

## THE GREEK EDUCATIONAL SYSTEM

The Greek educational system is mainly divided into three levels: primary, secondary and tertiary, with an additional post-secondary level providing vocational training. Primary education is divided into kindergarten lasting one or two years, and primary school spanning six years (ages 6 to 12). Secondary education comprises two stages: Gymnasio (variously translated as Middle or Junior High School), a three-year school, after which students can attend Lykeion (an academically oriented high school) or Vocational training. Higher Tertiary education is provided by Universities and Polytechnics, Technological Educational Institutes and Academies which primarily cater for the military and the clergy. Undergraduate courses typically last 4 years (5 in polytechnics and some technical/art schools, and 6 in medical schools), postgraduate (MSc level) courses last from 1 to 2 years and doctorates (PhD level) from 3 to 6 years.

All levels are overseen by the Ministry of Education, Research and Religious Affairs. The Ministry exercises centralized control over state schools, by prescribing the curriculum, appointing staff and controlling funding. Private schools also fall under the mandate of the Ministry, which exercises supervisory control over them.

All levels of education are catered for by both private and public schools. State-run schools and universities do not charge tuition fees and textbooks are provided free to all students.

There are also a number of private tutorial schools, colleges and universities operating alongside the state education and providing supplementary tuition. These parallel schools provide foreign language tuition, supplementary lessons for weak students as well as exam preparation courses for the competitive exams in national level. Most of the students typically attend such classes (and examinations) at the tutors schools in the afternoon and evening in addition to their normal schooling.

### **Primary education**

Elementary schools are called "*Dimotiko*" (demotic, meaning municipal), a carryover term from a time when such schools were run by local communities. The name remains although it has been obsolete for decades. Years are called "classes", from first to sixth:

- Year 1: age 6 to 7
- Year 2: age 7 to 8
- Year 3: age 8 to 9
- Year 4: age 9 to 10
- Year 5: age 10 to 11
- Year 6: age 11 to 12

A normal school-day starts at 8.15 and finishes from 13.15 to 15.00 depending on the school. The classes last between 40 and 90 minutes. The school year always

starts on September 11 and ends on June 15. The students have summer vacation (about 3 months), Christmas vacation (2 weeks) and Easter vacation (2 weeks). Furthermore, students take usually another four days off in order to celebrate their two national holidays (28/10 and 25/3).

**Gymnasium** (Lower secondary education - Middle School) (compulsory education)

- 1st grade, age 12 to 13
- 2nd grade, age 13 to 14
- 3rd grade, age 14 to 15

Starts on September 11 and ends on June 15 to 18. The lessons end in 31st of May so that the students will be able to study for their examinations between on June. The classes start at 8.15 and end from 13.45 to 14.15 according to the type of school. Classes last from 45 min. There were 4 types of gymnasiums in Greece:

1. General Gymnasium (entering there from the primary school is automatic)
2. Musical Gymnasium (to enter this type of school students must pass certain exams on a musical instrument)
3. Experimental Gymnasium (to enter this type of schools students must pass certain exams on Maths, Science, Reading Comprehension and Writing [the last two are written as one])
4. Church Gymnasium

**General Lyceum** (upper secondary education - High School)

- 1st grade, age 15 to 16
- 2nd grade, age 16 to 17
- 3rd grade, age 17 to 18

The subjects for:

1. 1st Grade of General Lyceum (The curriculum is based on the 2013 curriculum, for the school season 2014-2015):

- **Subjects of General Education**

Ancient Greek (5 hours/week)  
Modern Greek Language (2 hours/week)  
Modern Greek Literature (2 hours/week)  
Algebra (3 hours/week)  
Geometry (2 hours/week)  
Physics (2 hours/week)  
Chemistry (2 hours/week)  
Biology (2 hours/week)  
History (2 hours/week)  
Political Studies (3 hours/week)  
Religion Education (2 hours/week)  
Project (2 hours/week)  
Foreign Language: English or French or German (2 hours/week)  
Physical Education (2 hours/week)

- **Subjects of selection**

Applications of Computer Science (2 hours/week)  
Geology and Management of Natural Resources (2 hours/week)  
Greek and European Culture (2 hours/week)  
Art Education (2 hours/week)

## 2. 2nd Grade of General Lyceum (The curriculum is based on the 2013 curriculum, for the school season 2014-2015):

- **Subjects of General Education**

Ancient Greek (2 hour/week)  
Modern Greek Language (2 hours/week)  
Modern Greek Literature (2 hours/week)  
Algebra (3 hours/week)  
Geometry (2 hours/week)  
Physics (2 hours/week)  
Chemistry (2 hours/week)  
Biology (2 hours/week)  
Introduction to the Principles of Science of Computers (1 hour/week)  
History (2 hours/week)  
Philosophy (2 hours/week)  
Political Education (2 hours/week)  
Religious Education (2 hours/week)  
Project (1 hour/week)  
Foreign Language: English or French or German (2 hours/week)  
Physical Education (1 hour/week)

