



Directorate-General for Education and Culture



# Structures of education, vocational training and adult education systems in Europe

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European Commission





Structures of Education,  
Vocational Training  
and Adult Education  
Systems in Europe

# UNITED KINGDOM

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**ENGLAND AND WALES  
NORTHERN IRELAND**

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If you wish to have more detailed information on education systems in Europe, we warmly recommend that you consult the EURYBASE database (<http://www.eurydice.org>) and the CEDEFOP monographs (<http://www.cedefop.eu.int>)

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# INTRODUCTION

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Europe is characterised by a very wide variety of education and training systems. In order that this diversity should be fully appreciated, EURYDICE, the information network on education in Europe, the European Centre for the Development of Vocational Training (CEDEFOP) and the European Training Foundation (ETF) regularly update a set of national monographs entitled *Structures of Education, Vocational Training and Adult Education Systems in Europe*.

Descriptions relating to individual countries in turn include basic information on the administration and structure of their systems of education and initial vocational training at all levels (from pre-primary to tertiary). Also included are descriptions of initial vocational education and training in alternance and adult education and training within provision for lifelong learning. The initial and in-service training of teachers and their status are also considered.

The information is set out in accordance with a common structure to facilitate inter-country comparisons while ensuring that special features peculiar to each system are duly emphasised.

The description for each country is preceded by a diagram of its education system. Here again, the way the diagrams are presented has, as far as possible, been standardised so that common – and differing – features of the various systems can be more easily identified and compared.

The first chapter within each country section is devoted to a short presentation of the country concerned, together with the basic principles governing its education and training, the division of responsibilities and then more specific information (relating to administration, inspection, financing, private schooling and advisory bodies). The major reforms of education systems are also considered.

The other chapters deal in turn with pre-primary education, compulsory and post-compulsory education (general, technical and vocational provision entirely within schools). The way these chapters are structured depends on each national context. Where pre-primary education is not in reality separate from primary education, or where compulsory education spans different levels, no artificial division has been created. In the case of all countries, a brief description of the aims and structure of the level of education concerned is followed by further headings devoted to the curriculum, assessment, teachers and statistics.

Initial vocational education and training in alternance is the subject of a chapter in its own right. It includes all education and training for young people that is not essentially school-based, and thus covers for example apprenticeships based on the 'dual system' pattern, sandwich course training and any other initiatives and experiments with major elements of 'on-the-job' experience.

This is followed by a chapter on tertiary education, in which a summary description is supplemented by sections on admission, tuition fees, the academic year, courses, qualifications and assessment. The chapter includes any initiatives implemented as part of the Bologna process.

The last chapter deals with continuing education and training for adults (whether in or outside the labour market, employed or unemployed). It provides information on the political, legislative and financial framework of this kind of education, on the authorities concerned and their responsibilities, as well as on the general organisation of training for adults (types of institution, access requirements, programme objectives, the curriculum and quality assurance). There is also a brief description of guidance/counselling services, as well as of questions relating to assessment and accreditation including the recognition of non-formal kinds of learning.

The situation regarding teachers is dealt with in a specific section for each level of education discussed. Also provided are national statistics on the number of pupils, students, teachers and educational institutions and, where figures are available, on pupil or student/teacher ratios, attendance and attainment rates or, yet again, on the choice of branches of study or areas of specialisation.

The National Units in the EURYDICE Network have drafted the descriptions for their countries, each using the same proposed outline of content as a common framework. The information on initial vocational education and training in alternance, and on adult education has been prepared in close collaboration with members of the CEDEFOP REFER Network (in the case of the European Union and EFTA/EEA countries) and the National Observatories of the European Training Foundation (ETF) in the case of the 12 candidate countries. We are extremely grateful to them and to all those who were involved in this project in the EURYDICE European Unit in Brussels, CEDEFOP in Thessaloniki, and the ETF in Turin for their invaluable contribution to this fundamental source of information which is vital to a better understanding of education and training systems in Europe.

Given the number of countries now covered <sup>(1)</sup> and the amount of data available, the description of each system of education and training may be consulted solely electronically on the website of the EURYDICE Network (<http://www.eurydice.org>), which brings it to the attention of the largest possible number of people and enables it to be updated on a more regular basis.

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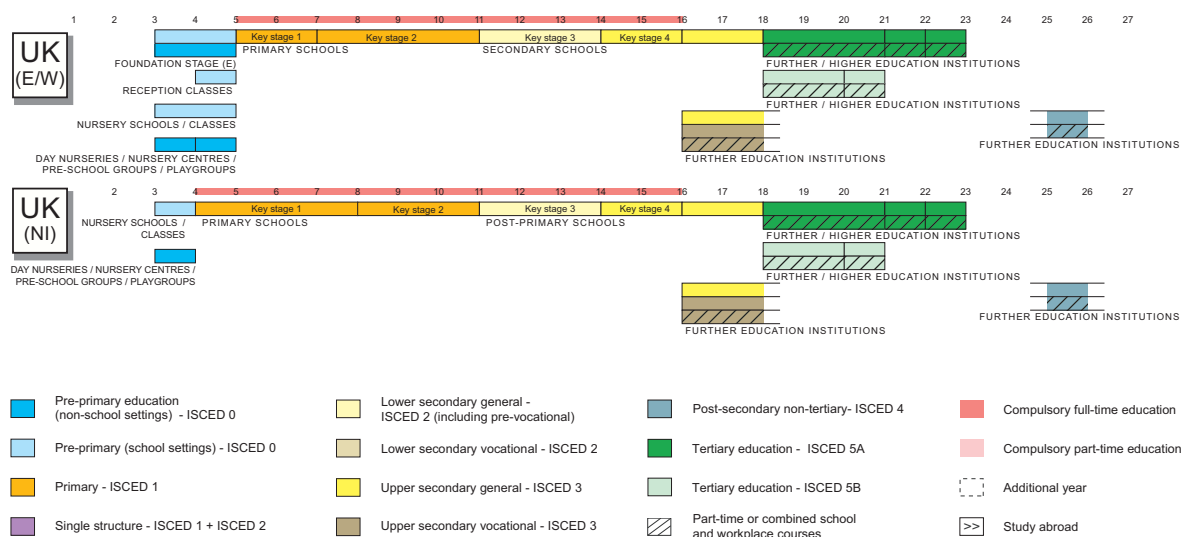
Peter de Roij  
Director of the ETF

June 2003

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<sup>(1)</sup> The 30 European countries taking part in the EU Education Programme, Socrates.

Organisation of the education system in England, Wales and Northern Ireland,  
2003/04



Source: Eurydice.

## BACKGROUND

### United Kingdom

#### Central government

The United Kingdom (UK) consists of Great Britain (England, Wales and Scotland) and Northern Ireland. It has a constitutional monarchy and the Sovereign is Head of State and Head of Government. The Government comprises the Legislature (Parliament), the Executive (the Cabinet, which consists of about 20 Ministers, who are usually heads of government departments and are chosen by the Prime Minister) and the Judiciary. Parliament consists of the Queen, the House of Lords and the House of Commons. Most of the work of Parliament is conducted in the House of Commons at Westminster, which is composed of 659 elected Members, including 40 for Wales, 72 for Scotland and 18 for Northern Ireland. The Labour Party currently has the majority in the House of Commons, having won the last two general elections in 1997 and 2001. However, prior to 1997, the Conservative Party had been in office since 1979.

Arrangements for devolving power from the Westminster Parliament to National Assemblies in Northern Ireland and Wales and a new Scottish Parliament were implemented in 1999. As a result of difficulties in the peace process, the Northern Ireland Assembly was suspended at midnight on 14 October 2002 and the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland assumed responsibility for government.

The Westminster Parliament remains unchanged and continues to deal with non-devolved areas. Details about constitutional arrangements in the UK are given in the relevant national description.

#### Legislation

The constitution of the UK is not contained in any single document but statutes, common law and convention are the main sources of constitutional law. There has always been a separate legal system in Scotland which is quite different from the legal system in the rest of the UK. Although some statutory provisions are UK-wide, the nature of the union means that there

may be separate legislation, common law provisions and conventions in the four constituent parts of the UK. Primary education legislation for England and Wales is enacted by the UK Parliament at Westminster (London). Separate legislation is made for Scotland and Northern Ireland. Since devolution, the Scottish Parliament and, until October 2002 (see above), the Northern Ireland Assembly have been responsible for enacting educational legislation for their respective countries.

Whilst broadly similar, there are differences in the education systems in terms of organisation, administration and control as well as educational terminology, the designation of educational institutions and the qualifications system. For clarity, the descriptions of education which follow are provided in three sections, each outlining the separate systems in England and Wales, Northern Ireland and Scotland.

#### Local government

Local authorities or councils consist of democratically elected councillors. In England, local government is organised either as a single-tier or a two-tier system. A single-tier, which may be a London borough, metropolitan district or unitary authority, provides all public services in the geographical area they represent, including education. A two-tier system operates where county councils provide the bulk of services such as education and social services and the smaller district councils provide other services such as housing and refuse collection. In Wales and Scotland, there is a single-tier system: all local authorities are unitary authorities. In Northern Ireland a single-tier system also exists but elected district councils do not have responsibility for education. Education is organised at local level by Education and Library Boards which include, among others, members of the district councils and church representatives.

#### Religion

Every major religion is represented in the UK, because there are many ethnic groups and people who have come from overseas to settle.

However, the established church in England is the Church of England, which is Protestant Episcopal. In Scotland, it is the Presbyterian



Church of Scotland. There is no established church in Wales. In Northern Ireland, just over half the population is Protestant, and just under half is Roman Catholic.

### Languages

The official language in England by custom and practice is English, but in Wales, both English and Welsh are used in official documents. English is the official language in Scotland, with Gaelic as a national language, spoken by some 70,000 Scots. English is also the official language of Northern Ireland.

### Area and population

The area and population of the UK are as follows:

	Area (sq km)	Population (thousands) Mid-year estimates 2001
England	130 281	49 181
Northern Ireland	13 576	1 689
Scotland	77 925	5 064
Wales	20 732	2 903

Source: OFFICE FOR NATIONAL STATISTICS (2003). Annual Abstract of Statistics (2003 edition. No 139). London: TSO.

# ENGLAND AND WALES

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## 1. RESPONSIBILITIES AND ADMINISTRATION

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### 1.1 Background

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This section covers education in England and Wales only. Separate descriptions are available for Northern Ireland and Scotland.

For information on the government, legislation, religion, languages, area and population, please refer to the United Kingdom introductory section at the start of this document.

### 1.2 Basic principles and legislation

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Education provision in England and Wales is based on the principle that all children between the ages of five and 16 must receive efficient full-time education suitable to their age, ability and aptitude, and to any special educational needs they may have, either by regular attendance at school or otherwise.

All children between the ages of five and 16 are entitled to free education. Any subsequent education provided in schools or at further education institutions is normally free for students up to the age of 19 (subject to residency conditions) but adults undertaking courses at further education institutions may be charged fees. Higher education students have to pay a contribution towards tuition fees depending on personal or family income.

Education legislation is contained in a series of Acts of Parliament. Education Acts (primary legislation) largely apply to both England and Wales. Acts of Parliament may give Government ministers or other authorities the power to regulate administrative matters by means of 'delegated' or secondary legislation. This mostly takes the form of separate Orders and Regulations made by the Secretary of State (for education) in England, and the National Assembly for Wales, in Wales. These are

collectively known as statutory instruments, and may be introduced separately for England and Wales where requirements differ.

Major reforms introduced by Conservative Governments from 1979 include the Education Reform Act 1988, which introduced, for the first time, a National Curriculum for schools. This Act also provided for a high level of financial delegation to schools, which, together with other legislation passed during the 1980s, extended the financial and managerial responsibilities of school governing bodies. The Further and Higher Education Act 1992 abolished the distinction between universities and polytechnics, and established new funding councils for both further and higher education. It also removed further education institutions from local authority control to become autonomous corporate bodies.

Much of the essential law of education as it relates to schools is now embodied by the Education Act 1996, which repealed and consolidated earlier legislation without changing its effect.

The education agenda of the current Labour Government includes raising educational standards, reducing the effect of social exclusion and opening up opportunities for lifelong learning. Four major pieces of education legislation have recently been introduced in England and Wales. The School Standards and Framework Act 1998 introduced measures to raise standards of school education, and created a new framework of community schools, foundation schools and voluntary schools. The Teaching and Higher Education Act 1998 made new provisions with respect to teacher training, and to student fees, grants and loans. The Learning and Skills Act 2000 reformed the organisations responsible for managing the further education sector (see sections 4, 5 and 7). The Education Act 2002 included measures to increase schools' flexibility with respect to the curriculum, staffing and governance.

### 1.3 Organisation and administration of the education system

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The administration of the education system is effected at national and local government level. At institutional level, governing bodies have a high degree of autonomy for the management of their institutions.

#### Central government and national agencies

The Government helps set the broad policy framework for the education and training system and works in partnership with other central and local bodies to implement these policies. It also funds the public bodies involved in education and training.

In **England**, the Secretary of State for Education and Skills has overall responsibility for the **Department for Education and Skills (DfES)**, the government department responsible for policy on education and training in England. It is staffed by permanent civil servants, headed by a Permanent Secretary. The **Department for Work and Pensions (DWP)** is responsible in England for training and employment programmes such as the New Deal. The **Welsh Assembly Government's Department for Training and Education (DfTE)** has broadly similar responsibilities to the DfES and DWP in respect of **Wales**.

