Institutions, level and models of training

Initial teacher training courses for the various types of school are part of higher education, some being provided at institutions of higher professional education and some at universities.

- There are full-time, part-time and dual (i.e. work-study) HBO teacher training courses for:
  - primary education;
  - secondary education, grade two qualification for the first three years of HAVO and VWO, and all years of VMBO and secondary vocational education;
  - secondary education, grade one qualification for all levels of secondary education, including pre-higher education level, i.e. the last two years of HAVO and the last three of VWO.

- There are also full-time, part-time and dual university training courses leading to a grade one secondary school teaching qualification (ULO courses) for all levels of secondary education, including pre-higher education. These courses are open to university students and graduates only.

Teacher training courses are available in practically all subjects taught at secondary schools. Grade one and grade two teachers of art, music, handicrafts, eurhythmics, dance, drama, English, German, French, Frisian and physical education are also qualified to teach at primary level and in special education.

Primary school teacher training

Primary school (basisonderwijs) teacher training courses are higher professional education courses offered at both multisectoral HBO institutions and colleges providing primary teacher training only. Over 30 HBO institutions, with an annual intake of between 8,000 and 9,000 students, provide primary school teacher training courses, some at several different locations.

All courses have a study load of 240 ECTS credits (equivalent to four years’ full-time study). However, students may be given exemptions on the basis of previous educational qualifications or skills
acquired elsewhere, so that, in practice, institutions can now offer shorter tailor-made as well as standard courses.

Although not compulsory, almost all teachers working in special education (including secondary level) also take a master’s course in special educational needs.

**Teaching practice**

Teaching practice is an important component of primary teacher training. Students receive practical training in the area in which they intend eventually to work. This is a compulsory part of the course. Details about the period of teaching practice must be set out in the institution’s teaching and examination regulations. Around a quarter of the entire course is devoted to periods of teaching practice, beginning in the first year. Teaching practice takes place mainly in primary and special schools.

The post of trainee teacher (LIO) was introduced in primary schools in August 2000. Students in the final year of their training can be employed part time under a training and employment contract for a limited period (equivalent to no more than five months’ full time), provided the school has a vacancy. The trainee teacher is supervised by a qualified teacher and does everything a regular member of staff would do. This makes the transition from student to teacher less abrupt and the teacher training institutions are better able to keep abreast of current developments in education.

Primary school teachers are qualified to teach all subjects at primary level and in special education, with the exception of physical education. Most teachers working at special schools have also completed a master’s degree course in special educational needs. They may take the course after completing their initial primary or secondary teacher training, or another higher education course. Students can specialise in a particular field of work (e.g. teaching children with hearing disabilities or maladjusted children) and are awarded a qualification with the relevant endorsement. The institutions providing the training decide whether or not a candidate will be admitted. This training course is not compulsory; it is still possible to work in special education with an ordinary teaching qualification.

**Training of teachers in secondary education**

Secondary school teacher training courses are provided at HBO institutions and universities. Teacher training in agricultural subjects is provided by the STOAS Agricultural Teacher Training College[1]. HBO courses in arts subjects are provided by a number of HBO institutions specialising in courses in the fine and performing arts and by institutions offering teacher training in other fields as well. Teacher training is provided by 9 universities: 3 technical and 6 general. Courses vary per university.
HBO teacher training courses

HBO teacher training courses for secondary school teachers lead to either a grade one or grade two qualification. Courses are available in general subjects, arts subjects, technical subjects and agricultural subjects. Students specialise in one subject, and the courses prepare them to meet the statutory standards of competence. HBO teacher training courses cover both subject training and aspects of teaching in general.

University-based teacher training courses

University graduates with a master’s degree can take a postgraduate teacher training course leading to a grade one qualification. Students can also begin, and, if they wish, complete their teacher training while they are still undergraduates. The part-time, full-time and dual options all have a study load of 60 ECTS credits (equivalent to one year’s full-time study). Courses are available in all subjects in the secondary curriculum. Students specialise in one subject, sometimes with an extra qualification to teach a subject like general science or culture and the arts. Graduates from university-based teacher training courses have a grade one qualification. They may teach at all levels of secondary education, including the last two or three years of HAVO and VWO respectively.

