The legislative document establishing norms and standards for quality of education is the Law on Education approved by the President of the Republic of Azerbaijan on 5th September 2009. The Ministers Cabinet focused on education as a priority area and approved some 32 decisions in the field of education in 2010. A total of 28 decisions directly relates to implementation of the Law on Education. In 2011, additional 4 decisions were made. These include the following:

- Decision no. 004, as of 8 January 2010 on Regulations for Organization of Preschool Education;
- Decision no.005, as of 13 January 2010 on Establishment of the Department of Deinstitutionalization and Alternative Care at the Ministry of Education;
- Decision no.006, as of 13 January 2010 on Actions Plan for Reforms in General Education System of the Republic of Azerbaijan;
- Decision no.008, as of 14 January 2010 on Regulations for Awarding Golden and Silver Medals to Students with Excellent Learning Achievements;
- Decision no.010, as of 19 January 2010 on Types of Profit Oriented Business Activities for Educational Institutions;
- Decision no. 011, as of 19 January 2010 on Classification of Qualifications for Secondary Specialized Education;
- Decision no. 012, as of 21 January 2010 on Regulations for Issuing Certificates to Students Failed at a Certain Education Level/Cycle;
- Decision no.067, as of 14 April 2010 on Additional Benefits and Motivating Measures for Young Employers Graduated from Pedagogical Institutions;
- Decision no. 075, as of 23 April 2010 on National Standard and Programme of Higher Education;
- Decision no.076, as of 23 April 2010 on National Standard and Programme of Secondary Specialized Education;
- Decision no.077, as of 23 April 2010 on National Standard and Programme of Initial Vocational Education and Training;
- Decision no.082, as of 29 April 2010 on Framework of and Regulations for Awarding National Educational Documents;
- Decision no.088, as of 12 May 2010 on Regulations for the Content and Organization of Master’s Level Education and Awarding Master’s Degree;
- Decision no. 098, as of 27 May 2010 on Benefit Scale for Academic Staff Salaries at Public and Municipal Educational Institutions Based on Scientific Degrees and Titles;
- Decision no. 103, as of 3 June 2010 on National Standard and Programmes (Curricula) of General Education;
- Decision no.104, as of 4 June 2010 on Duration for Implementation of Educational Programmes (Curricula);
- Decision no.112, as of 16 June 2010 on Title Changes for Secondary Specialized Educational Institutions;
- Decision no.115, as of 22 June 2010 on Duration of General Education Levels and Promotion Regulations;
- Decision no.117, as of 24 June 2010 on Regulations for the Content and Organization of Bachelor’s Level Education;
- Decision no.119, as of 25 June 2010 on List of International Olympiads, Competitions and Contests the Results of which May Secure Admission to Higher Educational Institutions without Participating in Entrance Examinations;
- Decision no.120, as of 25 June 2010 on Application of New Financing Mechanism at Higher Educational Institutions;
- Decision no.129, as of 1 July 2010 on Establishment of Doctoral Level Education and Admission Regulations;
• Decision no.137, as of 16 July 2010 on National Standard and Programme of Preschool Education;
• Decision no.147, as of 6 August 2010 on Regulations for Organization of Formal Education;
• Decision no.150, as of 17 August 2010 on Calculation Methodology and Regulations for Application of Budgetary Standards for Initial Vocational Education and Training Institutions;
• Decision no.163, as of 28 September 2010 on Regulations for the Content and Organization of Further Education, and for Awarding Relevant Documents to Graduates;
• Decision no.167, as of 28 September 2010 on Regulations for Accreditation of Educational Institutions;
• Decision no.180, as of 19 October 2010 on Regulations for Scholarship Payment (the Regulations were approved within the framework of the State Programme for Education of Azerbaijani Youth Abroad (2007-2015) ratified by the Ministers Cabinet Decision no.261, as of 27 November 2008;
• Decision no.215, as of 24 November 2010 on Workload Standards for Faculty Members;
• Decision no.235, as of 14 December 2010 on List of Higher Educational and Scientific Institutions Offering Doctoral Education Programmes;
• Decision no.239, as of 17 December 2010 on Establishment of Ismayilli Vocational Training Centre;
• Decision no.101, as of 31 May 2010 on Scholarship Scale for Students Studying at Higher Educational Institutions of Turkey, Egypt, Russia and Ukraine;
• Decision of the Ministers Cabinet as of 13 January 2011 on Framework Regulations of General Educational Institutions.

