

The Danish Education System



Primary and secondary
education

Higher Education

Lifelong Learning



The Danish Education System

Written in cooperation between:
The Ministry of Higher Education and Science,
The Ministry for Children, Education and Gender Equality
and The Ministry of Culture

Print: Rosendahls A/S

Photos: Jakob Dall, Tuala Hjarnø,
Torben Klint og Jens Hasse

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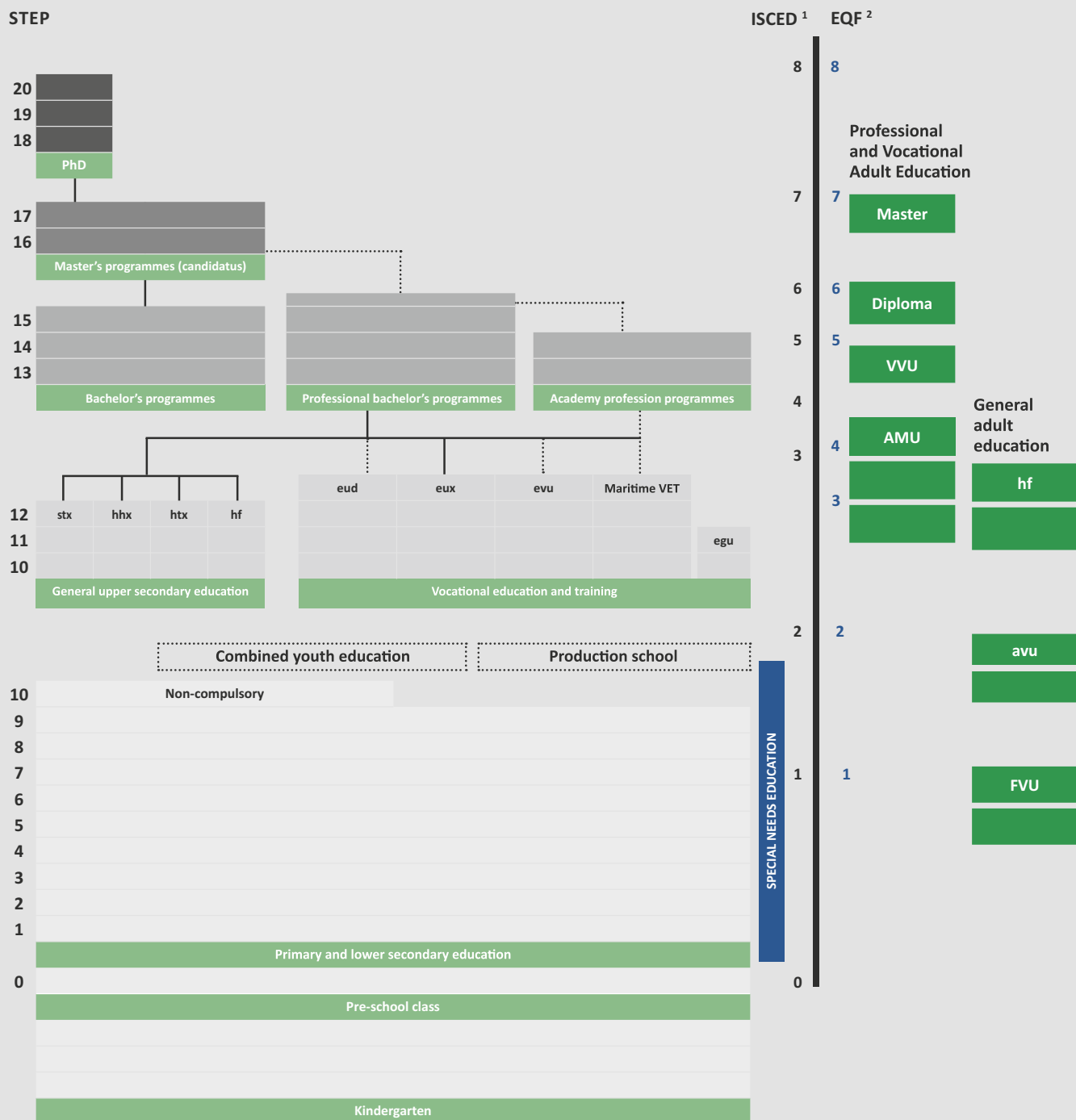
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Introduction

This booklet provides a brief introduction to the Danish education system – from primary school to youth- and higher education. Besides giving you this overview the booklet also presents the advanced system of adult education and training and tells you about the Danish grading scale, about financing and education grants, quality assurance as well as other items. Furthermore, it will direct you to relevant sources for further reading.

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For a presentation of adult education, see page 13

¹ International Standard Classification of Education (UNESCO)

² European Qualification Framework (Eu)

Primary and lower secondary education

The public system

The Danish public school – the "Folkeskole" – is a comprehensive, integrated municipal school covering primary and lower secondary education (ISCED 1 and 2) without streaming.

In the 2014/2015 school year, 78% of all pupils in primary and lower secondary schools attended the Folkeskole, 16% attended private schools, 4% attended private residential schools known as "Efterskoler", and 2% attended special schools. Education is compulsory for ten years starting from the year the child turns six. It is education itself that is compulsory, not schooling.