Teaching practice

Teaching practice is an important component of teacher training. Students receive practical training in the area in which they intend eventually to work. This is a compulsory part of the course. Details about the period of teaching practice must be set out in the institution’s teaching and examination regulations. The universities themselves have agreed that teaching practice should last 840 hours, 250 of which must be spent in a school, with students actually taking a class for at least 120 hours.

Secondary school teacher training courses offer a combined period of work and study in the final year. Students can be employed part time in a school under a training and employment contract for a limited period (equivalent to no more than five months’ full time), provided the school has a vacancy. The trainee teacher (LIO) does everything a regular member of staff would do, including speaking to parents at parent evenings and discussing reports. The level of supervision is minimal. This makes the transition from student to teacher less abrupt and the teacher training institutions are better able to keep abreast of current developments in education.

Admission requirements

Primary school teacher training

Candidates for admission to an HBO primary teacher training course must possess a senior general secondary education (HAVO), pre-university education (VWO) or secondary vocational education
(MBO) certificate. In the latter case they must have completed level 4 (middle-management or specialist training). Applicants aged 21 or over who do not possess the required qualifications may also be admitted if their previous training is deemed to be adequate. There are no government-imposed restrictions on the number of places (numerus clausus).

**Language and numeracy skills**

As of the 2006/2007 academic year, students starting a primary school teacher training course will have to take a test to establish whether their Dutch language and numeracy skills are up to scratch. If not, they will be given extra support. Students have three chances to pass the test in their first year. If they fail at their third attempt, they will not be allowed to continue their course.

**Training of teachers in secondary education**

Candidates for HBO teacher training courses must possess at least an HAVO, VWO or MBO certificate. In the latter case they must have completed level 4 (middle-management or specialist training). Additional requirements regarding the subjects studied apply for some grade two courses. Applicants for grade one HBO training courses must have a grade two certificate of competence in the subject to be studied. Applicants aged 21 or over who do not possess the required qualifications may also be admitted if their previous training is deemed to be adequate. Both university graduates and master’s degree students may be admitted to university teacher training courses.

**Curriculum, level of specialisation and learning outcomes**

To prepare graduates for a job in education, the curricula of teacher training courses are organised in such a way as to ensure that they meet the standards of competence listed in the [Education Professions Act (WBIO)](https://www.nobis.nl/nl/legislation). These are the basic knowledge and skills required of teachers, to which specialisations may added, such as training as a lower or upper primary or vocational teacher, or subject specialisations.

There are no statutory regulations relating to the organisation of teacher training courses or the curriculum. The organisation of teaching is regulated in the teaching and examination regulations drawn up by the institution concerned only the principles, structure and procedures underlying the teaching and examination regulations are prescribed by law.

Dutch is the language of instruction and the language in which the examinations are set. Another language may be used:

- for modern language courses;
- for lectures given by a guest lecturer from another country;
- if required, given the specific nature, organisation or quality of teaching or the origins of the student, in accordance with the code of conduct drawn up by the administration of the institution.
Primary school teacher training

HBO institutions have reached agreement on a limited number of possible subject combinations and safeguards to ensure that courses train students to meet the standards of competence and are at higher education level (Dublin descriptors).

The study load for each course is 240 ECTS credits (four years’ full-time education). Courses consist of a propaedeutic part (60 ECTS credits) and the main part. For full-time courses the propaedeutic part lasts one year and the main part three years. The duration of courses varies in practice depending on a range of factors, including the student’s previous educational qualifications and skills acquired elsewhere. Furthermore, the course may be offered in a part-time dual format by several different HBO institutions. Teaching practice is an important component of primary teacher training and is compulsory.

Training for other jobs in primary schools

The government has entered into a voluntary agreement with schools on the professional development and supervision of primary and secondary school staff, and has earmarked funds to this end. Schools may use this money to enable head teachers to attend a postgraduate management course, for instance. This course is not compulsory.

Training of teachers in secondary education

HBO institutions have reached agreement on a limited number of possible subject combinations and safeguards to ensure that courses train students to meet the standards of competence and are at higher education level (Dublin descriptors).

