



United Kingdom

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Principles and general objectives of education

The education and training systems of England, Wales and Northern Ireland are broadly similar. The education system in Scotland has, however, always been completely separate with its own laws and practices. Differences across the United Kingdom are particularly marked in the school systems. At the higher education and training levels, this is less so.

Education is the Government's number one priority. Overall policy and funding for education is determined by the following major government departments: the newly established Department for Children, Schools and Families, and the Department for Innovation, Universities and Skills (which have replaced the Department for Education and Skills in June 2007) in England; the Department for Children, Education, Lifelong Learning and Skills in Wales, the Scottish Executive Education Department in Scotland; and in Northern Ireland the Department of Education and the Department for Employment and Learning.

In **England**, the newly established Department for Children, Schools and Families leads work across government to ensure that all children and young people: stay healthy and safe; secure an excellent education and the highest possible standards of achievement; enjoy their childhood; make a positive contribution to society and the economy; have lives full of opportunity, free from the effects of poverty. The work of the new the Department for Innovation, Universities and Skills is based on the assumption that only an inclusive society that creates opportunities for all its people will have the strength and resource to be at the leading edge of the world economy or meet the global challenges of the twenty-first century. Among other objectives, the Department works to: improve the skills of the population throughout their working lives to create a workforce capable of sustaining economic competitiveness, and enable individuals to thrive in the global economy; build social and community cohesion through improved social justice, civic participation and economic opportunity by raising aspirations and broadening participation, progression and achievement in learning and skills.

In **Scotland**, equality of access and the opportunity for all to develop their potential are the mainstream values on which education is based. The Government believes that education must focus on the skills, talents and abilities of each individual person and should be a lifelong process. The education system should be democratically managed and respond to the needs of the community. Access to education should be freely available to all irrespective of sex, creed, ethnicity, culture, academic ability, economic or social background. The Education Department's key aims and supporting objectives are to: ensure a secure, stimulating environment for all children and young people to develop, play and learn; ensure that schools provide the highest quality of education, to enable all young people to realize their potential to the full; support wider involvement in culture and sport to enable people of all ages to



enjoy well-rounded lives; and contribute to a better physical environment through care for the physical heritage and encouraging architectural quality.

In **Northern Ireland**, schools, and the many other organizations which work with them (including the teacher education providers, and professional administrative and support services), aim to provide the best possible opportunities for pupils to learn and develop, in order to help them fulfil their potential and contribute to society and the economy. The Government's strategic aims are: (i) to motivate and help pupils to: develop spiritual and moral values; gain a sense of personal responsibility; knowledge, skills and creativity; acquire independent thought, critical and cultural awareness, self-esteem and respect for others; maintain physical and emotional well-being; appreciate the value of cooperation and team effort, to work effectively with others; develop tolerance, an understanding of society, the world of work and the wider world; and understand and experience the challenges and rewards of learning; (ii) to support each individual in acquiring, to the best of his or her ability, the skills of spoken and written communication, numeracy and working with information technology.

Current educational priorities and concerns

In **England**, the (former) Department for Education and Skills published the *Five-year Strategy for Children and Learners* in July 2004. It set out an ambitious strategy to 2009 and beyond, and sought to address historic weaknesses, putting a clear focus on children, learners, parents and employers. The strategy foresees eight key reforms: (i) guaranteed three-year budgets for every school from 2006, geared to pupil numbers, with every school also guaranteed a minimum per pupil increase each year; (ii) universal specialist schools and better specialist schools; high-performing specialist schools will have the chance to become training schools or leaders of partnerships, those without sixth forms will have new opportunities to develop sixth form provision; (iii) freedom for all secondary schools to own their land and buildings, manage their assets, employ their staff, improve their governing bodies, and forge partnerships with outside sponsors and educational foundations; (iv) more places in popular schools; (v) halving the existing inspection burden on schools and replacing the existing system of local authority 'link advisers' with a single annual review carried out by a 'school improvement partner', usually a serving headteacher from a successful school; (vi) provision of 200 independently managed academies to be open or in the pipeline by 2010; (vii) every secondary school to be refurbished or rebuilt to a modern standard over the next ten to fifteen years; (viii) 'foundation partnerships' to enable schools to group together to raise standards and to work together to take on wider responsibilities, in areas such as provision for special educational needs or hard-to-place pupils.

On 27 March 2006 the (former) Department for Education and Skills published the Further Education Reform White Paper *Raising Skills, Improving Life Chances*. Further Education is central to transforming the life chances of young people and adults and to the prosperity of the nation. This White Paper builds on the existing *14-19 Education and Skills White Paper* and *Skills Strategy* to set out a series of reforms which will raise skills and qualification levels for young people and adults to world standards. The proposed changes will offer more choice for customers, tailor services to meet individuals' needs, encourage new, innovative providers to enter the



market, and promote action to tackle poor quality combined with more autonomy for the excellent. These reforms will equip learners with high-quality skills for productive, sustainable employment and personal fulfilment; and they will ensure that employers have the right skills for their business to succeed in a competitive global economy. Together, they will enable the system to achieve its full potential as the driver for economic growth and social mobility. The White Paper was developed following extensive consultation with partners and practitioners and we must continue to work together to drive forward the reforms.

In 2001, the National Assembly for **Wales** published a comprehensive ten-year strategy document on education and lifelong learning (*The Learning Country*), which provided the basis for a distinctive agenda for education and training in Wales. The *Learning Country*'s overarching aim is to deliver better outcomes in schools, colleges, universities and work based training by: building stronger foundations for learning by radically improving early years provision and support for special needs; improving transition between primary and secondary school; developing schools' working practices to be more flexible, innovative and responsive; transforming provision for 14- to 19-year-olds; ensuring that better services are developed for young people; giving stronger support to practitioners; strengthening careers information, advice and guidance; promoting greater access to post-16 learning; tackling skills deficits; and modernizing the collaborative efforts of higher education in Wales.

In 2006, the Welsh Assembly Government consulted on progress at the mid-way point for the strategy prior to publishing *The Learning Country: Vision into Action*, the strategic plan for education, lifelong learning and skills in Wales until 2010. This document represents the second stage in the *Learning Country* programme. In addition to reviewing progress made on the targets identified, it highlights specific targets for action during the next four/five years, which include: taking forward initiatives to ensure that every child in Wales has a good start in life; continuing to improve outcomes for pupils in disadvantaged schools, or who are looked after by local authorities; and a comprehensive review of further education.

The **Northern Ireland** school system has gone through substantial changes in recent years, especially since the Education Reform (Northern Ireland) Order, 1989. After September 1996, when the new curriculum and the associated statutory assessment arrangements were set in place, the Government accepted that a period of curricular stability in statutory requirements will be appropriate to allow the benefits of the changes to come to fruition. Following a period of extensive consultation, proposals for a radical restructuring of the curriculum have been approved. The Education (Northern Ireland) Order 2006, which became law in July 2006, provides the broad legislative framework to implement the revised statutory curriculum, and to give effect to aspects of new arrangements for post-primary education. On the basis of The Education (Curriculum Minimum Content) Order (Northern Ireland) 2007, the new curriculum is being phased in from September 2007 until 2009. The revised curriculum is organized around learning areas which are broadly the same as the previous curriculum, the difference is that the law no longer sets out in as much detail what the content has to be for each subject and that there is an increased emphasis on skills. 'Personal development and mutual understanding' is being introduced as part of the curriculum from Year 1 to Year 10, in which young people will learn about



themselves and how they interact with others, and the society and world in which they live. The revised curriculum also provides for key elements such as personal health, cultural and spiritual awareness, employability and sustainable development, which challenge and inform young people's views of the world. Religious education also remains part of the curriculum.

At Key Stage 4 and post-16 pupils will have access, through the Entitlement Framework, to a broader range of courses. They will be able to choose a mix of applied/vocational courses and general/academic courses which suits them and is supported by high quality careers advice. The revised curriculum will allow teachers to cover the knowledge and understanding pupils' need within each area of the curriculum. The revised curriculum will also allow pupils to develop the skills they need for life and work in the twenty-first century. The cross-curricular skills are the key basic requirements which young people need to achieve through their education and include: communication (literacy), using mathematics (numeracy), and using Information and Communications Technology (ICT). Other skills include: thinking, problem solving and decision making; self management; working with others; managing information; being creative. Statutory assessment arrangements for Key Stages 1 to 3 are to be replaced by standardized annual reports or 'pupil profiles'. In addition, the creation of a new distinct Foundation Stage for Year 1 and Year 2 allows schools to provide an environment which is appropriate to the specific learning needs and interests of 4–6-year-olds. This also means that, in law and in guidance, the positive differences for our youngest pupils' learning can be more easily set out.

Educational administration is also the subject of significant reform following a recent major review of public administration in Northern Ireland. At the heart of the plans for modernization is the decision to create a single Education and Skills Authority (ESA), which will bring together the direct support functions currently undertaken by the five Education and Library Boards, and other government-funded organizations such as the Council for Catholic-Maintained Schools and the Northern Ireland Council for the Curriculum, Examinations and Assessment (CCEA). It is intended that the new Education and Skills Authority will also incorporate teacher support functions and act as a single employing authority for all teachers and other staff in grant-aided schools. The role of the Department of Education (DE) will change to enable it to focus better on policy development and implementation; some of its functions will transfer to the ESA. In addition, a new Education Advisory Forum (EAF), to be established under forthcoming legislation, will provide advice to the DE. These new arrangements are expected to take effect in 2008. The Department of Education has also produced a Strategic Plan for Education (2006) which identifies four strategic themes, each with its own strategic aims, e.g.: valuing education; fulfilling potential (to provide flexible learning opportunities that meet the varying needs and abilities of all young people); promoting equality and inclusion (to ensure equality of access to education and youth service provision and to facilitate parental choice as far as possible); and resourcing education (to secure the necessary funding to deliver a high quality education and youth service).

In **Scotland**, the curriculum is currently going through a national review called *Curriculum for Excellence* with the aim of developing a streamlined curriculum for 3-18-year-olds and implementing new approaches to assessment. The purposes of the curriculum are to enable all young people to become: successful learners; confident



individuals; effective contributors; responsible citizens. After a familiarization phase in 2007, the implementation of the reviewed curriculum is expected to begin in August 2008.

Curriculum for Excellence is based on seven principles which will underpin all the learning experiences of children and young people throughout their 3-18 education. These principles are: (i) *challenge and enjoyment*: children should find their learning challenging, engaging and motivating; the curriculum should encourage high aspirations and ambitions for all; (ii) *breadth*: all children should have opportunities for a broad, suitably weighted range of experiences; the curriculum should be organized so that they will learn and develop through a variety of contexts within both the classroom and other aspects of school life; (iii) *progression*: children and young people should experience continuous progression in their learning from 3 to 18 within a single curriculum framework; each stage should build upon earlier knowledge and achievements; (iv) *depth*: there should be opportunities for children to develop their full capacity for different types of thinking and learning; (v) *personalization and choice*: the curriculum should respond to individual needs and support particular aptitudes and talents and it should give each child increasing opportunities for exercising responsible personal choice as they move through their school career; (vi) *coherence*: taken as a whole, children's learning activities should combine to form a coherent experience; there should be clear links between the different aspects of children's learning, including opportunities for extended activities which draw different strands of learning together; (vii) *relevance*: children should understand the purposes of their activities; they should see the value of what they are learning and its relevance to their lives, present and future. The current curriculum areas and subjects have been grouped into eight new curriculum areas and will be refreshed and re-focused in accordance with the purposes of the curriculum, the principles underlying the curriculum, and an emphasis on cross-curricular activities. The curricular areas are: expressive arts; health and well-being; languages; mathematics; religious and moral education; sciences; social studies; and technologies. The new curriculum will include space for learning beyond subject boundaries, so learners can make connections between different areas of learning. Through cross-curricular activities, young people can develop their organizational skills, creativity, teamwork and the ability to apply their learning in new and challenging contexts.

Laws and other basic regulations concerning education

In England and Wales, the **Education Reform Act of 1988** introduced the National Curriculum for all pupils aged 5-16 in State schools. The **Education Reform (Northern Ireland) Order 1989** reflects many of the provisions of the Education Reform Act, 1988, for England and Wales. The Order established the Northern Ireland Curriculum and was amended in 1993 and in 1996. The **Education Act 2002**, which covers both England and Wales, legislates to achieve the goals set out in the White Paper *Schools Achieving Success* (September 2001). This set out the Government's plans for supporting teachers to raise standards in secondary schools, building on the success of primary schools in raising achievement in the basics. The Act's key theme is innovation; in particular, freeing schools to try out new ideas, to excel and to work with other schools to lead change in secondary education. The **Education Act 2005**, which also applies to Wales, aims to raise standards for all



children by developing a new relationship with schools and promoting greater autonomy and diversity in the education system.

The **Children Act 2004**, passed in November 2004, aims to maximize opportunities and minimize risks for all children and young people, by integrating services provided for children, and to centre these services more effectively around the needs of children, young people and families. It also broadly applies to Wales. The **Childcare Act 2006** introduces a range of provisions including: improved access to free, quality early learning and care and early childhood services for all children under 5; a new quality framework for the early years, the Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS), which will establish a framework to support children's development from birth to the August after their fifth birthday. Some of the provisions of the Childcare Act 2006 in England are also relevant to Wales.

The **Education and Inspections Act 2006**, passed in November 2006, provides the legislative basis to implement the reform proposals set out in the White Paper *Higher Standards, Better Schools for All*. The Act refers mainly to England and includes: provisions to establish new 'trust schools', which will have greater independence and freedom to run their own affairs, as they will be self-governing foundation schools funded by local authorities but supported by external charitable trusts established by universities, companies, parent groups and voluntary sector organizations; a revised curriculum entitlement for 14- to 19-year-olds, who will have access to 14 new specialized diplomas; the introduction of a more strategic role for local authorities; the introduction of a new single inspectorate (in England) for children and learners, which will continue to be known as OFSTED, but will cover all state-funded learning outside higher education.

The principal pieces of legislation governing further and higher education in England and Wales are the **Further and Higher Education Act 1992**, which took further education institutions out of local authorities (LA) control, and the **Learning and Skills Act 2000**. The **Higher Education Act 2004** also introduced changes in the student finance system, introducing variable tuition fees.

The **Special Education Needs and Disability Act (SENDA)** came into force on 1 September 2002. The SENDA makes changes to the existing framework for children with special educational needs (SEN). It also places new anti-discrimination duties on schools, colleges, universities and providers of adult education, removing the exemption of education from the Disability Discrimination Act 1975. Part II of the Act addresses the key education recommendations of the Disability Rights Task Force report, *From Exclusion to Inclusion*, published in December 1999. New duties have been placed upon local authorities (LAs) and schools including independent schools and non-maintained special schools in England and Wales and on local authorities, independent schools, self-governing schools and grant-aided schools in Scotland. The term 'additional support needs' (ASN) is now used in Scotland in preference to 'special educational needs' (SEN). The **Education (Additional Support for Learning) (Scotland) Act 2004** introduces a new framework for supporting all children and young people who, for whatever reason, require additional support, long- or short-term, in order to help them make the most of their education.



The **Children (Northern Ireland) Order** became law on 15 March 1995 and its main provisions came into operation on 4 November 1996. The Order, which is jointly promoted by the Department of Health and Social Services and the Office of Law Reform, follows the introduction of the **Children Act 1989** in England and Wales and broadly replicates it. It is the most comprehensive piece of legislation ever enacted in Northern Ireland in relation to children. It reforms and brings together much of the law relating to the care, upbringing and protection of children, and it fundamentally changes the balance between parental care and State intervention. It is the belief of the legislators that children are generally best looked after within the family unit. The **Education (Northern Ireland) Order 2006**, which became law in July 2006, provides the broad legislative framework to implement the revised statutory curriculum, and to give effect to aspects of new arrangements for post-primary education. The new curriculum is being phased in from September 2007 on the basis of **The Education (Curriculum Minimum Content) Order (Northern Ireland) 2007**.

