

Higher Education in the Republic of Belarus

Belarusian education is ranked among the best ones, and the Belarusian specialists are much in demand in the world. Therefore both our citizens and foreign students wish to study in the higher educational establishments (Universities) of the Republic. Belarus has been involved in training foreign students since 1961. More than 20 thousand foreigners have got their education in Belarus since then.

There are 340 students per 10,000 residents of Belarus. This ratio is among the highest in Europe. In the system of higher education of Belarus a broad network of educational establishments was shaped. Four major types can be distinguished:

- Classical university;
- Profile university or academy;
- Institute;
- Higher college.

Altogether there are 57 higher educational establishments, of which 43 are state owned (28 universities, 8 academies, 1 institute, 5 higher colleges, 1 higher school), 13 are private and 2 are run by religious organizations. Every establishment occupies its particular niche in training of highly qualified staff for various branches of national economy.

Classical and profile universities as well as institutes are classified as higher educational establishments of university type and provide a two level system of higher education with academic degrees of Bachelor and Master.

At the same time the old 5-year curriculum is still in use. Graduates both from state and private universities are granted state diplomas of higher education. But it is not that easy to become a student. High demand on higher education led to high entrance competition regardless of form of study or specialty. Therefore only the very best can study at budget cost. The entrants who passed the entrance exams successfully but did not win the competition (did not get the necessary entrance score) have the opportunity to study for their own account. As regards tuition fee, it does not significantly exceed education services costs and stays within 500-3500 US\$ for the most prestigious specialties.

3 forms of learning are available at Belarusian higher educational establishments: full-time, evening and by correspondence. Full-time learning is the most widespread and in the greatest demand with 2/3 of the students. Less than 1% of students use evening form of learning and over 35% of students learn by correspondence.

Full-time students with positive grades receive a monthly allowance. Its size depends on a student's academic success. Some groups of students are granted social allowances; the gifted students are awarded with nominal

scholarships. Correspondence and evening forms of learning are a good opportunity for persons with financial, age, physical and other limitations. External studies represent another form of receiving higher education. It is based on the independent study of subjects from the regular curriculum. Credits and examinations are taken without obligatory attendance of classes. This form of learning is available to persons with secondary education, who cannot study full-time or leave their workplace. Diplomas are granted to external students on a regular basis.

A combination of various forms of learning is accepted, so is learning on individual curricula. The efficiency of any form of learning is ensured by eminently qualified teaching staff including a large number of candidates and doctors of science, associate professors and professors.

But higher education in Belarus does not only mean lectures, seminars and exams. In addition Belarusian students participate in international scientific conferences and competitions, student exchange programs. Belarusian teams take first places at competitions in mathematics, economy and programming. However organization of the educational process is not the only concern of the Higher School. Much attention is paid to students' living conditions, providing non-residents with a hostel accommodation. University administration renders assistance in conducting leisure activities of students. Let's take for example Belarusian State University (BSU), the largest higher educational establishment in the Republic. The BSU Students' Tutorial Board is the initiator of students' festivals, sports and athletics meetings, tourist programs and the Bard's club sessions, which became regular events in the life of the BSU students. Such bodies function at many educational establishments.

This is how the student years at Belarusian higher educational establishments are spent. After graduation the budget students are provided with the first workplaces. Finding a good job on specialty both in the republic and abroad is not a problem for paying students either. Belarus has bilateral agreements on mutual recognition of education certificates with dozens of the world countries.

Low cost of learning and scientific literature, accommodation, transport, high quality of academic education, good conditions of Belarusian diploma recognition abroad, stable political situation and low crime rate are just some of the reasons that attract foreign students. Annually about 3,000 students from over 70 world countries (China, Lebanon, Iraq, Syria, Pakistan, Poland, Jordan, India) study in the republic. Foreign students are offered a year's preparatory Russian language course. There is a possibility of getting an inexpensive hostel accommodation. Universities place at students' free disposal sports facilities and library funds, encourage their creative activities.

