

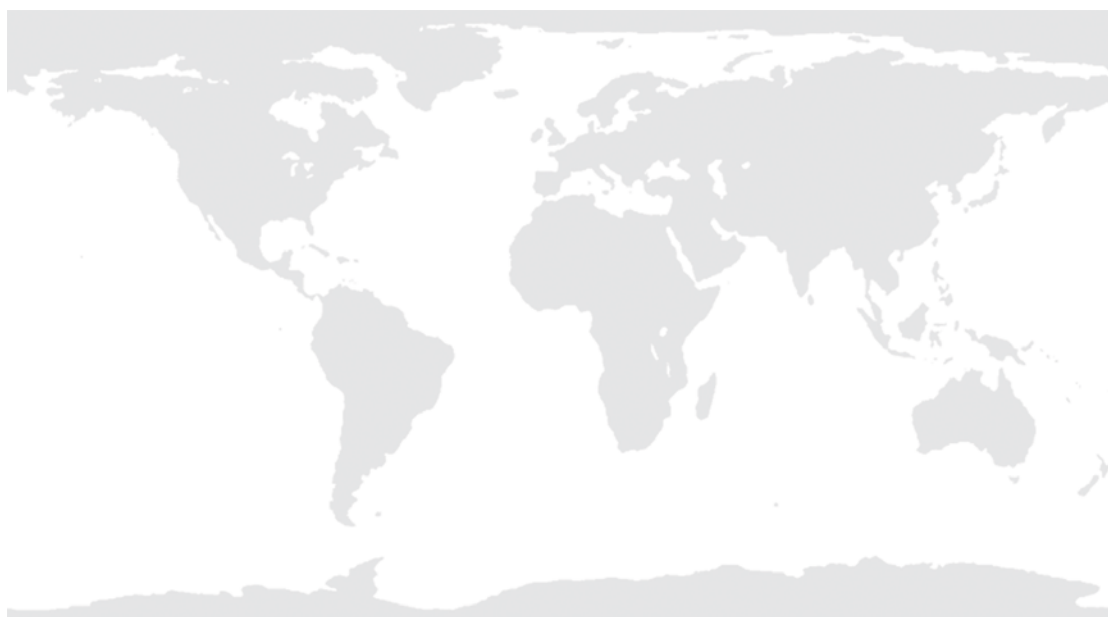


# World Data on Education

## Données mondiales de l'éducation

### Datos Mundiales de Educación

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## Samoa

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### Principles and general objectives of education

The vision for the Government of Samoa as stipulated in the Strategy for Development 2008-2012 is improved quality of life for all while ensuring sustainable economic and social progress.

The vision of the Ministry of Education, Sports and Culture for the period 2006-2015 is a holistic education system that recognizes and realizes the spiritual, cultural, intellectual and physical potential of all participants, enabling them to make fulfilling life choices. (Ministry of Finance, 2008).

Five key concepts form the basis of policies and practices of the Ministry of Education for 2006-2015, e.g. equity, quality, relevancy, efficiency and sustainability:

- Equity calls for the system to treat all individuals fairly and justly in the provision of services and opportunities. It requires that every Samoan is provided with an opportunity for a good education, opportunity to participate in sports and to be involved in cultural activities.
- Quality is exemplified by high standards of academic achievement, cultural understanding and sensitivity, and social cohesiveness. This implies a solid foundation of worthwhile learning resulting from a complex interplay of professional and technical knowledge and skills and social and cultural practices. It requires high standards of wellbeing of individuals in pursuit of excellence in performance. Core values of the *faa-Samoa* must underpin academic, social behaviour and cultural excellence. This will better enable the individual to cope with change and relationships in an increasingly complex environment.
- Relevancy requires that the system is meaningful, recognized, applicable and useful to one's life. In essence, it is a system that is largely localized and contextualized, reflecting the language, cultural, and spiritual values of Samoa.
- Efficiency means optimum use of human, financial and material resources at all levels, timely and quality service delivery, unhampered communication and coordinated decision-making. Excellence in management practice at all levels needs strong group values that unify people and help align individual efforts to achieving goals. Effective partnership and networking between the Ministry and stakeholders is critical to quality service delivery.
- Sustainability requires the wise utilization of human, financial and material resources, to ensure balanced and continual development in the system. Transparency and accountability are necessary at all levels. The collective values of trust, integrity and a sense of responsibility for the common good in community and national development will be promoted. (MESC, June 2006).

## Laws and other basic regulations concerning education

The **Education Act No. 9**, adopted of 2009 and effective 2010, regulates and makes provision for school education and early childhood education in Samoa, repealing the Education Ordinance 1959. As regards enrolment and school attendance requirements, section 4 of the Act stipulates that if a child's fifth birthday falls prior to or on the 1st day of June in a given school year, the child must be enrolled to commence school at the start of that school year; a child must remain enrolled at a school (unless exempted by the Chief Executive Officer) until the child completes the work of Year 8 of school or attains the age of 14 years, whichever occurs sooner. The Act specifies that private, mission or village schools (including early childhood education centers) must be registered. Subject to the provisions of the Public Service Act 2004: (a) the Ministry shall supply to a village school a principal and such staff as the Chief Executive Officer considers reasonably appropriate for the school's requirements; and (b) the Chief Executive Officer may from time to time vary the number of staff supplied to a village school, after taking into account the number of students enrolled or likely to be enrolled at the school and the type of school. (Section 42).

