

HIGHER EDUCATION SYSTEM OF POLAND

Nowadays in the era of globalisation more and more young people want to obtain education not only in their native countries but abroad as well. Students of our university are not the exception. A lot of them go to Poland that is why we will make a close study of higher education system of this country.

The aim of the thesis is to cover an information about higher education system of Poland.

The study object is polish higher education system, its programmes, admission, curriculum and assessment.

The Minister of Science and Higher Education is responsible for higher education and research, as well as for formulating educational policy with respect to higher education, with support from the General Council of Science and Higher Education.

Higher education institutions (HEIs) enjoy a considerable degree of autonomy. Public HEIs are governed by collective bodies which include a senate and boards of academic units. The statutes of a non-public HEI may provide for a collective body other than the senate. If provided for in the statutes, public HEIs may establish a council in addition to the senate. The collective bodies of a non-public HEI are specified in its statutes. The rector (*rektor*) and the heads of academic units are single-person authorities. The dean (*dziekan*) is the head of the faculty. The statutes of a non-public HEI may provide for another single-person authority in addition to the rector.

Tertiary education currently includes the following types of programmes:

degree programmes provided by both public and non-public university-type and non-university higher education institutions, including:

- first-cycle (Bachelor's degree) programmes;
- second-cycle (Master's degree) programmes;
- long-cycle (Master's degree) programmes;

- third-cycle or doctoral programmes.

Higher education programmes may be offered as full-time or part-time programmes.

According to the Law on Higher Education of 2005, a higher education institution (HEI) may be organised as:

- a university-type higher education institution (*uczelnia akademicka*): where at least one academic unit (e.g. faculty) is authorized to award doctoral degrees;
- a non-university higher education institution (*uczelnia zawodowa*): which offers first-cycle, second-cycle and/or long-cycle programmes, but is not authorised to award the doctoral degree or provide doctoral programmes.

Degree programmes, provided by both university-type and non-university HEIs, include first-cycle programmes, second-cycle programmes and/or long-cycle programmes. 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 second-cycle or long-cycle programmes provides access to third-cycle (doctoral) programmes.

The duration of degree programmes in both university-type and non-university HEIs is as follows:

- **first-cycle (Bachelor's degree) programmes** last a minimum of 6 semesters and lead to a degree of *licencjat* or a minimum of 7 semesters and lead to a degree of *inżynier*, depending on the field of study;
- **second-cycle (Master's degree) programmes** last 3 or 4 semesters and lead to a degree of *magister* or equivalent, depending on the field of study;
- **long-cycle (Master's degree) programmes** last 9 to 12 semesters and lead to a degree of *magister* or equivalent. They are however provided only

in selected fields of study such as medicine, pharmacy, veterinary medicine, dentistry, psychology, law and some art and design areas.

General requirements for admission to degree programmes are the same both for university-type and non-university HEIs.

Access to first-cycle programmes and long-cycle programmes is open to holders of a matriculation certificate, and admission is based on the results of this examination. Thus, HEIs may not organise entrance examinations in the subjects taken by applicants at the matriculation examination. However, each HEI may specify which results of the matriculation examination provide the basis for admission. Additional entrance examinations may be organised by HEIs, upon the consent of the minister responsible for higher education, but only:

- when it is necessary to assess the applicant's artistic skills, physical aptitude or specific knowledge and skills required to follow a particular programme, not assessed during the matriculation examination,
- when the applicant holds an upper-secondary school leaving certificate obtained abroad.

Access to second-cycle programmes is open to holders of a Bachelor's degree, a Master's degree or an equivalent degree.

While respecting these general admission requirements, each HEI may define its own additional admission conditions and procedures, including the number of places available to students, except in medical fields of study (*numerus clausus*). Admission conditions and procedures may be similar across an HEI or may vary according to the field of study. Different conditions and procedures may be applied by different HEIs for the same fields of study. Admission conditions and procedures must be published by each HEI not later than by 31 May of the year preceding the academic year to which they refer.

The academic year in higher education institutions begins on 1 October and lasts until the end of September. It is divided into two semesters. There are two examination periods – in winter and in summer. Apart from the summer

holidays, there are also the following breaks: two weeks of winter holidays (first half of February) and two shorter breaks at Christmas and Easter. Detailed arrangements concerning the academic year are laid down by individual HEIs.

To sum up, we must admit that the Polish education system is not ideal. But there are significant advantages to it - it is respect for the student, understanding of his interests, appreciation of his work and time.

REFERENCES

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WEBSITES

1. General Council of Science and Higher Education (*Rada Główna Nauki i Szkolnictwa Wyższego* – RGSW) www.rgnisw.nauka.edu.pl
2. Ministry of National Education (*Ministerstwo Edukacji Narodowej*) www.men.gov.pl