Education legislation for Scotland is a distinctive set of Acts pertinent to Scotland and different from that for England and Wales. The most important law is the **Education (Scotland) Act, 1980**, and the related amendments. In March 1992, the Government enacted the **Further and Higher Education (Scotland) Act, 1992**, which made fundamental changes in the organization of post-school education in Scotland. It also created a separate Scottish Higher Education Funding Council (SHEFC) and, from 1 July 1999, the Scottish Further Education Funding Council (SFEFC). In 2005 the **Further and Higher Education (Scotland) Act 2005** dissolved SFEFC and SHEFC and created a new Scottish Funding Council (SFC), which is now responsible for funding colleges and universities. The **Local Government (Scotland) Act 1994** makes provision with respect to local government and the functions of local authorities; it also introduces amendments in relation to local government finance, local authority accounts and the records of local authorities. The **Standards in Scotland's Schools etc. Act 2000** requires education authorities to endeavour to secure improvement in the quality of the school education which is provided in the schools managed by them. The Act set out a framework for establishing national priorities in education, a system of local authority and school planning to meet related national and local objectives and a requirement to report publicly on progress in meeting these objectives.

In England, Wales and Scotland compulsory schooling takes place between the ages of 5 and 16. In Northern Ireland compulsory schooling begins at age 4 and ends at age 16.

Administration and management of the education system

Policy and overall funding for education is determined by the following major departments: the **Department for Children, Schools and Families** and the **Department for Innovation, Universities and Skills** in England (created in June 2007 replacing the former Department for Education and Skills); the **Department for Children, Education, Lifelong Learning and Skills** in Wales; the **Department of Education** and the **Department for Employment and Learning** in Northern Ireland; and the **Scottish Executive Education Department (SEED)** in Scotland. In all education institutions in the United Kingdom, from the most basic to the most



advanced level of provision, there are unique systems of self-management; this ensures that important decision making is carried out close to the level of delivery. The education system is decentralized and responsibility for different aspects of the service is shared between central government, local governments, churches and other voluntary bodies, the governing bodies of educational institutions and the teaching profession.

The **Qualifications and Curriculum Authority (QCA)** in England is a non-departmental public body formed in October 1997 by the merger of the School Curriculum and Assessment Authority and the National Council for Vocational Qualifications. The QCA's function is to promote quality and coherence in education and training, from pre-school to higher vocational levels, and to give advice on all matters affecting the school curriculum, pupil assessment and publicly funded qualifications offered in schools, colleges and workplaces (excepting higher education). Prior to April 2006, the Qualifications, Curriculum and Assessment Authority for Wales (ACCAC, which was an Assembly-Sponsored Public Body accountable to the National Assembly for Wales), was responsible for matters pertaining to the curriculum, assessment and qualifications in Wales. In April 2006, ACCAC's responsibilities became those of the **Qualifications and Curriculum Group** of the Department for Children, Education, Lifelong Learning and Skills. The main functions of the Group include: advising the Welsh Assembly Government on matters relating to the curriculum, assessment and qualifications in schools; ensuring quality and standards in external general and vocational qualifications; keeping under review all aspects of the school curriculum and statutory assessment arrangements for maintained schools. The Group is also responsible for the Credit and Qualifications Framework for Wales, the modernization of examinations, and the Welsh Baccalaureate qualification. The **Northern Ireland Council for the Curriculum, Examinations and Assessment (CCEA)** is a non-departmental public body established in April 1994. The main functions of the Council include: keeping under review all aspects of the curriculum, examinations and assessment; giving advice to the Department of Education about the curriculum, assessment, examinations and external qualifications; conducting and moderating examinations and assessment, ensuring that standards are equivalent in these areas to other parts of the United Kingdom. The **Scottish Qualifications Authority (SQA)** is a statutory body which has responsibility for national qualifications at all levels (below degree level) offered in schools, colleges and some higher education institutions in Scotland. It also approves education and training establishments which offer courses leading to its qualifications. The SQA took over these functions from the Scottish Examination Board and the Scottish Vocational Education Council in April 1997.

The **Inspectorate for Children and Learners** (previously the Office for Standards in Education, OFSTED) in England is the non-ministerial government department which is responsible for the inspection and regulation of childcare, schools, colleges, children's services, teacher training and youth work. OFSTED has also recently taken on the responsibilities of the former non-departmental public body the Adult Learning Inspectorate, which was, until April 2007, responsible for the inspection of: further education for people aged 19 or over; employer-based training; and government-supported training for young people and adults. **Her Majesty's Inspectorate for Education and Training** in Wales performs similar functions to OFSTED in England, whilst in Northern Ireland the **Education and Training**



Inspectorate is the sole body with responsibility for the inspection of education and training. **Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Education** (HMIE) in Scotland promotes improvements in quality of experience, achievements and standards for all learners in the Scottish education system. HMIE carries out evaluations of the work of pre-school and community learning settings, schools, colleges, teacher education and local authority services.

In England, Wales and Scotland, most schools are funded by their **local authorities** (LAs), which receive their financial resources via grants from the central government and from revenue raised by the local authority itself. In England and Wales all LA-maintained schools manage their own budgets. LAs allocate funds to schools based on a formula which is largely driven by pupil numbers. Each LA-maintained school has a governing body comprising LA appointed governors, elected teacher and parent governors, and people from the local community. The school governing body is responsible for overseeing spending and most aspects of staffing, including appointments and dismissals. Governors take all the decisions about school management, employ and pay staff, and are responsible for school premises, including the buying or selling of land. In England there are nine **Government Offices for the Regions**, each headed by a regional director, which are responsible for managing and delivering some government plans and programmes within the field of education and skills. Furthermore, each LA has a local **school organization committee** (SOC). This SOC is independent of the local authority; its role is to consider all school organization proposals, for example, changes to school pupil numbers or buildings/facilities and the opening or closing of schools. SOCs have members representing the LA, the Church of England and Roman Catholic dioceses, the Learning and Skills Council and school governors. In addition, in accordance with the Education Act 2002, groups of schools may also join together to form a **company**. This is to allow them to procure goods and services collectively and therefore benefit from economies of scale. School companies may also provide services or sell their expertise to other schools.

In England, sixth-form colleges are funded by the **Learning and Skills Council** (which replaced the Further Education Funding Council for England). The National Council for Education and Training for Wales (ELWa) was established under the Learning and Skills Act 2000. In April 2001, the National Council-ELWa took over the majority of the functions of the four Training and Enterprise Councils and the Further Education Funding Council for Wales. It assumed responsibility for funding, planning and promoting all post-16 education and training with the exception of higher education. The National Council-ELWa had responsibility for further education, private and voluntary sector training provision, adult continuing education and, with effect from April 2002, sixth form provision. The responsibilities of ELWa were taken over by the Welsh Assembly Government's Department for Children, Education, Lifelong Learning and Skills on 1 April 2006. In Scotland, there are no separate sixth-form colleges as this is already provided for in all six-year secondary schools. Financing for vocational training of 16- to 24-year-olds is the responsibility of the **Ministry for Enterprise and Lifelong Learning**.

In England and Wales, under the School Standards and Framework Act of 1998, the status of all existing maintained schools has changed. From September



1999, the grant-maintained category no longer exists and has been replaced by community, voluntary and foundation.

Following the Local Government (Scotland) Act, 1994, a new structure of single-tier local authorities came into being on 1 April 1996. The former fifty-three district and nine regional councils have been replaced by twenty-nine new entities, with the former three island councils remaining the same, making thirty-two local (district) authorities in all. Most have an Education Committee and Director of Education or equivalent. The Director of Education will usually head a number of officers with special responsibilities. The LA is responsible for the employment of teachers and other staff. It is also free to decide how schools will be staffed subject to the national contractual agreements with teachers' unions and others. The Education Directorate in a LA has a number of key responsibilities in supporting the policies and decisions of the Education Committee. These are likely to include: strategic planning; policy preparation; policy implementation; quality assurance; accountability, support and development; monitoring, evaluation and review.

In Scotland, key objectives for each LA are: (i) to see that adequate and efficient school education is provided for its area, including provision of compulsory education for children of school age (from age 5 to 16); (ii) to assess the special educational needs of children and provide special help when appropriate; (iii) to provide school pupils with adequate facilities for physical education and training and for social, cultural and other recreational activities; and (iv) to provide voluntary part-time and full-time courses of instruction for persons over school age. School education is integrated, progresses from stage to stage and is appropriate to the needs of pupils taking into account their age, ability and aptitude. Most Scottish schools have school boards which are made up of elected parents and staff members, as well as others from the community served by the school. The school boards promote contact between parents, the school and the community. They are also involved in the appointment of senior staff and the use of the school premises by the local community.

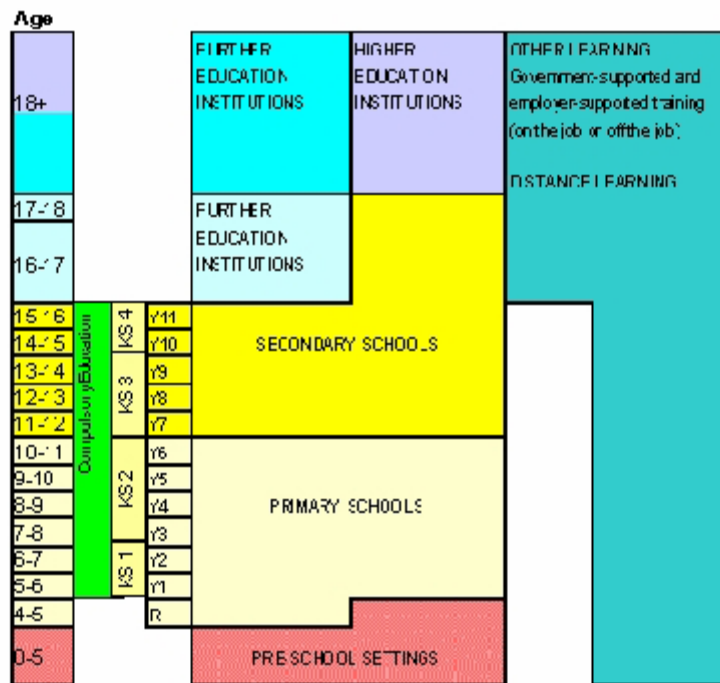
In Northern Ireland most schools are financed from public funds through the five **Education and Library Boards**. There are also voluntary grammar and grant-maintained integrated schools which are financed by the Government through the Department of Education. Schools of all types are managed by a governing body made up of elected teachers, parents and people from the local community. As mentioned, a single **Education and Skills Authority** (ESA) will bring together the direct support functions currently undertaken by the five Boards. The new Authority will also incorporate teacher support functions and act as a single employing authority for all teachers and other staff in grant-aided schools. The main responsibilities of the Department for Employment and Learning include: further and higher education; vocational training; employment services; employment law and labour relations; student support and postgraduate awards; and training grants.

For higher education, the **Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education** (QAA), which was set up in 1997, provides an integrated quality assurance service for all the United Kingdom higher education institutions. The Agency is an independent body, funded by subscriptions from universities and colleges of higher education and through contracts with the higher education funding bodies. In England and Wales,

funding for teaching and research in higher education is delivered through their respective **Higher Education Funding Councils**. Similar functions are performed by the Department for Employment and Learning in Northern Ireland, and by the **Scottish Higher Education Funding Council** in Scotland. The **Office for Science and Innovation** (formerly the Office for Science and Technology) within the Department for Trade and Industry, also funds university research and postgraduate training throughout the United Kingdom through eight Research Councils. The **Higher Education Statistics Agency** collects and publishes financial information from universities and colleges in the United Kingdom.

Structure and organization of the education system

United Kingdom: structure of the education system



Pre-school education

Pre-school provision is made either through the local authorities or by independent bodies. In addition to nursery schools and nursery classes in primary schools, local authorities may provide day nurseries, which accept children below the age of 2 years. There are also nursery schools and pre-school playgroups organized by voluntary or private providers. In Northern Ireland, nursery education is provided in nursery schools and in nursery classes attached to primary schools. From April 1999, local authorities had a duty to secure and find sufficient, at least part-time, nursery education places in their area for children below compulsory school age. Nursery schools cater to children aged between 3 and 5 years in England, Wales and Scotland, and between 2 and 4 years in Northern Ireland.



Primary education

Compulsory education begins at age 5 in England, Wales and Scotland and at age 4 in Northern Ireland. There is little or no specialist subject teaching, but great emphasis on literacy and numeracy in early years. At age 7 many children move to junior schools. The usual age for transfer to secondary schools is 11 years in England, Wales and Northern Ireland and 12 years in Scotland, though in some areas pupils attend a first school for three or four years, followed by a middle school for a similar period before moving to a high school.

Secondary education

Compulsory education ends at age 16, though many pupils stay on beyond the minimum leaving age. About 90% of state secondary school pupils in England, Wales and Scotland go to comprehensive schools (96% in Scotland), which provide a wide range of secondary education for most children of all abilities in the 11-18 age range (12-18 in Scotland). A few comprehensive schools only cover the 11-14 and 14-18 age ranges. At age 16 pupils in England and Wales may transfer to sixth-form colleges or tertiary colleges. In Northern Ireland, secondary education normally begins when pupils reach the age of 11. There are two main types of school, grammar and secondary. Grammar schools provide a range of courses for pupils between 11 and 18 years of age, while secondary schools provide a similar range of courses for the 11-16 age group, although some secondary schools offer opportunities for those aged 16+.

In England, Wales and Northern Ireland, the General Certificate of Secondary Education (GCSE) was introduced in 1988, replacing the GCE O-level and the Certificate of Secondary Education examinations, and serves as the principal examination taken by secondary school pupils at 16+. GCE A-level examinations are normally taken following the GCSE and after two further years of study, usually in Form VI of secondary schools, tertiary colleges or colleges of further education. The National Qualifications Framework (NQF) sets out the levels (currently eight) at which qualifications are recognized: GCSEs Grades D-G are at level 1, GCSEs Grades A*-C at level 2, and A-levels at level 3.

In Scotland, at the end of four years of lower secondary education students are eligible to sit their first National Qualifications examinations, either Standard Grade or the newer Intermediate levels 1 and 2 of the National Qualifications (General and Credit Standard Grade, respectively). Their achievements are recorded on the Scottish Qualifications Certificate (SQC, formerly the Scottish Certificate of Education). The Higher level of SQC, usually taken in the fifth year of (upper) secondary education at about age 17, is the target of many students who aim to enter professions or to go on to higher education. The Certificate of Sixth-Year Studies was available for students with a pass at Higher level in their fifth year and continuing their studies for another year; it has been replaced by the Advanced Higher level.

