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Section for Higher Education | Division for Education 2030

Higher Education Report: [Country]

UNESCO National Commission in alliance with Directorate-General for Higher Education

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Abstract

This report on higher education in Portugal, prepared within the scope of the 2022 World Conference on Higher Education, addresses the evolution of the main indicators of tertiary education in Portugal and presents a description of its higher education system, as well as the main challenges facing it. put for the future.

Since 2015, Portugal has witnessed a very positive evolution both in terms of enrolled students and higher education graduates. Currently, half of the 20-year-olds residing in Portugal attend higher education. Regarding tertiary education graduates, in 2020, Portugal exceeded the European target of 40%, with the fraction of the resident population between 30 and 34 years old with higher education reaching 45.5% in the 2nd quarter of 2021.

As for the main challenges for the future, the following stand out: the defined goals of reaching an average rate of attendance in higher education of 6 out of 10 young people aged 20 by 2030 and reaching 50% of tertiary education graduates in the age group of 30-34 years by 2030 and to achieve a European leadership level of digital skills by 2030. To achieve these goals, it is envisaged to reinforce the current political strategy for Higher Education, continuing to strengthen the social base of knowledge support, supported by a clear strategy to support the modernization, qualification and diversification of Higher Education and continue to diversify and specialize the teaching/learning process in higher education, intensifying R&D activity, increasing a strong digital commitment to education, inclusion, literacy digital literacy, in information literacy and in promoting the development of digital skills and the articulation between teaching and research and innovation, as well as an articulation with the companies, the productive sector, the public administration and the social institutions.

Content

Acronyms

A3ES	Agência de Avaliação e Acreditação do Ensino Superior (Higher Education Assessment and Accreditation Agency)
CITE	International Standard Classification of Education
CNA	National Access Contest
CTeSP	Professional Higher Technical Courses
DGEEC	Directorate-General for Education and Science Statistics
DGES	Directorate-General for Higher Education
ECTS	European Credit Transfer and Accumulation System
FCT	Foundation for Science and Technology
HEI	Higher education institutions
IAS	Social Support Index
INE	National Institute of Statistics
NUTS II	Nomenclature of Territorial Units for Statistical Purposes (level 2)
OCDE	Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development
PNAES	National Housing for Higher Education (PNAES),
PRR	Recovery and Resilience Plan
R.A. da Madeira	Autonomous Region of Madeira
R.A. dos Açores	Autonomous Region of the Azores
RAIDES	Registration of Students Enrolled and Graduated in Higher Education
STEAM	Science, Technology, Engineering, Arts and Mathematics
TIC	Information and communication technologies

Presentation

This report was prepared for the purpose of presenting higher education in Portugal within the scope of the 2022 World Conference on Higher Education promoted by UNESCO. In accordance with the established guidelines, emphasis was placed on the evolution of the most significant indicators, namely students enrolled and enrolled in Portuguese higher education institutions, including new enrolments per academic year, graduates in the last ten years, and the higher education institutions by typology and nature of education.

A detailed description of the higher education system in Portugal, its institutional organization, the quality assurance system, and the training offer model fully suited to the European Higher Education Area is presented. Consequently, the study cycles offered are characterized and the respective forms of access are briefly described.

A sub-item dedicated to the characterization of the School Social Action system was introduced, considering its importance in the Higher Education System, and the identified need to continue to broaden the social base of access, and to reinforce incentives and support for attending higher education.

Current situation of higher education

1.1 Historical enrolment and graduation rates

Since 2015, Portugal has witnessed a very positive evolution both in terms of enrolled students and in terms of the number of graduates.

Enrolled and Enrolled Students

Regarding students enrolled, after the drop recorded between 2010 and 2014, the number increased year after year, with a historic maximum of 408,499 students enrolled in higher education in the academic year 2020/2021.

The increase in the total number of higher education students is particularly associated with a new reality induced by short higher education courses (i.e., Professional Higher Technical Courses - CTeSP).

Table 1 - Total students enrolled in Higher Education between 2010/11 and 2020/21, by study cycle

	2010/11	2011/12	2012/13	2013/14	2014/15	2015/16	2016/17	2017/18	2018/19	2019/20	2020/21
CTeSP					395	6 430	11 048	12 780	15 423	17 409	18 128
Licenciatura (1st cycle)	255 812	246 171	231 473	220 787	212 275	211 619	210 963	216 471	219 615	227 075	236 116
Mestrado integrado	61 971	62 687	63 048	62 950	59 941	60 852	60 684	60 993	62 854	62 293	63 351
Mestrado (2nd cycle)	55 145	58 186	54 217	54 751	53 582	54 433	55 684	58 643	62 976	64 957	67 359
Doutoramento (3rd cycle)	18 293	19 213	19 471	20 245	19 465	19 214	19 759	20 452	21 090	21 764	23 545
Total	**391 221**	**386 257**	**368 209**	**358 733**	**345 658**	**352 548**	**358 138**	**369 339**	**381 958**	**393 498**	**408 499**

Source: DGEEC

However, the increase in new enrollments in other study cycles, especially in “mestrado” degrees, also contributed to the overall increase in the number of enrollments.

