in private schools	453	1.1%
in special schools	171	0.3%
immigrants	1.266	2.8%

School attendance: 100%

Teachers in compulsory schools 2001/02

Teachers	Number	Proportional
Total	4,4901	
Qualified teachers	3,586	80%
Instructors, lacking full qualifications	904	20%
Male		24%
Female		76%
Full-time equivalents	4.273	

Average pupil-teacher (qualified teachers and instructors) ratio: approx.10.1.

4. POST-COMPULSORY SECONDARY EDUCATION

Upper secondary education is governed by the Upper Secondary School Act No. 80/1996 *Lög um framhaldsskóla*. The act applies to the entire upper secondary level. It primarily defines the framework for education at this level, its objectives, the role and responsibilities of the State and local authorities, individual institutions and their staff, as well as other parties that are involved in providing and administering 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 as well as the Ministry's National Curriculum Guidelines *Aðalnámskrá framhaldsskóla* which, among other things, describe the objectives and contents of individual programmes of study. New National Curriculum Guidelines for upper secondary schools took effect in the school year 1999/2000. The guidelines shall have come totally into force no later than 2004.

The law defines the purpose of upper secondary education as follows:

The role of upper secondary schools is to promote the general development of all students in order to enable them, as well as can possibly be done, to actively participate in a democratic society. Furthermore, upper secondary school prepares students for work and further studies. Upper secondary school is supposed to promote students' sense of responsibility, broad-mindedness, initiative, self-confidence, tolerance and to train them in disciplined and independent ways of working and in 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.

Students complete compulsory education in the year they turn sixteen and may then start studies in an upper secondary school. The majority of programmes at the upper secondary school level are four-year programmes. Students who progress at a normal rate are therefore between sixteen and twenty years old. However, the age of students in vocational programmes is generally higher.

Upper secondary education is not compulsory. All schools at that level, like other schools in Iceland, are coeducational.

The Upper Secondary School Act allows for

different admission requirements for individual programmes of study in accordance with what knowledge and skills are required for the different programmes. However, all students are to have the option of studying at the upper secondary level. Although upper secondary education is generally divided into general and vocational education with some artistic programmes of study as well, it is in many respects organised in a single structure with a variety of options. It is also common to provide more than one type of education in one school. The main types of upper secondary schools are as follows:

- Grammar schools *menntaskólar* which offer a four-year academic course of study concluding with a matriculation examination *stúdentspróf*, i.e. a university entrance examination.
- Comprehensive schools *fjölbrautaskólar* which offer an academic course comparable to that of the grammar schools concluding with a matriculation examination. These schools also offer theoretical and practical training as in the industrial-vocational schools (see below) and, in addition, some other programmes providing vocational and artistic education.
- Industrial-vocational schools *iðnskólar*, which offer theoretical and practical programmes of study in the certified and some non-certified trades.
- specialised vocational schools *sérskólar* which offer specialised programmes of study as preparation for specialised employment.

The size of upper secondary schools varies; the largest schools have around 2,000 students while the smallest have 50-100. There are very few private schools at that school level.

While there is no charge for tuition in public schools, students are required to pay an enrolment fee and supply their own textbooks. In addition, students in vocational courses have to pay a part of the cost of materials they use.

General academic education

General academic education *almennt bóknám* at the upper secondary level is primarily organised as a four-year course leading to a matriculation examination *stúdentspróf*. Grammar schools and comprehensive schools are virtually the only

schools that offer education leading to matriculation. The Upper Secondary School Act of 1996 stipulates that academic programmes of study leading to matriculation are to be three: natural sciences, social sciences and foreign languages. In addition there is a short general programme of study *almenn námsbraut* (1-2 years of studies depending on individual students) intended for students who are undecided as to what to do after compulsory education or need further preparation for academic or vocational studies.

Artistic education

Study of the arts is defined as a three-year programme of study *listnámsbraut* which is to provide preparation for further study in the arts in specialised schools or the higher education level. Emphasis is to be placed on design, visual arts, and music.

Vocational education

Vocational education *starfsnám* is organised in different ways depending on subjects, but in most cases it takes place both in the school and in the workplace (See also chapter 5). The organisation of courses varies as well as their length, which may last from one semester to five years. Schools that offer vocational education are comprehensive schools, industrial-vocational schools and specialised vocational schools. Many forms of vocational education give the students legal certification for certain types of employment. This applies to studies in the certified trades, and also for example in the training of auxiliary nurses and in the course that qualifies sea captains. Such studies are dealt with in Chapter 5.

In the school year 2001/02 the percentage of age groups enrolled in upper secondary education was as follows:

16 years	90%
17 years	81%
18 years	72%
19 years	67%

4.1 Organisation of the school

The school year, which lasts for 9 months, is divided into autumn and spring terms. Generally, the teaching period of each term lasts 14-15 weeks and the testing period 2-3 weeks, as a whole 35 weeks per school year. Students generally attend 30-40 lessons per week, with each lesson lasting 40 minutes. The length of the school day differs from one school to another

depending on whether the school buildings can accommodate the students as one set. Some schools offer evening courses in addition to daytime courses. They are intended for adults but may be attended by students that have reached the age of 18. See 7.5.