The study load for each course is 240 ECTS credits (four years). One ECTS credit is equivalent to 28 hours of lectures and independent study. Courses consist of a propaedeutic part (60 ECTS credits) and the main part. For full-time courses the propaedeutic part lasts one year and the main part three years. The duration of courses varies in practice depending on a range of factors, including the student’s previous educational qualifications and skills acquired elsewhere. Teaching practice is an important component of teacher training and is compulsory.

HBO teacher training courses

There are HBO teacher training courses in general subjects, arts subjects, technical subjects and agricultural subjects. Students qualify to teach one subject, and the courses prepare them to meet the statutory standards of competence (see 8.1.2.). The courses cover both subject training and aspects of teaching in general, including:
Qualified teachers with a bachelor's degree may then carry on studying for a grade one qualification in the same subject. These courses have a study load of 90 ECTS credits. The grade one courses in arts subjects have a study load of 240 ECTS credits for both full-time and part-time courses. Courses in technical and agricultural subjects lead to a grade two qualification only. The study load for both full-time and part-time courses is 240 ECTS credits. The training course for physical education teachers is available as an ungraded (usually full-time) course with a study load of 240 ECTS credits.

University-based teacher training courses

University-based teacher training courses lead to a grade one qualification in one subject (i.e. a HAVO/VWO examination subject), sometimes with an extra qualification to teach a subject like general science or culture and the arts. Courses have a study load of 60 ECTS credits (equivalent to one year of full-time study or two years of part-time study). As a rule, half the course consists of teaching practice while the rest is devoted to theory (teaching methods). Science degrees include a teacher training option to be incorporated, as far as possible, in the regular five-year undergraduate course.

Qualifications, evaluation and certificates

Primary school teacher training

Primary teaching certificates are awarded by Primary School Teacher Training Colleges (PABO), which are part of the higher professional education system. Certificate holders are fully qualified to teach:

- all subjects and all age groups at primary level;
- in special education (speciaal onderwijs), at both primary and secondary level (voortgezet speciaal onderwijs).

Those completing the course receive a certificate of higher professional education. This usually states:

- the course attended;
- the parts of the examination and
- the teaching qualification obtained.

A qualified primary school teacher can teach all subjects in all year groups, except physical education, which can be taught in years 1 and 2 only. A separate postgraduate qualification is needed to teach physical education in years 3 to 8. Schools can also appoint specialist teachers with a secondary school teaching qualification in sensory coordination and physical education, art, music, handicrafts, eurhythmics, dance, drama, English, German, French, Frisian or minority languages.
Qualifications of teachers at special schools

Primary school teachers are qualified to teach all subjects at special schools. Most teachers who work at special schools also take a master’s degree in special educational needs. After initial teacher training, usually as a primary or secondary school teacher, teachers can follow Special Education Training (OSO), under the auspices of the Platform on Special Education Training (WOSO). Depending on the field of work, it is possible to study for a specialised master’s degree (for instance in teaching children with learning difficulties or disabilities). The institutions offering such courses decide who to admit. It is not compulsory to train as a special education teacher – it is possible to work in special education with mainstream qualifications.

Training of teachers in secondary education

A secondary school teaching qualification can be obtained at HBO institutions and at universities. Students are trained to teach one subject. A key feature of general secondary education is the distinction between grade one and grade two teaching qualifications. Grade two teachers are qualified to teach only the first three years of HAVO and VWO but all years of VMBO and secondary vocational education. Grade one teachers are by contrast qualified to teach at all levels of secondary education.

Alternative training pathways

Lateral entry

Staff shortages in primary schools and the need for teachers with other qualities have led to measures to promote intake into the profession of people who have not had teacher training. Since 2000 people with higher education qualifications may enter the teaching profession without having trained in the normal way. Anyone whose education and profession have equipped them with the relevant knowledge and experience may work as a teacher on a temporary contract for a maximum of two years, provided they pass an aptitude test. Within these two years, these lateral entrants are given the training and support needed to gain a full teaching qualification, and thus a permanent contract. Teacher training institutions test their prior learning competences to establish which individual qualities they possess. They may then be exempted from taking certain parts of the examination. If they display shortfalls, they may be offered a course to make up for them. Lateral-entry posts are also available in secondary schools, both for people who do not yet have the required qualifications and for teachers who want to obtain a qualification in another subject.

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