After university graduation young specialists have the possibility to get a postgraduate education. Here training of the scientific personnel with highest qualifications is conducted with granting scientific degrees of Candidate of Science (equivalent of PhD; postgraduate courses-aspirantura, adjunktura (military), assistentura (probation period)) and Doctor of Science (doktorantura). Establishments providing postgraduate education include higher educational establishments (regardless of pattern of ownership), scientific and other organizations entitled to engage in postgraduate education in accordance with established procedure.

Regardless of pattern of ownership and departmental affiliation all higher educational establishments are subordinate to the Ministry of Education of the Republic of Belarus.

Regulation on Study of Foreign Citizens in Belarus

A valid passport or other means of identification, a student visa and medical insurance are major enrolment requirements for foreign citizens.

Admission of foreign citizens to educational establishments of Belarus is based on a contract signed with a potential student or his/her intermediary on terms of education cost compensation (unless other condition is stipulated by international agreements of the Republic of Belarus). However, the financial matter is not the only condition for entering Belarusian higher educational establishments. An adequate level of previous education is also required. It should correspond to secondary or special secondary education in the Republic of Belarus. To acquire a master's degree an adequate education background is also required.

Another condition is a good command of Russian, though it is not obligatory. Foreign citizens with a poor command of Russian are admitted to a preparatory course of a chosen educational establishment, where Russian and specialty-related subjects are taught. After the preparatory course examinations are held and those who passed the exams successfully are admitted to a chosen faculty. Those who failed are given the chance to repeat the preparatory course. The admission of foreign citizens without a preparatory course certificate is possible after the confirmation by the commission created by the order of the head of a higher educational establishment, of the entrant's proper language command and educational background.

Foreign students have the same rights with Belarusian students to change the specialty, form of learning (full-time, shift (evening), correspondence) or even switch over to an individual curriculum within the scope of educational standards. If a course is completed successfully a student is granted a diploma of the established standard.

Post-graduate courses are available (PhD and doctorate) to students with the proper language command and educational background.

It should be noted that according to the Regulation on Study of Foreign Students in the Republic of Belarus, foreign students can participate in autonomous bodies and create native country associations. Medical service of foreign students is conducted on terms of compulsory medical insurance, if other conditions are not stipulated by international agreements of the Republic of Belarus.

Step-by-step directions

If the education in Belarus is what you were looking for don't waste time and start preparations immediately.

Step 1

The first thing a future student should do is to choose the university you want to study and send there the following documents:

- A copy of education certificate with a list of studied subjects and corresponding examination grades or a certificate of education in progress for last year students attested in accordance with established procedure;
- A copy of a birth certificate and a passport or other identity document.

These documents are required for a Belarusian educational establishment to issue a study invitation, necessary for obtaining a student visa. Student visas are issued by diplomatic representatives and consular offices of the Ministry of foreign affairs of the Republic of Belarus.

Step 2

An applicant to a full-time form of education should present to a chosen educational establishment a list of the following documents (in Belarusian, Russian, English, French, Spanish or German):

- A passport with a student visa of the Republic of Belarus;
- An application for admission with indication of a chosen specialty;
- A certificate of education with indication of studied subjects and examination grades;
- A medical certificate issued by an official health care establishment of the country of residence of the applicant;
- Certificate of a negative HIV-reaction issued by an official health care establishment of the country of residence of the applicant;
- A copy of birth certificate, attested in accordance with established procedure;

A list of publications (if any);

- 6 photos (4 x 6 cm).

In case a foreign citizen changes an educational establishment his documents will be sent to the place of further education.

Step 3

If an interview is passed successfully, the applicant is to sign a study contract at the department of international relations of a chosen educational establishment. The basic provision of the contract is tuition fee which ranges from 700 to 3,500 US\$ depending on a chosen specialty and form of learning (full-time, shift, by correspondence).

It should be reminded, that foreign citizens with a poor command of Russian are admitted to a preparatory course of a chosen educational establishment, where the language of instruction and specialty-related subjects are taught. After the course examinations are held and those who passed the exams successfully are admitted to a chosen faculty. Those who failed are given the chance to repeat the preparatory course.

Step 4

When all the formalities are settled it's time to think about living conditions. The department of international relations of an educational establishment will help you obtain a residence permit and a lodging. The average monthly charge at a student hostel makes 15-30 US\$ depending on the type of room (single or double) and hostel location.