

HIGHER EDUCATION IN TURKEY

Implementing the Assumptions of the Bologna Declaration in 2001-2002

I. Overall Condition of Higher Education in Turkey

The Higher Education system is defined as all post-secondary programmes with a duration of at least two years. At the undergraduate level higher education is provided by 53 state universities including 2 state higher institutes of technology and 23 private (foundation) universities.

Administration:

The supreme authority for the regulation of higher education is the Council of Higher Education (YÖK), which is a fully autonomous national board of trustees without any political or governmental affiliation. The Council is a 22-member corporate public body responsible for the planning, coordination and supervision of higher education within the provisions set forth in the Higher Education Law. Seven of its members are academics nominated by the Interuniversity Council and appointed by the President of the Republic, seven are appointed directly by the President of the Republic, giving priority to former rectors, and eight are elected by the Government, mostly from among senior civil servants, and appointed by the President of the Republic, each for a renewable term of four years. The President of the Council is directly appointed by the President of the Republic from among the Council members. The day-to-day functions of the Council are carried out by a nine-member executive board, elected from among its members.

There are three other upper administrative bodies in the field of higher education: ***Interuniversity Council (UAK)***, which acts as an academic advisory in some matters and a decision-making body in some matters. It consists of the rectors of all universities and the one member elected by the senate of each university, and the ***Turkish University Rectors' Committee (TURC)***, which is made up of all university rectors and lastly the ***Higher Education Supervisory Board*** which, on behalf of the Council of Higher Education, supervises and controls the universities together with the units attached to them and teaching staff and their activities.

The Higher Education Law No. 2547 is the main law, which governs the higher education in Turkey. The Turkish higher education system has a centralized structure. All universities (both state and private, or in a true sense, foundation universities) are subject the same law and regulations/rules. All state and private universities are founded by Law. There were no private universities in Turkey until 1984. The Higher Education Law No. 2547 made it possible for private universities to be established by non-profit foundations; and are sometimes referred to as foundation universities. Private universities are under the supervision of the Council of Higher Education and their programmes must be regularly accredited. While the universities are founded by law, the establishment of new faculties in subject to the approval of the content, and that of new departments to the approval of the Council of Higher Education.

Financial Administration: Sources of income of governing bodies of higher education, higher education institutions and the units attached to them are:

- a. Annual budgetary allocations,
- b. Aids from institutions,
- c. Fees and payments received,
- d. Income from publications and sales,
- e. Income from movable and immovable property,
- f. Profits from the enterprises of the revolving fund,
- g. Donations, bequests and sundry.

The Main Institutions of Higher Education:

The structure of the Turkish higher education system is defined as a unitary system and basically consists of universities. According to the Article 3 of Higher Education Law No. 2547 defines higher education institutions as follows:

a) University: An institution of higher education possessing academic autonomy and juristic personality, conducting advanced-level education, scholarly research, publication and consultancy; it is composed of some units as in the following:

- **Faculty:** An institution of higher education conducting high-level education, scholarly research and publication; sub divisions may be attached to it.
- **Department:** The main unit of a faculty gives instruction leading to degrees at all levels and carrying out research. It may be sub-divided into sections or programmes. Departments directly attached to the office of the Rector can also be established for the purpose of offering courses common to various departments.
- **Graduate School:** An institution in universities, which is concerned with graduate education. There are basically three kinds of graduate schools in the fields of health, social and science.
- **4-Year Higher School:** 4-year higher school institution, which is mainly concerned with providing instruction for a specific profession.
- **2-Year Vocational School:** An institution of higher education carrying out two-year education aimed at training manpower in specific areas.

b) Higher Institute of Technology: An institution of higher education possessing academic autonomy and juristic personality, carrying out high-level research, education production, publication, and consultancy specifically in the areas of technology.

In Turkey, the Open Education Faculty of Anadolu University in Eskisehir offers both two-year and four-year distance-learning programmes. There are 13 Associate's level and 7 Bachelor's level departments offering distance learning for approximately 800.000 students.

Access to Higher Education

- For National Students

For admission to all undergraduate programmes in Turkey holding a secondary school/high school diploma (Lise Diploması) and having a sufficient score from the Student Selection Examination (ÖSS) are required. ÖSS is a central university entrance examination administered by the Student Selection and Placement Center (ÖSYM), which is affiliated to the Council of Higher Education (YÖK). ÖSS is usually administered in May, throughout the country at a single session and at the same time in all centers. The examination consists of two tests. One of them is prepared to measure mainly the candidates' verbal abilities, and the other, their quantitative abilities. Starting as of 2003 academic year candidates have to obtain a minimum of 160,000 points (previously 105,000) to be eligible to enroll in two-year vocational higher education programs and open education programs and a minimum of 185,000 points (previously 120,000) for all four-year undergraduate programs from the Student Selection Examination (ÖSS). However, 185,000 and 165,000 respectively correspond to 120 and 105 of the previous ÖSS score types. The maximum ÖSS score will be 300 in 2003.