Apart from the compulsory grades 0 to 9, the Folkeskole also has an optional grade 10. In the 2014/2015 school year, 51% of pupils having attended grade 9 also attended grade 10.

The average number of pupils per class in the Folkeskole is 21.4, while the figure for private schools is 18.1 (2014/2015).

According to the Folkeskole Act, schools must provide pupils with subject-specific qualifications and prepare them for further education. Moreover, schools should prepare pupils for their role as citizens in a democratic society. The Folkeskole builds on the principle of differentiated teaching. Teaching is organised so it strengthens and develops interests and qualifications while catering for the needs of the individual pupil. It also aims at developing pupils' cooperative skills. There are three national goals for public schools in order to support and develop their strengths and academic standards:

1. The public school must challenge all pupils to reach their full potential.
2. The public school must lower the significance of social background on academic results.

3. Trust in the school and pupil well-being must both be enhanced through respect for professional knowledge and practice in the public school.

Pupils are continuously evaluated. Teachers develop individual learning plans for pupils, which are updated regularly. National computer-based tests have been introduced in a number of subjects in grades 2 to 8. Progression to the next grade is usually automatic. School-leaving examinations are taken in grade 9. Moreover, pupils in grade 9 complete a one week project assignment.

Other possibilities

Parents may choose a private school for their children. Private schools are self-governing institutions required to measure up to the standards of public schools.

There are many different types of private schools and some are based on a specific philosophy, a special pedagogical approach or a religious belief.

Continuation schools - Efterskoler - are private residential schools for pupils in grades 8 to 10. In addition to normal subjects, emphasis in these schools is typically on social learning and fields such as sports, music, nature or ecology.

Private schools receive a substantial state subsidy based on the number of pupils in these schools.

General and vocational upper secondary education

In Denmark, upper secondary education programmes (ISCED 3), also referred to as youth education programmes, can be divided into:

- General upper secondary education programmes, which primarily prepare students for higher education.
- Vocational upper secondary education and training programmes, which primarily prepare students for a career in a specific trade or industry.

General upper secondary education programmes

There are four academically oriented general upper secondary programmes:

- The 3-year Upper Secondary School Leaving Examination, Gymnasium (stx)
- The 3-year Higher Commercial Examination (hhx)
- The 3-year Higher Technical Examination (htx)
- The 2-year Higher Preparatory Examination (hf)

All four programmes prepare students for further studies while also developing the students' personal and general competencies. The programmes aim to enhance the students' independent and analytical skills as well as preparing them to become democratic and socially conscious citizens with a global outlook.

Each education programme has its specific range of compulsory subjects that are common for all students attending the programme. For the stx, hhx and htx programmes, each school also offers a number of different specialised study programmes (packages normally containing three subjects) and elective subjects for students to choose

from. With regard to the hf programme, students choose subjects from the electives offered by the school.

The curriculum and examinations must follow national standards and are subject to external evaluation. The curricula of the hhx and the htx differ from those of the stx and the hf. In addition to some general upper secondary subjects, hhx offers financial and business subjects, and the htx offers technical subjects.

The stx and hf programmes are offered primarily by general upper secondary schools. This sort of school is called Gymnasium. Business and technical colleges offer the hhx and htx programmes, respectively. Some schools are mixed schools offering various types of programmes.

Admission requirements for the stx, hhx and htx are a Folkeskole Leaving Certificate as well as certain subject requirements. For the hf, admission requirements are 10 years of basic school or the equivalent thereof. The stx, hhx and htx are for students aged 16-19, whereas the hf attracts both young people and adults. The hf programme can be taken on a single-subject basis and is also taught in evening classes.

The programmes will be subject to changes in the coming years, following a political agreement in June 2016 between the Government and a majority in the Danish Parliament.



Vocational education and training (VET)

Vocational education and training (VET) includes more than 100 main programmes leading to almost 300 different qualifications at level 3 to 5 in the Danish qualification framework. The duration varies from 2 to 5½ years, the most typical being 3½ to 4 years. VET programmes are combination “sandwich-type” programmes in which theoretical and practical education at a vocational college (approximately 1/3 of the time) alternates with practical training in an approved company or organisation (approximately 2/3 of the time). The dual training principle building on apprenticeship contracts in companies ensures that the trainees acquire theoretical, practical, general and personal skills which are in demand in the labour market.

Vocational education and training consists of a basic programme divided into two basic courses and the main programme. VET students enrolled directly after compulsory school will start on the first basic course which is not an option for students enrolled at least one year later. The length of each of the two basic courses is 20 weeks. The main programme is based on the alternating principle typically organised as 4-5 periods of school-based education and training at the workplace, which in total typically takes 3 to 3½ years, but can be shorter or longer for certain programmes. VET programmes are offered by vocational technical colleges, business colleges and social and health care colleges.

