

## MALAYSIA

### Country Summary of Higher Education

#### **Background:**

**Recent expansion of tertiary education sector:** Malaysia has experienced a marked expansion in both private and public higher education since the Government of Malaysia (GOM) passed three educational bills in 1996<sup>1</sup>, which especially had a direct impact on the development of private higher education. Enrollments in **private** Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) increased by 60.1% between 1998–2000 and 20.0% between 2003–2005. During the Eighth Malaysia Plan (2000–2005), which placed high priority on accessibility to higher education, enrollment in **public** HEIs increased by 37.6% between 2000–2003 and by 20.0% between 2003–2005. The total enrollments in HEIs in 2005 accounted for 649,653, representing 29.9% of the 18–24 population<sup>2</sup>.

**Tertiary education system:** The higher education system in Malaysia comprises public and private HEIs, polytechnics, and community colleges. Both public and private HEIs offer certificate, diploma, first degree, and postgraduate degree. Public HEIs consist of universities and university colleges; Private HEIs consist of universities, university colleges, colleges, overseas branch campuses, open universities, virtual/e-universities, and IT academies. Polytechnics offer certificate and diploma as a source of semi professional workforce. Community colleges offer full time academic programs and short courses, based on the request of the local community. The Ministry of Higher Education (MOHE) was established in March 2004 with the responsibility of providing strategic direction and overseeing the development of the sub-sector.

**Quality assurance mechanisms:** Under the aegis of the MOHE, two separate bodies are mandate to address quality issues in academic programs in private and public HEIs. The Lembaga Akreditasi Negara (LAN), which was established in 1996, is responsible for public HEIs; the Quality Assurance Division (QAD), which was established in 2001, is responsible for private HEIs. The Quality Management Units of institutions coordinate other activities, such as academic programs, libraries, administration, and management systems. Auditing exercises are also conducted externally by professional accreditation bodies, such as the Malaysia Medical Council, the Public Services Department, and the Engineering Accreditation Council. The GOM is currently in the process of developing a unified quality assurance framework that will review performance of all Malaysian HEIs under the Malaysian Qualification Framework.

**Government Strategy & Policy Reforms:** The GOM has recently linked the development of the higher education sector to the requirements of economic growth, articulating the following complementary policy objectives: (1) establishing a world class university system; (2) making Malaysia a regional education hub; and (3) transforming Malaysia into a knowledge-based economy. To respond to the objectives, the GOM carefully laid the foundation for the expansion of the higher education system in its Ninth Malaysian Plan (2006–2010). It emphasizes on increasing accessibility to higher education to create a critical mass of trained, skilled and knowledgeable workforce who would sustain economic growth, increase competitiveness, and support a knowledge-based economy. The Plan provided for a series of measures to improve the quality of education, especially in science, mathematics and foreign languages for a more advanced technological future, and to promote and develop Malaysia as a regional center of education excellence. Finally, the Plan called for the promotion of lifelong learning.

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<sup>1</sup> The National Council on Higher Education Bill, the Private Higher Educational Institutions Bill, and the National Accreditation Board Bill

<sup>2</sup> Ministry of Higher Education Malaysia, 2005

## Summary Data Table on Higher Education (Data in 2005)

Enrollment	Total Enrollment	731,077
	% of Female	55.4%
	% of Private	32%
Gross Enrollment Rate	Total	32.0%
	Male	27.9%
	Female	36.4%
Student Teachers Ratios		20:1
Teaching Staff	Total Number	47,072
	% of Female	47%
	% of teachers with Masters	
	% of teachers with Doctorate	
Gross Graduation Rates*	Total	13.7%
	Male	12.0%
	Female	15.5%
Total Public Expenditure on Education	% of GDP	6.2%
	% of Govt. Expenditure	25.2%
Total Public Expenditure on Higher Education	% of total education budget.	33.4%
Number of Higher Education Institutions	Total	630
	Public HEIs	17
	Private HEIs	559
	Polytechnics	20
	Community Colleges	34

Source: Global Education Digest 2006, UNESCO, Ministry of Higher Education Malaysia 2005

\* Number of graduates regardless of age in a given level or program expressed as a percentage of the population at the theoretical graduation age for that level or program

### Issues:

Access	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Limited space in admission may limit the chances for the most qualified students to enter HEIs based on their choice.</li> </ul>
Equity	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Participation of women in higher education needs to be increased.</li> <li>There is no common entrance examination.</li> <li>Recruitment and promotion practices for the faculty do not favor all equitably.</li> </ul>
Quality	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>There is a need to increase the number of faculty with highest credentials.</li> <li>More senior researchers and academics need to be involved in teaching.</li> <li>An oversight body to examine the performance of the QA bodies is necessary.</li> </ul>
Relevance	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The unemployment of young graduates is considerably high (over 12%).</li> <li>There is a weak linkage between higher education and industry.</li> </ul>
Financing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Funding for research needs to be increased.</li> <li>There is misconception that all private HEIs are well-funded. Some need financial support through direct public funding instead of incentives.</li> <li>The level of repayment for the student loan is low.</li> </ul>
Governance/ Management	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>HEIs have weaker governance under insufficient autonomy and accountability mechanisms. The government has the authority to appoint professors and researchers, allocate students to HEIs, and fix teachers' salary scale.</li> <li>There are no managerial incentives without any performance-based budget allocation mechanism.</li> <li>Public and private HEIs operate under different regulatory and financial rules without a unified higher education system.</li> </ul>