

*Version: 13/05/2022*

**UNESCO National Commission Country Report Template**

Under the UNESCO World Higher Education Conference ([WHEC2022](#))

[Section for Higher Education](#) | Division for Education 2030

**Higher Education Report: Thailand**

UNESCO National Commission in alliance with

**the Ministry of Higher Education, Science, Research and Innovation**

(International Affairs Division)

Bangkok, 30 March 2022

**Abstract**

The Thai higher education has transformed dramatically in the past decade. The foremost movement is the establishment of the Ministry of Higher Education, Science, Research and Innovation to spearhead the country economic and social development through human capital development, research enhancement and innovation production. Thus, its main missions are to formulate and implement higher education, research and innovation policies, as well as strengthen and prepare the country to address the current and future challenges. This report will present the movement of Thai higher education, consisting of the current status, challenges and recommendations towards 2030 agenda to achieve the SDGs.

**Content**

Abstract ..... 1

Content..... 2

Acronyms..... 3

Presentation ..... 4

Current situation of higher education..... 4

    1.1 Historical enrolment and graduation rates..... 4

    1.2 Quantity and types of higher education institutions ..... 5

    1.3 Higher education policy inThailand..... 5

    1.4 Thai higher education standards and quality assurance .....6

Current challenges in higher education ..... 6

Towards 2030 and beyond: recommendations for the future ..... 7

References..... 8

Annexes ..... 9

    Annex 1..... 9

    Annex 2..... 12

**Acronyms**

1.	Buddhist Era	B.E.
2.	Higher Education	HE
3.	Higher Education Institution	HEI
4.	Ministry of Higher Education, Science, Research and Innovation	MHESI
5.	Ministry of Science and Technology	MOST
6.	National Research Council of Thailand	NRC
7.	National Statistical Office	NSO
8.	Office for National Education Standards and Quality Assessment	ONEQA
9.	Office of the Higher Education Commission	OHEC
10.	Thailand Research Fund	TRF

## Presentation

This report is based on data from Office of the higher education commission (OHEC), Ministry of Education. In 2020, the OHEC had merged with Ministry of Science and Technology (MOST), National Research Council of Thailand (NRCT), and Thailand Research Fund (TRF) and became the Ministry of Higher Education, Science, Research and Innovation (MHESI).

## Current situation

### 1.1 Enrolment and graduation rates

In 2021, the total enrolment in higher education institutions was 1,586,852. Of them, approximately 90 percent were in bachelor's degree. The rest were in graduate programs, including master's, doctoral and graduate and higher graduate diploma. The number of enrolment has been decreasing since 2013, reflecting the demographic change to an ageing society. Table 1 shows the number and trend of higher education enrolment in Thailand.

**Table 1:** Number of student's enrolment classified by levels education

Academic year	Bachelor's degree	Graduate diploma	Master's degree	Higher Graduate diploma	Doctoral degree	Total
2012	1,817,830	5,543	189,089	1,227	21,433	2,035,122
2013	1,875,149	5,559	198,292	1,442	25,397	2,105,839
2014	1,820,931	3,822	188,156	1,523	24,487	2,038,919
2015	1,827,924	7,976	179,578	1,317	24,824	2,041,619
2016	1,737,305	8,014	146,777	1,025	23,829	1,916,950
2017	1,681,170	10,689	131,343	1,761	24,472	1,849,435
2018	1,603,222	9,707	108,639	1,792	25,558	1,748,918
2019	1,512,945	8,660	94,878	1,544	23,838	1,641,865
2020	1,492,785	8,960	102,375	1,228	26,951	1,632,299
2021	1,441,790	11,158	103,658	1,299	28,947	1,586,852

In 2021, the number of graduate was 363,031. It slightly increased from 2020, and the trend is upward. The detail is in Table 2. More information is accessible at <http://info.mhesi.go.th/info/>