Table 2 - New students enrolled in the 1st year for the 1st time in Higher Education between 2010/11 and 2020/21, by study cycle

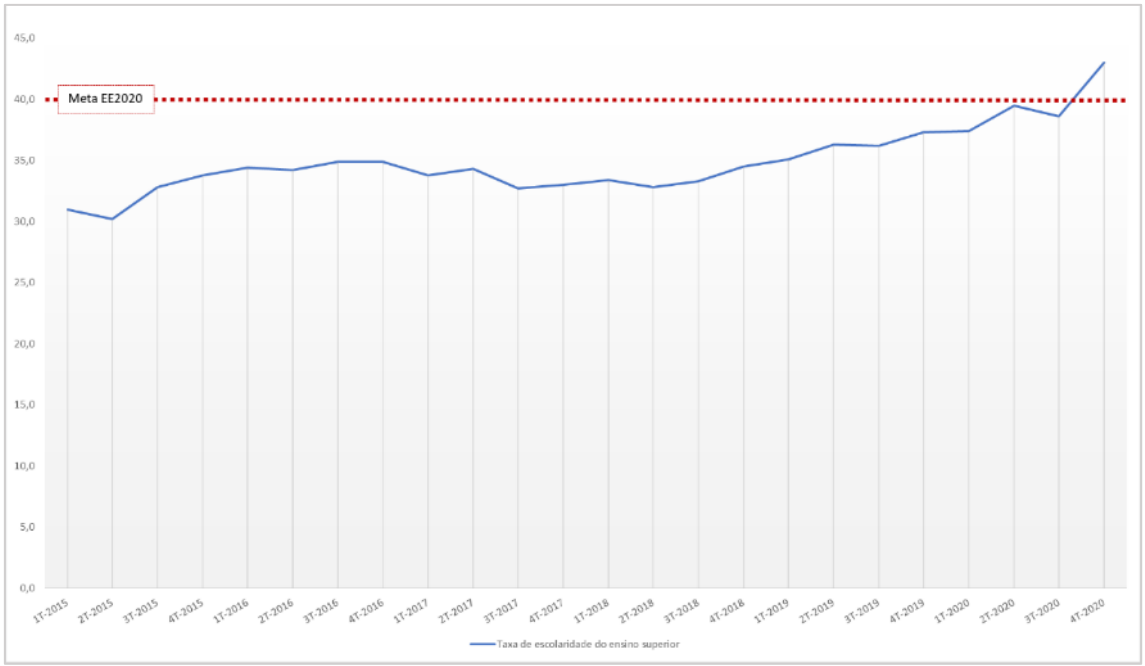
	2010/11	2011/12	2012/13	2013/14	2014/15	2015/16	2016/17	2017/18	2018/19	2019/20	2020/21
CTeSP					395	6 149	6 461	6 965	8 510	9 356	9 685
Licenciatura (1st cycle)	74 397	65 150	60 462	57 777	58 808	60 840	59 684	64 869	64 318	68 174	76 667
Mestrado integrado	11 978	11 595	11 238	10 703	10 614	11 008	11 583	12 021	12 469	12 485	13 132
Mestrado (2nd cycle)	35 798	31 285	27 925	27 597	26 943	27 305	28 432	31 085	33 184	34 886	36 321
Doutoramento (3rd cycle)	5 303	5 217	4 533	4 919	4 492	4 559	4 920	5 277	5 363	5 692	6 139
Total	**127 476**	**113 247**	**104 158**	**100 996**	**101 252**	**109 861**	**111 080**	**120 217**	**123 844**	**130 593**	**141 944**

Source: DGEEC

Graduate students

Portugal has already exceeded the European target for higher education schooling, with the fraction of the resident population aged between 30 and 34 with higher education reaching 43% in the 4th quarter of 2020, surpassing the 40% target for the first time. The schooling rate grew by 4 percentage points compared to 2019 and 16 since 2010. The data obtained in the last quarter correspond to an evolution of 9 p.p. compared to the 4th quarter of 2015 and 16 p.p. when compared to 2010 figures.

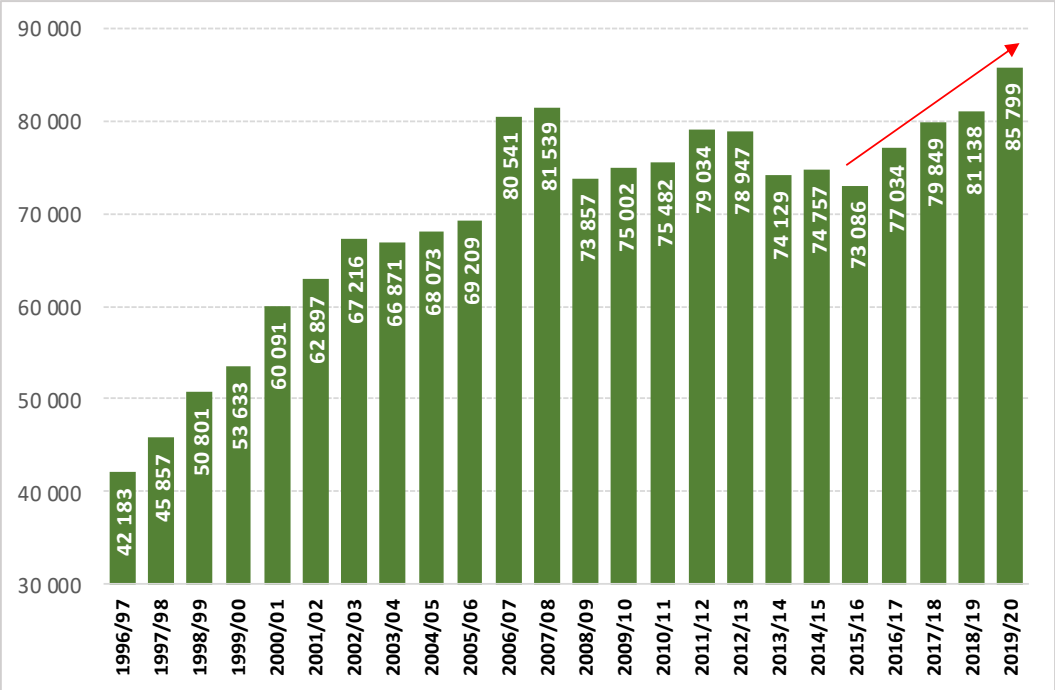
Figure 1 - Quarterly higher education schooling rate of the resident population between 30 and 34 years old (2015-2020)



Source: National Institute of Statistics, Employment Survey. DGEEC.

