



## Current situation

In Ukraine, almost 99% of education takes place in public schools (Ministry of Education and Science, 2019). There are **4.2 million students** and around **440 000 teachers** as of 2021 (State Statistics Service of Ukraine, 2021). The Ukrainian education system is being reformed under the name of the New Ukrainian School (NUS). NUS envisages three levels for complete general secondary education:

1. Primary education (1-4 grade);
2. Basic secondary education at secondary schools (5-9 grade);
3. Specialized secondary education at focused high schools or vocational education and training centers (10-12 grade).

It is important to note that the first class of students to complete a **full cycle of 12 grades** according to NUS will graduate in **2030** (those who started school in 2018). Until then everyone is set to graduate after 11th grade.

**Primary education** is divided into 2 cycles. The first and second grade are focused on students getting used to school life through play. At this stage, no marks are given, the amount of home assignments is restricted, the main objective is to support children's self-confidence and spark motivation for knowledge. Studying is organized through activities using games methods in and out of the classroom (New Ukrainian School, n.d., p.21)

The next two years of 3rd and 4th grade introduce subject-based study with some subjects being marked but only according to the level of competency acquired and not on a number scale. Value judgment is called verbal evaluation, and value judgment with indication of competency level - level evaluation. Both assessments can be expressed both orally and in writing. The Ministry of Education and Science (MoES) recommends using mainly verbal evaluation.

Average number of studying hours established by the curriculum starts with **20** hours per week in the first grade and increases gradually to 22 and 23 by the end of fourth grade (physical education not included). One class lasts 35 minutes in the first grade and 40 minutes starting in the second grade. It is recommended to have short breaks during classes (breathing exercises, physical activity breaks, etc.) every 15 minutes.

Duration of breaks between classes is set by the school but should be no less than 15 minutes for first graders and no less than 10 minutes for other students and there has to be one big break no less than 20 minutes (usually after 2 and/or 3 class of the day).

The national final assessment (NFA, Ukrainian: *Державна підсумкова атестація, ДПА*) of pupils after 4th grade is performed exclusively for the purposes of assessing the quality of educational activities at schools, and is performed by school teaching staff. In 2022 it was canceled because of the Russian invasion.

Typical elementary school curriculum includes the following subjects<sup>1</sup>:

- Ukrainian language and reading
- Foreign language (English, German, French or Spanish)
- Math
- Integrated course (history, science, health, culture)
- Computer science
- Art
- Design and technology
- Physical education

Starting **from the fifth grade** there is a smooth transition to evaluation with marks which are given on a scale from 1 (lowest) to 12 (highest) and education is mostly subject-specific. Typical middle and high school curriculum subjects can be found in the tables below. <sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> All curriculums for every elementary school grade can be found here (available in Ukrainian only): <https://mon.gov.ua/ua/osvita/zagalna-serednya-osvita/navchalni-programi/navchalni-programi-dlya-pochatkovoyi-shkoli>

<sup>2</sup> All curriculums for every middle and high school grade can be found here (available in Ukrainian only): <https://mon.gov.ua/ua/osvita/zagalna-serednya-osvita/navchalni-programi/tipovi-osvitni-programi-dlya-2-11-klasiv>

Grade	5	6	7	8	9	10	11
Ukrainian language	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Ukrainian literature	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Foreign language*	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
World literature	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Ukrainian history	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
World history		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Basics of Law					✓		
Music	✓	✓	✓				
Physical Education	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓

\* English, German, French or Spanish

Grade	5	6	7	8	9	10	11
Art	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓		
Math	✓	✓				✓	✓
Algebra			✓	✓	✓		
Geometry			✓	✓	✓		
Science	✓						
Biology		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Geography		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Computer science	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Physics			✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Chemistry			✓	✓	✓	✓	✓

Grade	5	6	7	8	9	10	11
Health basics	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Crafts	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Civics						✓	
Ecology						✓	✓
Astronomy						✓	✓

One should keep in mind that subjects may vary since schools may decide on their own additional optional classes or include integrated ones instead. Also, some subjects have 2 levels: standard and advanced. Classes last 45 minutes each. Educational outcomes after 9th grade are evaluated through NFA. In 2022 it was canceled because of the Russian invasion as well. As for number of hours of classes per week, they are as follows (physical education not included):

- 5th grade - no more than 28
- 6th grade - no more than 31
- 7th grade - no more than 32
- 8th through 11th - no more than 33

According to MoES regulations, there must be a minimum of 5 students in one class and the biggest class mustn't exceed 24 students in elementary school and 30 students in secondary and high school. In reality, class sizes depend on where the

school is located. Urban school's classes are often overcrowded, while rural schools are understaffed in many cases and classes are considerably smaller. To address this issue, MoES has implemented a network of 'pivot schools' (Ukrainian: *опорні школи*). Now, children will receive the elementary education in the nearest school, while senior students will be brought to pivot education institutions with significantly better conditions. (Ukraine Crisis Media Center, 2017)

