



Refugees Country Briefing

Iran

This document was developed in the framework of the EU-funded project “Refugees and Recognition – REACT” by the ENIC-NARIC centres of Norway, Italy, the Netherlands, Ireland and the Germany.



The European Commission support for the production of this publication does not constitute an endorsement of the contents, which reflects the views only of the authors, and the Commission cannot be held responsible for any use, which may be made of the information contained therein.

This country briefing – especially developed to help with the evaluation of credentials of refugees, displaced persons and persons in a refugee-like situation – should give orientation on the education system in Iran in the light of recent political and economic developments in this country. It presents a systematised overview on its higher education system and links to the available information sources that are useful for the evaluation of qualifications of refugees coming from Iran, even in cases where candidates present insufficient or lack of documentation.

Iran



Source: Ministry of Foreign Affairs Iran

Official name: Islamic Republic of Iran

Location: Iran is a country in the Middle East, bordering Turkmenistan, Azerbaijan and Armenia to the north, Afghanistan and Pakistan to the east, the Persian Gulf to the south and Turkey and Iraq to the west.

Population: 82,021,564 (July 2017 est.)

Ethnic groups: Persian, Azeri, Kurd, Baloch, Lur, Arab and Turkmen.

Languages: the official language of Iran is Farsi (Persian).

1. History and current situation

The Islamic Republic of Iran was formerly known as Persia and is one of the world's oldest nations in the world with a history dating back tens of thousands of years with changing dynasties and rulers. In the late 18th century, foreign powers, including Britain and Russia, took control of parts of Persia. In 1921, a Persian army officer, Reza Khan, sought to end outside influence and took control. In 1935, he renamed the country Iran. His son, Mohammad Reza Pahlavi, eventually became the shah of Iran.

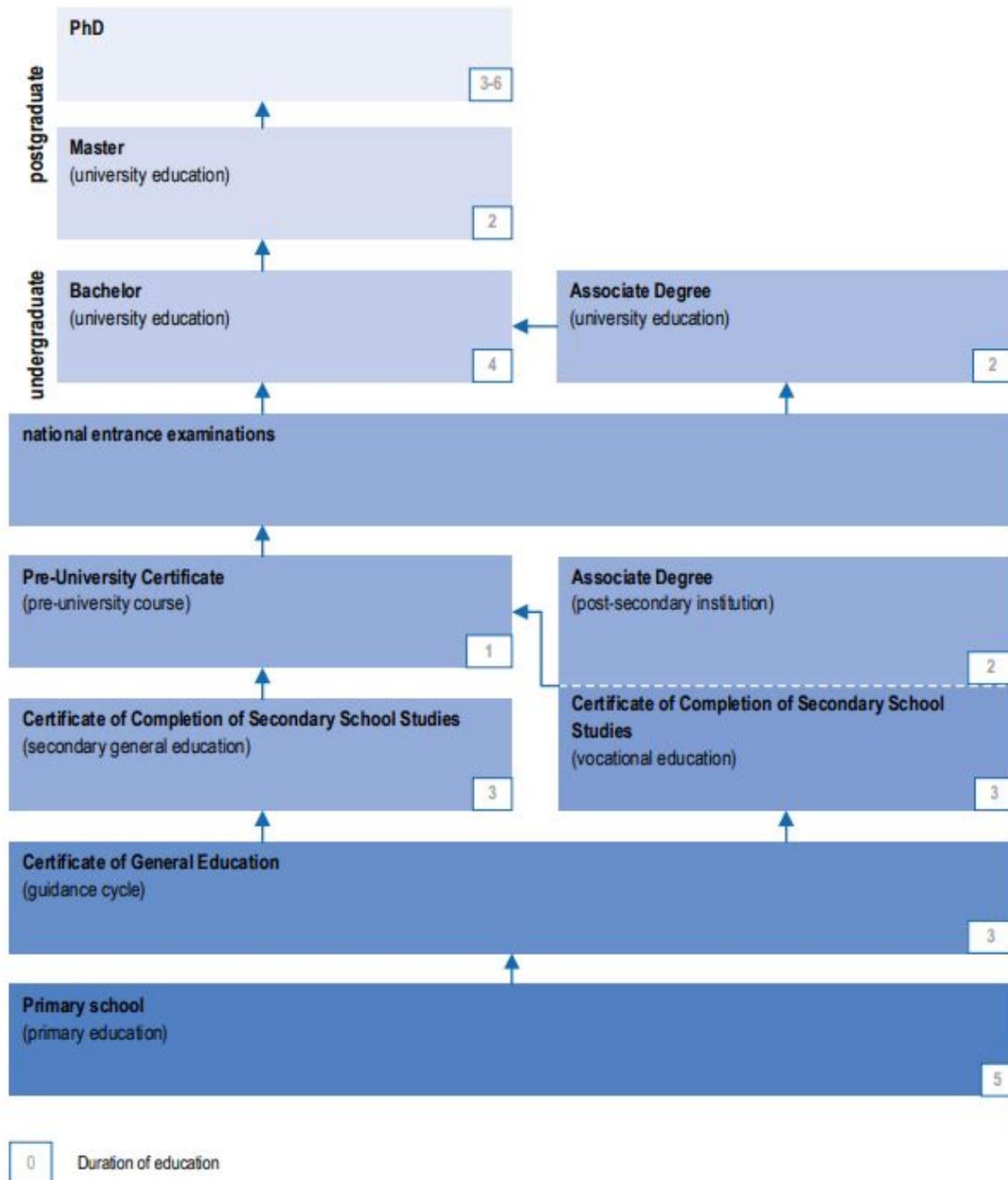
In 1979, tensions inside the country forced Pahlavi to flee, ending the reign of the shahs in Iran. Following the 'Islamic revolution of 1979' Iran became the Islamic Republic of Iran. Since then highly conservative religious leaders have ruled the country. The Supreme Leader is the highest power in the land and appoints the heads of the judiciary, military and media. He also confirms the election of the president. The first supreme leader was Ayatollah Ruhollah Khomeini, whose years in power were marked by a long war and tensions with other nations. During the period 1980-88, Iran fought an indecisive war with Iraq that eventually expanded into the Persian Gulf and led to clashes between the United States and Iran. Khomeini died in 1989 and in the same year Ayatollah Ali Khamenei was appointed for life.