There are also a number of **non-departmental public bodies (NDPBs)**, known in Wales as **Assembly-sponsored public bodies (ASPBs)**, which may be established by statute but are not government departments nor parts of a department. They normally operate within broad policy guidelines set by departmental ministers. Their duties may include executive, administrative, regulatory or commercial functions. They employ their own staff.

The **Qualifications and Curriculum Authority (QCA)** is a statutory NDPB whose members are appointed by the Secretary of State for Education and Skills. The members must include persons with experience in the provision of education, training, and in commercial, financial or professional matters. The QCA's prime duty is to advise the Secretary of State on all matters affecting the school curriculum, pupil assessment and publicly funded qualifications offered in schools, colleges and workplaces in England. It is responsible for the development and management of the statutory system of National Curriculum assessment at age seven, 11 and 14. It provides guidance and support

materials for teachers, and some teaching materials (although the final choice of teaching methods and materials rests with schools). The QCA is the regulatory body for public examinations and publicly funded qualifications. It sets or approves national grade standards, accredits qualifications, and defines and maintains standards of quality assurance expected of the **awarding bodies**, which offer general and vocational qualifications. Awarding bodies are responsible for syllabus development, approval of schools and other institutions as examination centres, standardisation of marking and quality assurance. They are independent, not-for-profit companies, funded largely by examination fees, whose members are drawn from education and industry.

The **Qualifications, Curriculum and Assessment Authority for Wales (ACCAC)** works closely with the QCA in England, and performs, in relation to Wales, functions similar to those that QCA exercises in England.

The **Learning and Skills Council (LSC)** and the **National Council for Education and Training for Wales** (commonly known as the National Council - ELWa) are statutory public bodies. Their members are appointed by the Secretary of State in England and the National Assembly for Wales, in Wales, and include persons with experience in the provision of education, and in commercial, financial or professional matters. They are responsible for the planning and funding of all post-16 education and training, including that provided in schools, but excluding higher education.

The **Higher Education Funding Councils for England and Wales** respectively are statutory public bodies whose members are appointed by the Secretary of State in England and the National Assembly in Wales, and include persons with experience in the provision of higher education and in commercial, financial or professional matters. The Funding Councils distribute public money for teaching and research to universities and other institutions which provide higher education. The Higher Education Council for Wales is now commonly known as the Higher Education Council – ELWa.

Funding for research is also provided by the six **Research Councils** (public bodies established under Royal Charter, within the control of the Department of Trade and Industry) and by the **Arts and Humanities Research Board (AHRB)** (which will be upgraded to a full Research Council by 2005).

The **Teacher Training Agency (TTA)** is a statutory public body whose members, appointed by the Secretary of State in England, include persons

who have experience in teaching and the provision of education. It is responsible for ensuring that there are sufficient facilities for training teachers for service in maintained schools in England, and for funding initial teacher training in England. It is also responsible for designating institutions which satisfy the criteria and standards specified by the Secretary of State as accredited providers of courses of initial teacher training, for ensuring the effective implementation of the national curricula for teacher training and for setting standards and developing a strategy for the continuing professional development of teachers. The Higher Education Council - ELWa is responsible for performing these duties in respect of Wales.

### Local administration

The provision and organisation of school education services is largely the responsibility of the democratically elected local councils in England and Wales which have designated responsibility as **local education authorities (LEAs)**.

The Local Government Act 2000 required each local council in **England** and **Wales** to submit plans for modernisation to the then Secretary of State for Environment, Transport and the Regions in England (local government is now the responsibility of the Office of the Deputy Prime Minister) and to the Welsh Assembly Government in Wales. This restructuring was intended to make them more efficient, open and accountable. The restructuring of local government has resulted in the replacement of the traditional committee structure of local authorities with management structures involving cabinet-style governance with separate decision making and scrutiny structures. Decision making in local authorities is now shared between: the local authority executive – mayor or leader and cabinet; the scrutiny committees or panels; and the whole council. Any committees dealing with education must include representatives of parent-governors and church authorities.

Local authorities have a statutory duty to designate a 'Chief Education Officer' and, in most authorities, the management of the education service is delegated to this Officer (sometimes known as the Director of Education), who is assisted by professional and administrative staff. The principal duties of LEAs are to:

- secure the provision of a sufficient number of school places for pupils of compulsory school age and ensure there is sufficient pre-school provision in their area;
- provide funding for maintained schools in accordance with the locally agreed scheme;

- monitor and improve standards of education;
- act as the admissions authority in certain categories of school;
- assess and make provision for pupils' special educational needs, provide educational psychology and education welfare services, and secure regular school attendance;
- set term and holiday dates for certain categories of school;
- employ staff in certain categories of school (but not appoint, dismiss or manage staff, which is the responsibility of the school governing body);
- provide school meals (unless this function has been delegated to schools);
- provide transport free of charge for pupils who do not live within walking distance of the nearest suitable school.

The School Standards and Framework Act 1998 made provision for a new, but temporary (maximum lifespan of five years), type of organisational arrangement at local level in England. **Education Action Zones (EAZs)** consist of local clusters of up to around 20 schools, typically covering two or three secondary schools and their feeder primary schools. The Zones are based in areas facing challenging circumstances in terms of underachievement or disadvantage. The main object of the Education Action Zone should be the improvement of standards in the participating schools. Each zone is managed by an Action Forum, a public body with a legal status of a corporate body.

In 2001, the Government announced its intention to combine the EAZs, at the end of their statutory life, with the **Excellence in Cities (EiC)** Initiative. This initiative was launched in England in March 1999 to target deprivation in six urban areas but now covers 58 local authority areas across all major cities. By 2005 the original EAZs will be transformed into either 'Excellence Clusters' or 'EiC Action Zones' under the Excellence in Cities programme.

### Educational institutions

**Pre-primary education** is provided in publicly-funded nursery schools and the reception classes of primary schools as well as in a variety of private and voluntary-run pre-primary settings which receive government funding (nurseries and day-care centres, pre-school groups and playgroups and nursery schools). Management structures in private and voluntary settings vary, but they must all conform to government guidelines and standards implemented under a

range of legislation.

There are several legal categories of maintained (publicly-funded) **schools** including: community schools; foundation schools; voluntary aided schools and voluntary controlled schools. The ownership of these schools varies but they must all have a school governing body which sets the aims and overall conduct of the school, although head teachers have responsibility for the day-to-day management of the school. The composition of the governing body varies according to the category and size of school but usually includes the headteacher and representatives of parents, teachers, non-teaching staff, the LEA and the school's founding body (if any). Under the Education Act 2002, new, more flexible models for school governing bodies will be introduced by 2006. The governing body has a wide range of powers and duties including responsibilities for the budget, staffing (determining the number and composition of the staff, selecting staff, including the headteacher, and promoting, and disciplining staff other than the headteacher), pupil exclusions, and, depending on the category of school, pupil admissions. The governing body decides the general direction of the school and its curriculum, subject to the requirements of the National Curriculum. It has a duty to oversee the management of the school with a view to promoting high standards of educational achievement. The headteacher and staff report to the governing body on the school's overall performance, and in its turn the governing body should ensure accountability to parents and the wider local community. It is required by law to prepare an annual report and hold an annual parents' meeting. Teachers themselves are largely responsible for deciding teaching methods and what textbooks to use.

**Further education (FE) institutions** include further education colleges (providing a range of general and vocational education and training, through various modes of attendance largely for students over compulsory school age, including adults), sixth-form colleges (providing mainly full-time courses for 16- to 19-year-olds) and tertiary colleges (combining the functions of FE colleges and sixth-form colleges). Further education institutions were removed from local authority control and given the autonomy to run their own affairs under the Further and Higher Education Act 1992. The corporation (the governing body) is accountable for the management of the college and for the proper use of the public funds entrusted to it. It has full responsibility for internal organisation, including the employment of staff, and all aspects of educational provision. Corporations consist of 10-20 members, including the principal and a member from the local Learning and Skills

Council (LSC). Other members are drawn largely from local business and industry, but also include members elected by staff and students and, in some cases, parents.

Local education authorities also make provision for adult and community learning. The ways in which these services are organised vary between LEAs. For example, there may be free-standing **adult education institutions or centres**; an integrated **community education service** offered through schools; or courses may be provided by LEA staff and based in libraries, community centres, schools or other local premises. Free-standing adult education institutions or centres may have their own governing body, management and staff and may receive a delegated budget from the LEA. These services are funded by the Learning and Skills Council in England and the National Council – ELWa in Wales.

All **higher education institutions** are legally autonomous. Their governing bodies have full responsibility for educational provision (including teaching and assessment methods) and internal organisation. All universities and some other higher education institutions have the power to award their own degrees.

## 1.4 Inspection and quality assurance

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National inspectorates, local education authorities and governing bodies of educational institutions all contribute to the assurance of quality in education.

### **Government-supported nursery education**

Arrangements for the inspection of nursery education vary depending on the status and funding of the provider: maintained nursery schools and nursery classes within primary schools are inspected under the same arrangements as primary and secondary schools (see below) while a separate inspection system operates for settings in the private, voluntary and independent sectors that receive government funding.

In England, under the Care Standards Act 2000, the Office for Standards in Education (Ofsted) became responsible for the registration, regulation and inspection of childcare providers. As a result, from September 2002, a new system of combined inspection of the provision of childcare and nursery education has been introduced in government-supported private and

voluntary pre-school settings. Although care facilities will be inspected annually, combined inspections, which also cover the provision of education, will take place every 4 years. New national standards for daycare and childminding have been introduced by the Department for Education and Skills (DfES), but inspection of nursery education continues to focus on the effectiveness of settings with respect to children's progress in meeting the 'early learning goals' for pre-school education (see 2.2).

In Wales, the inspection of publicly-funded nursery education in voluntary and private settings is the responsibility of Estyn and is carried out, under contract, by independent Registered Nursery Inspectors (RGNIs). Inspectors assess the quality of education provided with reference to the 'desirable learning outcomes' for pre-school education (see 2.2).

### **Nursery, primary and secondary schools**

The **school governing body** has a general responsibility for seeing that the school is run effectively, and should play an important role in monitoring and evaluating school performance.

**Local Education Authorities (LEAs)** have a responsibility for quality assurance in their schools and may offer inspection and advisory services. They have a duty to exercise their functions with a view to promoting high standards of education for pupils of school age in their area. They are responsible for taking initial action in failing schools, and also have powers of intervention, for example the power to withdraw the school's delegated budget and appoint additional governors in certain circumstances.

Overall responsibility for the national school inspections systems lies with Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Schools (HMCI) in England and with Her Majesty's Chief Inspector for Education and Training in Wales. The office of Her Majesty's Chief Inspectorate in England is known as **Ofsted (the Office for Standards in Education)**, that in Wales as **Estyn**, Her Majesty's Inspectorate for Education and Training in Wales. The remit of Ofsted and Estyn is to improve standards of achievement and quality of education (and training, in Wales) through the management of the system of regular school inspection, public reporting and informed independent advice.

Ofsted and Estyn arrange inspections and allocate schools to inspection teams (independent contractors) by competitive tender. Inspection teams are put together and led by

Registered Inspectors, approved by Ofsted and Estyn. The team must include inspectors capable of inspecting as appropriate: National Curriculum subjects; the curriculum for pupils under five and students post-16; vocational courses; religious education; equal opportunities issues; and the education of pupils for whom English is an additional language. All teams must include a lay member (someone without personal experience in the management or the provision of education in any school). Inspection teams work to published national frameworks. Every inspection leads to a public report, which reflects the inspection team's judgement on standards, the quality of education provided (including the quality of teaching, and curriculum and assessment), the quality of leadership and management, and the spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of pupils.

The permanent inspection staff, Her Majesty's Inspectors (HMI), who are civil servants, are responsible for providing the advice necessary to regulate and monitor the school inspection system. HMIs also visit schools in order to report on good practice in teaching and management, and issues such as public examinations and international comparisons. They carry out analyses to identify trends, evaluate the effects of educational policy and follow up on issues and concerns to which inspection findings have drawn attention.

### **Further education institutions and training providers**

Under the Learning and Skills Act 2000, the Office for Standards in Education (Ofsted) assumed responsibility for inspecting further education provision of 16- to 19-year-olds in England from April 2001. A new independent inspection body, the **Adult Learning Inspectorate (ALI)** assumed responsibility for the inspection of the quality of further education provision for those aged 19 and over, and work-based training for all ages in all types of publicly-funded institutions. The Act provides for a single common framework for inspection to be drawn up and agreed by Ofsted and ALI and provides for joint inspections where the provision falls within the remit of both bodies. The Act provides for inspections of provision across a geographical area. The ALI and Ofsted report on:

- the quality of education and training within their remit;
- the standards achieved by students; and
- whether financial resources for education and training are being used effectively.

## Higher education institutions

There are different systems for evaluating the quality of education in higher education institutions, and for evaluating the quality of research. The evaluation of initial teacher training is subject to different requirements from the evaluation of other forms of higher education.