**Table 2 -** Number of graduation classified by levels education

Academic year	Bachelor's degree	Graduate diploma	Master's degree	Higher Graduate diploma	Doctoral degree	Total
2012	226,193	51,350	29,858	51	1,556	263,008
2013	217,464	1,849	29,104	156	1,813	250,386
2014	249,919	3,006	25,121	195	1,491	279,732
2015	262,809	1,216	38,356	751	2,973	306,105
2016	220,768	2,547	27,608	392	2,475	253,790
2017	304,411	4,642	34,194	259	3,992	347,498
2018	303,019	4,817	31,329	336	3,905	343,406
2019	325,824	4,458	28,080	335	4,298	362,995
2020	315,484	5,196	24,158	616	4,065	349,519
2021	323,603	4,743	28,863	546	5,276	363,031

According to the National Statistical Office (NSO), Thailand data, the number of students will continue to decrease due to lower birth rate. In addition, it is relevant to the growing number of elder population

indicating that Thailand is becoming aged society. Those details of Thailand's demography population (in Thai language) can be accessed from <http://statbbi.nso.go.th/staticreport/page/sector/th/01.aspx>

## 1.2 Quantity and types of higher education institutions

There are 155 accredited higher education institutions under MHESI's jurisdiction, comprising:

### 1.2.1 Public higher education institutions (83);

- Autonomous universities (26)
- Public universities (10)
- Rajabhat universities (Former teacher college) (38)
- Rajamangala Universities of Technology (9)

### 1.2.2 Private higher education institutions (72)

List of 155 Thai higher education institutions under MHESI can be achieved from [https://drive.google.com/file/d/1lhQyi0MJ7RCcMbY5a2z7XmI\\_wJ4Kctq/view](https://drive.google.com/file/d/1lhQyi0MJ7RCcMbY5a2z7XmI_wJ4Kctq/view)

Apart from higher education institutions under MHESI, there are specialized higher education institutions under Ministry of Defence, Ministry of Interior, Ministry of Tourism & Sports, Ministry of Transport, Ministry of Culture, and Ministry of Public Health. Their purpose is to produce personnel in specific profession aligning with their missions.

## 1.3 Higher Education Policy in Thailand

### 1.3.1 Government Policy focuses on;

(1) Education, learning, and fostering religions, arts and culture by (a) reforming formal, informal and non-formal education systems and learning process, (b) promoting lifelong learning to enhance people's capacity at every age group (c) promoting technical and vocational education, as well as community-college education to produce skilled workforce, and (d) enhancing the quality and adequacy of teacher, both pre-service and in-service ones.

(2) Developing and promoting the application of science, technology, research and development and innovation by (a) creating ecosystem for an innovative society through STEM education; (b) alleviating the gap between education production and the needs of real sectors, particularly graduate competencies, (c) linking the learning process and employability, (d) encouraging researchers in public research agencies/centers to work with the private sector, (e) encouraging technology transfer and commercialization through the cooperation between SMEs and research agencies and academic institutions, and (f) utilizing science, technology, research and development and innovation to the government's mega projects.

### 1.3.2 Higher Education Policy Framework

(1) The 15-year plan on higher education (2008-2022) focuses on enhancing the quality of higher education and lifelong learning process. The goals are to ensure the ability of higher education sector in producing high quality graduates and developing workforce

in the labor market. These are the basis of the country's competitiveness. The detail (in Thai language) can be achieved from <http://www.sci.ubu.ac.th/assets/upload/files/HEPlan-Final.pdf>

(2) The 20-year plan on higher education (2018-2037) focuses on reforming higher education system, particularly in higher education administration and outcomes within current and future contexts, and future global changes. The detail (in Thai language) can be achieved from <https://drive.google.com/file/d/1geeJmx53EbXli6QbwJiuGryBvfXxZPeS/view>

(3) Thai Higher education plan on building and developing manpower (2021-2027) focuses human development and capacity building, research ecosystem building and higher education transformation. The human development and capacity building focuses on developing manpower with competencies the country needs. In addition, it stresses the importance of digital technology in promoting education accessibility. On the research promotion issue, the MHESI categorizes research into three groups, including research to address social issues, research to enhance competitiveness and research to strengthen community and reduce disparity. The higher education reform aims at developing higher education institutions based on each one's strength and role in the country and community development. Details (in Thai language) can be achieved from [https://drive.google.com/drive/folders/12UzeAe3hODVrQkhhHB\\_NMAjeJwMda3v](https://drive.google.com/drive/folders/12UzeAe3hODVrQkhhHB_NMAjeJwMda3v)

#### 1.4. Quality assurance in Thailand higher education

**1.4.1 Laws and Regulations** - According to the Ministerial Regulation on Educational Quality Assurance B.E. 2561 (2018), each level and educational type is subjected to be assessed, monitored, and audited by the Office for National Education Standards and Quality Assessment (Public Organization), or ONESQA.

