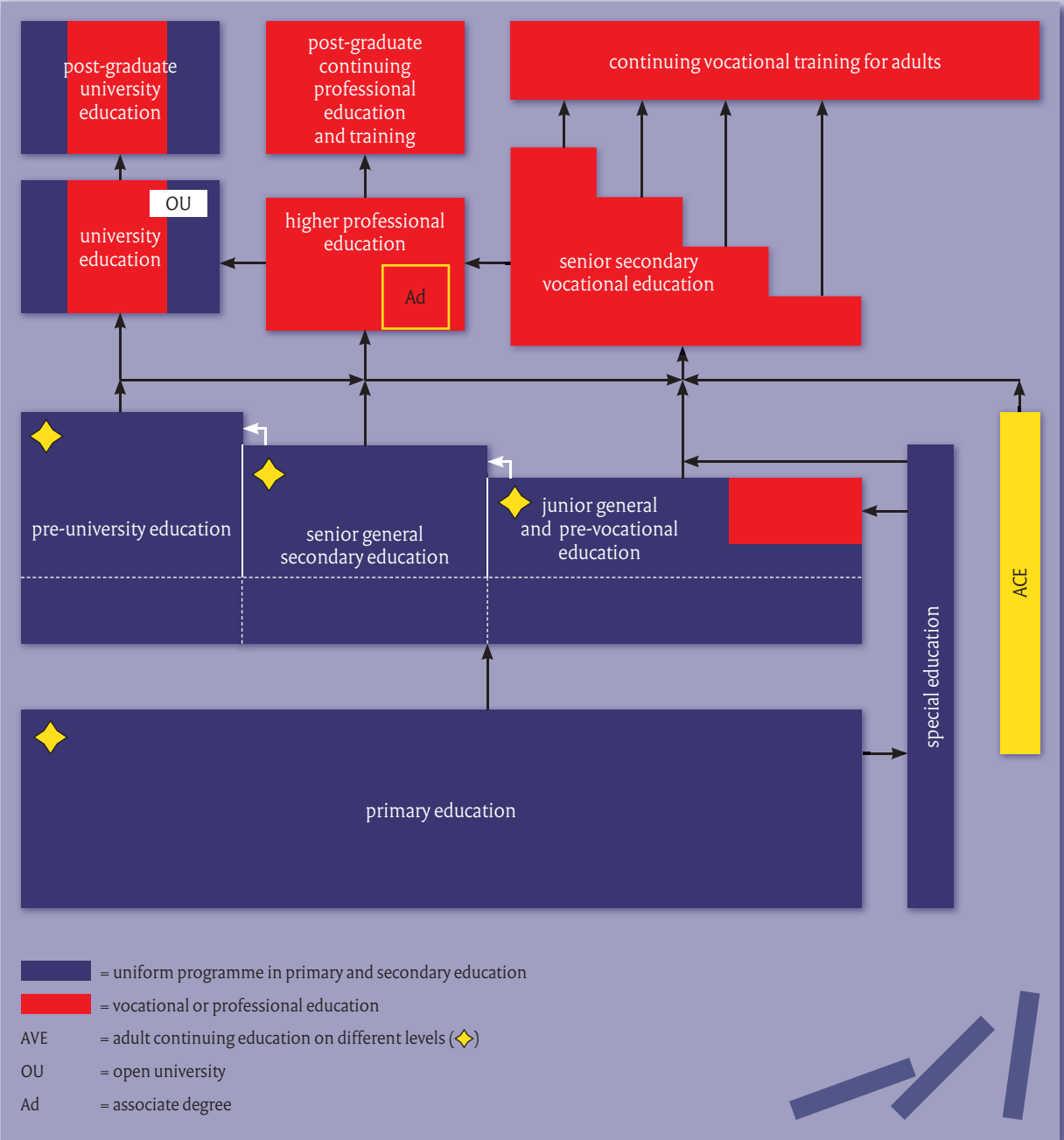




# General education, vocational education and training in the Netherlands



The Dutch system of education and training

The Dutch education and training system comprises the following six main elements:

- primary education
- special education
- (general) secondary education (consisting of 2 phases)
- senior secondary vocational education and adult continuing education
- vocational courses and training for adults
- higher education

Education is compulsory for persons till 16 years of age. The law requires 16-year-olds – on 1 August of any year – to attend part-time education one or two days a week.

