



European
Commission

ISCED-F 2013

*Fields of Education
detailed levels*

preliminary EU version

Background

UNESCO has recently revised the ISCED levels (see ISCED 2011); at the time of revision it was decided to separate out the fields in an independent classification. In the ISCED 1997 both levels and fields were presented in the same manual. The ISCED 1997 fields is a two-level classification (classified in 8 broad fields and 24 narrow fields). In the ISCED 2011, the fields' classification was reproduced with a note about its future revision.

This revision took place through the work of an international group in 2012 and 2013 and was approved by the UNESCO's 37 General Conference in November 2013. The manual for the ISCED-F 2013 classification is available on UNESCO's website: <http://www.uis.unesco.org/Education/Pages/international-standard-classification-of-education.aspx>.

Unlike the ISCED 1997 fields of classification, the ISCED-F 2013 contains three classification levels; including detailed fields. The detailed fields are to a large extent build on the Field of Education and Training 1999 manual used by Eurostat (see par's 45 and 46 of the UNESCO note).

UNESCO will update the FOET 1999 manual to the ISCED-F 2013 but **this is not planned to happen until the end of 2014** as the statistical world will not implement the manual before 2015 to 2016. In fact, EU legislation will be using the ISCED-F 2013 classification¹.

In the meantime, the FOET 1999 manual can be used for detailed referencing as there is a big overlap between FOET 1999 and ISCED-F 2013. FOET 1999 exists in EN, DE and FR. A detailed index is provided for giving explanations about all possible fields of education and training.

Field of Education and Training 1999: [EN](#) [DE](#) [FR](#)

For example, details about the content of the detailed field '0213 fine arts' can be found by consulting the conversion table between FOET 1999 and ISCED-F 2013; for FOET, the classification number for 'fine arts' is '211'. Likewise, the details regarding '0421 Law' can be found by looking up narrow field '38' in FOET 1999.

Explanatory note

Further details about the ISCED-F 2013 classification can be found at UNESCO's Institute of Statistics' website:

<http://www.uis.unesco.org/Education/Pages/international-standard-classification-of-education.aspx>;

¹ <http://eur-lex.europa.eu/LexUriServ/LexUriServ.do?uri=OJ:L:2013:252:0005:0010:EN:PDF.>:
See annex 1, p. 7 2nd and 5th paragraphs as well as p. 8 paragraph 5.

The document for ISCED-F 2013 (reference number 37 C/53) exists in the following languages: English, French, Spanish (and Arabic, Chinese and Russian).

Please note the following regarding this classification:

The detailed fields (the third hierarchical level of the classification) [as shown here] are intended mainly for use at the **tertiary level of education** and, for vocational education and training programmes and qualifications at secondary and post-secondary non-tertiary levels. (Par. 10)

It is the **main subject content** which determines the field of education and training into which a programme or qualification should be classified. Subject matter is the factual, practical and theoretical knowledge imparted during the programme and which is recognised by the related qualification. (Par. 13)

Cases where there is no further information about a given programme or qualification than that known at a higher level of the classification (narrow field). These are known as cases which are "**not further defined**" and are designated by the use of a "0" at the end of the code.

Example: A programme in engineering where more details is not available should be classified as 0710 "Engineering and engineering trades not further defined". Such cases should not be considered as inter-disciplinary or broad programmes (See par. 34a).

Respondents are encouraged to use the detailed classification as far as possible as this will improve the information base substantially at EU and national level. Please note that this classification is also used for statistical purposes.

Cases where the particular detailed field is known and adequately described but is not explicitly provided for in the classification. These are known as cases which are "**not elsewhere classified**" and are designated by the use of "9" at the detailed field level of the classification (i.e. as the last digit).

Example: A programme in a new field in ICTs which does not belong to any of the other detailed fields should be classified as 0619 "Information and Communication Technologies not elsewhere classified". (Par. 34b).

