Higher education is integrated by:

- university education
- Advanced vocational training
- Specialised education, [1] which includes advanced Artistic education, professional Plastic Arts and Design studies, and advanced Sports education.

Higher education qualifications correspond to the levels and qualifications established in the Spanish Qualifications Framework for Higher Education and to the levels established in the European Qualifications Framework:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Spanish Qualifications Framework for Higher Education</th>
<th>European Qualifications Framework</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>LEVELS</strong></td>
<td><strong>QUALIFICATIONS</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Advanced Technician [2]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Bachelor</td>
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<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Master's</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>PhD</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

Source: Drawn up by Eurydice Spain-REDIE (National Centre for Educational Innovation and Research (CNIIE), Ministry of Education and Vocational Training (MEFP)) on the basis of current regulations.

Within this framework of correspondences, the following qualifications in education should be highlighted:

- the official university degrees in Pedagogy, Psychology and Educational Psychology correspond to Level 3 (Master) of the Spanish Qualifications Framework for Higher
Education and Level 7 of the European Qualifications Framework

- the official university degree in Social Education corresponds to Level 2 (Bachelor) of the Spanish Qualifications Framework for Higher Education and Level 6 of the European Qualifications Framework.

- the official university degree in School Teacher, in the specialisations of Hearing and Speech, Special Education, Physical Education, Pre-Primary Education, Primary Education and Foreign Language corresponds to Level 2 (Bachelor) of the Spanish Qualifications Framework for Higher Education and Level 6 of the European Qualifications Framework.

**University education**

**Structure**

University education is organised into Bachelor, Master and PhD programmes. From the 2015/16 academic year, universities are free to decide whether to implement a model offering Bachelor and Master degrees of 3 and 2 years’ duration respectively, which may facilitate the mobility of both Spanish and foreign students.

**General objectives and functions**

Under the principle of autonomy of universities, the university system is granted with the development of a public service of higher education through research, teaching and study.

The university system has the following functions:

- creation, development, transmission and critical analysis of science, technology and culture

- training of students for professional activities in areas which require applying knowledge, scientific methods and artistic creativity

- dissemination, appreciation and transfer of knowledge at the service of culture, life quality and economic development

- dissemination of knowledge and culture by means of the extension of university education

- lifelong learning.

The current legislation assigns the following general objectives to university education:

- facilitate the acquisition of the qualifications demanded by the productive sector and by the public sector, and to improve adaptability to social and economic changes

- promote quality, competitiveness and the internationalization of universities

- foster scientific productivity, transfer of knowledge, technological development and innovation in all branches of knowledge
facilitate university governance, by means of promoting measures which guarantee the exercise of government and managerial functions, the review of internal management and governance procedures and the implementation of good practices in accordance with internationally recognised criteria of quality and efficiency in management.

increase transparency, internal control of finances and budgetary balance, as well as an external evaluation of their activity.

encourage talent recruitment, international mobility and collaboration with international reference universities and research institutions.

promote measures to attract private national and international investment, so as to contribute to the financing of the objectives of the university, especially in the area of research, transfer of knowledge and creation of innovation and technology-based business projects.

Structure of the academic year

Each university designs the organisation of the academic year and includes it in their statutes.

As a general rule, the university school year has 220 school days, and is divided into two semesters:

- first: from the beginning of the academic year, between the beginning and the middle of September, until the end of January or the beginning of February, when the final examinations of the subjects taught in the first semester and the partial examinations of the annual subjects take place.

- second: from the beginning of February until the end of May, with the exams for this semester and the end of the annual subjects taking place in June.

Universities, at their discretion, hold extraordinary examinations in July or September.

School holidays are distributed throughout the course:

- summer period, generally beginning at the end of June: 12 weeks approximately

- Christmas: approximately a fortnight

- Easter: between 8 and 11 days approximately

- the corresponding official holidays set at state, regional and local level (between 7 and 12 days)

Measures to improve the position of Spanish universities for internal cooperation and international competition

1. Creation of strategic alliances

   The aim is to develop studies leading to official university degrees or programmes and
projects of international excellence in conjunction with other institutions.

This cooperation may be among universities, with Public Research Organisations, with businesses and other agents of the Spanish System of Science, Technology and Innovation, which may belong to other countries.

2. Flexibilisation of the organisation of university studies and promotion of their autonomy

In a manner compatible with the EHEA, curricular diversification and the capacity for innovation give universities the responsibility for designing and proposing study plans which they believe are more attractive and in line with their resources and interests.