The Act defines the curriculum as 'courses taught in schools including content, support materials and other learning resources in accordance with course accreditation.' Section 58 stipulates that all schools and early childhood education (ECE) centers must deliver the curriculum specified by the Minister to the standards specified by the Minister. If the Minister specifies any curriculum standards or any changes to curriculum standards, the Minister must advise all schools in writing. Schools and ECE centers may deliver curriculum in areas additional to those specified by the Minister if this does not prevent the school from providing the curriculum specified by the Minister to the standards specified by the Minister. Schools and ECE centers may modify the curriculum or implement individual education programmes for students with special needs, subject to any policy or guidelines the Chief Executive Officer issues. Section 60 specifies that the Chief Executive Officer has the following powers and functions: (a) to develop policies, criteria and standards for curriculum and assessments for school students; (b) to develop and evaluate curriculum for courses normally undertaken in, or designed to be undertaken in the school Years 1 to 13; (c) to provide guidelines for the modification of curriculum and for the development of individual learning programmes for children with special needs; (d) to oversee the delivery of, and conduct assessments for any certificate available to a student in a school; (e) to give advice or make recommendations to the Minister about any educational policy or strategy relating to the development of curriculum that will prepare students for successful transition to employment, tertiary education, vocational education and training and further education; (f) to prepare and maintain records of student assessment and, on request, provide a copy of a student's record to the student or a person authorized by the student to receive it; (g) to report on student performance to the Minister; and (h) to issue certificates relating to any course undertaken by a school student in any year up to and including Year 13.

The Samoa Qualifications Authority (SQA) was established in 2006 on the basis of an Act of Parliament.



## Administration and management of the education system

Samoa consists of two large and eight small islands about half way between Hawaii and New Zealand. The vast majority of the population lives on the two larger islands of Upolu and Savai'i which account for approximately 96% of the country's total land area.

The mission of the **Ministry of Education, Sports and Culture (MESC)**, is to promote quality and sustainable development in all aspects of education, sports and culture to provide choices to everyone. The Ministry is headed by the Minister assisted by the Chief Executive Officer. The MESC comprises six divisions: School Operations; Curriculum, Material and Assessment; Policy, Planning and Research; Corporate Services; Sports; and Culture.

The main tasks of the **Curriculum, Material and Assessment Division** under are the following: ensure the development of curricula for all levels of schooling that is consistent with national objectives; ensure the provision of materials to support the teaching of the curriculum; and ensure that assessment is consistent with national policies and objectives.

Primary and secondary education in Samoa is provided through three stakeholders, namely the Government in partnership with village-based school committees, mission schools and private schools. The islands of Upolu and Savai'i are divided into three regions and 22 **Education Districts**. The three regions are Apia Urban, Rest of Upolu, and Savai'i. MESC appoints and pays the salaries of principals and teachers, and distributes stationery and curriculum materials to schools. The local communities (village/district) provide the school buildings, furniture and equipment, and are also responsible for the maintenance of the school and its environment. All government primary schools and most of government secondary schools/colleges have a **School Committee**. The school committee acting on behalf of the village council has the controlling authority of the school, with the principal as the secretary. They perform their responsibilities on behalf of the local community. Some schools do have Parent-Teacher Associations (PTAs) that exist alongside school committees. PTAs can assist with fundraising activities and general maintenance of grounds, school buildings and facilities. A **School Review Officer** in each of the educational districts supports government teachers and schools in the implementation of all educational services.

The **National Council of Early Childhood Education in Samoa (NCECES)** was established in 1998 to provide minimum standards and guidelines as well as set new directions for future operations in the development of early childhood education (ECE). It has responsibility for registering all early childhood education centers, also in accordance with the Education Act 2009 (section 65). The operation of the ECE programme is administered under the umbrella of the National Council.

The **Samoa Qualifications Authority (SQA)** was established by an Act of Parliament in 2006. The role of SQA in relation to post-school education and training (PSET) is as follows: provide policy advice to government on strategies and priorities for PSET; monitor and report to government and the post-school education sector, on



the activities, resourcing, and overall performance of the post-school education sector in relation to national strategic goals for economic, social and cultural development; provide advice to government and the post-school education sector on findings and implications arising from research, monitoring or evaluation conducted by the Authority or other agencies, bodies or persons; coordinate and strengthen all PSET, so as to better focus the post-school education sector on national development goals and to promote and develop articulation among programmes.

The **Samoa Association of Technical and Vocational Education Training Institutions** (SATVETI) is a national association firmly committed to the development of effective TVET in the country.

Concerning post-school education and training, considerable consolidation and rationalization has occurred in recent years, for example with the amalgamation of the Nurses Training School with the **National University of Samoa** (NUS) in 1993, the Marine Training School with Samoa Polytechnic (1993), and the merger between the Teacher's College with the NUS (1997). In 2006, Samoa Polytechnic was merged with the NUS in an effort to deliver training in a more cost effective manner. It has become the Institute of Technology (IOT).

The **Secretariat of the Pacific Board for Educational Assessment** (SPBEA), whose headquarters are in Fiji, is an intergovernmental, regional organization set up in 1980 to assist the region and member countries to develop assessment procedures towards national/regional certificates. SPBEA has a membership of nine countries (Fiji, Kiribati, Nauru, Tokelau, Tonga, Tuvalu, Samoa, Solomon Islands, and Vanuatu), plus Australia and New Zealand who are the main donors. The Board administers two regional senior secondary school qualifications, the Pacific Senior Secondary Certificate (PSSC) and the South Pacific Form Seven Certificate (SPFSC), beginning in 1989 and 2004 respectively. These two qualifications replaced New Zealand-based qualifications.

The **University of South Pacific** (USP) is the premier provider of tertiary education in the Pacific region and an international centre of excellence for teaching, research consulting and training on all aspects of Pacific culture, environment and human resource development needs. Established in 1968, USP is jointly owned by the governments of 12 member countries: Cook Islands, Fiji, Kiribati, Marshall Islands, Nauru, Niue, Solomon Islands, Tokelau, Tonga, Tuvalu, Vanuatu and Samoa. The University has campuses in all member countries. The main campus, Laucala, is in Fiji. The Alafua Campus in Samoa is where the School of Agriculture and Food Technology is situated, and the Emalus Campus in Vanuatu is the location for the School of Law. The University offers programmes through distance and flexible learning in a variety of modes throughout its 14 campuses.