The assessment is based on five areas as indicated in the Ministry of Education Announcement on Higher Education Standards B.E. 2561 (2018):

- (1) learner outcomes;
- (2) research and innovation;
- (3) academic services;
- (4) arts, culture and Thai identity; and
- (5) instructional management

Details are in Annex 1 and 2.

**1.4.2 Quality Assurance Systems** consist of the external quality assurance (EQA) and internal assurance (IQA). The EQA is conducted by ONESQA as mentioned above. The internal assurance (IQA) has been prepared in the self-assessment report. The report consists of the assessment of study program, faculty and institution. The MHESI has developed and utilizes the QA online system as a central QA database. The system facilitates all HEIs to prepare the self-assessment report more systematically. In addition, MHESI has constantly encouraged Thai HEIs to work in collaboratively with leading institutions around the world to heighten the of instructors and programs, as well as to enhance quality and foster internationalization of Thai higher education.

#### 1.4.3 Thai Qualification Framework (TQF)

The TQF has been implemented since 2009, and become an overarching framework for Internal Quality Assurance (IQA). (It covers six levels of higher education. There are five domains of learning outcomes: 1 (ethical and moral development, 2 (knowledge, 3 (cognitive skill, 4 (interpersonal skill and responsibility, and 5 (analytical and communication skills. These domains serve as a minimum standard requirement for a qualification framework of each area

of study .The implementation of TQF is supported by Ministry of Education Regulations which identify the period and required credit hours for each level of study, as shown in Table 3.

**Table 3:** Thai Qualifications Framework for Higher Education (TQF)

Level of Study	Required Credit	Domains of Learning				
		Ethical and Moral Development	Knowledge	Cognitive	Interpersonal and Responsibility	Analytical and Communication
1. Associate Degree	At least 90	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Habits of acting ethically</li> <li>• Moral standards</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Specific facts</li> <li>• Concepts, principles, theories</li> <li>• Procedures</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Applying knowledge</li> <li>• Analyzing situation</li> <li>• Critical thinking</li> <li>• Creative problem solving</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Work in group</li> <li>• Exercise leadership</li> <li>• Accept personal and social responsibility</li> <li>• Plan their own learning</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Math and IT literacy</li> <li>• Communicate in oral and written form</li> </ul>
2. Bachelor	From 120 to 180					
3. Graduate Diploma	At least 24 after Bachelor					
4. Masters	At least 36 after Bachelor					
5. Higher Graduate Diploma	At least 24 after Masters					
6. Doctoral	At least 36 after Masters					

Source :Office of the Higher Education Commission

### Current challenges in higher education

Technology and digital disruption and COVID-19 pandemic are the foremost challenges for Thai higher education. These challenges have unprecedented impact of how people live, learn and work, for instance the emergence of online and hybrid learning, self and part-time employment and necessary competencies. To address these issues, Thailand has tried to re-adjust, re-position, and re-invent itself to keep pace with national and global contexts, including

- (1) The promotion of lifelong and multidisciplinary learning for all learners, including student, workforce and elderly as Thailand is an ageing society,
- (2) The implementation of National Credit Bank to increase opportunities for students to learn across institutions accessibility to learners, regardless of their location, age and socio-economic status,
- (3) The correspondent between graduate's outcomes and the labor market needs, to enhance the graduate and workforce's employability. Thailand is moving toward the outcome-based education and skill-oriented learning process.