Post-school education takes place at universities, further and higher education institutions, colleges of technology, etc. In England, Wales and Northern Ireland other education is provided in the form of courses leading to qualifications of a standard higher than the GCE A-level, e.g. certificates, diplomas and foundation degrees, at



levels C (certificate) and I (intermediate) of the Framework for Higher Education Qualifications. Degree titles vary according to the practice of each university. In England, Wales and Northern Ireland, the most common titles for a first degree are Bachelor of Arts (B.A.) or Bachelor of Science (B.Sc.) and for a second degree Master of Arts (M.A.), Master of Science (M.Sc.), and Doctor of Philosophy (Ph.D.). In England and Wales, first-degree courses are mainly full-time and usually last three years. Master's degrees usually require a minimum of one year of full-time study (more commonly, two years) or the part-time equivalent. The minimum time for completing a doctorate is normally three years. In Scotland, degrees are awarded for the successful completion of a three-year full-time course at an appropriate level (an ordinary degree) or a four-year course at a more specialized and demanding level (an honours degree). Degrees in medicine, dentistry, architecture, veterinary sciences and in some other areas can take up to six years. In the four oldest universities, first degrees in the arts, humanities and languages are called Master of Arts. Other higher education institutions in Scotland offer first degrees with the title of bachelor. Post-graduate courses include both one-year post-graduate diplomas and one- or two-year courses leading to a master's degree. For admission to a master's degree, a first degree is normally required as an entrance requirement. Master's degrees may lead to research degrees. Research degrees (M.Phil., Ph.D.) are available in almost every higher education institution. The M.Phil. degree requires one or two years of full-time research, the Ph.D. at least three years.

In the United Kingdom, primary and secondary schools are usually open for 190 days in each school year.

The financing of education

In England, the departments responsible for education provide funds to the various statutory and non-statutory agencies for education including the Learning and Skills Council (for post-16 education) and the Higher Education Funding Council for England. The departments also provide funds to local authorities for education services in the local area. In addition, they make grants available to local authorities to meet specific government education priorities. All central government funding for education in Wales is provided through the National Assembly for Wales. The Assembly decides the sums to be spent on its various areas of activity, including education, and distributes resources to local authorities, and the Higher Education Funding Council for Wales. In Northern Ireland, the Department of Education is responsible for allocating, monitoring and accounting for all resource issues relating to schools and the Youth Service. The Department's Allocations, Finance and Governance Unit is responsible for the budget allocations to the five Education and Library Boards (ELBs) which have statutory responsibility for the provision of services, and for monitoring related expenditure. Relevant expenditure includes the salaries of teachers in schools. The Department for Employment and Learning is responsible for the funding of further and higher education. The Scottish Executive supports school education and community learning and development through the grant which it pays annually to local authorities. The actual proportion allocated by the local authorities to education is their own responsibility. Much day-to-day responsibility for spending is delegated by education authorities to schools themselves. The Scottish Executive funds colleges and higher education institutions through the Scottish Funding Council. Fees from students also contribute to the



funding of colleges and higher education institutions. Colleges and higher education institutions also have income from services they provide in such fields as training, research and specialist advice.

Most publicly financed school education is the responsibility of local authorities (LAs). In England and Wales, the system of LA-maintained and grant-maintained schools has been replaced, from September 1999, by a new framework of community, voluntary and foundation schools, and a new system of funding has been introduced. Under this system, all state schools are funded by their LAs. Funding is allocated on the basis of a largely pupil-led formula, the details of which will be for the LA to determine. Current costs include salaries, running costs and teaching materials, but direct school management is increasingly giving responsibility for much of this expenditure to schools. Maintained schools receive funding from local government, with most receiving 100% funding for both recurrent expenditure (revenue funding) and capital expenditure. The exception is voluntary aided schools which receive 100% revenue funding for recurrent costs, but a small proportion of capital expenditure is the responsibility of the founding body, usually a religious organization. In England, new school funding arrangements were introduced in April 2006. As a result, local authorities receive this funding from two principal sources: general education funding from central government in the form of the Dedicated Schools Grant (DSG), which provides the majority of funding; and a range of specific grants for schools. The Welsh Assembly Government provides around 80% of funding to local authorities in the form of the Revenue Support Grant (RSG) and redistributed national non-domestic rates. The other 20% of local authority funding is raised locally in the form of council tax which is set by each authority as part of its annual budget setting process.

In Northern Ireland, all grant-aided schools have their recurrent costs fully funded by the Department of Education (DE), either direct from the DE or through the Education and Library Boards (ELBs). The DE also provides 100% grant-aid for capital costs for controlled schools which are owned by the ELBs, and for grant-maintained integrated schools (GMI schools), which are privately owned. The DE also provides 100% funding for Catholic-maintained schools and voluntary grammar schools which have entered into capital funding agreements under which the DE appoints one or more representatives to the Board of Governors. All other maintained schools and voluntary grammar schools, with very limited exceptions, are grant-aided, for capital costs, by up to 85% by the DE. The total amount available from the DE for school recurrent funding comprises three elements: (i) centrally held resources to cover expenditure for services that are delivered centrally and are the responsibility of the ELB to provide (such as home to school transport, school meals, curriculum advisory and support services, school library services); (ii) resources held at centre which include centrally held funds against which schools can make a call (such as replacement teacher cover, contingency and curriculum reserve funds, along with various initiatives which may be put in place, either by the DE or individual ELBs); (iii) local management of schools delegated funding allocated to school budgets.

Education is one of the most expensive services provided by local authorities in Scotland, absorbing just over half of their annual expenditure. Individual schools are responsible for managing their own expenditure to a considerable extent (at least 80%). These arrangements apply to the appointment of some staff additional to the



school's normal complement (who are paid by the local authority), running costs, teaching materials and a number of other items. Capital expenditure on new buildings, modernization projects and equipment is financed by the education authorities within broad capital expenditure limits laid down annually by Government. These limits cover all local authority capital programmes.

In England, funding for teaching and research in higher education is delivered through the Higher Education Funding Council for England (HEFCE) by means of a block grant. Much of the funding for teaching and research, including that for capital, is allocated to higher education institutions on a formula basis, although some funding is held centrally by HEFCE for sector wide programmes, such as subscriptions, and for special initiatives. In addition to funding from HEFCE, the Office for Science and Innovation (formerly the Office for Science and Technology) within the Department for Trade and Industry, also funds university research and postgraduate training throughout the United Kingdom through eight Research Councils. A number of higher education institutions engage in teacher training, and funding for this aspect of their work is provided by the Teacher Training Agency (now the Teacher and Development Agency for schools) which was set up by the Government in 1994 for this purpose.

The Higher Education Act 2004 takes forward the Government's proposals to introduce variable deferred fees in England for full-time undergraduate students commencing their courses from 2006/07. From 2006/07 full-time undergraduates in England and Northern Ireland have not have to pay tuition fees in advance. Instead these students are able to take out a loan for fees (up to £3,000 per year), repayable only when they are earning more than £15,000, and then in line with income and at no real rate of interest (and written off after 25 years). The measure is backed by a student support package of grants and bursaries focusing on the less well off. Grants of up to £2,700 are available as well as a minimum bursary of £300. Variable tuition fees will bring new income into the higher education sector – an extra £1.35 billion per year – and are independent of government decisions about public spending priorities. There is no evidence to indicate that tuition fee contributions have deterred students from entering higher education and there has been no change in the socio-economic background of applicants.

In Northern Ireland the main government department for higher and further education is the Department for Employment and Learning, which funds institutions directly by means of a block grant. In Wales the National Assembly for Wales has responsibility for higher education. The Assembly does not have primary legislative powers and the United Kingdom Government continues to make primary legislation on an England and Wales basis. On the whole therefore, higher education in Wales is subject to the same legislative framework as in England, however there are differences in approach and detail which reflect the specific circumstances in Wales – for example, the Welsh Assembly Government is committed to not introducing variable fees before 2007/08 and has made no decisions beyond that. Funding for teaching and research in higher education is distributed by the Higher Education Funding Council for Wales which is an Assembly Sponsored Public Body. Funding is largely allocated on a formula basis, but is distributed to institutions as a block grant.

In 2005 the Scottish Higher Education Funding Council has merged with the Scottish Further Education Funding Council to form the Scottish Further and Higher



Education Funding Council, known as the Scottish Funding Council (SFC). The Scottish Executive is the devolved government in Scotland and is responsible to the Scottish Parliament for a wide range of policy areas, including education. The Scottish Executive makes decisions on the level of funding for teaching and research for Scottish higher education institutions and further education colleges. The Scottish Executive's funds for higher education institutions are administered via SFC. SFC has a responsibility to ensure that public funds for higher education provision are spent effectively. Much of the funding for teaching and research is allocated to higher education institutions on a formula basis. The formula used to determine research funding is based on a common system of assessment used by all of the United Kingdom's funding bodies.

According to Eurostat, the total public expenditure on education in the United Kingdom represented 5.29% of GDP in 2004.

The educational process

Pre-primary education

Pre-school provision is made either through local authorities or by independent bodies. In addition to nursery schools and nursery classes in primary schools, local authorities may also provide day nurseries, which accept children below the age of 2 years. There are also nursery schools and pre-school playgroups organized by voluntary and private providers.

The School Standards and Framework Act 1998 in **England** and **Wales** has imposed a new statutory duty on LAs to ensure the provision of pre-school education in their area. Initially, the Government set the target of providing a good-quality, free part-time place for all 4-year-olds whose parents wanted it. Eligibility for free places was extended to 3-year-olds from April 2004. In **Northern Ireland** there is no statutory requirement for the provision of nursery education. However, since 2003/04 free part-time places have been available for all children in their immediate pre-school year whose parents want them. Publicly-funded early years education is being expanded and developed by co-operation with the private and voluntary sectors, which receive government funding subject to meeting certain conditions and requirements. In **Scotland**, free, part time pre-school education is available for all 3- and 4-year-olds. LAs provide pre-school education through their education departments in a range of settings such as nursery classes within primary schools, nursery schools and children's centres.

In September 2000, the foundation stage of education, which is based on six key areas of learning known as the 'early learning goals' was introduced in **England**. This is a distinct stage of education for children from the age of 3 until the end of the primary school reception class (usually aged 5), and has now become a statutory part of the National Curriculum under the Education Act 2002. During the foundation stage, the overwhelming majority of children attend some form of pre-school or nursery education, either full- or part-time. The early learning goals, now more commonly referred to as 'areas of learning', form an integral part of the foundation stage and cover the following six areas of development: (i) personal, social and



emotional development, which is broken down into ‘dispositions and attitudes’, ‘social development’ and ‘emotional development’; (ii) communication, language and literacy, combining ‘language for communication and thinking’, ‘linking sounds and letters’, ‘reading’ and ‘writing’; (iii) mathematical development which is broken down into ‘numbers as labels and for counting’, ‘calculating’ and ‘shape, space and measures’; (iv) knowledge and understanding of the world; (v) physical development; (vi) creative development). The time to be spent on each area of learning is not prescribed. The headteacher and staff decide on the timetable, as well as on matters such as classroom organization.

In August 2004, the, then, Qualifications, Curriculum and Assessment Authority for **Wales** published a draft framework for the foundation phase. This built on existing curricular guidance and outlined a system of learning based on well-structured play, practical activity and investigation. It also included a system of continuous assessment, based on assessment through observation. A pilot project for the foundation phase began in September 2004. The phased introduction of the statutory foundation phase is expected to begin in September 2008 (with 3- to 5-year-olds) and to be completed by 2010/11 (for 3- to 7-year-olds). The six key areas of learning or areas of experience (known as the desirable learning outcomes) which form the current basis of curricular guidance for Welsh pre-school education are very similar to the current areas of development for the foundation stage prescribed in England. However, in Wales, this guidance is non-statutory. Under proposals to introduce a new statutory foundation phase of education for 3- to 7-year-olds, the pre-school curriculum and the curriculum for Key Stage 1, (5- to 7-year-olds) will be reformed. The foundation phase will contain seven areas of learning: personal and social development and well-being; language, literacy and communication; mathematical development; bilingualism and multicultural understanding; knowledge and understanding of the world; physical development; creative development.

In **Northern Ireland**, in June 2004 the Department of Education launched a consultation to review pre-school education. Following the review, the Department has confirmed that the focus of future early years provision in Northern Ireland will be integrated, family-friendly services and early years support (from birth to 4 years of age). Although there is no prescribed curriculum for pre-school education, providers receiving government funding are expected to follow curriculum guidance issued by the Northern Ireland Council for the Curriculum, Examinations and Assessment. This curricular guidance for pre-school education was originally produced in 1997, and revised in 2006 to provide for progression to the new foundation stage of education (e.g. the first two years of primary education). The revised pre-school curricular guidance states that all children should have the opportunity to follow a pre-school curriculum that enables them to make appropriate progress in learning and to achieve their full potential. It is expected that children should experience the pre-school curriculum in a holistic and engaging way, with opportunities for play, and that they will use a range of ICT resources to motivate them and enhance their learning across the following six areas: the arts; personal, social and emotional development; physical development and movement; language development; early mathematical experiences; the world around us. As in England and Wales, the time to be spent on each area of the curriculum is not prescribed.



In **Scotland**, a Curriculum Framework for children aged 3-5 was published in 1999 by the Scottish Consultative Council on the Curriculum (now Learning and Teaching Scotland). It deals with key aspects of children's development and learning and offers guidance on effective learning, staff interaction with children, partnership with parents, appropriate provision for children with additional support needs, equal opportunities and effective transition to the primary school. In pre-school education centres, there are many opportunities for children to listen and talk, explain their ideas and clarify their thinking, acquire new knowledge and learn to relate to others. Role play and activities involving art and music develop their expressive skills. Physical play on large equipment, energetic games and activities manipulating smaller tools and materials enable them to develop the skills of movement and body control. Observing of natural objects and investigating their environment helps to build their understanding of the world. Mixing with other children, with whom they have to learn to cooperate during play, helps them to develop a sense of responsibility and establish new relationships. Eligible children are entitled to 412 and half hours of funded pre-school education over the school, equivalent to twelve and half hours per week over the year (thirty-three weeks).

According to the Office for National Statistics, in January 2005 a total of 1,152,400 3- and 4-year-olds were enrolled in early years' education in England, 96,460 in Scotland, 53,200 in Wales, and 32,000 in Northern Ireland.

Primary education

The basic principle underlying school education in England, Wales and Northern Ireland is that it should provide a balanced and broadly based curriculum which is suitable to a child's age, ability, aptitude and to any special educational needs (SEN) which he/she may have. Section 78 of the Education Act 2002 (England and Wales) defines a balanced and broadly based curriculum as one which: promotes the spiritual, moral, cultural, mental and physical development of pupils at the school and of society; and prepares pupils for the opportunities, responsibilities and experiences of later life. The curriculum is defined in a very similar way under the Education (Northern Ireland) Order 2006. The purpose of primary schooling in Scotland is to provide a broad basic education, concentrating on enabling children to read, write and count, but also introducing them to ways of learning about and understanding their environment, helping them to express themselves through art, music, drama and physical activity and developing their awareness of religious, moral and social values and acceptable behaviour. Increasingly, pupils are also learning about the impact of technology on society and use computers from an early stage.

The National Curriculum was introduced into schools in **England and Wales** in 1988. The curriculum sets out what pupils should study, what they should be taught and the standards that they should achieve. The National Curriculum, which is statutory in England and Wales, comprises four Key Stages and ten statutory subjects (eleven in Wales): Key Stage 1: up to age 7; Key Stage 2: age 7-11; Key Stage 3: age 11-14 (pre-GCSE); Key Stage 4: age 14-16 (preparation for GCSE and equivalent vocational qualifications). The primary curriculum requirements in England have been relaxed from September 1998

Key Stages 1 and 2 are the primary phase. Key Stages 3 and 4 constitute the secondary phase. In England there are three core subjects: English, mathematics and science. The foundation subjects include: design and technology, ICT, history, geography, music, art and design, physical education and a modern foreign language (in Key Stages 3 and 4).

In **England**, all children in Key Stages 1-3 must study the first nine of these subjects. In Key Stage 3 they must also study a modern foreign language. Pupils aged 14-16 must study the core subjects, technology, a modern foreign language and physical education, plus either history or geography or short courses in both. From September 1998 secondary schools have the flexibility to omit certain parts of the National Curriculum or alter parts of it for individual pupils at Key Stage 4 to offer those pupils work-related learning programmes.

