

ABOUT
TO FINISH
PRIMARY
SCHOOL? IT
NEEDN'T END
THERE!



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A student with a blue headband is seen from behind, writing on a green chalkboard. The board has some faint white text, including 'm, Dmytra yku' and 'mi- uju. vos'. A large, semi-transparent circle with a black border is overlaid on the left side of the image, containing the text 'INTRODUCTION: THE IMPORTANCE OF CONTINUING YOUR EDUCATION AFTER PRIMARY SCHOOL'.

INTRODUCTION: THE IMPORTANCE OF CONTINUING YOUR EDUCATION AFTER PRIMARY SCHOOL

NOT SURE WHETHER CONTINUE YOUR EDUCATION AFTER PRIMARY SCHOOL?

In the Czech Republic, children are required to attend primary school (for pupils up to the age of 15), where they learn the basic knowledge and skills they need to get by in society. Although there is no legal obligation to continue education after finishing primary school, this does not mean that most people opt to end their education at that point. Only around 5% of young people choose not to go on to secondary school once they have completed their primary education.

WHY ENROL AT SECONDARY SCHOOL?

Secondary and, ultimately, higher education not only hones students' knowledge and experience, but also greatly increases their job prospects. Nowadays, employment opportunities for people who have dropped out of the system after primary school are few and far between. What is more, a primary-only education equates to lower wages than those typically enjoyed by students who complete at least secondary school. Graduating from secondary school or a secondary vocational school is now virtually a prerequisite for anyone seeking even moderately paid employment.

SO MANY SECONDARY SCHOOLS - WHICH ONE TO CHOOSE?

In order to make the right choice of secondary school, it is important to have an idea about what kind of path the child will be following in the future. Pupils who do well at primary school and are keen learners might consider pursuing the sort of education that will put them in good stead for college or university. In the Czech educational system, a grammar school (gymnázium) is best placed to prepare students for higher education. Grammar schools are secondary schools that expand and deepen general education without offering any particular specialisation. Students end up taking a school-leaving examination (maturita) here, and are nurtured to a stage where they are ready to enrol at university. University entrance exams are also open to secondary-school students who have not attended a grammar school, provided that their studies at their school are rounded off with a maturita. All higher education institutions require a certificate of a school-leaving examination.



LOFTY ACADEMIA OR A PRACTICAL TRADE?

Many young people, upon leaving primary school, are not sure that university is the right choice for them. With this in mind, they start thinking about specialising in a particular field as they consider which secondary school to attend. A secondary vocational education is offered by secondary vocational schools and colleges. Secondary schools provide a wide range of both technical and non-technical fields (electrical engineering, mechanical engineering and construction on the one hand, and economics, art, nursing, hotel management and many other fields on the other). Once students hold their maturita certificate, they can start thinking about whether to continue their studies or whether to enter the job market.

Secondary vocational colleges offer fields of study that prepare their students for less skilled, but widely demanded occupations in the service sector (mechanic, bricklayer, decorator, hairdresser, beautician, cook, waiter, etc.). These days, many (but not all) of these apprenticeship-based courses end with a school-leaving examination.

THE LOWDOWN ON SECONDARY SCHOOLS - WHERE TO LOOK?

It is important not to put off choosing a secondary school until the last minute. You should begin planning at least a year before completing primary school. A good start would be to compare the range of secondary schools and vocational colleges in your area and attend their house days. You can find lists of secondary schools online at sites such as www.stredniskoly.cz and www.atlaskolstvi.cz. Every November, the printed version of the periodical for teachers, Učitelské noviny, also publishes a rundown of all secondary schools and fields of study.

If you are unsure about which school to choose, it would be a good idea to consult this matter with a professional. Primary schools have 'guidance counsellors' who are in a position to provide such consultations to primary school pupils and their parents. Another



option is to contact the staff of organisations specialising in education advice (see the list of organisations at the end of this publication).





PRESENTATION OF THE CZECH EDUCATION SYSTEM

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THE CZECH EDUCATION SYSTEM - WHAT DOES IT LOOK LIKE?

As hinted in the previous section, the Czech Republic employs a multilevel education system.

WHAT ABOUT PRE-SCHOOLERS?

Prior to starting compulsory school attendance, children may enrol at nursery school (these facilities are generally intended for children from the age of three, but increasing numbers of younger children can be found here). At nursery school, children learn how to cooperate with others in a team and are prepared to cope with the skills they will need during compulsory schooling. Although nursery school is optional, all experts agree that, in order to cope with compulsory school attendance, it is important to enrol at least for the final year of nursery school. Nursery schools are also open to the children of recognised refugees and beneficiaries of subsidiary protection. However, finding an opening place at nursery school can be a problem because classes are often full to capacity. It is a good idea to look up information about the capacity of nursery schools in your area in advance.

PRIMARY SCHOOLS - WHO ARE THEY FOR?