Upper secondary schools either have traditional classes or they operate according to a unit-credit system, i.e. the student groups vary according to the students' choice of course units. The unit-credit system is the prevalent form of organisation for schools at this level. In a unit-credit system the educational content of each subject is divided into a number of defined course units which last for one semester and give a certain number of credits. At the end of every semester, the student decides on courses for the following semester according to certain rules and in accordance with his own study plans and results. The unit-credit system allows students to regulate to a certain extent the speed at which they complete their studies. Those schools that have traditional classes or forms operate around the class as a unit. At these schools all students in a particular programme of study follow the same course at the same time and rate, with the exception of their electives.

In schools based on classes or forms, the students in a given class tend to be of the same age. In a unit-credit system, it is the student's choice of courses and rate of progress in a given subject, which determines the group he/she goes into. It is common that students between the ages of sixteen and twenty and even older are together in a group. The number of students in a group varies greatly, especially in schools which function according to the unit-credit system.

Teachers are free to choose their textbooks and other educational materials.

4.2 Curriculum

The National Curriculum Guidelines define, among other things, the objectives of individual subjects and programmes of study. It is also supposed to define the overall structure and the content of individual subjects. On the basis of the National Curriculum Guidelines, upper secondary schools are to write their own school working guides. School working guides are required, among other things, to specify what areas individual schools have chosen to emphasise, define the education they offer, their teaching methods and administration.

The intention underlying the new National Curriculum Guidelines, which took effect in the school year 1999/2000, is to ensure that each

individual student may be enrolled in a course of study suitable for him/her within the framework of upper secondary schools.

According to the Upper Secondary School Act there are to be four types of programmes of study: general, academic programmes of study leading to matriculation, vocational programmes of study, fine arts programmes of study, and a short general programme of study. Each programme of study is organised into core subjects, an elected field and a free selection. The act specifies that all programmes of study at that school level are to lead to further education either directly or through defined additional studies.

Neither the curriculum 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. Teaching methods are mainly based on lectures, individual tutoring, discussions between the teacher and students, in addition to individual assignments. Group work projects are sometimes assigned, but projects and teaching based on the integration of subjects are rare. On the practical side of vocational education, an attempt is made to simulate conditions in the workplace. Every upper secondary school is connected to the Internet which allows teachers to communicate, exchange information, assignments, educational materials and ideas and to be linked to data banks all over the world.

The Ministry of Education, Science and Culture's Project Plan for e-learning 2001-2003 entails that information and communication technology be utilised for the benefit of education. Measures have been taken to ensure that possibilities offered by new technologies are taken advantage of in the school system. The Web educational gateway *menntagatt.is* has been opened.

In the four-year course leading to matriculation, 140 credits are required. Core subjects constitute the required course in each academic programme of study and amount to 70% of the total course load. The core subjects include special subjects within that programme together with subjects that provide and support general education. Elected fields cover specialisation in an area of the programme of study and constitute 21% of the total course load. Free selection constitutes about 9% of the total course load. Core subjects common for all students in general academic programmes are: Icelandic, mathematics, foreign languages, natural sciences, social sciences, life skills and physical education. The number of credits in each subject may vary according to programmes.

The subjects included in vocational programmes of study can further be divided as follows: general academic subjects, theoretical vocational

subjects and practical vocational subjects.

A variety of vocational study programmes is offered in non-certified trades, for instance in fish processing, fish farming, agriculture, horticulture, service trades, design and ICT. The initial vocational education and training in these fields does not confer certification but is formally recognised. The studies in non-certified trades take place at an educational institution and generally there is no on-the-job training in a workplace.

Students in vocational study programmes have the possibility of doing additional studies to complete the matriculation examination.

Those who have completed the journeyman's examination *sveinspróf* can become master craftsmen after a certain period of work experience and advanced studies.

4.3 Assessment/Certification

Student evaluation is carried out both by continuous assessment and final assessment at the end of each semester. Schools generally have examinations at the end of every semester, regardless of the type of school. These examinations cover a range of subjects and are compulsory for students. Continuous assessment and assignments set usually count towards the final mark. Some grammar schools that have traditional classes have more extensive final examinations at the end of the fourth school year (matriculation examinations).

In the general academic programmes of study as well as in the non-certified trades, there have been no nationally coordinated examinations either with respect to final examinations or earlier ones. Examinations are set and graded in each school by subject teachers and supervised by the head of department in question. Final examinations in the non-certified trades are generally not as well defined as in the certified trades as the certificate awarded by the school does not confer the right to perform a certain occupation. According to the Upper Secondary School Act of 1996, the matriculation examination is to be nationally coordinated in certain subjects. This provision will come into effect in the school year 2003/04.

The grading system is based on individual attainment of students. Marks are given in whole numbers on a scale from one to ten in all schools, ten being the highest. At the end of each semester, students are given a transcript, which shows their marks and present standing within the programme of study. On receiving their marks, all students have the right to inspect their examinations in the presence of a teacher.

On completing a programme of study, students are issued with a certificate by the school, which specifies which course units or subjects, they have taken and the marks they have received. Students in schools that operate using a unit-credit system are able to graduate at the end of both the autumn and spring semesters.

