

# Norway

## Demographics for Norway

Population:	4,593,041 (July 2005 est.)
GDP (by PPP method):	US\$183 billion
Currency (inc code):	Norwegian Krone (NOK)
Language(s):	Bokmal Norwegian (official), Nynorsk Norwegian (official), small Sami- and Finnish- speaking minorities
Internet country code:	.no

## Primary and secondary education

Education for all is the foundation in Norwegian educational policy. Everyone in Norway has an equal right to education, regardless of social and cultural background and possible special needs. Public education in Norway is free up to, and including, the upper secondary level. It is Norway's educational policy that the Norwegian educational system shall be among the best in the world.

### *Compulsory schooling ten years, starting at the age of six*

Primary and lower secondary education in Norway is founded on the principle of a unified school system that provides equal and adapted education for all, based on a single national curriculum. All young people are to share a common framework of knowledge, culture and values.

The pupils are introduced to the English language in the first grade, and English is compulsory during the ten years. Most pupils also study an optional second foreign language as well, most commonly German, French or Spanish.

Three main stages:

1. Lower primary (grades 1-4).

2. Upper primary (grades 5-7).
3. Lower secondary (grades 8-10).

*Upper secondary education three years, normally starting at the age of 16*

Upper secondary education embraces all courses leading to educational qualifications above the lower secondary level and below the level of higher education. Everyone between the ages of 16 and 19 has had a statutory right to three years' upper secondary education, leading either to higher education, or to vocational qualifications or partial qualifications.

### **Higher education**

Public higher education institutions include six universities, six specialised university institutions, 25 state university colleges and two national university colleges of the arts. These institutions carry out research and offer courses leading to academic degrees. There are 26 private higher education institutions in Norway with recognised study programs, but the majority of students in Norway (about 90 percent) attend state institutions. Private higher education in Norway is regulated by the Act of June 11 1986.

Entering one of these institutions requires a university entrance examination from upper secondary school. In many studies a higher level than the minimum is required in specific subjects, and for some studies extraordinary good scores from upper secondary school are required.

### *Degree cycles*

It is important to be aware that the first year of a university degree in some countries, for example the USA, is evaluated as being equivalent to the last year of the upper secondary school in Norway.

Norway has recently changed its degree system in order to implement the Bologna declaration. All higher education, except for professional qualification courses such as medicine, dentistry and a few others, has the following system:

- Bachelor degree: 3 years.
- Master degree: 2 years.
- Doctoral degree (PhD): 3 years.

In engineering and in a few other areas complete five years Master degrees are offered, based on upper secondary school qualifications.

*The Bachelor degree* is awarded by all the state universities, specialized university institutions, university colleges and a good number of the other higher education institutions, both private and public. It is obtained after three years of study.

*The Master degree* is awarded by the state universities and specialized university institutions, several university colleges and some private

educational institutions. The degree is obtained after two years of study. An important part of this degree is independent research work.

*The Doctoral degree – Philosophiae Doctor (PhD)* is awarded after three years of study following the completion of a Master's degree or a professional degree/program. Doctoral programmes, which are essentially research programs, are offered by all university-level institutions, some state university colleges and a few private educational institutions.

#### *Accreditation*

The Norwegian Agency for Quality Assurance in Education (NOKUT) was established by the Norwegian Parliament (Stortinget) in 2002 and commenced its activities on January 1, 2003. NOKUT is an independent government body.

NOKUT is an independent agency in the sense that the Ministry may not instruct NOKUT in excess of what is authorized by statute or laid down by the Ministry in regulation. The Ministry can neither reverse the agency's decisions, nor permit the establishment of study programmes that have not been accredited or approved by NOKUT. NOKUT also has the authority to withdraw accreditation or recognition if the conditions are no longer fulfilled.

### **Structure of business and management education**

#### *History*

The first business school in Norway, Norges Handelshøyskole (Norwegian School of Economics and Business Administration) was founded in 1936. The next school, today known as Handelshøyskolen BI (BI Norwegian School of Management), was founded in 1943. During the last few decades Norway has had a rapid growth within the sector of business education. In this period Norwegian business education has focused on the Norwegian degree Siviløkonom which is normally translated into Master of Science in Business or Master of Science in Economics and Business Administration. The Siviløkonom degree is a degree at the Master level, and is obtained after four years of business studies. It has been possible to undertake the first two years at university colleges all over the country, but only four universities/colleges have been accredited to offer the last two years. To go directly on to the four years study program requires extraordinarily good marks from upper secondary school, and only the very best candidates from the university colleges get the opportunity to undertake the last two years in the two plus two system.