Iran is extremely rich in natural resources and has the second largest reserves in the world. However, poor economic planning, sanctions by Western countries and (past) conflicts have kept Iran poor and isolated. In 2013 Hassan Rouhani was elected as president. He is regarded as a moderate figure with efforts to reach out to the world and rebuild the struggling economy. Nevertheless, much of the tensions with the United States still exist today and Iran's economy remains unstable.

The state of human rights in Iran has been criticized both by Iranians, NGO's and international human right activists. Human rights abuses are still widespread; people are persecuted for political views, gender, race/religion and sexuality. The biggest wave of Iranian refugees occurred during the 1980s and 1990s, following the fall of the shah, the Islamic revolution and the war between Iraq and Iran.

Regarding higher education, almost all universities in Iran were closed after the Islamic revolution. Between 1980 and 1983 there was a revision of the curriculum and the university system was nationalized and desecularized. With the new curriculum the focus was shifted to ideology and religion, 'Islamisation' of the education system was implemented on all levels. Today, the Iranian education system faces challenges. Internally, conservative factions of the regime see higher education as an ideological tool; externally, sanctions imposed by the West make universities' everyday operations significantly harder. Besides that, Iran faces a shortage of educational opportunities at graduate level, a factor which has contributed to the out-migration of academics.

2. Education chart



Source: <https://www.nuffic.nl/en/subjects/education-and-diplomas-iran/>



3. Education System

Primary and Secondary Education

The central government exerts strong control over education. The Iranian Ministry of Education is responsible for primary and secondary education. Basic education is compulsory and lasts until grade 9. Before 2012, the basic education cycle lasted 8 years and was divided into a five-year primary education cycle and a three-year lower secondary (guidance cycle). Reforms adopted in 2012 have extended the primary cycle to 6 years, lengthening basic education to a total of 9 years.

Certificate of General Education

- Duration of schooling: 3 years.
- Type of education: lower general secondary education.
- Purpose of diploma: access to upper general secondary education.

Certificate of Completion of Secondary School Studies (technical/vocational programme)

- Duration of schooling: 3 years.
- Type of education: vocational secondary education.
- Purpose of diploma: access to Associate Degrees at a postsecondary technical institute, or to pre-university courses.

Certificate of Completion of Secondary School Studies (academic programme) (until early 1990s)

- Duration of schooling: 4 years.
- Type of education: general secondary education.
- Purpose of diploma: access to higher education.

Certificate of Completion of Secondary School Studies (theoretical programme) (since early 1990s)

- Duration of schooling: 3 years.
- Type of education: secondary general education.
- Purpose of diploma: access to a pre-university course.

Pre-University Certificate

- Duration of schooling: 1 year.
- Type of education: upper general secondary education.
- Purpose of diploma: access to higher education.