4.4 Progression/Guidance/Transition arrangements

In schools that operate according to the unit-credit system, the passing grade for each course unit is five. Students who fail to receive a passing grade in any given course unit have to repeat that course unit during the next semester in order to continue in that particular subject. No average mark is calculated, but students must complete at least nine credits per semester.

In schools that have traditional classes or forms, a minimum grade of four in every subject and a five average for all subjects is needed to be allowed to move up to the next year. Examinations in individual subjects can, with certain reservations, be retaken after the regular examinations at the end of the school year. 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.

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

All students 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 student and other teachers or the school authorities.

4.5 Teachers

Teachers at upper secondary school level *framhaldsskólakennarar* are state employees. They are allocated by subject. Legislation stipulates that upper secondary school teachers of academic subjects should have completed four years of university education as a minimum. At least two of these should be in a major subject and in addition certain courses are required in

education and instructional methodology. The same legislation defines who is permitted to use the professional title "teacher".

Teachers of vocational subjects or other technical subjects must be qualified in the field in which they teach or be master craftsmen in the trade in question and have a minimum of two years' experience working in the trade. In addition, they are required to have completed certain courses in education and instructional methodology.

Teachers are paid by the State, although they are hired by individual schools. A wide variety of in-service training courses are held annually. According to wage contracts teachers are to attend up to two weeks of in-service training over a period of two years.

4.6 Statistics

Upper secondary education (including all vocational education) statistics 2001/02:

No. of students in day schools	18,261
No. of upper secondary schools:	39
No. of private schools:	3
Average pupil- teacher ratio:	12
No. of qualified teachers (March 2001):	1,122
No. of instructors (lacking full qualification as teachers):	456

The percentages of pupils in the various programmes of study 2001/02 were as follows:

General programmes	12%
Languages	8%
Fine and applied arts	5%
Pedagogical and physical programmes	2%
Social science programmes	17%
Commerce, economics	10%
Natural science programmes	21%
Crafts and technical trades	18%
Agriculture, food and service trades	5%
Health	2%

Sources: Statistics Iceland 2002 and Ministry of Education, Science and Culture 2003.

5. INITIAL VOCATIONAL EDUCATION AND TRAINING IN ALTERNANCE

5.1 Organisation

The Upper Secondary School Act no. 80/1996 (see chapter 4) applies to the entire upper secondary level, including initial vocational education. All education at this school level is under the administration of the Ministry of Education, Science and Culture (*menntamálaráðuneytið*) with a few exceptions such as the schools of agriculture, which are the responsibility of the Ministry of Agriculture.

In addition to several regulations issued by the Ministry of Education, Science and Culture on the basis of the Upper Secondary School Act, special regulations concerning initial vocational education have been issued, such as on journeyman's examinations, *sveinspróf* apprenticeship agreements *námssamningar* and on-the-job training *starfsþjálfun*. The Ministry also issues National Curriculum Guidelines *Aðalnámskrá framhaldsskóla* for education at that school level (see chapter 4).

The Upper Secondary School Act of 1996 makes detailed provision for the influence and responsibilities of both sides of industry in initial vocational education. This shall be achieved through a Cooperation Committee for Vocational Education *Samstarfsnefnd um starfsnám á framhaldsskólastigi* on the one hand and, on the other, through occupational councils *starfsgreinaráð*. The Cooperation Committee for Vocational Education is appointed to assure the role and influence of the social partners. Its role is to strengthen connections between school and industry and to advise the Ministry of Education, Science and Culture on a general policy for vocational study. 14 Occupational Councils were set up in 1998. They define the needs and qualification requirements in the occupational groups, which they represent and lay down the objectives of vocational study. They are appointed for all occupations or occupational groups in which education and training are offered at the upper secondary level within the vocational sectors of the comprehensive schools, the industrial-vocational schools, or the specialised vocational schools.

In addition to the general objectives of upper

secondary schools, initial vocational training is to prepare students for specific jobs, give them an understanding of the role of enterprises and workers in industry and further their general education. Study is at the same time intended to encourage students to maintain and extend their knowledge through continuing education or further study.

Vocational education is organised in different ways depending on subjects. The length of the studies varies, both with regard to the duration of on-the-job training and the course as a whole. Relatively few students enrol in vocational education and training at the end of their compulsory schooling at the age of sixteen. Statistics on the average age of students in vocational education and training are not available. However, it is clear that the age is considerably higher than the average age of students in general programmes of study.

In vocational education, students can choose between training for the certified trades *löggit iðngrein* and training in other areas, for example in the field of agriculture, in the travel industry, 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 the workplace to train its personnel. This has been the case in various branches of the manufacturing and service industries.

Initial vocational education can be divided into two main categories: vocational education and training which confers legally certified qualifications, and education which does not lead to certified qualifications. Vocational training conferring certified qualifications comprises the following: 1) study in the certified trades; 2) study within the health care system; 3) study for officers of air and sea transportation vehicles; 4) study for law enforcement officers. A regulation on apprenticeship agreements and on-the-job training, issued by the Ministry of Education, Science and Culture provides for the format, confirmation and registration of apprenticeship and on-the-job training contracts, as well as for the termination of contracts and handling of disputes which may arise concerning the implementation of the contract. A special on-the-job training contract for workplace instruction is concluded between a school and workplace or an apprenticeship contract between the student

and the employer. An apprenticeship contract is signed at the commencement of workplace instruction and confirmed within one month. It specifies the trial period and duration of the contract.