## The students can choose 1 of the 2 Orientation Groups: the Humanities or the Sciences

- **Subjects of the Humanities Orientation Group**

Ancient Greek Language and Literature (3 hours/week)  
Basic Principles of Social Science (2 hours/week)

- **Subjects of the Sciences Orientation Group**

Physics (3 hours/week)  
Mathematics (2 hours/week)

## 3. 3rd Grade of General Lyceum (The curriculum is based on the 2015 curriculum, for the school season 2015-2016):

- **Subjects of General Education**

Religion Education (1 hour/week)  
Foreign Language: English or French or German (2 hours/week)  
Physical Education (2 hours/week)  
History (2 hours/week)  
Greek Language (2 hours/week)  
Greek Literature (1 hour/week)  
Biology (2 hours/week)

Mathematics and Statistics (2 hours/week)  
History of Social Sciences (1 hour/week)

- Subjects for selection

2nd Foreign Language  
Drawing (free or linear)  
History of Art  
Business Management and Organization  
(all 2 hours/week)

The students can choose 1 of the 3 Orientation Groups: the Humanities, the Economical and Computer Studies and the Science Studies.

- Subjects of the Humanities Orientation Group:

Ancient Greek Language (5 hours/week)  
Latin (3 hours/week)  
History (3 hours/week)  
Literature (2 hours/week)  
Sociology (2 hours/week)

- Subjects of the Economical and Computer Studies Orientation Group:

Mathematics (5 hours/week)  
Economy (3 hours/week)  
Computers (2 hours/week)  
History (3 hours/week)  
Sociology (2 hours/week)

- Subjects of the Science Studies Orientation Group:

Mathematics (5 hours/week)  
Biology (2 hours/week)  
Physics (3 hours/week)  
Chemistry (3 hours/week)  
Computers (2 hours/week)

The students, who want an access to the tertiary education, must take the Panhellenic national Examinations. These exams are held after the students have received their certification for secondary education. The students pass into a specific Higher Educational Institute based on the Orientation and Group chosen.

## Vocational education and training

Students with technical interests enter a vocational upper secondary school (*EPAL*). The Vocational secondary school lasts three years and is focused on technical, vocational subjects and workshop exercises. There are also vocational training institutes (*IEK*) at the upper secondary level providing a formal but unclassified level of education. Teaching at *IEK* is based on vocational specialisation.

## Tertiary education in Greece

Higher Educational Institutes are consisted of two parallel sectors: the Universities and the Technological Educational Institutes. In addition, colleges collaborating with foreign universities can offer undergraduate and postgraduate foreign programmes of study in Greece, under the proper registration with the Greek Ministry of Education. Usually, these programmes are provided following franchise or validation agreements with universities established in other European Union countries, primarily in the UK, leading to degrees which are awarded directly by those universities. In some cases these institutions are wholly owned and operated branch campuses of foreign institutions.

## Private education

- There are public and private schools in primary education and secondary (lower and upper) education.
- Public and private institutions of vocational education
- According to the article 16 of the Greek constitution private tertiary education was not allowed in Greece. However, there were some Laboratories of Free Studies, often franchises of foreign universities, sometimes non-profit organizations, which advertised themselves as private universities or as centers from public universities abroad.
- Following changes in the Greek legislation, in 2008 and 2010, private organisations, referred to as colleges, have been authorised to offer foreign undergraduate and postgraduate programmes under the monitoring of the Greek Ministry of Education, for example.

All levels are overseen by the Ministry of Culture, Education and Religious Affairs, which exercises centralised control over public schools, by prescribing the curriculum, appointing staff, and controlling funding. The ministry exercises a supervisory mandate over private schools. At a regional level, the supervisory role of the Ministry is exercised through Regional Directorates of Primary and Secondary Education, and Directorates of Primary and Secondary Education operate in every Prefecture. Tertiary institutions are nominally autonomous, but the Ministry is responsible for their funding, and the distribution of students to undergraduate courses. Currently the Greek government only recognises degree programmes offered by the state-run universities although there are several private universities and colleges offering degree programmes that are validated and overseen by American, British and other European universities. The Greek government is pressured to recognise these overseas programmes.

All levels of education are catered for by both private and public schools. State-run schools and universities do not charge tuition fees and textbooks are provided free to all students, although, from 2011 onwards, there has been noticed a

shortage in new textbooks, forcing students to either buy stock books from bookshops, or participate in parent-teacher association-run book trades.

There are also a number of private tutors schools, colleges and universities operating alongside the state education and providing supplementary tuition. These parallel schools, provide foreign-language tuition, supplementary lessons for weak students, as well as exam preparation for the competitive Panhellenic national examinations. Most of the students typically attend such classes (and examinations) at the tutors schools in the afternoon and evening in addition to their normal schooling.