

## SINGAPORE STANDARD EDUCATIONAL CLASSIFICATION 2010

### Introduction

The Singapore Standard Educational Classification (SSEC) is designed for use in the collection of data (e.g. censuses, surveys, administrative records) that requires the classification of educational programmes and qualifications. It is also used in the compilation, presentation and analysis of a wide range of statistics, including demographic, social and education statistics. To ensure the continuing relevance of the SSEC, the classification is revised and updated regularly, taking into account developments in the education system as well as initiatives in the workforce education and updating which tend to bring about new programmes and qualification/ certification systems.

2 The SSEC 2010 makes reference to and is consistent with the basic framework and principles of the International Standard Classification of Education 1997 (ISCED 97). It is developed to take into account changes in the Singapore education landscape while enhancing international comparability.

### Scope and Structure of the Classification

3 The SSEC 2010 comprises of three sub-classifications:

- Classification of Level of Education Attending
- Classification of Educational Qualification Attained
- Classification of Field of Study

4 The hierarchical structure of the SSEC is defined by aggregation levels and groups which use Singapore's present education system and the formal educational qualifications currently awarded in Singapore as the basis. For educational programmes offered in Singapore based on foreign education systems, and qualifications which were awarded in Singapore in the past or those awarded overseas, the approximate equivalence to the current system and qualifications in Singapore can be used to facilitate the appropriate classification.

5 The SSEC is revised to maintain relevance with various developments in the area of education in Singapore. Apart from evolutions of the full-time education system and vocational certification system, development in recent years of the continuing education and training programmes, in terms of recognition and rigor compared to the mainstream formal education system, has also been taken into consideration when revising the SSEC. Appendix I briefly summarises the key developments in the Singapore education landscape. Appendix II provides a chart of the various programmes in Singapore's full-time education as well as continuing education and training systems.

## Sub-classifications of SSEC 2010

### *Classification of Level of Education Attending*

6 The level of education attending refers to the grade or standard of formal education that a full-time student is attending.

7 The classification for level of education attending is a two-digit hierarchical structure. Six broad levels of education can be identified:

<b>Broad Level</b>	<b>Typical Age (years)</b>	<b>Years of Schooling</b>
Pre-primary	4 to 5	2
Primary	6 to 11	6
Secondary	12 to 15	4
Post-Secondary (Non-Tertiary)	16 to 18	2 to 3
Diploma courses	16 to 18	2 to 3
University	18 to 25	3 to 5

8 The six broad levels of education are broken down into more detailed categories by the grade of education at primary and secondary level, and by type of curriculum (general/vocational) at post-secondary level.

9 When classifying the detailed categories, considerations have been taken in terms of the educational content of the various educational levels. In practice, supplementary criteria for classifying educational level attending also include typical age of students attending the educational programme, duration of education, minimum entrance requirements and next typical educational level.

10 An example to illustrate the application of the criteria is the six-year Integrated Programme. While the Integrated Programme does not include a national examination at the end of secondary school, a student would typically progress from the fourth year to the fifth year to prepare for pre-university examinations such as the GCE 'A' Level Examination to be attempted at the end of the sixth year. The typical age of students in the fifth and sixth year of the Integrated Programme is 16 to 18 years old. In addition, the progression and duration within an Integrated Programme is similar to the conventional educational pathway with separate secondary and pre-university programmes. Therefore, the fifth and sixth year of the Integrated Programme would be classified as Post-Secondary (Non-Tertiary) level.

### *Classification of Educational Qualification Attained*

11 The level of educational qualification attained refers to the grade or standard of formal education passed or the highest level of education where a certificate, diploma or degree is awarded by a formal educational institution. The educational qualification may be attained through full-time or part-time study in a structured educational programme.