Primary schools are for children aged 6 to 15 years, and it is here that most children undertake their compulsory school attendance, which lasts for nine years in the Czech Republic. All children living in the Czech Republic, including beneficiaries of international protection (recognised refugees and beneficiaries of subsidiary protection) are required to undergo compulsory school attendance. Children who have attended school in their country of origin for fewer than nine years must complete the remainder of their compulsory education at a primary school in the Czech Republic. Primary school has two stages. The first stage lasts for five years, the second for four. Gifted students may leave after the first stage to enrol at an eight-year or six-year grammar school or conservatory (konzervatoř). Education in primary schools is free.

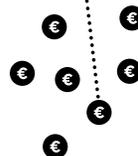
HOW ACCESSIBLE IS EDUCATION AT NURSERY AND PRIMARY SCHOOLS?

The network of nursery schools and primary schools in the Czech Republic is relatively dense. Everyone should have the opportunity to attend primary school in the place where they live. If there is no school facility within reach of the place where you live, children and pupils fall within the jurisdiction of the nearest regional school. Information about local schools and education opportunities is published by municipalities (the education department of the municipal authority).

I'VE FINISHED COMPULSORY SCHOOL ATTENDANCE – WHAT NEXT?

Most children go on to secondary school after completing their compulsory education. Secondary schools are classified by the level of education they provide:

level of secondary education	duration of study (full-time)	proof of completion of education	type of school
secondary education	1-2 years		secondary vocational college, special school (praktická škola)
secondary education ending with a certificate of apprenticeship (výuční list)	2-3 years	certificate of apprenticeship	secondary vocational college
secondary education ending with a school-leaving examination (maturita)	4 years	school-leaving examination certificate	secondary vocational school, grammar school



The level of education indicates how demanding the field of study is. Secondary education without a certificate of apprenticeship is the least demanding. Those who graduate at this level also find their employment opportunities most restricted. Those who complete secondary education with a certificate of apprenticeship are able to work in the profession they have trained for, but cannot study at a higher education institution. Higher education is only open to those who have passed their maturita, having undergone the most challenging form of study (at a secondary vocational school or grammar school).

WHAT TYPES OF SECONDARY SCHOOL ARE THERE?

Each level of secondary school offers numerous fields of study from which students can choose a specialisation.

- **grammar schools (gymnázium)** – provide a comprehensive education that prepares students for university. At the end of their four years of study here, students take a school-leaving examination. There are also extended grammar schools lasting for eight years (students start grammar school after completing the fifth grade of primary school) or six years (pupils enrol after their seventh year of primary school).
- **secondary vocational schools (střední odborná škola – SOŠ)** – provide teaching geared towards a particular profession. At the end of their four years of study here, students take a school-leaving examination. Secondary schools offer a wide range of fields of study. The most common include:
 - business academy (obchodní akademie)
 - secondary technical school of civil engineering (střední průmyslová škola [SPŠ] stavební)
 - secondary technical school of transport (SPŠ dopravní)
 - secondary technical school of electrical engineering (SPŠ elektrotechnická)
 - secondary school of nursing (střední zdravotnická škola)

- teacher training school (pedagogické lyceum)
 - secondary school of agriculture (střední zemědělská škola)
 - textiles and clothing industry (textilní výroba a oděvnictví)
 - secondary vocational school of management (střední odborná škola managementu)
 - secondary school of agriculture (střední zemědělská škola)
- **secondary vocational colleges (střední odborné učiliště – SOU)**
 - provide hands-on training for an occupation. Studies are completed with a certificate of apprenticeship. Studies typically last three years, but in some exceptional cases may take place over two years. Fields of study offering a certificate of apprenticeship include:
 - electrician
 - cook/waitstaff
 - bricklayer
 - plumber
 - mechanic
 - hairdresser
 - gardener
 - tailor

Secondary vocational colleges often also offer fields of study in which students are able to take a maturita exam.

- **conservatories (konzervatoř)** – training in the arts – music, singing, acting or dance. Those wishing to be admitted to a conservatory must first pass an audition to demonstrate that they have talent.

A list of all maturita fields of study at secondary vocational schools and apprenticeship fields of study at secondary vocational colleges can be found at www.infoabsolvent.cz

Schools may be public or private. Education at public schools is free of charge, while private schools charge tuition fees (of varying amounts). When considering private schools, then, you should research how much tuition costs and what other fees are charged.

WHAT FORMS OF STUDY ARE AVAILABLE AT SECONDARY SCHOOL?

Students can attend secondary schools in several different ways:

- **full time** – the most common form of study. Students attend school every day from morning to afternoon (depending on their timetable), just as they attended primary school.
- **part-time learning** – an opportunity for students work to achieve an education. Typically, they work full-time but attend school on a regular fortnightly or monthly basis.
- **distance learning** – similar to part-time learning, but may also take place electronically.
- **night school** – as with part-time learning, students typically work during the day, and in this case they attend school in the evening after work.

HOW ACCESSIBLE IS SECONDARY SCHOOL?