The National Curriculum and the school curriculum in England

Subjects	Primary stage		Secondary stage	
	Key Stage 1 Years 1–2	Key Stage 2 Years 3–6	Key Stage 3 Years 7–9	Key Stage 4 Years 10–11
<u>National Curriculum core subjects:</u>				
English language	*	*	*	*
Mathematics	*	*	*	**
Science	*	*	*	**
<u>National Curriculum non-core foundation subjects:</u>				
Design and technology	*	*	*	**
Information and communication technology	*	*	*	*
History	*	*	*	
Geography	*	*	*	
Modern foreign languages			*	**
Art and design	*	*	*	
Music	*	*	*	
Physical education	*	*	*	**
Citizenship			***	***

Sources: National Curriculum for England online [www.nc.uk.net/home.html] and The Qualifications and Curriculum Authority [www.qca.org.uk], March 2002. (*) Programmes of study statutory from August 2000. (**) Programmes of study statutory from August 2001. (***) Programmes of study statutory from August 2002.

Notes:

All National Curriculum subjects provide opportunities to promote pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. Explicit opportunities to promote pupils' development in these areas are provided in religious education and the non-statutory framework for personal, social and health education (PSHE) and citizenship at Key Stages 1 and 2. A significant contribution is also made by school ethos, effective relationships throughout the school, collective worship, and other curriculum activities.



Schools have some discretion over when to start teaching the key stage programme of study. The law requires that they should be taught during the key stage, not that they be introduced at a particular time. The Government believes that two hours of physical activity a week, including the National Curriculum for physical education and extra-curricular activities, should be an aspiration for all schools. This applies throughout all key stages. Under the Education Act 1996 schools must provide religious education for all registered pupils, although parents can choose to withdraw their children. Secondary schools must provide sex education for their pupils. All schools must provide a programme of careers education for pupils during Year 9, 10 and 11 and an appropriate range of career information. The recommended annual minimum instructional time (including religious education) in England and Wales consists of 798 hours (or 21 weekly hours over 38 weeks) for pupils aged 5 to 7, and 893 hours (or 23.5 weekly hours over 38 weeks) for pupils aged 8 to 11.

According to a review of primary school education in England “The total teaching time per week varies markedly from school to school. This feature inevitably begs the question of what is the relationship between the amount of taught time and the quality and standards of pupils’ work. The overall number of lesson hours is not prescribed, although guidance is given. It is suggested that governing bodies of all maintained schools should take as a general rule to good practice: 21 hours for pupils aged five to seven; 23.5 hours for pupils aged eight to eleven. Data provided by schools about the amount of taught time per week is not always based on immediately comparable data, as schools interpret the phrase ‘taught time’ in a number of different ways. There is often uncertainty about what should be included or excluded in the statistics: for example, acts of worship, registration time, movement between classes, and so on. [...] Almost one in five schools at Key Stage 1 and three-fifths of the schools at Key Stage 2 teach less than the suggested number of hours each week. [...] In all of the primary schools surveyed, the reported time spent on teaching the core subjects averaged 57 per cent of the taught time, but varied from 40 per cent to 75 per cent. Schools found it particularly difficult to define how much time was spent teaching English; often they felt that much of the work in other subjects was contributing directly to progress in English. During Key Stage 2, two-thirds of schools spent between 4.5 and 6.0 hours on English; between 4.0 and 5.1 hours on mathematics; and between 2.6 and 3.6 hours on science.” (OFSTED, 1999).

In **Wales**, the National Curriculum at Key Stages 1-3 is made up of core subjects (English, Welsh, mathematics and science) and the following foundation subjects: design and technology plus information technology, history, geography, music, art and physical education. A modern foreign language is added from the age of 11. The National Curriculum programmes of study for Welsh, history, geography, art and music are specific to Wales. Welsh is taught mainly as a first language in Welsh speaking schools, and mainly as a second language in non-Welsh speaking schools. Baseline assessment has been introduced in Wales from September 1999.

At Key Stage 4, the National Curriculum comprises five subjects: English, Welsh, mathematics, science and physical education. This allows pupils to choose additional subjects and courses for GCSE or vocational qualifications. All pupils must study religious education, and schools are required to provide some personal, social, health and safety education, with careers and sex education added in secondary schools. Pupils aged 14-16 in Wales must study English, mathematics, science and



Welsh (if they are in a Welsh-speaking school). From September 1999, pupils aged 14-16 in non-Welsh-speaking schools have to study Welsh.

The school curriculum in Wales

Subjects	Primary stage		Secondary stage	
	Key Stage 1 Years 1–2	Key Stage 2 Years 3–6	Key Stage 3 Years 7–9	Key Stage 4 Years 10–11
<u>Statutory subjects:</u>				
English language	x(*)	x	x	x
Welsh language(**)	x	x	x	x
Mathematics	x	x	x	x
Science(***)	x	x	x	x
Design and technology	x	x	x	
Information technology	x	x	x	
History	x	x	x	
Geography	x	x	x	
Modern foreign languages			x	
Art	x	x	x	
Music	x	x	x	
Physical education	x	x	x	x
<u>Other statutory requirements:</u>				
Religious education	x	x	x	x
Sex education	x	x	x	x
Career education and guidance				x
<u>Non-statutory elements:</u>				
Personal and social education	x	x	x	x
Work related education				x

Source: Qualifications, Curriculum and Assessment Authority for Wales, 1999. (*) There is no statutory requirement in Welsh-speaking schools. (**) Refers to the models for Welsh and Welsh second language. (***) In Key Stage 4, Science (Double) or Science (Single).

In **England**, six 'key skills' are embedded in the National Curriculum for Key Stages 1 and 2. These are: communication, application of number, information technology, working with others, improving own learning and performance, and problem-solving, and have been identified as the skills needed to succeed in work, education and everyday life. The 'thinking skills' of information processing, reasoning, enquiry, creative thinking, and evaluation, are also embedded in the National Curriculum. They complement the key skills and teaching of these is intended to enable children to 'learn how to learn'. In **Wales**, in addition to the core subjects and foundation subjects there are 'common requirements' that apply across all subjects in the National Curriculum. These include a statement of access for all students, including those with special educational needs and those who are gifted and/or talented. This statement of access is intended to provide teachers with the flexibility, where appropriate, to select curricular content from earlier or later key stage programmes of study to meet individual needs. The other common requirements are communication skills, mathematical skills, information technology skills, problem-solving and creative



skills, personal and social education, and the Wales-specific aspects of the curriculum. It is left to teachers to provide opportunities for pupils to have access to the common requirements across the National Curriculum, and to determine the appropriate number and range of such opportunities for individual pupils.

In **Scotland**, the curriculum is not determined by statute or legislation, but by advice from the Scottish Executive Education Department (SEED). The aim of the curriculum is to provide breadth, balance, coherence and progression and, to attain this, the curriculum has been divided into a number of broad curricular areas, with an appropriate balance of time to be spent on each area. Progression through the curriculum is integrated with assessment as it is recognized that pupils learn at different rates. The curricular areas are: language, mathematics, environmental studies, expressive arts, religious and moral education, and flexible studies. Learning and Teaching Scotland covers all matters relating to the curriculum in the pre-school, primary and secondary education sectors. This national public body sponsored by the SEED was formed on July 2000 from the merger of the Scottish Consultative Council on the Curriculum and the Scottish Council for Educational Technology (SCET).

In general terms, the purpose of primary schooling is to provide a broad basic education. Through literacy and numeracy, it introduces pupils to ways of examining and understanding their environment. It helps them to express themselves through art, music, and physical activity, and develops their awareness of religious, moral and social values.

The class teacher is expected to be able to teach all aspects of the curriculum, but in practice may well receive support from visiting teachers of art, drama, music and physical education. All primary school classes are co-educational and cover the full range of abilities. Selection or streaming by ability is rare. The approach to teaching reflects this with a mixture of whole-class, group and individual pupil techniques. All children are now assessed on entry to primary school in language, literacy, mathematics and personal and social development. This enables teachers to match work to children's individual needs, and may help with future value added measurements. All pupils are admitted to secondary education after completing seven years of primary education.

Scotland. 5–14 Curriculum: minimum recommended time allocation in primary schools

Curriculum area	Minimum time allocation (in %)
Language, including modern language from no later than P6 (Year 6)	20%
Mathematics	15%
Environmental studies: society, science and technology	15%
Expressive arts and physical education	15%
Religious and moral education, with personal and social development and health education	15%
Flexible use of time (which should be based on the needs of pupils and the development priorities of the school and the local authority)	20%

Source: Learning and Teaching Scotland, 2000. Cross-curricular aspects include: personal and social development; education for work; education for citizenship; the culture of Scotland; information and communications technology. The school year lasts a minimum of 190 days or thirty-eight weeks. The normal length of the pupil week in primary schools is twenty-five hours, with reduced hours for infants.

In **Northern Ireland**, pupils study a common curriculum made up of religious education and six broad areas of study: English, mathematics, science and technology, creative and expressive studies, language studies (for Irish-medium schools). The school curriculum also contains six compulsory cross-curricular themes: education for mutual understanding, cultural heritage, health education, information technology, economic awareness (in secondary schools), careers education (in secondary schools). The Northern Ireland Council for Curriculum, Examinations and Assessment is responsible for curriculum development and assessment. The curriculum is defined in terms of four key stages which cover the twelve years of compulsory schooling: Key Stage 1 covers Years 1–4 (pupils aged 4–8); Key Stage 2 covers Years 5–7 (pupils aged 8–11); Key Stage 3 covers Years 8–10 (pupils aged 11–14); Key Stage 4 covers Years 11–12 (pupils aged 14–16). Schools can develop additional curriculum elements to express their particular ethos and meet pupils' individual needs and circumstances.

Following The Education (Curriculum Minimum Content) Order (Northern Ireland) 2007, the revised curriculum is being phased in from September 2007. The revised curriculum is organized around learning areas which are broadly the same as the previous curriculum. A new distinct Foundation Stage (Year 1 and Year 2, 4–6-year-olds) has been introduced. The new statutory Northern Ireland Curriculum from Foundation Stage to Key Stage 4 is a balanced and broadly based curriculum which: (i) promotes the spiritual, emotional, moral, cultural, intellectual and physical development of pupils at the school and thereby of society; and (ii) prepares such pupils for the opportunities, responsibilities and experiences of life by equipping them with appropriate knowledge, understanding and skills. In order to meet their statutory requirements, schools must provide learning opportunities in relation to the following: (a) religious education, in accordance with the core syllabus drafted by the four main Christian Churches in Northern Ireland and specified by the Department of Education; (b) several areas of learning.

The areas of learning for the Foundation Stage (Years 1 and 2) are: language and literacy (contributory elements: talking and listening, reading, writing);



mathematics and numeracy (number, measures, shape and space, sorting, patterns and relationships); the arts (art and design, music, drama); the world around us; personal development and mutual understanding (personal understanding and health; mutual understanding in the local and wider community); physical development and movement. The areas of learning for the Key Stages 1 and 2 are: language and literacy (contributory elements: talking and listening, reading, writing); mathematics and numeracy (processes in mathematics, number, measures, shape and space, handling data); the arts (art and design, music, drama); the world around us (history, geography, science and technology); personal development and mutual understanding (personal understanding and health; mutual understanding in the local and wider community); physical education.

The areas of learning for the Key Stages 3 are: language and literacy (contributory elements: English, Irish in Irish-speaking schools, media education); mathematics and numeracy (mathematics, financial capability); modern languages (any official language of the European Union other than English and Irish); the arts (art and design, music, drama); environment and society (history, geography); science and technology (science, technology and design); learning for life and work (employability, local and global citizenship, personal development, home economics); physical education. The areas of learning for the Key Stages 4 are: language and literacy; mathematics and numeracy; modern languages; the arts; environment and society; science and technology; learning for life and work (employability, local and global citizenship, personal development); physical education. The cross-curricular skills are the key basic requirements which young people need to achieve through their education and include: communication (literacy), using mathematics (numeracy), and using Information and Communications Technology (ICT). Other skills include: thinking, problem solving and decision making; self management; working with others; managing information; being creative.

The most common age for pupils to transfer from state primary to state secondary schools in the United Kingdom is 11 years (12 in Scotland). No form of examination has to be undertaken in order for them to do so. Entrance to independent secondary schools is by way of a Common Entrance Examination, taken at the ages of 11, 12 or 13.

The introduction of the National Curriculum allowed the implementation in England and Wales of the National Curriculum tests and teachers' assessments at the end of each Key Stage. There are national tests (and teachers' assessments) for 7-, 11- and 14-year-olds in English and mathematics. Pupils are also assessed in science although there are no national tests for 7-year-olds. Test and teachers' assessment results are reported alongside each other and have equal status. In **England** results are published for each child, each school and the national averages for comparison purposes. In **Wales**, the results of National Curriculum assessments are published nationally and for each local authority area.

In **Scotland**, national tests in language and mathematics were developed in 1990 by the Scottish Examinations Board for pupils aged 5-14 in support of the Government's 5-14 Development Programme. The tests are arranged at five levels of difficulty and take the form of a large bank of units from which teachers may choose test materials to fit their own teaching programmes and contexts.



According to national data, in 2005/06, there were 22,156 primary schools in the United Kingdom (17,504 in England; 2,194 in Scotland; 1,555 in Wales; and 903 in Northern Ireland). The total number of pupils (including nursery classes) was 4,974,900. The pupil/teacher ratio was 22.0:1 in England, 17.1 in Scotland, 19.8 in Wales, and 20.5 in Northern Ireland.

Secondary and further education

In **England**, secondary schools usually admit pupils aged 11 years; however, in areas where three-tier systems exist, pupils may transfer from middle schools at 12 or 13 years or from junior high schools at 14 years. Schools may be organized in a number of ways, including those that take the full secondary school age range 11-18; middle schools whose pupils move on to senior comprehensive schools at 12, 13 or 14, leaving at 16 or 18; and schools with an age range of 11 or 12 to 16 combined with a sixth-form or a tertiary college for students over 16. Most of secondary pupils attend comprehensive schools, which admit students without reference to ability or aptitude and provide a wide range of secondary education for all or most of the pupils of a district. Other pupils receive secondary education in grammar or secondary modern schools, to which they are allocated on the basis of their performance in selection tests, taken at the age of 11. Grammar schools provide a mainly academic course for selected pupils from the age of 11 to 18 or 19.

According to a review of secondary school education in England: “in planning their curriculum, schools are urged by the [then] DfEE to provide a minimum of 25 hours of teaching per week in Key Stage 4 and 24 hours for Key Stage 3. In practice, the vast majority of schools have the same length of teaching week for all pupils. One in five secondary schools has a teaching week of less than 25 hours. Available teaching time for the curriculum at both Key Stages 3 and 4 varies widely, for example in schools inspected in the 1996-97 school year from 22.5 to 27 hours, and higher in some City Technology Colleges. This difference in taught time equates to nearly 100 hours per year, or the equivalent time allocation expected for a National Curriculum subject. In about 80 per cent of schools neither governors nor parents have been effectively involved in decisions about the length of the taught week.” (OFSTED, 1998).

In **England, Wales and Northern Ireland**, the General Certificate of Secondary Education (GCSE) was introduced in 1988, replacing the GCE O-level and the Certificate of Secondary Education (CSE) examinations, and now serves as the principal examination taken by secondary school pupils at 16+. The GCSE is a single-subject examination like its predecessors. It was introduced to raise standards of performance and is designed to assess and reward positive achievement. The GCSE examination is set according to nationally agreed criteria which provide guidance on syllabus content. All GCSE syllabi for use in **England** must be formally approved by the Qualifications and Curriculum Authority (QCA). In **Wales**, GCSE syllabi must be approved by the Qualifications, Curriculum and Assessment Authority for Wales.