Initial vocational education that is formally recognised but does not confer certification differs in structure to that of certified trades. Study in the non-certified trades usually takes place at an educational institution, (i.e. there is usually no on-the job training at a workplace). Its position within the education system is weaker, as is the status of individuals on completion of studies. Qualification requirements for jobs that are not certified are not defined a priori in acts and regulations. Final examinations are generally not as well defined, as they do not result in the awarding of a certificate, which confers the right to perform a certain occupation. This form of education and training includes a wide variety of study programmes: fish processing, horticulture, livestock and fish farming, drafting, computer studies, design, massage, travel services, commercial, secretarial and office studies.

For admission requirements, see chapter 4.

5.2 Vocational/Initial training establishments

The following are the types of schools offering vocational education and training:

- Industrial-vocational schools *iðnskólar*, which offer theoretical and practical programmes of study in the certified and some non-certified trades.

Comprehensive schools *fjölbrautaskólar* which offer theoretical and practical training as in the industrial-vocational schools and, in addition, some other programmes providing vocational and artistic education. These schools also offer an academic course comparable to that of the grammar schools concluding with a matriculation examination. Specialised vocational schools *sérskólar* which offer specialised programmes of study as preparation for specialised employment. Educational centres for individual certified trades serve as intermediaries between the apprentice and the workplace and supervise study progress. Some of these centres also offer initial education at the post secondary level for master craftsmen *iðnmeistari*.

5.3 Access requirements

The Upper Secondary School Act allows for different admission requirements for individual programmes of study in accordance with what knowledge and skills are required for the different programmes. These admission requirements are further specified in regulations and apply both for vocational and general education. Work experience is rarely required for admission.

5.4 Financing

Costs of training off the job, i.e. costs of the running of schools are paid by the State. Companies and institutions (such as hospitals etc.) pay the costs of the on-the-job training. Provisions concerning wages and other benefits are in accordance with currently applicable collective bargaining agreements for apprentices in the occupation concerned. During the training period, students in the certified trades receive payments from the employer according to such agreements. In other fields of vocational training, how payments set varies. In some programmes, students receive no payments during their training, e.g. in the training of auxiliary nurses. Students in vocational education are generally eligible for loans from the Icelandic Student Loan Fund *Lánasjóður íslenskra námsmanna*.

5.5 Curriculum

Occupational councils make proposals to the Minister of Education, Science and Culture concerning the structure of vocational programmes of study in question, as well as their curriculum in theoretical and practical subjects. The occupational councils also make proposals on the division of study between the school and the workplace. After receiving the proposals, the Minister of Education, Science and Culture publishes curriculum guides for the theoretical and practical subjects in the relevant vocational programmes of study as part of the National Curriculum Guidelines for upper secondary school, as well as rules on the implementation of vocational education and training in individual occupations.

In the national curricula of 1999

Vocational education is generally divided between the school and the workplace (but may in some cases only take place at school). Practical work and on-the-job training at the workplace are based on the provisions of the National Curriculum Guidelines and rules concerning workplace instruction in the occupation concerned.

The course in the certified trades usually takes four years. It involves taking a vocational programme of study at an upper secondary school and an apprenticeship contract with a master craftsman or an industrial firm. Students can mainly choose from eight different vocational fields in this sector of upper secondary education. These fields are printing, construction and woodwork, tailoring, food-related industries, metalwork, electricity related trades, landscape gardening and cosmetic trades. Each field is subdivided into specialised programmes of study. The student has the choice of one of the following avenues:

- a) An apprenticeship agreement with a master craftsman
- b) A one-year programme of basic academic and practical studies *grunndeild* at an industrial-vocational school or comprehensive school, followed by an apprenticeship agreement with a master craftsman
- c) First, a one-year programme of basic academic and practical studies, then a one-year programme of specialised academic and practical studies *framhaldsdeild*, at an industrial-vocational school or a comprehensive school, followed by an apprenticeship agreement with a master craftsman.

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.

All vocational trainees in certified trades must, according to the National Curriculum, take at least 25 credits in general academic subjects; i.e. four credits in Icelandic, eight in modern languages, two in social studies, four in mathematics, two in book-keeping and five in electives. Physical education is also compulsory. The number of specialised subjects and credits varies in different programmes and so does the extent of practical training.

The contract made between the apprentice and the master craftsman stipulates that the latter accepts the responsibility for the practical training

of the apprentice. He/she is to keep a diary as a checklist to show that the content of his trainee's practical training is being fulfilled according to the contract. In all regions, this is checked by a trade supervisor.

Health care studies vary considerably both in scope and structure as they are directed at conferring a variety of qualifications. They include, for example, studies for auxiliary nurses, medical secretaries, dental assistants, pharmaceutical technicians and foodstuff technicians.

As in health care studies, the structure and duration of studies for officers of air and sea transportation vehicles are variable. These studies lead to certified occupations and occupational qualifications such as navigators, marine engineers, aircraft officers and traffic controllers.

Studies for law enforcement officers consists of two terms of study in school with at least eight months of on-the-job training between the first and the second of these terms.

See also 4.2. on ICT and 7.1. on lifelong learning.

