



THE HIGHER EDUCATION SYSTEM IN TURKEY

THE COUNCIL OF HIGHER EDUCATION



The Council of Higher Education

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The Council of Higher Education (CoHE)
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List of Abbreviations

| | |
|-------------------|--|
| <i>ALES</i> | The Graduate Education Entrance Examination |
| <i>ADEK</i> | The Academic Assessment and Quality Improvement Board |
| <i>BCC (BEK)</i> | The Bologna Coordination Commission |
| <i>CoHE (YÖK)</i> | The Council of Higher Education |
| <i>DS</i> | Diploma Supplement |
| <i>ECTS</i> | European Credit Transfer and Accumulation System |
| <i>EHEA</i> | European Higher Education Area |
| <i>EQF</i> | European Qualifications Framework |
| <i>HEI</i> | Higher Education Institution |
| <i>ISCED</i> | The International Standard Classification of Education |
| <i>LLL</i> | Lifelong Learning Program |
| <i>LYS</i> | The Placement Examination for Bachelor's |

| | |
|--------------|--|
| <i>MÜDEK</i> | The Association for Evaluation and Accreditation of Engineering Programs |
| <i>NQF</i> | National Qualifications Framework |
| <i>ÖSYM</i> | The Student Selection and Placement Center |
| <i>QF</i> | Qualifications Framework |
| <i>QA</i> | Quality Assurance |
| <i>TYYÇ</i> | The Qualifications Framework for Higher Education in Turkey |
| <i>YGS</i> | The Transfer Examination for Higher Education |
| <i>YÖDEK</i> | The Commission for Academic Assessment and Quality Improvement in Higher Education |

1. Education in Turkey

Formal education in Turkey includes pre-primary education, primary education, secondary education and higher education.

Pre-primary School Education: It involves the education of children in the age group of 3 to 5 who have not reached the age of compulsory primary education, on an optional basis.

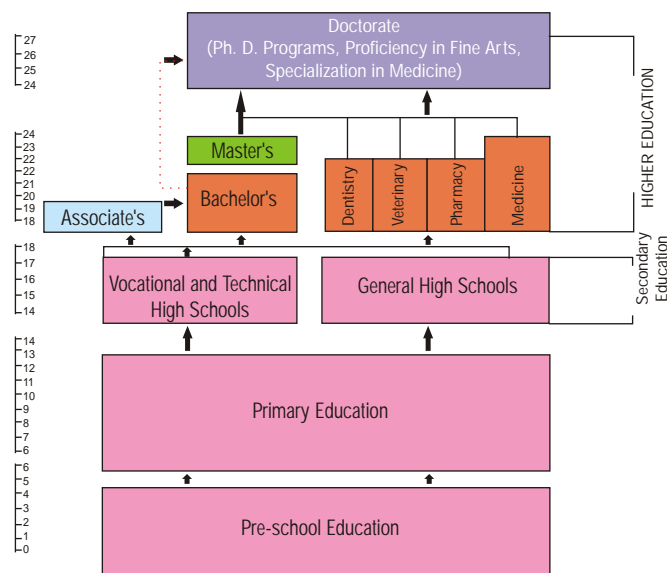
Primary Education: It involves the education and training of children in the age group of 6 to 14. Primary education is compulsory for all citizens. It is free at the State schools and lasts eight years.

Towards the end of the primary school, pupils are given information about both general, vocational and technical high schools and the kinds of employment they prepare for.

Secondary Education: It comprises high schools of a general or vocational and/or technical character giving four-year courses following primary education.

Higher Education: After graduating from high school, students can enroll in higher education, which is compatible with the Bologna three-cycle system.