Following a recommendation by Lord Dearing and a subsequent consultation, Ministers announced that they wanted three unitary awarding bodies in place, each offering GCSEs, GCE, A-level and GNVQs (now virtually phased out), and with a single point of accountability and single trading name. The *Edexcel* Foundation was



formed in 1996 from a merger between the University of London Examinations and Assessment Council (ULEAC) and the Business and Technology Education Council (BTEC). The Assessment and Qualification Alliance (AQA) came into existence in April 2000 following the merger of the Associated Examining Board (AEB) and the Northern Examinations and Assessment Board. The Oxford, Cambridge and RSA (known as 'OCR') was formed in 1998 as a result of a merger between the University of Cambridge Local Examination Syndicate (UCLES) and the Royal Society of Arts (RSA). The Welsh Joint Education Committee and the Northern Ireland Council for Curriculum, Examinations and Assessment are operating in Wales and Northern Ireland, respectively. The awarding bodies are constituent members of the Joint Council for the GCSE, which was established in 1985 as a central coordinating body. UCLES has developed the International GCSE (a two-year curriculum programme with a choice of core and extended-level curricula, accepted as a preliminary requirement for entry to most universities and institutes of higher education in the United Kingdom) and has also introduced the Advanced International Certificate of Education (AICE).

The GCSE exam emphasizes coursework, examination and application of knowledge. School-based assessment of coursework by teachers can form a significant percentage of the final result. The standards expected in GCSE are at least as high as those in O-level. Grades are awarded on an 8-point scale, i.e. A*, A, B, C, D, E, F and G. Candidates who fail to reach the standard required for grade G will be ungraded and receive no certificate. The GCSE is administered by five autonomous GCSE Examining Groups, three in England, one in Wales and one in Northern Ireland (the Northern Ireland Council for the Curriculum Examinations and Assessment). The five groups are all constituent members of the Joint Council for the GCSE, which was established in 1985 as a central coordinating body.

The regulatory authorities with responsibility for the accreditation of qualifications in England, Wales and Northern Ireland originally implemented a framework of national awards as recommended by the Dearing review (1996). This National Qualifications Framework (NQF) embraced general academic and vocational qualifications (below the level of higher education) at six levels (entry level to level 5) as follows: Level 5 = higher level qualifications, NVQ level 5; Level 4 = higher level qualifications, NVQ level 4; Level 3 = advanced level, e.g. A-levels and NVQ level 3; Level 2 = intermediate level, e.g. GCSEs grades A*–C and NVQ level 2; Level 1 = foundation level, e.g. GCSEs grades D–G and NVQ level 1; Entry level, e.g. certificate in adult literacy. Following a review and public consultation, the above framework was replaced in September 2004 with a nine-level model (entry level to level 8). In the revised NQF, entry level to level 3 remained the same and the higher levels, 4–5, were assigned to more precise levels 4 to 8. The current levels 4 to 8 broadly compare to the Framework for Higher Education Qualifications (FHEQ), which covers qualifications provided by universities and other higher education institutions. Qualifications have been awarded against the new NQF levels since January 2006. Further revision to the framework is expected as a result of a current work piloting a new Qualifications and Credit Framework (QCF). This unit-based qualifications framework, which is underpinned by a system of credit accumulation and transfer, is designed to recognize a wider range of learner achievement than the current NQF. Trials of this new system are taking place until 2008.



Young people over the age of 16 have a number of education and training options open to them. They may stay on in sixth form of their school or they may transfer to a further education college, which includes sixth-form colleges, general further education colleges, agricultural and horticultural colleges, and art and design colleges. With school sixth forms, these colleges are the main providers of vocational and general education for the 16-19-year-olds; they provide full- and part-time courses for adults as well. They are also a major training resource for local employment markets, offering a range of services, including some bespoke courses. The Education Act 2002 created a legislative distinction between Key Stages 1 to 3 (5- to 14-year-olds) and Key Stage 4 (14- to 16-year-olds) of compulsory education. This allows for increased flexibility in education for pupils in Key Stage 4 and provides more opportunities to tailor education to their individual needs. Education for young people between the ages of 14 and 19 is currently the focus of reform and reorganization in England and Wales. The Education and Inspections Act 2006 provides the legislative framework for the introduction of new specialized diplomas for this age group in England.

GCE A-level (Advanced) examinations are normally taken following the GCSE and after two further years of study, usually in the sixth form of secondary schools, sixth-form tertiary colleges or in colleges of further education. A-levels are set by the four GCE Examining Groups and Boards. In Northern Ireland, A-level exams are set by CCEA. Traditionally, students followed courses in two or three related subjects, for example the sciences or the humanities. However, with the introduction of less conventional higher education courses, less traditional combinations of A-levels are now more common. There are five official pass grades, A to E, and a candidate not achieving the required standard may obtain an 'N' (narrow failure or near miss) grade. AS-level (Advanced Supplementary) qualifications were introduced in 1987 with the first exams taken in 1989. Their purpose was to broaden sixth-form studies beyond the traditional clusters of science or arts subjects. AS-level qualifications are designed to occupy half the teaching and study time of an A-level, but are set to the same standard and are taught as a two-year course. Like A-level, they are graded A to E, with grade standards related to the corresponding A-level grade. The syllabi take account of the shorter teaching and study time available so that, while the quantity of work is less, the quality is the same as that required for the equivalent A-level grade. A-levels in applied subjects are aimed primarily at young people over compulsory school age who remain in full-time education, although they are available to students of any age. These qualifications emphasise knowledge, skills and understanding in broad vocational areas and are intended to offer a comprehensive preparation for employment, as well as a route to higher-level qualifications.

Further education colleges became autonomous and independent when they were incorporated in April 1993, under the Further and Higher Education Act 1992. Formerly they were under the control of the local authorities which subsequently retained responsibility for securing adequate provision of the more informal or 'leisure' courses that do not generally lead to qualifications. The Learning and Skills Act 2000 created new bodies, the Learning and Skills Council for England and the then National Council for Education and Training for Wales (National Council–ELWa, whose responsibilities were taken over by the Welsh Assembly Government's Department for Children, Education, Lifelong Learning and Skills in April 2006). The



Learning and Skills Council and the Welsh Department fund and organize all post-compulsory education and training of young people aged 16+ and adults (excluding higher education) in one overarching sector. The Council and the Welsh Department operate through local branches: local learning and skills councils in England, and through regional committees and community consortia for education and training in Wales.

Modern Apprentices, National Traineeship and other training arrangements offer the guarantee of two years vocational training for young people under the age of 18, and some broad-based vocational education and training and planned work experience. This enables trainees (and with some exceptions for young people with special training needs) to work towards a qualification equivalent to at least Level 2 in the frame overseen by QCA. After full-time education, there is an option to take National Vocational Qualification (NVQ). NVQs are work-related qualifications, made up of a number of units which set out industry defined standards of occupational competence. NVQs can be taken in the work place, but there is widespread provision in colleges of further education.

In **Northern Ireland**, secondary education normally begins when pupils reach the age of 11. There are two main types of school: grammar and secondary. Grammar schools provide a range of courses for pupils between 11 and 18 years of age, while secondary schools provide a similar range of courses for the 11-16 age group, although some secondary schools offer post-16 opportunities. At the end of compulsory school age most pupils sit the General Certificate of Secondary Education (GCSE) examination. In the two years after this, most pupils staying at school follow GCE A-level courses. Standards in Northern Ireland examinations are generally comparable with those in England and Wales. The third stage of public education is further education, that is full-time and part-time education for persons over compulsory school age.

Further education colleges have been incorporated bodies since April 1998 and have most of their expenditure met from public funds. The colleges vary greatly in size and in the diversity of courses which they provide. Courses are subject to continuing change to meet the changing needs of individual pupils, employers and the community. The content of vocational courses is as required by the national examining and validating bodies. In Northern Ireland, 'Jobskills' provides a two-year programme to 16-year-old school leavers combining training, further education and work experience in the first year and either employment with training or more specialized full-time training in the second year.

In **Scotland**, lower secondary schooling (age group 12-16 years) provides an education which prepares students for a place in society and which meets their personal, social and vocational needs, the expectations of their parents, of employers and of tertiary education. In S1 and S2 all pupils undertake a common course with a wide range of subjects, based on the 5-14 Curriculum Guidelines, but with some subjects which will be new to students. Schools vary in the number of subjects or courses they offer in S1/S2.

Scotland. 5–14 Curriculum: minimum recommended time allocation and pupil entitlement for the first stage of secondary education (S1–S2)

Curriculum area	Minimum time allocation (in %) over two years
Language	20%
Mathematics	10%
Environmental studies: society, science and technology (courses include: science, social subjects, technical education, home economics)	30%
Expressive arts and physical education (courses include: art and design, music, drama, physical education)	15%
Religious and moral education, with personal and social development and health education	5%
Flexible use of time (which should be based on the needs of pupils and the development priorities of the school)	20%

Source: Learning and Teaching Scotland, 2000. Cross-curricular aspects include: personal and social development; education for work; education for citizenship; the culture of Scotland; information and communications technology. The school year lasts a minimum of 190 days or thirty-eight weeks. The normal length of the pupil week in secondary schools is twenty-seven hours. Some schools operate with eight periods of forty minutes with subjects involving practical work allocated blocks of two periods. However, many schools operate a five- or six-period day, each period lasting around an hour.

A school's S1/S2 curriculum will normally include the following subjects: English, a modern foreign language, mathematics, science, geography, history, home economics, technical education, art, music, physical education, religious education and one or two other subjects (to be chosen among the following: Latin/classical studies, health studies, drama, outdoor education, local/environmental studies, media studies, business studies, Gaelic, social education, a second foreign language, and computing).

Near the end of second year, the school presents students with an option sheet for courses in Years III and IV. Students choose courses from the menu offered, which is usually a core of subjects and an optional element (about 25-30% of the time available), where free choice exists. An emphasis is placed on preparation for more specialized study and training, but all students must continue to the age of 16 with the study of English, mathematics, a science, a modern foreign language and a social subject.

From August 1999, a new system of courses and qualifications for everyone studying beyond standard grade has been introduced in schools, further education colleges and other centres in Scotland. The new system is based on proposals outlined in the *Higher Still Opportunity for All* published by the Secretary of State for Scotland in March 1994. Qualifications are available at five levels: Access, Intermediate 1, Intermediate 2, Higher and Advance Higher. Most students in schools and colleges follow programmes that either consist of individual courses or which can combine to make up a group award. Each course is at one of the five levels and consist of 160 hours of study made up of three forty-hour units plus an additional forty hours. At the end of four years of lower secondary education, students are eligible to sit their first National Qualifications examinations, either Standard Grade or the newer Intermediate levels 1 and 2 of the National Qualifications (General and Credit Standard Grade, respectively). Their achievements are recorded on the Scottish



Qualifications Certificate (SQC, formerly the Scottish Certificate of Education). The certificate, intended to be attainable at some level in a number of subjects by all students, is gained by examination with an element of assessment within the school itself. Students in S3 and S4 can also take modules from the catalogue of the Scottish Qualifications Authority (SQA), and by completing them successfully, receive credit towards the National Certificate which is a non-advanced vocational qualification.

The aim of upper secondary school education (age group 16-18 years) is to equip students to profit from vocational training and higher education, which is the next stage in their education. All 16-year-olds are given two weeks of work experience in local firms as part of their general pre-vocational training. Many students will continue to study the same subjects studied in previous years, but the level of study will be higher and the number of subjects studied is likely to be no more than five. The broad range of subjects remains with freedom of choice being greater than in previous years.

A significant curricular option is the offer of a wide range of short modular courses offered by the SQA, as an alternative to those leading to the Higher level and Advanced Higher level examinations. Some schools will have students studying combinations of courses. A broadly based qualification, the General Scottish Vocational Qualification (GSVQ), was introduced in 1991. GSVQs are a particular type of group award made up of fixed numbers of National Certificate Modules. GSVQs are available at three levels and are designed for students aged 16-19 in school and further education colleges.

The Higher level of SQC, usually taken in the fifth year of (upper) secondary education at about age 17, is the target of many students who aim to enter professions or to go on to higher education. The examinations are externally set by the SQA using teachers and lecturers from higher education and mainly consist of written papers. The Certificate of Sixth-Year Studies was available for students with a pass at Higher level in their fifth year and continuing their studies for another year; it has been replaced by the Advanced Higher level.

Scottish further education has an established history of providing a high standard of education and training. There are forty-three independent, incorporated further education colleges funded by the SEED and a further two (Orkney College of Further Education and Shetland College of Further Education) funded by their respective local authorities and supported by direct payments from the SEED. The incorporated colleges are managed individually by Boards of Management whose membership includes industrial and commercial employers, college staff and students. There are two additional colleges in Scotland: the Gaelic College in Skye is a registered educational charity, founded by Deed of Trust and administered by a Board of Trustees. The North Atlantic Fishery College in Shetland is funded by a trust.

The colleges provide education and vocational training. They vary in size and in the range of courses offered. All colleges offer both full-time and part-time courses. Some colleges are specialist institutions covering areas such as agriculture, food technology and maritime studies. Colleges have a high degree of freedom to structure programmes of study to meet the needs of students and employers. In 2003/04 the



total enrolment in non-advanced further education was 411,700 students (mainly vocational courses).

Most of the courses offered by Scottish colleges are accredited and awarded by the SQA. The SQA works with all sectors of industry and commerce, and with the government to ensure that its qualifications are relevant to the needs of employers, flexible enough to respond to change, and nationally and internationally recognized. All SQA vocational qualifications are based on a flexible system of units of study. Each unit covers a particular subject area, and requires the student to demonstrate a number of practical skills.

Most colleges now have agreements with higher education institutions that allow students who reach certain standards to progress straight on to a higher education course. Some colleges are running part or all of certain degree courses. These links involve industrial funding for particular projects, tailoring training programmes for employers and student placements.

In **England, Wales and Northern Ireland**, the General National Vocational Qualifications (GNVQs) offered students over the age of 16 with an alternative to traditional GCE A-levels and GCSEs. The GNVQs provided a broad base of vocationally relevant knowledge and skills in preparation either for entry into work or for progression into higher education. There were three levels: (i) foundation, which was broadly equivalent to four GCSEs at grades D to G, and normally taken after one year's full-time study; (ii) intermediate, which was largely equivalent to four GCSEs at grades A* to C, and normally taken after one year's full-time study; and (iii) advanced, which was broadly equivalent to two GCE A-levels, and normally taken after two years' full-time study. The GCSE in vocational subjects and the A-level in applied subjects have largely replaced the GNVQ which has virtually been phased out.

The Business and Technology Education Council (BTEC) was established with the aim of promoting and developing high-quality, work-related programmes and is responsible for validating technician-level courses and providing qualifications for a wide variety of careers in **England, Wales and Northern Ireland**. The BTEC awards nationally recognized qualifications, within the NVQ framework. The main qualifications are: BTEC First Certificates (part-time study) and Diplomas (full-time study); BTEC National Certificates and Diplomas. Since September 1991, schools have been able to offer certain BTEC qualifications to sixth formers. These are: the First Diploma, which is a one-year full-time course; the BTEC National Diploma, which is a two-year full-time course. The normal entry requirement for the National Diploma is a First Diploma or four GCSEs at grades A to C. In September 1996, the BTEC merged with the University of London Examinations and Assessment Council to become the *Edexcel* Foundation.