## Structure and organization of the education system

### Pre-school education

Early childhood education (ECE) caters to children between the ages of 3 to 5 years. ECE is not compulsory.

### Primary education

Primary education covers Years 1 to 8 and is compulsory; the entry age is 5. The Samoa Primary Education Literacy Levels (SPELL) Tests are conducted at Year 4 and Year 6 to test pupils' ability in English, Samoan and numeracy in an effort to establish common benchmarks across schools. Students sit a national exit examination at the end of Year 8 to determine entry into secondary schools.

### Secondary education

Secondary education covers Years 9 to 13 and is not compulsory. At the end of Year 12, students sit the National Examination and if successful receive the Samoa School Certificate. A regional examination, the Pacific Senior Secondary Certificate (PSSC) administered by the South Pacific Board for Educational Assessment (SPBEA) is taken upon completion of Year 13 and is required for enrolment in tertiary institutions both locally and overseas. The Year 11 National Examination was phased out in 2001, replaced by school-based assessment.

### Higher education

Post-school education and training encompasses tertiary-level education at university, pre- and in-service teacher education, technical and vocational education and training (TVET), and professional education. The Institute of Technology at the National University of Samoa (NUS) offers a range of technical and vocational one-year certificate and two-year diploma and intermediate certificate programmes. The Faculty of Nursing and Health Science at NUS (formerly the Nurses Training School) offers two-year diploma and three-year bachelor of nursing programmes; a three-year diploma in dental therapy and one-year postgraduate diploma (in nursing) programmes are also offered. The Faculty of Education offers the following programmes: one-year foundation certificate, two-year diploma (pre-service), four-year bachelor's degree (both pre-service and in-service), and one-year graduate diploma in education, the latter for graduates with degrees from recognized universities who wish to obtain a professional qualification for teaching. The Faculty of Business and Entrepreneurship offers one-year certificate, two-year diploma and three-year bachelor of commerce programmes; one additional year is required for a bachelor of commerce (honours). The Center for Samoan Studies offers a one-year postgraduate certificate and a two-year master's degree programme in Samoan Studies open to bachelor's degree holders (three-year programme). The University of South Pacific offers degree and postgraduate studies in arts, science, law and

commerce by distance and flexible learning as well as agriculture and continuing education in the Alafua Campus in Samoa.

The 2011 school year started on 31 January and will end on 9 December. It comprises 40 weeks in total, divided into three terms. The academic year at the National University of Samoa is divided into two semesters. The first semester starts in February and the second semester in July.

## The educational process

A National Curriculum Council was established in 2004 to provide advice on issues relating to curriculum. The Council played a major role in the development of the National Curriculum Policy Framework. The Samoan curriculum is the official policy for teaching, learning and assessment in schools. It sets out national directions for schooling and provides for consistency in classroom programmes throughout the country. The curriculum comprises a set of national curriculum statements, which define the learning principles and achievement aims and objectives for each of the learning areas, which all schools are required to follow. National curriculum and support materials are designed and produced by the Ministry of Education (MESC) for all schools from Years 1 to 13. Each subject has an established committee of selected people with in depth knowledge of the subject area. Membership of these committees includes teachers from government, mission and private schools, and lecturers from tertiary institutions and vocational schools.

The national curriculum includes seven learning areas: Samoan, English, social science, mathematics, science, physical education and health, and performing and visual arts. In order to achieve a broad and balanced education, students are expected to study all seven learning areas from Year 1 to Year 11 with some specialization thereafter. The focus in each learning area is on the attainment of key learning outcomes that highlight what students are expected to know, be able to do, and value. The School Review Officers and Curriculum Officers provide ongoing support for teachers in the implementation of the curriculum. The secondary curriculum recently completed a review and new curriculum statements in all subject areas including additional subjects such as computer studies for Year 12, physical education and health, visual arts, performing arts and music are being implemented in secondary schools and colleges. The Primary Education Materials Project (PEMP) focused on the development of resource materials to support the primary education curriculum for Years 1-8. The new primary curriculum and related instructional materials are expected to emphasize more active, child-centered learning activities in the classroom, strengthening of pedagogical teaching skills and classroom assessment techniques essential for high quality teaching and learning, and will be consistent with the bilingual education (Samoan-English) policy. (MESC, June 2006).

The National Curriculum Policy Framework of 2006 provides the national guidelines for the development of more detailed curriculum documents that describe what students should know and be able to do in each subject at different stages of development and outlines the essential skills and values that are to be developed which are central to the development of a just, prosperous and successful Samoan society. In terms of the Framework, the curriculum is the planned and structured learning experiences provided by schools; the national curriculum is the approved



statement of learning that applies to all schools. The Framework has been developed bearing in mind four overarching principles underpinning all aspects of Samoan education, e.g. equity, quality, relevance and efficiency. The goals associated with the curriculum are:

- To ensure that all students achieve acceptable standards in all subjects and that schools establish high expectations for all students.
- To equip students to take an active role in the development of a just and prosperous society that builds on a rich cultural heritage and maximizes future local and international opportunities.
- To ensure that indigenous and global knowledge occur within a bilingual language structure that develops existing knowledge, skills and values.
- To ensure that the total needs of all students including the academic, physical, spiritual, cultural and social needs are met through the programs and activities provided by schools.
- To develop in students an understanding of music, art and aesthetics and provide for the creative use of imagination and individual expression.
- To foster the development of each teacher's skills, knowledge and attributes so that they are able to maximize the learning potential of all students through teaching approaches that encourage enquiry, problem solving, debate and independent thought.