GENERAL STRUCTURE OF THE TURKISH EDUCATION SYSTEM



NB Since 2003, Bachelor's degree holders whose performance at Bachelor's level is exceptionally high can enlist directly to the Doctoral level programs

Figure 1. General Structure of Turkish Education

2. Structure of Turkish Higher Education

In 1981, in accordance with the new Higher Education Law (No. 2547), the administration of higher education in Turkey was comprehensively restructured. The system thereby became centralized, with all higher education institutions tied to the Council of Higher Education (*Yüksekö retim Kurulu, or YÖK*). After this restructuring, all institutions of higher education were

designed as universities. Expansion of higher education throughout the country was achieved, application to higher education was centralized, and a central university exam and placement were introduced. In addition to public universities, the first non-profit foundation university in Turkey started to provide education for students in 1986.

The CoHE has twenty-one members: One third of its members are directly appointed by the President of the Republic of Turkey by giving priority to the former rectors and successful professors; one third are selected by the Council of Ministers (Cabinet) from among distinguished, high ranking civil servants; one third are selected by the Inter-University Council from among professors who are not members of that Council. The selections of members by the Council of Ministers and the Inter-University Council are subject to approval by the President of the Turkish Republic. Each member is appointed for a renewable term of four years. The President of the Council is appointed by the President of the Republic of Turkey from among the Council members.

Nine members of the Council are elected to an Executive Board to carry out day-to-day functions of the Council. Members of the Executive Board are appointed on a full-time basis.

The Inter-University Council is composed of two persons from each university, the rector and one member elected by the Senate of the university. The main duties are to co-ordinate and evaluate teaching, research and publication activities; to propose measures concerning academic staff; and to establish rules and regulations regarding doctoral work and granting of academic titles and degrees.

(www.uak.gov.tr)

THE COUNCIL OF HIGHER EDUCATION

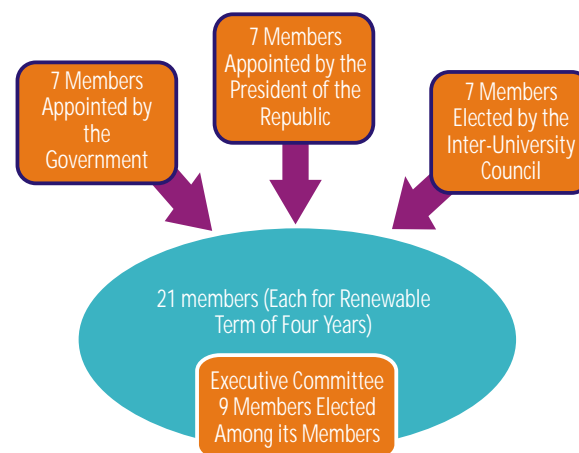


Figure 2. Council of Higher Education (CoHE)



3. Types of Higher Education Institutions (HEIs)

Higher education institutions can be classified as follows: Universities, Institutes of High Technology, Foundation Post Secondary Vocational Schools, Other Higher Education Institutions (Military and Police Academies).

There are two types of universities in Turkey, namely Public and Non-profit Foundation Universities. There are the following units in the universities:

- Faculty (School): A division conducting higher education, scholarly research and publication. Various departments and programs may be connected to it. It carries out an educational program of at least four years' duration that culminates with the award of a Bachelor's degree.
- Graduate School: An institution in universities concerned with graduate education, scholarly research and applications. Called institutes, they award MA, MS and PhD degrees.
- Post-secondary School: An institution of higher education which is mainly concerned with providing instruction for a specific profession. It carries out eight-semester education.
- Conservatory: An institution of higher education in which artists are trained for music and the performing arts. It carries out eight-semester education.



- Post-secondary Vocational School: An institution of higher education that is aimed at training manpower in specific occupations and provides instruction lasting four semesters.
- Department: The main unit of a faculty offering degrees at bachelor degree level and carrying out research. It may be sub-divided into sections or programs.
- Research and Applied Studies Center: An institution of higher education carrying out research and applied studies to meet the applied study needs of various areas and to provide preparatory and support activities for various professional areas, with the aim of supporting education in institutions of higher education.