2. Applicable norms and standards with the regard to the following:

a) School infrastructure According to the Law on Education, depending on the number of students there are three school types which include primary, general secondary and full secondary schools. Primary school infrastructure includes classrooms, a library, sports facilities, education and training area and public utilities, while general secondary and full secondary school infrastructure include the following:

Classrooms (1.8-2 m² per student)
Labs (1.8-2 m²)
Room height 3.0-3.3 m
Room area 33.6-36 m²
Gym (9x18 m and 12x24 m) 18x36m
Canteen 33.6-36 m² (with total capacity of 20 students)
School hall 73-76 m²
Dressing rooms
Sanitary facilities
Director’s office 33.6 m²
Secretary’s office 16.8 m²
Assistant director’s office 16.8 m²
Computer lab 33.6-36 m²
Library and reading room
Boiler house
Fire extinguishing water storage containers 100m³
Drinking water storage containers 100m³
Water tower
Classroom capacity is for 20 students
Transformer
Pumping house

b) Class size and pupil-teacher ratio
The number of students studying at general education schools comprises 12,87,476, while student-teacher ration constitutes 8.5 (statistical data of 2011/2012 academic year).

c) Teacher qualification

Teacher training in Azerbaijan is regulated by the following normative and legislative documents:

- Concept and Strategy of Continuous Teacher Education and Training;
- Regulations of the Coordination Council for Continuous Education;
- Regulations for the Content and Organization of Master’s Level Education and Awarding Master’s Degree;
- Regulations for the Content and Organization of Further Education, and for Awarding Relevant Documents to Graduates;
- Regulations for the Content and Organization of Bachelor’s Level Education;
- National Standard and Programme of Higher Education;
- Regulations on Replacement of Department Director, Dean and Deputy Dean Positions at Higher Educational Institutions;
- Framework Regulations on Organization of Teaching Based on Credit System;
- Regulations on Knowledge Assessment of Students Studying Credit Based Educational Programmes;
- Regulations on National Attestation of Students at Bachelor’s Level;
- Regulations on Preparing a Bachelor’s Level Dissertation;

A graduate is awarded a professional pedagogical qualification upon the decision of the Public Attestation Commission established by the Ministry of Education. The latter is, inter alia, also responsible for development and implementation of the state policy on teacher education and training, as well as for defining the requirements for teaching qualification and relevant curricula.

Adoption of the Concept and Strategy on Continuous Teacher Education and Training was followed by extensive reforms in the field of teacher education. Reforms Programme in the Field of Higher Education (2009-2013) significantly contributes to and facilitates the development of a teaching qualification.

In Azerbaijan, students may study Bachelor’s level pedagogical education programmes for 4 years or secondary specialized level (sub-bachelor’s level education) pedagogical education programmes for 2.5 years. Graduates have to take centralized examinations organized by the Ministry of Education in order to be qualified to get jobs at general educational institutions.

d) Working conditions for teachers and their professional development

Further Education Unit was established at the Ministry of Education with the view to facilitate and coordinate implementation of the activities by institutions of further education. In accordance with Article 24 of the Law on Education, the Ministers Cabinet approved Decision no. 163, as of 28 September 2010 on Regulations for the Content and Organization of Further Education, as well as for Awarding Relevant Documents to Graduates which includes the following sub-fields:

1. In-service training;
2. Retraining;
3. Probation (training);
4. Capacity building;
5. Retraining in higher education;
6. Retraining in secondary specialized education;
7. Improvement of qualification;
8. Adult education

The following activities were implemented in the field of further education to ensure and improve professional development of teachers:

- Curriculum Framework for Retraining of General Education Teachers was approved;
- Training programme for teachers of I grades was developed;
- A tender was organized for NGOs competing for organization of training courses for primary school teachers on curriculum implementation;
- A total of 7778 primary school teachers have participated in 36 hours training courses;
- In 2010/2011 academic year, retraining of teachers included a number of specialities such as Azerbaijani Language and Literature, English (translation and interpretation), Maths and Information Sciences (Mathematics, Physics, Information Sciences and Applied Mathematics), Psychology (teachers/tutors in Azerbaijani Language and Literature, Russian Language and Literature, Foreign Languages, Biology, Primary Education);
- In 2010/2011 academic year, a retraining course in the speciality of social servant was offered at Baku In-Service Teacher Training and Retraining Institute which involved boarding school teachers having basic pedagogical qualification in primary and general secondary education, psychologists, speech pathologists and therapists.

Public Investment Capacity Building Project was initiated within the framework of the Agreement signed between the Government of Azerbaijan and the World Bank. The aim of the Project is to facilitate institutional development and organization of trainings at specific agencies, as well as improve capacity building by formulating a sustainable training system. In 2010, a total of 12 training courses were organized within the framework of the project which involved 338 employees of 15 public bodies and organizations. In 2011, the number of the training courses was increased up to 27.

