Higher education currently includes the following types of programmes:

- **college programmes** (ISCED 5), provided by public and non-public colleges of social work (*kolegium pracowników służb społecznych*), which last 3 years and are classified as tertiary education for international comparisons, but are not recognised as higher education in the national legislation;
- **degree programmes** (ISCED 6-7), provided by both public and non-public university-type higher education institutions (*uczelnia akademicka*) and non-university higher education institutions (*uczelnia zawodowa*), which comply with relevant requirements; these include:
  - first-cycle programmes which last 3 to 4 years and lead to a Bachelor's degree (*licencjat* or *inżynier*, depending on the field of study); programmes lasting 3 to 4 years which lead to a *licencjat* degree, and those lasting 3.5 to 4 years which lead to an *inżynier* degree;
  - second-cycle programmes which last 1.5 to 2 years and lead to a Master's degree (*magister* or an equivalent degree, depending on the field of study);
  - long-cycle programmes which last between 4.5 and 6 years, lead to the same Master's degree (*magister*) or equivalent degree as in the case of second-cycle programmes, and;
- **third-cycle or doctoral programmes** (ISCED 8) which last 3 to 4 years and are provided by: (1) units of university-type higher education institutions authorised to confer either the post-doctoral academic degree of *doktor habilitowany* or the academic degree of *doktor* in at least two different disciplines of a given area of science; and (2) research institutions other than higher education institutions (units of the Polish Academy of Sciences and research and development institutions) authorised to confer the post-doctoral academic degree of *doktor habilitowany*.

Programmes are provided in the fields of study specified in the relevant legislation.

Moreover, both teaching and research institutions offer non-degree postgraduate programmes, open to holders of a Bachelor's or Master's degree, which last 1 to 2 years. However, these programmes are considered part of continuing or adult education.

Classes in HEIs usually begin on 1 October and finish in June. The academic year is divided into two semesters. In addition to the summer holidays, there are the following breaks for students: a break around Christmas and the Three Kings’ Day (Epiphany) which lasts 1 to 2 weeks; the winter holidays (in the first half of February) lasting 1-2 weeks, and a break at Easter.

Detailed arrangements concerning the academic year are laid down by individual higher education institutions (HEIs).
Specific Legislative Framework

Legislation concerning colleges

Legislation concerning colleges of social work which are classified as ISCED 5 institutions:

- Regulation of the Minister of Family, Social Policy of 15 September 2016 on colleges of social work (Journal of Law of 2016, item 1543);

The Regulation of the Minister of Family, Labour and Social Policy of 15 September 2016 on colleges of social work lays down detailed arrangements for the establishment, restructuring and liquidation of colleges of social work; organisational and operational arrangements for colleges, including those for appointment to management positions; arrangements for academic supervision exercised over a given college by a higher education institution and pedagogical supervision over colleges exercised by the educational authorities; conditions and procedures for issuing, and specimens of, documents provided to college students and graduates, including graphic symbols indicating the level of the Polish Qualifications Framework on college diplomas.

The Regulation of the Minister of Social Policy of 7 April 2005 on the programme requirements for initial training in colleges of social work lays down national standards for programmes to be offered by this type of institution: duration of programmes, groups of courses (subjects) to be taught, the minimum course load and general curricular contents, the scope and duration of practical placements, and the profile of graduates. The requirements provide the basis for curricula to be implemented in colleges.

Legislation concerning higher education

The main Acts of Parliament:

- Article 70 of the Constitution of the Republic of Poland;
- Act of 30 April 2010 on the provisions adopting Acts of Parliament reforming the system of research (Journal of Law of 2010 No. 96, item 620);
- Act of 30 April 2010 on the Rules for Financing Research (Journal of Law of 2010 No. 96, item 615);
- Act of 30 April 2010 on the National Centre for Research and Development (Journal of Law of 2010 No. 96, item 616);
- Act of 30 April 2010 on the National Science Centre (Journal of Law of 2010 No. 96, item 617);
- Act of 14 March 2003 on the Academic Degrees and Title, and on the Degrees and the Title in the field of Art (Journal of Law of 2003 No. 65, item 595);
- Act of 17 July 1998 on Student Loans and Credits (Journal of Law of 1998 No. 108, item 685);
- Act of 22 December 2015 on the Integrated Qualifications System (Journal of Law of 2016, item 64);
- Act of 22 December 2015 on the Rules for the Recognition of Professional Qualifications Acquired in Member States of the European Union (Journal of Law of 2016, item 65);