5.6 Assessment/Qualifications

On completion of his/her studies, the apprentice in the certified trades takes the journeyman's examination, which provides her/him with qualifications to pursue the trade concerned. The journeyman's examinations are the responsibility of the trade in question and are administered on a national basis. A committee with members from industry and the trade unions (employers and employees) defines the requirements and oversees the examination. The journeyman's examination consists of a practical and a theoretical part. It can last from one to ten days, depending on the trade.

Those who have completed the journeyman's examination can become master craftsmen after a certain period of work experience and advanced studies in an industrial-vocational school or a comprehensive school.

Certified qualifications are issued by the ministry that handles matters relating to the occupation in question. Master craftsmen receive their qualifications from the local chief of police or sheriff.

See also chapter 4.3.

5.7 Guidance

Some compulsory and upper secondary schools offer career education programmes for students. Regional employment centres may provide support for transition to employment. See also 4.4.

5.8 Teachers/Trainers

Workplaces have to receive an approval from the Ministry of Education, Science and Culture to be able to accept apprentices for on-the-job training or on apprenticeship contracts. This approval is among other things based on the number of qualified trainers at the workplace. In the certified trades, a master craftsman is made responsible for the training of an apprentice. No rules are in force concerning the in-service training of trainers.

See also chapter 4.5.

5.9. Statistics

Number of students in combined school and work based programmes 2000-2001: 3,620

Number of students obtaining vocational qualifications 2000-2001: 1,652.

Dropout-rate: Information not available

Statistics concerning the destination of those completing vocational education are not available. It can only be stated that those completing vocational education have not in recent years had much difficulties in finding a job, the unemployment rate in Iceland being rather low (3,2% in November 2002).

The rate of those retiring from/quitting some of the certified trades and technical job sectors is higher than the rate of newly qualified people entering them. The resultant lack of people providing certain services is predicted to increase in the coming years.

Source: Statistics Iceland 2003.

6. HIGHER EDUCATION

The modern Icelandic system of higher education dates back to the foundation of the University of Iceland in 1911. The University of Iceland remains the principal institution of higher learning in Iceland, but over the last three decades new institutions of higher education have emerged with a more specialised focus, creating greater diversity on the higher education level.

A law on higher education, enacted in 1997, establishes the general framework for the activities of these institutions. Under the law, the Icelandic term *háskóli* is used to refer both to traditional universities and institutions, which do not carry out research. Separate legislation for each public higher education institution, and the charters of privately run universities, define their engagement in research, internal organisation, etc. Public and private higher education institutions receive individual appropriations from the state budget, but the Minister may contract with public and private institutions to undertake specific projects and provide specific services. The lines of administrative authority are laid out in the law and external influence on institutions of higher education is ensured by reserving two seats on their governing councils for outside members. According to the legislation the Minister of Education, Science and Culture is responsible for establishing rules on quality evaluation and recognition of all degrees offered. The role of each higher education institution is further defined in separate legislation on their activities.

Higher education takes place in institutions that come under the definition of *háskóli* in the framework law on higher education. The law does not make distinction between universities and non-universities. All higher education institutions offer university degrees and their research responsibilities are decided by the Ministry of Education, Science and Culture. Institutions previously belonging to the non-university sector have now been upgraded and merged with university institutions. At present, the higher education sector is made up of 8 universities or *háskólar*.

The Bologna Declaration has not led to major changes or reforms in Iceland higher education policy or in the organisation and structure of the system. The declaration is in line with the development that has taken place at this education level during the last decade. The

Ministry of Education, Science and Culture has however established an advisory committee on the Bologna process in Iceland. The advisory committee is to coordinate and conduct the Bologna declaration in Iceland in cooperation with the Ministry.

6.1 Admission requirements

According to the law on higher education institutions, students entering *háskóli* are required to have passed the Icelandic matriculation examination, to have finished other equivalent education or to have, in the view of the higher education institution in question, acquired equivalent maturity and knowledge. Higher education institutions can impose further admission requirements, including admission tests.

For most courses of study there are no general restrictions on admission for those who have passed the matriculation examination. However, in some programmes such as nursing and dentistry, the number of students allowed to continue after a competitive examination at the end of the first semester is limited. Also, in pharmacy and the natural sciences, as in some technical programmes, students are required to have matriculated from a mathematics, physics, or natural sciences branch of study of an upper secondary school.

For teacher training programmes and some business and computer science programmes, students are selected on the basis of their grades on the matriculation examination and priority may be given to students with particular work experience.

Registration of first year students usually takes place from late May until early June. Some institutions also admit new students for the spring semester. The application deadline for overseas students is in March of the year they wish to commence their studies. Application deadline for foreign exchange students is in June.

6.2 Fees/Financial support for students

There are no tuition fees at public institutions of higher education, but the institutions charge registration fees. Privately run institutions charge tuition fees.

Icelandic students attending institutions of higher education are eligible for student loans from the Icelandic Student Loan Fund. The total loan received per annum depends upon the income of the student and his/her spouse, as appropriate. Repayments commence two years after completion or discontinuation of studies.

Individuals from EU member states and the EFTA countries, who have worked in Iceland at their trade or profession for at least one year, are entitled to apply for a student loan.

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 post-graduate, research-oriented studies at universities in Iceland.