In fact, in recent years, Portugal has been increasing the number of graduates in higher education courses, from 42,183 graduates in 1996/97 to 85,799 in 2019/20, as can be seen in Figure 2, a figure that corresponds to a historic maximum of graduates, with 4,661 more than in the previous academic year.

Figure 2 - Graduates in higher education courses/cycles – 1996/97 to 2019/20



Source: DGEEC - RAIDES.

The following table shows the evolution of graduates by study cycle since the 2010/11 academic year.

Table 3 - Graduates in higher education between 2010/11 and 2019/20, by study cycle

	2010/11	2011/12	2012/13	2013/14	2014/15	2015/16	2016/17	2017/18	2018/19	2019/20
CTeSP						170	3 213	3 756	4 181	4 791
Licenciatura (1st cycle)	51 504	50 951	51 470	47 593	47 194	46 522	47 280	48 808	49 085	52 832
Mestrado integrado	7 420	7 797	7 698	7 831	8 166	8 469	8 386	8 461	8 279	8 035
Mestrado (2nd cycle)	14 733	18 367	17 316	16 202	16 746	15 553	16 020	16 558	17 490	18 200
Doutoramento (3rd cycle)	1 608	1 859	2 463	2 503	2 351	2 344	2 135	2 266	2 103	1 941
Total	**75 265**	**78 974**	**78 947**	**74 129**	**74 457**	**73 058**	**77 034**	**79 849**	**81 138**	**85 799**

Source: DGEEC - RAIDES.

Enrolled and graduated by Higher Education in Portugal: summary

t should be noted that, currently, more than half of the 20-year-olds residing in Portugal attend higher education, representing a 25% increase in students compared to 2015 (about 12 thousand students between 2015 and 2019/20). These data confirm an evolution towards ensuring that 60% of 20-year-olds are studying in higher education in 2030.

In recent years, there has been a growth in "proximity higher education" through the provision of short higher education courses (i.e., professional higher technical courses), which has been offered in recent years in 134 locations (i.e., 30% of municipalities), while there were only 40 locations in 2015. In 2021, Masters concentrate 16% of those enrolled and grow 4% compared to 2020, reinforcing the important dynamism seen in recent years (growth of 26% since 2014/15). The number of PhD students enrolled in the same year also reached a new maximum, with 23,545 enrolled, growing 8% over the previous year and 22% since 2014/15.

In recent years, Portugal has increased the number of graduates in higher education courses, from 42,183 graduates in 1996/1997 to 85,799 in 2019/2020. It should be noted that Portugal has exceeded the European target for higher education schooling, with the fraction of the resident population between 30 and 34 years old with higher education reaching 45.5% in the 2nd quarter of 2021 (it was 30% in the 2nd quarter of 2021). th quarter of 2015). The schooling rate grew by 4 percentage points compared to 2019 and 16 since 2010. 57% of the degrees awarded were in the areas of "Science, Technology, Engineering, Arts and Mathematics" (ie, STEAM), with a growth of 20% of diplomas in information and communication technologies.

1.2 Quantity and types of higher education institutions

The Portuguese higher education system includes public higher education, made up of institutions belonging to the State and those of a foundational nature instituted by it, and private higher education, made up of institutions belonging to private entities and cooperatives.
Portugal currently has 99 higher education institutions: 36 public and 63 private; 37 university and 62 polytechnic.

Table 4 - Higher education institutions in Portugal, by NUTS II, in 2021-2022

	Total	University Education			Polytechnic Education		
		Total	Public	Private	Total	Public	Private
Portugal	**99**	**37**	**16**	**21**	**62**	**20**	**42**
Norte	34	10	3	7	24	5	19
Centro	18	6	3	3	12	6	6
AM Lisboa	35	16	6	10	19	5	14
Alentejo	6	1	1	0	5	4	1
R.A. Açores	2	2	1	1	0	0	0
R.A. Madeira	1	1	1	0	0	0	0

Source: DGES

Public institutions of higher education have a high level of autonomy, especially university foundations that were created after the last OECD Review.
The regional distribution of higher education in Portugal essentially copies the national

urban landscape. Public institutions cover the entire national territory, presenting a more dispersed pattern than private institutions, which are concentrated in the metropolitan areas of Lisbon and Porto and in regions with greater population.
Public polytechnics are the HEIs that are most spread across the country, being present in 47 different municipalities. Public universities are present in 16 municipalities. Private universities are present in 13 municipalities and private polytechnics in 28. Although the network is dispersed, the municipalities of Lisbon and Porto concentrate a vast number of public and private institutions, courses and enrolled students.

1.3 Legal and institutional framework of higher education

The Portuguese education system is regulated by the Basic Law of the Educational System[1] and is developed at three levels: basic, secondary, and higher education.

Portuguese higher education is organized in a binary system that integrates university education and polytechnic education and is provided in public and private institutions. Private higher education institutions obtain prior public interest recognition from the Government.

University education is guided by a perspective of promoting research and creating knowledge and aims to ensure a solid scientific and cultural preparation and provide technical training that enables the exercise of professional and cultural activities and encourages the development of design skills, innovation, and critical analysis.

Polytechnic education is guided by an applied research and development perspective, aimed at understanding, and solving concrete problems and aims to provide solid cultural and technical training at a higher level, develop the capacity for innovation and critical analysis and provide scientific knowledge of theoretical and practical nature and their applications for the exercise of professional activities.

University education includes universities, university institutes and other university education establishments. Polytechnic education comprises polytechnic institutes and other polytechnic education establishments.

Higher education institutions enjoy scientific, pedagogical, cultural, and disciplinary autonomy.

In 2005, with the start of implementation of the Bologna Process, it was adopted[2] the European Credit Transfer and Accumulation System (ECTS), based on student work, and mobility mechanisms were introduced, such as the diploma supplement, among others.