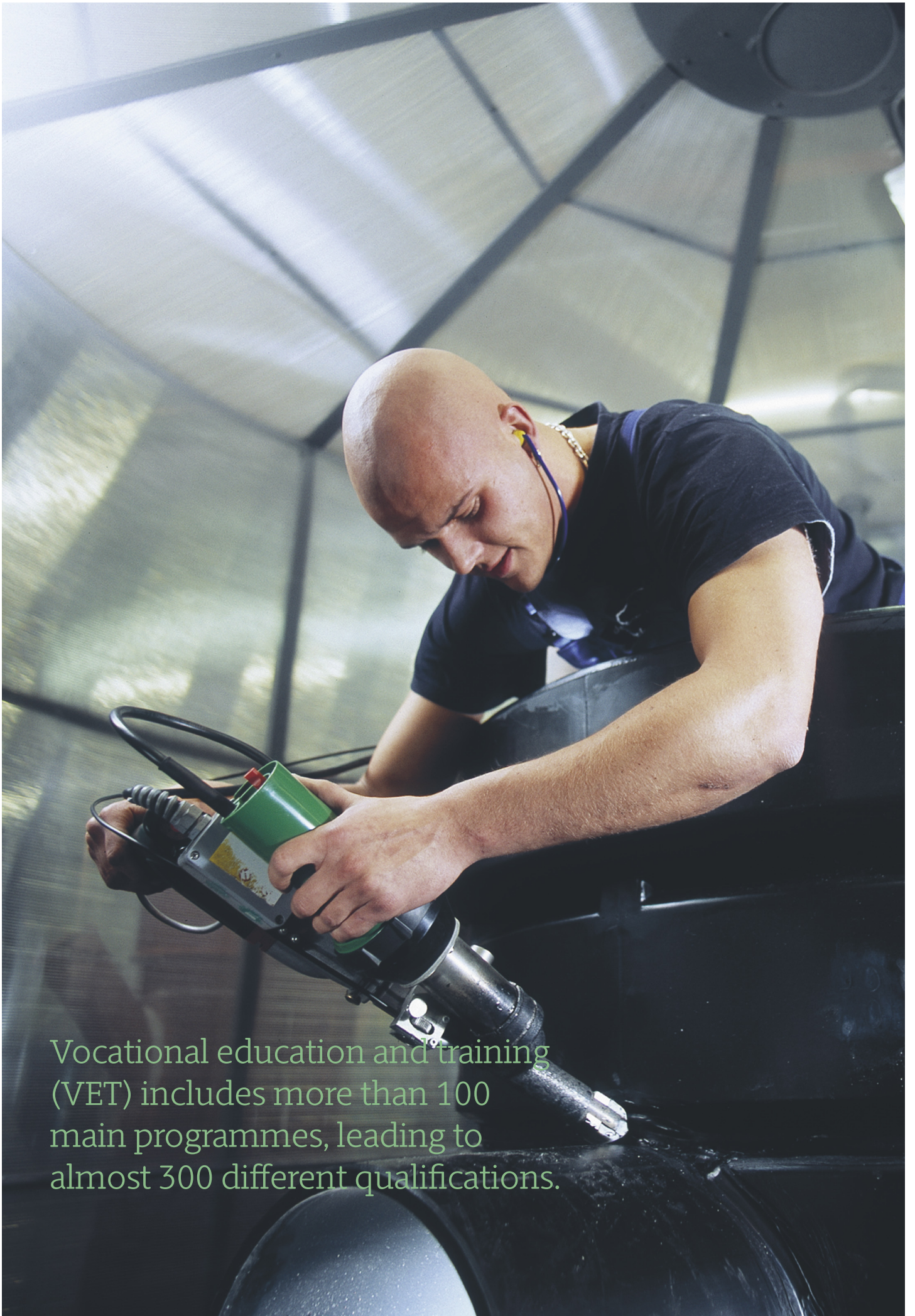
The Danish VET system also offers a VET programme combining general upper secondary education and vocational education and training – eux – qualifying students for a job as well as giving them direct access to higher education in a wide range of programmes, i.e. leading to a journeyman’s certificate as well as the general upper secondary diploma. Furthermore, adults 25 years and older have access to VET programmes designed

especially for adults on the basis of recognition of prior learning and relevant work experience, which lead to the same vocational qualifications. In order to complete the main programme, all VET students must have a training agreement with an approved company which offers training. The first basic course is structured around four broad vocational main subject areas which lead to the second basic course linked to the more than 100 different main programmes. The four main subject areas are:

- Care, health and pedagogy
- Administration, commerce and business service
- Food, agriculture and hospitality
- Technology, construction and transportation

VET programmes are normally completed with a journeyman’s test or a similar examination testing vocational knowledge, skills and competences. The majority commence with the basic VET programme, but some students choose to begin with a period of in-company training before they enter the basic programme. Also, students who prefer practical training to school attendance can commence their vocational education in a company which offers practical training, also referred to as the “New Apprenticeship”: The student enters a training agreement with a company and during the first year must acquire the same knowledge and qualifications as the students who have followed the basic programme at a college. This requires flexibility on the part of the student, the company and the college.

Admission to vocational education and training requires completion of compulsory education and a school leaving certificate with at least a mark of 02 in Danish and maths. All programmes qualify students for labour market entry as skilled workers, and all programmes can qualify students for admission to specific higher education programmes.



Vocational education and training (VET) includes more than 100 main programmes, leading to almost 300 different qualifications.

Other programmes

Vocational basic course (egu)

The egu is an individually designed programme focused on a specific trade or composed of elements from several trades/programmes. The target group is people under the age of 30 who live in the municipality and are not in education, are unemployed and do not meet the requirements for completing an upper secondary programme.