The **Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education (QAA)** is an independent body set up in 1997 to provide an integrated quality assurance service for UK higher education institutions. Higher education institutions are responsible for providing good quality education and for ensuring that appropriate standards are achieved. The QAA provides assurance that standards and quality within higher education are being met by reviewing standards and quality, and providing reference points that define clear and explicit standards.

A new review system is currently being introduced in England and Northern Ireland. This features a cycle of institutional audit visits by a QAA audit team and, during the cycle, institutions making information on quality and standards available and conducting internal monitoring involving external reviewers. Visits look at the effectiveness of quality assurance arrangements at institutional level. Students contribute to the audit process. Audit reports are made public. Matters requiring attention are outlined in action plans and closely monitored. The first full programme of institutional audit will run until 2005 and thereafter it is intended that a six-year cycle will become the norm.

In Wales, a new quality assurance and standards framework is being developed for implementation in the academic year 2003/4.

The quality of **research** is assessed by the higher education funding bodies every three to five years through the Research Assessment Exercise. Assessment is by peer review, and the judgements of quality provided are used to calculate the allocation of research funds.

Initial teacher training is inspected by the Office for Standards in Education (Ofsted) in England and by Estyn in Wales. Inspections focus on three areas:

- quality of trainees' teaching against national standards for the award of Qualified Teacher Status (QTS);
- quality of training and assessment of trainees;
- selection and quality of trainee intake.

The different aspects of each of the five areas are graded on a four-point scale.

## 1.5 Financing, fees, loans and grants

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In England, the Department for Education and Skills (DfES) provides funds to the various statutory and non-statutory agencies including the Learning and Skills Council (LSC) and the Higher Education Funding Council for England (HEFCE). The DfES also makes grants available to local authorities to meet specific government priorities. Schools receive the majority of their funding from local government. This funding combines central government grants and additional local government investment in local education. A new system of funding for local education authorities (LEAs) came into force in April 2003. The Revenue Support Grant (RSG) is distributed to local authorities for all their services on the basis of a formula known as the Formula Spending Share (FSS) which includes an assumption of the funding local authorities raise from Council Tax (a local property tax). One of the blocks within the FSS is the Education Formula Spending Share (EFSS). The EFSS is divided into blocks of funding intended for schools and for defined local education authority functions. This division is designed to make clear the funding that central government intends should go into school level provision. In addition, local authorities can devote further revenue resources to education.

The total amount that a local authority may borrow to finance **capital expenditure** (defined as spending that produces or protects an asset that will last a long time such as a building, machinery or large items of equipment) on all its services is determined each year by central government. Each local authority receives an Annual Capital Guideline, which is the Government's estimate of that local authority's capital expenditure needs. Other potential sources of capital investment include funds bid for under the New Deal for Schools scheme and through Private Finance Initiative credits. As with revenue resources, it is the responsibility of each local authority to determine how its available capital resources are allocated between services, including education, taking account of its statutory responsibilities and its perception of local needs and priorities.

All central government funding for education in **Wales** is provided by the Welsh Assembly Government (WAG). The WAG decides the sums to be spent on its various areas of activities, including education, and distributes resources to local authorities, the National Council for Education and Training for Wales (also known as the National Council – ELWa) and the Higher Education Funding Council for

Wales (also known as the Higher Education Council - ELWa).

### **Government-supported nursery education**

In England and Wales, funding for nursery education is provided through the Revenue Support Grant (RSG) made to local authorities by central government (see above). LEAs distribute funds to nursery education providers on the basis of pupil numbers.

### **Primary and secondary schools**

Publicly funded schools in England and Wales receive their funding from local education authorities (LEAs). All publicly funded schools are fully funded for recurrent costs, and most are also fully funded for capital expenditure. However, for voluntary aided schools, 10 per cent of capital expenditure is the responsibility of the founding body.

Since local management of schools (LMS) was introduced under the Education Reform Act 1988 there has been a high level of financial delegation to schools and revised arrangements introduced in April 1999 further increased the level of delegation in England. Funding formulae, which are set by LEAs in consultation with their schools and local stakeholders, must provide for the calculation of the school's budget mainly on the basis of the number and age of the pupils. Formulae also take local needs into account such as the number of pupils with special educational needs, the extra costs incurred by small schools, and the additional needs of schools in socially deprived areas.

Education in maintained nursery, primary and secondary schools is **free of charge** to parents, including tuition, books and stationery. Schools may, however, invite parents to make voluntary contributions for some activities.

The school governing body and headteacher are entirely responsible for the expenditure of the school's annual budget, which covers all staffing costs (including teacher supply cover), recurrent equipment, books and materials, and premises' running costs, repairs and maintenance.

Local authorities and education institutions also receive a relatively small proportion of direct funding from the Department for Education and Skills (DfES) or the Welsh Assembly Government. For example, funding from the Standards Fund (England) and the Grants for Education Support and Training (Wales) is allocated for particular purposes in line with current priorities. Schools may also raise extra

funds through voluntary contributions and renting out school premises to local bodies.

Although governing bodies are normally consulted about proposals for capital expenditure, final responsibility rests with LEAs, who have a duty to ensure that there are sufficient schools in their areas, and hence for opening, closing, enlarging or changing the location of schools.

In England, under the New Deal for Schools, funding is available to support the capital needs of school buildings. This includes Devolved Formula Capital funding which is allocated to all maintained schools. Its primary uses are to fund small capital projects or can be accumulated for up to three years to fund larger projects.

### **Further education and training**

Under the Learning and Skills Act 2000, the Learning and Skills Council for England (LSC) and the National Council for Education and Training for Wales (commonly known as the National Council – ELWa) became responsible, from April 2001, for funding the provision of full- and part-time education and training (except higher education) for students over compulsory school age (16 years). The LSC and the National Council may fund formal and informal learning in further education institutions, adult education centres, school sixth forms, private training providers and voluntary organisations. The funding of work-based training on employers' premises is also within the remit of the Councils.

Funding is provided to institutions on the basis of separate formulae in England and Wales which take into account various elements of costs including the number of students, the type of courses offered as well as factors relating to the location of the institution, the level of social deprivation and the achievement of students in terms of qualifications achieved.

The governing body of a further education institution is responsible for ensuring that all expenditure incurred by the institution, including all staffing costs, teaching materials, and premises' running costs, repairs and maintenance, professional fees, publicity and marketing etc. can be met from within its resources.

Institutions may secure additional income by various means including providing courses, consultancy and research work for employers or other organisations, charging full-cost fees to overseas students, selling goods or services in connection with the work of the institution or the letting of premises to users in the community.



There are a number of Government-supported training schemes which are largely funded through the local arms of the LSC and National Council - ELWa. Other training may be funded by individuals or by employers, or a combination of both.

In publicly-funded further education institutions, 16- to 18-year-olds from the UK and the European Union/European Economic Area who have ordinarily been resident in the UK for the previous three years are exempt from tuition fees. However, they may incur some costs, for example, for registration and exam fees, books and equipment or transport to and from college. Students over the age of 19 may be charged fees and, in England, there is an expectation that approximately 25 per cent of the notional full cost of a course will be met by fees. Fees are not charged to students in certain circumstances such as unemployed people receiving state benefits (jobseekers' allowance) and those undertaking courses in basic skills. A range of financial assistance is available to students under certain circumstances. Students undertaking full-time education or training under the New Deal Programme have their fees paid for them.

### Higher education institutions

Higher education institutions are mainly funded by central government through the **Higher Education Funding Councils for England (HEFCE)** and the **Higher Education Funding Council for Wales** (now commonly known as the Higher Education Council - ELWa). The funding councils are responsible for deciding the method by which funding is allocated to institutions, within broad Government policy guidelines. The distribution of funding for teaching depends largely on the number of students and the subjects which an institution teaches. Nearly all funding for research, however, is related directly to the quality and volume of research.

Other sources of funding include research grants and contracts awarded by the Research Councils (see 1.3); tuition fees paid by overseas students and (since 1998) contributions towards tuition fees paid by home students; charities; research commissions from commercial or industrial firms; endowments; and residential and catering and conference services.

In January 2003, the Government issued a White Paper, setting out its plans for reform and investment in higher education. The paper includes proposals for changes in the student finance system. In 2003-04 the Government will introduce legislation to underpin the proposals in the strategy paper.

As all universities and other higher education institutions are autonomous institutions, their governing bodies are responsible for all expenditure and financial management.

Fees are charged by all higher education institutions. Since 1998-99, new UK and European Union/European Economic Area undergraduate students have been required to pay a means-tested contribution towards the cost of their tuition fees. Many students are, however, eligible for support to help meet the cost of these fees, the amount of support depending on their own, their parents' or their husband's or wife's income. From 1999/2000, maintenance grants, which had been available to many students, were replaced by loans, part of which are means-tested. The Government's policy is that loans should be available to students on favourable conditions, which require borrowers to repay, in real terms, broadly the same amount as that borrowed. The rate of repayment depends on the level of the borrower's income after graduation. More recently, the National Assembly for Wales has re-introduced grants for students in Wales. Assembly Learning Grants were introduced from September 2002 for students from low-income families.

Financial support for approved courses of postgraduate study and for research may be available in the form of awards or studentships. Awards are available from the Research Councils, the Arts and Humanities Research Board or in certain cases, the Department for Education and Skills (DfES). Students taking postgraduate courses leading to the award of Qualified Teacher Status are eligible for financial support in the same way as undergraduate students. Other incentives may also be available.

## 1.6 Advisory and consultative bodies

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There are a number of **non-departmental public bodies (NDPBs)** (**Assembly-sponsored public bodies (ASPBs)**, in Wales) which not only advise the Secretary of State and the Welsh Assembly Government, but also have delegated responsibility for particular aspects of the education service. They include the QCA, ACCAC, the TTA, the LSC and ELWa and Higher Education Funding Councils (see 1.3) and the British Educational Communications and Technology Agency (BECTA) which supports the Government in the deployment of ICT in education.

The House of Commons Education and Skills Select Committee conducts inquiries into subjects related to the expenditure, administration and policy of the Department for Education and Skills. At the end of each inquiry reports are published which usually contain recommendations to Government and other bodies. Recent topics have included A-level standards and post-16 student support.

The Government may also set up **advisory councils or committees** to undertake research or collect information. The membership normally includes representatives of the relevant interests and professions. From time to time, an *ad hoc* committee of inquiry is set up to examine specific aspects of the education service. For example, the National Committee of Inquiry into Higher Education was established in May 1996 by the then Secretaries of State for Education and Employment, Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland to make recommendations on how the purposes, shape, structure, size and funding of higher education, including support for students, should develop to meet the needs of the United Kingdom over the next 20 years. Its members were drawn from education, industry and commerce, the National Union of Students (NUS) and the professions. Examples of recent advisory groups and committees include the Advisory Group on Education for Citizenship and the Teaching of Democracy in Schools (1997), the Modern Apprenticeship Advisory Committee which reported in 2001, and most recently, the Working Group on 14-19 Reform, comprising representatives of schools, colleges, higher education and industry, which will report to Government in 2004.

Many **interest groups** exist to represent parties involved in education such as parents, teachers, governors, students, employers, trade unions and political and religious groups. These include, among others, the Local Government Association, CASE – the National Campaign for State Education, the National Governors' Council, the National Parent/Teacher Confederation, the National Union of Students and Universities UK. Such associations, as well as the general public, are normally invited to comment on Government discussion papers and policy proposals.

## 1.7 Private schools

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Private provision at the **pre-compulsory stage** of education may take the form of day nurseries, pre-school groups or playgroups, privately run nursery schools and nursery classes in

independent schools. The recent expansion of state-funded pre-school education has created publicly-funded places for three- and four-year-olds with such providers in the private and voluntary sectors.

**Schools** outside the maintained sector are known as independent schools. Some long-established senior (secondary) schools are known as public schools. Most boarding schools are independent schools.

Independent schools receive no direct state funding, but are financed from fees and income from investments. The majority are run by boards of governors as not-for-profit organisations.

Independent schools must be registered with the Department for Education and Skills (DfES) or the Department for Training and Education (DfTE) in Wales, which can require them to remedy deficiencies in their premises, accommodation or instruction. They are not required to provide the National Curriculum, but they must satisfy inspectors that their curriculum is of the requisite depth and breadth for the age, aptitudes and abilities of their pupils and for any special educational needs which they may have.

They offer the same range of publicly recognised qualifications, such as GCSEs and GCE A-levels, as schools in the maintained sector. Although they are not required to participate in the National Curriculum assessment arrangements at age seven, 11 and 14, they are encouraged to do so.

Around seven per cent of pupils in England attend independent schools.

There are a number of independent **further education** institutions offering post-compulsory education. Many of these institutions offer an academic education leading to GCE A-level etc., but there are also a number of specialist institutions such as secretarial and business colleges and art colleges.

Most private further education institutions are accredited by the British Accreditation Council for Independent Further and Higher Education, which was set up by bodies responsible for the maintenance of academic standards to define, monitor and improve standards in independent further and higher education institutions in Britain. These institutions are financed largely from tuition fees; they receive no direct Government funding. They offer the same range of publicly recognised qualifications as publicly funded institutions.

There is only one independent **university**, the University of Buckingham. It is a self-governing institution with the power to award its own

degrees.

There are also a small number of private institutions which offer courses of higher education.

These institutions receive no direct government funding. However, students on designated

courses may be eligible for financial help in the form of a loan and a means-tested contribution towards tuition fees and student support.