It can be difficult to differentiate the use of “0”, “8” and “9”. The following table may be of assistance:

| <i>Code</i> | <i>Name</i> | <i>Use</i> | <i>Example</i> |
|-------------|---|--|--|
| 0 | <i>Not further defined</i> | <i>No further information than what is known at a higher level of the classification</i> | See all codes ending with '0' for example: 0110, 0210, 0220, 0310 etc. |
| 8 | <i>Inter-disciplinary programmes/qualifications</i> | <i>Programmes/qualifications with no dominant detailed field</i> | See below |
| 9 | <i>Not elsewhere classified</i> | <i>The detailed field is known but not provided for in the classification</i> | See all codes ending with '9' for example: 0119, 0219, 0229, 0319 etc. |

NB Programmes and qualifications with a dominant detailed field (comprising more than 50% of learning credits or time) are classified in that dominant field.

Inter-disciplinary or broad programmes and qualifications are those which combine **several** detailed fields of education and training where **no single detailed field dominates**. Many inter-disciplinary programmes and qualifications cover several narrow or even broad fields. In this classification, the “leading subject rule” is used to determine the **broad** field into which the inter-disciplinary study should be classified. That is, the leading subject or subjects determines the (broad) field. (Par. 29).

Example: A programme consisting of equal parts (one-third each) of theology (0221), history (0222) and philosophy (0223) should be classified as 0288 (“Inter-disciplinary programmes and qualifications involving arts and humanities”). If a programme consists of 60% theology, 20% history and 20% philosophy, it should be classified as 0221 as theology is the dominant subject.

Where more than one leading broad field is identified, the inter-disciplinary study should be classified in the broad field listed first in the title (or in the curriculum or syllabus if not listed in the title) of the programme or qualification. Where there is insufficient information to determine the leading subject, the “first-listed” rule described in the previous sentence should be applied. (Par. 30).

Programmes or qualifications covering two or more detailed fields where one detailed field represents the predominant share of the learning credits or intended learning time should be classified in that detailed field. Thus, if the major share of learning credits or intended learning time is devoted to a single detailed field, the programme/qualification should be classified in that detailed field and not as an inter-disciplinary programme/qualification. (Par. 31).

Example: A programme majoring in mathematics with a minor in French should be classified as 0541 “Mathematics” as mathematics is the dominant subject.

Example: A programme consisting of 40% engineering (071), 30% business (041) and 30% languages (023) should be classified as 0788 ("Inter-disciplinary programmes and qualifications involving engineering, manufacturing and construction") as no field predominates but 07 is the leading broad field. If engineering and business were equally important and greater than languages (e.g. 40%, 40% and 20%), the programme would be classified as either 0788 or 0488 depending on which programme, engineering (071) or business (041), is listed first in the programme title (or, if not in the title, in the curriculum or syllabus).

Example: A programme consisting of 40% history (0222), 30% economics (0311) and 30% politics (0312) would be classified as 0388 ("Inter-disciplinary programmes and qualifications involving social sciences, journalism and information") as economics and politics are in the same broad field.

Further explanatory notes

The UNESCO manual specifies some further notes regarding programmes for engineers (par. 23), for manufacturing programmes (pars 24 and 25), for language programs (pars 26) as well as for teacher training programmes (par. 28). In addition it gives more details and advice for classifying difficult cases:

ISCED-F 2013 contains more broad, narrow and detailed fields than ISCED 1997/FOET 1999. For example '22 humanities' are split into 022 humanities and 023 languages; '3 Social sciences, business and law' are split into '3 social sciences, journalism and information' and '4 business, administration and law'. Most of these splits are 'logical' and will in all likelihood not cause classification problems. The detailed notes on the actual splits will only be available later.

Data by fields of education and training:

<http://epp.eurostat.ec.europa.eu/portal/page/portal/education/data/database;>
(table 'educ_enr15')

Also graduates by fields of education are published by Eurostat.

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