The egu alternates between school-based periods and periods of practical training in one or more companies. The main focus is on practical training and an individual programme is designed for each young person depending on his or her needs and interests. The trainees are offered individual guidance during the entire programme.

In most cases, the young person finishes his or her egu after two years, but it may be extended by up to one year. The majority of egu trainees go on to seek employment or enter a VET programme.

Production schools

Production schools are for young people under the age of 25 who have not completed a youth education programme or are not ready to commence an ordinary youth education. The purposes of production schools are to enhance personal development and to improve students' future education and labour market possibilities. There are approximately 80 production schools in Denmark. Production schools are based on practical work in workshops, ranging from carpentry or metalwork to media or theatre workshops. Teaching aims to provide students with qualifications which will enable them to complete a vocationally qualifying educational programme. Students are offered individual guidance on a day-to-day basis to support their efforts in clarifying their future choice of education, training and job.

There are no examinations at production schools. Production schools have continuous intake. Students typically stay for an average of 5 months; approximately 30% stay for more than 6 months. A young person is entitled to a maximum of one year at a production school.

Combined youth education (KUU)

Combined youth education is a programme for young people who are not ready for education at an upper secondary school or vocational education. The programme can last up to two years. Tuition is tailored to local or regional businesses based on the student's subsequent chances of getting a job. The programme can also provide a basis for completing an ordinary youth education, e.g. a vocational programme.

Specially planned youth education (STU)

STU is a three-year youth education programme for young people with special needs that prevent them from completing other types of youth education. This may be the case if a young person is intellectually challenged and/or has a physical or mental disability. The aim is to promote the young person's personal development and improve their chances of living an independent and active life.

Higher education

Danish higher education institutions use the European Credit Transfer System (ECTS) for measuring study activities. 60 ECTS correspond to one year of full-time study. Higher education programmes are offered at five different types of institutions, each with well-defined profiles and qualities.

Academy profession programmes

Academy profession programmes offer professionally-oriented short-cycle and first-cycle degree programmes of 90-150 ECTS in fields such as business, technology and IT. The programmes prepare students for performing practical, vocational tasks on an analytical basis and may lead to employment in middle-management positions. They combine theoretical studies with a practice-oriented approach in the form of work placements. Holders of an academy profession degree can obtain a professional bachelor's degree within the same field of study through a top-up programme of 90 ECTS. These programmes are offered at the business academies. Maritime training institutions offer programmes at academy profession level of 120 ECTS as a top-up programme to vocational maritime training.

Professional bachelor's programmes

Professionally-oriented first-cycle degree programmes of typically 180-240 ECTS are offered in fields such as business, education, nursing, engineering and maritime transport. The programmes have a strong focus on professional practice and provide students with theoretical knowledge and its application to professions and industries. The programmes include a period of work placement

of at least 30 ECTS. Most programmes provide access to further studies in the same field. University colleges and specialised colleges offer the professional bachelor's programmes.

University level programmes

There are three levels of study programmes offering first-, second- and third-cycle degree programmes in academic disciplines:

Bachelor's programmes

The bachelor's degree (BSc/BA) is awarded after 180 ECTS and qualifies students for a professional career and further studies at second-cycle level.

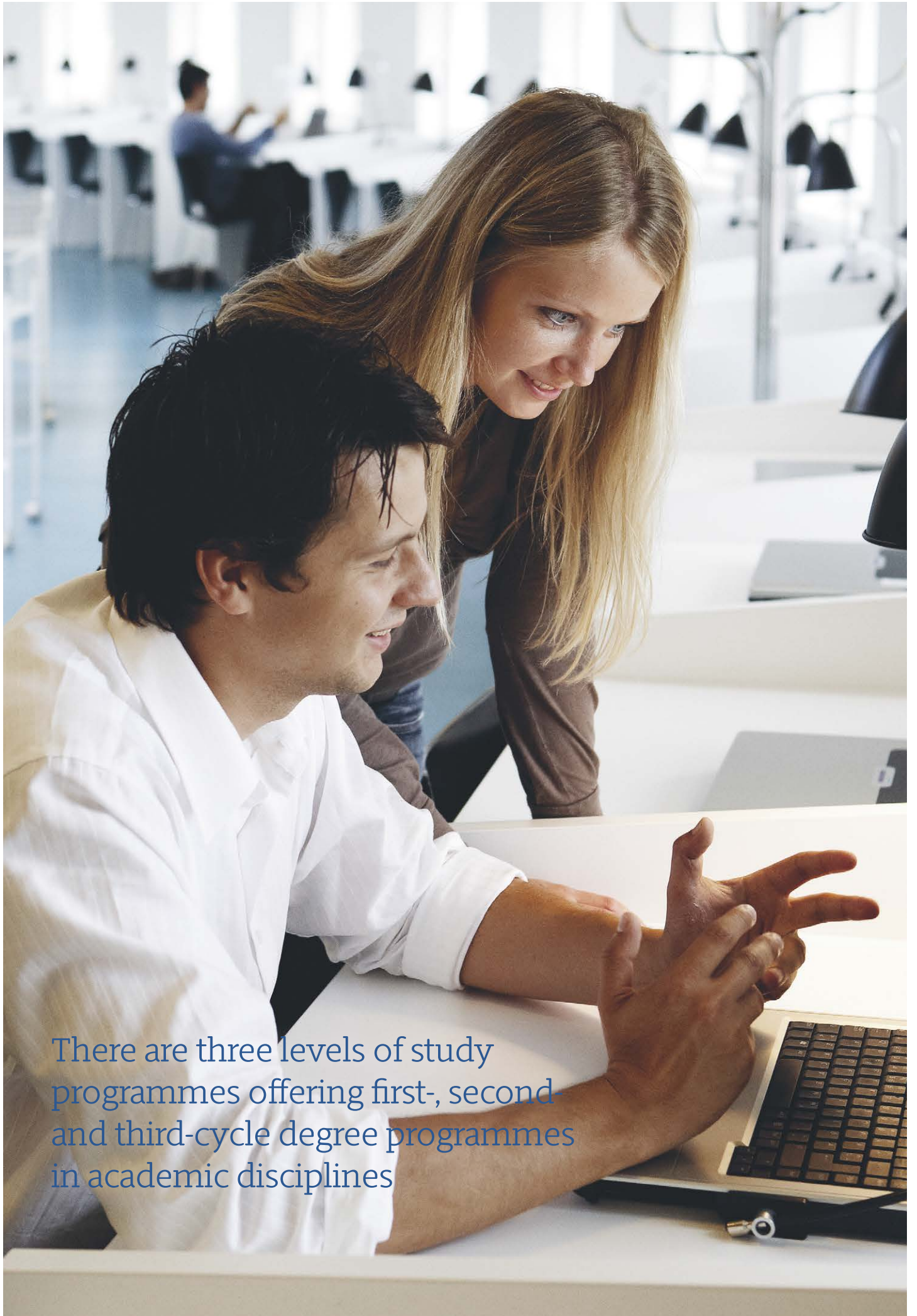
Master's programme (candidatus)

