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## Higher Education in Denmark

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# Higher Education in Denmark

Peter Döbrich

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## 1. History of higher education

For a long time Copenhagen University was the only university in Denmark. It was founded in 1479 by Christian I. At the beginning there was little significance. Under Protestant rule it was provided with greater support and its significance grew. The foundation of the other types of institutions of higher education is showing a great deal of differentiation that is still valid. Except the Royal Academy of Fine Arts in Copenhagen (1754) with its three independent school departments (School of Architecture; School of Visual Arts and Sculpture; School for Conservators) all other institutions of higher education were founded in the 19th and 20th century.

Three universities (Copenhagen 1479; Aarhus 1928; Odense 1964) and two university centers (Roskilde 1970; Aalborg 1974) are administered by the Ministry of Education, they all have full academic freedom in research and teaching.

The following specialized institutions are under the administration of the Ministry of Education (year of foundation in brackets):

- Denmark's Technical University (1928)
- the Engineering Academy of Denmark (1957)\*
- two Dental Colleges (Copenhagen 1888; Aarhus 1958)
- two Schools of Economics, Business Administration and Modern Languages (Copenhagen 1917; Aarhus 1939)
- five branches of Schools of Economics, Business Administration and Modern Languages\*
- the Royal Danish School of Educational Studies (Copenhagen 1856) with seven branches in other cities
- 60 training colleges (training for teachers for primary and lower secondary education, for pre-school teachers, leisure-time youth leaders, home economics teachers)\*
- eight colleges of engineering\*
- eleven state colleges of social educational training
- the School of Advanced Training for Social Pedagogues
- schools for training of nurses, dieticians, midwives, physiotherapists, occupational therapists and other health personnel\*.

The institutions marked with an \* do not carry out research, but make use of research results from other institutions.

Besides the Royal Academy of Fine Arts with its three independent school departments the following institutions of higher education are under the Ministry of Cultural Affairs (year of foundation in brackets):

- the School of Architecture Aarhus (1965)
- the Royal Danish Academy of Music Copenhagen (1867)
- four Academies of Music (Aarhus 1927; Esbjerg 1946, Odense 1929, Aalborg 1929)
- the Royal School of Librarianship (Copenhagen 1956) and its branch in Aalborg.

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As far as the higher education institutions under the Ministry of Education are concerned they shall aim at carrying out research as well as at providing instruction of the highest standard within the main fields of study entrusted in each institution. The Minister of Education lays down regulation for:

- admission to studies
- study programmes
- obtaining doctorates and licentiate degrees
- employment of teachers and staff
- expulsion of students.

## 2. Organization of studies

The universities and university-centers offer a large number of different programmes in the following main areas:

- humanities (all of them)
- social sciences (all of them)
- natural sciences (all of them)
- medicine (Copenhagen, Aarhus and Odense university only)
- theology (Copenhagen and Aarhus university only).

The periods of study are generally rather long. Most programmes take 5 or 6 years. But experience has shown that the duration of studies is often longer. The academic year is the basic unit in Danish higher education. Two semesters per year include lectures between September and Christmas and the period from February to June. Admission to studies and registration for courses is possible only once a year (until September 1st). It is not possible to change from one course of study to another during the academic year.

As regulations from the Ministry of Education are general rules for examinations etc. there are additional study and examination regulations determined by the individual higher education institutions. The kandidat-examen is the most common final examination in the traditional university subject of the main areas like the humanities, the social sciences etc. Kandidat-programmes have an officially stipulated duration of 5 to 6 years. In order to obtain full professional qualification further training is required e.g. in the areas of medicine, law, the clergy or as teacher in upper secondary education. This kind of further training is provided as practical training or additional courses outside the university.

Since autumn 1988 a bachelor's degree is introduced. After three years of study in a kandidat-programme and having passed the prescribed examinations the title of B.A. in humanities, theology and the social sciences or the title of B.Sc. in the natural sciences and health sciences may be gained at universities and university-centers.

The university-centers offer one-year (Aalborg) or two-year (Roskilde) project-orientated basic studies as a basis for the major studies on an intermediate or kandidat level. Students with special interest in methodological disciplines can attend a magisterkonferens, which is a research training programme of six years duration.

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The other types of higher education institutions that are based upon research and instruction offer courses of different duration (intermediate or long) and different types of final examinations.