As of the end of 2009-2010 Education Year there are 163 higher education institutions in Turkey (see Table 1). A list of universities and their contact information is available at www.yok.gov.tr

Table 1. The number of higher education institutions in Turkey (2010)

| | |
|--|------------|
| Public Universities | 95 |
| Non-profit Foundation Universities | 51 |
| Foundation Post-Secondary Vocational Schools | 9 |
| High Technology Institutes | 2 |
| Other Higher Education Institutions | 6 |
| Total | 163 |




4. Degrees

An Associate's degree (short cycle) is awarded on completion of a two-year study program. The associate degree programs are offered by universities and foundation post-secondary vocational schools. Some distance education programs are also available. The associate degree programs may require a period of on-the-job training.

A Bachelor's degree (1st cycle) is normally awarded after the completion of a four-year course of study.

The duration of study for dentistry, veterinary medicine and pharmacy is five years and that of medicine is six years. The qualifications in these four fields are considered to be the equivalent of a Master's degree.

A Master's degree program (2nd cycle) is a two-year program leading to the Master of Arts (MA) or Master of Sciences (MS). There are two kinds of Master's programs, with or without a thesis. The Master's with thesis program is a two-year program generally consisting of seven courses with a minimum of 21 credits followed by submission of a thesis. Non-thesis programs are to be completed in one and a half years and call for the completion of ten graduate courses of a minimum 30 credits and a term project.



A Doctoral degree program (3rd cycle) is usually an eight-semester program leading to the PhD degree. It consists of a minimum of seven courses, with a minimum of 21 credits, a proficiency exam, a dissertation proposal, a dissertation and its oral defense. After successful completion of the course work and the proficiency exam, students must submit the dissertation and defend it orally before an examining committee.

Specialization in Medicine programs are equivalent to doctoral degree programs and are carried out in the faculties of medicine, university hospitals and research and training hospitals. For the specialization in medicine, there is a competitive selection examination in various branches of medicine for those graduating from the faculties of medicine. Specialist candidates are required to submit a dissertation and defend it before an examining committee.

Proficiency in Art is at least a six-semester post-Master's program in the visual and performing art branches making it equivalent to a Doctorate. It requires the presentation of an original work of art or (in music and the performing arts) a superior, creative performance.

5. Institutional Management of HEIs

The Rector chairs the Senate, implements the regulations, and ensures co-ordination among subsidiary organizations attached to the university. In public universities, six candidates for the rectorship are elected by the faculty members of the university by secret ballot. CoHE proposes three of those six candidates to the President of Turkey, who then makes the final selection and appoints the rector. In non-profit foundation universities, the selection of candidates and appointment of the rector are carried out by the Board of Trustees and approved by CoHE.

A UNIVERSITY SENATE STRUCTURE

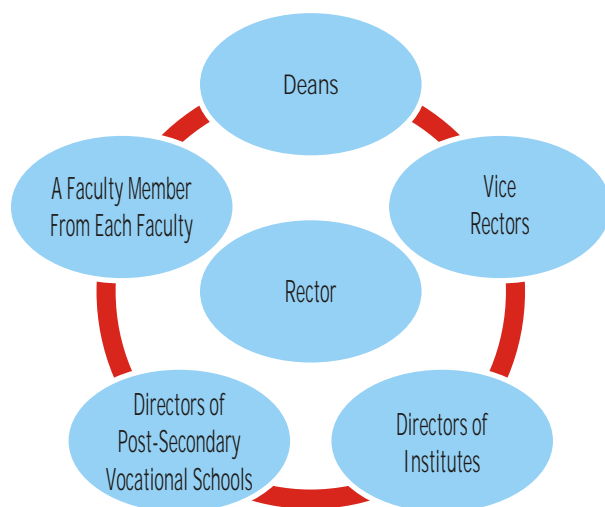


Figure 3. General Structure of a University Senate

The Senate is the governing body of a university in terms of academic affairs, composed of the rector, vice-rectors, deans, directors of the graduate schools and the post-secondary vocational schools, as well as a teaching staff member from each faculty elected for a three-year term.