According to national data, in 2005/06, there were 4,206 secondary schools (including middle schools) in the United Kingdom (3,367 in England; 385 in Scotland; 224 in Wales; and 230 in Northern Ireland). The total number of students was 3,987,500. The pupil/teacher ratio was 16.6:1 in England, 12.3 in Scotland, 16.6 in Wales, and 14.4 in Northern Ireland.



Assessing learning achievement nationwide

Raising the quality of education, and consequently the standards of achievement, is one of the government's key aims. In order to ensure that this objective is attained, the United Kingdom operates a unique system of quality assurance which is open to public scrutiny. The Her Majesty's Inspectorate (HMI) has traditionally reported to the Government on the quality of education in schools and on most further and higher education establishments, outside the universities.

The Education and Inspections Act 2006 (which applies mainly to **England**, but provides for a framework power which enables the National Assembly for **Wales**, by regulations, to make provision about the matters set out in the Act) made provision for a reduction in the number of public service inspectorates in England, with the aim of enabling better coordination and reduced duplication. Under the Act, on 1 April 2007 a new, single inspectorate came into being: the Office for Standards in Education, Children's Services and Skills, under Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Education, Children's Services and Skills (HMCI). The new organization (still to be known as OFSTED) took on responsibilities from four existing inspectorates: the Adult Learning Inspectorate; the work relating to children of the Commission for Social Care Inspection (CSCI); the work relating to the children and family courts of HM Inspectorate of Court Administration (HMICA); and the previous work of OFSTED. The Act also gave new powers to OFSTED to investigate complaints from parents about the schools attended by their children. Local Authorities normally prepared an Education Development Plan (known as an Education Strategic Plan in Wales), a strategic plan setting out the authority's arrangements for monitoring its schools' performance. Under the Children Act 2004, these education-specific plans have since been replaced in England by a single, strategic, overarching plan for all local services for children and young people, a Children and Young People's Plan (CYPP, to be introduced in Wales from 2008). The Education and Inspections Act 2006 gives local authorities in England new powers to tackle failing and underperforming schools more quickly and effectively by providing for a new power to force failing and underperforming schools to federate or take another partner for school improvement, and by amending the formal warning notice legislation. School self-evaluation has taken on an increasingly high profile over the past two decades, as legislative and policy changes have greatly increased the need for schools to take responsibility for their own improvement, and therefore to assess for themselves how well they are doing and what they need to do to improve. There has also been an increasing level of support from central government and from local authorities for school self-evaluation, which has come to be seen as a key factor in school improvement. The new model of school inspections introduced in England in September 2005, places particular emphasis on leadership, management and school self-evaluation.

According to the OFSTED annual report 2005/06, "Of the 6,129 maintained schools inspected in 2005/06, the great majority, over nine in 10, are providing a quality of education which is at least satisfactory overall, while in about six in 10 it is good or outstanding. However, there are variations in performance among different types of school. In just over one in 10 schools, the standard of education is outstanding. The proportion of schools in which provision is inadequate, however, remains too high at about one in 12 of those inspected: in secondary schools this



proportion increases to almost one in eight. Pupils' achievement is at least satisfactory in a large majority of schools inspected, although inadequate in 7%. Most of the nursery schools inspected are good or outstanding. The proportion of special schools judged good or better overall is also very high. Almost six in 10 primary schools are good or outstanding."

In **Scotland**, inspections are carried out by the HM Inspectorate of Education (HMIE). In addition, the schools and colleges are responsible themselves for monitoring and evaluating their performance and progress and they are required to produce both an annual 'Standards and Quality' or self-evaluation report and a development plan. HMIE publishes reports on inspections of individual establishments and services: pre-school centres, schools, the education functions of local authorities, community learning and development provision and colleges. It also publishes evaluations of education as a whole. There are several types of these broader reports, including 'aspect reports' on the quality of particular facets of educational provision. In any year, HMI may visit establishments in addition to those in the main inspection programme, to obtain particular evidence for aspect reports. HMIE published its report *Improving Scottish Education* in February 2006. This report continues an approximately triennial series of HMIE reports on Standards and Quality in Scottish Schools (primary and secondary), of which the most recent covered 1998-2001. However, the 2006 report introduces a broader approach: it evaluates all the education sectors and aims specifically to promote and support improvement across the system. According to the report (*Improving Scottish Education*) by HMIE on inspection and review 2002-2005, "Overall, children in the pre-school sector achieve well in a broad range of important outcomes. Pre-school centres are strong on valuing children as individuals and celebrating their individual achievements. [...] Overall, pupils in primary schools achieve well across a broad range of areas. They are developing a good range of knowledge, understanding, skills and attitudes through their classwork and their interactions with others in their daily school lives. [...] In the period covered by this report, secondary schools responded well to a range of opportunities and challenges resulting from national and local initiatives, each of which required school staff to review their expectations and improve their knowledge and skills. The vast majority of schools are seeking ways to become more effective. National priorities for school education have successfully focused attention on developments in areas such as creativity, enterprise and education for sustainability. In addition, recent developments in curriculum flexibility have begun the process of improving the quality of learning and achievement for a number of pupils, notably the lower-attaining. Now, in the context of *A Curriculum for Excellence*, secondary education needs to review its aims and approaches. Schools need to focus more effectively on the broader achievement of all young people, and in particular on the attainment of those in S1/S2, boys, the lowest-attaining groups and vulnerable children."

In **Northern Ireland**, inspections are carried out by the Education and Training Inspectorate (ETI), a division within the Department of Education. The ETI is the sole body with responsibility to inspect and report on the quality of education and training. There is no system of contracting out school inspections as in England and Wales. ETI inspectors inspect and report on all grant-aided schools, independent schools, further education colleges, teacher education institutions, the support services of the Education and Library Boards, training organizations, and the youth service.



Inspection of schools normally takes place at least once every five to seven years. School self-evaluation is seen as an essential part of the process of school improvement. The prime responsibility for institutional self-evaluation lies with the Board of Governors and headteacher of each individual school. In 2003, ETI launched a range of materials to support schools in the process of self-evaluation leading to self-improvement. According to the Chief Inspector's Report 2004-2006, "Standards of pre-school education are good or better in well over half of all centres and continue to improve. There are particular improvements in the increasingly high quality of the teaching, and the better opportunities for learning related to early science and for outdoor play. [...] The good quality of the pastoral care and child protection arrangements provide a caring and supportive climate in nearly all primary schools. The schools have sustained the good attainments in English and mathematics of all children at KS1 and have improved the mathematics attainments of pupils at KS2. [...] In post-primary education, there are significant strengths in the overall quality and effectiveness of provision in over 10% of the schools inspected, with strengths outweighing weaknesses in a further 57%. It is a concern that in over 30% weaknesses in the overall provision outweigh strengths. [...] In the majority of colleges, the standards achieved by students on externally accredited awards are satisfactory or better. A key challenge is to ensure that the requirements of course specifications are interpreted broadly enough to include essential transferable skills and competences. In almost all colleges inspected, the success and progression rates are good or better for those who complete their course of study. The success rate for learners following an essential skills course is consistently low. Retention rates within and across the colleges and courses remain variable."

England and **Northern Ireland** have taken part in international studies of student attainment such as those organized by the OECD Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA). They have also participated in the International Association for the Evaluation of Educational Achievement (IEA) Trends in Mathematics and Science Study (TIMSS 2003). England also participated in the IEA Progress in International Reading Literacy Study (PIRLS 2001). **Wales** took part in PISA in full in 2006 for the first time.

Higher education

Post-school education takes place at universities, colleges of technology, further and higher education institutions. Other education is provided in the form of degree and courses of a standard higher than the GCE A-level or SQC higher level or equivalents.

The Framework for Higher Education Qualifications in **England, Wales** and **Northern Ireland**, defined in 2001, places qualifications awarded by universities and colleges at five levels; in ascending order, these are the certificate, intermediate, honours, master's and doctoral levels. Although the organization of higher education programmes is not regulated by law, the traditional structure of three main cycles meets the basic requirement of the Bologna Process. Courses leading to the award of a certificate are usually offered in a vocational subject and normally take one year's full-time study. The intermediate level includes ordinary (non-honours) degrees, the foundation degree, diplomas of higher education and other higher diplomas. Higher national certificates and diplomas are awarded by *Edexcel* and usually take two years to complete (the certificate by part-time study and the diploma by full-time study).



Foundation degrees were introduced in September 2001, and are predominantly delivered through partnerships of further and higher education institutions; they are intended to be completed in two years or an equivalent period part-time. They do not represent an end of first cycle higher education in terms of the Bologna Declaration; they are designed to offer opportunities to progress to an honours degree (first degree) which represents completion of first cycle higher education. Degree titles vary according to the practice of each university. The most common titles for a first degree (honours degree) are Bachelor of Arts (B.A.) or Bachelor of Science (B.Sc.) and for a second degree Master of Arts (M.A.), Master of Science (M.Sc.), and Doctor of Philosophy (Ph.D.). In England and Wales first-degree courses are mainly full-time and usually last three years. However, there are some four-year courses, and medical and veterinary courses normally require five years. Master's degrees usually require a minimum of one year of full-time study (more commonly, two years) or the part-time equivalent. The minimum time for completing a doctorate is normally three years.

In **Scotland**, degrees are awarded for the successful completion of a three-year full-time course at an appropriate level (an ordinary degree) or a four-year course at a more specialized and demanding level (an honours degree). Degrees in medicine, dentistry, architecture, veterinary sciences and in some other areas can take up to six years. In the four oldest universities, first degrees in the arts, humanities and languages are called Master of Arts. Other higher education institutions in Scotland offer first degrees with the title of bachelor. Post-graduate courses include both one-year post-graduate diplomas and one- or two-year courses leading to a master's degree. For admission to a master's degree, a first degree is normally required as an entrance requirement. Master's degrees may lead to research degrees. Research degrees (M.Phil., Ph.D.) are available in almost every higher education institution. The M.Phil. degree requires one or two years of full-time research, the Ph.D. at least three years.

In 2005/06, there were 100 universities in England, eight in Wales, two in Northern Ireland, and fourteen (including the Open University) in Scotland. The number of other higher education institutions (including colleges for teacher training, art, technology and professions allied to medicine) was 31 in England, six in Scotland, four in Wales, and two in Northern Ireland. Admission to universities is by selection. Approximately one in three young people enter higher education. In 2004/05 there were 1.45 million full-time and 1.03 million part-time students in higher education (including the Open University) across the United Kingdom.

In general, the management structure of a university is very similar to that of other private sector institutions, incorporating positions such as the vice-chancellor or principal whose equivalent in business would be the managing director. As the managing director of a company would work closely with the Board of Directors in the world of business, so does the vice-chancellor or principal work closely with the governors of the institution.

The internal governing of a university differs depending on whether the institution was established before or after 1992. If the university was established before 1992, the governing body is the Council (in Scotland, the Court) which normally has responsibility for the conduct of all the affairs at the university. Membership of the Council or Court comprises officers of the university, elected staff



members and usually student representatives, as well as members who have been appointed by the local authorities, affiliated institutions, and others. If the university was established after 1992, the governing body is the Board of Governors which has responsibility for the conduct of all the affairs at the university. Membership of the Board of Governors comprises independent members, co-opted members and may also have members of staff, the student body and local authority. The number of universities increased considerably in 1992, when polytechnics and some other higher education establishments were given the freedom to obtain university status.

The Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education (QAA) was set up in 1997 as an independent body funded by subscriptions from universities and colleges of higher education throughout the United Kingdom, as well as through contracts with the funding bodies. The QAA advises government on applications for the grant of degree awarding powers, university title, or designation as a higher education institution. It acts on behalf of the United Kingdom higher education funding bodies in respect of the assessment of the quality of education. It aims to safeguard the public interest in sound standards of higher education qualifications, and to encourage continuous improvement in the management of the quality of higher education. It does this in two ways: by providing reference points that help to define clear and explicit standards; and by reviewing standards and quality using peer review processes where teams of academics conduct audits and reviews. However, the QAA is not a regulator. It has no powers over higher education institutions and no statutory authority.

The Further and Higher Education Act of 1992 allowed the polytechnics and some other higher education institutions which had been offering degrees validated by the Council for National Academic Awards to apply for permission to use the word 'university' in their titles. Thirty-five institutions became universities under this process. In general these 'new universities' place a greater emphasis on the practical application of knowledge than do the 'old' universities. They offer a wider range of courses leading to professional qualifications recognized by professional institutions. The Teaching and Higher Education Act of 1998 has allowed a number of colleges of higher education with their own taught course degree awarding powers or which are part of a federal university to include the title 'university college' in their name.

The Further and Higher Education (Scotland) Act 1992 enabled higher education institutions in Scotland to be granted the title university. The remaining higher education institutions which all offer courses at degree level, tend to specialize in particular areas, e.g. teaching education, music and drama. Following the Act, higher education went through many changes, including funding arrangements with the establishment of a Higher Education Funding Council in Scotland. There are twenty higher education institutions in Scotland, including fourteen universities (including the Open University) and six other higher education institutions. They are funded by the Scottish Funding Council, with the exception of the Scottish Agricultural College. In 1992, the Committee of Scottish Higher Education Principals (COSHEP) was established to represent all the higher education institutions in Scotland, both universities and colleges.

Higher education institutions offer a wide range of vocationally-orientated courses ranging from medicine, law, science, engineering and computing to health care, art and design, music and drama and teacher training, as well as the more



traditional academic courses. Many institutions provide pre-entry summer schools and access courses for non-traditional students. The universities and two of the other institutions (Queen Margaret College and the Royal Scottish Academy of Music and Drama) have powers to award their own degrees, the remainder have validation arrangements with another educational institution.

Higher National Certificates (HNCs) and Diplomas (HNDs), usually taken in further education colleges, may lead to degrees in technical or scientific subjects. HNC courses normally last one year and most HND courses two years, if taken full-time. HNC and HND awards are made by the SQA. Many courses, especially in science and engineering, are known as sandwich courses, with students having periods of professional training or work experience in a professional or industrial environment as part of their studies. Such courses normally take a year longer to complete than full-time courses. Courses for intending teachers are offered at undergraduate level leading to the B. Ed. degree and at post-graduate level leading to the Postgraduate Certificate in Education (PGCE). Postgraduate courses include both one-year post-graduate diplomas and one or two-year courses leading to a Master's degree. For admission to a Master's degree, a first degree is normally required as an entrance requirement. Master's degrees may lead to research degrees. Research degrees (M.Phil., Ph.D.) are available in almost every higher education institution. The M.Phil. degree requires one or two years of full-time research, the Ph.D. at least three years. An M.Phil. student may transfer to a Ph.D. programme provided the institution is satisfied with the student's progress. In 2003/04 there were 55,600 students enrolled in colleges and 216,300 students in higher education institutions in **Scotland**.

Higher education in **Northern Ireland** is provided by the Queen's University of Belfast, the University of Ulster, and two colleges of education, both of which are located in Belfast. The Queen's University provides a full range of undergraduate and post-graduate degrees through its nine faculties. The University of Ulster is based on four campuses and has eight faculties. Both universities are active in promoting links with industry and in developing the local scientific and technological base.