The details (in Thai language) of the white paper can be seen from NXPO's website at <https://www.nxpo.or.th/สมุดปกขาวระบบอุดมศึกษา/>

### Towards 2030 and beyond: recommendations for the future

Apart from national framework in higher education policy, Thailand also adopts the UNESCO 2030 agenda for sustainable development as a part of long-term country development. To

*Version: 13/05/2022*

support the attainment of the SDGs, the MHESI aims to ensure inclusive and quality education and promote lifelong learning for all. Obtaining a quality education can lead to sustainable development. In addition to enhancing quality of life, access to inclusive education can equip one with knowledge to develop innovative solutions to global problems.

To acquire inclusive and quality education, balancing and prioritizing the role of each level of education should be considered to realize their potential. The early childhood prepare a basic foundation for successful learning, primary and secondary education should be accessible and delivered with quality. The vocational and higher education should emphasize innovative approach to broaden the opportunities for students to further their education in practical ways.

Apart from accessibility to quality education, the MHESI promotes the Bio, Circular and Green (BCG) economy as the backbone of the country development. The BCG model focus on balancing economic development and environmental sustainability. The four industrial sectors are identified as flagships under this model, including agri-food system, energy, health services, and tourism and hospitality management. The MHESI envision that the BCG model and these four sector will propel the country to the high-income status and ensure the environmental sustainability in the process.



## List of References

	Page	Details
1.	4	Enrolment and graduation rate of Thai graduates (in Thai language) <a href="http://info.mhesi.go.th/info/">http://info.mhesi.go.th/info/</a>
2.	5	Thailand's demography population (in Thai language) <a href="http://statbbi.nso.go.th/staticreport/page/sector/th/01.aspx">http://statbbi.nso.go.th/staticreport/page/sector/th/01.aspx</a>
3.	5	List of 155 Thai higher education institutions under MHESI (in English) <a href="https://drive.google.com/file/d/1lhQyi0MJ7RCcMbY5a2z7XmI_wJ4Kctq/view">https://drive.google.com/file/d/1lhQyi0MJ7RCcMbY5a2z7XmI_wJ4Kctq/view</a>
4.	6	The 15-year plan on Thai higher education (2008-2022) (in Thai language) <a href="http://www.sci.ubu.ac.th/assets/upload/files/HEPlan-Final.pdf">http://www.sci.ubu.ac.th/assets/upload/files/HEPlan-Final.pdf</a>
5.	6	The 20-year plan on Thai higher education (2018-2037) (in Thai language) <a href="https://drive.google.com/file/d/1geeJmx53EbXli6QbwJiuGryBvfXxZPeS/view">https://drive.google.com/file/d/1geeJmx53EbXli6QbwJiuGryBvfXxZPeS/view</a>
6.	6	Thai Higher education plan on building and developing manpower (2021-2027) (in Thai language) <a href="https://drive.google.com/drive/folders/12UzeAe3h0DVrQkhhHB_NMAjeJwMdta3v">https://drive.google.com/drive/folders/12UzeAe3h0DVrQkhhHB_NMAjeJwMdta3v</a>
7.	7	the White Paper of Thai higher education as in the context of developed country (in Thai language) <a href="https://www.nxpo.or.th/th/สมุดปกขาวระบบอุดมศึกษา/">https://www.nxpo.or.th/th/สมุดปกขาวระบบอุดมศึกษา/</a>

Annexes

Annex 1

Page 3  
Volume 135 Section 11 *kor* Government Gazette 23 February B.E. 2561 (2018)

---

(Garuda emblem)

**Ministerial Regulation**  
On Educational Quality Assurance  
B.E. 2561 (2018)

---

By virtue of Article 5 of the National Education Act B.E. 2542 (1999) amended by the National Education Act (Volume 2) B.E. 2545 (2002) and Article 47 Paragraph 2 of the National Education Act B.E. 2542 (1999), the Minister of Education hereby issues this ministerial regulation as follows:

**Article 1.** The Ministerial Regulation on the System, Criteria and Methods of Educational Quality Assurance is hereby annulled.

**Article 2.** In this regulation:  
"educational quality assurance" means assessing, monitoring and auditing quality in accordance with educational standards for institutions at each level and of each educational type by means of a mechanism for overseeing and auditing the educational quality management system put in place by the institution for the purpose of improving and building confidence in stakeholders and the general public of the institution's ability to provide quality instruction in line with educational standards and to achieve the objectives of the body to which the institution is attached or of the supervisory body.  
"Office" means the Office for National Education Standards and Quality Assessment (Public Organization).