Most students choose to continue on a master's programme (MSc/MA) of 120 ECTS. They usually include one or two of the major fields of study of the bachelor programme. Independent research activities and a master's thesis of at least 30 ECTS are required. The master's programmes qualify students for a professional career and for scientific work.

PhD

The PhD degree is obtained after 180 ECTS and consists of research, participation in research courses, teaching and public defense of a thesis.

The programmes are offered at the Danish universities, which are research-intensive institutions offering research-based study programmes.



There are three levels of study programmes offering first-, second- and third-cycle degree programmes in academic disciplines

University level programmes within the arts

First-, second- and third-cycle artistic and academic degree programmes in subject fields such as architecture, design, music, and fine and performing arts are offered at a number of artistic higher education institutions at the university level. Bachelor's, master's and PhD degrees are awarded after 180, 120-180 and 180 ECTS, respectively. A higher education degree in film-making is awarded after 4 years of study (240 ECTS). Music academies offer an Advanced Postgraduate Diploma in Music of 2 to 4 years following the master's degree.

Admission

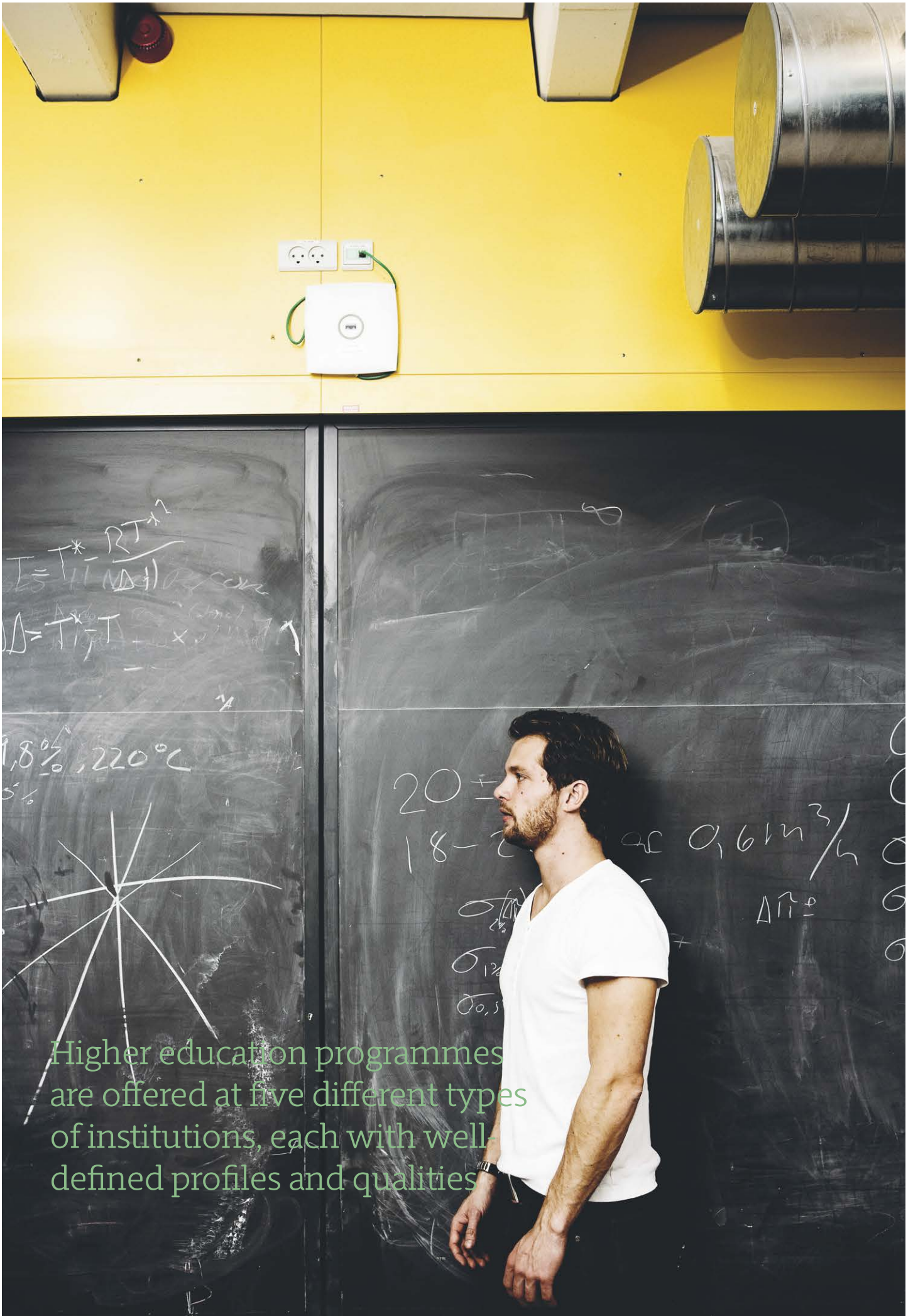
General access requirements to higher education are one of the general upper secondary school leaving examinations or comparable qualifications. Access may also depend on specific requirements such as a particular subject combination in upper secondary school or a certain level of grades. Admission to some particular programmes requires an entrance examination or submission of a portfolio of artistic work.