Special education

In **England, Wales and Northern Ireland** current policy, as supported by legislation, places emphasis on educating children with special educational needs (SEN) alongside their peers in mainstream schools, wherever possible. This reflects the importance attached to personalizing learning for all children and making the education system responsive to the diverse needs of individual children and thus reducing reliance on separate SEN structures. A small minority of children need more help than a mainstream school can provide. The Education Act 1996 (as amended by the Special Educational Needs and Disability Act - SENDA, 2001) for England and Wales, and the Education (Northern Ireland) Order 1996 for Northern Ireland (as amended by the Special Educational Needs and Disability (Northern Ireland) Order 2005), state that a child has special educational needs (SEN) 'if he has a learning difficulty which calls for special educational provision to be made for him'. Such provision is required when a child: has significantly greater difficulty in learning than the majority of children of his/her age; or has a disability which either prevents or hinders him or her from making use of educational facilities of a kind generally provided in schools, within the area of the local authority concerned, for children of



his/her age. Special educational provision is provision which adds to or differs from provision made generally for pupils of the same age in maintained schools. Pupils who need special help may be those with severe intellectual or physical disability, such as limited intellectual capacity, blindness or deafness, or those who have a milder form of disability. A local authority (LA) in England and Wales has a duty to identify pupils: who have special educational needs; and for whom special educational provision must be made because of any learning difficulty they may have. LAs in England and Wales must ensure that the child receives the educational provision specified in the statement of special educational needs. If the LA cannot meet a child's needs at one of its own maintained schools it may recommend placing the child in an independent school or a non-maintained special school and must, in such cases, meet all expenses. Similar arrangements exist in Northern Ireland.

In England and Wales, LAs have responsibility for the education of children and young people with SEN attending schools from the age of two to 19 years. In Northern Ireland, this is the responsibility of the Education and Library Boards (ELBs). LAs and ELBs are required to take into account the wishes of parents in the choice of a particular school, whether mainstream or special, when deciding what type of provision to make. They must also consider the individual pupil's needs, the needs of his or her peers and the efficient use of resources. Provision within a mainstream school may include integration within an ordinary class while receiving extra assistance, or attendance at special units or classes within the school. Education for a pupil with SEN in a mainstream school, rather than a special school is subject to two qualifying factors. Firstly, educating the pupil in this way must be compatible with: his/her receiving the special educational provision which his/her learning difficulty calls for; the provision of efficient education for the children with whom he/she will be educated; and the efficient use of resources. Secondly, this method must be compatible with the wishes of his/her parents. The key objective regarding the education of children with SEN is inclusion; that is, integrating children with SEN into mainstream education alongside pupils of the same age without such needs. Wherever possible, children with SEN follow the National Curriculum. However, modifications of the National Curriculum, and related assessment arrangements, for an individual child who has a statement of SEN are allowed.

The revised (2000) National Curriculum in Wales specifically aims to provide teachers with greater flexibility to respond to the needs of pupils with special needs, (including gifted and talented pupils). Teachers are, for example, allowed greater scope to use materials from a lower key stage for pupils who are experiencing learning difficulties. In Northern Ireland, under the terms of the Education Reform (Northern Ireland) Order 1989, the special educational provision specified in a statement of special educational needs for any pupil may include modifying or disapplying the statutory curriculum. In 2005/06, the number of pupils with a statement of SEN in mainstream schools was 236,700 in England, 15,800 in Wales, and 12,000 in Northern Ireland. In the same school year, the number of pupils attending special schools was 104,600 in England, 4,300 in Wales, and 4,600 in Northern Ireland. There were 1,033 maintained and 72 non-maintained special schools in England, 43 maintained special schools in Wales, and 43 maintained special schools in Northern Ireland. The total number of teachers in special schools was 17,200 in England and Wales, and 700 in Northern Ireland.



In **Scotland**, the term ‘additional support needs’ is used in preference to SEN. The Education (Additional Support for Learning, ASL) (Scotland) Act 2004 states that a child or young person has Additional Support Needs ‘where, for whatever reason, the child or young person is, or is likely to be, unable without the provision of additional support to benefit from school education provided or to be provided for the child or young person.’ The ASL Act introduces a new framework for supporting all children and young people who, for whatever reason, require additional support, long or short-term, in order to help them make the most of their education. Most pupils with additional support needs are included in mainstream schools, although special schools also exist for pupils with particular types of needs (only about 1% of pupils, or 7,680 pupils with additional support needs were in special schools in 2004). Additional support needs (ASN) may arise from the learning environment, family circumstances, disability or health needs and social and emotional factors. The group also includes able pupils who require additional support to reach their full potential. A child or young person may have an additional support need for a short or a long period of time. Education authorities and schools identify most children and young people with ASN through their arrangements for assessing learning and for monitoring individual educational progress. Where more specific assessment is required, this could include discussion with the parents and professionals involved and should build on other assessment information available. Such specific assessment procedures would normally identify need for and recommend effective multi-agency consultation and/or collaborative working. Education authorities and schools are encouraged to educate children with ASN, including children with disabilities, in mainstream schools. Funding is also available within general local government revenue for improvements to buildings, equipment and staffing to facilitate this programme. The inclusion programme is congruent with key aspects of current government educational policy, which aims to promote equality and community involvement for all, as well as the development of individual pupils’ abilities to their fullest potential.

Pupils and students in mainstream education with ASN follow the normal pattern of primary and secondary education and experience the same range of learning and teaching methods as other pupils. In many cases pupils with ASN will have Individualized Educational Programmes, which are used as a basis for planning, setting targets and ensuring that pupils make progress. For pupils with very significant learning difficulties, there is a variety of provision across, including day or residential special schools or units and special classes. Education authorities manage almost 190 special schools and units. Sometimes these provide for a particular group of pupils with similar ASN, such as learning difficulties related to visual or hearing impairment or to physical disabilities. Special schools are encouraged to develop strategies for enabling pupils to interact with the community or with neighbouring schools. In addition to education authority provision, there are seven schools run by independent Boards of Governors or by charitable organizations, but supported financially by the Scottish Executive. These grant-aided schools offer residential and day provision for pupils with a specified range of needs, such as those with visual and hearing impairment or physical disability. There are also over 30 independent special schools, which also provide for pupils with ASN, including those deriving from social, emotional and behavioural difficulties. In 2004, the number of pupils with the Record of Needs as well as Individualized Educational Programmes was 14,569 in primary



education (or 3.7% of all primary pupils) and 10,814 in secondary education (or 3.4% of all secondary pupils).

Private education

In general, private education is that which is provided in institutions which are largely privately-funded, receiving most of their income from tuition fees, usually paid by parents. In some cases, private schools also receive some funding from donations and grants received from benefactors, or through endowments.

In **England** and **Wales**, private schools are generally known as independent schools. The Education Act 2002 provided a new statutory regime for independent schools. Providers of independent schools must register with the Secretary of State (in England) or the National Assembly for Wales. Independent schools which are found not to be providing satisfactory education can be closed down by removal from the register. Schools must meet standards covering the quality of education; spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of pupils; welfare; health and safety of pupils; suitability of the people running the school; standards of premises; provision of information; and handling complaints. The registration authorities also have the power to require a registered independent school to be inspected. Independent schools which are accredited by the Independent Schools Council (ISC) are inspected by arrangement with the Independent Schools Inspectorate (ISI), under a framework approved by the Government and OFSTED. The ISC represents the interests of eight associations of independent schools. There are more than 2,500 independent schools in the United Kingdom, of which approximately 1,300 belong to the constituent associations of the ISC; these schools educate more than 80% of pupils in the independent sector. A total of 615,000 pupils attend these schools in the United Kingdom. In England this represents about 7% of the school age population; the proportion is lower in Wales. The curriculum of independent schools is the responsibility of the headteacher and governors of the school and, although independent schools must have regard to the National Curriculum they are not required to implement it fully. However, the curriculum is one of the major aspects considered in a school inspection, and both the range and the depth of the curriculum offered must be appropriate for the age, aptitude, ability and special educational needs (SEN) of the pupils in the school. Conditions of employment for teachers in the private sector are drawn up by the governors of the school and may make reference to, or be independent of, the conditions applicable to teachers in the maintained sector. Although salary scales are usually similar to those of teachers in the maintained sector, they may be lower or higher. Voluntary schools which are set up and, in many cases, owned by a voluntary body, usually a church body, are considered to be maintained schools rather than independent schools since they are largely publicly funded and may not charge tuition fees.

There are 19 independent schools in **Northern Ireland**. The Education (NI) Order 1986, as amended by the Education (NI) Order 1996, defines an independent school as “a school at which full-time education is provided for pupils of compulsory school age (whether or not such education is also provided for pupils under or over that age), not being a grant-aided school”. Independent schools are required to be registered with the Department of Education. Teachers in independent schools are not required to have eligibility to teach (the certification required to teach in grant-aided



schools). In similar procedures to those for England and Wales, schools are normally inspected once every five years by the Education and Training Inspectorate (ETI) which advises the Department of Education about schools' fitness to be registered.

Independent schools is the term normally used also in **Scotland** for private schools. Parents pay fees for the attendance of their children at these schools. Only about 4% of children and young people in Scotland attend independent schools. Some offer a complete education from pre-school age to 18; others are for primary age or secondary age pupils. Independent schools have some freedom in the number of days on which they have to open in the year. There is no legal requirement for an independent school to follow a particular teaching programme. are modelled on English 'preparatory schools' or 'public schools' and prepare their pupils either to enter the English public schools system or to sit English examinations. A number have a very strong religious orientation. Over 75% of independent schools are members of the Scottish Council of Independent Schools (SCIS). Independent schools are inspected by HM Inspectorate of Education in the same way as local authority schools. In carrying out such an inspection, HMIE takes into account the stated aims of the school. According to the Independent School Census of September 2003, there were 63 independent primary schools/primary departments with 11,568 pupils enrolled (P1 to P7); there were 55 secondary schools with 11,865 pupils in S1 to S4 and 5,689 students in S5 to S6.

Means of instruction, equipment and infrastructure

The Government is determined to take the United Kingdom swiftly and successfully into the information age. It is fully committed to ensuring that all schools and teachers are in a position to deploy new information and communication technologies (ICT), to raise educational standards, to enhance learning and to prepare young people with the ICT skills they will need in society and at work in the twenty-first century.

All schools have computers available for use by pupils. The British Educational Communications and Technology Agency (*Becta*) is the Government's key partner in the development and delivery of its information and communications technology (ICT) and e-learning strategies. *Becta* is an agency which supports the education departments across the United Kingdom in their strategic ICT developments. It works with industry to ensure that the right technology for education is in place. It also supports the education workforce to help make the best use of technology to improve learning and delivers its work directly to the learning and skills sector through the provision of advice, digital resources, partnerships, standards and organizational development strategies. Government investment in interactive whiteboards for primary and secondary schools in United Kingdom started with £25 million committed in September 2003 and then a further £25 million in January 2004.

The Pupil Level Annual School Census 2006 showed that in the United Kingdom the number of pupils per computer used for learning and teaching was 6.2 at the primary level and 3.6 at the secondary level. According to the ICT in Schools Survey 2004 (England), primary schools: have on average 37 computers each; 95% have interactive whiteboards; 91% have a network in place; 99% are connected to the Internet; 78% have a broadband connection; 85% of teaching staff are reported to be very confident or confident in using ICT in their job. Secondary schools: have



on average 275 computers each; 99% have interactive whiteboards; 99% have a network in place; 99% are connected to the Internet; 99% have a broadband connection; 81% of teaching staff are reported to be very confident or confident in using ICT in their job. According to the ETI Chief Inspector's Report 2004-2006, in Northern Ireland schools have been provided with secure, reliable ICT infrastructures. The potential of technology to extend learning remains relatively under-exploited across the sector with evidence of extensive, consistent and skilful use in only a minority of schools.

Adult and non-formal education

Adult education (i.e. for those aged 19 and over) is provided in further education colleges, adult colleges and centres and by voluntary bodies. The Learning and Skills Act 2000 radically reformed the post-compulsory sector in **England** and **Wales**. The Act distinguishes between education and training for persons aged 16 to 19 years and for those aged 19 years and over. In respect of both age groups, the Learning and Skills Council in England and the Welsh Assembly Government's Department for Children, Education, Lifelong Learning and Skills in Wales, have a statutory duty to secure the provision of reasonable facilities for: education (other than higher education) suitable to the requirements of persons aged 16 to 19 years and for persons over 19; training suitable to the requirements of such persons; organized leisure-time occupation connected with such education; and organized leisure-time occupation connected with such training. In addition, facilities for those aged over 19 includes provision for what is now widely referred to as adult and community learning (ACL). This is an umbrella term for the wide range of learning made accessible to adults including language, basic skills, ICT and leisure courses, most of which take place outside the 'formal' further education sector. Local authorities (LAs) have responsibility for securing ACL as part of the range of post-16 education funded by the Learning and Skills Council in England or the Welsh Assembly Government's Department in Wales. LAs have a high degree of autonomy in deciding which organizations they will work with and through to make this provision, and what the nature of that provision will be. Partners can include local community groups, voluntary organizations, colleges and schools.

The Basic Skills Agency (BSA, see: <http://www.basic-skills.co.uk/>) is the national development agency for literacy and numeracy in England and Wales. It runs a number of programmes, publishes resources for teachers and students, funds research into the levels of basic skills need and effective approaches for tackling this. The BSA works with primary schools, secondary schools, further education and adult organizations to improve basic skills for all ages, and provides a free National Telephone Referral Service to help adults join basic skills classes. The National Institute of Adult Continuing Education (NIACE, see: <http://www.niace.org.uk/>) is a non-governmental organization for adult learning in England and Wales. It is a centre of information, research, development work and publications for adult and continuing education. Its function is to promote the study and the general advancement of adult continuing education.

In **Northern Ireland**, the further education division of the Department for Employment and Learning (DEL) is responsible for the policy, strategic development and financing of the statutory further education sector. It takes advice from the



Learning and Skills Advisory Board. DEL funds the 16 colleges of further and higher education. These institutions are autonomous institutions, independent of Education and Library Boards, with a legal status similar to that of public companies. The Department also provides funding to a small number of non-statutory further education providers, including the Workers' Educational Association and the Ulster People's College. The Basic Skills Unit based within the Educational Guidance Service for Adults has taken over the work of the Adult Literacy and Basic Education Committee. The Unit focuses on improving the adult literacy and numeracy skills of the people in Northern Ireland.

The term 'Community Learning and Development' (CLD) is used in **Scotland** to refer to the wide range of community-based adult learning, community capacity building and youth work. CLD is now seen as a major part of the Scottish Executive's community regeneration and community planning policies and is being given higher priority in the implementation of the Scottish Executive's Lifelong Learning Strategy for Scotland *Life Through Learning – Learning Through Life* (February 2003). Local authorities discharge their responsibilities for CLD through a variety of structures. Several departments in an authority have an important role in providing the service. Since 2002, Communities Scotland has general responsibility for promotion, development and oversight of CLD. Within Communities Scotland, Learning Connections, part of the agency's Regeneration Division, has responsibility for CLD issues, and for support to the Adult Literacy and Numeracy fields. In 2004, Learning Connections, Communities Scotland also assumed responsibility for policy advice to Ministers on all matters relating to CLD. A wide range of bodies is involved with adult education, including some which do not offer direct provision but support provision already being made. Among these are the Scottish Qualifications Authority, the Scottish Further Education Unit, the Scottish School of Further Education, Communities Scotland, and Learning and Teaching Scotland. Adult education and training is offered by CLD services of local authorities, voluntary organizations, commercial and industrial firms, colleges and higher education institutions, including universities. Some adults also attend secondary schools for part of the time and take particular classes with the pupils. The education units within Her Majesty's Prisons also provide adult education. Another body with a considerable interest in adult education is the Health Education Board for Scotland, which has responsibilities for providing further training for professionals in the National Health Service, and also for educating the general public on health issues, such as the misuse of drugs.

