**What is special with ISCED?**

1. No detailed category list in ISCED – 1997. The former version, ISCED 1997 <http://www.uis.unesco.org/Library/Documents/isced97-en.pdf>) has no detailed category list. Education levels 0 – 6 are distinguished. Further detailed lists can be developed based on descriptions.
2. Relationship between concepts of classification. The main classificatory concept of ISCED is the Levels of education. ISCED 1997 and 2011 distinguish educational programmes further within levels according to concepts that are useful for the reporting of international statistics on education. In the ISCED 2011 specification <http://www.uis.unesco.org/Education/Documents/isced-2011-en.pdf> the additional classificatory concepts are:
* the programme orientation;
* completion of the ISCED level;
* access to higher ISCED levels; and
* position in the national degree and qualification structure

Below (figure 1) is a presentation of the relationships between the concept of the classification unit (the educational programmes ) and the classificatory concepts.

The figure represents my interpretation of the relationships so please feel free to disagree with it.



**Figure 1**

In the description of the conceptual framework of ISCED, the additional classificatory concepts are called cross classification variables. Their aim is to allow to distinguish programmes and qualifications further within education levels. In the conceptual framework of ISCED, the main concept of the ISCED Levels have a structural relationship to the additional classificatory concepts such that all additional classificatory concepts are described as having the same ‘structural distance’ to the main concept of the ISCED levels. By this I mean that for example ‘Upper secondary education’, ISCED Level 3 of education is further distinguished by the concepts ‘Programme orientation’ and ‘Level completion and access to higher ISCED levels’ (the latter a combination of two of the additional classificatory concepts) – which are conceptually on the same ‘level’ in relation to the concept of the Levels of education, see the ISCED 2011 specification p. 39.

ISCED 2011 has a code list with three structured levels. The list is strictly hierarchical and contains exclusive categories and codes. In the code list. Orientation is represented at the second classification level and ‘Level completion and access to higher ISCED levels ‘ on the third classification level (see the ISCED 2011 specification p. 69), but conceptually ‘Level completion and access to higher ISCED levels ‘ is not a sub-concept of ‘Orientation’.

1. Not all additional classifying concepts apply at all of the ISCED education levels. Figure 2 below example shows additional classifying concepts applicable at an extract of the ISCED Levels: ISCED Level 1 of education – ‘Primary education’ and 2 ‘Lower secondary education’.



**Figure 2**

1. The ISCED mappings of national educational programmes into ISCED. It is difficult for national teams to code their national educational programmes into ISCED, and as it is so complex the way of doing it should be made transparent. The official ISCED mappings between national educational programmes and ISCED are official[[1]](#footnote-1) and developed by UiS in collaboration with NSIs, and regarded by ISCED as a component on which ISCED rests (see the ISCED 2011 specification p. 7). The mappings are a grid like structures which display the national education programme names, their ISCED value, their value on the additional classificatory concepts as well as their value on additional variables that are used as background for the coding.
1. Current mappings into ISCED 1997 exist http://www.uis.unesco.org/Education/ISCEDMappings/Pages/default.aspx.

Mappings for ISCED 2011 are under development by UiS in collaboration with the NSIs [↑](#footnote-ref-1)