The seven learning areas mentioned above are broad categories of knowledge within which related skills, understandings and values are developed. They organize related areas of learning into broad groupings. It is important that the curriculum is developed as a continuum from Year 1 to Year 13 with clear links between the various stages of schooling. Learning areas may be broken down into subjects; for example, in the science learning area there are a range of subjects including chemistry, physics and biology. Within the senior school curriculum the studies that students undertake should form a coherent programme that prepares them for employment and/or further study and are directly linked to vocational education training programmes or higher education.

For each learning area and year level, key learning outcomes describe the content of the curriculum and are referred to as 'content standards'. As well as content standards, 'performance standards' allow student progress to be measured against expectations. Performance standards clarify the level of achievement expected of students at different stages of schooling. The development of clear statements of the outcomes required for all students in all subject and at all levels and agreement on the levels of attainment expected at particular points in time is a central feature of the Samoan curriculum. Outcomes are also relevant to the design of 'integrated units' as each integrated unit should indicate which outcomes from the various learning areas are being covered. As regards languages, the goal is for all students to be equally competent in Samoan and English. This requires that both languages are used as means of instruction as well as the learning of the different features of both languages. Both Samoan and English will be used as the shared medium of instruction in primary schools. For secondary schools English will be the main medium of instruction and all secondary teachers, irrespective of the subject specialization, are language teachers.





Essential skills transcend the compulsory curriculum and are the broader skills that are developed throughout the years of schooling. The essential skills are developed as a result of the quality of the experiences provided in all classroom and school activities and are used by students in all school activities as well as in their social and cultural world outside the school. The essential skills are: communicating effectively; solving problems; utilizing aesthetic judgment; develop social and cultural skills and attributes; managing oneself and developing work and study skills; integrating knowledge; and effectively using technology. Like the essential skills, values transcend traditional subjects and are central to the personal development of each individual and the way the broader society operates. The values that underpin the Samoan curriculum include: fairness, in order to ensure that decisions and practices are viewed as having respected the opinion of others and where outcomes are accepted as just; honesty, in order to ensure that there is a consistency and sincerity in what is said and done; excellence, in order to ensure that high achievement is valued and celebrated; responsibility, in order to ensure that students are responsible for their actions and undertake actions to assist others; respect, in order to ensure that others are treated with consideration and sensitivity, the physical environment is maintained and cultural and spiritual values and societal rules are adopted by all; and tolerance, in order to ensure that the differences and diversity within society is respected and accommodated.

In each of the learning areas the curriculum statement will address the following: (a) general aims: these outline the general knowledge and skills being addressed as well as the purpose of the proposed study; (b) organizing strands: for many subjects the subject is categorized under strands or organizing concepts, for example, Samoan for primary schools deals with the strands of reading, writing, listening and speaking; (c) specific aims: these link the general aims to the outcome objectives; (d) achievement objectives: these describe what students need to know and be able to do for each subject and year level, i.e. the 'content standards' associated with each learning area and year level; (e) outcome indicators: these provide detailed descriptions of the expected level of learning to be attained by students as they progressively grow in knowledge and skills; they may describe progress in a variety of ways and allow teachers to assess student growth and programme effectiveness; (f) approaches to teaching and learning: the approaches to be used that maximize the involvement and achievement of students will be outlined.

Assessment and reporting are key elements of teaching and learning and the capacity of teachers to provide fair and accurate assessments of student achievement is central to effective classroom practice and in the reporting of the achievement of students. Assessment is undertaken in order to gather information from a variety of sources using different assessment tools that together build an accurate picture of each student's educational progress. In order to undertake assessment effectively teachers need to know how students learn, the standards sought and how to make judgments concerning the achievement of those standards including the learning growth that has occurred. The provision of 'performance standards' is central to this process as they indicate how well a student has performed against established expectations. In forming judgments about student progress, teachers should use a range of assessment techniques including: national examinations and assessment against performance standards in key areas; local tests; class exercises and activities; projects and



portfolios; observations allowing individual and group performance to be assessed in areas of music, dance and drama, and speaking; products; and discussion.

Within the Whole School Approach to Improvement, curriculum planning is the process used by schools to determine the subjects to be taught including the instructional time allocated, the outcomes sought and approaches to be taken for teaching and evaluation. Each school is required to develop an Annual Curriculum Plan that outlines: curriculum provision (subjects taught and times provided); course of study statement (details of each subject offered); assessment and reporting programme (process used by the school to monitor, assess and report on performance); and professional development programme (designed to improve performance and to introduce new programmes and materials). The Curriculum Plan is part of the School Annual Plan and an annual report on the achievement of the outcomes associated with the Curriculum Plan are provided as part of the School Annual Report which is provided to the community, parents and the Ministry of Education, Sports and Culture.

Curriculum reviews need to be conducted at least every five years to evaluate the effectiveness and appropriateness of the national curriculum for schools. Issues such as the relation of the curriculum offered in meeting new challenges and opportunities will ensure that the curriculum planned for schools is the best available to meet new opportunities and challenges. In addition reviews need to be conducted to ensure that the expectations or performance standards developed within the curriculum are appropriate. (MESC, 2006).

## Pre-primary education

The Government first recognized the importance of early childhood education (ECE) in the Education Policies 1995-2005. This policy devised that an ECE working party be formed to consider issues to formulate appropriate aims and policies, and more specifically, make decisions regarding regulatory mechanisms, staffing issues such as teacher qualifications and training options, and the development of curriculum guidelines. The Standards for Samoan Preschools and *Ta'iala Mo A'oga 'Amata i Samoa* (Guide to Preschools in Samoa), which guide the operation of ECE centers, were developed in line with this policy. Standards for preschools registration must be considered and approved by National Council of Early Childhood Education in Samoa (NCECES). The standards should be strictly observed and complied by all centers. Registration entitles ECE centers to receive financial assistance from the government's annual grant.