## 2. PRE-PRIMARY EDUCATION

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Nursery education, which is also known as pre-school or early years education, is full- or part-time education for children below statutory school age (five years). It underwent considerable reform in the late 1990s, when the Government set targets to substantially increase the number of Government funded pre-school places in a range of settings. As a result, local education authorities (LEAs) in England and Wales now have a statutory duty to provide a good-quality, part-time nursery place for all four-year-olds whose parents want one. LEAs are working towards the Government target of extending this provision to all three-year-olds by April 2004.

The Government developed National Childcare Strategies for England and Wales in 1998 to fulfil its commitment to integrating early years education with pre-school childcare and out of school care (the care of pupils before and after school and during school holidays). The strategies also aim to raise the quality of childcare and make it more affordable and accessible, by increasing the number of places and improving the information regarding what is available.

In September 2000, the Foundation Stage of education was introduced in England, although it was formally established in the Education Act 2002. It caters for children from the age of three until the end of the reception class (usually aged five). It is a distinct stage of education in its own right and plays an important role in developing children's skills and knowledge and preparing them for the start of compulsory schooling. The Welsh Assembly Government is developing proposals for the introduction of a Foundation Phase for children aged three to seven in Wales.

### 2.1 Organisation

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Early Years Development and Childcare Partnerships (EYDCPs) have been created to ensure provision of high quality childcare and early years education. The Partnerships consist of local education authorities (LEAs) and all those involved in running early years settings, which can include nursery schools, nursery classes attached to primary schools, reception

classes in primary schools, pre-school play groups, day nurseries and combined nursery centres, run by public, private or voluntary bodies. Only those settings registered with an EYDCP are eligible to receive government funding.

Nursery schools and nursery classes in primary schools normally admit children from the age of around three years, depending on the admissions policy and the number of places available. Parents have a right to express a preference for a particular nursery institution. It is recommended that, on deciding their admissions policies, LEAs give priority to children with special educational needs and to children from socially and economically deprived areas. Early years settings are generally coeducational, but single-sex institutions do exist, for example, in nursery classes attached to single-sex private schools.

LEA-maintained nursery schools or nursery classes attached to primary schools are normally open five days per week (Monday to Friday) from around 9.00 a.m. to 3.00 p.m. during term time. They are closed during normal school holidays. Most children attend for five half-day sessions per week, each session lasting two-and-a-half hours (either morning or afternoon). Other early years settings have a similar timetable. Some children attend for five full days a week. Public and private day nurseries and combined nursery centres admit and care for children for the entire day. They usually open from around 7.30 a.m. to 6.00 p.m. throughout the year.

Classroom organisation is decided by the headteacher and staff. Children may be placed either in mixed-aged classes or grouped into classes according to age. Nursery schools and classes maintained by LEAs do not charge fees for the provision of nursery education, but local authority day nurseries may charge fees. Private and voluntary bodies working in partnership with their LEA receive government funding in respect of the part-time places provided for three- and four-year-olds. Many providers offer additional hours on a fee-paying basis.

## 2.2 Curriculum and assessment

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In England and Wales the National Curriculum applies to pupils of compulsory school age only. However, pre-school education providers receiving government funding are expected to work towards the **early learning goals** in England, and the **desirable learning outcomes** for early childhood education in Wales.

In **England**, the early learning goals complement the foundation stage of education. They cover the following areas: personal, social and emotional development; communication; language, literacy; mathematical development; knowledge and understanding of the world; physical development; and creative development. It is intended that children should achieve these goals by the end of the Foundation Stage, which is the end of the reception class (children usually aged around five).

The Education Act 2002 introduced the **foundation stage profile** from the 2002/03 school year as the new statutory assessment for children in the final year of the foundation stage in England. This replaced the previous system of baseline assessment on entry to primary education (see 3A.3). Early years practitioners assess each child's development in relation to the statutory early learning goals (see above) by accumulating observations and knowledge of the whole child. The foundation stage profile intends to provide a way of summing up that knowledge at the end of the foundation stage.

In **Wales**, the desirable learning outcomes (revised in 2000 by the Qualifications, Curriculum and Assessment Authority for Wales (ACCAC)) define the basis of curricular guidance for pre-school education. Desirable learning outcomes cover the same areas of learning as early learning goals and are intended as goals for learning for children by the time they enter compulsory education. There is no statutory requirement to assess children during pre-school education in Wales, although curricular guidance promotes the monitoring of children's progress as good practice. It is proposed to introduce a statutory 'foundation phase', with a curriculum extending from the ages of three to seven years by September 2008.

The headteacher and staff decide on the timetable, teaching methods and materials used in nursery schools and classes. In both England and Wales, the local education authority (LEA) may give advice about the organisation of teaching and the teaching programme, but has

no powers to impose teaching methods.

Government guidance recommends a minimum of two adults per group of 26 pupils in nursery schools and classes where the staff include a qualified teacher and a qualified nursery assistant. The ratio is reduced to 2:20 where one member of staff has other administrative duties to perform (for example, where he or she is also the headteacher). However, in other early years settings such as day nurseries and pre-school groups, the recommended staff: pupil ratio is one to four for two- to three-year-old children and one to eight for three- to five-year-old children.

## 2.3 Teachers

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Teachers in pre-school education are allocated by group and not usually by subject, although children may, from time to time, have sessions with teachers who specialise in subjects such as music or physical education.

Teaching staff employed in maintained nursery schools and classes are usually either qualified teachers or qualified nursery assistants. Teachers follow a period of initial training, usually lasting three years, and receive **Qualified Teacher Status**. Qualified nursery assistants hold a relevant qualification in childcare and education.

Nursery teachers and qualified nursery assistants in maintained nursery schools or classes are not civil servants, but are employed by contract, which may be permanent or temporary, full- or part-time, to the individual institution or local education authority (LEA).

All full-time teachers in publicly funded schools (including nursery teachers) are required by statute to have at least five working days when they are not required to teach pupils. It is recommended that the five working days be used for in-service training.

## 2.4 Statistics

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In England, most four-year-olds and the majority of three-year-olds take up a government-funded pre-school place in the maintained (state), private, voluntary and independent sectors.

In Wales, an estimated 79 per cent of pupils under five were in full- or part-time educational provision in 2001/02.

Number of public sector nursery schools  
2001/02

England	494
Wales	40

	Number of full- and part-time pupils age 2-4 2001/02 in the United Kingdom (including Scotland) in thousands
Maintained:	
Nursery schools	149.5
Primary schools	951.5
Special schools	6.8

	Pupil:teacher ratio in public-sector nursery schools 2001/02
England	16.6
Wales	16.4

Source: DEPARTMENT FOR EDUCATION AND SKILLS (2002). *Education and Training Statistics for the UK 2002 Edition*. London:TSO.

NB. Government-funded places are also available in the private, voluntary and independent sectors.

### 3. COMPULSORY EDUCATION

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Compulsory education is from age five to 16. All children must receive appropriate full-time education, by regular attendance at school or otherwise, from the beginning of the school term which follows their fifth birthday, to the last Friday in June in the school year in which a child reaches the age of 16. For children not educated at school, the most common alternative provision is education at home.

The period of compulsory education is divided into four key stages: key stage 1 (age five to seven years), key stage 2 (age seven to 11 years), key stage 3 (age 11 to 14 years) and key stage 4 (age 14 to 16 years).

Within the predominant two-tier system of primary and secondary schools, key stage 1 and key stage 2 are provided in primary schools, and key stage 3 and key stage 4 in secondary schools.

Some primary schools, known as infant schools, cater only for children in key stage 1, after which they transfer to a junior school until the age of 11. Most primary schools also admit four-year-olds to the reception class, and many also have a nursery class for younger children.

Although many secondary schools cater for pupils up to the end of compulsory education (16) only, over half also provide post-compulsory education for young people up to the age of 18+.

In some areas of England a three-tier system is in operation; pupils transfer from first school to middle school at age eight or nine and subsequently to a secondary school at age 12 or 13.

The basic principle underlying school education is that it should provide a balanced and broadly based curriculum which is suitable to the child's age, ability, aptitude and to any special educational needs (SEN) the child might have. A balanced and broadly based curriculum is defined 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 adult life.

Under the School Standards and Framework Act

1998, a new legal framework of community, voluntary and foundation schools was created. As a result, since 1 September 1999, schools established and fully funded by local education authorities (LEAs) have been allocated to the community schools category. Most other schools are categorised as voluntary aided or voluntary controlled schools in the new voluntary schools category. Voluntary schools are established by voluntary bodies, mainly churches, who retain some control over their management, but remain largely funded by LEAs. Those schools remaining have been allocated to the new foundation schools category. These too remain largely funded by LEAs, but are owned by the school governing body or a charitable foundation. Around two thirds of primary and secondary schools in England and three quarters of schools in Wales are categorised as community schools.

Parents may apply to any school for a place for their child, and there must be a written admissions policy to explain how places will be allocated if there are more applications than places at the school. For example, priority may be given to children who live closest to the school, to children who already have brothers or sisters at the school, or to children with special needs which may be best met by the school. Schools supported by religious foundations generally give preference to members of a particular faith or denomination.

Attendance at a primary school nursery class does not normally guarantee subsequent admission to the primary school reception class. Schools develop links aimed at easing the transfer of pupils from one phase to another. In some cases, a junior school may give priority to applications from pupils at a particular infant school (with which it may share a site), and secondary schools may give priority to pupils who attend particular feeder primary schools.

Primary schools and most secondary schools accept pupils without regard to academic ability, but a small number of secondary schools in England, known as grammar schools, admit pupils on the basis of their performance in selection tests, taken at the age of 11. Some secondary schools which specialise in certain subjects, such as modern foreign languages, or technology, may give priority for admission to up to ten per cent of children based on their

aptitude for the subject concerned.

Almost all publicly funded primary schools are coeducational, as are around 90 per cent of secondary schools.

The size of schools varies widely, but only 15 per cent of primary schools in England have 100 pupils or fewer, and around two per cent have more than 500 pupils. In Wales, however, nearly a third of primary schools have 100 pupils or fewer. Almost 90 per cent of publicly funded secondary schools in England and Wales have between 400 and 1,500 pupils.

All schools have a school governing body which is responsible for making decisions on the general direction of the school and its curriculum. The composition of the governing bodies of all schools normally reflects several sectors of the community, including the local business community and parents, alongside representatives of the LEA or the foundation body (if appropriate) and teaching and non-teaching staff from the school. In addition, many schools have a Parent-Teacher Association (PTA), which may provide parents with the opportunity to discuss issues of concern with teaching staff, but is used more frequently as a means of organising fund-raising activities. Many schools have links with local businesses and there is a national network of education-business partnerships.

For information on financing compulsory education, see 1.5.

## 3A. Primary education

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### 3A.1 Primary school organisation

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The legal school year runs from 1 September to 31 August. It must consist of 380 (half-day) sessions, but the actual dates of terms and holidays are decided by the LEA or the school governing body (depending on the category of school). Schools are generally open between 9 a.m and 3.30/4.00 p.m. The school year is normally divided into three terms (autumn term, spring term, and summer term) with a long summer break of about six weeks in July and August and shorter breaks of two to three weeks at Christmas and Easter. There are no consistent timings for school holidays and terms are of uneven length with the spring term varying each year according to when Easter falls. There is

currently some movement towards the adoption of a standardised six-term school year which would be consistent year on year from 2003/04. However, the decision to adopt this new model remains at the level of the LEA or school governing body (depending on the type of school).

The school week normally runs from Monday to Friday.

The school day is divided into a morning and an afternoon session. The times at which a school opens and closes each day are decided by the school governing body. The amount of time to be devoted to individual subjects is not prescribed. However, there are minimum recommended weekly lesson times which are 21 hours for pupils aged five to seven years and 23½ hours for pupils aged eight to 11 years, but most schools provide more hours of lessons than this suggested minimum. These times are in addition to the daily act of collective worship, registration and breaks for lunch and recreation.

Outside normal school hours, the premises may be used for other requirements of the school (such as meetings of the Parent-Teacher Association); or they may be used by the LEA or the wider community for adult education, out-of-school childcare, sport, or youth clubs.

Pupils are placed in a class according to their age and, at the end of each school year, they normally progress to the next class. Many primary schools, particularly small schools, may have one or more mixed-aged classes. Each class is normally the responsibility of a class teacher who teaches all or most of the curriculum. Classes for 5-7 year-olds must not exceed 30 pupils but there are no regulations governing class sizes for older pupils.

Teaching normally takes place in mixed-ability groups or classes, but some larger primary schools may group pupils for some subjects, such as mathematics, according to their ability in that subject (a practice known as 'setting'). Many teachers use some form of ability grouping within a mixed-ability class. For example, a class may be divided into small groups for part of the school day and each group instructed separately. Pupils with special educational needs are educated in mainstream schools, wherever possible, alongside children of the same age without such needs.

### 3A.2 Primary-level curriculum

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Every publicly funded primary school must



provide the National Curriculum, religious education and collective worship for all pupils. At the request of a parent, a pupil may be withdrawn from religious education and collective worship. Optional subjects are not normally offered in primary schools.

See 2.2. for the foundation stage which applies in the reception class.