Higher education has a training offer based on a structure of three study cycles, leading to the academic degrees of “licenciado”, “mestre” and “doutor”. This structure was introduced in 2006[3] and fully implemented in Portugal from the 2009-2010 school year.

For each study cycle, generic qualification descriptors are established[4] based on acquired competences, and ECTS credit intervals are defined for the first and second cycle of studies.

As part of the implementation of the Bologna Process, the legal regime for higher education institutions was also instituted[5], regulating their constitution, attributions and organisation, the functioning and competence of their bodies and, also, the supervision and supervision of

[1] Approved by Law No.46/86, of October 14, later amended by Laws No. 115/97, of September 19, 49/2005, of August 30, republishing and renumbering the diploma, and 85/2009, of August 27.
[2] By Decree-Law no. 42/2005, of February 22, which approved the regulatory principles of instruments for the creation of the European higher education area.
[3] Embodied in the Legal Regime for Higher Education Degrees and Diplomas, approved by Decree-Law No. 74/2006 of March 24, 107/2008, of June 25, 230/2009 of September 14, 1158/2013 of August 7, 63/2016 of September 13, 65/2018 of August 16, and 27/2021 of April 16.
[4] Based on the Qualifications Framework for the European Higher Education Area.
[5] Approved by Law No. 62/2007, of September 10.

the State within the framework of their autonomy. Also, the new legal regime for assessing the quality of higher education, covering the assessment of the quality of both study cycles and higher education institutions themselves, was instituted. In this context, it is the responsibility of the Higher Education Assessment and Accreditation Agency (A3ES), which is an independent body vis-à-vis the state and institutions that aims to promote and ensure quality in higher education, evaluate, and accredit higher education institutions and their study cycles.

The implementation of study cycles that confer an academic degree, requires accreditation by the A3ES and subsequent registration with the Directorate-General for Higher Education (DGES), implying this registration, the recognition with general validity, of the degree or degrees awarded.

The assessment and accreditation criteria are those set out in the legal regimes for higher education degrees and diplomas and higher education assessment.

Study cycles, academic degrees, and diplomas

The licentiate degree can be awarded by university and polytechnic institutions.

The cycle of studies leading to the “licenciado” degree in polytechnic education has a normal duration of six curricular semesters of student work corresponding to 180 credits, or exceptionally, in cases covered by national or European Union legal norms, a normal duration of up to seven or eight curricular semesters of work and training of up to 240 credits.

The cycle of studies leading to the “licenciado” degree in university education has 180 or 240 credits and a normal duration of between six and eight curricular semesters of student work.

In the first cycle of studies of university or polytechnic institutions, the “licenciado” degree is awarded to those who, through approval in all the curricular units that are part of the study plan of the degree course, have obtained the fixed number of credits.

The “mestre” degree is awarded by university and polytechnic institutions. The cycle of studies leading to the “mestre” degree has 90 to 120 credits and a normal duration between three and four curricular semesters of student work or, exceptionally, when it has a strong professional orientation or because of a stable and internationally consolidated practice, 60 credits and a duration of two semesters. The admission conditions in these exceptional cases of masters with 60 credits are suitable for the exclusive recruitment of students with a minimum of five years of experience, duly proven.

In polytechnic education, the cycle of studies leading to a “mestre” degree should predominantly ensure the acquisition of a specialization of a professional nature. In university education, the cycle of studies leading to the “mestre” degree must ensure, predominantly, the acquisition of a specialization of an academic nature using research activity or that deepens professional skills.

In university education, the “mestre” degree can also be awarded after an integrated cycle of studies, with 300 to 360 credits and a normal duration of between 10 and 12 curricular semesters of work in cases where the duration for access to the exercise of a certain professional activity is established by legal rules of the European Union or results from a stable and consolidated practice in the European Union. In this cycle of studies, those who have completed the 180 credits corresponding to the first six curricular semesters of work are awarded a “licenciado” degree.

In the second cycle of studies of university or polytechnic institutions, the “mestre” degree is awarded to those who, through approval in all the curricular units that are part of the master's course study plan and approval in the public act of defending the dissertation, the work of project or internship report, have obtained the number of credits set

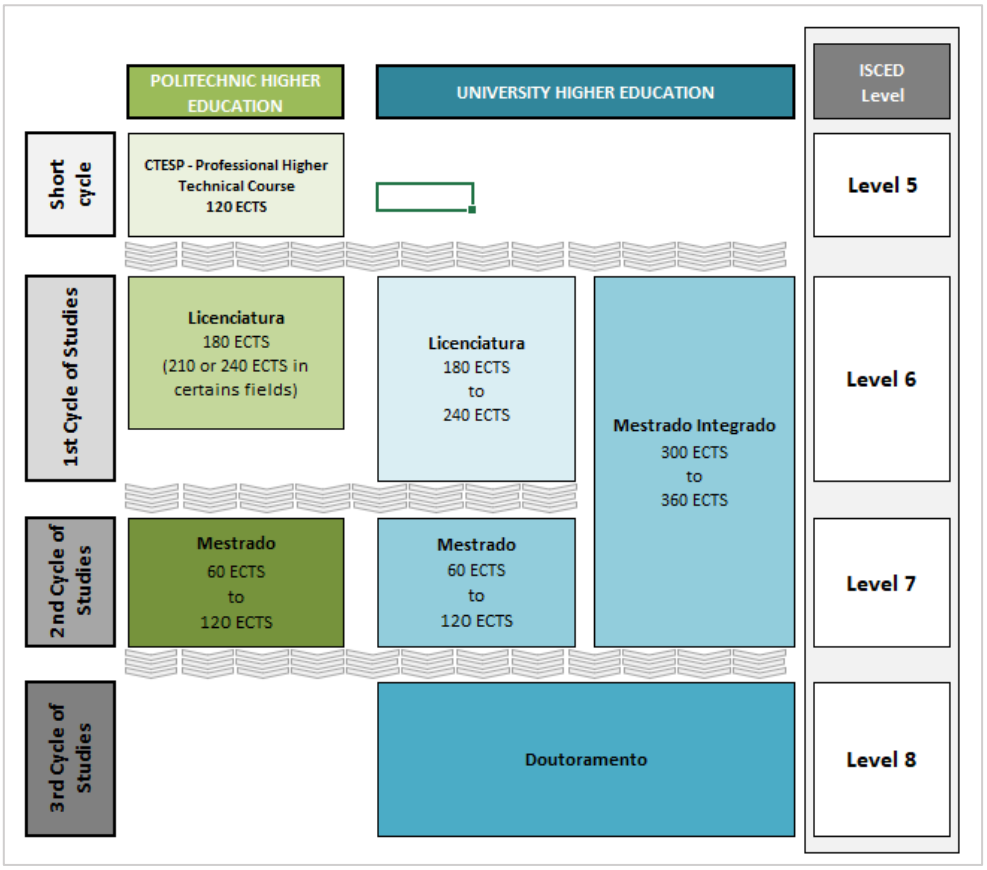
The degree of “Doutor” is awarded by universities and university institutes to those who have passed the curricular units of the doctoral course, when applicable, and in the public act of defending of the thesis.