The standards have been an important step in regulating ECE to ensure the educational, social and physical welfare of pre-school children. The standards have been designed to ensure the health, safety and welfare of children as well as the provision of a stimulating and challenging learning environment. More explicitly, the guidelines specify facility requirements, furniture and equipment needs, hygiene and safety features, play area requirements, staffing and staff qualifications, enrolment and class sizes, child and staff health, support and treatment of children, programmes of activities, responsibilities of management, and record keeping. The minimum education level for the teacher trainee is the successful completion of Year 13 or Form 6, and the minimum professional qualification for the ECE teacher is the NCECES



Certificate. A one-year (two semesters) teaching certificate in ECE with studies in special needs is administered by NCECES. More than 11 subjects are covered in the curriculum, including child development, language, special needs, the arts, toy making, observation skills and history and theory of childhood education. In 2005, 50 students were enrolled in the programme. The top ten students who complete the NCECES certificate programme are sponsored by the Ministry of Education (MESC) to enroll in the two-year Diploma in Education (Primary) programme at the National University of Samoa. MESC sponsored the first group in 2004. NCECES policy is that these graduates should return to ECE. However, one of the major issues affecting the improvement and development of ECE is that graduates are accepting MESC employment in primary schools rather than return as a volunteer to a non-salaried position (or poorly paid position) in an ECE center.

The Guide to Preschools in Samoa sets the curriculum which must be followed by ECE centers. It was developed by the NCECES in collaboration with MESC. It emphasizes the importance of ECE practices in the home, from birth to age 3. The Guide sets out the specific skills that a teacher should have for effective and successful ECE. The document also runs through the topics that teachers should introduce to the children, such as the person, health and safety, animals, independence, sea and air, sports, Samoa, and culture and traditions. Learning outcomes of the children, methods of teaching the topics and suggested activities are addressed. It also provides examples of work plans, timetables, and progress sheets for each child. Trainees undertaking the one-year ECE certificate with the NCECES are trained in line with this curriculum. The Education Act 2009 stipulates that the Chief Executive Officer may issue instructions or guidelines to all schools and early childhood education centres in respect of: (a) the delivery of curriculum specified by the Minister; and/or (b) the modification of curriculum for students with special needs.

The geographic location of ECE centers is widespread with 19 in the urban area, 57 in the rural area of Upolu, and 35 in Savai'i (data refer to 2007). A range of private, community-based and church groups operate their own centres. Some of these centers have their own buildings, but others operate in church halls, women's committee *fales* (open houses), and private homes. The number of ECE centers registered with NCECES has declined over the years. This is because many have been closed for failure to comply with national standards. The Government has also been pushing for one ECE center per village, as some villages have more than one center. Most centers start at 9:00 a.m. and finish at 12:00; many centers operate four days a week, but some are open five days. There are no special resources, facilities or equipment for children with disabilities in ECE centers due to high costs involved. Apparently there are children with disabilities enrolled in preschools, which is why the entry age is extended to 8-year-olds. In 2007, only 15 ECE centers have children with disabilities.

As of July 2007, there were 111 registered preschools with an average size of 30 to 35 children in an ECE center. A typical center has the minimum number of children at 15. ECE catered for approximately 4,629 children in 2007 (of whom 42.8% in private centers) with about 336 teachers. The gross enrolment ratio was below 35%. (MESC, 2007).

## Primary education

Primary education covers Years 1 to 8 and is compulsory; the entry age is 5. Educational provision is not completely free. While some schools do not charge fees, parents and communities contribute to maintaining school buildings and pay for other school costs such as for transport, uniforms and food.

The primary school curriculum consists of 26 themes in Years 1 to 3, and of five core subjects in Years 4 to 8. The core subjects are English, Samoan, mathematics, social studies and basic science. The suggested weekly lesson timetable according to the National Curriculum Policy Framework of 2006 is shown below:

### Samoa. Primary education: suggested weekly lesson timetable

Subject	Number of weekly hours in each year							
	Early primary			Primary				
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
Samoan language	7.5	7	6	5	5	5	5	5
English (oral only)	1	1.5	–	–	–	–	–	–
English language	–	–	4	5	5	5	5	5
Social science	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3
Mathematics	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	5
Science	2.5	2.5	2.5	2.5	2.5	2.5	2.5	2.5
Health and physical education	3	3	2.5	2.5	2.5	2.5	2.5	2.5
Visual performing arts	3	3	2	2	2	2	2	2
<b>Total weekly hours</b>	<b>25</b>	<b>25</b>	<b>25</b>	<b>25</b>	<b>25</b>	<b>25</b>	<b>25</b>	<b>25</b>
<i>Other (assembly, recess)</i>	2.5	2.5	2.5	2.5	2.5	2.5	2.5	2.5

*Source:* Ministry of Education, Sports and Culture, 2006. In Years 1-3, social science incorporates story and drama; visual and performing arts include art and music. CCI reports that the regulated hours of school attendance are as follows: for Years 1-3, from 8:00 am to 12:30 pm, including a 30 minute break; and for Years 4-8, from 8:00 am to 1:30 pm with a 30 minute break. In Years 1-3, the minimum hours of instruction are 20 hours per week. (CCI, 2008).

According to the National Curriculum Policy Framework of 2006, in early primary (Years 1-3) the development of the foundation skills in literacy and numeracy will occur within an integrated curriculum that allows the student to link growing knowledge with their own world by using a theme or topic where a number of learning area outcomes will be realized through integrated activities. It requires sufficient time being allocated for literacy and numeracy to be effectively taught. Through the development of these foundation skills aspects of the physical, social and cultural world of children can be explored. As students progress beyond the early years, the skills of literacy and numeracy are well developed and greater emphasis is placed on developing important concepts across the disciplines. For many students this is a critical time in which to consolidate the foundation skills developed through literacy and numeracy programmes.