The secondary education underwent a reform in 2012, whereby the pre-university level was removed and an extra year was added to primary education. Pre-University Certificates will no longer be conferred as of September 2019 and students will be able to access higher education upon completion of secondary education.

Higher Education

Higher education is provided by state universities and private institutions. During and after the revolution private institutions were taken over by the government. The ban on private institutions was lifted in the late 1980s, mainly in an attempt to lighten the government's financial burden. The largest private institution is Islamic Azad University.

Except for medical schools, all state-run universities are under the direct supervision of the Iranian Ministry of Science, Research and Technology. Medical schools are under the supervision of the Ministry of Health, Treatment, and Medical Education. The Supreme Council of the Cultural Revolution is the highest authority and controls the policy and regulations in the higher education area.

Completion of the *Konkur* (National University Entrance Examination) is required to enter a higher education programme (except for when applying to the Islamic Azad University, which has its own entrance examinations). The *Konkur* is a competitive entrance examination that tests student knowledge in Persian language and literature, history, a foreign language and mathematics. Students that fail are allowed to repeat until they pass.

Types of qualifications

Associate degree (*kârdânî*)

- Duration of schooling: 2 years.
- Type of education: professional or research oriented.
- Purpose of diploma: access to the third year of bachelor's programmes.

Bachelor (*kârshenâsî*)

- Duration of schooling: 4 years.
- Type of education: professional or research oriented.
- Purpose of diploma: access to university master's programmes, if the diploma is obtained with good grades.
- If someone enters the third year of a bachelor's degree after obtaining an associate degree, their bachelor's degree is known as a discontinuous bachelor (*kârshenâsî*)

napayvasteh). A continuous bachelor (**kârshenâsî payvasteh**) means someone has studied the entire bachelor programme.

Professional Doctorate

- Duration of schooling: 5-7 years
- Type of education: professional.
- Purpose of diploma: access to certain professions.
- Architecture, dentistry, pharmacy and veterinary science require 5 or 6 years of full-time study. Medicine requires 6 or 7 years.

Master (**kârshenâsî-arshad**)

- Duration of schooling: 2 years.
- Type of education: professional or research oriented.
- Purpose of diploma: access to doctoral programmes, if the diploma is obtained with good grades.
- If someone enters the master's degree programme after obtaining a bachelor's degree, their master's degree is known as a discontinuous master (**kârshenâsî-arshad napayvasteh**). A continuous master (**kârshenâsî-arshad payvasteh**) or Integrated master's degree is a unified degree (bachelor and master) in some professional specialisations such as architecture.

Grading system

A grading system ranging from 0 to 20 is applied throughout the different levels of the Iranian education system. What is regarded as 'satisfactory' grade can however vary. An average score of 10 is required in elementary education to transfer to the next year, with a 7 being regarded as 'satisfactory' (apart from Persian, in which a minimum grade of 10 is required). In higher secondary education and higher education up to the master level, a 10 is considered 'satisfactory'. At the master level, a 12 is considered a passing grade and an average score of 14 is required to transfer to the next year and to graduate. At the doctorate level, a score of 14 is required in every subject. The academic year begins in September and ends in June.

4. Certification/Documentation samples

- The file for secondary and higher education should contain a diploma as well as an overview of subjects/marks, both in Farsi, accompanied by a sworn translation.

- English translations are usually authorized by the Ministry of Justice. Authorized translations do not provide confirmation of authenticity.
- Higher education graduates are sometimes only issued a temporary certificate. Possible reasons for this are that students still owe fees or have not completed the military service that's typically required following undergraduate studies.
- For more information, please contact your national ENIC-NARIC centre.

5. Useful sources and links

- Website of the Iranian Ministry of Science, Research and Technology in [English](#) and in [Persian](#). The English version contains a list of some of the [recognized public universities](#), the Persian version contains a list of [all the different types of recognised institutions](#). These lists also include contact information for the institutions.
- [Iranian calendar converter](#)

Existing country profiles

- [Education system Iran, Nuffic](#)
- [Education in Iran, WES](#)
- [The Islamic Republic of Iran, Its Educational System and Methods of Evaluation, ECE](#)
- [World Data on Education Iran, UNESCO](#)

6. Evaluation tips and recommendations

- It is possible to email the Ministry of Science, Research and Technology to verify the accreditation of an educational institution: cisc@msrt.ir
- Link to good practices: [EAR HEI manual Chapter 12 Refugees](#)

References

- <https://www.nuffic.nl/en/subjects/education-and-diplomas-iran/>
- <https://wenr.wes.org/2017/02/education-in-iran>