Anyone who has completed primary education may apply for secondary school. Grammar schools and some other selective schools require candidates to take an entrance exam. Most secondary vocational schools and colleges admit students on the basis of their performance at primary school. This topic is discussed in more detail in the section entitled 'Admissions'. In the Czech Republic, secondary schools are not as numerous as primary schools, but can be found in all larger towns and cities. If students want to attend a secondary school that is not within reach of their home, they may be offered accommodation in a dormitory ('home for young people'). Only certain schools offer room and board, which must be paid for by the student's family. More detailed information can be found on boarding schools' websites, or directly on the websites of specific dormitories .

Secondary school's over – now what?

Students who complete their secondary education with a maturita may then proceed to a post-secondary vocational school (vyšší od-



borná škola – VOŠ) or higher education institution. Post-secondary vocational schools are more practically oriented than universities. The length of study is three years, and successful graduates are awarded the title of ‘Certified Specialist’ (diplomovaný specialista – DiS). Public post-secondary vocational schools may charge tuition fees, which for most fields of study is a maximum of CZK 3,000 per year. Tuition at private post-secondary vocational schools usually ranges from CZK 20,000 to CZK 40,000 per year.

Studying at university (i.e. higher education institutions) provides a higher level of education than post-secondary vocational schools (i.e. further education institutions) and is divided into two basic stages. Students initially study for a Bachelor’s degree, earning them the title of ‘Bachelor’ (bakalář – Bc.). Bachelor’s degree programmes typically take three years. The follow-up Master’s degree programme, resulting in the academic title of ‘Master’ (magistr – Mgr.) or ‘Engineer’ (inženýr – Ing.), lasts for two years.

Students enrolled in the Czech-speaking programmes of public higher education institutions do not pay for their studies (a fee is payable only if they exceed the standard period of study). However, students are expected to cover the costs of study materials, meals and accommodation themselves. Most universities offer scholarship programmes for students.

After completing their Master’s degree programme, students at some universities may then proceed to doctoral studies. Doctoral degree programmes prepare them for the pursuit of scientific or academic professions. These programmes are three or four years long, at the end of which students are awarded the title of ‘Doctor’ (doktor – Ph.D.).

Further information on the education system in the Czech Republic is available at www.msmt.cz/vzdelavani/vzdelavaci-soustava.





ADMISSIONS

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HOW SHOULD I GO ABOUT CHOOSING A SCHOOL?

If you are not sure what facility to enrol at (whether secondary school or university), guidance counsellors at your current school and staff from non-profit organisations that provide education guidance (these are listed at the end of this publication) or educational counseling are ready to help.

Further details are available at www.infoabsolvent.cz. The range of fields of study offered by secondary schools can also be found on the website of the Ministry of Education, Youth and Sports at www.msmt.cz.

Before you submit an application, you can personally go to visit the schools you have short-listed when they hold open house days. This is an opportunity to ask about what interests you. All types of schools hold open houses days. Education fairs are another opportunity to delve deeper – the advantage of these events is that a large number of schools are concentrated in one place.

HOW DO I APPLY FOR FURTHER STUDIES?

Candidate students must fill in a study application form.

Electronic applications are available on the websites of your selected schools (under 'admissions' or 'information for applicants').

Study the information about admission requirements carefully. If an acceptance condition is the passing of an entrance exam, you find sample tests from previous years, recommended literature and other useful information on the school's website.

HOW DO ADMISSIONS DIFFER AT SECONDARY AND POST-SECONDARY VOCATIONAL SCHOOLS AND HIGHER EDUCATION INSTITUTIONS?

Admissions at secondary schools

Completed applications are submitted to secondary schools by **15 March**. Fields of study requiring an audition (e.g. at a conservatory) are an exception, as applications need to be submitted by **30 November** for those schools.



Each pupil may submit **two applications in the first round**; there is no limit on the number of applications that may be submitted in the second round. Applications may be collected from the pupil's primary school or downloaded from the website of the relevant secondary school or the Ministry of Education.

The completed application form should be printed. Confirmation of educational performance is required from the primary school. The application should then be signed (for children who are under 18 years old, it must be signed by their legal guardian) and delivered in person or sent by post to the address of the school.

Applicants may fill in the grades they have achieved in each subject themselves if they are not applying directly from a primary school, in which case they need to attach a certified copy of their report card. Secondary schools issue proof of receipt of an application on request. When sending documents by post, it is recommended that you fill in and keep the post-office shipping receipt as proof that the application has been sent on time.

Entrance exams at secondary schools

Schools which are very popular and have more applicants than spaces usually organise entrance exams. These exams may take various forms - written tests or interviews, or auditions for art schools such as conservatories. If foreign nationals have not previously attended school in the Czech Republic, the head teacher arranges to test their ability to study in Czech by interviewing them.

Dates of entrance exams at secondary schools

Auditions for secondary art schools are held in the first week of January (2-15 January), and take place at conservatories between 15 and 31 January.



Entrance exams for other secondary schools are held in the period from 22 to 30 April.

At each school, two dates are announced for entrance examinations in the first round. The date on which you are to take the entrance exam must be stated in the application.