In preschools and early primary Samoan should be used as the general medium of instruction, but English should be introduced early through songs, stories,



rhymes, simple greetings, and social exchanges in day to day activities. In Years 1-3, English should also be introduced so that as students develop their Samoan literacy skills they are also learning about English and developing literacy in both languages. An integrated approach to teaching is encouraged. For Year 1, units of work should be developed in both Samoan and English with 90% of units prepared, taught and assessed in Samoan and 10% of units prepared, taught and assessed in English. For Year 2, 80% of units should be prepared, taught and assessed in Samoan and 20% in English. For Year 3, 70% of units should be prepared, taught and assessed in Samoan and 30% in English. In Years 4 and 5, 60% of all units should be prepared, taught and assessed in Samoan and 40% in English. For Year 6, 50% of units within each learning area should be prepared, taught and assessed in Samoan and 50% in English. For Year 7 and 8, 40% of units within each learning area should be prepared, taught and assessed in Samoan and 60% in English. (MESC, 2006).

The repetition rates for Years 2 to 7 are consistently low, between 0.4 and 1.7%. More pupils repeat Years 1 and 8 than any other year level, suggesting that some children are enrolled into Year 1 too early and that some Year 8 students are not prepared for entry into secondary school. In all year levels besides Year 1 to 2, the promotion rate is in the high ninety percentile. The lower promotion rate from Year 1 to 2 across all years suggests that some parents are enrolling their children into Year 1 too early.

At the end of the primary programme students sit the Year 8 National Examination in five core subjects: English, Samoan, mathematics, basic science, and social science. During 1999-2006, the graduation rate has remained in the low ninety percentile and the rest of the 100 percentile either drop out from the system or repeat the same level. The average transition rate from primary to secondary was estimated at 89% in 2006 (82% in Savai'i and 76% in rest of Upolu).

The Samoa Primary Education Literacy Levels (SPELL) Tests are conducted at Year 4 and Year 6 to test student ability in English, Samoan and numeracy. The tests are taken in all government schools, and most non-government schools also participate on a voluntary basis. At risk are those scoring at levels 4 and 5 on the test. The intention is that test results are provided to principals and teachers so that they can devise intervention strategies to assist at risk students. The results of the SPELL Tests, although improved since 2003, remain a concern. There is a move in the Pacific region towards setting benchmarks for literacy and numeracy, to be assessed at Years 2, 4, 6 and 8. This will allow member countries to measure and monitor the quality of basic education in their countries, rather than against other countries in the Pacific. These benchmarks will also introduce to the Pacific region definitions for literacy, numeracy and life skills.

In 2005, MESC drafted the Samoa Special Needs Policy with the commitment to provide appropriate programmes for students with special needs or at risk because of economic circumstances. The Policy which addresses an approach to inclusive education states that where possible, all students' needs should be met in regular schools. In 2007 there were no regular inclusive schools.

In 2007, there were 39,578 students enrolled in primary education. There were 141 government primary schools, 13 mission primary schools, and six private primary



schools. In addition there were seven schools that were classified as primary-secondary schools. A total of 1,273 teachers were teaching in primary schools; female teachers account for over 70% of teachers at the primary level. In 2006, the gross enrolment ratio was estimated at 103.8% and the net enrolment ratio at 97.3%; the pupils/teacher ratio was 31:1. (MESC, 2007). The recently completed Demographic Health Survey 2009 records that 89% of children aged 5-12 were attending primary school. (MWCSD, 2010).

According to MESC statistics, in 2010 there were 142 government primary schools, 14 mission primary schools, and seven private primary schools. In addition there were six schools (five mission schools and one privately-owned) that were classified as combined primary and secondary schools. The total enrolment in Years 1-8 was 40,809 students (of whom 19,575 girls); 84% were enrolled in government schools, 12% in mission schools and 4% in private schools. The total number of teachers was 1,395, of whom 1,129 in government primary schools; an additional 159 teachers were in primary-secondary schools. The average students/teacher ratio was 30.1:1. In 2009/10, the transition rate from Year 8 to Year 9 was estimated at 89%. The apparent retention rate for Years 1-8 was 83% in 2010. (MESC, 2010).

## Secondary education

As mentioned, secondary education covers Years 9 to 13 and is not compulsory. At the end of Year 12, students sit the National Examination and if successful receive the Samoa School Certificate. A regional examination, the Pacific Senior Secondary Certificate (PSSC) administered by the South Pacific Board for Educational Assessment (SPBEA) is taken upon completion of Year 13 and is required for enrolment in tertiary institutions both locally and overseas. English is used for all learning areas and subjects except Samoan. The suggested weekly lesson timetable according to the National Curriculum Policy Framework of 2006 is presented below:

### Samoa. Secondary education (years 9-11): suggested weekly lesson timetable

Subject	Number of weekly hours in each year		
	9	10	11
Samoan	3	3	3
English	4	4	4
Mathematics	3	3	3
Science	3	3	3
Social science	3	3	3
Health and physical education	1	1	1
Visual performing arts	1	1	1
Options: business studies, food and textile technology, design technology, ICT, agricultural science, (at least 2 weekly hours for each option studied)	7	7	7
<b>Total weekly hours</b>	<b>25</b>	<b>25</b>	<b>25</b>
<i>Other (assembly, recess)</i>	<i>2.5</i>	<i>2.5</i>	<i>2.5</i>

Source: Ministry of Education, Sports and Culture, 2006.



According to the National Curriculum Policy Framework, in Years 9 to 11 schools are encouraged to expose students to the full range of programmes offered. In practice this may mean offering optional programmes as an integral part of the curriculum when students may study outside compulsory curriculum areas. It is important that through optional programmes students have the opportunity of linking school with their interests and talents.