In 2014, a higher study cycle was created that does not award an academic degree, called the professional higher technical course (CTeSP), which corresponds to the short cycle of studies linked to the 1st cycle of studies considered in the Qualifications Framework for the European Higher Education Area. Higher. This course has 120 ECTS credits, of which 30 are achieved through an internship, and lasts for two years, and the successful completion leads to the award of the professional higher technical diploma.

Higher education institutions may also offer other non-degree courses and award diplomas, namely:

a) For the completion of part of a first cycle of studies not less than 120 credits.
b) Completion of not less than 60 credits of a 2nd cycle of studies.
c) Completion of a doctoral course.
d) By carrying out other courses that do not award an academic degree, integrated in their educational project.

Figure 3 – Diagram of higher education training offer in Portugal



Source: DGES

Access to the first cycle of studies and "mestrado integrado"

1. General regime

National and foreign students wishing to apply to the 1st cycle of studies leading to the "licenciado" degree, or "mestrado integrado" leading to "mestre" degree through the general regime must fulfil the following conditions:

- Have successfully completed a secondary education course or a national or foreign qualification legally equivalent.
- Have taken the entrance exams required for the programme the student wishes to attend with a mark equal or higher than the minimum required (there are higher education institutions that accept foreign tests or exams).
- Have fulfilled the prerequisites (when applicable) of the programme the student wishes to attend.

An annual competition is held by the Directorate-General for Higher Education for admission to public higher education through the general regime. Institutional competitions are held for admission to private higher education through the general regime.

2. Special conditions

Besides the general regime, there are special conditions that apply to:

- Top-level athletes.
- Portuguese citizens on an official mission abroad.
- National or foreign diplomatic staff.
- Permanent staff of the Portuguese Armed Forces.
- Scholarship holders within the framework of cooperation agreements agreed by Portugal.

An annual competition is held by the Directorate-General for Higher Education for admission to public higher education through the special conditions.

3. Special competitions

Besides the general regime and the special conditions, there are special competitions for applicants holding specific qualifications, thus opening higher education to new publics in a lifelong learning perspective, namely:

- Applicants over 23 years old who have passed special exams for assessing their capacity to accede to higher education.
- Holders of other higher education courses, professional higher technical diplomas, and Technological specialization diploma (a postsecondary course certificate).
- Holders of the "licenciado" degree wishing to apply to Medicine.
- International students.
- Graduates from vocational courses in secondary education.

In addition, students who have been or are registered and enrolled in higher education are allowed to apply for readmission or to opt for another institution/programme pairing. The application to higher education through special competitions is made through competitions organized by each higher education institution, apart from the special competition for graduates

of secondary education vocational pathways to study cycles of public higher education institutions, which is managed by the Directorate-General for Higher Education

Access to the second cycle of studies

Those who meet the following conditions may apply to the 2 nd cycle of studies leading to the "mestre" degree:

- Holders of the "licenciado" degree or legal equivalent.
- Holders of a foreign academic degree dully recognised as satisfying the objectives identical to the "licenciado" degree by the relevant scientific body of the higher education institution they wish to be admitted to.
- Holders of an academic, scientific, or professional curriculum vitae that is recognised as attesting to the capacity to carry out this cycle of studies by the relevant scientific body of the higher education institution they wish to be admitted to.

The relevant bodies of each higher education institution are responsible for the regulations, application requirements and selection criteria for admission to this cycle of studies.
The access and admission to the integrated cycle of studies leading to the "mestre" degree is ruled by the same applicable standards to the access and entry into the 1st cycle of studies leading to the "licenciado" degree.

Access to the third cycle of studies

Those who meet the following conditions may apply to the 3 rd cycle of studies leading to the "doutor" degree:

- Holders of a "mestre" degree or legal equivalent.
- Holders of a "licenciado" degree who have a particularly relevant academic or scientific curriculum vitae that is recognised as attesting the capacity to carry out this cycle of studies by the relevant scientific body of the higher education institution they wish to be admitted to.
- Holders of an academic, scientific or professional curriculum vitae that is recognised as attesting the capacity to carry out this cycle of studies by the relevant scientific body of the higher education institution they wish to be admitted to.

The relevant bodies of each higher university or university institute are responsible for the regulation's application requirements and selection criteria for admission to this cycle of studies.

Admission to CTeSP

Those who meet the following conditions may apply to a CTeSP:

- Holders of a secondary education course or legal equivalent;
- Applicants aged over 23 who have passed the special exams for assessing their capacity to attend higher education required for a particular course;
- Holders of Technological specialization diploma, professional higher technical diploma or of a degree wishing to undergo reskilling.