6.3 Academic year

In most institutions of higher education the academic year 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 late December. The spring semester lasts from the beginning of January until the end of May.

6.4 Courses

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.

Increasingly, professors integrate state of the art information- and communication technology into their teaching methods. For example they use specific web-sites to post course-related material and interact with students on the internet. Some

programmes are offered with distance learning via the internet and/or through video conferencing.

Students pay for books and other educational materials.

In a number of higher education institutions a diploma or certificate is awarded after one and a half or two-year study in various fields of study such as pedagogy, business and languages.

Bachelor-degree courses last for three to four years in the humanities, theology, social sciences, economics, business administration, natural sciences, health subjects, fishery studies, agricultural science, engineering, teacher education Pre-primary school and in social pedagogy.

The *Candidatus* courses lead to a professional degree in the fields such as theology medicine, pharmacy, law, and dentistry. They last from four to six years.

One-year post-graduate programmes of study (after the bachelor degree) are offered in upper secondary teacher training, student counselling, social work, journalism and media studies.

Courses leading to a master's degree are offered in the fields of humanities, social and natural sciences and have in recent years been extended to other sectors, such as business. Doctoral programmes are offered at the two higher education institutions, University of Iceland and Iceland University of Education.

Since 1998, nine lifelong learning centres have been established, with one in each of the main regions of the country. Distance learning courses are increasingly being offered at higher education level and few universities run institutes of continuing education.

6.5 Assessment/Qualifications

Student assessment is usually based on written, oral or practical examinations, term papers and assignments. Teachers are responsible for assessment, but each university department provides the overall organisation of the examinations within the regulatory framework of the institution. Examinations are generally held at the end of each term.

Admission tests are held in the programmes of medicine and physiotherapy before the first semester.

Competitive examinations are held in the programmes of nursing and dentistry at the end of the first semester. As a general rule, grades

are expressed on the 0-10 scale, where the passing grade is 5 and above, or with the assessment pass/fail.

A diploma or certificate is awarded after 1,5-2 years study in some fields of study.

Bachelor degrees are awarded to students who have completed 3 to 4 years of study in a degree course in the fields described in chapter 6.4 and satisfactorily completed the required final thesis or research project. Bachelor degrees do not usually confer professional certification, except for nursing (BS) and teachers (BEd). The bachelor degree constitutes a formal qualification for post-graduate study.

A *BPIsl* degree (*Baccalaureatus Philologiae Islandicae*) is awarded to foreign students on completion of a programme in Icelandic language, literature and history. This degree is on the same level as the BA degree.

A *Kandidatsgráða* (*candidatus* degree) qualifies the holder for a special office or profession. It is an academic/professional degree in the fields described in chapter 6.4.

Postgraduate certificates are conferred after the one-year post-graduate programmes of study described in chapter 6.4. The certificate in social work and upper secondary teacher training are professional certifications.

A *Meistaragráða* (*master's* degree) is awarded after two years of post-graduate study in a particular field and the successful completion of a major thesis research project.

A *Doktorsgráða* (*doctorate* degree) is awarded to those who have completed a doctorate course and defended a doctoral thesis.

6.6 Teachers

Senior lecturers and professors at institutions of higher education usually hold a Ph.D. degree. Other university teachers are required to have at least an MA or comparable education in their subject.

University teachers are state employees and come under the law concerning the rights and duties of state employees.

The forms of appointment for legally qualified university teachers are as follows:

a) permanent appointment, b) indeterminate appointment, c) temporary appointment. In addition to those teachers who have a formal contract of employment, there are sessional teachers at most institutions hired on an hourly

basis. Most university teachers hold full-time appointment.

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. University teachers are not obliged to attend in-service training.

6.7 Statistics

Number of Students at Higher Education Institutions.
School year 2001/02

Institution	Under-graduate	Graduate	Total
University of Iceland	6,461	590	7,051
Iceland University of Education	1,281	310	1,591
University of Akureyri	864	44	908
Technical University of Iceland	530	-	530
Bifröst School of Business	224	-	224
Iceland Academy of the Arts	237	-	237
Reykjavik University	960	9	969
Hvanneyri Agricultural University	35	-	35
Total	10,592	953	11,545

Source: Statistics Iceland. 2003

Regular Staff at Higher Education Institutions
School Year 2001/02

Post	Number
Professors	179
Senior lecturers	165
Lecturers	164
Other permanent teachers	1069
Other staff	28
Total	1,605

Source: Statistics Iceland, 2003

Percentage of Icelanders working on their undergraduate degree.

Age group 20-24 years old.

Year	Male %	Female %	Total %
1977	12.1	9.5	10.8
1980	18.6	15.5	17.1
1985	20.7	22.9	21.8
1990	21.5	30.0	25.7
1991	24.9	36.3	30.5
1992	26.3	38.1	32.1
1993	27.6	39.6	33.5
1994	29.0	40.9	34.8
1995	28.2	41.6	34.8
1996	29.7	43.2	36.4
1997	31.5	46.2	38.8
1998	31.6	49.9	40.6
1999	35.2	54.7	44.8
2000	34.1	55.7	44.8
2001	37.8	62.2	49.9

Source: Statistics Iceland, 2003

7. ADULT EDUCATION

7.1 Policy and legislative framework

No comprehensive legislation is in force on adult education in Iceland. The Act on Upper Secondary Education (*Lög um framhaldsskóla*) passed in 1996, covers several aspects of adult education, including adult education programmes in evening classes and lifelong learning centres. The Act on Vocational Training in Business and Industry of 1992 covers 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. An Act on Labour Market Measures of 1997 provides for 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.