The University Administrative Board is chaired by the rector and is composed of the deans and three professors appointed by the Senate for four years. The main duty of this board is to assist the rector in daily administrative duties.

The Dean of a faculty is appointed by CoHE from among three candidate professors nominated by the rector.

6. Academic Staff

1) Faculty Members with PhD:

- Professor: highest academic title.
- Associate Professor: has successfully fulfilled the requirements of the Inter-University Council.
- Assistant Professor: has successfully completed doctoral studies.

2) Teaching Staff:

- Instructor: teaches or supervises compulsory courses.
- Lecturer: teaches and supervises students.
- Support staff: hired for a specified period by higher education institutions (i.e., research assistants, specialists, translators, and education planners).

Table 2. Total number of academic staff in Turkey (2008-2009)

| | Female | Male | Total |
|---------------------------------|---------------|---------------|----------------|
| Faculty Members with PhD | 12 528 | 27 032 | 39 560 |
| Professor | 3 746 | 9 916 | 13 662 |
| Associate Professor | 2 326 | 5 034 | 7 360 |
| Assistant Professor | 6 456 | 12 082 | 18 538 |
| Teaching Staff | 28 333 | 32 611 | 60 944 |
| Instructor | 6 067 | 9 685 | 15 752 |
| Lecturer | 4 384 | 2 936 | 7 320 |
| Specialist | 1 341 | 1 692 | 3 033 |
| Research Assistant | 16 518 | 18 274 | 34 792 |
| Translator | 13 | 5 | 18 |
| Education Planner | 10 | 19 | 29 |
| TOTAL | 40 861 | 59 643 | 100 504 |

As of the end of 2008-2009 academic year, there were 100.504 academic staff in Turkey. About 40 % were female and 60 % male.

7. Types of Higher Education

Face-to-face Education: Generally, in most of the Turkish Higher Education Institutions, face-to-face type of education is followed. In this type of education, students are required to attend their courses or practical work sessions.

Distance Education: Students may follow their programs through radio, television or training tools. Since 1982, the Open Education Faculty of Anadolu University has offered distance education delivering two-year and four-year undergraduate programs. Today, in addition to the Open Faculty of Anadolu University, many other higher education institutions are offering distance education via internet (e-campus).

8. Students

As of 2008-2009, there were almost three million higher education students in Turkey (see Table 3). About 39% of these students were undertaking their studies via distance education and 61% via face-to-face education. The number of foreign students was 18 720. The higher education gross enrolment rate in Turkey for the relevant age group is 44,2% (including distance education). The students can be involved in decision making at faculty board level as well

as at the level of the Senate of the Higher Education Institutions when needed in order to make contributions to the process. Representative of the students in classes, departments, faculties and universities are elected by the students and these university representatives constitute the National Council of Students which is the top representative body of the university students in Turkey.

Table 3. Total number of students in higher education institutions (2008-2009)

| Education Type | Female | Male | Total |
|-----------------------------------|------------------|------------------|------------------|
| Post-secondary Vocational Schools | 374 137 | 500 560 | 874 697 |
| Undergraduate | 823 231 | 1 059 900 | 1 883 131 |
| Master | 52 038 | 57 807 | 109 845 |
| Doctorate | 16 004 | 19 942 | 35 946 |
| Specialization in Medicine | 9 208 | 11 454 | 20 662 |
| TOTAL | 1 274 618 | 1 649 663 | 2 924 281 |

9. Language of Instruction

The main language of instruction is Turkish in the higher education institutions, but some universities use English, French and/or German as the language of instruction preceded by one-year language preparatory classes. Additionally, some universities have programs in which about 30% of the courses use English as the language of instruction.

10. Funding

Public higher education institutions are funded by the government budget, based on a detailed itemizing of their expenditures, essentially prepared after consultations based on the previous year's allocations. Income is also received from institutions, fees, payments, publications and sales, movable and immovable property, profits etc. Non-profit Foundation universities are funded by their Foundations and by student fees.