In England, the National Curriculum at key stage 1 (age five to seven) and key stage 2 (age seven to 11) comprises the following compulsory subjects: English, mathematics, science, design and technology, information and communication technology (ICT), history, geography, art and design, music and physical education.

The requirements are the same in Wales, except that Welsh is also a compulsory subject, and pupils at key stage 1 in Welsh-speaking classes do not have to follow the key stage 1 programme of study in English.

The compulsory National Curriculum subjects (and religious education) are not considered to form the complete curriculum. Primary schools in England are expected to follow a non-statutory framework of citizenship and personal, social and health education (PSHE) whilst, in Wales, the non-statutory framework of Personal and Social Education (PSE) is expected to become part of the compulsory curriculum in September 2003. Schools have discretion to develop the whole curriculum to reflect their particular needs and circumstances. Other subjects such as modern languages may also be taught in some schools.

The amount of time to be allocated to each curriculum subject is not prescribed. Since September 1998, most schools in England have followed a national framework for the 'literacy hour', for which detailed guidance has been provided. Similar arrangements for the teaching of mathematics (the 'numeracy hour') have been in effect since September 1999.

Teaching does not necessarily have to be organised and delivered within subject boundaries and teachers sometimes organise their work in an integrated way, using thematic work as a way to teach several subjects at once. Teachers are also responsible for ensuring that there are sufficient opportunities for differentiated work for students of all abilities. Teaching methods and learning materials are decided by the class teacher, in consultation with the headteacher and subject coordinators (classroom teachers, who, in addition, have responsibility for a particular subject area and who give help and guidance to their colleagues). Audio-visual materials and information and communications technology

are routinely used.

The National Curriculum applies to pupils with special educational needs, but may be changed or not applied in specific cases.

The Government also publishes guidelines on the purpose, nature and amount of homework for pupils of different ages. Recommendations for primary school pupils range from one hour a week for children in Years 1 and 2 (age five to seven) to 30 minutes a day for children in Years 5 and 6 (age nine to 11). These guidelines apply to England only.

### 3A.3 Primary-level assessment/certification/guidance

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Until the 2002/03 school year all pupils in ["maintained schools"] in **England** were assessed in language skills, mathematics skills and personal and social skills within the first seven weeks of entering primary school. This, **baseline assessment**, intended to allow teachers to plan the curriculum appropriately and to provide learning activities that match each child's needs, continues in **Wales**. In **England**, the Education Act 2002, introduced the **foundation stage profile** which is completed at the end of the reception class, when children enter Year 1 of compulsory primary education. See 2.2 for further information on the **foundation stage**.

Teachers and schools continuously assess their pupils' progress. In addition, statutory assessment arrangements for the National Curriculum enable each pupil's progress to be measured against national standards in the core subjects of English, Welsh (in Welsh-speaking schools in Wales), mathematics and science. The assessment arrangements consist of teacher assessment in accordance with nationally set criteria (drawing on evidence of oral, written and practical work in class, homework and school tests), and nationally set tests and tasks.

In addition to statutory teacher assessment:

At the end of key stage 1 (age seven), in England only, pupils take practical classroom-based tasks and written tests in English and mathematics. These tests are marked by the class teacher, but set and audited by an external agency.

At the end of key stage 2 (age 11), pupils in England and Wales take written tests in English, mathematics and science. Pupils in Welsh-speaking schools in Wales also take tests in Welsh. The tests are set and marked by an external agency.

The results of both teacher assessment and the tests and tasks are expressed in terms of the National Curriculum 1-8 level scale, where level 2 is the level expected of seven-year-olds and level 4 that expected of 11-year-olds. The results of the national key stage 2 teacher assessment and test and task results of each school are published at school level, and are intended to provide the basis for schools to set targets for improvement. They are not used to assess the ability or aptitude of pupils for the purpose of selection for secondary school.

There is no certificate awarded on completion of primary education and most pupils continue their education in secondary schools, known as 'comprehensives' which admit pupils regardless of ability. However, in a few areas of England pupils may sit an entrance examination for access to a selective secondary or 'grammar' school which admits pupils on the basis of ability.

Both LEAs and schools have responsibilities for identifying children with special educational needs. Schools are expected to designate a teacher (the Special Educational Needs Coordinator - SENCO) to coordinate their responsibilities in this area. LEAs are also responsible for assessing those needs, and, where necessary, making a formal statement specifying the provision which should be made to meet those needs.

### 3A.4 Teachers at primary and secondary level

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In England and Wales, teachers employed in publicly funded schools are normally required to have Qualified Teacher Status (QTS) which is gained by completing an initial teacher training (ITT) course or programme accredited by the Teacher Training Agency (in England) or the Higher Education Council – ELWa (in Wales). Although student teachers study at least one specialist subject during training, and courses cover a specific age range (three to eight, three or five to 11, seven to 11, seven to 14, 11 to 16 or 18, or 14 to 19), QTS allows holders to teach any subject at any level.

There are currently several models of training which lead to QTS. The concurrent model usually involves four years' full-time teacher training leading to an education degree, normally the Bachelor of Education (BEd). Courses are offered by universities and other higher education institutions. They include curriculum, pedagogical and educational

studies and study of one or more advanced specialist subjects(s), and incorporate 32 weeks spent in schools. Most programmes following the concurrent model are for primary teaching, but there are also some programmes aimed at secondary teaching.

The consecutive model of initial teacher training is available to holders of a first (bachelor's) degree (awarded after three or four years of study at a university or other higher education institution), who may apply for a one-year course of professional training leading to a Postgraduate Certificate of Education (PGCE). These courses are offered by universities and other higher education institutions, and combine subject and professional study with 24 weeks spent in schools (18 weeks for intending primary teachers). A two-year conversion course is also available for students wishing to teach a different subject to the one of their degree. The PGCE can also be offered by a group of schools, normally in partnership with another institution (School-Centred Initial Teacher Training, SCITT). Traditionally programmes following the consecutive model are for secondary teaching, but programmes for primary teaching are increasingly popular.

There are also some alternative, employment-based routes to QTS (the graduate and registered teacher programmes).

At primary level, teachers are mainly generalists, teaching most, or all, of the curriculum to their class. However, many classroom teachers have an additional responsibility, as a subject coordinator, for providing help and guidance to colleagues within the school for a particular subject area. In some primary schools, there may be specialist (or peripatetic) teachers for a few subjects, for example music, and some schools may make use of teachers' subject expertise by enabling them to teach their specialist subject(s) more widely across the school.

At secondary level, pupils are mainly taught by subject specialists.

Teachers are not civil servants; they are employees of the LEA or the school, depending on the type of school. In voluntary aided and foundation schools, the school governing body employs the staff; in community and voluntary controlled schools, the LEA is the employer. However, teachers are appointed to a specific post at a specific school by the governing body of that school. Appointments may be made on a permanent basis, on a fixed-term contract, a temporary contract, or, in the case of supply work (cover for absent members of staff), on a casual basis. Teachers may be employed on a full-time or a part-time basis.

All teachers in publicly funded schools and in special schools are required to register with the General Teaching Council for England or the General Teaching Council for Wales. These Councils were established in September 2000.

Each school determines its own need for staff development activities, which may be supported in part by specific government grants. The statutory conditions of service provide for all full-time teachers to have at least five working days when they are not required to teach pupils, of which at least three should be used for continuing professional development.

### 3A.5 Statistics - primary and secondary

Public sector mainstream schools 2001/02

	England	Wales
Primary	17985	1624
Secondary	3457	227

Full-time and part-time pupils in school 2001/02 (thousands)

	England	Wales
Primary (includes nursery classes)	4363.3	282.6
Secondary	3264.1	212.0

Data includes pre- and post-compulsory school age pupils.

Full-time teachers in public sector mainstream schools 2000/01 (thousands)

	England and Wales
Nursery and primary	152.7
Secondary	105.1

Pupil: Teacher Ratio in public sector mainstream schools 2001/02

	England	Wales
Primary	22.5	21.0
Secondary	16.9	16.4

Source: DEPARTMENT FOR EDUCATION AND SKILLS (2002). *Education and Training Statistics for the UK 2002 Edition*. London:TSO.

## 3B. Compulsory secondary education

### 3B.1 Secondary school organisation

The arrangements for the school year, week and day and the use of school premises are as at primary level. Although the amount of time to be devoted to individual subjects is not prescribed, the minimum recommended weekly lesson times for pupils aged 12 to 16 years is 24 hours. Since the launch, in England, during the 2001/02 school year, of a new strategy for pupils in key stage 3 (aged 11-14), schools are recommended - within these 24 hours - to provide a minimum of three hours of English teaching, plus three hours of mathematics teaching each week for all pupils during this key stage.

Pupils are generally placed in a class according to their age and progress to the next class at the end of each school year. Secondary schools commonly group pupils for some subjects according to ability in that particular subject (a practice known as 'setting'), whilst teaching other subjects in mixed-ability groups. Teachers are expected to ensure that there are sufficient opportunities for differentiated work for pupils of all abilities. Pupils are taught by specialist teachers for most of their subjects. As at primary level, wherever possible, pupils with special educational needs are educated in mainstream schools, alongside children of the same age without such needs.

### 3B.2 Secondary-level curriculum

Every publicly funded secondary school must provide the National Curriculum, religious education, collective worship and sex education for all pupils. At the request of a parent, a pupil may be withdrawn from religious education, collective worship or sex education (but not from the aspects of human growth and reproduction taught as part of National Curriculum science). In addition, schools must provide careers education and guidance to all pupils aged 13+.

As at primary level, schools have discretion to develop the whole curriculum to reflect their

particular needs and circumstances. In particular, there is intended to be room in the timetable for schools to offer pupils at key stage 4 (age 14-16) a choice of subjects, including vocational options, in addition to those required by the National Curriculum. Some schools in England may specialise in a particular area of the curriculum, such as language, sports, arts (performing, visual or media), business & enterprise, technology, engineering, science, and mathematics & computing. Two new areas - music and the humanities - will be introduced from October 2003. Although known as specialist schools, these schools nevertheless deliver the full National Curriculum and accept pupils of all abilities and aptitudes.

The National Curriculum at key stage 3 (age 11 to 14) in **England and Wales** comprises the following compulsory subjects: English, mathematics, science, design and technology, information and communication technology (ICT), history, geography, modern foreign languages, art and design, music, physical education and, since September 2002 in England, citizenship. In Wales, Welsh is also a compulsory subject. Optional subjects may also be offered at key stage 3.

The National Curriculum at key stage 4 (age 14 to 16) in **England** comprises the following compulsory subjects: English, mathematics, science, design and technology, ICT, modern foreign languages, physical education and, since September 2002, citizenship. Pupils choose several additional subjects from the range offered by the school.

The National Curriculum at key stage 4 (age 14 to 16) in **Wales** comprises English, Welsh, mathematics, science and physical education. Personal and social education (PSE) is expected to become part of the statutory curriculum in Wales from September 2003.

As in primary education, teachers are responsible for determining teaching methods and materials. There are no prescribed texts, except, for example, literature texts required to meet the needs of particular external qualifications. Teachers are also responsible for ensuring that there are sufficient opportunities for differentiated work for pupils of all abilities. At the end of key stage 4, some subjects are examined by tier, that is to say that different examination papers are targeted at specific ability groups, and schools may organise the teaching in different sets to reflect this.

The National Curriculum applies to pupils with special educational needs, but may be changed or not applied in specific cases.

The Government publishes guidelines on the purpose, nature and amount of homework for

pupils of different ages. Recommendations for secondary school pupils range from 45 to 90 minutes a day for pupils in Years 7 and 8 (age 11 to 13), to one-and-a-half to two-and-a-half hours a day for pupils in Years 10 and 11 (age 14 to 16). These guidelines apply to England only.

Most pupils at key stage 4 undertake a period of work experience, defined as a placement on employer's premises in which a student carries out a range of tasks and duties, but with the emphasis on the learning aspects of the experience. Placements are permitted by law only for students during key stage 4 and beyond. Currently, the Government is exploring ways in which some young people aged 14-16 may complete part of their period of compulsory schooling in learning or working environments that are outside the school.

### 3B.3 Secondary-level assessment, certification and guidance

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Teachers and schools continuously assess their pupils' progress. In addition, at the end of key stage 3 (at age 14), statutory assessment arrangements for the National Curriculum enable each pupil's progress to be measured against national standards. The requirements include teacher assessment in accordance with nationally set criteria in all National Curriculum subjects (drawing on evidence of oral, written and practical work in class, homework and school tests), and nationally set and marked tests in English, Welsh (for Welsh-speaking schools in Wales), mathematics and science. The results of the teacher assessment and the tests are expressed in terms of the National Curriculum 1-8 level scale, where levels 5 or 6 are the levels expected of 14-year-olds.

Assessment of pupils at the end of key stage 4 is mainly by the General Certificate of Secondary Education (GCSE). GCSEs are normally taken in a range of single subjects, and a certificate is issued listing the grade a candidate has achieved in each subject. Candidates are awarded one of eight grades (A\*-G, where A\*-C is regarded as a good GCSE pass) according to their performance against nationally set criteria; they must reach the minimum standards for Grade G for a subject to be included on a certificate. For most subjects, the grade awarded is based mainly on end-of-course examinations, although it may also be based partly on course work done throughout a period of up to two years. There are also some modular courses which include a number of

end-of-module examinations. GCSEs are externally set and marked by awarding bodies (see 1.3) in accordance with a mandatory code of practice. The choice of awarding body and syllabus is made by the school.