Programmes and courses taught in English

Danish higher education institutions offer more than 700 programmes and over 1,300 individual modules taught entirely in English. For more information about courses and programmes in English and courses in Danish language and culture, please see www.studyindenmark.dk.

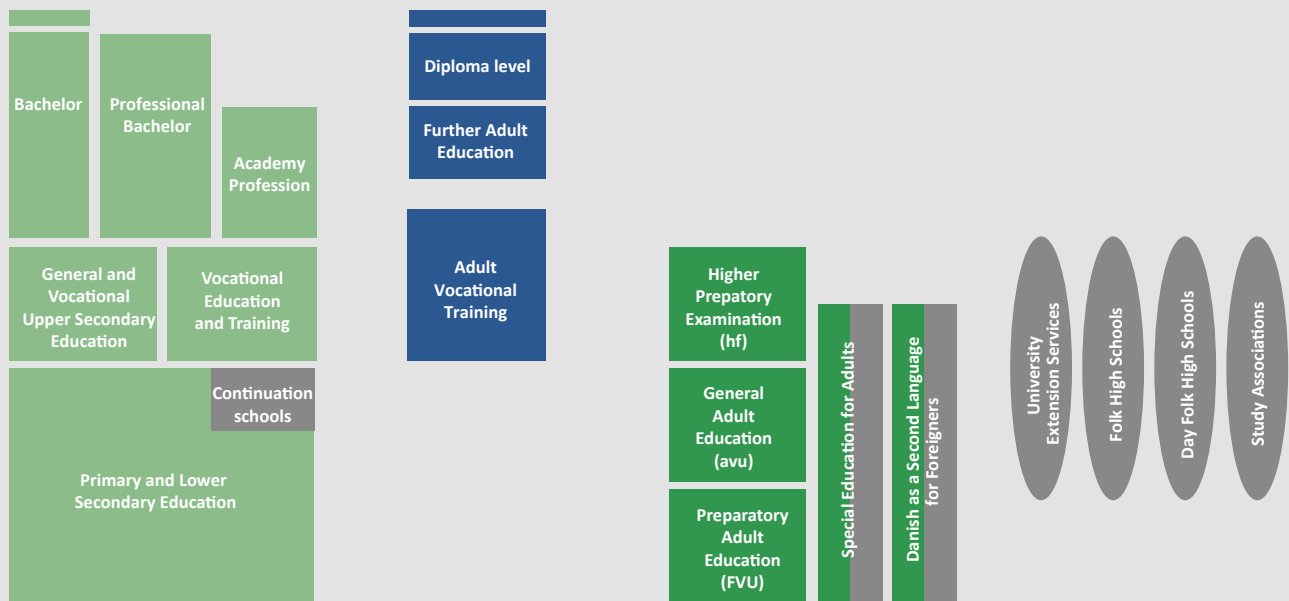
Other educational programmes

There are educational programmes which do not belong under the aforementioned headings. These include programmes within the police force and some programmes within the area of defense, where admission requirements can differ and vary e.g. from completion of compulsory schooling or a VET programme to documentation of relevant experience.



Higher education programmes are offered at five different types of institutions, each with well-defined profiles and qualities

Adult education



Light green = Mainstream Education System (column 1)

Blue = Vocationally Adult Education (column 2)

Green = General Adult Education (column 3)

Grey = Non-formal Adult Education (column 4)

Adult education and continuing training

Denmark has a long-standing tradition of lifelong learning. In 2014, nearly one in three of the population in the 25–64 age bracket participated in formal and non-formal education and training including publicly or employer funded internal and private education programmes and courses in connection with employment or as leisure-time education.