Before the entrance exams, you should also collect an **enrolment slip**. Enrolment slips are available from your primary school or (if you no longer attend primary school) at the regional authority in the place where you live, or where the school you are applying for is situated.

HOW DO I FIND OUT MY ADMISSION RESULTS?

Within three days of the entrance examinations, a list of accepted applicants (listed by registration number) will be published at the school and on its website. If you have been admitted, it is important to take your enrolment slip to the secondary school within 10 days. This confirms your intention of becoming a student in the relevant field of study at that secondary school. Enrolment slips are not submitted by applicants for night school, part-time learning, distance learning or combined forms of intermediate courses.

I DIDN'T PASS THE EXAMS - WHAT NOW?

If you are not among the selected candidates, you may lodge an appeal within three days of delivery of the decision not to accept you.

If, after the first round of entrance exams, not all vacancies are filled, a second (and sometimes even a third) round of admissions may be held. Information about vacancies at schools and the dates of subsequent admission rounds may be obtained directly from the school, from the school's website, or from the website of the education department at the regional authority.

A certificate of residency in the Czech Republic must be submitted by the time your course starts.

ADMISSIONS AT POST-SECONDARY VOCATIONAL SCHOOLS AND HIGHER EDUCATION INSTITUTIONS

It is always best to verify the exact deadline for the submission of applications by referring to the selected school's website. Applicants for Bachelor's and Master's degree programmes at public universities typically submit **applications** by **28 February** or **31 March** (or as early as 30 November or 31 December for those applying for fields of study in the arts). Post-secondary vocational schools, private higher education establishments and some Master's degree programmes at public universities have a later deadline for applications.

You may fill in the application electronically on the school's website or on paper. Electronic applications, once completed, must be printed. As with an application filled in by hand, they need to be signed and then, together with proof of payment of the administrative fee, sent or personally delivered to the school address. Electronic applications are generally charged a lower administrative fee. Some higher education institutions only accept electronic applications. (Electronic applications are usually charged CZK 400 to 500, whereas the fee for paper applications is CZK 500 to 600.) Prospective students who have attained their previous education in a country other than the Czech Republic also attach a validation stamp (see the chapter on validation).

UNIVERSITY ENTRANCE EXAMS

Registered applicants usually receive an invitation to sit entrance exams by post. Always keep the invitation - you may be required to produce it when registering for the exam, and it contains important information about the time and place of the examination. Entrance exams for post-secondary vocational schools and higher education institutions are held in June; auditions for fields of study in the arts take place earlier, usually in January.

At some schools, it is necessary to take national standardized tests ('Scio' tests - see www.scio.cz), but usually the admissions



procedure comprises written tests from multiple related subjects, depending on the subject of study (e.g. mathematics and English). If the entrance exams have more than one round, the first part is usually a written test. In the next round, applicants demonstrate their motivation to study and their interest in the field in an oral examination or interview before a committee. Some schools also take into account the grades achieved at secondary school, usually in the form of a points-based score. At some universities, where an interview is not part of the admission procedure, foreign nationals demonstrate their ability to study in Czech by sitting an examination in Czech as a second language.

More information on study programmes can be found, for example, at www.msmt.cz/file/15150/, www.vysokeskoly.cz and in the edition of Učitelské noviny published in early December. However, the most reliable source of information is always the websites of the specific university and/or faculty.



RECOGNITION OF EDUCATIONAL ATTAINMENT (RECOGNITION)

3

I HAVE CERTIFICATES AND DIPLOMAS OBTAINED OUTSIDE THE CZECH REPUBLIC - ARE THEY VALID HERE?

Certificates and diplomas obtained in your country of origin are not automatically valid in the Czech Republic. They require formal verification. The recognition of foreign certificates and diplomas is important if potential students wish to continue their studies. They also need to provide convincing proof of previous studies in their search of employment.

In order for documents proving formal qualifications (diplomas and certificates) to be regarded as equal and valid, they need to be recognised, i.e. they need to be accompanied by an appropriate document confirming such recognition.

IS THERE A DIFFERENCE BETWEEN THE RECOGNITION OF A CERTIFICATE OR DIPLOMA FROM A SECONDARY SCHOOL AND A DIPLOMA FROM A HIGHER EDUCATION INSTITUTION?

There are several differences between the recognition of diplomas and certificates from primary and secondary schools and the recognition of diplomas obtained upon graduation from university. The recognition procedure in particular is different.

PRIMARY, SECONDARY AND POST-SECONDARY VOCATIONAL SCHOOLS

When making the transition from one level of education to another (primary, secondary, tertiary), proof of educational attainment at the previous stage must be proven (for example, you cannot attend secondary school if you have not completed your primary education). If you have spent at least nine years at a foreign school, you need to have your certificates recognised in order to prove that you have completed primary education. The recognition of diplomas and certificates from primary and secondary schools and post-secondary vocational schools is governed by Section 108 of Act No 561/2004 on preschool, primary, secondary, post-secondary and other education (the Schools Act) and Imple-



menting Decree No 12/2005 of the Ministry of Education, Youth and Sports.