GCSEs in vocational subjects were introduced from September 2002 and have replaced the Part One General National Vocational Qualification (GNVQ), see 4.2. As is the case with general GCSEs, GCSEs in vocational subjects are primarily aimed at 16 year-olds but can be taken by students of any age. These GCSEs provide an introduction to a broad vocational area and enable progression to further education, training or employment.

Through the introduction of GCSEs in vocational subjects, the Government intends to make it easier for students to combine academic and vocational courses of study and to promote parity of esteem between vocational and more traditional, academic subjects.

GCSEs in vocational subjects consist of three common, compulsory, and normally equally weighted units in each subject. Assessment is usually one third external (one unit) and two thirds internal (two units). A vocational GCSE is equivalent to two academic (general) GCSEs.

Subjects initially available are:

- Applied Art and Design
- Applied Business
- Applied ICT
- Applied Science
- Engineering
- Health and Social Care
- Leisure and Tourism
- Manufacturing

In addition to the above qualifications, there is also a developing range of approved 'Entry Level' qualifications in literacy, numeracy, information technology and other subject areas, which is aimed at pupils who are not likely to achieve a grade G at GCSE.

Schools are required to publish information showing their overall results for the end of key stage 3 assessments and the qualifications achieved at the end of key stage 4, together with national comparative information. In addition, in England only, overall results for each school in qualifications achieved at the end of key stage 4 are published nationally. These results may be used by schools as a resource to help set targets for improvement, and by parents of pupils and prospective pupils for making choices about the education of their children. Performance at the end of key stage 4

is seen as a useful predictor of potential achievement and as such is used to guide pupils' decisions on post-16 education and training.

Qualifications taken at the end of compulsory education are integrated into the **National Qualifications Framework (NQF)**, which also embraces general, vocationally-related and occupational qualifications taken by students in post-compulsory education and at work:

	General	Vocationally-related	Occupational
Entry Level	National Curriculum levels 1, 2, and 3  Certificate of Educational Achievement		
Foundation Level 1	e.g. GCSE grades D-G	GNVQ Foundation	e.g. level 1 NVQ
Intermediate Level 2	e.g. GCSE grades A*-C	GNVQ Intermediate	e.g. level 2 NVQ
Advanced Level 3	e.g. GCE A/AS- level	e.g. AVCE (Vocational A level)	e.g. level 3 NVQ
Advanced Level 4	Higher level qualifications		e.g. level 4 NVQ
Advanced Level 5	Higher level qualifications		e.g. level 5 NVQ

Schools also offer a programme of careers education and are required to provide access to careers advisers and to work with careers services to ensure that pupils have access to materials providing careers guidance. New guidance services for young people have been set up following the Learning and Skills Act 2000 (see 4.3).

Arrangements for the identification and assessment of special educational needs are as at primary level (see 3A.3).

### 3B.4 Teachers

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See 3A.4.

### 3B.5 Statistics

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See 3A.5.

## 4. POST-COMPULSORY SECONDARY EDUCATION AND FURTHER EDUCATION

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Post-compulsory education for students over 16 years of age is provided in secondary schools and further education institutions. Post-compulsory education has been the focus of significant reform in recent years. The Learning and Skills Act 2000 made provisions to bring planning, funding and promotion of **all** post-compulsory learning (except higher education) under the auspices of two national bodies: the **Learning and Skills Council for England (LSC)** and the **National Council for Education and Training for Wales** (known as the National Council - ELWa). There is increased emphasis on strengthening participation in post-16 education and training and on encouraging employer participation in the sector. These duties are reflected in the statutory remit of the new bodies.

The general aim of the statutory system of public education, including post-compulsory or 'further education', as originally laid down in the Education Act 1944 (now superseded by the Education Act 1996) is to contribute to the spiritual, moral, mental and physical development of the community. It is now generally recognised that education institutions, particularly at the level of secondary and further education, also have a duty to prepare their students for future employment and for lifelong learning.

For information about financing post-compulsory education, see 1.5.

### 4.1 Organisation

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Traditionally, young people stayed on at school or transferred to a sixth-form college to follow academic courses (General Certificate of Education Advanced-levels — GCE A-levels) or transferred to a further education or tertiary college to study vocational courses. However, the distinction between the post-compulsory courses offered in schools and further education colleges is increasingly blurred. Many further education institutions have for some time offered a wide range of academic as well as vocational courses for young people over the

age of 16, and schools are now being encouraged to offer vocational as well as academic courses. **Further education institutions** include sixth-form colleges, tertiary colleges and further education colleges (both general and specialist).

Whereas schools offer post-compulsory education on a full-time basis, further education institutions offer courses full-time, part-time, or on day-release or block-release for students in employment. Schools and sixth-form colleges, normally offer courses in the daytime (generally 9.00 a.m. to 4.00 p.m.) while other further education institutions also provide courses in the evening (generally 9.00 a.m. to 9.00/10.00 p.m.).

All institutions decide their own **admissions policy**. Students are usually admitted on the basis of their past educational and personal record. Success in General Certificate of Secondary Education (GCSE) examinations is not officially required for access to post-compulsory education, but most institutions require students to achieve five good passes at GCSE before admitting them to a GCE A-level course. Other types of course may have specific requirements with regard to previous achievement.

Most further education institutions are organised into departments. In larger colleges, several departments may be grouped into faculties or schools. Departments may have senior lecturers responsible for groups of courses. Students are grouped according to their course of study. Secondary schools are also usually organised on departmental lines with post compulsory education provided over two years in the 'sixth form'.

The academic year runs from 1 September to 31 August. It is usually divided into three terms with breaks at Christmas, Easter and during the summer. In further education institutions certain courses may be offered during holiday periods and some courses are offered on a roll-on, roll-off basis which means that enrolment can take place at any time during the year.

## 4.2 Curriculum, assessment and qualifications

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There is no statutory curriculum at post-compulsory level. The curriculum students follow depends on their choice of nationally-recognised qualifications and the syllabuses laid down by awarding bodies. Under the Learning and Skills Act 2000, schools and colleges may only offer courses leading to external qualifications to students or trainees under the age of 19 which have been approved by the Secretary of State for Education and Skills in England or the National Assembly for Wales. In addition, under the Education Act 1997, external qualifications are regulated and accredited by the qualifications and curriculum authorities to ensure that consistent standards are maintained by the awarding bodies.

The National Qualifications Framework (NQF) which embraces academic and vocational qualifications has been developed (see 3B.3).

### Academic (general) courses

Young people who wish to go on to university or other higher education institutions have traditionally studied subjects to GCE A-level, although vocational alternatives are increasingly acceptable. A revised system of GCE A-levels and GCE AS qualifications was introduced in September 2000, with the principal aim of broadening the subjects studied by pupils in post-compulsory upper secondary education. Pupils are free to choose any combination of academic and vocational A-levels and/or AS qualifications within the limitation of an institution's timetable and the range of subjects it offers.

Pupils are encouraged to study up to five subjects in the first year of post-compulsory upper secondary education, aged 16 to 17. On successful completion, they are awarded the new GCE Advanced Subsidiary qualification (GCE AS qualification). Candidates who continue their studies for a second year, study more demanding units (known as the 'A2') in three of these five subjects in order to obtain the full GCE 'A' Level on successful completion. To facilitate this process, GCE A-level and GCE Advanced Subsidiary qualification courses consist of units - six for the full A-level and three for the GCE Advanced Subsidiary qualification (the AS-level as it is commonly known). Most units are assessed by examination. Some are assessed by coursework. Candidates may receive one of five 'pass' grades, A to E, with U (unclassified) denoting a fail for each subject in

which they are examined.

In addition to GCE A-level and AS courses, students in post-compulsory education (either in a further education institution or a secondary school) may take courses in preparation for GCSE examinations (see 3B.3).

Students in secondary schools must, by law, receive religious education and careers education. Schools may also require them to follow courses such as physical education, personal and social education and general studies. Teaching methods are decided largely by teachers within the requirements of the syllabus, for example, regarding practical work. Teaching materials including textbooks are also decided by teachers in consultation with senior staff in their department.

### Vocational courses

Although traditionally offered in further education institutions, vocational courses are increasingly being made available in schools.

Vocational qualifications are the subject of ongoing reform in order to increase flexibility and promote parity of esteem with academic (general) qualifications. **General National Vocational Qualifications (GNVQs)** were originally available at three levels: foundation, intermediate and advanced, as well as the 'Part One' GNVQ, aimed specifically at 14- to 16-year-olds in compulsory education which is being replaced by the GCSE in vocational subjects (see 3B.3). Foundation and Intermediate level GNVQs will be available until at least 2006, whilst suitable successors are developed. At advanced level, GNVQs have already been replaced by the Advanced Vocational Certificate of Education (AVCE) (also known as Vocational A-levels or VCE A-levels) - see below.

Other vocational qualifications are also offered by awarding bodies and approved by the QCA.

For information on National Vocational Qualifications (NVQs) (see 5.5 and 7.5).

**The Advanced Vocational Certificate of Education (AVCE)** is aimed primarily at young people over compulsory school age who remain in full-time education, although it is available to students of any age. It is intended to offer a comprehensive preparation for employment, as well as a route to higher-level qualifications.

Students study a number of units, some of which are mandatory; the total number of units required varies between levels. AVCEs are assessed by a combination of internal and external assessment. Usually, one-third of the overall assessment is external. The type of external assessment varies according to the

vocational area.

Double Award AVCEs, equivalent to two traditional A-levels and an Advanced Subsidiary Vocational Certificate of Education/Vocational Advanced Subsidiary, roughly equivalent to the GCE Advanced Subsidiary Qualification, are also available.

Further education institutions usually offer a wider range of AVCE subjects than schools. The subject areas cover:

- Art and design
- Business
- Construction and the built environment
- Engineering
- Health and social care
- Hospitality and catering
- Information and communication technology
- Leisure and recreation
- Manufacturing
- Media: communication and production
- Performing arts
- Retail and distributive services
- Science
- Travel and tourism

'Key Skills' qualifications in the individual key skills of communication, application of number, and information technology are also available and are designed to be taken in tandem with the other qualifications described above.

### 4.3 Progression/guidance/transition arrangements

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In England, the **Connexions Service** provides integrated advice and guidance for 13- to 19-year-olds to encourage them to continue and participate effectively in education and training and to make a smooth transition to adulthood and working life.

**Careers Wales** performs a similar function in Wales.

Under the 1997 Education Act, further education institutions must work with careers services and provide access to careers information.

### 4.4 Teachers

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For teachers providing post-compulsory education in secondary schools please see 3A.4.

In further education institutions, many teachers (sometimes known as lecturers) have teaching qualifications, particularly those teaching academic (general) subjects. However, since September 2001, all new entrants to teaching in the further education sector are required to undergo teacher training and complete a professional teaching qualification that is endorsed by the **Further Education Training Organisation (FENTO)** (see 7.4). Serving teachers in further education institutions who were employed before September 2001 are also being encouraged to obtain relevant teaching qualifications through a process of continuing professional development.

Teachers in further education colleges are employees of the governing body. In further education institutions, there is an increasing tendency to employ staff on short-term contracts or to contract staff, who may have self-employed status, through employment agencies.

### 4.5 Statistics

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In 2001/02 there were 396 further education colleges in England, of which 84 were sixth form colleges. In Wales, there were 24 further education colleges. In the United Kingdom as a whole 56 000 full time teachers were employed in further education institutions in 2000/01.

Source: DEPARTMENT FOR EDUCATION AND SKILLS (2002). *Education and Training Statistics for the UK 2002 Edition*. London:TSO.

Participation rates in all education and training in England in 2001 (end-of-year estimates)

Age	%
16	86.5
17	79.3
18	60.4



Participation in education and training 16- to 18- year-olds in England (provisional figures for 2001)

	%
Full-time education	56
Government Supported Training 8 (GST)	
Employer Funded Training (EFT)	5
Other education and training	7
Total Education and training	76
Not in any education or training	24
Population (thousands)	1856

Source: DEPARTMENT FOR EDUCATION AND SKILLS (2002). *Participation in Education, Training and Employment by 16-18 Year Olds in England 2000 and 2001* (Statistical First Release 16/2002). London: DfES.

In Wales in 2000/01, approximately 40 per cent of 16- to 18-year-olds were estimated to be engaged in some type of education or training and in employment.

Source: NATIONAL ASSEMBLY FOR WALES (2003). *Participation of 16-18 Year Olds in Learning and the Labour Market* (Statistical Data Brief 55/2003). Cardiff: NAW.

## 5. INITIAL VOCATIONAL EDUCATION AND TRAINING

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The **Learning and Skills Act 2000** governs all post-compulsory education and training, including the vocational training provided in the work place and in further education institutions. The **Teaching and Higher Education Act 1998** gives employees aged 16 or 17 who are not receiving full-time secondary or further education, and who have not reached the standard of achievement prescribed by regulations made by the Secretary of State, the right to paid time off work to pursue approved qualifications.

As with post-compulsory education (see section 4), the Government is seeking to strengthen participation in vocational education and training and there is currently a drive to raise the profile of vocational qualifications and increase their relevance to young people and employers.

