

# How to enter education system

## [Law on education in Bulgaria](#)

Education in Bulgaria is mainly supported by the state through the Ministry of Education and Science. The Bulgarian educational system falls within the continental European tradition. The educational system in Bulgaria consists of the following levels:

- Nursery education - for children from 0 to 2 years old.
- Pre-school education - it is for children between 2 and 6 years old. According to the law the children at the age of 5 are obliged to go for preprimary education (not obligatory for younger kids). Children at the age of 6 should either be enrolled in preprimary school or in first grade of school. For the children at the age of 6 parents may decide if they want their kid to be enrolled at school at that age, or wait till 7. 7 is the age at which kids in Bulgaria have to start their elementary education. Education between 5 and 16 is obligatory.
- School education - depending on the type of teaching, schools are non-specialized and specialized (with a certain profile - mathematics, languages, etc.). Depending on the stage or degree of education, non-specialized schools are:
  - elementary (grades I to IV inclusive);
  - primary (grades I to VII inclusive);
  - gymnasiums (grades VIII to XII inclusive) - these can be special profile gymnasiums or vocational gymnasiums;
  - integrated (grades I to X inclusive);
  - secondary (grades I to XII inclusive);



*Students in their classroom in a Sofia school, personal*

Specialized schools shall be schools providing education in the fields of sports, arts, culture and for the needs of religious denominations. Specialized schools shall be:

- sports schools (grades V to XII);
- culture schools (grades I to XII, V to XII, or VIII to XII);
- arts schools (grades I to XII, V to XII, or VIII to XII);
- spiritual schools (grades VIII to XII).

Certificate for Primary Education and Certificate for Elementary Education are obtained upon successful completion of grade 4 and 7 respectively. High schools use grades from the Certificate for Elementary Education as a major admissions criterion. The admission to secondary schools is based upon grades from entry exams, usually in literature and/or mathematics as well as grades in primary school. Students can enroll in high school after the successful completion of grades 7 or 8. The secondary education finishes with 2 state exams - one state exam in Bulgarian language and literature and one in a subject, which the student chooses himself/herself. At the school level, the general curriculum provides opportunities for ethnic minority children to study their mother tongue. In specialized language schools and in the profile-oriented schools, instruction takes place in English, German, Italian, French, Spanish, Hebrew, Russian, and other languages.

The compulsory pre-school and school education at state and municipal kindergartens and schools shall be free for children and pupils. This education is also free for:

- citizens of another Member State of EU;
- citizens of third countries, who hold a permanent residence permit;
- citizens of third countries, entitled to long-term or prolonged stay in the country, as well as members of their families;
- citizens of third countries, admitted in accordance with acts of the Council of Ministers;
- citizens of third countries, admitted in accordance with an international treaty or agreement on these matters;
- citizens of third countries, in accordance with a special law;

- citizens of third countries, seeking or granted international protection in the country;
- foreign minors, seeking or granted international protection in accordance with the Asylum and Refugees Act, shall receive free education and training at state - owned and municipal kindergartens and schools in the Republic of Bulgaria under the terms and conditions applicable to Bulgarian citizens.

The right to free education shall be exercised by not paying tuition fees for the training financed from the state budget. In the cases other than those specified above, citizens of third countries above the compulsory school age shall be educated at state-owned and municipal schools upon the payment of tuition fees at rates per year approved by the Council of Ministers:

- Primary, Primary and Secondary Schools - € 800;
- Profiled high schools and classes - € 900;
- Arts Schools - € 1350;
- Vocational high schools: Transport / Agriculture - € 1500; Business Administration and Administration - € 900; Health Care - € 2000; Other - € 1300.
- Higher education - the types of higher education institutions are Universities, Colleges and Specialized Higher Schools. Higher education in Bulgaria follows the Bologna process, which ensures compatibility with the qualifications on offer across European universities. This means that higher education follows the usual stages of bachelor's (undergraduate), master's (graduate), and doctorate. Undergraduate stage lasts for at least four years. Graduate stage lasts for five years after completion of secondary education or one/two year after obtaining a bachelor's degree. The third stage of higher education results in obtaining a Ph.D. Degree. Specialized higher schools offer degrees in one or more areas of science, arts, sports, medicine. Usually, the names of these institutions indicate the area of specialization. Colleges are former semi-higher institutes. Some of them are part of universities and use their equipment and facilities. There are fifty-one higher educational institutions in Bulgaria offering degrees at undergraduate and graduate levels. The academic year for most Bulgarian universities begins around October 1 and consists of fall and spring semesters. The official language of instruction is

Bulgarian. But academic institutions offer also various programs taught in English, French or German, which are popular among foreign students. Some universities also offer programs which are jointly accredited. English-taught courses are common at master's level and are becoming increasingly common for medical degrees.

On [this website](#) you can see the ranking of Bulgarian universities for 2017. The website provides also direct links to the universities and brief description of each one of them.

Foreign students pay tuition fees which, for the state high academic institutions, are determined annually by the Council of Ministers in euro (the equivalent in levs according to exchange rate 1,95583).

For example in accordance with Ordinance of the Council of Ministers and Rector's order, the annual tuition fees for Sofia University (which is ranked number 1 in Bulgaria) foreign students for the academic 2017/2018 year can be seen at:

[https://www.uni-sofia.bg/index.php/eng/admission/international\\_students/tuition\\_fees\\_in\\_sofia\\_university\\_for\\_the\\_academic\\_2017\\_2018\\_year](https://www.uni-sofia.bg/index.php/eng/admission/international_students/tuition_fees_in_sofia_university_for_the_academic_2017_2018_year)



*Sofia University "St. Kliment Ohridski" - Main building,*  
[source](#)

The taxes for other universities can be seen at their own website (available also in English usually) or at the [website of the State gazette](#), which publishes the ordinances of the Council of Ministers (available only in Bulgarian).

However if the foreign citizen is a citizen with permanent residence or has a refugee status or is a holder of humanitarian protection, then he/she has the right to apply for education in university under the same conditions as Bulgarian citizens. With regard to taxes it means foreigners may pay only the state taxes, asked by each university - also determined annually by the Council of Ministers - but much lower.