If the state in which the certificate or diploma is issued has entered into an international agreement on the recognition of the equivalence of education documents with the Czech Republic, a **certificate of recognition of the equivalence** of foreign education in the Czech Republic is issued. If the Czech Republic and the relevant state have not entered into an international agreement, a decision on the **recognition of the validity** of the foreign education (validation) in the Czech Republic is taken by the Czech authorities. In the first case, the authority issues a certificate and in the second case a **validation stamp**. If the content and scope of education is too different, the application may be rejected.

Recognition (validation) does not apply to vocational courses (e.g. beautician, welder, etc.) taken abroad as these do not represent a level of educational attainment.

WHERE CAN I SUBMIT MY APPLICATION?

Applications for the recognition of foreign education are handled by the **education departments of regional authorities**. Applications may be submitted to the regional authority which has jurisdiction over the municipality or town where you are registered as a permanent resident (or the address specified in your recognised refugee's identity card as your residential address). If you live in Prague, your application for validation will be processed by Prague City Hall. All regional authorities post information on their websites on what to do to have your education recognised (contact details for regional authorities can be found in the last section of this publication).



CAN I APPLY FOR RECOGNITION EVEN IF I DON'T HAVE IDENTICAL SUBJECTS ON MY CERTIFICATE?

An authorised official at the education department assesses how similar the structure of the subjects is and examines the number of lessons involved in the submitted documents, which are compared with a similar Czech study programme. If major differences exist, **validation tests** are prescribed, which are held at a selected secondary school. These tests are designed to compensate for the difference between the different educational systems. Applicants are issued with a validation stamp and decision or certificate only if they pass the validation tests (the competent official has the discretion to decide on the number and focus of such tests). These documents then confirm the validity of a foreign diploma in the Czech Republic. Applicants should be aware of the need to pay an administration fee of CZK 1,000.

HOW IS THE RECOGNITION OF HIGHER EDUCATION DIPLOMAS DIFFERENT?

The recognition of higher education diplomas is governed by Sections 89 and 90 of Act No 111/1998 on higher education and amending other laws (the Higher Education Act). It differs from the recognition of certificates and diplomas from primary and secondary schools in terms of both procedure and the conditions applicable. Unlike the recognition of secondary education certificates, verification tests are not usually held for higher education diplomas. A competent member of staff from the faculty merely assesses how similar the field of study is with the Czech study programme. A decision on the recognition of a diploma or on the rejection of an application depends on the degree of similarity or differences in relation to the equivalent Czech degree programme.

HOW DO I HAVE MY HIGHER EDUCATION DIPLOMAS RECOGNISED?

For the verification of a university diploma, it is necessary to contact directly a public university that has a similar an accredited degree programme offering similar content. Where university education has been attained in a military field, the request is sent to the Ministry of Defence; if education has been attained in an area related to the security forces, the request is sent to the Ministry of the Interior. The document issued is a **certificate of recognition of the equivalence** of the higher education and qualification in the Czech Republic.

IS THE PROCEDURE THE SAME AT ALL HIGHER EDUCATION INSTITUTIONS?

The recognition procedure is similar, but the specific conditions for recognition at a particular institution should always be ascertained. Information on conditions for the recognition of a foreign higher education, including application forms, is often published on the web pages of the rector's office or dean's office of the given university or faculty. If not, information can be obtained from the study department.

A university usually responds to a request within two months. Certificates are generally issued free of charge.

WHAT DO I NEED FOR THE VALIDATION PROCESS?

The conditions for the recognition of foreign education may vary by type of institution, but the general requirements are always the same. You need to prepare:

1) a notarised copy of the diploma or certificate, including a **supplement to the diploma** containing a list of the courses taken, along with the number of hours and grades.

Where countries have entered into a bilateral or multilateral agreement with the Czech Republic on the mutual recognition of educa-

tion certificates, there is no need for other forms of authentication (apostille, legalisation, etc.). A notarised copy of the diploma, if issued by the appropriate school, is enough. A list of countries in this group can be found at www.msmt.cz. For those countries with which the Czech Republic has not concluded such an agreement, the original diploma must be accompanied by one of the following forms of verification:

- A. an **apostille** (a simplified legalisation endorsement) – if the state in which the education certificate was issued has acceded to the Hague Convention Abolishing the Requirement of Legalisation for Foreign Public Documents. A list of states to which this agreement applies can be found at www.hcch.net
- B. a **legalisation endorsement** – authentication by the ministry of foreign affairs of the relevant state or by the competent foreign authority and the competent embassy of the Czech Republic if the document is issued in a country which is not a signatory to the Hague Convention. If you have any doubt as to your home state's status, we recommend that you contact the Ministry of Education, Youth and Sports (Department of Higher Education, Karmelitská 7, Praha 1) or members of staff from the META association.

2) a certified translation of these documents (we recommend having a notarised copy translated, rather than the original). A list of court-appointed translators is available, for example, on the website of the Chamber of Court Appointed Interpreters and Translators at www.kstcr.cz.