11. Admissions

For admission to all undergraduate programs in Turkey, a valid high school diploma and a sufficient score on the Student Selection and Placement Examinations (*YGS* and *LYS*) are required. The *YGS* and *LYS* are central university entrance examinations administered by the Student Selection and Placement Centre (*ÖSYM*), which is affiliated to the Council of Higher Education. The *YGS* is usually administered in April while the *LYS* is usually in June, throughout the country simultaneously.

Student Selection and Placement Examinations are two staged. The results of the first stage of these examinations (*YGS*) are used both in acceptance to the 2-year post secondary vocational schools and in



calculation of the total composite scores of the students in *LYS* which is required in admission to the undergraduate programs. Admissions to the undergraduate higher education institutions are based on the students' composite scores, which take into account the *YGS* and *LYS* scores and the high school grade point averages. Moreover, some programs that require special abilities (art, music, sports, etc.) can select their students via try-outs. More information is available at <http://www.osym.gov.tr>

Admission to graduate programs is carried out by the higher education institutions. Admission depends on composite scores which take into account the Graduate Education Entrance Examination (*ALES*), the undergraduate grade point average, and interview results.



12. International Student Admissions

Foreign students who wish to undertake their undergraduate studies in Turkey must have completed their secondary education in a high school or similar institution in which the education is equivalent to that of a Turkish high school. They apply directly to the university of their choice and the university makes the selection. Foreign students who wish to pursue their graduate / post-graduate studies in Turkey also apply directly to the universities, which set their own admissions requirements. Scholarships are available for some international students from the Turkish Ministry of National Education. More information on these scholarships and application procedures is available at <http://digm.meb.gov.tr/burs.html>

13. Tuition Fees

Tuition fees are applied differently in public and non-profit foundation universities. In public universities, tuition fees are decided and announced by the Council of Ministers, taking into consideration the type and duration of study in different disciplines. In non-profit foundation universities, on the other hand, tuition fees are decided by the Board of Trustees of the university.



Students must pay their tuition fees for each semester before registering for the courses at the beginning of that specific semester. Both in public and non-profit foundation universities, a certain percentage of the students admitted to the university are given diverse scholarships. These scholarships may be full or partial tuition waiver; merit or support scholarships. Some of these scholarships may meet academic materials, accommodation, food and beverages, and even certain allowances. In addition to this support, student assistantship and the research fellowships are another kind of support that could be helpful during the study in Turkey.

14. Financial Support for Students

There is a centralized state grant and loan system to support both undergraduate and graduate students with Turkish citizenship. The Higher Education Loan and Dormitory Authority (*YURTKUR*) is the body responsible for the administration of state loans and lodging in higher education. There are also various merit based scholarships and fellowships available to students. More information is available at <http://www.kyk.gov.tr>



15. Degree Equivalency

In line with the Lisbon Convention, the Regulation on Recognition of Foreign Higher Education Qualification was reviewed and the new version of the Regulation came into force on May 11, 2007. Since then, the new regulation with relevant changes has been applied in the procedure of recognition and the assessments of foreign higher education diplomas in Turkey.

The people who have associate, bachelor and master's degrees diplomas given by Higher Education Institutions outside Turkey apply to the Council of Higher Education if they wish to get equivalence certificates. More information is available at <http://www.yok.gov.tr>

Concerning the equivalency of the degrees of professorship, associate professorship and doctorate, on the other hand, the Inter-university Council is the responsible body and people who have taken these degrees outside Turkey have to apply this Council in order to obtain equivalency. <http://www.uak.gov.tr>




16. The Bologna Process

With the developments of the past twenty years, higher education systems all around the world have undergone a transformation process. This transformation brings with it a need for comparable, competitive and transparent higher education programs in a specified geographical area. One of its results is the Bologna Process, which aims to create a European Higher Education Area (EHEA) based on international cooperation and academic exchange that is attractive to students and staff from different countries. Since 2001 Turkey has participated in the implementation of the Bologna Process together with 47 partner countries.