### 3. Statistics

When students start their initial courses in higher education after having passed the upper secondary school leaving examination they are usually 19 or 20 years of age. As there are other types of examinations leading to higher education admission, these students are older than applicants from upper secondary schools. The consequent considerable variation in the age of students in Danish higher education is not regarded to be a problem.

In October 1988 114.319 students attended courses and programmes in 100 institutions of Danish further and higher education. The distribution among the major programmes is as follows:

Students and institutions of higher education in Denmark Oct. 1988

	No. of institut.	No. of students		
		males	females	total
1. universities	3	22.188	20.367	42.555
2. university centres	2	5.447	3.353	8.800
3. technical universities	2	6.130	1.634	7.764
4. schools of economics with branches	11	14.610	10.635	25.245
5. school of pharmacy	1	177	724	901
6. colleges of dentistry	2	214	1.246	1.460
7. agricultural university	1	1.305	1.332	2.637
8. colleges of architecture	2	889	756	1.645
9. academies of music	5	438	378	816
10. school of educational studies	1	1.007	1.371	2.378
11. colleges of teacher training	29	2.364	5.004	7.368
total 1.-11.	59	54.769	46.800	101.569
12. others	41	8.026	4.724	12.750
total 1.-12.	100	62.795	51.524	114.319

Source: Statistisk Aarbog 1990, Copenhagen 1990, p. 79

## 4. Admission regulations

The usual basic requirements for admission to higher education institutions The usual basic requirements for admission to higher education institutions are:

- the upper secondary school leaving examination (studentereksamen)
- the higher preparatory examination (højere forberedelseksamen)
- the higher commercial examination (højere handelseksamen)
- equivalent examination from another country.

But there has been, due to limited capacity especially in long-cycle courses, for a number of years, regulation of admission (numerus clausus) to many educational courses. Admission to other types of education has been open, pro-

vided that applicants met the basic admission requirements. According to the diversity in Danish further and higher education there are no uniform requirements for admission. A large number of Danish and foreign examinations and qualifications can lead to acceptance. The qualifications needed for admission are indicated in the admission regulations of the individual higher education institution. Initial information can also be obtained from the Central Student Advisory Service at the University of Copenhagen. In certain subjects (e.g. medicine, pharmacy, engineering) it is necessary for foreign students to have "special ties with Denmark". In each case it is the responsibility of the higher education institution to decide on these ties and on admission in general.

Admission to the higher education institution in practice takes some months in a process of application and registration that ends with the receipt of the student identity card (aarskort) in the month of August.

A good knowledge of spoken and written Danish is necessary for foreign students to follow lectures and courses. Danish language courses are not offered by higher education institutions; there are specialized schools (studieskole) for language training in Copenhagen, Aarhus and Odense.

## **5. Tuition fees**

There are no tuition fees at Danish higher education institutions.

## **6. Grants and scholarships**

Financial assistance is granted by the Government Educational Assistance (Statens Uddannelsesstøtte - SU) to Danish citizens under specific regulations. Foreign students might also benefit from this support system, but not in case of occasional or short-term studies. Precise information can be obtained from the scholarship office (stipendie kontoret) of the relevant higher education institution.

Scholarships awarded by private foundations are mostly reserved for special categories of recipients. There are some exchange scholarships from the Danish government, information in this field can be obtained from the relevant authorities of the home country of applicants.

## **7. Cooperation and Membership**

The Danish Conference of Rectors is an informal body consisting of the heads of all institutions of higher education, which carry out research. It provides a forum for cooperation between universities and other institutions of higher education. Within a higher education institution the students and the administrative/technical staff have been given in the administration of each institution through their representation on boards and committees.

Denmark is member of the Nordic Council, the European Communities, the Council of Europe and UNESCO; Danish higher education institutions are members of the respective networks.

## 8. Postgraduate studies

There are possibilities to continue studies in higher education institutions after having gained a degree after courses of short duration; e.g. teachers of primary and lower education, trained at a teacher training college, continue their studies and receive degrees from the Royal Danish School of Educational Studies. For those with the kandidat-eksamen postgraduate studies lead to the degree of licentiatgrad (Ph.D.) or the doktorgrad.

### Addresses:

Det internationale kontor undervisningsministeriet  
International Office at the Ministry of Education  
Frederiksholmskanal 25 D  
DK - 1171 København K

Styrelsen for Statens Uddannelsesstøtte  
States Educational Assistance  
Danasvej 30  
DK - 1910 Frederiksberg C

Den centrale studievejledning  
Central student advisory service  
Københavns Universitet  
Fiolstraede 22  
DK - 1171 København K

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