3) a request for the recognition of a foreign education. Higher education institutions and the education departments of the respective regional authorities usually have a request form on their websites that can be downloaded. Request forms may also be collected in person.

If any of the certificate or diploma verifications you require is missing, you may replace them with, not by a solemn declaration provided that you have already been granted international protection. In these cases, you may discuss what steps are open to you with the

competent official responsible for the agenda of recognising education certificates.

WHAT DO I DO IF I HAVE STUDIED IN MY COUNTRY OF ORIGIN, BUT I HAVE LOST THE CERTIFICATES AND DIPLOMAS (IN WHOLE OR IN PART)?

If you have been granted asylum, you may still submit a request for recognition of your studies, and you may replace the missing documents with a solemn declaration. The whole process will probably take longer and will be more complicated. In relation to secondary education, you will have to sit equivalence validation tests.

CONTACTS, USEFUL LINKS AND MORE INFORMATION ABOUT THE VALIDATION PROCEDURE

Ministry of Education, Youth and Sports

- Department of Higher Education, Karmelitská 7, Praha 1, 118 12
www.msmt.cz

Prague City Hall – Education Department

Jungmannova 35, Praha 1, 110 00
www.praha.eu

(Contact details for other regional authorities can be found in the final section.)

More information about the validation procedure can also be found on the following websites¹:

www.domavcr.cz
portal.gov.cz

¹ The Multicultural Centre in Prague (www.mkc.cz) is preparing an Information Gateway on the Recognition of Foreign Education and Qualifications for Consultancy Services and Foreign Nationals. After the launch, a link to the website of the Multicultural Centre in Prague and the META website (www.meta-os.cz) will be provided.





SUPPORT FOR BENEFICIARIES OF INTERNATIONAL PROTECTION IN EDUCATION

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ARE RECOGNISED REFUGEES AND BENEFICIARIES OF SUBSIDIARY PROTECTION ENTITLED TO EDUCATIONAL SUPPORT?

Under the Schools Act, recognised refugees and beneficiaries of subsidiary protection are regarded as pupils with special educational needs, and in particular as socially disadvantaged pupils (Section 16 of the Schools Act). Therefore, even during their studies at secondary schools they are entitled to **'compensatory measures'**, designed to gradually compensate for the disadvantages faced by these pupils when they first join the school.

These measures include (according to Section 1 of Implementing Decree No 147/2011 on the education of children, pupils and students with special educational needs and exceptionally gifted children, pupils and students):

- the use of teaching or special pedagogical methods and procedures that meet the educational needs of the pupils;
- the provision of one-on-one learning support and preparation for lessons;
- the provision of counselling services in schools and school counselling facilities;
- the preparation of an individual education plan;
- the use of the services of a teaching assistant.

This support should be provided by each school to all pupils who have learning obstacles.

WHAT DOES THIS ACTUALLY MEAN?

It means that a secondary school which educates recognised refugees or beneficiaries of subsidiary protection should draw on the needs of such pupils in the learning process (linguistic, social, and cultural needs) and respond to them accordingly. For example, if teachers discover that pupils have gaps in their education because of their personal or family history, the school should draw up an **individual education plan (IEP)** for them. This plan sets educational goals with a view to closing the gaps in education as soon as possible. Pupil assessments should be based on the set objectives and should therefore be tailored to the pupil. During secondary

education, an individual education plan can form the basis for an extension to the duration of the studies so that pupils can cope with preparations for the final exams. Under the IEP, the school may also draw on the services of a **teaching assistant** to support pupils and help with their learning. However, these measures are not particularly common at secondary schools.

If students are unable to speak the language of instruction well enough, the school arranges language lessons. This service may be financed, for example, by the State Integration Programme.

WHAT IS THE STATE INTEGRATION PROGRAMME (SIP)?

The State Integration Programme (Sections 68, 69 and 70 of Act No 325/1999 on asylum) focuses on support for recognised refugees as they seek to integrate into society. It has codified the state's efforts to help recognised refugees find a place to live, attend Czech language lessons and integrate into the labour market.

HOW CAN THE SIP BE USED IN EDUCATION?

Under State Integration Programme, **400 free Czech language lessons** may be attended. Recognised refugees in an integration asylum centre are taught by the Refugee Facilities Administration of the Ministry of the Interior. Refugees living outside integration asylum centres receive lessons from a contractual partner of the Ministry of Education, Youth and Sports, which is the guarantor of free language courses.

WHERE CAN I FIND OUT MORE ABOUT THE SIP?

www.mvcr.cz/clanek/integrace.aspx ('integration of recognised refugees' section)

UNIVERSITY SCHOLARSHIPS

Higher education institutions may award several types of scholarships to students of Bachelor's, Master's and doctoral degree programmes.

Scholarships may take the form of a lump sum or may be disbursed as monthly amounts for a set period of the academic year.