The Law on Higher Education of 27 July 2005 (LoHE) repealed the Higher Education Act of 12 September 1990, the Act on Schools of Higher Vocational Education of 26 June 1997, and the Act on
Military Higher Education of 31 March 1965. It applies to public and non-public HEIs. It does not apply to HEIs and higher education seminaries administered by churches and denominational organisations, except the Catholic University of Lublin, unless the LoHE or an agreement between the government and the authorities of churches or denominational organisations provides otherwise. The LoHE defines:

1. the basic terms used in higher education, including an HEI, a public and non-public HEI, university-type and non-university HEIs, degrees, first-cycle, second-cycle and third-cycle programmes, non-degree postgraduate programmes, full-time and part-time programmes, fields and macro-fields of study, interdisciplinary programmes, etc.;
2. the requirements to be fulfilled by HEIs in order to use the following names: "university", "technical university", "university of applied sciences", "university" with another adjective", and "academy";
3. basic tasks of HEIs.

It specifies the main national-level institutions and bodies in the higher education system (the General Council for Science and Higher Education, the Polish Accreditation Committee /formerly the State Accreditation Committee/ and Rectors’ Conferences) together with their main responsibilities and general organisational arrangements.

It lays down arrangements concerning:

- the establishment and liquidation of public and non-public HEIs;
- supervision over HEIs;
- international co-operation of HEIs in the area of education and research;
- system of governance of HEIs;
- the internal structure of HEIs;
- the organisation of degree programmes and doctoral programmes;
- rights and duties of students and doctoral students;
- financial support for students and doctoral students;
- student and doctoral student self-government bodies;
- order and security on the premises of HEIs.

More information on legislation is available in [Chapter 15: Legislation](#) [1]

### General objectives

Higher education programmes are offered by colleges of social work (kolegium pracowników służb społecznych) (ISCED 5), higher education institutions (HEIs) (ISCED 6 and ISCED 7) and research institutions (only ISCED 7).

The following main general aims are defined for all HEIs, including both university and non-university type, in the 2005 Law on Higher Education: 1) teaching students to prepare them for employment; 2) educating students in the spirit of responsibility for the Polish State, consolidation of democratic principles and respect for human rights; 3) conducting research and development work, and providing research services; 4) training and advancement of research staff; 5) disseminating, and contributing to, achievements of science, national culture and technology, among other things, by collecting and making available library and information resources; 6) providing training to enable the acquisition and development of knowledge; 7) creating conditions for the physical development of students; and 8) conducting activities benefiting local and regional communities. However, non-university HEIs...
(uczelnia zawodowa) authorised to provide only first-cycle (Bachelor's degree) programmes may conduct research and development (R&D) and train research staff, but are not required to do so.

The primary aim of research institutions other than HEIs is to conduct R&D activities, but a large number of them also train prospective research staff by providing doctoral programmes.

For specific aims of programmes at each level, see: college programmes, first-, second- and long-cycle programmes, and third-cycle (doctoral) programmes below.

**College programmes**

College programmes (ISCED 5) prepare students for employment. Colleges of social work (kolegium pracowników służb społecznych) train prospective social workers, and may also offer in-service training courses in the areas of welfare and social work.

**First-, second- and long-cycle programmes**

First-, second- and long-cycle programmes are provided by both university-type HEIs (uczelnia akademicka) and non-university HEIs (uczelnia zawodowa). First-cycle programmes aim to provide knowledge and skills in a specific area of study, preparing students for work in a specific profession. Graduates of first-cycle programmes have access to second-cycle programmes. Second-cycle and long-cycle programmes aim to provide specialist knowledge in a specific area of study, preparing students for creative work in a specific profession. The completion of both second-cycle and long-cycle programmes provides access to third-cycle (doctoral) programmes.

Currently, the main aims of the education policy for first- and second-cycle programmes are to:

1. reduce the extent of mass participation in higher education by promoting appropriate student to staff ratios;
2. push forward greater internationalisation by applying appropriate financial incentives (the algorithm for the distribution of State-budget subsidies for HEIs) and institutional arrangements (the establishment of the National Agency for Academic Exchange);
3. intensify activities encouraging quality enhancement (funding streams);
4. ensure closer linkage between the programmes offered and labour market needs.

**Third-cycle (doctoral) programmes**

Doctoral (third-cycle) programmes (ISCED 6), which are offered by university-type HEIs (uczelnia akademicka) and research institutions, aim to provide advanced knowledge in a specific area or discipline of science, preparing students for independent research and creative activity and for the award of a doctoral degree (doktor). Thus, they facilitate the preparation of an applicant for the procedure leading to the award of a doctoral degree. However, the completion of a doctoral programme is not a precondition for the award of this degree. Doctoral degree holders may continue their research career to obtain first a post-doctoral degree (doktor habilitowany) and subsequently a professorial title (profesor).
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