In the senior secondary years (12 and 13) students must undertake the study of English and then choose four subjects from the options listed below. Both English and optional subjects shall be allocated a minimum time of five hours per week. Schools need to provide students and their parents with advice on the subjects to be chosen and may choose to develop a program approach where a group of subjects are linked to academic, vocational or employment interests. For example a student who wishes to seek a future career in agriculture needs to be advised of the group of subjects that will best equip them to pursue agriculture as a vocational training programme, academic programme or equips them for immediate employment. The Year 12 and Year 13 subjects are: English (compulsory); Samoan; history; biology; chemistry; physics; science (year 12 only); mathematics; accounting; economics; typing (year 12 only); development studies (year 13 only); agricultural science; computer studies; geography; food and textile technology (year 12 only); design technology (year 12 only); design and technology (year 13 only); physical education and health; the arts. (MESC, 2006).

The secondary programme covers Years 9 to 13 with only certain senior secondary colleges both in the private and public sectors offering full programmes up to Year 13. From 2005, all secondary school students are to receive five years of secondary education, offered in the senior secondary schools (Years 9 to 12), or senior secondary colleges (Years 9 to 13) offering the full Year 13 curriculum because of the shortage in teacher numbers.

Technical and vocational education and training (TVET) comprises a range of programmes with courses offered at different levels. Training is offered at tertiary technical and vocational institutes, the main one being the Institute of Technology of the National University of Samoa, previously known as Samoa Polytechnic. TVET is also offered in secondary schools and colleges as practical subjects including agriculture, food and textiles technology, arts and crafts and design technology.

In 2007, there were 42 secondary schools/colleges (24 government, 17 mission and one private school; only 15 government schools were offering Year 13 programmes). The total enrolment was 15,165 students and the number of teachers was 792. Female enrolment levels have been approximately two to six percent higher in all years from 2000 to 2006. (MESC, 2007).

According to the Demographic Health Survey 2009, only 59% of the students aged 13-18 years are attending secondary education, with much wider gender gap in favor of females (70%) than for males (51%). The attendance rate for rural areas (63%) at secondary education is much lower than for urban areas (68%). There appears also to be a strong relationship between household economic status and school attendance, which is most evident for secondary school education. (MWCSO, 2010).



According to MESC statistics, in 2010 there were 24 government secondary schools, 11 mission secondary schools, and one private secondary school. In addition there were six schools (five mission schools and one privately-owned) that were classified as primary-secondary schools. The total enrolment in Years 9-13 was 16,269 students (of whom 8,616 girls); 59% were enrolled in government schools, 38% in mission schools and 3% in private schools. The total number of teachers was 742, of whom 477 in government schools (as mentioned, an additional 159 teachers were in primary-secondary schools). The average students/teacher ratio was estimated at 20.3:1. In 2009/10, the transition rate from Year 12 to Year 13 was estimated at 60%; drop-out rates were particularly high at Years 10-11 level (15%) and Years 12-13 level (35%). In 2010, the apparent retention rate was estimated at 73% for Years 9-12 and at 46% for Years 9-13; the transition rate from Year 13 to post-school education was estimated at 64% (45% in 2009, 54% in 2008). (MESC, 2010).

### Assessing learning achievement nation-wide

The Samoa Primary Education Literacy Levels (SPELL) Tests are conducted at Year 4 and Year 6. The areas covered are Samoan, English and Numeracy. The initial intention behind the SPELL Tests was to use the test as a measurement and diagnostic tool to allow literacy standards to be monitored and identify students whose performance in the test placed them at some risk in achieving educational outcomes.

The results from SPELL 1 (Year 4, covering all schools, government and non-government) in 2006 showed that the percentage of students at risk was: 19% in English (25% for boys and 12% for girls); 23% in Samoan (30% for boys and 16% for girls); and 26% in numeracy (32% for boys and 19% for girls). For the SPELL 2 (Year 6, covering only government schools) the percentage of students at risk was: 53% in English (60% for boys and 45% for girls); 13% in Samoan (18% for boys and 7% for girls); and 58% in numeracy (63% for boys and 52% for girls). Despite some improvements since 2000, examination results in the SPELL tests are concerning. The quality of teaching, inadequate teaching resources and minimal support for teachers, may be causal factors. Other factors affecting scores may be the quality of assessment in terms of validity and reliability. Another problem is that there are no strong links between SPELL and the present primary curriculum. The results from the National Examinations in Year 8 are also concerning, with the average raw score in 2006 for English at 43, Samoan at 52 and Mathematics at 33. (MESC, 2007).

As regards the 2009 results from SPELL 1 (Year 4, covering all schools), the percentage of students at risk was: 35% in English (43% for boys and 26% for girls); 28% in Samoan (36% for boys and 19% for girls); and 22% in numeracy (27% for boys and 16% for girls). For the SPELL 2 (Year 6, government schools), in 2009 the percentage of students at risk was: 56% in English (71% for boys and 41% for girls); 14% in Samoan (18% for boys and 9% for girls); and 48% in numeracy (56% for boys and 39% for girls). (MESC, 2010).

## Teaching staff

Teacher education and training is carried out in various settings. Pre-service teacher education is provided mainly at the National University of Samoa (NUS) in the





Faculty of Education, with some trainees also studying at the University of South Pacific (USP). Some pre-service training programmes for preschools are also conducted by USP and NGOs. As regards early childhood education (ECE), the minimum professional qualification is a one-year (two semesters) teaching certificate in ECE administered by the National Council of Early Childhood Education in Samoa (NCECES).

The Faculty of Education, one of the five faculties of the NUS, offers the following programmes: one-year foundation certificate, two-year diploma (pre-service), four-year bachelor's degree (both pre-service and in-service), and one-year graduate diploma in education, the latter for graduates with degrees from recognized universities who wish to obtain a professional qualification for teaching. As regards teaching practice (an uninterrupted four weeks in schools), the model considered by the Faculty of Education (FOE) to be most useful is the following: students take most of their courses serviced by other university faculties during the foundation year; timetable FOE courses during the second and third year to enable students to spend the four uninterrupted weeks teaching practice in the schools without having to return to university for lectures; FOE taught courses are made up of ten weeks of university instruction and four weeks of teaching practice (for each of four semesters) in the two years for the Diploma in Education programme. (CCI, 2008).