## Primary education

Primary education is intended for pupils between 4 and 12 years of age and lasts eight consecutive years (ISCED\*-level 1).

## Special education

Special education is intended for pupils who require more support and guidance due to a mental, sensory or physical handicap.

The admission age varies from three to six, depending on the type of special education involved. Secondary special education is open to pupils between the ages of twelve and twenty (maximum).

Almost half of these pupils move on to some form of vocational education.



‘Back to school together’ is an approach designed to bring about more integration of primary and special education, in order to call out steady increase in the numbers of pupils attending special education. On the secondary level of education special education and junior pre-vocational education work closely together.

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## General secondary education

Secondary education follows primary and special education and is intended for pupils between twelve and sixteen or eighteen years of age. In the initial years (usually two), pupils are taught a uniform programme of education consisting of a number of subjects. This is referred to as basic secondary education. Secondary education comprises two phases including three types of education.

\* ISCED: *International Standard for the Classification of Education.*

Both phases are offered in:

### **Pre-university education (VWO)**

Pre-university education lasts six years and prepares pupils for a course at university or in higher professional education. The final three years are part of the second phase of general secondary education (ISCED-levels 2 + 3).

### **Senior general secondary education (HAVO)**

This type of education lasts five years and prepares pupils for higher professional education. Graduates can also move on to senior secondary vocational education or the fifth year of pre-university education. The final two years form the second phase of general secondary education (ISCED-levels 2 + 3).

Only the first phase of secondary education is offered in:

### **Junior general secondary and pre-vocational education (VMBO)**

This type of education lasts four years (ISCED-level 2). The programme contains general subjects and in the last two years vocational subjects can be followed in different learning paths. Pupils are prepared for follow-up courses in senior secondary vocational education. Graduates from the theoretical learning path can also move on to the fourth year of senior general secondary education.

## **Senior secondary vocational education and adult continuing education**

In The Netherlands, the broad field of secondary vocational education and adult continuing education is referred to as the BVE sector. It runs courses for a highly heterogeneous group of participants.

### **Senior Secondary Vocational Education (MBO)**

Senior secondary vocational education comprises courses for types of work within four sectors: the technical sector, the economic-administrative sector, the service and health care sector and the agricultural sector. The courses vary in level and duration.

The **assistant vocational education course** prepares participants for simple operational work in an occupation. The course lasts no more than one year (ISCED-level 2).

The **basic vocational education course** prepares participants for operational work. The course lasts two or three years (ISCED-level 3).

The **advanced vocational education course** prepares participants to work fully independently. The course lasts three or four years (ISCED-level 3).



The **middle-management course** is designed to train participants to be able to function fully independently and qualify them for all kinds of work. The course usually lasts four years (ISCED-level 3). Graduates can move on to higher professional education.

The **specialist training course** is open to graduates from the advanced vocational education course. The course lasts one or two years (ISCED-level 4).

Senior secondary vocational education is open to pupils who have usually completed the first phase of secondary education. Graduates can move on either horizontally or vertically.

Courses in senior secondary vocational education are run by regional training centres (ROCs), agricultural training centres (AOCs), vocational schools and labour organizations. Organizations not funded by the government can also run courses in senior secondary vocational education.

The courses are designed by employer and employee organizations and the educational establishment, which are represented in national centres of expertise on vocational education, training and the labour market.

The courses are designed along two educational tracks:

- The **dual track**: at least 60% of the course is spent in occupational practice. This is a dual programme (the apprenticeship system).
- The **non-dual track**: at least 20% and no more than 60% of the course is spent on training in occupational practice.



The regional training centres (ROC) also offer courses in general and adult continuing education.

### ***Adult Continuing Education***

There are two main forms of adult continuing education: **Basic education** comprises activities designed to qualify adults to function in both their personal and social lives. Dutch as a second language is part of this form.