The conditions for the granting of scholarships are set out in the **scholarship rules** of each university, which are governed by the Higher Education Act (Act No 111/1998, Sections 62 and 91). The scholarship rules usually also apply to foreign students who study in the Czech language under the same conditions as Czech citizens.

Scholarship applications are submitted at set times to the dean or the rector via the study department. The current scholarship rules, deadlines for scholarship applications, application forms, measures taken by the rector, and faculty rules governing the conditions for the award of scholarships are available on the websites of universities.

- **Merit scholarships** are awarded to students studying full-time as a reward for excellent academic credentials, provided that these students have not exceeded the standard period of study and meet the prescribed criteria for the award of the scholarship (the fulfilment of study obligations laid down in the curriculum, the attainment of the required number of credits points, etc.). The criterion for determining the amount of the merit scholarship is the student's grade average.
- **Social scholarships** are intended for students in difficult social situations. They are awarded to students who are entitled to the increased level of child allowance. A current written notification of the increased level of child allowance, issued by a state social assistance authority, must be attached to the social scholarship application. Social scholarships are disbursed for each full calendar month in which the student is eligible for a social scholarship (except July and August).



- **Accommodation scholarships** are intended for full-time students of degree programmes who are studying for their first degree or are participating in a follow-up degree programme, and who have not exceeded the standard period of study. Students who are studying multiple degree programmes simultaneously are permitted a maximum of one such scholarship – for the degree programme for which they enrolled first. This applies to the majority of students who are not permanently resident in the district in which they study. Compliance with the conditions for an accommodation scholarship is checked according to information in the register of students. Students submit written accommodation scholarship applications to the dean’s office of their faculty, typically when they enrol on their course (or for a particular year of their course). Accommodation scholarships are usually disbursed retroactively on a quarterly basis. Students of Bachelor’s and Master’s degree programmes receive the scholarship for the full academic year (not July and August).
- **Special-purpose scholarships** (or just ‘special scholarships’) may be granted for outstanding scientific, research or artistic results, for outstanding academic achievement (the completion of a degree programme with distinction or commendation, over a shorter period of study compared to the recommended schedule), for the support of students abroad, or for the support of foreign students in the Czech Republic, in which case it is intended as a social contribution, and in other circumstances, e.g. support for the work experience and excursions of students, for professional scientific publications in prestigious international journals, for the representation of national teams, etc.
- **Doctoral scholarships** are awarded to full-time doctoral students. They are disbursed over the standard period of study. Scholarships are awarded by the dean or the rector on a proposal from a supervisor, department head, institute or branch council as a lump sum or as a monthly amount paid over a set period of an academic year.



DECISIONS ON AWARDING SCHOLARSHIPS

The dean or rector responds to scholarship applications in the form of a written, reasoned decision within thirty days of submission of the application. Decisions are delivered directly to the relevant students via the study department. Requests may be submitted for a review of decisions.

FUNDING FROM FOUNDATIONS AND ENDOWMENTS

Gifted or disadvantaged pupils and students are supported by certain foundations and endowment funds,

including the Foundation of Josef, Marie and Zdenka Hlávka, www.hlavkovanadace.cz

the Sophia Foundation, www.nadacesophia.cz

The Goodwill Committee – Olga Havlová Foundation, www.vdv.cz

The Kellner Family Foundation, www.kellnerfoundation.cz

the Depositum Bonum Foundation (a foundation run by Česká spořitelna), www.csas.cz

the Zdeněk Bakala Foundation, www.nadacezb.cz

the Václav and Livia Klaus Foundation, www.nadacnifondklausovych.cz, and others.

If necessary, you can also contact any of the organisations listed in the contacts with a request for assistance in filling in an application for a scholarship or other aid.



STUDENT BENEFITS

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STUDENT STATUS²

Full-time students who, by law, are preparing for a future career, need not pay social and health insurance contributions up to the age of 26. The current legal system views them as dependent children, and therefore their parents may deduct CZK 967 from their tax every month.

What specific benefits are associated with student status, i.e. a full-time student at a secondary school, post-secondary vocational school or higher education institution?

- health insurance contributions paid by the state up to 26 years of age
- the preservation of family allowances, tax credits and social security benefits (if the relevant conditions are met) up to 26 years of age (for full-time doctoral studies, a student discount for personal income tax is also available up to 28 years of age)
- all the usual student discounts (discounts on transportation, culture, ISIC, etc.)

PLEASE NOTE!

For part-time learning, distance learning, night school or combined studies at secondary schools and post-secondary vocational schools, students who are gainfully employed or are entitled to unemployment/retraining benefits do not have student status, and therefore are not entitled to student benefits.

WHAT HAPPENS TO HEALTH INSURANCE AFTER I LEAVE SCHOOL?

In terms of health insurance, between completing secondary school and starting at university, students are still regarded as dependent children systematically preparing for a future career.

For graduates of secondary schools and post-secondary vocational schools, the state pays insurance until the end of the holidays (31 August); for post-secondary vocational schools with a 3.5-year curriculum and graduations in January, insurance is paid until January; for universities, insurance is covered for the month after the final state exams.