In-service teacher education is conducted mainly by the Ministry of Education, Sports and Culture (MESC) under the direction and supervision of the School Operations Division and Curriculum Materials and Assessment Division, in conjunction with any initiatives in curriculum development projects. Opportunities for in-service education and training are also accessed by teachers who go back to university to upgrade their qualification towards a degree at the NUS, overseas on a government scholarship, or the USP by distance mode.

A range of qualifications exist for qualified teachers with some holding a diploma of education while others hold a bachelor's degree plus a teaching diploma or a graduate diploma of teaching. There are many mature teachers who hold only a primary teaching diploma from the former Teachers College before amalgamation with the NUS. The main qualification for teachers is the Diploma in Education. (MESC, June 2006).

In the belief that teacher training could be better carried out at the tertiary level, the transfer of teacher training from MESC to NUS was one of the targets of the education policies and strategies for 1995–2005. This was achieved in 1996. According to national standards, the MESC defines a qualified teacher as one who has a formal qualification from a recognized teacher training institution and a trained teacher's certificate. On this basis, 96% of primary school and 82% of secondary school teachers were qualified in 2007. A secondary school teacher having the required academic qualifications is defined as a teacher who holds a trained teacher's certificate and also a tertiary qualification other than a qualification from a teacher training institution. On this basis, 90% of secondary school teachers had the required academic qualification in 2007. (MESC, 2007).

Most in-service training has been mainly project driven and therefore lacked cohesiveness and continuity in many subject areas. Development projects have



provided funding and extensive training for teachers in new curriculum initiatives and quality teaching methods (such as more active, learner-centered teaching methods). System-wide training in quality teaching methods was implemented for all primary school teachers and subject-based approach for secondary teachers. Due to teacher shortages, a focus of training in recent years has been multigrade teaching (in 2006, 64% of government primary schools had multigrade classes). MESC also responds to requests from schools on a needs basis. Staff visit schools and carry out school-based training, depending on the availability of funds. Routine programmes to improve the quality of teaching service include: training to upgrade content knowledge; block course training in pedagogy; training by subject clusters; school-based training; internal school-based monitoring of the quality of teaching and learning; and teacher performance appraisal. Some of the strategies proposed by MESC in its strategic policies and plan 2006-2015 to address the quality of teaching services include the following: (a) all teachers sponsored by MESC will be bonded for a period of time equivalent to the length of time spent on training; (b) teachers will be required to remain in a school for a minimum of three years before they seek a transfer to another school; (c) teachers will progress in the approved Public Service Commission Teaching Careers and Salary Structure based on continuous excellent performance over a three-year period; (d) standards for pre-service qualifications for teachers will be consistently reviewed over the period 2006-2015; (e) teachers' outstanding performance will be recognized through special merit awards and further training opportunities. The National Teachers Development Framework (NTDF) will guide teacher development policy and monitor the implementation of quality programmes (*Ibid.*).

The current recruitment process commences with MESC advertising for students intending to apply to study at the FOE/NUS to register firstly at MESC. Interviews are conducted by MESC and checks made that they satisfy the NUS entry requirements. Applicants are allocated into either primary or secondary training and these lists are then forwarded to FOE/NUS for enrolment. FOE/NUS checks that the NUS minimum requirements are met and students are then enrolled. MESC pays the fees for all its sponsored students. Current MESC policies and procedures for the allocation and distribution of teachers to schools is outlined in the School Staffing Manual where teacher allocation is based on a teacher-student ratio worked from actual enrolment data, with the teacher-student ratio of 1:30 for primary schools and 1:20 for secondary schools. Special entitlements apply for small schools with flexibility to address the subject requirements in secondary schools. The introduction of the school staffing policy has been a significant move towards a more equitable distribution of teachers. However, there are limitations in meeting the needs of some individual schools, particularly small rural schools. A Performance Appraisal (PA) System has been established for all school personnel, and this is a key element in the MESC Human Resource Development Framework and NTDF. The current (2008) PA is based on job descriptions rather than teachers' competencies and standards. This emphasis on job descriptions occurred as a result of the original design of the PA system, and because competencies are not embedded in the training system. Consequently the PA is not designed specifically for the appraisal of teachers and principals, and therefore is not providing information on performance against standards and competencies. (CCI, 2008).



The MESC requirement for normal hours of duty for teachers is 40 hours per week. Primary teachers may be assigned up to 25 hours per week of class teaching time and secondary teachers between 16 and 20 hours per week. Deputy-principals are expected to teach a minimum of 10 weekly hours. In addition to class teaching, teachers spend time on lesson preparation, assessment and marking, and school administration, other school activities (including computer activities, sports training and cultural day preparation) and meetings with parents and school committees. Details on the actual teaching load are not available, but teachers tend to claim that they comply with the 40 weekly hours set by the government. At the same time, there is discursive evidence from community members and government personnel that teacher absenteeism from class is practiced, although its frequency has not been measured. The Samoan “Teaching Profession Career and Salary Structure July 2005-July 2007” distinguishes between Salary Grades T1 to T8 for primary, secondary and college level teachers and deputy-principals. Within each grade there are five or six levels, while T8 distinguishes only four levels. The teacher salary structure follows the salary structure of the Samoan public service. The promotional and salary increment opportunities are limited. (*Ibid.*).

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## Web resources

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Ministry of Women, Community and Social Development:  
<http://www.mwcsd.gov.ws/> [In English. Last checked: June 2011.]

National University of Samoa: <http://www.nus.edu.ws/> [In English. Last checked: June 2011.]

Samoa Qualifications Authority: <http://www.sqa.gov.ws/> [In English. Last checked: June 2011.]

*For updated links, consult the Web page of the International Bureau of Education of UNESCO: <http://www.ibe.unesco.org/links.htm>*