The specific conditions to apply for a professional higher technical course are set by higher education institutions, according to the field of the course. The competitions are held by higher education institutions.

Classification system

The professional higher technical diploma, as well as the "licenciado" and "mestre" degrees are assigned a 10-20 final classification on a numerical scale from 0 to 20, as well as its equivalent in the European scale of comparability of classifications. The academic degree of "doutor" is assigned a final classification pursuant to the regulating standards approved by the awarding university or university institute.

1.4. Another relevant subheading

Portugal has a Social Action system for Higher Education students that aims to respond to their needs, guaranteeing equity in the attribution of social benefits and promoting social action that favors access to higher education and increases success in its attendance.
The support system for higher education students has grown in recent years, not only due to the effort to broaden the social support base for students with economic needs, which has been successively increased, but also through the creation of diverse and complementary support between each other, which seek to encourage mobility and regional development, the inclusion of people with disabilities and academic merit.
The entire system has also been subject to changes and improvements that seek to simplify procedures, reducing response time.

Below are the relevant statistics for each type of support, and respective evolution, for the academic years 2019-2020, 2020-2021 and 2021-2022 (until 31-12-2021).

Grants for Underprivileged Higher Education Students

The process of awarding grants to needy higher education students is regulated by the Regulation for the Awarding of Grants to Higher Education Students, in the wording of Order No. 9276-A/2021 (2nd series) of 20 of September.
In the academic years from 2019-2020 to 2021-2022, there was an increase in the number of applications submitted, more pronounced from 2019-2020 to 2020-2021, but with a tendency to remain in 2021-2022, which was also reflected an increase in the number of students with a grant and a reduction in the number of rejected applications.

Table 5 – Number of applications submitted, grants awarded and rejections (grants for students in need

	Applications submitted	Grants awarded	Rejected applications
2019-2020	97 219	72 172	24 278
2020-2021	102 370	78 248	22 185
2021-2022	104 065	62 003	12547

* Data as of 12-31-2021. the number of applications submitted includes those that are not yet associated with a higher education institution.
Source: DGES

As of the 2020-2021 school year, the eligibility threshold for granting the grant was increased, with regard to the annual per capita income of the household, to 18 times the value of the Social Support Index (IAS), which was previously set at 16 times the IAS. This change contributed to the increase in grants awarded from that academic year onwards.
On the other hand, from that academic year onwards, the minimum scholarship, previously corresponding to the tuition fee actually paid, up to the limit of the maximum tuition fee set for the 1st cycle of studies in public higher education, began to correspond, for the first time,

to the a value higher than the tuition fee (125% of the tuition fee actually paid, up to a limit of 125% of the maximum tuition fee set for the 1st cycle of studies in public higher education).

Table 6 – Average scholarship value (grants for needy students)

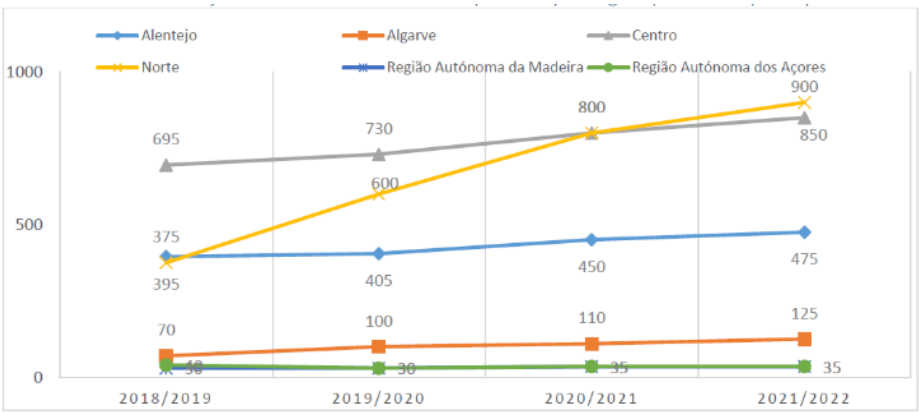
School Year	Average grants value	Average grants with complements
2019-2020	1 455,42€	1 584,20€
2020-2021	1 331,23€	1 474,38€
2021-2022	1 355,43€	1 448,71€

* Data as of 12-31-2021.
Source: DGES

+Superior Program mobility grants

The +Superior Program is a measure that aims to encourage and support the attendance of higher education in regions of the country with lower demand and lower demographic pressure by economically disadvantaged students who usually reside in other regions, contributing to territorial cohesion by retaining young people in these regions.
The process of awarding mobility grants for the +Superior Program is regulated by an annual Regulation, which, among other things, sets the number of new grants to be awarded per region.
This number of new grants has been successively increased each year since the inception of the Program in 2014-2015 but has been particularly significant from 2019-2020 onwards.

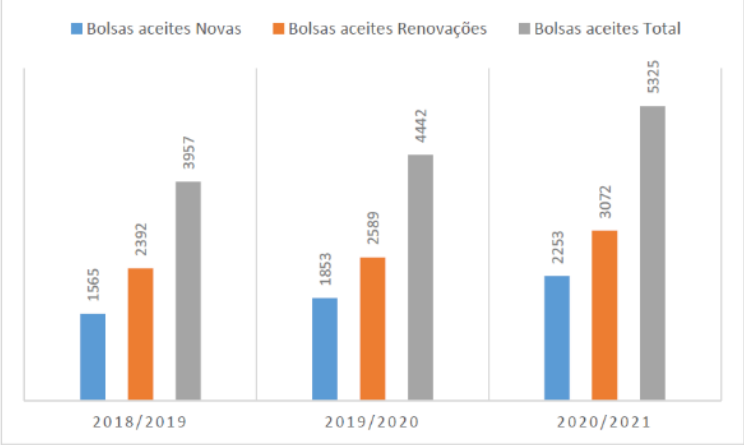
Figure 4 – Evolution of the number of new grants available by region (+Superior grants)



Source: DGES

The number of candidates for new +Superior grants has also been increasing, having been very significant from 2018-2019, due to the anticipation of the application start date (at the same time as the National Call for Access in Higher Education), suffering a decrease in 2021-2022 by a later start and shorter period.
The increase in the number of new grants available, together with the increase in the number of candidates, has resulted in an increase in the number of grants accepted, both new and in total, including renewals of grants awarded in previous years.