According to the law no. 4702, came into force in July 2001, the placement of students to the vocational school programmes primarily inside the region of their own **Vocational and Technical Training Region¹** or outside their own region has been started for the first time in the 2002-2003 academic year. In the scope of entering university without taking ÖSS, 193.667 students were placed to the public, private (foundation) and Turkish Republic of North Cyprus Vocational Higher Schools.

¹ **Vocational and Technical Training Region:** It is a training region consists of vocational and technical secondary schools which are related to each other in the context of the unity and continuity of one or more vocational school(s) of higher education and training programme(s).

- For Foreign Students:

Foreign students who wish to pursue their undergraduate study in Turkey must have completed their secondary education in a high school/secondary school or a similar institution in which the education is equivalent to that of a Turkish high school. Secondly, they must take the Entrance Examination for Foreign Students (YÖS). The YÖS consists of two tests. The first test is the Basic Learning Skills Test which assesses abstract reasoning. The questions have a minimal dependence on language but explanations are given in English and Turkish. The second test is the Turkish Language Proficiency Test which assesses the candidates' comprehension of written Turkish. The YÖS is usually administered in June by the Student Selection and Placement Centre (ÖSYM). All foreign/international students must obtain a student visa from the Turkish Consulate in their country of residence. Language courses are organised for the international students at the universities where the medium of instruction is Turkish.

Fees For National Students:

The fees to be paid each year per student to the institutions of higher education are fixed and announced by the Council of Higher Education, taking into consideration the character and duration of the period of study in various disciplines and also the nature of the individual higher education institutions. The portion of these fees to be paid by the State is determined each year by the Council of Ministers and allocated to the budget of the institution concerned on a per-student basis. The remaining portion of the fees is paid by the student. The portion paid by the State is to be a minimum of 50 %.

Fees For Foreign Students:

Foreign students pay the tuition fee three times more than the Turkish students. The tuition fee must be paid in a single sum and in the foreign currency to be determined in accordance with the current exchange rate.

Number of students:

By the 2002-2003 academic year the number of students registered to a Bachelor's or Associate's program conducted in higher education institutions are given below:

Formal Education		The Number of Students
Faculties (552)		1.394.656
4-year Higher School (175)		61.104
2-year Vocational School (446)		323.971
TOTAL		1.779.731
It'd be better to mention the number of students enrolled in second education and in the open university in a separate table as follows:		
Second Education	Bachelor's	155.565
	Associate's	124.208
TOTAL for Second Education		279.773²
Open University	Bachelor's	421.215
	Associate's	240.639
TOTAL for Open University		661.854³

There are 57.213 students enrolled in Associate's or Bachelor's programs of one of the 23 private (foundation) universities. There are 75.994 masters, 22.693 doctorates and 31.018 profession of medicine students in our 207 institutes of graduate school and 43 faculty of medicine. In private (foundation) universities, there are 6283 masters, 483 doctorate students.

² The number of students enrolled in a second education program has already been included to the total number of 1.779.731.

³ The number of students enrolled in the Open University has already been included to the total number of 1.779.731.

Language of Instruction:

The main language of education at institutions of higher education is Turkish. However in 14 universities (Atılım, Bahçeşehir, Beykent, Bilkent, Boğaziçi, Işık, İstanbul Bilgi, İzmir Ekonomi (İzmir Economy), İzmir Yüksek Teknoloji (İzmir Institute of Higher Technology), Koç, Sabancı, Yaşar, Yeditepe and Orta Doğu Teknik (METU)) the instruction language is English while in one university (Galatasaray) instruction is held in French. Some programs at other universities are offered in English, German and French. There are language preparatory programs for those foreign students who do not have sufficient knowledge of Turkish although they are placed at institutions of higher education where the language is Turkish. These students can continue their education only if they can become proficient in Turkish within one year. Similarly, those universities with English or French as the medium of instruction, English/French preparatory schools for those whose language is insufficient to follow the courses.

II. Activities Undertaken to Implement the Assumptions of the Bologna Process

1) Degree Structure:

The structure of Turkish higher education degrees is a two-tier system: undergraduate and graduate level of study. At undergraduate level, two year Associate's and four year Bachelor's degrees are awarded. Graduate level programmes consist of Master's (MA, MS & MBA, etc...) and Doctorate (Ph.D's) degrees. There are two types of Master's programmes: those requiring a thesis, and those not requiring a thesis.

