

# Higher Education System

Thai Higher education is divided into three levels, i.e. lower than bachelor's degree level, bachelor's degree level, and graduate level.

## Undergraduate Level

### Associate Degree and Diploma

Associate Degree program is designed to develop both the knowledge and skills for employment in an administrative or para-professional field, and the foundation of theoretical knowledge and research that provides the basis of further studies leading to a Bachelor degree. Applicants for this level of study must complete upper secondary education or equivalent. A two-year Associate degree which offered by Rajabhat universities requires a minimum of 60 credits, and a three-year program requires a minimum of 90 credits. In addition, Community colleges offers study program leading to associate degree with a minimum of 84 credits.

### Bachelor's Degree

Bachelor's Degree studies require four years of full-time study in most courses with a minimum of 120 credits, with the exception of some academic disciplines, e.g. Architecture, five years with a minimum of 150 credits; Medicine, Dentistry, Veterinary Medicine, and Pharmacy, six years with a minimum of 180 credits. Programs are structured in groups of general education studies in Sciences, Liberal Arts, and Social Sciences relevant to the course's discipline and Philosophy. Specialized studies in theoretical and advanced subjects are the core group, with a number of selective subjects. To obtain the Bachelor's Degree, students must obtain at least 2.0 average grade point.

In addition, continuing undergraduate programs require a minimum of 72 credits. Applicant for continuing undergraduate programs must obtain higher vocational education certificate or equivalent or associate degree complete upper secondary education or equivalent for a five or six year program.

## Graduate Level

### Master's Degree

Further post-graduate studies for a Master's Degree require a minimum of two years' further study with a minimum of 36 credits. Students with graduate grade points average 2.5 and above may choose to enter the Master's program of direct or related disciplines. Program modules comprise advanced course work and research. Liberal Arts and Social Science programs offer an alternative of comprehensive study and examination in place of a thesis, whereas all Science and Applied Science programs require a research thesis. To obtain the Master's Degree, students must obtain at least 3.0 average grade point.

### Higher Graduate Diploma

A higher graduate diploma is an advanced professional qualification provided in a limited number of specialized fields that required professional studies between the levels of master and doctor. It is used primarily in medicine and related studies. Students must have completed a Master degree or equivalent prior to admission and the program requires a minimum of 24 credits with a maximum of 3 academic years of study.

## **Doctoral Degree**

The doctoral degree represents the highest level of post graduate study. Applicants must either complete their bachelor degree program with excellent study record or master degree or equivalent. Studies for a Doctorate normally requires on average 3-years of intensive research and knowledge acquisition. A doctoral thesis is expected to contribute to the highest level of academic advancement in the discipline. Students are also expected to produce study reports and give academic seminars during the course. Applicants for this level of study holding Masters has to earn at least 48 credits to complete degree. Applicants holding Bachelor has to earn at least 72 credits to complete degree.

## **Innovations**

A significant innovation during the Development Planning Period was the initiation of two open admission universities: Ramkhamhaeng and Sukhothai Thammathirat, which opened in 1971 and 1979 respectively. These two universities provide an effective and economical way to respond to the growing public demand for access to higher education. Both make use of modern technologies such as radio and television to broadcast tutorials to a wider audience. As a result, the two universities presently share around sixty per cent of all tertiary enrolments. Currently, Ramkhamhaeng University also delivers closed admission study programmes in 16 undergraduate programmes as well as all of its master's and doctoral degree programmes.

Suranaree University of Technology, founded in 1990, is the first public university in the country to operate independently from the government bureaucracy with its own autonomous administration system and with government financial support in the form of block grants. It was hoped that it would become a model for other public universities seeking to become autonomous in the future. Walailak University, the second of its kind, opened its doors to students in 1998. In early 1998, King Mongkut's Institute of Technology Thonburi was also upgraded to be an autonomous university and renamed King Mongkut's University of Technology Thonburi. Mae Fah Luang University, another autonomous university, was established in 1998 in Chiang Rai.

## **The Development of Rajabhat Universities**

40 Rajabhat Universities were formerly Rajabhat Institutes before being upgraded to university status and falling under jurisdiction of the Office of the Higher Education Commission. Dealing with education at an advanced level, the universities operated under supervision of the Rajabhat Council under the Ministry of Education and are scattered in the big cities throughout the country. In order to serve the different regions of Thailand, they have been divided into eight clusters.

The Rajabhat University Act of 2004 stipulates coordination of the strengths of Rajabhat Universities in order to aid development of the regions. Although Rajabhat Universities have become separate legal entities, there is still a joint committee that consists of representatives from each Rajabhat University.

## **University Administration in Thailand**

Each type of higher education institution in Thailand has certain governing bodies that are responsible for academic administration: the maintenance and supervision of the institution. These types of institutions include public and private higher education institutions, as well as autonomous universities. The governing bodies at these types of institution are listed in the diagram below. In addition, the Council of University Presidents of Thailand and the Association of Private Higher Education Institutions of Thailand play a significant role in university administration and serve as advisory bodies to public and private institutions respectively.

# List of Thai Universities