The main lines of action in the Bologna Process are the Qualifications Frameworks (QF), Quality Assurance (QA), Recognition and the European Credit Transfer and Accumulation System (ECTS) and Diploma Supplement (DS) implementations, Mobility, Lifelong Learning Program (LLL), Joint Degrees and the Social Dimension.

Turkey is undertaking steps to enact various instruments of those lines of action. To facilitate integration with the Process, ECTS was defined and accepted by many higher education institutions. Among five applicant higher education institutions in the European Higher Education Area, Karadeniz



Teknik University and Sakarya University were awarded ECTS Label in 2010. The Short Cycle in Turkey requires an accumulation of 120 ECTS credits (2 years), the First Cycle requires an accumulation of 240 ECTS credits (4 years), with 90-120 ECTS credits required for the Master's and 180-240 ECTS credits for the Doctorate.

The reform process on the Qualifications Framework for Higher Education in Turkey started in 2006 and the framework was updated on 21.01.2010 by CoHE Decision. According to this decision, EQF-LLL descriptors for Associate Level (5th cycle) were approved and Bachelor's, Master's and PhD level descriptors were revised. The name of Turkish NQF is "The Qualifications Framework for Higher Education in Turkey." Further work is being carried out on defining learning outcomes of "field based qualifications" and "program based qualifications". Fields in Turkish Higher Education Qualifications Framework are defined taking ISCED 97 as a reference point. Working groups are established for each of the main fields. After completing this work, program based qualifications will be defined. According to the timetable prepared, "The Framework for Higher Education Qualifications in Turkey" will start to be implemented in all of the higher education institutions in 2012.

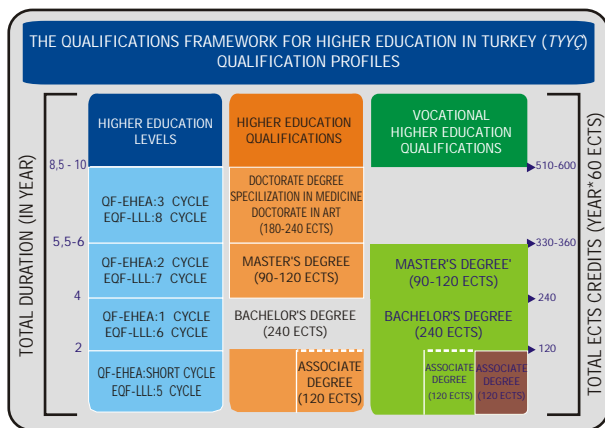


Figure 4. The Qualifications Framework for Higher Education in Turkey

These developments also accelerated the Quality Assurance studies in higher education. The new version of a "Guide on Academic Assessment and Quality Improvement at HEIs," which includes an expanded list of standards and performance indicators for the use of HEIs and QA Agencies in their internal and external quality assurance procedures, was published by the Academic Assessment and Quality Improvement Commission (YÖDEK) in line with the Standards and Guidelines for QA and in the light of the views of relevant stakeholders. Also, internal QA processes in Turkish HEIs are well in place, and since January 1, 2007, each university in Turkey prepares its annual strategic plans according

to the Law on Public Financial Management and Control. As for external evaluation, some independent national quality agencies have started to work on acquiring accreditation through external quality assurance agencies. The Association for Evaluation and Accreditation of Engineering Programs (MÜDEK) was awarded a license for external assessment of engineering programs on 15 November 2007 thus qualifying as an independent external QA agency. As of June 2009, 115 engineering programs in Turkey were evaluated, and 76 of them have been accredited by MÜDEK. More information on the accreditation of Higher Education Institutions can be found at <http://www.mudek.org.tr>

Universities can set up and carry out joint degree programs through bilateral protocols. Currently, 26 universities have 48 joint degree programs with higher education institutions abroad.