- First stage university level qualifications:

1. On Lisans Diploması (Pre-Licentiate or Associate Degree) awarded after the successful completion of the full-time two-year university study.
2. Lisans Diploması (Bachelor's degree) awarded after the successful completion of four-year university study. Dentistry and Veterinary Medicine programmes are five-year programme and Medicine is six-year programme. In Veterinary Medicine the professional qualification of "Veteriner Hekim Diploması" is conferred upon the completion of five-year study. In Dentistry, upon the completion of five-year study, "Dis Hekimligi Diploması" is awarded. In Medicine, the professional qualification of "Tip Doktorluğu Diploması" is conferred. The graduates of Medicine, Veterinary Medicine and Dentistry can directly apply to the Ph.D/Doctorate programmes in Turkey. The qualifications in these three fields of study are considered to be the equivalent to the Master's degree (Yuksek Lisans Diploması). In the fields of Medicine, Dentistry and Veterinary Medicine programmes have a one-tier system.

- Second stage university level qualifications:

Master's degree (Yuksek Lisans Diploması) is awarded after the successful completion of two-year university study. There are two types of Master's programmes: those requiring a thesis, and those not requiring a thesis. Master's programmes requiring a thesis consist of a minimum of seven courses, one seminar course, and thesis, with a minimum of 21 credits. The seminar course and thesis are non-credit and graded on a pass/fail basis. Non-thesis Master's programmes consist of a minimum of 10 courses and a non-credit semester project, with a minimum of 30 credits. The semester project is graded on a pass/fail basis. Duration of the non-thesis Master's programmes is one and half years.

- Third stage university level qualifications:

Ph.D/Doctorate degree (Doktora Diploması) programmes consist of a minimum of seven courses, with a minimum of 21 credits, a qualifying examination, a dissertation proposal, and a dissertation. The duration of Doctorate programmes is normally four years.

As Bologna Declaration foresees the implementation of the Diploma Supplement to enhance transparency in documentation, The Council of Higher Education designed a common university version of the Diploma Supplement and the universities will be issuing their first Diploma Supplement in the academic year 2003-2004. The Diploma Supplement will be made available upon request.

It may be seen that the degree structure of Turkish Higher Education is already in line with the Bologna Declaration.

2) Credit System and Credit Transfer

In general, all higher education institutions use the credit system that very much resembles that of the North American universities. In that credit system each course is allotted a predetermined number of credit hours. These include all of the weekly theoretical course hours plus half of the weekly laboratory, practical, or studio course hours.

Rules and procedures for the credit transfer are regulated according to the Article 7/c of the Higher Education Law No. 2547. Students, who have successfully completed at least one academic year at a higher education institution abroad have the right to transfer to an equivalent programme in the Turkish universities. A student who has successfully completed at least one semester in a Turkish University is eligible to apply for transfer to another university. This minimum duration of study in the original institution does not include the preparatory language courses. The applications are evaluated by universities.

Faculty and school boards propose the maximum number of transfer students for each department on an annual basis. These numbers are subject to the approval by the university Senate.

As in the other European candidate countries participating in the European Union education and youth programmes, Turkey established a National Agency responsible to promote, manage, monitor and evaluate the EU programmes. Turkey has currently undergone a preparatory period of minimum 18 months. The work plans were signed with the Commission on 27 December 2002. It is planned that Turkey will be able to fully participate in the programmes as of the 2004-2005 academic year. Since with the participation in Socrates/Erasmus will require a stricter application of ECTS principles most of the Turkish universities already converted their credit systems into ECTS credits.

The pilot project on ECTS/DS and Erasmus-Student mobility is one of those promising projects that will be implemented during 2003-2004 academic year before our planned participation to the programmes in January 2004.

As preparation for Erasmus student mobility and ECTS/DS studies, fifteen universities were selected quite recently (in April 2003). While choosing the 15 universities for the pilot project, regional distribution has been given special consideration. Regions with higher density of population are represented with more universities.

Three departments from each university will be participating to the pilot project with the support of European Commission. As soon as they were selected, Turkish National Agency asked the ECTS/DS counselors of each departments and the International office coordinators of each university to attend an ECTS/DS training seminar which took place last week of April. Experts from EU universities were invited to this seminar to deliver information on ECTS studies.