**Article 3.** Each educational institution shall establish an internal educational quality assurance system that defines the institution's educational standards in accordance with the educational standards for each level and for each educational type as stipulated by the Minister of Education; institutions shall also devise and implement an educational development and management plan focusing on quality in line with educational standards; institutions shall conduct internal assessments and inspections of educational quality and monitor operating performance for the purpose of improving educational quality in accordance with educational standards, and submit an annual report of the self-assessment to the body to which the institution is attached or to the supervisory body.

To ensure that quality assurance procedures as in the paragraph above proceed smoothly and efficiently, the body to which the institution is attached or the supervisory body is charged with providing advice, assistance and guidance so that the institution's quality assurance progresses consistently.

**Article 4.** Once the body to which the institution is attached or the supervisory body is in receipt of the annual self-assessment report, it shall forward the report together with any issues in need of assessment and inspection which have been gathered from relevant bodies or from the institution's stakeholders to the Office for use as data in the external assessment.

The Office shall conduct an assessment and inspection of the institution's quality and educational standards and send a report of its findings together with any recommendations to the institution and the body to which it is attached or the supervisory body for use as guidelines in improving educational quality in the future.

In the execution of Paragraph 2 above, the Office may appoint a certified individual or organization to conduct the quality assessment and inspection of educational standards of an institution.

The body to which the institution is attached or the supervisory body shall use the performance report to improve the institution's educational quality as in Paragraph 2 for the purpose of raising educational quality and standards.

**Article 5.** The Minister of Education is empowered to interpret and resolve any problems pertaining to the execution of this ministerial regulation.

Given on the 20<sup>th</sup> of February B.E. 2561 (2018)  
Theerakiat Charoensethasilpa  
Minister of Education

**Remark:** The reason for issuing this ministerial regulation is that guidelines for implementing the Ministerial Regulation on Systems, Criteria and Methods of Educational Quality Assurance B.E. 2553 (2010) do not correspond to actual principles of educational quality assurance. As a result, internal and external quality assurance procedures are not related. This has created unwarranted complications, inaccuracies and a general failure to reflect actual conditions, while placing an unnecessary burden on educational institutions, their staff, the bodies to which they are attached, oversight agencies and external organizations. For this reason, it has been deemed appropriate to amend the educational quality assurance system, criteria, and methods such that they serve as a mechanism for facilitating operations in line with educational standards for each level and improving educational quality more effectively.

Annex 2

Page 19  
Volume 135 Section 199 *ngor* Government Gazette 17 August B.E. 2561 (2018)

**Ministry of Education Announcement**  
On Higher Education Standards  
B.E. 2561 (2018)

By virtue of the Constitution of the Kingdom of Thailand B.E. 2560 (2017), the National Education Act B.E. 2542 (1999) amended (Volume 2) B.E. 2545 (2002), the 20-year National Strategy of the National Economic and Social Development Plan Volume 12 B.E. 2560-2564 (2017-2021), and the National Education Plan B.E. 2560-2579 (2017-2036) which places emphasis on human and social development as the foundation for national strength and stability; physical, emotional and intellectual preparedness and the possession of 21<sup>st</sup>-century skills; moral and ethical integrity; respect for law; leadership, and an appreciation for the preservation of Thai values in an international context, while also seeking to foster an educational environment that leads to lifelong learning; creates instructional methods that promote a learning society in which Thai people participate in the development of innovations which contribute to improvements in the quality of life and society;

The Higher Education Commission has, therefore, deemed it appropriate to revise higher education standards in line with national education standards to serve as a mechanism at the ministerial, Higher Education Commission, and work unit levels for promoting educational quality assurance in accordance with the principles stated above, based on ongoing monitoring, auditing, assessment, and development; these higher education standards covering learner outcomes, research and innovation, academic services for society, art, culture and the Thai identity, and instructional management in accordance with the capacities and individual character of the type of institution, while emphasizing social responsibility and accountability in order that the key goal is met, namely the provision of education which produces higher education graduates who are Thai people corresponding to national strategies and a key driving force in the nation's development toward strength, stability, prosperity and sustainability;

By virtue of Article 8 and Article 16 of the Ministry of Education Regulatory Act B.E. 2546 (2003), the Minister of Education with the advice and consent of the Higher Education Commission at its meeting (8/2561) of 13 June B.E. 2561 (2018) hereby issues this Ministry of Education Announcement as follows:

**Article 1.** This Ministry of Education Announcement is called "Ministry of Education Announcement on Higher Education Standards B.E. 2561 (2018)."