Education and training for adults at all levels

Adult education and training range from formal qualifying general education, continuing vocational training and adult higher education to non-formal education. Generally, the syllabus and examinations are adapted to the experience and interests of adults and most public programmes provide recognition of prior formal and non-formal learning.

Adult education and training programmes leading to formal qualifications for further education or for the labour market include:

- Preparatory adult education (FVU): Offered to improve basic literacy and numeracy skills of adults who do not have sufficient qualifications to follow education and training or cope with the demands of working life.
- General adult education (avu): General education at lower secondary level.
- Higher preparatory single-subject courses (hf-e): General education at upper secondary level.
- Adult vocational training (AMU): The main target group is unskilled and skilled workers in the labour market who need to update and/or develop their competencies. The continuing training programmes are developed and adapted according to the needs of the labour market.

- Vocational education and training for adults (euv): Offers adults 25 years and older opportunities to acquire a VET qualification to become a skilled worker within the IVET system based on recognition of prior learning and work experience.
- Further adult education programmes (VVU): Corresponds to the level of ordinary academy profession programmes.
- Diploma programmes: Corresponds to the level of bachelor's programmes within the ordinary higher education system.
- Master's programmes within adult higher education: Corresponds to the level of master's programmes within the ordinary higher education system.

Non-formal education

A wide range of different schools operate within the framework of non-formal adult education ("folkeoplysning"). The most well-known are the Folk High Schools, which are residential schools providing general and non-formal education. The lengths of courses vary – from one week up to almost a year – and are attended by adults of all ages. They are non-formal courses meant to broaden general, social and democratic competencies. Other programmes of non-formal adult education are offered by Adult Education Associations and Day Folk High Schools, or can be university extension courses.

Grading scale

The current grading system in Denmark was implemented in 2006: the 7-point grading scale. In tests and examinations students are given an assessment on the basis of the grading scale below. According to the rules governing the individual study programmes, the grades must be documented by test, examination or leaving certificates.

Grade	Description	ECTS	Old scale (00-13)
12	For an excellent performance displaying a high level of command of all aspects of the relevant material, with no or only a few minor weaknesses	A	13 11
10	For a very good performance displaying a high level of command of most aspects of the relevant material, with only minor weaknesses	B	10
7	For a good performance displaying good command of the relevant material but also some weaknesses	C	9 8
4	For a fair performance displaying some command of the relevant material but also some major weaknesses	D	7
02	For a performance meeting only the minimum requirements for acceptance	E	6
00	For a performance which does not meet the minimum requirements for acceptance	Fx	5 03
-3	For a performance which is unacceptable in all respects	F	00

Financing and ownership

The education system is financed by the State or the municipalities. Most institutions are self-governing, while others are owned by the State or the municipalities. The table below illustrates the main sources of funding and forms of ownership for selected groups of institutions. In addition to public financing, tuition fees are charged at private schools, and there is typically user payment for a number of adult education and training programmes provided by education institutions and adult education and training centres.

Taximeter financing

The central government's system of financing education and training is mainly based on the so-called taximeter system, a comprehensive financing system based on per capita grants (cash per student) to institutions. The grants are calculated primarily on the recorded number of students passing examinations. The taximeter rate varies according to subject field and level of education.

	State institutions	State-funded/ supported, self-governing institutions	Institutions funded by the municipalities	Tuition fee
The Folkeskole			–	No
Private elementary schools		–		Yes
Continuation schools		–		Yes
Gymnasium		–		No
Commercial colleges		–		No
Technical colleges		–		No
Maritime schools	–			No
Schools of marine engineering	–			No
Social & health care colleges		–		No
Business academies		–		No
Specialised colleges and university colleges		–		No
Universities		–		No
Academies of architecture and design	–	–		No
Academies of music, theatre, film and fine art	–			No
Adult education centres		–		Yes
Adult vocational training centres		–		Yes
Folk high schools		–		Yes
Evening schools			–	Yes

Education grant and loan scheme

Through the State Educational Grant and Loan Scheme (SU), the Danish state provides financial support to all Danes over the age of 18 enrolled in a youth or higher education programme. There are two main support programmes:

- Students undertaking youth education programmes.
- Students enrolled in higher education programmes.

In combination with both types of grants, students can also make use of supplementary state loans. Around 50% of all students make use of these state loans.

Danish students can generally obtain support for studies abroad if the courses meet the same conditions for recognition as Danish courses and programmes. Foreign students are entitled to educational support if they can be given equal status. For support for studies abroad, foreign students also have to meet requirements regarding their association with Denmark.

The State also provides financial support for adults in adult education and continuing training.



For more information, please see www.su.dk

Career guidance

Provision of high quality guidance services is important at all levels of the education system. Starting with general career education in grade 1 in the Folkeskole and guidance from grade 7, pupils are gradually prepared for making their first educational and vocational decisions. Career learning activities are obligatory throughout compulsory school and are a shared responsibility for schools and guidance centres.