**Adult general secondary education (VAVO)** is the part-time form of general secondary education for youth in the first and second phase.

## Vocational courses / Training for adults

Vocational courses for adults, which is sometimes referred to as schooling, focuses on two categories of participants:

### *Job-seekers*

Job seekers can attend courses in senior secondary vocational education and in the private training circuit of institutes not funded by the government. In addition, there were specific centres such as women's training centres (for those re-entering employment) and vocational training centres (retraining and additional training at basic level), which are now privatised or part of the regional training centres.

### *Employees and employers*

There are various forms of training open to employees:

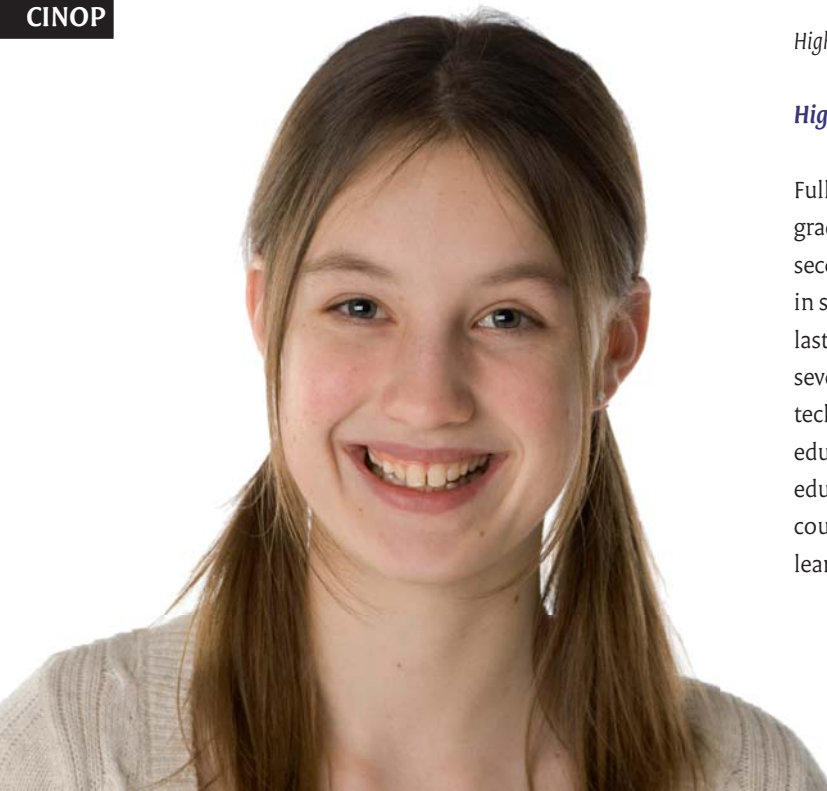
- The part-time equivalents of regular government funded education: part-time senior secondary and part-time higher professional education.
- The two educational tracks of senior secondary vocational education.
- Private correspondence courses, which are primarily vocational in nature.
- Private oral education, which again comprises primarily vocational courses.
- Training courses given outside the company.
- In-company training, off-the-job and on-the-job.

## Higher education

*Higher education consists of two components (ISCED-level 5).*

### *Higher professional education (HBO)*

Full-time higher professional education is open to graduates from pre-university education, senior general secondary education and the middle-management course in senior secondary vocational education. Courses usually last four years. This type of education is divided into seven sectors: agricultural education, teacher-training, technical education, economic education, health care education, social studies and art. Higher professional education is also taught part-time (as part of professional courses for adults) and in combination with work (dual learning).



The four-year programme leads to a Bachelor's degree. Master's degree programmes are being developed.

### **University education (WO)**

University education is split into two phases. The first phase lasts four years (Master's degree course). The second phase, which has limited student capacity, offers post-graduate researcher training. University education is open to graduates of pre-university education and, to a certain extent, graduates of higher professional education. The Open University, on the other hand, which is an institute for higher distance education, is open to people over eighteen years of age and imposes no admission requirements. It is also part of adult continuing education.

Further information: [www.minocw.nl](http://www.minocw.nl)

## **Colophon**

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