**Article 2.** This announcement shall come into effect as of the day following the date of its publication in the Government Gazette.

**Article 3.** The Ministry of Education Announcement on Higher Education Standards dated 7 August B.E. 2549 (2006) is hereby annulled.

**Article 4.** Higher education standards consist of standards in these five areas as follows:

- (1) Standard 1: learner outcomes

(1.1) is a knowledgeable and capable individual with a range of general knowledge enabling him/her to practice a right livelihood that provides for a stable and acceptable quality of life for him/herself, his/her family, the community and society; possesses skills for lifelong learning and is moral, hard-working, determined, perseverant, and respectful of professional ethics.

(1.2) contributes to the development of innovations; possesses 21<sup>st</sup>-century skills; can synthesize knowledge from various fields in order to improve social conditions or address social problems; has entrepreneurial know-how and is aware of current changes in society and the world at large; can create opportunities and give added value to him/herself, the community, society and nation;

(1.3) is a solid citizen with ethical and moral courage; upholds what is right and understands the value and importance of preserving the Thai identity; contributes to the long-term peace and well-being of the family, society, and local and global communities.

(2) Standard 2: research and innovation

The institution of higher education has a body of research that generates and finds applications for new knowledge; develops innovations or intellectual property with clear connections to economic, social, arts and culture, and environmental conditions and in accordance with the institution's capacities and particular character; it participates in a network of institutions of higher education, and government and private-sectors organizations both within Thailand and abroad; its research and innovations respond to national strategies and the needs of Thai society, the local community, government and private sectors, and the country as a whole; research and innovations have a significant impact on the development of learners, contribute to improvements in the quality of life, or create opportunities for added value and enhance the country's ability to compete in the global sphere.

(3) Standard 3: academic services

The institution of higher education provides appropriate academic services suited to the given context and respond to the needs of the local community and society at large, in line with its own level of expertise and particular character; these services are offered in cooperation with other institutions of higher education and with government and private-sector organizations both in Thailand and abroad; they are transparent, clearly defined and accountable; and outcomes aim at enhancing the long-term strengths of learners, their families, communities, society and the nation.

(4) Standard 4: arts, culture and Thai identity

The institution of higher education provides for instruction, research or academic services aimed at transmitting or generating knowledge and understanding of art and culture, and at adapting and applying Thai and foreign art and culture in appropriate ways in line with its own level of expertise and particular character; the outcome of the institution's art and culture activities is the development of a sense of pride in the Thai identity or the creation of opportunities and added value for learners, the community, society and the nation.

(5) Standard 5: instructional management

(5.1) the higher education institution has programs and instructional methods aimed at the integrated development of learners in line with desired characteristics and in response to national strategies and the country's economic, social and environmental needs, in cooperation with the local community, society, business and the private and public sectors;

(5.2) the higher education institution operates in accordance with stated mission and vision while the management of human and other educational resources complies with the principles of good corporate governance; shows respect for diversity and academic freedom; and is efficient, effective, transparent and accountable.

(5.3) the higher education institution has implemented a quality assurance system which provides for efficient and effective monitoring, auditing, assessment and development of educational management at the program, faculty and institutional levels; there is regular and ongoing oversight of educational management and operations in accordance with stated missions and the ministerial regulation on educational quality and in compliance with curriculum standards at the higher education level, the National Qualifications Framework for Higher Education and other standards prescribed by the Ministry of Education.

Given on the 20<sup>th</sup> of July B.E. 2561 (2018)  
Theerakiat Charoensethasilpa  
Minister of Education