In the social dimension line, the EUROSTUDENT III project, which aims to collate comparable data on the socio-economic background and living conditions of students throughout Europe, has been carried out by a national commission. The fourth round of the Project which covers the years of 2009-2011 is being carried out.

Regarding the promotion of student

mobility, exchange programs have started in many universities in Turkey. In 2008-2009 academic year, around 7000 students in Turkey benefitted from the student mobility programs.

Implementation of the Bologna Reform Process in Turkey is carried out and monitored by the Council of Higher Education. The Council follows the developments of implementation of the process in HEIs, organizes meetings, workshops and site visits and other activities to raise the level of awareness on the reforms. It also collects data on the implementation of the reforms in HEIs and analyzes the results to determine the strategy and draw a road map for the Bologna Coordination Commissions (BCC) to help put the reforms into action in their own institutions. Actual student involvement in administration, quality improvement, academic mobility, changes and reforms in curriculum are some of the other issues taken into consideration in the framework of this integration process.

Bologna Coordination Commissions are composed of the following members appointed by the rector in each university.

- Vice rector/s responsible for Education and/or International Relations Unit
- President of the Academic Assessment and Quality Improvement Board (ADEK)

- Bologna Expert (if there is one)
- Coordinator/s of ECTS/DS and Erasmus
- Head of Registrar's Office
- President of the Student Council of the university
- Other member/s that may be appointed by the rector

The rector appoints the president from among the members of the Commission.

BOLOGNA COORDINATION COMMISSION (BCC)

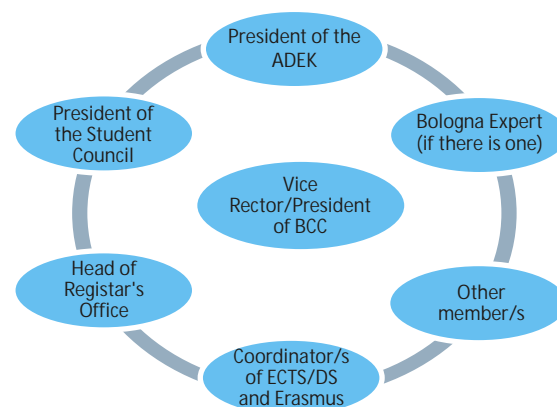


Figure 5. Bologna Coordination Commission in Higher Education Institutions

More information on the implementation of the Bologna Process in Turkey can be found at <http://bologna.yok.gov.tr>



17. Related Institutions

The Ministry of National Education is the national authority responsible for primary and secondary education and its institutions whereas the Council of Higher Education is responsible for higher education and its institutions. The Ministry of National Education manages the relations of CoHE with the Great National Assembly of Turkey and also represents it there.

<http://www.meb.gov.tr>

The Scientific and Technological Research Council of Turkey (*TÜB TAK*) is the leading agency for management, funding and conduct of research in Turkey. It is responsible for promoting, developing, organizing, conducting and coordinating research and development in line with national targets and priorities. TÜB TAK is an autonomous institution governed by a Scientific Board whose members are selected from among outstanding scholars from universities, industry and research institutions. In addition, it acts as an advisory agency to the Turkish Government on science and research issues.

<http://www.tubitak.gov.tr>

The Academy of Sciences of Turkey (*TÜBA*) is an autonomous body which determines its organizational structure and

activities on the principle of scientific merit. Its aims are to establish criteria for scientific excellence in Turkey, to encourage and foster scientific endeavors, to ensure that scientific principles are applied in all spheres and to create an environment of debate so that basic social strategies can be defined in the light of scientific and technological data.

<http://www.tuba.gov.tr>

The Turkish National Agency of the Centre for European Union Education and Youth Programs was established under the Turkish Prime Ministry State Planning Organization in January 2002. The main purpose of the Agency is to promote mobility among the higher education institutions in Turkey and in Europe. <http://www.ua.gov.tr>

In addition to these, there are also other institutions that do not provide any degree or diploma, instead focusing more on research and development, or other kind of scientific activities.