See 1.3 for information on the role of central government and national agencies such as the qualifications and curriculum authorities.

### 5.1 Organisation

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Under the Learning and Skills Act 2000, the **Learning and Skills Council** for England (LSC) and the **National Council for Education and Training for Wales**, known as the National Council - ELWa, must secure proper facilities for full and part-time education (other than higher education) and training of people over compulsory school age; this responsibility includes securing the provision of courses to prepare students for a vocational qualification.

The LSC works through a network of local LSCs which plans and coordinates provision at local level. The National Council - ELWa has regional committees which advise on provision in their region and, in addition, Community Consortia for Education and Training (CCETs) have responsibility for planning delivery of post-compulsory education and training at local level. Local LSCs and CCETs have taken over many of the functions of the former Training and Enterprise Councils (TECs).

Both the LSC and the National Council - ELWa have a statutory duty to encourage employers to participate in the provision of post-16 education and training, and to contribute financially. Local

LSCs and CCETs work with local employers to define skills needs and identify how the provision of education and training in the local area will meet these.

The **Sector Skills Development Agency (SSDA)** assumed responsibility for sectoral workforce skills development in April 2002 and is leading the establishment of a UK wide network of employer-led **Sector Skills Councils (SSCs)**. The SSCs bring together employers, trade unions and professional bodies to work with government to develop the skills the economy requires. They have responsibility for developing Modern Apprenticeships (MAs), national occupational standards and National Vocational Qualifications (NVQs) or other qualifications for the sector they represent. As they are set up, the SSCs are replacing and rationalising the former National Training Organisations (NTOs).

The **Learning and Skills Development Agency (LSDA)**, formerly the Further Education Development Agency (FEDA), is a strategic national resource for the development of policy and practice in post-16 education and training.

Within the area of vocational education and training, the **Qualifications and Curriculum Authority (QCA)** coordinates the development and maintenance of occupational standards and accredits and reviews the qualifications of **awarding bodies** (see 1.3) and provides quality assurance for vocational qualifications within the **National Qualifications Framework (NQF)** (see 3B.3).

#### Employer-led training for young people

Many large employers offer **traineeships** to 18-year-old school-leavers. Trainees usually follow an approved course of study for a National Vocational Qualification (NVQ) or a qualification approved by a professional institute.

Employers recruiting new graduates from higher education often provide professional development plans which may include part-time study for qualifications of the relevant professional institute. Universities do not usually provide professional training. Qualifications specific to a profession and (sometimes) required for its practice are more often obtained through successfully completing examinations set or accredited by professional institutes and

institutions.

### Government-supported training schemes for young people

The **Advanced Modern Apprenticeship** initiative was introduced in 1995 (known then as Modern Apprenticeships) to provide a high-quality work-based route to NVQ level 3 (see 3B.3), and to provide the broader skills and qualifications needed by industry and employers. **Foundation Modern Apprenticeships**, formerly known as National Traineeships, offer similar opportunities leading to a qualification at NVQ level two. Modern Apprenticeships are intended largely for school leavers aged 16, but they are also open to more mature trainees who are able to complete their training before the age of 25 (this upper age limit is to be abolished in Wales). Most modern apprentices have employed status and are paid a salary by their employer. Training frameworks have been developed by SSCs/NTOs (see above) for over 80 sectors of industry and business, ranging from engineering and construction to business administration, banking, information technology and the retail sector. A national framework for apprenticeships to define standards and to strengthen relationships between employer and apprentice is under development. The **Technical Certificate** has recently been developed to form a component of the Modern Apprenticeship programme (see 5.5). **Key skills** tests also form part of Modern Apprenticeships schemes (see 4.2).

Under the '**New Deal**' for unemployed people, young people between the ages of 18 and 24, who have been unemployed for six months or more are offered a 'gateway' of guidance and assessment, followed by one of four options:

- employment in the public or private sector with day-release for education or training leading to a nationally recognised qualification;
- up to six months' work experience in projects with the Environment Task Force;
- up to six months' work experience in the voluntary sector;
- a full-time education or training programme lasting up to one year, designed to lead to an appropriate qualification.

Those employed under the scheme are paid normal rates by their employer but the Government subsidises employment and training costs. Allowances are paid to those young people in education and training programmes and to those on work placements in the voluntary sector and Environment Task Force.

## 5.2 Institutions and training providers

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Vocational education and training is provided largely by further education institutions (see 4.1) and other approved training providers including autonomous professional institutes, training companies and individual employers.

**Centres of Vocational Excellence** are units based within further education institutions, established to develop and deliver high-quality, specialist provision in a specific vocational subject or area. Such centres focus on developing skills and meeting the needs of employers. Centres of Vocational Excellence have been set up in England and Northern Ireland. In Wales, the **Networks of Excellence** programme involves similar centres built around a single further education institution or group of institutions.

## 5.3 Access requirements

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From September 2004, all 16- and 17-year-olds with five or more General Certificate of Secondary Education (GCSE) with five or more GCSE passes at grades A\* to G will be entitled to a Modern Apprenticeship.

Entry requirements for employer-led training vary.

See above for conditions of access for the **New Deal**.

## 5.4 Financing initial vocational education and training

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For information on the financing of initial vocational education and training see 1.5.

## 5.5 Curriculum, assessment and qualifications

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The curricula of courses of initial vocational training are determined largely by the requirements of particular qualifications as laid down by the awarding and regulatory bodies. The main initial vocational qualifications are vocational GCSEs (see 3B.3) and the Advanced Vocational Certificate of Education (which, respectively, are replacing General National Vocational Qualifications (GNVQs) at Part One and Advanced levels - see 4.2) and National Vocational Qualifications (NVQs). Vocational qualifications are integrated within the National Qualifications Framework (NQF) (see 3B.3).

**National Vocational Qualifications (NVQs)** are job-specific vocational qualifications aimed largely at people who have left full-time education. They are available at five levels. They may be obtained by successfully completing courses offered by awarding bodies, which comply with the competence-based criteria laid down by the QCA. Alternatively, they may be obtained by showing 'competence' in an occupation (as defined in a 'statement of competence' from one of the standard-setting bodies, usually Sector Skills Councils/National Training Organisations, see 5.1). Competence is defined as a combination of relevant skills, knowledge and understanding and the ability to apply them. Units of competence which may have been achieved in a range of different ways and over a period of time may be combined into an NVQ. An awarding body may accept a variety of evidence to show that someone has achieved the necessary level of competence. There are no set time limits for completing an NVQ. See 7.5 in addition.

**Technical Certificates** are vocationally related qualifications which aim to equip young people undertaking Modern Apprenticeships (see 5.1) with the knowledge and understanding which underpins the National Vocational Qualification

(see above) relevant to their chosen programme but which covers specialised occupational knowledge directed at the off-the-job training.

Awarding bodies also offer a range of other qualifications designed to meet the needs of business and industry. Professional institutes provide courses, examinations and diplomas as part of their professional development programmes.

## 5.6 Guidance and Transition

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See 4.3. for information about guidance services and 5.1 for assistance under the **New Deal**.

In addition, a new programme **Entry to Employment (E2E)** is currently under development which will support disengaged young people, those who have opted out or become disillusioned with education and training, to prepare for apprenticeships and employment.

## 5.7 Teachers and trainers

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See 7.5 for information on trainers.

For information on teachers in further education institutions, see 4.3.

## 5.8 Statistics

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See 4.5 for participation rates in all post-compulsory education and training for 16- to 18-year-olds.

In March 2002, there were 125 400 participants in Advanced Modern Apprenticeships and 119 700 participants in Foundation Modern Apprenticeships in England and Wales.

Source: DEPARTMENT FOR EDUCATION AND SKILLS (2002). *Education and Training Statistics for the UK 2002 Edition*. London:TSO.

## 6. HIGHER EDUCATION

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The **Education Reform Act 1988** defines higher education as 'education provided by means of a course of any description mentioned in Schedule 6 of the Act', that is, 'a course of a standard higher than the standard of courses leading to General Certificate of Education Advanced-level (GCE A-level) or Business and Technology Education Council National Diploma or Certificate'.

There is no single coherent body of legislation dealing with higher education but the **Further and Higher Education Act 1992** introduced many reforms, including the establishment of a single framework, including a single funding structure, for all higher education institutions. It also enabled all institutions which met certain criteria to adopt the title "university".

Widening participation in higher education is a key goal of current policy. The Government has set the target that half the population will enter higher education by the time they reach 30. The proposed **Office for Fair Access (OFFA)** will encourage wider participation in higher education and encourage applications from underrepresented groups.

### 6.1 Organisation, institutions and admissions

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**Universities** are diverse, ranging in size, mission and history. They are self-governing institutions and each determines which degrees and other qualifications it will offer and the conditions which apply.

The 'old' or 'pre-1992' universities include the universities of Oxford and Cambridge, which date from the 12<sup>th</sup> and 13<sup>th</sup> centuries; the first colleges of the University of Wales and universities established in major cities in the 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> centuries, together with many universities founded in the 1950s and 1960s. These 'older', 'pre-1992' universities operate under Royal Charter.

'New' or 'post-1992' universities gained university status following the Further and Higher Education Act 1992. Many were formerly polytechnics, which had developed out of the national network of colleges maintained

by local authorities. Most 'newer', 'post-1992' universities and certain other higher education institutions operate under an Instrument of Government and Articles of Government.

Non-university higher education institutions include **colleges of higher education** and a small number of **university colleges**. University colleges are independent institutions; they are not to be confused with the colleges that make up federal universities, such as London University. Colleges of higher education also vary in size, mission, subjects offered and history. They range from small specialist institutions to large multi-disciplined institutions. All colleges are now self-governing institutions. Degrees and other qualifications offered by most higher education colleges are validated by external bodies such as a university or national accrediting body. University colleges and a small number of higher education colleges have the power to award their own degrees and qualifications. These degree-awarding powers are normally restricted to first degrees and taught (not research) master's degrees.

As part of ongoing expansion, higher education courses are also increasingly available in some further education colleges.

The **Open University** is a major provider of higher education courses through distance learning.

Each higher education institution determines its own admissions policy. The traditional qualification for entry to degree study has been two or three passes at General Certificate of Education Advanced-level as well as at least three passes in General Certificate of Secondary Education (GCSE) examinations at grade C or above. In practice, due to the competition for places, many institutions and courses require levels of qualifications considerably above the minimum. Alternative qualifications, including qualifications in vocational education, are also increasingly accepted and many institutions also welcome applications from mature candidates who have had appropriate experience but may lack formal qualifications. Access courses, which prepare adults without formal qualifications for higher education studies, are offered in many further education institutions, often in collaboration with higher education institutions.

Applications for full-time undergraduate higher education courses are normally made through a central clearing house, the Universities and

Colleges Admissions Service (UCAS). Applications are usually made in the autumn, a year before the start of the course. Applications for postgraduate and part-time courses are made directly to the university or college.

## 6.2 Fees/financial support for students

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See 1.5.

## 6.3 Academic year

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The academic year for higher education starts in September or October and finishes in June or July of the following year. Organisation of courses is at the discretion of the individual institution but most follow similar patterns. The academic year is traditionally divided into three terms, although many institutions now organise their teaching along the two-semester system.

## 6.4 Courses

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Higher education courses are generally above the standard of GCE A-levels or National Vocational Qualification (NVQ) Level 3 and include courses leading to higher education certificates and diplomas, foundation degrees, ordinary (non-honours) degrees, honours degrees, and higher (postgraduate) degrees such as masters degrees and doctorates. The subject content of courses is usually determined by individual institutions.

Courses leading to a qualification below the level of an honours degree, such as **higher education certificates** and **diplomas** and **foundation degrees**, typically take one or two years to complete.

Undergraduate programmes leading to **honours degrees** form the largest group of higher education programmes. Typical courses last for three years (if taken full-time) although some courses are longer.

**Masters degrees** are awarded after completion of taught courses, programmes of research, or a mixture of both. Most masters programmes last at least one year (if taken full-time), and are taken by persons with honours degrees (or equivalent achievement).

**Doctorates** are awarded for the creation and interpretation of knowledge, which extends the forefront of a discipline, usually through original research. However, some doctoral programmes, whilst including a research component, also have a substantial taught element. A doctorate normally requires the equivalent of three years' study.

Increasing numbers of courses are available on a modular and part-time basis. Modular courses provide increased flexibility to both institutions and students by making it easier for institutions to offer their courses either full- or part-time and by enabling students to move in and out of study programmes and institutions.

The **Open University** is a major provider of distance learning, although many higher education institutions now also offer a wide range of courses by distance and open learning.

**Teaching methods** are generally decided by the individual teacher, department or institution, or a combination of these. Most courses involve a combination of formal lectures and more informal seminars or tutorials, in which students are encouraged to participate and lead discussions. Certain courses require practical sessions, such as laboratory work for science subjects and oral classes for foreign languages. Institutions may also exploit information technology, for example using televised lectures, including interactive sessions. Students are normally required to purchase books and other equipment recommended for courses.

## 6.5 Assessment and qualifications

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Assessment procedures are decided by the individual institution. They may include projects and dissertations, written examinations, essays, and oral presentations. Students are normally required to sit final written examinations, but the final qualification usually takes into account the student's performance in other examinations and project work. For the award of a doctorate, the student is required to submit a thesis of around 60,000 to 80,000 words in length to a panel of examiners. The student subsequently undertakes an oral examination, conducted by the examiners.

