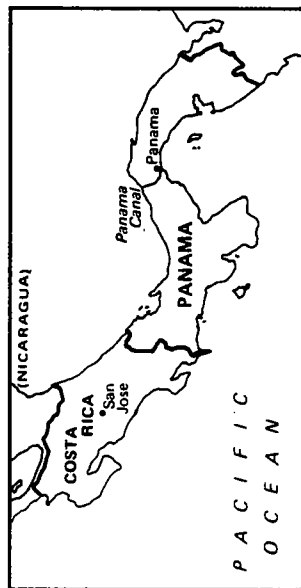


Panama

About 87 percent of Panama's population of 2,400,000 is literate. Spanish is the language of instruction. The educational system is highly centralized under the Ministry of Education, with education having priority over all other government expenditures. Education is free and compulsory for nine years from age six, including six years of primary school and three years of lower secondary education. In addition to the three-year *ciclo básico* (basic cycle), a three-year *ciclo diversificado* (diversified cycle) of secondary education is offered at both public and private schools in various tracks, following curricula

prescribed by the Ministry of Education. Dropout rates are low. Higher education is offered at the public *Universidad de Panamá* and the *Universidad Tecnológica de Panamá* (which began as the school of engineering at the *Universidad de Panamá*) and at the Catholic *Universidad Santa María La Antigua*.

Non-university higher education also is available at *escuelas* and *institutos*, including the *Escuela Náutica de Panamá* (Maritime School of Panama), which offers only a five-year program in Maritime Engineering, the *Instituto Superior de Turismo* (Higher Institute of Tourism), and the *Instituto Superior de Enseñanza*, which trains teachers for the physically and mentally disabled.



Credential Name	Entrance Requirement	Length of Program	Type of Program	Gives Access to
Level: Ciclo Diversificado (Upper Secondary Education) Following 6 years of primary and 3 years of lower secondary education				
<i>Bachillerato en</i> (letters and/or sciences, industrial, commercial, agriculture, teacher education, or home economic teaching.)	<i>Certificado de Terminación de Estudios</i> <i>Correspondientes al Primer Ciclo de</i> <i>Educación Secundaria</i>	3 years	academic/vocational	further study/ employment
Level: Educación Superior (Higher Education)				
<i>Técnico en</i> (specialization)	<i>Bachillerato</i>	1-3 years	technical/professional	employ./further study
<i>Profesor en educación primaria</i>	<i>Bachillerato</i>	3 years	teacher training	employment as primary school teacher
<i>Licenciatura/Título Profesional</i>	<i>Bachillerato</i>	4-6 years	professional	further study
<i>Doctor en Cirugía Dental</i>	<i>Bachillerato</i>	5 years	professional	further study
<i>Doctor en Medicina</i>	<i>Bachillerato</i>	6 years	professional	further study
<i>Maestría</i>	<i>Licenciatura</i>	2 years + thesis	academic	further study
<i>Doctor</i>	<i>Licenciatura</i>	3 years, examination, + thesis	academic	further study