PAULO (see: <http://www.paulo.org.uk/>) is the National Training Organization for community-based learning and development. PAULO (named after the Brazilian adult educator Paulo Freire) covers the occupational sector that includes community-based adult learning, community education, community work, youth work and parenting education and support. The organization was founded by a partnership comprising: Community Learning Scotland; Community Work Education and Training Network, Northern Ireland; Community Work Forum; Federation of Community Work Training Groups; the NIACE; National Youth Agency; Wales Youth Agency, and the Youth Council for Northern Ireland. PAULO's role is to advance, support and raise national occupational standards and training for all those engaged in promoting community-based learning and development.



The United Kingdom is committed to the delivery of high quality education through innovative application of new technology. The Open University (see: <http://www.open.ac.uk/>) is a non-residential university offering degree and other courses for adult students of all ages in Britain and other parts of Europe. It uses a combination of specially produced printed texts, correspondence tuition, television and radio broadcasts, audio and video cassettes, and residential schools. There is also a network of study centres for contact with part-time tutors and counsellors, and with fellow students. No formal academic qualifications are required to register for most courses, but the standard of the University's degrees is the same as that of other universities.

Opportunities have been extended with the formation in 1987 of the Open College, an independent company set up with government support. The College brings together broadcasters and sponsors, and provides vocational education and training courses below degree level. The Open College of Arts, also launched in 1987, offers an art foundation course to those wishing to study at home.

Teaching staff

Teachers in **England** and **Wales** complete an approved course of initial teacher training leading to the award of Qualified Teacher Status (QTS). Initial teacher training courses are provided by universities and other higher education institutions. Courses are also provided for graduates by consortia of schools. Non-graduates usually qualify by taking a three- or four-year degree course in which subject study and professional training are taken concurrently. Graduates wishing to enter the profession normally undertake a one-year Post-graduate Certificate of Education (PGCE). All teachers who wish to teach in maintained schools are required to register with the General Teaching Councils (established in September 2000). The Teaching and Higher Education Act 1998 introduced the requirement for newly qualified teachers to serve an induction period through their first year of teaching; this statutory induction period was introduced in England in 1999 and similar arrangements were introduced in Wales in 2003.

The Education Act 2005 Act states that the functions of the Training and Development Agency for Schools (TDA, formerly the Teacher Training Agency) are: to contribute to raising the standards of teaching and of other activities carried out by the school workforce; to promote careers in the school workforce; to improve the quality and efficiency of all routes into the school workforce; and to secure the involvement of schools in all courses and programmes for the initial training of school teachers. Higher education institutions whose initial teacher training provision satisfies criteria regarding quality and efficiency are accredited by the TDA and the Higher Education Council for Wales, respectively, to offer programmes which led to the award of QTS.

The content of training courses and the minimum period of practical and teaching experience in schools are specified in broad terms by the Government. In England, the amount of time spent training in schools depends on the route into teaching and the phase of teaching. Undergraduate trainees (the concurrent route) spend 24 weeks during three-year courses, or 32 weeks during four-year courses. On a postgraduate programme (the consecutive route), trainees can expect to spend 18



weeks in schools for primary school teaching, and 24 weeks for secondary and Key Stage 2/3 training. In addition, since May 2002, all trainees have been required to pass skills tests in numeracy, literacy and ICT. Computerized tests in numeracy and literacy were introduced in February 2001 and tests in ICT skills began in September 2001. All trainees are required to pass these skills tests before they can obtain QTS, register with the General Teaching Council for England and begin their induction period.

All initial teacher training institutions in Wales must offer training in Welsh as a second language as an integral part of their courses of primary teacher training. Students who successfully complete this component are awarded a certificate of competence to teach Welsh in primary schools. Concurrent courses leading to the Bachelor of Education (BEd) must include at least 24 or 32 weeks' practical teaching experience in the classroom for two- and three-year courses or four-year courses respectively. Consecutive courses leading to the PGCE must include at least 18 weeks (for intending primary teachers) or 24 weeks (for intending Key Stage 2/3 and secondary teachers) of classroom-based experience. All trainees must have experience of at least two schools.

Depending on the category of school, the employer is either the local authority (LA) or the school governing body. The LA is the employer of teachers in community schools and voluntary controlled schools and is the body which determines the majority of their conditions of service. However, the governing body has many of the functions of the employer, including determining the number and composition of staff. In voluntary aided schools and foundation schools the governing body is the employer of teachers and other staff. Teachers are public employees, but not civil servants. The National Employers Organization for School Teachers (NEOST) provides national support to local authorities in their role as employers. The organization's main functions include national negotiations on pay and conditions of local government employees.

Full-time teachers are required, as part of their conditions of service, to teach for 190 days each year and to be available for staff development or other duties for a further five days a year. Within the 195 days, teachers must undertake duties at the direction of the headteacher for up to 1,265 hours per year. These directed duties include teaching, attendance at consultation meetings with parents and others, and staff development, but they exclude other professional duties such as the preparation of lessons, teaching materials and teaching programmes; the marking of pupils' work; and the writing of reports on pupils' progress, which must all be carried out in addition to the directed duties.

In **Northern Ireland**, the main teacher training courses are the four-year Bachelor of Education Honours and Bachelor of Arts Honours (Education) and the one-year PGCE course for graduates. The General Teaching Council for Northern Ireland, which was established in 2002, advises the Department of Education and the employing authorities on a wide range of issues, including training, career development and performance management of teachers, and standards of teaching and standards of conduct for teachers. The Council has similar powers to the General Teaching Councils in England and Wales. The training of teachers comprises three integrated stages: initial teacher training in a higher education institution; an induction



period in the first professional post; and a period of 'early professional development'. Initial teacher training is provided by five higher education institutions, including the Open University. The programmes lead to 'eligible to teach' status and are prepared and delivered in partnerships with schools. The areas of competence are: understanding of the curriculum, and professional knowledge; subject knowledge and subject application; teaching strategies and techniques, and classroom management; assessment and recording of pupils' progress; and foundations for further professional development. Concurrent courses leading to the Bachelor of Education (BEd) must also include at least 32 weeks' practical teaching experience in the classroom. Consecutive courses leading to the PGCE must include at least 18 weeks (for intending primary teachers) or 24 weeks (for intending secondary teachers) of classroom-based experience.

Policy concerning teachers' pay and conditions is the responsibility of the Department of Education. Agreement on teachers' pay and conditions of service is reached through the Teachers' Salaries and Conditions of Service Committee (Schools) which comprises the employing authorities/employer representatives, the Department of Education and the five recognized teachers' unions. Teachers are not civil servants, but employees of the Education and Library Boards (ELBs), the Council for Catholic-Maintained Schools, or of the governing body of the maintained school (other than Catholic-maintained schools), the voluntary grammar school or the grant-maintained integrated school in which they work. As in England and Wales, they are not guaranteed employment at any stage of their professional life, but must apply for specific posts. As regards teachers' workload, arrangements are generally the same as those in operation in England and Wales.

Responsibility for continuing professional development (CPD) in England, Wales and Northern Ireland is shared across a range of organizations, including: central government, e.g. the Departments for Education and the TDA in England, the National Assembly for Wales, and the Department of Education in Northern Ireland; the National College for School Leadership in England; the General Teaching Councils; local authorities and the Education and Library Boards in Northern Ireland, where appropriate; school governing bodies (boards of governors in Northern Ireland); Regional Training Unit (RTU) in Northern Ireland; headteachers; and the individual teachers concerned. All teachers have a professional duty to review their methods of teaching and programmes of work, and to participate in arrangements for their in-service training or CPD as teachers. There is no legal minimum requirement stated for the length of time to be spent on continuing professional development. Participation depends on the professional needs of the teacher concerned and the availability of the resources in the school to meet them. It can range from a few hours to several days and sometimes full- or part-time studies over an extended period, in preparation for nationally recognized qualifications. Courses may be held during school hours, in 'twilight' sessions after school or at weekends or during holidays. The statutory conditions of service do, however, require teachers to be available for work under the direction of the headteacher for 195 days per year, of which only 190 are teaching days. The five days when school sessions are not required were introduced to support a number of non-teaching activities, including in-service training.



In **Scotland**, all who wish to teach in publicly funded nursery, primary, secondary and special schools in Scotland are required to hold a Teaching Qualification (TQ), in order to be registered with the General Teaching Council for Scotland (GTCS). Registration is a requirement before a teacher can be employed by an education authority in Scotland. A Teaching Qualification may be gained by one of three routes: (i) to become a primary teacher or a secondary teacher of technology, physical education or music it is possible to take a four-year course leading to a Bachelor of Education (BEd) degree at one of seven teacher education institutions (faculties of education); (ii) to become a secondary teacher in certain subjects it is possible in some higher education institutions to take a combined degree which includes subject study, study of education and school experience; (iii) those who already hold a university degree and wish to teach in either a primary or a secondary school can take a one-year university course for a Professional Graduate Diploma in Education (PGDE) leading either to a Teaching Qualification (Primary) or a Teaching Qualification (Secondary). Teachers in colleges may, and the majority do, undertake training leading to a Teaching Qualification (Further Education). They may also thereafter register with the GTCS. There is, however, no legal requirement for them to do either.

Courses leading to the Teaching Qualification (Primary Education) are based on the Guidelines for Initial Teacher Education Courses (1998). There are three major elements in the course: professional studies, curriculum studies, and school placement experience. Thirty weeks are spent in school experience, which provides a focus for the whole course. It offers an opportunity to observe children and teachers; to practice different teaching styles; to develop the attributes of a primary teacher; and to gain some experience of the operation of a school as a whole. In addition to these three key elements of the primary BEd course, students can choose particular areas for special study (e.g., music, computing, modern foreign languages, early education, or additional support needs). Recently, students are strongly encouraged to choose a modern foreign language. The one-year PGDE course for primary teachers is intended to provide professional training for students who have already experienced at least three years of higher education and obtained a degree. It contains the same three closely inter-related elements: school experience, professional studies and curricular studies. Most students aiming at the Teaching Qualification (Secondary Education) take the one-year PGDE course. As in other teacher education courses, the period of school experience is considered to be of the greatest importance and students on this course must spend 18 of their 36 weeks in school placements. In subject studies students learn to relate their specialist subjects to the school curriculum and develop strategies and methods for teaching them. In some cases they study further aspects of their subjects which are part of the school curriculum but did not feature in their degree course.

The local authorities appoint and employ school teachers in the public sector. However, conditions of service are negotiated at the national level by the Scottish Negotiating Committee for Teachers (SNCT), a body comprising membership from the local authority employers, teacher organizations and the Scottish Executive. Teachers in state schools have a standard 35 hours a week and work 195 days a year. The amount of class contact time is 22.5 hours a week. Teachers also spend time outside school hours for: preparing lessons, marking work and exams, and attending meetings.



The term ‘continuing professional development’ (CPD) is used also in Scotland to cover the range of in-service provision. There is a considerable amount of such provision, delivered in many forms and covering most subjects and many aspects of school life. Teachers can expect to receive advice and be encouraged to undertake approved courses of study. They can identify their own in-service training needs at any time. Under the agreement *A Teaching Profession for the Twenty-first Century* all teachers are entitled to a contractual minimum of 35 hours of CPD per annum. They should draw up a CPD plan for the forthcoming year after discussion with their line manager in a formal process of professional review and development. This plan should be based on individual professional need and on school, local and national priorities. Teachers are expected to maintain a portfolio of their CPD. This provision of CPD time is additional to the five days per year that teachers spend in school without pupils; these ‘closure days’ are usually devoted to CPD activities organized or agreed by the headteacher or the education authority.

Educational research and information

The Departments for Education in England, the National Assembly for Wales, and the Department of Education in Northern Ireland fund educational research projects related to their specific objectives. Government agencies such as the Qualifications and Curriculum Authority, the Training and Development Agency for Schools and the further and higher education funding bodies also commission research relating to their specific fields of interest, as do professional bodies such as the General Teaching Council for England. Local authorities commission research individually and as part of a common research programme under the auspices of the Local Government Association (LGA). The Economic and Social Research Council (ESRC) is a major sponsor of educational research carried out by universities.

The overall mission of the National Foundation for Educational Research (NFER, see: <http://www.nfer.ac.uk/>), created in 1946, is to contribute to improving education and training nationally and internationally by undertaking research, development and dissemination activities and by providing information services. A growing area of its work is evaluating the impact of various education and training programmes, ranging from major national initiatives to small-scale local programmes. The NFER also participates in a wide range of international research partnerships and networks including the International Association for the Evaluation of Educational Achievement and the Consortium of Institutions for Development and Research in Education in Europe.

In Scotland, the Scottish Council for Research in Education (SCRE, see: <http://www.scre.ac.uk/>) receives a grant from the Scottish Office which goes towards its maintenance, as well as income from other sources. The SCRE compiles the database on educational research in Scotland (see: <http://www.scre.ac.uk/is/>) which provides access to the vast body of research relevant to education in Scotland at all levels and stages, from pre-school to higher and vocational education.



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Qualifications, Curriculum and Assessment Authority for Wales. *The school curriculum in Wales*. Cardiff, Wales, United Kingdom, 1999.

Web pages providing access to information on education and training in the United Kingdom (see below).

Web resources

England:

Department for Children, Schools and Families: <http://www.dcsf.gov.uk/> [Last checked: October 2007.]

Department for Innovation, Universities and Skills: <http://www.dius.gov.uk/> [Last checked: October 2007.]

Higher Education Funding Council for England: <http://www.hefce.ac.uk/> [Last checked: October 2007.]

Learning and Skills Council: <http://www.lsc.gov.uk/> [Last checked: October 2007.]

Office for Standards in Education, Children's Services and Skills: <http://www.ofsted.gov.uk/> [Last checked: October 2007.]

Qualifications and Curriculum Authority: <http://www.qca.org.uk/> [Last checked: October 2007.]



Training and Development Agency for Schools: <http://www.tda.gov.uk/> [Last checked: October 2007.]

Northern Ireland:

Department of Education, Northern Ireland: <http://www.deni.gov.uk/> [Last checked: October 2007.]

Department for Employment and Learning: <http://www.delni.gov.uk/> [Last checked: October 2007.]

Northern Ireland Council for Curriculum, Examinations and Assessment: <http://www.ccea.org.uk/> [Last checked: October 2007.]

Northern Ireland Curriculum: <http://www.nicurriculum.org.uk/> [Last checked: October 2007.]

Scotland:

General Teaching Council for Scotland: <http://www.gtcs.org.uk/> [In English. Last checked: October 2007.]

Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Education, Scotland: <http://www.hmie.gov.uk/> [In English. Last checked: October 2007.]

Learning and Teaching Scotland: <http://www.ltscotland.org.uk/> [In English. Last checked: October 2007.]

Scottish Executive Education Department: <http://www.scotland.gov.uk/Topics/Education> [In English. Last checked: October 2007.]

Scottish Funding Council: <http://www.sfc.ac.uk/> [In English. Last checked: October 2007.]

Scottish Qualifications Authority: <http://www.sqa.org.uk/> [In English. Last checked: October 2007.]

Wales:

Department for Children, Education, Lifelong Learning and Skills, Welsh Assembly: <http://new.wales.gov.uk/about/departments/dcells/?lang=en> [In English and Welsh. Last checked: October 2007.]

Higher Education Funding Council for Wales: <http://www.hefcw.ac.uk/> [In English and Welsh. Last checked: October 2007.]

Welsh Joint Education Committee: <http://www.wjec.co.uk/> [In English and Welsh. Last checked: October 2007.]



United Kingdom:

Higher Education Statistics Agency: <http://www.hesa.ac.uk/> [In English. Last checked: October 2007.]

Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education: <http://www.qaa.ac.uk/> [In English. Last checked: October 2007.]

EURYBASE, the information database on education systems in Europe:
<http://www.eurydice.org/> [In several languages.]

For updated links, consult the Web page of the International Bureau of Education of UNESCO: <http://www.ibe.unesco.org/links.htm>