It was mentioned already that there are 4.2 million students and around 440 000 teachers in Ukraine as of 2021, which means that there are 9 students for every teacher with only Latvia and Estonia reporting smaller ratios than this. With less than 20 students per class, Ukraine has one of the smallest average class sizes in the world. (The World Bank, 2018)

After finishing the 9th grade students have two options:

1. Graduate and enter vocational (vocational technical) training institutions.

Depending on the institution, studying lasts from 6 months to 3 years and some offer dual education. After finishing vocational training institutions students have the opportunity to enter university on the same conditions as graduates after 11th grade or start working.

2. Continue studying in school and graduate after 11th grade.

This means that after finishing 11 grades, educational outcomes are evaluated through the NFA in the form of external independent assessment (EIA, Ukrainian: *ЗОВНІШНЄ НЕЗАЛЕЖНЕ ОЦІНЮВАННЯ, ЗНО*) and if needed students can take extra EIA in selected subjects that are necessary for university admission. Results of EIA are counted as entrance examinations to universities based on which ratings of students are compiled to determine who gets the national scholarship.

### **The New Ukrainian School (NUS): what to expect?**

The New Ukrainian School is a key reform of the Ministry of Education and Science. It is a long-term reform which started in **2016** and is expected to finish in **2030** with graduation of the first 12th grade. First of all, the total duration of the full secondary education cycle increased to 12 years. This means that right now studying takes place according to two systems simultaneously: in elementary school children study according to the reformed NUS system; secondary and high schoolers do the core curriculum according to the rules of 2001/2002.

In 2021 a 'pilot' 5th grade was launched in some schools across the country to test the NUS system and it is expected that in September 2022 all 5th graders will start

studying according to the new curriculum with integrated courses, new coursebooks and curriculum.

A key change for students concerns approaches to learning and educational content. Instead of memorizing facts and definitions, students will acquire competencies. The list of competencies includes but is not limited to:

- fluency in the state language;
- competency in math, natural sciences, engineering and technologies;
- environmental competency;
- information and communication competency;
- social and civic competencies related to the ideas of democracy, justice, equality, human rights, well-being and healthy lifestyle, and to awareness of equal rights and opportunities;
- entrepreneurship and financial literacy

This is a dynamic combination of knowledge, skills, ways of thinking, opinions, values, and other personal qualities that determine a person's ability to socialize well and to engage in professional and/or further learning activities. (New Ukrainian School, n.d., p. 10)

#### **Other important changes planned with NUS:**

- Primary education (already implemented)

As a rule, education will start at the age of six. Study will be organized according to a uniform standard; no advanced-level subjects will be introduced. There will be no “one-hour” special courses or subjects at the primary school and no more than 8 mandatory subjects in a single grade.

- Basic secondary education (expected to start in September 2022)

In accordance with NUS, a special focus in the educational process will be placed on the study of the national language. National standard of basic secondary education doesn't have fixed subjects but key competencies instead which will serve as a basis for those developing curriculums and enabling them to combine and integrate them. Educational outcomes after 9th grade will be evaluated through the national final attestation in the form of external independent assessment.

- Specialized secondary education (expected to start in 2027)

In the framework of the profession-oriented education, a high school student will be able to choose one of two 'paths':

- Academic, with advanced study in certain subjects and a goal to continue education at a university;
- Professional, which, alongside attaining complete general secondary education, provides training for a first profession (does not restrict the potential for continuing education).

Obtaining specialized secondary education under academic concentration will be enabled at academic lyceums (high schools), which are, as a rule, separate educational establishments. A network of academic high schools will be established following the example of professional high schools, i.e. the third phase of schooling will be separate from the second phase. The first year of education at academic high schools will be transitional. At this stage, the pupil still can change their direction of study. Students will be able to select not only subjects, but the levels of their complexity as well.

Leavers of professional high schools and colleges will take the NFA in the form of the external independent assessment. Leavers of professional high schools and colleges who successfully pass NFA in the form of EIA will be able to enter higher educational establishments, and college leavers will be able to study at universities under an accelerated programme. (New Ukrainian School, n.d., pp. 22 - 23)

## PISA

Ukraine took part in the international PISA research for the first time in **2018**. The next assessment round was scheduled for 2021 but was postponed to 2022 due to COVID-19 pandemic. You can find Ukraine's results report from PISA 2018 here: [https://www.oecd.org/pisa/publications/PISA2018\\_CN\\_UKR.pdf](https://www.oecd.org/pisa/publications/PISA2018_CN_UKR.pdf)

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