As mentioned above, Norway has changed its degree system to match the Bologna system, and the last Siviløkonom degrees will be obtained by those who started the degree in 2002 and graduate in 2006. After 2006 graduates will receive the title Siviløkonom in addition to their Master degree, only if both the bachelor and the Master degree fulfil special requirements.

### *Degree titles*

The most common titles for business education will be *Bachelor/Master i økonomi og administrasjon* and it will be translated into Bachelor/Master of Science in Business and Economics.

More specialist Master and Bachelor degrees will be named Master i Markedsføring and Master i Finans translated into Master of Science in Marketing and Master of Science in Finance.

These titles are mainly used on pre-experience education and the courses are rather theoretical, and based on research.

For older students with some years working experience MBA degrees are offered.

### *Curriculum structures*

A bachelor degree in business consists of three years of full-time study and 180 credits (ECTS):

The curriculum structure will typically be:

- Business analyses: 30 ECTS.
- Management and leadership: 25 ECTS.
- Mathematics and statistics: 15-20 ECTS.
- Economics: 15-20 ECTS.
- Some compulsory courses: 90 ECTS.
- Advanced business courses: 30 ECTS.
- Other courses: 60 ECTS.

The “other courses” section indicates that students have a free choice of subject, but the majority select language studies and business related courses. Universities/colleges offering Master degrees often set special requirements for admission to the Master’s level course, for example extra requirements in mathematics and statistics and/or in economics.

Economics occupies a central position in Norwegian business and management higher education.

In the Master degree the student selects a profile containing one major area and one minor area. In addition the student has to follow some other courses. An important part of the Master degree is the thesis, which is an independent piece of research within the major study area. The thesis should not be less than 30 ECTS, which equates to half a year of full time study.

### *Providers*

Specialist university institutions, some state universities, several university colleges and some private institutions provide business education in Norway. Bachelor studies are offered at 27 different universities/colleges. Some of them

have more than one campus. Master studies in business are offered at eight institutions.

Except for a few universities/colleges all the institutions are owned and financed by the state. The private universities/colleges are partly financed by the government, and partly by tuition fees. For the universities/colleges owned by the state there are no tuition fees.

Business Doctorate programs, are offered at three universities/colleges. In addition the universities and some other institutions give Doctorate programs in related areas.

#### *Accreditations*

All providers of higher education in Norway have to be accredited by NOKUT ([www.nokut.no](http://www.nokut.no)).

The two main business schools have also obtained EQUIS accreditation.

#### *Demographics and education capacity*

At Bachelor level the capacity is approximately 3,500 students per year, and at Master level, approximately 1,500 students per year. The capacity at Bachelor level has grown very fast in recent years, and the capacity at Master level is also increasing.

Students are normally between 19 and 27 years old, and 40-50 percent are female.

#### *Faculty*

Most faculty combine research and teaching. In order to be accredited at Bachelor level, at least 20 percent of faculty should have a PhD or equivalent. At Master level at least 50 percent of the faculty should have a PhD and out of these at least 25 percent should have professorial competence.

#### **Most important issues facing business schools in Norway**

The most important issue seems to be lack of faculty. The number of Norwegians studying for a PhD in Norway and abroad is low compared with the growth in education capacity to Bachelor and Master level. This means that Norway might not have the sufficient number of professors and associate professors in the coming years. Most business schools are owned by the state and have to pay salary and other forms of compensation according to the governmental system. This means that many of the most qualified candidates might prefer to work in the private sector.

The new grade system for higher education is another issue. The new system is looks like the US system, but it is used completely differently, with grades from A to F, with E as the lowest pass grade. The whole scale is used, and the average student will then obtain a C. In Norway C is a good grade and should then be accepted as a fair grade, both from students, employers and

Universities/colleges in other countries. The grades A and B are only given if exceptionally good and very good results are obtained. It is a challenge to convince people with experience of the US system that C is a good grade.

The traditional business schools in Norway have a long tradition for contact and cooperation with the business community and public sector. This is important in order to assure that the education is relevant to Norwegian and international industries. It is a challenge for the smaller colleges to establish the necessary cooperation with the business community.

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