The National Agency for Quality Assessment and Accreditation is responsible for the evaluation of the study plans and the degrees offered by universities, as well as for the accreditation of their quality.

Some Autonomous Communities have created within their territories quality assessment agencies with the same functions as the National Agency.

3. 2015-2020 Strategy for the Internationalisation of Spanish Universities

Drawn up by the Working Group for the Internationalisation of Universities, this Strategy comes as a response to the Internationalisation Strategy for the European Union approved by the Commission in 2013.

The Working Group, coordinated by the General Secretariat for Universities under the Ministry of Science, Innovation and Universities, has counted with ample participation from other ministerial departments, universities and other stakeholders of the university system, including companies and civil society organisations. On the basis of their diagnosis of the internationalisation of the system and university institutions, they identify the challenges to be faced in an open environment of collaboration and international competition in higher education, and propose a system of specific objectives and actions for their development.

The objective for 2020 is 'to consolidate a strong and internationally attractive university system which promotes the mobility of the best students, teachers, researchers and administration and services staff, educational quality, the potential of Spanish as a language for higher education, the internationalisation of R&D&i training programmes and activities, contributing to improving Spain’s attractiveness and international competitiveness, as well as to the socio-economic development of its immediate environment based on knowledge'.

In order to achieve this objective, 4 main strategic lines are established:

- consolidate a highly internationalised university system
- increase the international attractiveness of universities
- promote the international competitiveness of the environment
- intensify cooperation in higher education with other regions of the world.
The Strategy presents the timing for the implementation of the results and indicators proposed for the first two years.

It will be monitored by a commission coordinated by the General Secretariat for Universities with the participation of the ministries involved in its development, the General Conference for University Policy and the Council of Universities.

**Advanced vocational training**

It comprises a series of programmes which provide qualifications for a number of professional fields, as well as access to employment and active participation in social, cultural and economic life.

Vocational training is a priority area within the education and economic policy of Spain, and has become one of its main action lines. An ambitious package of reforms in legislation introduced a series of important changes in this type of provision, so as to contribute to adapt the training offer to the demands of the different productive sectors, to increase the educational offer, to advance towards the integration of vocational training in the education system, and to strengthen the cooperation between the different education authorities, as well as with other social agents and with the entrepreneurial sector.

When it comes to the education system, since December 2013, vocational training provision has been reformed and changes in the conditions for admission to advanced vocational training have been introduced.

More information on [National Reforms in Vocational Education and Training and Adult Learning](#).

**Structure**

Advanced vocational training is organised in training cycles, which have a modular structure. It includes a vocational module, which requires the preparation of a project during the last stage of the training cycle.

These training cycles belong to one of the 26 professional families established by the [National Catalogue of Professional Qualifications](#). More information on [Lifelong learning strategy](#).

**Aim and objectives**

The aim of vocational training within the education system is to provide learners with professional qualifications, to facilitate their adjustment to changes in society and in the labour market which may take place during their lives, as well as to contribute to personal development and the exercise of democratic citizenship, promoting at the same time inclusion, social cohesion and lifelong learning.

The objective of advanced vocational training is to provide students with the professional, personal and social competences which will allow them to:

- engage in a professional activity related to the general competence area of the relevant Vocational Training programme
- understand the organisation and characteristics of the relevant productive sector, the
mechanisms for professional insertion, the pertinent labour legislation and the rights and obligations arising from labour relationships

- consolidate the habits of discipline, individual and teamwork, as well as the ability for self-learning and for critical analysis
- establish interpersonal and social relationships, both at professional and personal levels, based on the peaceful resolution of conflicts, the respect to others and the rejection of violence or any kind of prejudice and sexist behaviour
- prevent labour and environmental risks, and implement measures to work under conditions of good health and safety
- develop a motivating professional identity for future learning, and be able to adapt to the evolution of production processes and to social changes
- promote creativity, innovation and entrepreneurship
- use information and communication technologies, as well as the foreign languages required in their professional activity
- communicate effectively both at professional and personal levels
- manage their professional careers, analysing the most suitable training itineraries in order to improve employability.

**Structure of the academic year**

On the basis of the minimum requirements the Ministry of Education and Vocational Training establishes for the entire State, the education authorities of the Autonomous Communities are responsible for the annual organisation of the academic year for non-university levels, which include advanced vocational training.

Generally, the **duration of the academic year** comprises a minimum of 175 days, distributed between the first fortnight of September and the end of June, grouped in trimesters.