Two types of independent guidance centres provide guidance in relation to the transitions from one level of the education system to another:

- 56 Youth Guidance Centres ("Ungdommens Uddannelsesvejledning") focus on the transition from compulsory to youth education.
- 7 Regional Guidance Centres ("Studievalg") deal with the transition from youth education to higher education.

Guidance on general adult education and continuing vocational education and training is provided by 13 regional adult education and training centres offering guidance for adults and companies.

A national guidance portal – the "Education Guide": www.ug.dk – provides comprehensive information on education and training possibilities at all levels, professions, labour market conditions and statistics. A national e-guidance centre provides users with online guidance service seven days a week. It is linked to the guidance portal and can be reached at www.ug.dk/evejledning



For more information please see www.ufm.dk/en/euroguidance

Quality assurance

The standard and quality of educational provision in the Danish higher education system are assured by a number of elements, including:

- Common rules and guidelines (curricula) specifying the aims, contents and duration of programmes and individual subjects.
- Testing and examination system, with the use of national boards of external examiners.
- Ministerial approval of provision and inspection in a varying degree within the different education areas.
- Accreditation of higher education institutions by the Danish Accreditation Institution.

Denmark has, as part of the Bologna Process, implemented the European Standards and Guidelines (ESG) for the quality assurance of the higher educations, and all public higher education study programmes must meet these international qua-

lity and relevance standards. For all institutions of higher education, accreditation is mandatory and a precondition for attaining public funding based on the 2013 Act on the Accreditation of Institutions of Higher Education. The Danish Qualifications Framework has been incorporated into the quality criteria of the accreditation system.

The Act changes the system of accreditation from programme accreditation to institution accreditation. Institutions with a positive institution accreditation are entitled to establish and offer new study programmes after these have been pre-qualified and approved. Institutions that have not yet obtained a positive institution accreditation still need to have their study programmes accredited by the Danish Accreditation Institution (AI).

Within the area of higher education, the Danish Evaluation Institute (EVA) conducts different types of cross-sectoral evaluations that can contribute new knowledge and lead to development in the sector.



For more information, please see www.eva.dk and www.akkr.dk.

Internationalisation

Great importance is attached to the internationalisation of education and training in Denmark. The objective is to prepare pupils and students to meet the challenges of a globalised world by including intercultural understanding and international competencies in the entire educational system.

It is the aim of the Danish government that the educational system should give the young people the knowledge and the competences useful in their future life and employment. Education programmes must be of high quality and relevant to the labour market. In order to face the challenges of globalisation, educational institutions should be of high quality with strong academic environments which can attract talented students and researchers and meet the labour market needs.

At governmental level, Denmark is an active partner in the educational cooperation of the EU, the Council of Europe, the OECD, UNESCO and the Nordic Council of Ministers. Furthermore, Denmark is a member of the ENIC Network (Euro-

pean Network of Information Centres) and the NARIC Network (National Academic Recognition Information Centres).

The Bologna process and the overall objective of Europe becoming one large higher education area also play an important role in the development of Danish higher education. The Copenhagen process strengthens European cooperation within vocational education and training. At institutional level, schools and institutions actively participate in international cooperation and exchange programmes, both within Europe and worldwide.

Internationalisation at all levels of the education and training system is supported and promoted by the Danish Agency for Higher Education – an agency within the Ministry of Higher Education and Science. Please read more about the Agency at www.ufm.dk.



Please read more at www.ufm.dk and www.studyindenmark.dk.

Education in Denmark

Provision of high quality education at all levels is essential to ensure competitiveness in today's global society. Thus, Danish education aims to ensure that all young people acquire knowledge and competencies which will qualify them to take an active part in society and contribute to its further development. Education is open to all and generally free of charge. Other characteristic features of the Danish education system include:

High standards

The quality of Danish education is assured in many ways. It is mainly regulated and financed by the State, and all public educational institutions are approved and evaluated on an ongoing basis.

Relevance

Danish educational institutions must provide their students with knowledge and competencies for them to use in their future job and in life in general. Institutions therefore seek to ensure education programmes are of a high quality, are of relevance to society and are oriented towards the needs of the labour market.

Lifelong learning

Lifelong learning is a key principle in Denmark. The idea goes back all the way to the 19th century Danish clergyman and philosopher N.F.S. Grundtvig, who argued that a prerequisite for active participation in a democratic society is education for all citizens on a lifelong basis.

Active participation

Treating pupils and students as independent people with a right to form their own opinion and a duty to participate actively in discussions is a matter of course in Danish education.

Project work

At all levels of the education system, pupils and students attend classes, however, they also carry out project work, either on an individual basis or in small groups. Interdisciplinary activities are also an integrated part of Danish education.



Further information

The Ministry for Children, Education and Gender Equality www.uvm.dk

The Ministry of Higher Education and Science www.ufm.dk

The Ministry of Culture www.kum.dk

Facts & figures

Population:
5.7 million (2014)

Percentage of a year group completing
a youth education programme:
93% (2014)

Percentage of a year group completing
a higher education programme:
62% (2014)

Percentage of a year group of women completing
a higher education programme:
Approximately 69% (2014)

Percentage of a year group of men completing
a higher education programme:
Approximately 55% (2014)

Percentage of total national expenditure
spent on education (incl. State grants):
15.2% (2011)