In 1998 the Icelandic government presented a five-year plan on how to increase and improve lifelong learning in the Icelandic community. It surfaces in this policy formulation that it is the responsibility of several parties to promote lifelong learning in the community, including the government, parties of the labour market, institutions, companies and the individuals themselves. A resolution of the government states that adult training and lifelong learning shall come under the Ministry of Education Science and Culture. The government responsibility in lifelong learning is primarily entailed in ensuring good basic education for all. This applies not least to education and training in information technology.

The Icelandic government has largely left it to the unions and employers' organisations to negotiate terms that safeguard the rights of workers/employees, rather than imposing laws and regulations. Wage agreements contain many provisions that guarantee workers the right to lifelong learning, as well as provisions on funds for lifelong learning, and provisions guaranteeing higher salaries for those who gain qualifications. It has thus come increasingly common for wage agreements to guarantee the right of workers to undertake studies. These provisions vary from one wage agreement to another: some guarantee the worker to unpaid study leave, while others provide for the employee to be able to undertake study during working hours on full pay, and also for grants to pay travel and other expenses.

7.2 Management/Organisations involved

Adult education is mainly offered by public institutions at the upper secondary and higher education levels including lifelong learning centres. Adult education may also be provided for by municipality schools, private schools, companies or organisations.

The Ministry of Education, Science and Culture *menntamálaráðuneytið* is in charge of virtually all education that takes place within the public sector education system including adult education. The Ministry of Education, Science and Culture prepares education bills, issues regulations and sees to it that laws and regulations are complied with. No regulations are in force to cover the operation of educational courses offered by the private sector, except where a specific agreement has been made between the body offering the courses and the Ministry of Education, Science and Culture.

The Ministry of Social Affairs *félagamálaráðuneytið* has responsibilities concerning vocational education and training in business and industry. See 7.1.

In early 2003 the government made an agreement with the Federation of Icelandic Industries and the Icelandic Confederation of Labours on the establishment of the Education and Training Service Centre *Fræðslumiðstöð atvinnulífsins*. This is a three-year programme supported annually by the government. The main goal is to increase educational opportunities among people on the labour market, support educational providers to define the target groups' need for education and assist in developing methods to assess informal competence.

EDUCATE – Iceland *Mennt*, established in 1998, is a co-operation forum between the educational sector, the social partners, local authorities and others interested in education and training. The main focus of the work of the institute is to gather and disseminate information on education and training and to act as a venue for discussion between the educational and employment sectors as well as policy makers.

In relation to the government's five-year plan on lifelong learning a special committee has been appointed.

See also 7.1. and chapter 5.

7.3 Funding

Funds for adult education programmes and distance learning in upper secondary schools are determined by the Parliament in the annual state budget. The state pays two thirds of the cost of tuition, students pay one third which in some cases may be covered partly or wholly by their unions. Running costs are paid by the state.

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. However, unions, companies, institutions or organisations often pay the fees for people participating on their behalf. The same applies for participants at courses run by the Institute of Continuing Education of the University of Iceland *Endurmenntunarsstofnun Háskóla Íslands*. Fees may also be financed by the state, as is, for example, the case for courses in Icelandic for immigrants.

Evening schools for adults operated by municipalities receive financial support from the local community in question but have to rely on tuition fees to make up the rest of their costs.

The Act on Vocational Training in Business and Industry provides for a vocational training fund. Grants from the fund may for example be awarded for paying the cost of holding courses, the cost of project management and the production of teaching materials.

Provisions on funds for lifelong learning are to be found in several wage contracts.

EDUCATE – Iceland and the Education and Training Service Centre are financially supported by the Ministry of Education, Science and Culture. See 7.2.

7.4 Human resources

In the initial teacher training programme at the University of Iceland *Háskóla Íslands* training in the teaching of mature students is included.

At upper secondary schools, those who teach in

the adult education programmes are subject to the same rules as all upper secondary school teachers. See 4.4.

Lifelong learning centres hire both qualified teachers as well as teachers without formal qualifications.

Teachers of adults at the higher education level usually have an MA or a doctorate.

Not all teachers of adults at the compulsory school level are fully qualified as some of them are employed by municipal evening schools, which do not necessarily demand any formal qualifications.

7.5 Organisation

According to the legislation on upper secondary education, schools at that level are allowed to offer special programmes, including evening classes, for mature students (18 years or over) who are unable to avail themselves of regular instruction at the upper secondary schools but wish to complete studies comparable to the programmes offered by them. The law also permits anyone who has turned 18 to take individual courses during regular school hours. The evening programmes offered are comparable to those of the day school, but the students get half the number of lessons. See chapter 4.

In those upper secondary schools which offer adult education programmes through evening school *öldungadeild* there is a unit-credit system *áfangakerfi*. See 4.1. Many of the upper secondary comprehensive schools *fjölbrautaskólar* offer vocational training programmes, which are also offered as a part of adult education if there is sufficient demand.

