

Thailand

Demographics for Thailand

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| Population: | 65,444,371 |
| GDP (by PPP method): | US\$524.8 billion |
| Currency (inc code): | Baht (THB) |
| Language(s): | Thai, English, ethnic and regional dialects |
| Internet country code: | .th |

Primary and secondary education

The Thai formal education system is divided into two levels: basic education and higher education. Basic education is the education provided for 12 years before higher education. After two to three years in nursery school or kindergarten, students typically spend six years in primary education followed by three years at the lower secondary level and three years at the upper secondary level. Students usually complete primary and secondary education by 18 years of age.

The state provides basic education for the duration of 12 years. Such education, provided on a nationwide basis, is of good quality and free of charge. Local administration organizations, individuals, families, community organizations, private organizations, professional bodies, religious institutions, enterprises and other social institutions can also provide basic education under guidance of the Office of the Non-Formal Education Commission.

Basic education gives emphasis to morality, the learning process, and integration of knowledge and skills about social study, science and technology, religion, culture, art, mathematics, and languages. Basic education institutions, under the control of the Basic Education Commission, prescribe curricula relating to needs of the community and the wider society.

Compulsory education in Thailand is for nine years, requiring children aged seven to enroll in basic education institutions until the age of 16 with the exception of those who have already completed three-year lower secondary education.

Higher education

Higher education is provided in universities, technical institutes, vocational colleges, or specialized-training institutions (i.e. nursing colleges, cadet schools and Buddhist universities). It is divided into two levels: non-degree level and degree level. Students seeking higher education may continue their education to either non-degree level or degree level.

Non-degree level or associate degree level is mainly offered by colleges and institutes, public and private vocational colleges, as well as colleges of physical education, dramatic arts and fine arts. The majority of courses offered are associated with vocational and teacher education and require two years of study.

A Bachelor's degree normally requires four years of college-level course work. Some degree programs including architecture, painting, sculpture, graphic arts and pharmacy require five years of study, while medicine, dentistry, and veterinary science require six years of study. Undergraduate studies leading to a Bachelor's degree are generally divided into two phases: a set of general course requirements in a broad range of subjects and a concentrated (or major) program of study in one or more subjects.

Applicants to Bachelor's degree programs in public universities are normally required to face an entrance examination and an interview. The Ministry of Education plans to introduce a new system in 2006 called Central University Admissions System (CUAS) to replace the existing entrance examination. The new system will select students based on both their academic performance during the three-year study in upper secondary level and their scores from Ordinary National Educational Test (O-NET), and Advanced National Education Test (A-NET) during the last semester of the upper secondary level.

Graduate education includes programs of study leading to a graduate diploma, Master's, or Doctoral degree. A Master's degree requires at least two years of study beyond the Bachelor's degree. A Doctoral degree usually requires three years of intensive research and knowledge acquisition beyond the Master's degree. Admission requirements for graduate programs vary depending on the nature of the program and university admission policies. Some universities require a standardized test, such as the Graduate Record Examination (GRE) and, for business and management, the Graduate Management Admission Test (GMAT).

Most institutions operate using either a semester or quarter academic calendar. The semester system consists of two sessions called semesters, each

lasting at least 15 weeks. The quarter system consists of three sessions called quarters, each lasting at least 12 weeks. An academic year is generally from June to March that usually equates to two semesters or three quarters. Both systems might have a six-week session in the summer during April and May.

The Commission for Higher Education is responsible for proposing policies, development plans and standards for higher education in line with the National Scheme for education, religion, art and culture; mobilization of resources; monitoring; inspection; and evaluation of the provision of higher education, taking into consideration academic freedom and excellence of degree-level institutions in accord with the laws on the establishment of such institutions and other relevant laws.

Structure of business and management education

Management education in Thailand leading to a degree is provided by colleges and universities. Business programs are usually managed and delivered by an academic unit often referred to as a business school (it may go by many names, such as college of business and management, faculty of business administration, faculty of commerce and accountancy, or school of management). Non-degree management education, such as training programs for corporate employees, short management programs focused on particular topics, and executive leadership development programs, is provided by a wide range of organizations including colleges, universities, associations, consulting companies, or corporations.

Colleges and universities in Thailand can be categorized into public institutes and private institutes. Public institutes consist of 60 limited-admission universities, two open universities, and four autonomous universities. Private institutes are composed of 26 universities and 28 colleges. All colleges and universities in Thailand are under the control of the Ministry of Education, except the Asian Institute of Technology which is an autonomous international institution established under its own charter.

Undergraduate education (leading to Bachelor's degrees) in business and management is provided by colleges and universities. Generally, the program consists of general courses, business core courses, and specialized courses with varying credit requirements depending on institutions. The common degree title is Bachelor of Business Administration (BBA). The normal duration of study for the program is four years.

Graduate business education includes Master's and Doctoral-level education. Master's level business education includes programs leading to a general business Master's degree (e.g. Master of Business Administration: MBA) and programs leading to a specialized Master's degree (e.g. Master of Accountancy, Master of Marketing, Master of Information Systems), which provide specialized training within a specific field.