12 The classification for level of educational qualification attained is a two-digit hierarchical structure. The levels of educational qualifications are categorised into nine broad groups:

<b>Level of Education</b>	<b>Benchmark</b>
No Qualification / Lower Primary Education	Did not pass Primary School Leaving Examination (PSLE) or equivalent
Primary Qualification	Passed PSLE or equivalent
Lower Secondary Qualification	Did not pass General Certificate of Education (GCE) at 'Normal' ('N') or 'Ordinary' ('O') Level or equivalent
Secondary Qualification	Obtained at least one pass at GCE 'N' or 'O' Level or equivalent
Post-Secondary Qualification (Non-Tertiary)	Obtained at least one pass at GCE 'Advanced' ('A') Level or equivalent, or awarded at least an ITE Nitec or Higher Nitec certification or equivalent
Polytechnic Diploma	Awarded a diploma or advanced diploma by a Polytechnic
Professional Qualification	Obtained a certificate, diploma or other qualification by a professional body or vocational institution
University First Degree	Awarded first degree by a university
University Postgraduate Qualification	Awarded postgraduate diploma or degree by a university or postgraduate educational institution

13 The nine broad groups contain more detailed distinction by type of qualification (general/vocational), where appropriate.

14 In defining the broad groups of educational qualifications, the certification used in Singapore's formal education system is used as a benchmark. This has been of particular importance when identifying equivalent qualifications awarded by continuing education and training system in SSEC 2010. For qualifications awarded by professional bodies, these must be the result of the fulfilment of the requirements of structured

educational programmes and passing of the appropriate standards. The levels of educational qualifications exclude skill certifications, certificates of courses attendance and honorary qualifications which are not the result of formal learning and examination by a formal educational institution or professional body.

15 The attainment of an educational qualification usually occurs when a certain grade or standard of education is passed at the end of an educational programme. Therefore, similar considerations of formal educational content, as in the case for level of education attending, have to be done when classifying the educational qualification attained. Supplementary criteria for classifying educational qualification include the typical age of education, duration of education, minimum entrance requirements and next typical level of educational qualification.

#### *Classification of Field of Study*

16 The field of study refers to the principal discipline, branch or subject matter of study that leads to the award of the qualification attained at polytechnic or university levels. Vocational qualifications at post-secondary level may also be classified by field of study.

17 The classification for field of study is a four-digit hierarchical structure comprising three levels, following the ISCED 97. The levels of this hierarchy are termed as broad fields (two-digit), narrow fields (three-digit) and detailed fields (four-digit). Broad fields constitute the highest level of aggregation in the field of study classification. Currently there are 14 broad fields. Moving down the hierarchy, there are 59 three-digit narrow fields and 238 four-digit detailed fields of study.

18 The 14 broad fields of study are listed as follows:

- 01 Education
- 02 Fine & Applied Arts
- 03 Humanities & Social Sciences
- 04 Mass Communication & Information Science
- 05 Business & Administration
- 06 Law
- 07 Natural, Physical, Chemical & Mathematical Sciences
- 08 Health Sciences
- 09 Information Technology
- 10 Architecture & Building
- 11 Engineering Sciences
- 12 Engineering, Manufacturing & Related Trades

- 13 Services
- 99 Other Fields

19 The following illustrates the formation of the hierarchy of the field of study classification from the broad field to the detailed field, using 'Human Resource Management' as an example:

<b>Classification</b>	<b>Title</b>	<b>Code</b>
Broad Field	Business & Administration	05
Narrow Field	Administration & Management	051
Detailed Field	Human Resource Management	0512

20 At the three or four-digit levels, the digit '9' that appears in the last digit position denotes residual fields of study grouped at the respective level of detail.

21 In classifying an educational programme by the field of study, the main consideration is the theoretical content of the programme. In the case of inter- or multi-disciplinary programme, i.e. programme which combine two fields of study, the 'majority rule' should be applied. Based on the majority rule, an inter- or multi-disciplinary programme should be classified to the field of study which most time is spent on. In practice, the number of modular credits may be used in place of time spent on a field of study.