Application of new regulations necessitates elaboration of relevant normative and legislative documents. In 2011/2012 academic year, the following activities will be implemented:

- Development of the Curriculum Framework on Retraining of Administrative and Academic Staff of Preschool, General Education and Extracurricular Institutions, and Mechanism for Assessment and Application of Retraining Programmes;
- Organization of 60 hour (10 days) training courses on Application of New Disciplinary Curricula and Interactive Learning for I grade teachers who didn’t participate in any training courses within the last three years;
- Organization of 30 hour (5 days) training courses on Management of New Disciplinary Curricula Application for school directors;
- Organization of training courses on school assessment for training of some 1800 teachers.

e) School curricula content and pedagogical materials

The Ministry of Education annually approves school curricula based on the principles defined by the government. Azerbaijani, Russian and Georgian are languages of instruction at schools. Moreover, a special curriculum for I–IV grades where languages of national minorities are applied is elaborated. Lyceums, gymnasiums and specialized educational institutions use individual curricula.

Students’ weekly workload also includes extra-curricular activities and comprises 23 hours for 1st, 24 hours for 2nd, 26 hours for 3rd and 4th, 31 hours for 5th, 32 hours for 6th, 35 hours for 7th, 36 hours for 8th–10th and 38 hours for 11th grades.
Pedagogical materials include textbooks, teachers’ guides, workbooks, programmes, methodological literature, scientific and methodological articles issued in relevant newspapers and magazines, test samples, literature for talented students (psychological diagnostic materials, etc.). All these materials are applied at schools.

f) Teaching-learning process

Various teaching methods are applied at schools. Teachers ensure that students comprehend the learning materials effectively by using these methods during the academic year, as well as by taking different examinations and tests at the end of it. Students are required to take final examinations at the end of grades IX and XI.

g) School management, including student and parents participation

Schools are managed by a school director in accordance with the regulations approved by the Ministry of Education. Parent Committees, Teacher and Parent Associations also participate in school management. A number of schools have established School Councils consisting of Parent Committees, students and community members who ensure transparent and effective management. Some NGOs also participate in monitoring and assessment of schools and together with parent association members they can even observe examinations within or at the end of an academic year.

h) Methods to evaluate student performance and access learning outcomes

Students’ achievements are assessed in accordance with the provisions of the Law on Education of the Republic of Azerbaijan approved by Presidential Decree no.156 as of 5 December 2009, Concept of General Education (National Curriculum) approved by Decree no. 233 as of 30 October 2006 and Assessment Concept in General Education System of the Republic of Azerbaijan approved by Decree no. 9 as of 13 January 2009 by the Ministers Cabinet.

The content and assessment standards envisaged in the abovementioned documents are the principal factors regulating the quality of education. Assessment Concept in General Education System of the Republic of Azerbaijan was developed as a framework document and in accordance with the requirements of the Law on Education, the Educational Reforms Programme, the national educational policy and modern assessment standards, and forms a basis for new assessment principles. The Concept defines three types of assessment including international, national and school assessment which is implemented based on the following principles:

- practicability;
- simultaneous assessment of achievements and education opportunities;
- sustainability of the data per every period irrespective of the assessment objectives;
- validity and relevance of the accumulated data;
- transparency;
- fairness;
- ensuring mutual understanding, cooperation and improving role of assessment results in the training process.

3. According to the legislation, each education institution has to obtain from the relevant executive authority an appropriate licence to carry out their educational activities. Public higher education institutions are provided with a permanent licence by the Cabinet of Ministers, while the licence granted to certain private and municipal education institutions founded by legal or physical entity of the Republic of Azerbaijan is issued by the Ministry of Education and is valid for five years. The validity of the temporary
The licence granted to a foreign legal entity, its branches and representations, as well as to non-residents and stateless persons is recognized by the Government of Azerbaijan according to bilateral agreements co-signed by the Republic of Azerbaijan.

Quality assurance and accreditation of higher education institutions and programmes are implemented by the Accreditation Commission under the Ministry of Education. The Commission may be comprised of the Minister of Education (the Chairman of the Commission), Deputy Ministers of Education, directors and experts of the relevant department, Director of the Institute of Education, as well the representatives of the relevant ministries and organizations cooperating with higher education institutions.

Higher education institutions are accredited so as to ensure the quality of education. Accreditation attests the compliance of the educational process, materials and technical bases of education institutions, education programmes, financial resources and education infrastructure with the approved state standards and legal requirements.

As regards the programmes, the Ministry of Education defines the accreditation and attestation requirements and criteria in accordance with the state education standards and a certificate valid for five years is issued upon accreditation.