**School holidays** are distributed throughout the course:

- summer period, generally beginning at the end of June: 12 weeks approximately
- Christmas: approximately a fortnight
- Easter: between 8 and 11 days approximately
- the corresponding official holidays set at State, regional and local level (between 7 and 12 days)

During the summer holidays, the centres can remain open until the end of July.

**Specialised Education**
Specialised education that composes higher education includes advanced Artistic education, professional Plastic Arts and Design studies, and advanced Sports education.

**Structure**

**Advanced Artistic Education**

Advanced Artistic Education is organized in Higher Degrees of Artistic Education, official Master's Artistic Education and Doctorate studies.

More information on [Advanced Artistic Education](#) [8].

**Advanced vocational education in Plastic Arts and Design**

They are structured in professional artistic families with a module organization. They include a module which requires the preparation of a project during the last stage of the training cycle. These cycles belong to one of the 13 professional artistic families. More information on degrees [9] and professional artistic families [10] that comprise these programmes.

**Advanced Vocational Education in Sports**

They are structured on the basis of the sports modalities and their specialties, with a module organization and different possible durations. They include a module which requires the preparation of a project during the last stage of the training cycle. These cycles belong to one of the 13 professional artistic families. More information on degrees [11] and sport modalities [12] that comprise these programmes.

**Aim and objectives**

**Advanced Artistic Education**

The purpose of these courses is to provide general training, in one or more disciplines, aimed at preparing students for the exercise of professional activities. The aim of the official Master's artistic education is for students to acquire advanced training, of a specialised or multidisciplinary nature, aimed at academic or professional specialisation, or at promoting initiation into research tasks.

**Advanced vocational education in Plastic Arts and Design**

Its purpose is to provide artistic, technical and technological training suitable for professional practice; to provide information on organisational, economic, legal and safety aspects that affect professional practice, labour relations and the business environment of the corresponding professional sector; to qualify for access to employment; and to encourage entrepreneurial spirit and lifelong learning.

The aim of these courses is to enable students to:

- develop the skills associated with each degree and begin professional practice with
guarantees of quality, efficiency and profitability

- value the importance of the plastic arts as a universal creative language and as a means of cultural expression, as well as the enrichment that traditional and modern artistic crafts and procedures represent for them

- encourage the renewal of the arts and cultural industries through aesthetic reflection and mastery of artistic production processes

- develop the potential for entrepreneurship, self-learning and adaptation to the evolution of artistic conceptions and technical processes, and use the channels of information and continuous training related to the exercise of their profession and the pursuit of personal and professional initiatives

- understand the organisation and characteristics of their professional environment, the legal aspects affecting labour relations in the relevant professional sector, as well as the basic and specific mechanisms for integration in the labour market

- develop skills and abilities in the priority areas defined within the guidelines established by the European Union, especially those relating to information and communication technologies, languages, teamwork and the prevention of occupational risks.

**Advanced Vocational Education in Sports**

Their **purpose** is to prepare students for their professional activity in the sports system in relation to a sport modality or speciality, and to facilitate their adaptation to the evolution of the working and sports world and to active citizenship.

The **aim** of these courses is to enable students to:

- develop the general skills corresponding to the professional profile defined in the corresponding degree

- guarantee the professional qualification in initiation, guidance, basic training, technical improvement, and single and team training for high-performance athletes in the corresponding modality or specialty within the sports system

- understand the characteristics and organization of the respective modality or specialty and of the sports system and know the rights and obligations arising from their functions

- acquire the knowledge and skills necessary to carry out their work under safe conditions, improving the quality and safety of the sports environment and taking care of the environment and people's health, and also facilitate the integration and normalisation of people with disabilities in the practice of sports

- develop a motivating professional identity and maturity for future learning (life-long learning, permanent training) and adaptations to changes in the initiation and improvement of the sports modality and in high-performance sport
• develop and convey the importance of individual responsibility and personal effort in sports practice and teaching

• develop and convey the ethical values linked to fair play, respect for others, the healthy practice of sports and the respect and care of one's own body

• enable the fulfilment of business activities and initiatives.

**Structure of the academic year**

**Advanced Artistic Education**

As it is equivalent to university education, the organisation of the academic year is similar to that of universities, although each degree may have its own specifications.

**Advanced vocational education in Plastic Arts and Design and Advanced Vocational Education in Sports**

As they are advanced training cycles, similar to those of vocational training, the organisation of the academic year is similar to the one set out in these programmes, although each degree may have its own specifications.

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