Figure 5 – Number of new, renewed and total Grants (+Superior grants)



Source: DGES

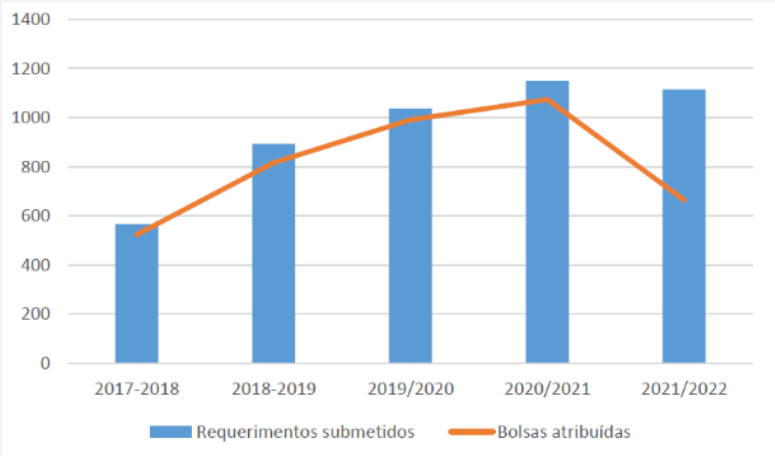
The annual value of the mobility grant was increased as of the 2019-2020 academic year, from €1500 to €1700, and from €1725 to €1955 in the case of major grants (students enrolled in professional higher technical courses and who have entered by the regime for people over 23 years old).

Scholarships for students with a disability equal to or greater than 60%

Attendance grants for students with a disability equal to or greater than 60% were created in 2017-2018 to promote access to higher education and the inclusion of citizens with special needs.

The process of granting this support is regulated by the Regulation for the Attribution of Scholarships for Attendance to Higher Education for Students with a disability equal to or greater than 60%, approved by Order No. 8584/2017 (2nd series), of the 29th of September. Since its creation, the number of applications has been increasing, also resulting in an increase in the number of grants awarded.

Figure 6 – Evolution of the number of applications submitted and grants awarded (grants for students with disabilities)



Source: DGES

Students enrolled in a higher education institution who prove their degree of disability through a medical certificate of multipurpose disability are eligible for this support.

The value of the grant for students with a disability equal to or greater than 60% corresponds

to the value of the tuition fee actually paid. In the academic year 2019-2020, as determined by the State Budget Law for 2019, this grant was limited to the maximum tuition fee for the "licenciado" degree. As of the academic year 2020-2021, and pursuant to the State Budget Law for 2020, the limit became the maximum amount of the tuition fee granted by FCT, IP, to obtain a doctorate degree in Portugal, currently set at €2750.

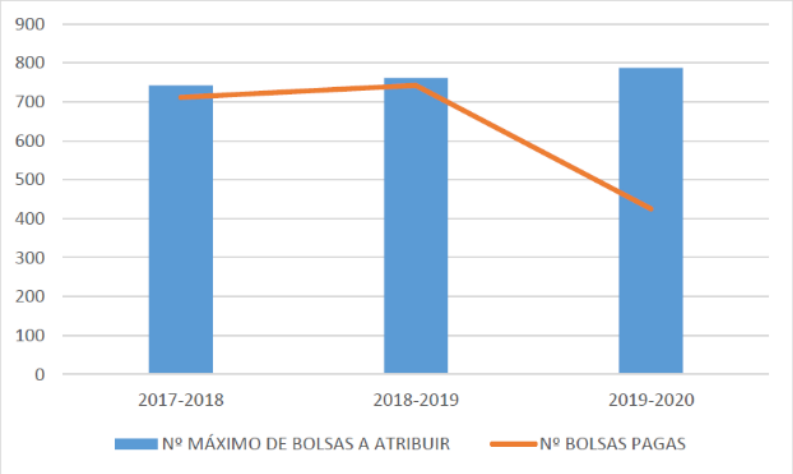
Merit Grants

Merit Scholarships are for outstanding students, regardless of income.

The process of awarding merit scholarships is regulated by the Regulation for the Attribution of Merit Scholarships to Students of Higher Education Institutions, approved by Order No. 13531/2009 (2nd series), of 9 June, amended by Order No. 7761/2017 (2nd series), of 4 September.

The maximum number of merit scholarships to be awarded in each academic year depends on the number of students enrolled (according to official statistical information provided by the DGEEC) and the calculation assumes the full completion of the academic acts of that academic year.

Figure 7 – Evolution of the maximum number of grants to be awarded and of grants paid (merit grants)



Source: DGES

The value of the grant corresponds to five times the value of the guaranteed minimum monthly remuneration in force at the beginning of the academic year in which it is awarded, which in 2019-2020 corresponded to €3,000.

Current challenges in higher education

Challenge 1

Achieving an average higher education attendance rate of 6 out of 10 of young people aged 20 by 2030 (while today it is 5.1 out of 10), as well as expanding the qualifications of the entire population, ensuring a 50% of graduates of tertiary education in the 30-34 age group by 2030 (while in the 2nd quarter of 2021 it was 45.5%).

Ensuring an effective process of European convergence by 2030 requires continuing this trajectory of recent years and ensuring four of the challenges that Portugal faces, namely:

i. broadening the social basis of participation in higher education towards a knowledge-based society;
ii. diversify and specialize the teaching/learning process in higher education, intensifying R&D activity and the articulation between teaching and research;
iii. employing better, with more and better integration between education, research and innovation and an articulation with companies, the productive fabric, public administration, and social institutions; and
iv. reinforce and expand the internationalization of higher education and R&D activities, stimulating the attraction of qualified human resources to Portugal in close articulation with new economic activities of greater added value.