² Source: <http://www.vysokeskoly.com/aktualne-na-vs/status-studenta-2016>

SPECIAL CASE - POST-GRADUATION EXAM

In 2013, an amendment to the law (Act No 267/2013) entered into force which regulates the status of a student attending a post-maturita language course. Students who pass their first school-leaving examination (maturita), or graduation exam at a conservatory, and enrol on a one-year foreign language course with daily lessons **continue to have the status of a student.**





ADULT EDUCATION

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RETRAINING COURSES³

Retraining courses are courses that allow you to gain qualifications for new employment or to maintain your current employment.

RETRAINING COURSES - WHO ARE THEY FOR?

These courses are designed primarily for unemployed persons registered at labour offices, job-seekers and those who feel at risk of losing their jobs.

WHAT KIND OF COURSES ARE THEY?

- educational programmes to gain full qualifications to perform specific work sought after in the labour market (e.g. barber and hairdressing, computer graphics...)
- educational programmes to gain specific work skills (e.g. computer courses, business basics...)
- Educational programmes leading to professional qualifications in the National Qualifications Framework (NQF) in accordance with Act No 179/2006 (e.g. painter, sales manager, preparation of hot meals...)
- educational programmes leading to a final exam under special regulations
- non-specific retraining courses – focusing on computer literacy, management, marketing, accounting, banking, the system of working with people and preparation for private enterprise in combination with intensive language training

PLEASE NOTE!

Participants in retraining courses are not considered to be students and do not have student benefits (e.g. tax credits, the ISIC student card, discounts on transportation, etc.). A retraining course cannot be regarded as a foundation year at a higher education institution and is not classified as a preparatory course for study at a higher education institution.



³ Source: <http://www.msmt.cz/vzdelavani/dalsi-vzdelavani/informace-pro-ucastniky-rekvalifikacnich-kurzu>

Further details, including information about what to pay attention to when selecting a retraining course, can be found at the website of the Ministry of Education.

LANGUAGE LEARNING

If you wish to improve your foreign language skills, you may enrol at a language school offering various forms of language study.

Post-maturita language course

If you have completed secondary school but have not been accepted for further studies, or if you have not yet decided whether you want to continue your studies, you may spend an additional school year studying a foreign language as a post-maturita course.

More information about the conditions and path of such a decision can be found here: <http://www.ssvs.cz/studiumjs.html>

Language courses

Many language schools and institutes offer foreign language courses of varying scope, level, price, and intensity. It is up to you whether you need to hone your skills in a foreign language or to learn a completely new language. Language courses provided by language schools and institutes are commercial courses. Some non-profit or government agencies may also provide courses for free or for a small fee. Most of these are courses in Czech as a foreign language.

A list of language schools is available here: www.jazykovky.cz

FURTHER EDUCATION AND LIFELONG LEARNING

‘Further education’ means adult learning and is often associated with entry to, or maintaining one’s status in, the labour market. The current situation on the labour market often requires employees to continuously improve and upgrade their skills and qualifications. Further education may include professionally-oriented training (e.g.



specific computer courses, or lessons to obtain a group-B driving licence), or may focus, for example, on languages or special-interest education (photography, graphic design).

More information is available here:

<http://www.dvmonitor.cz>

<http://www.nidv.cz>

LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS USED:

- UNHCR** – United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees
- CPIC** – Centers for the Support of the Integration of Foreigners
- ICP** – Prague Integration Center
- MŠ** – kindergarten
- ZŠ** – elementary school
- SŠ** – high school
- SOŠ** – vocational high school
- SPŠ** – technical high school
- SOU** – apprentice training centre
- VOŠ** – higher technical school
- VŠ** – university/college
- ČR** – Czech Republic
- Bc.** – graduate and holder of a Bachelor's degree (“bakalář”)
- Mgr.** – graduate and holder of a Master's degree (“magistr”)
- Dis.** – VOŠ graduate (a diploma specialist)
- Ing.** – graduate of a Master's curriculum from technology, economics, and agricultural colleges (“inženýr”)
- Ph.D.** – doctoral graduate (from Latin philosophiæ doctor)
- MŠMT** – Ministry of Education, Youth and Sports
- IVP** – individual training plan
- SIP** – State Integration Program
- NSK** – National Qualification System



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CONTACT DETAILS
FOR NON-
GOVERNMENTAL
ORGANISATIONS
PROVIDING SUPPORT
(NOT ONLY) TO
BENEFICIARIES OF
INTERNATIONAL
PROTECTION

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This section provides information and contact details for organisations that specialise in various forms of integration of foreigners. If interested, you can turn to them for information or to discuss your situation. Due to the different types of subsidies used to cover their activities, the level of support provided may vary. However, they should always provide basic guidance.



WE BELIEVE that this brochure will make your decisions somewhat easier and will be easy to navigate and helpful.



www.unhcr.cz



www.inkluzivniskola.cz

Graphic design and typesetting: KUTULULU studio