3) Academic Assessment and Quality Control in Higher Education:

In Turkish Higher Education there is no accreditation system for the time being, there is only official recognition. The universities are founded by law; and their affiliated faculties, institutes and four-year vocational/professional higher schools are founded by the decision of the Parliament; while the two-year vocational higher schools and the departments affiliated to the universities are established by the Council of Higher Education (YÖK). Likewise, the opening of a degree programme at any level (undergraduate or graduate) is subject to the ratification by the Council of Higher Education (YÖK). Only if the name of the master degree programme is the same as the Bachelor degree program, there is no need for the ratification of the Council of Higher Education Council. Therefore, all state and private universities and all the degree programmes offered at the universities are recognized centrally by the Council of Higher Education (YÖK).

As of the academic year of 2003, "Regulations on Academic Assessment and Quality Control" in Higher Education was initiated by the Interuniversity Board. It envisages that all higher education degree programmes will be evaluated and at this stage the emphasis will be placed on self-assessment except for the assessment and Quality Control of doctoral degrees, which will be subject to evaluation of an external committee. However, the curriculum evaluation is to be done by the external evaluators. The aim is to obtain a transparent result, which is expected to be issued in the web site of the university. This assessment should be open to the entire public.

The Commission and sub-committees from this Commission of Academic Assessment and Quality Control in Higher Education formed by the Interuniversity Board specifies the basic rules of the ways and mechanisms of the internal academic assessment of the programmes in the institutions of higher education. The Commission examines the academic assessment reports prepared within the framework of these basic rules and submits its assessment report prepared on the basis of the programme to the Council of Higher Education and the Inter-university Board.

It is planned that the national evaluation procedures that is qualified as the self-assessment and evaluation is transformed into a national accreditation system in the long run.

Some Turkish universities are accredited by foreign accreditation agencies. For example, "Accreditation Board for Engineering and Technology (ABET)" accredited the engineering programmes of some individual universities such as Middle East Technical University, Istanbul Technical University and Bogazici University and they were found to be "substantially equivalent" to accredited engineering programmes in the United States.

4) Mobility

Free mobility is of utmost importance to the Turkish universities. In general, universities encourage the mobility of academic staff and students. Many universities organize exchange programmes, workshops and summer schools in co-operation with universities abroad. The major problem for the mobility is funding, so far composed of limited university resources. Most of the universities have established their International Offices and have connections with the National Agency responsible from all EU programmes concerning mobility. The National Agency Turkey was established in Jan 2002 to carry out required activities to enable Turkey's participation in EU education & Culture Programs.

Turkey is now preparing to participate Socrates programmes with some training and promotional activities as well as some promising pilot projects. The aim of the Student mobility project is learning-by-doing experience; and also to monitor the implementation process and outcomes concerning this project.

The Turkish National Agency has also selected a total of 63 Socrates and Leonardo promoters to disseminate information across Turkey. A training seminar for promoters' was run by the Turkish National Agency in the first week of May 2003 by the help of European Commission and experts from other National Agencies. Now the National agency is in the process of organizing information meetings to the target groups all around the country. A draft timetable for 84 local information meetings and 7 regional conferences has been made. The conferences will be given mostly in May and June.

It is planned that Turkey will be able to fully participate in the programmes as of the 2004-2005 academic term. Universities have not participated in the EU Erasmus programmes yet. They conduct student exchange schemes through bilateral agreements with the universities abroad.

5) Life Long Learning

There is no regulated requirement on life long learning. But public training centers and continuing education centers of universities serve also as life long learning centers.

6) GATS/ Transnational Education

There is no improvement in this field in Turkish Higher Education.

7) European Dimension

The recent Quality Culture Project organized by EUA, were realized through participation of fifty universities from Europe. The following three Turkish universities participated in that project: Boğaziçi, Uludağ, and Yıldız Technical Universities.

8) Social Dimension

In Turkey, there are student unions, which have been meeting in a regular basis. They have a Council, which is not organized by the Council of Higher Education. For the time being, there is no student representative in the national level in Turkey. It is planned that, in the long run, with the foundation of national student union, students participate the administration of Turkish Higher Education.

“Universities Student Council Regulation” was initiated by the Interuniversity Board on 05/09/2002 and appeared in the Official Gazette on 26/12/2002. The aim of this regulation is to determine the ideas of students, who registered in a Pre-Licenciate or a Bachelor program, related to the supply the needs of education, health sport and cultural needs and inform these ideas to the administrative authorities and regulate the establishment and work essentials of the Student Council in order to create communication between administrative authorities and students. According to this Regulation, there would be a class representative, a department/program representative, a faculty/higher school representative, a university student council in each university at the Pre-Licenciate or Bachelor level; an executive board of university student council and a Council President.