The democratization of access to higher education and the strengthening of its diversity and regional expansion implies:

i. to stimulate the gradual modernization of the offer and its quality, including in the STEAM areas (science, technology, engineering, arts and mathematics), namely through the implementation and consolidation of the Youth STEAM Impulse Program within the framework of the implementation of the PRR;
ii. guarantee the training of adults and lifelong training processes, namely through the support of activities and postgraduate schools, including the implementation and consolidation of the Adult Impulse Program within the framework of the implementation of the PRR;
iii. continue to reinforce proximity higher education and the importance of short higher education courses (namely CTeSP), expanding the movement of recent years with its expansion to adult training and postgraduate training;
iv. to stimulate international offers and the entry of non-national students, with the possibility of working legally in Portugal, encouraging the attendance of higher education in Portugal, essentially for students from Portuguese-speaking countries;
v. to encourage collaborative networking between higher education institutions;
vi. improve the evaluation model of higher education institutions, considering their diversity and ensuring the stability of human resources, and
vii. to promote settlement agreements by objectives, as already started within the framework of the implementation of the Impulso Jovem STEAM and Impulso Adultos programs of the PRR, and encouraging synergies between education, research and innovation activities, protecting the differentiation of their dimensions and promoting the circulation between careers.

It also implies reinforcing school social action in higher education, reinforcing incentives and support for attending higher education in regions of the country with lower demand and lower demographic pressure by economically disadvantaged students who usually reside in other regions and implementing the reinforcement of the Plan's funding. National Housing for Higher Education (PNAES), guaranteeing the construction and rehabilitation of 15 thousand beds by 2026, doubling the current public offer at regulated prices.

Challenge 2

Achieve a European leadership level of digital skills by 2030.

The digital economy will continue to be one of the drivers of economic activity in the coming decades, and it is essential to ensure that the Portuguese population will increasingly have the necessary and adequate qualifications to succeed in this digital transition, which implies a

strong digital commitment in education, in inclusion, in digital literacy, in information literacy and in promoting the development of digital skills. Thus, it is intended to reinforce digital skills by 2030 for a labour market increasingly based on knowledge and advanced information systems, supported by a strong community of cutting-edge companies that produce and export technologies based on artificial intelligence, as well as supported by activities of excellence in R&D. AI-based technologies will be easily available to promote the efficiency and quality of a wide range of activities, and Portugal should position itself at the forefront of teaching, research and innovation in "responsible AI".

Although Portugal is not far from the European average in terms of digital skills, it needs to be reinforced, particularly with regard to the skills needed to increase the use of the Internet. To this end, it will be necessary, on the one hand, to invest in the qualification of the young population and, on the other hand, to retrain our human resources. The existing education and training infrastructures in Portugal and the strong potential of its human resources make this challenge feasible, despite requiring the mobilization and combination of efforts of different areas of governance and civil society. For this purpose, in 2017, the Portuguese Government created the "Initiative National Digital Competence e.2030, Portugal INCoDe.2030", an integrated public policy program aimed at promoting digital competences.

This alignment, the Portugal INCoDe.2030 initiative is envisaged in a broad scope for the integrated promotion of digital development, starting with digital inclusion and literacy, passing through the education of the new generations, from childhood, by the qualification of the active population to specialization of people licensed to occupy advanced digital jobs and research, in order to make the country an effective driver of new digital developments, seeking, in all dimensions, to create opportunities for a higher participation of girls and women.

Towards 2030 and beyond: recommendations for the future

Recommendation 1.

Reinforce the ongoing political strategy for Higher Education, continuing to strengthen the social base of support for knowledge, supported by a clear strategy to support the modernization, qualification and diversification of Higher Education, including the enhancement of polytechnic education and the internationalization of institutions, in addition to the effective reinforcement of social support for students and promoting an increasingly effective democratization of access to higher education, namely through:

- Encouraging students from the vocational paths of secondary education to enter higher education;
- Continue to reinforce direct and indirect social support for students, facilitating access to higher education for all students who complete secondary education:
  a) reinforcement of the number and value of grants to be awarded annually;
  b) reinforcement of grants to support participation in 2nd cycles, namely by reinforcing the component of support for the payment of tuition fees up to the amount practiced at the 3rd cycle;
  c) reinforcement of student loans;
  d) promoting the increase of students with special educational needs, enhancing their higher education and professional integration and contributing to the creation of more inclusive academic communities (namely, guaranteeing free admission to higher education for students with disabilities equal to or above 60%);
  e) reinforcement of the number of new grants awarded under the +Superior Program (aimed at students attending institutions in regions of the country

with lower demand and lower demographic pressure;

f) Continue to reinforce the Accommodation of Higher Education Students at regulated prices;

g) Continue to strengthen "proximity higher education", especially through short initial training courses offered by polytechnic education;

Recommendation 2.

Continue to diversify and specialize the teaching/learning process in higher education, intensifying R&D activity, increasing a strong digital commitment to education, inclusion, digital literacy, information literacy and promoting the development of digital skills and articulation between teaching and research and innovation, as well as articulation with companies, the productive sector, public administration and social institutions.

- Continue to create conditions for the development of digital skills through the National Digital Skills Initiative (INCoDe2030)
- Promotion of higher-level training, reinforcing the offer of professional higher technical courses in the digital area, as well as graduate and postgraduate training of a professional nature.
- Training of young people through the reinforcement of digital skills in all levels and modalities of education and training.
- Adult training, namely the active ones, providing them with the digital skills valued in the integration and reintegration into the labour market and with a view to job qualification and the creation of greater added value in the economy.

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