According to the Upper Secondary School Act, schools can in cooperation with bodies such as municipalities, employers' and employees' organisations, companies and other groups establish lifelong learning centres *símenntunarmiðstöð* to provide courses and counselling for a particular geographical region in the country.

Nine lifelong learning centres have been established, with one in each of the main regions of the country as well as one in the capital. The lifelong learning centres took over the role of the itinerant school which was to provide educational opportunities to where the participants actually live. The centres have increasingly been providing for distance education at the upper secondary and higher education level.

Upper secondary and higher education

institutions have in recent years increasingly been offering distance education courses.

The Iceland University of Education *Kennaraháskóli Íslands* organises basic training for adults in such a way that students have the chance to attend school as well as being employed part-time. The school offers a mixture of distance learning and direct teaching. Students undertake pre-primary school or compulsory school teacher training which leads to full qualification and which normally takes three years over a four-year period in this format.

The Institute of Continuing Education of the University of Iceland offers courses for adults. These courses cover a wide range of topics and include such diverse courses as a four-semester course in business administration, a three-semester course in official administration and a three-semester course in family therapy, health economy and administration of health institutions. The Institute also offers a wide variety of shorter courses, some of which are occupationally related, others are, for example, in the fields of languages, culture, personal development, law and engineering.

Most evening schools run by the municipalities offer hobby-related courses as well as courses for employees that relate to their work. The Reykjavík Municipal Evening School *Námsflokkar Reykjavíkur*, which is the largest of its kind, also offers courses at the compulsory level, preparatory courses for upper secondary schools and some courses at upper secondary school level.

Generally speaking, there are not many educational opportunities for adults at the compulsory school level, however, the Reykjavík Municipal Evening School does offer some courses and the upper secondary schools offer basic courses without units which are equivalent to compulsory education. The same teaching objectives apply to adults as to the pupils attending school at the compulsory school level. For the general aims of upper secondary schools see chapter 4.

The curriculum for adults in compulsory education is the same as for pupils in compulsory schools. In the selection of teaching materials an attempt is made to take into account the age and experience of the adult.

The Ministry of Education, Science and Culture issues curriculum guidelines for upper secondary schools, which also apply to adult education.

There are no admission requirements for adults to attend courses at the compulsory school level. In order to enrol in an adult education programme at the upper secondary level the student is generally expected to be 18 years of age or older. So far, no particular academic

preparation has been required. Schools are allowed to evaluate previous studies and give credits that count towards the completion of studies. 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. However, in certain cases, the work experience of the applicant is taken into consideration.

In the instruction of adults at the compulsory school level teaching, methods depend on the content of the course and the needs of students. In upper secondary education, neither the curriculum nor laws and regulations contain instructions regarding teaching methods. Teachers are free to choose those methods that suit their aims and circumstances at any given time. Teaching at the higher education level takes place e.g. in the form of lectures, assignments and distance learning. In some cases practical training is a part of the course.

Courses in Icelandic as a second language for adult immigrants are organised by various actors, such as lifelong learning centres, municipality schools and companies. The Ministry of Education, Science and Culture has issued a guide on the teaching of Icelandic as a second language for adults.

7.6 Guidance/Counselling services

According to the Upper Secondary School Act counselling and advice on studies and career choices, as well as on personal matters affecting their studies and school attendance, shall be available to students in upper secondary schools, including students in adult education programmes. This service shall be provided by study counsellors, teachers and other personnel, as appropriate. Counselling for adults is also provided for by the lifelong learning centres and university institutions.

Increasingly information on educational opportunities can be found on different web pages, such as the web of EDUCATE – Iceland.

See also 4.4. and 5.7.

7.7 Assessment, accreditation and recognition

Adults studying at the compulsory school level do not take the nationally coordinated examinations

samræmd próf as anyone who has reached the age of eighteen has the right to begin his or her studies on an ordinary programme as well as on the adult education programme at upper secondary level. Those adults who have studied at the compulsory school level receive a certificate stating that they have completed a certain course of study.

At the upper secondary level in adult education, most courses lead to a matriculation examination. Adult students, like ordinary students, generally take an examination at the end of each semester. Often various assignments and projects count towards the final grade. At the end of each semester, students are given a transcript, which shows their marks and present standing within the programme. On completing a programme of study, students are issued with a certificate, which specifies which course units or subjects they have taken and the marks they have received. The certificate, equivalent for both adult students and students attending normal upper secondary school, also shows the number of credits the student has gained 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.

Those adult students who complete their education at the higher education level receive 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 for people with the teachers' certificate. The certificate delivered to adult students is equivalent to the one delivered to students attending normal higher education institutions.

By the initiative of the Ministry of Education, Science and Culture methods are being developed to assess informal learning.

Source: Statistics Iceland and the Institute of Continuing Education of the University of Iceland 2003.

7.8 Statistics

There were approximately 3,800 people enrolled in adult education programmes at the upper secondary level including distance education in the autumn of 2002. For distance learning courses at the higher education level there were approximately 1,900 students in the autumn of 2002. In 2002 the Institute of Continuing Education of the University of Iceland enrolled approximately 12,000 people attending both short or longer duration courses. A large majority of these courses were occupationally related. Statistics for other kinds of adult education are not available.