

BRITISH EDUCATIONAL SYSTEM

Education in the United Kingdom is compulsory for everyone between ages 5 and 16. There are two parallel school systems in the UK:

- the state sector, where education is provided free, financed by the government and administered through local education authorities. Most schools in this sector are day schools, they accept children of all academic abilities and are co-educational. However, there still exist so-called Grammar Schools which select only the more academically gifted pupils and tend to be single sex schools. The state school system does not normally teach international students below the age of 16.
- the private sector, where parents are required to pay fees for a child's education. Schools in the private sector are called independent or public.

All state schools and most private schools follow the National Curriculum which is set up by the Government. From the age 11 children start secondary education and study between 10-12 core subjects - English, Mathematics, Science, Modern Languages, History, Geography, Design & Technology, Information Technology, Music, Art, Physical Education. There are two most relevant national exams that are compulsory for all school children being educated in mainstream schools in the UK: GCSE in Years 10 & 11 and A-level exams in Year 12 & 13.

When pupils are aged 14 they start a 2-year preparatory course leading to GCSE - **General Certificate of Secondary Education**. Students usually take their GCSE exams at 16 years old. Most take up to 10 subjects, six of these are compulsory "core" subjects namely English Language and English Literature, Mathematics, a Modern Language, a Science, and a Humanity (i.e. History). These are studied together with 3-4 optional choices of subject: Computer Studies, Music, extra Science subject, etc. For each examination passed pupils are awarded a grade between A and G with A being the highest and G the lowest.

GCE "A" level - General Certificate of Education Advanced Level is a 2-year syllabus which is the most common way of fulfilling the entry requirements for a degree course at British universities or university sector colleges. Students start preparing for A-level examinations when they are aged around 16-17. They usually take between 2 and 4 subjects at one time and will normally be expected to have a GCSE or equivalent qualification.

Further education

Those students who do not wish to follow a degree course may legally leave the school after the age of 16 and start work. In this case they will need a vocational course designed to give them the necessary qualifications. Such courses are available at state-financed *further education (or tertiary) colleges and independent sixth form colleges*. There are over 500 colleges of further education in the UK providing academic, vocational and professional courses.

Higher education

A degree from a British higher institution is accepted everywhere and is respected throughout the world. British universities have both a vision of academic excellence and a tradition which goes back over five hundred years.

Britain has more than 180 higher education institutions including universities and university sector colleges with the power to devise their own courses and to award their own degrees. They date from different centuries, and all have their unique specialisms and strengths.

A-levels are still the most common entrance qualifications though most universities now accept the IB and GNVQs as the equivalent of A-levels.

Usually studying for the first degree can take three years for an honours degree though some degree courses take four years to complete, and some even more.

Students with good degrees can go on to a postgraduate or higher degree.

<http://www.windsoreducation.co.uk/eng/education/index.htm>