MBA program structures normally consist of foundation courses, required courses, and elective courses. To complete the degree, there are two options: a thesis option and a project option. The project option requires more coursework than the thesis option. The programs are offered both full-time and part-time. The full-time programs are designed for fresh graduates or candidates with limited work experience while the part-time programs are designed for professionals who work during the day and attend classes in the evening. Some part-time programs are called Young Executive MBA Program (Y-MBA). The normal duration for the MBA programs is two years.

Besides MBA programs, Executive MBA (EMBA) programs are also designed and offered for working executives with significant management experience, many of whom are company sponsored. These programs normally meet on weekends (Fridays and Saturdays) over two academic years. Study tours to corporations, factory plants, and important business centers in Europe and Asia are included in most of the EMBA programs.

Most business Doctoral programs prepare candidates to conduct highly specialized scholarly research. Like in the USA, after completing preliminary courses and passing written examinations, doctoral students advance to the candidacy stage. The doctoral student then participates in advanced seminars, selects a subject for the dissertation, forms a dissertation committee, and initiates research. The student enters an independent research phase once the dissertation committee accepts the research design and proposal. Independent research and writing the dissertation can take several years. Once acceptable to the advisor, the student must defend the dissertation before the committee. In some institutions (i.e. The Asian Institute of Technology), at least one scientific paper based on the dissertation published or accepted in an international refereed journal is also required before sitting for the research defense. The degree title is either the Doctor of Business Administration (DBA) or the Doctor of Philosophy (PhD) depending on institutions. The duration of study for Doctoral degree program is varied from three to five years. There is also a joint Doctoral program called Joint Doctoral Program in Business Administration (JDBA), which is jointly offered by the National Institute of Development Administration (NIDA), Chulalongkorn University, and Thammasat University.

The language of instruction for both undergraduate and graduate programs is in local language (Thai), but some international programs are offered in English. Moreover, many universities began to offer degrees through twinning arrangements with foreign universities. In these cases, English is the medium of instruction. Students take the first years of a degree at local universities in Thailand before heading overseas for their final year. Besides twinning programs, student exchange programs are also popular for business students hoping to gain some experience abroad.

Faculty

Business faculty comes from both academia and business. Full-time faculty members are hired on tenure from academia while part-time faculty members are hired from business professionals. To be eligible to teach undergraduate programs, according to the Ministry of Education's policy, faculty have to get at least either a Master's degree or be an assistant professor in the field. To be qualified to teach graduate programs, faculty has to get at least either a PhD degree or be an assistant professor in the field. As the percentage of faculty with a PhD degree is still considered low, the Thai government provides scholarships for young faculty to further study toward the PhD degrees:

- Estimated number of institutions with undergraduate business degree programs: 95.
- Estimated number of institutions with business Master's degree programs: 61.
- Estimated number of institutions with business Doctorate degree programs: 9.

Students

In 2003, the total number of undergraduate students in Thailand was 1,711,332 and the total number of graduate students was 139,532. Approximately 80 percent of the total undergraduate students are enrolled in the field of humanities and social sciences including business; about 15 percent in the field of sciences and technology, and the remaining 5 percent in the field of health sciences. About 79 percent of total students are enrolled in public colleges and universities.

Accreditation

Quality assessment of academic institutions is carried out by a public organization called The Office for National Education Standards and Quality Assessment which is responsible for development of criteria and methods of external evaluation and evaluating of educational achievements in order to assess the quality of institutions. Up to July 2005, 91 percent of all public institutions have been evaluated. Some business schools have become members of AACSB or EFMD and are preparing a self-evaluation report for international accreditation.

Issues facing business schools

As the MBA degree has become the stamp of approval for managers and is a big revenue-generating business for colleges and universities in Thailand, the number of institutions offering MBA programs has increased dramatically during the past ten years. The business and management schools are facing

diverse issues like intense competition, shortage of faculty with PhD degrees, improvement of program quality, and flexibility in offering the programs.

The increase of demand for management education is not only from Thailand, but also from other countries in Asia (i.e. India, China, Laos, Cambodia, Vietnam). Business schools have aggressively expanded their targeted market group to include students from other countries. Some international programs (i.e. MBA programs of Asian Institute of Technology and Assumption University) have students from more than 20 countries. However, new competitors from universities abroad have emerged in the Thai MBA market and opened overseas campuses and branches in Thailand (i.e. Webster University or Schiller-Stamford International College). This emergence of competitors has intensified the competition among local business schools.

Despite the increasing demand for business education, the number of faculty with Doctorate degrees is limited. The main reason is that the remuneration package for PhD graduates working in the academic sector is considered very low compared to those working in the business sector. The problem of a doctoral faculty shortage has forced business schools to invite more part-time faculty both from academia and business to teach on their programs. In this case, business students may benefit from the professionalism and expertise of the external faculty who share their real-life experiences. However, business schools have to rely heavily on the availability and reputation of the external instructors.

Some business schools are not moving quickly enough to address new paradigms of management. Most business programs are focused on disciplinary business functions, analysis, and technique. They do not provide enough practical experiences to their students. However, some business schools try to include internship programs, international exchange programs, and new management models in their curricula in order to enhance the quality of the programs.

In a highly competitive market, a business school needs to differentiate its programs from other schools in order to attract more students. Business schools have to devote themselves to customizing their curricula to satisfy students in different market segments. Business programs have responded to the broad range of student needs by developing a wide variety of programs.

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