**Credit Accumulation and Transfer (CAT) schemes** allow students to build up credits towards a full qualification. CAT schemes are becoming increasingly common and are often linked to modular systems of study. Although there is no single uniform credit transfer system in UK higher education, there are consortia of institutions which operate common CAT

schemes. The key credit consortia in England, Wales and Northern Ireland have recently developed a set of non-mandatory guidelines designed to provide guidance to institutions on the operation of these systems.

In the UK, academic qualifications are not national awards, as in other European countries, but are granted by individual institutions. Universities are free to decide the titles of the qualifications they award. Degrees and other higher education qualifications offered by higher education institutions which do not have the authority to award their own degrees are validated by external bodies such as a local university or the Open University.

Qualifications below the level of an honours degree include higher education certificates and diplomas and foundation degrees, and ordinary (non-honours) degrees. **Foundation degrees** are a recently introduced employment-related qualification which aims to address skills shortages and to widen participation in higher education.

**Honours degrees** form the largest group of higher education qualifications. Typical titles are Bachelor of Arts (BA(Hons)) and Bachelor of Science (BSc(Hons)). Honours degrees are normally classified into first, second and third class. Second class degrees are further divided into two divisions, upper and lower, also known as 2(i) and 2(ii). Students who do not achieve a high enough standard for an honours degree may be awarded a pass (ordinary or non-honours) degree.

**Postgraduate qualifications** include diplomas and certificates, for example the Postgraduate Certificate in Education (PGCE). Common masters degree titles include the Master of Arts (MA), Master of Science (MSc), Master of Business Administration (MBA), Master of Education (MEd), Master of Social Work (MSW), Master of Musical Arts (AMusM), Master of Medical Sciences (MMedSci) and the Master of Philosophy (MPhil).

The title of **Doctor of Philosophy** (PhD or DPhil) is commonly used for doctorates awarded on the basis of original research. Doctoral programmes which include a substantial taught element lead usually to awards that include the name of the discipline in their title (eg EdD for Doctor of Education).

There is a new **framework for higher education qualifications** awarded by institutions in England, Wales and Northern Ireland, which will place these qualifications at five levels. In ascending order, these are the Certificate, Intermediate, Honours, Masters and Doctoral levels. The framework will be implemented from the start of the academic year 2003-04.

Many higher education institutions offer courses which may be accredited by professional bodies. In some areas, such as architecture, medicine, dentistry and law, successful completion of the appropriate course is a legal requirement in order to practise professionally in the field.

## 6.6 Teachers

Higher education institutions are responsible for employing their own staff. Academic staff in most universities and in some colleges carry out research as well as teaching and may be employed on a part-time or full-time basis. Many have doctorates and/or professional qualifications. There is currently no statutory requirement for teaching staff in higher education institutions to receive any initial training but institutions increasingly provide training for their staff, especially those who are new to the profession. A national body, the Institute for Learning and Teaching in Higher Education, was established in 1999 to set up an accreditation scheme for programmes of teacher training for teachers, more commonly referred to as lecturers, in higher education and to encourage innovation in teaching and learning.

## 6.7 Statistics

Number of higher education institutions in England and Wales 2001/02

	England	Wales	Total
Universities	72	2	74
Other HE Institutions	51	4	55

In 2001/02 there were 1 311 800 full-time and 928 900 part-time home and overseas students, including Open University students, in higher education across the United Kingdom (including Scotland).

In 2000/01 there were 78 000 full-time teachers (lecturers) in UK higher education institutions.

Source: DEPARTMENT FOR EDUCATION AND SKILLS (2002). *Education and Training Statistics for the UK 2002 Edition*. London:TSO.

## 7. CONTINUING EDUCATION AND TRAINING FOR ADULTS

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The role of central government and national agencies, such as the qualifications and curriculum authorities, in education and training is described more fully in 1.3. Information on organisations involved in vocational training can also be found in 5.1.

### 7.1 Policy and legislative framework

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The Government is committed to lifelong learning as central to all policies for education and training. The rationale emphasises the benefits accruing to individuals, businesses of all sizes, communities and the nation. For individuals: improving life chances, particularly in the labour market. For business: an investment in the future, adding value, generating ideas and modernising. For communities: promoting social cohesion. For the nation: a strong, competitive economy in a global marketplace. The government describes its role as helping to create a framework of opportunities for people to learn and to overcome the barriers to learning.

Access to continuing education and training is left in most respects to individuals (an individualistic approach) and, as far as training is concerned, to employers (the voluntarist approach). The Government is increasingly involved in identifying priorities and, for example, has developed national strategies for adult literacy and numeracy. The Government is seeking to achieve the maximum involvement of employers and their organisations. This is demonstrated in the new institutional arrangements for managing continuing education and training (see 7.2). The Government has stated its intention to publish a 'Skills Strategy' during 2003 which will set out the roles and responsibilities of employers, individuals and government. Trade unions are also beginning to play a more prominent role.

No single Act of Parliament regulates continuing education and training, although recent legislation - the Learning and Skills Act 2000 provides a basis for funding, strategic, and

quality assurance aspects (see section 1). The Teaching and Higher Education Act 1998 gives employed young people the right to time off for training, and the Education Act 2002 gives all employees a notional entitlement to a work/life balance that enables them to include education and training among their commitments.

### 7.2 Management/Organisations involved

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The government department responsible for continuing education and training in England (and aspects in Wales) is the **Department for Education and Skills (DfES)**. The **Department for Work and Pensions (DWP)** is responsible for employment policy. The **Department of Trade and Industry (DTI)** has a key role in improving productivity and skills.

The **National Assembly for Wales (NAWM)** and its **Department for Training and Education (DfTE)** is responsible for lifelong learning in Wales.

Within the area of vocational education and training, the **Qualifications and Curriculum Authority (QCA)** (see 1.3) is responsible for the national occupational standards programme and it approves qualifications that are included within the National Qualifications Framework (NQF) (see 3B.3).

The **Learning and Skills Council for England (LSC)** and the **National Council - ELWa** in Wales are responsible for strategic development and funding for continuing education and training for adults. Under the Learning and Skills Act 2000, the LSC and the National Council - ELWa have responsibility for securing the provision of facilities for adult education and training. They must secure the provision of proper facilities for:

- full and part-time education (other than higher education) and training; and
- leisure-time occupations connected with such education and training for persons aged 16 to 19, and for persons aged 19



and above.

The Act also amends the Education Act 1996 to give **local education authorities (LEAs)** the power to secure full- and part-time education suitable to the requirements of persons who have reached the age of 19. LEAs fund and provide a wide range of adult and community learning (ACL) education courses to the general public.

Regions are becoming an increasingly important part of the strategy for achieving economic competitiveness and regeneration, through the **Regional Development Agencies (RDAs)**. **Local Learning and Skills Councils (LSCs)** in England and **Community Consortia for Education and Training (CCET)** in Wales form the link between government and local training provision.

The **Sector Skills Development Agency (SSDA)** assumed responsibility for sectoral workforce skills development in 2002 and is establishing the new **Sector Skills Councils (SSCs)** (see 5.1).

While government places increasing importance on improving workforce skills and tackling basic skills issues, **employers** are responsible for their training policy. Employers' organisations therefore have a key role in developing training strategies, often linking with the SSCs for the development and recognition of qualifications. The extent of collective agreements varies by industry and sector.

The principal **advisory bodies** in the field of adult education and training include the **National Institute of Adult Continuing Education (NIACE)** and the **Basic Skills Agency**. NIACE is the national centre for information, cooperation and consultation in the field of adult continuing education and receives funding from the Department for Education and Skills (DfES), the National Assembly for Wales (NAfW), LEAs, universities and voluntary organisations. The Basic Skills Agency (formerly the Adult Literacy and Basic Skills Unit, ALBSU) is the central development agency for adult literacy, adult numeracy and related basic skills learning; it also receives financial support from the Government. The **Learning and Skills Development Agency (LSDA)** is also involved in the development of policy and practice in post-16 education and training.

The **Workers' Educational Association (WEA)** is a voluntary body which aims to encourage adults to undertake continuing education. It was founded in 1903 and has 900 local branches. It provides courses for adults in a wide range of subjects of varying lengths, from weekend seminars to three-year courses. The majority of the provision made by these associations for students is on a part-time basis. It receives funding from the Learning and Skills Council and the National Council - ELWa.

## 7.3 Funding

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In England the Department for Education and Skills (DfES) provides funding for education and training through the Learning and Skills Council (see 7.2) which distributes funding to lifelong learning providers for publicly funded courses and qualifications. In Wales, the National Assembly for Wales distributes funding through the National Council - ELWa.

Most work-based training for adults in the workforce is organised and paid for by the employer. There is no mechanism regulating continuing vocational education and training (VET) in England, nor is there comprehensive up-to-date information on what UK employers spend on VET. According to *Adult Learning in England: a Review* (Hillage *et al.*, 2000) employers make the biggest financial contribution to learning at work.

The previous system of sectoral training levies on employers was abandoned as the manpower planning approach was replaced with current approaches to forecasting and meeting labour market skills needs. Employers do not pay taxes or levies for training, except in the engineering and construction sectors.

Local education authorities (LEAs) organise and subsidise a wide range of adult and community learning courses. Until August 2003, LEAs will be funded by the Learning and Skills Council (LSC) to carry out these activities as set out in agreed adult learning plans. New funding arrangements will be introduced in 2003/04 by the Council. Adult learners contribute to the costs of their learning where they are able to do so.

See section 1.5 in addition.

## 7.4 Human resources

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The main policy priority in this area across the UK is to increase the number of further education teachers, often known as lecturers, who hold the teaching qualification in further education. Previously, there were few if any requirements for trainers and other VET teachers to have formal training or hold qualifications to teach, unless they worked in the maintained school sector.

The growth of certificated, state-validated VET qualifications and an emphasis on pedagogy

(training the trainers) is now leading to recognition and requirements for trainers to be properly trained, although the situation varies by sector. Assessors of National Vocational Qualifications (NVQs) (see 5.5) are required to have some training as part of the quality assurance system that is put in place by sectoral organisations (such as the SSCs - see 5.1) and accrediting boards and is overseen by the Qualifications and Curriculum Authority (QCA).

In 1997, the Government signified a major move in the training of trainers for the further education colleges along the lines of the NVQ route with the setting up in 1997 of the **Further Educational National Training Organisation (FENTO)**. FENTO is the national body for the development, quality assurance and promotion of national standards for the training of trainers and teachers in the public FE colleges and private training sectors. A Sector Skills Council incorporating a wide range of training activities is anticipated shortly.

See 4.4 for teachers in further education institutions.

## 7.5 Organisation of programmes

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A wide range of opportunities for work-based and other continuing lifelong learning are available from both public and private sector providers, with emphasis increasingly being placed on situating the learner at the centre of the process and on programmes involving ICT and distance learning.

Adult education and training is provided by further education institutions (see 4.1); approved training providers, including autonomous professional institutes, training companies and individual employers; higher education institutions (see 6.1); adult education centres run by local education authorities (LEAs); and Workers' Educational Association (WEA) centres.

The examples that follow indicate the key aspects of provision and the range of initiatives.

### Vocational Education/Training

**National Vocational Qualifications (NVQs)** are vocationally specific qualifications that can be taken by employees in a wide range of occupations. By the mid 1990s there were 500 NVQs covering 150 occupations. The level of penetration across industrial sectors is not uniform, and since a major review in the mid 1990s, efforts have been made to rationalise the provision of NVQs.

The NVQ system is a scheme designed to recognise the skills and understanding acquired in the workplace. NVQs are based on the concept of competences acquired and demonstrated, not on the time or place of acquisition. Gaining the qualification may, therefore, involve study at a college, but may be achieved entirely at the workplace. There are no entry requirements, since the key requirement for the qualification is to demonstrate competence. There are no formal curriculum requirements, although the employee is required to demonstrate competence for a particular NVQ award in a range of units. Most qualifications contain both mandatory and optional units, and additional units are also available. Units can be taken singly.

The **Sector Skills Councils (SSCs)** (see 5.1) are responsible for developing job profiles and national occupational standards across their sector in consultation with employers. The competences needed to perform to these standards are identified, and the units that comprise an NVQ are drawn up from these standards. Awarding bodies develop accreditation and awarding procedures, and are responsible for quality assurance. NVQs are included within the five levels of the National Qualifications Framework (see 3B.3), whose quality the Qualifications and Curriculum Authority (QCA) is responsible for. Inspection procedures are applied through the Adult Learning Inspectorate and Ofsted, in collaboration with the local Learning and Skills Councils (see 1.4).

A wide range of **other vocational qualifications** generated by employers or accrediting bodies exist, some outside the framework of NVQs and the National Qualifications. These qualifications often continue to be recognised by professional bodies.

### Adult Continuing Learning

A wide range of courses in general, basic skills and vocationally related areas such as ICT are available through local public provision in adult education centres provided by local authorities and by further education colleges. Funding is partly through the fees paid by the learner and partly through allocations made by the local authority or by the Learning and Skills Council. Inspection is undertaken by the Adult Learning Inspectorate or by Ofsted. Many such courses involve non-formal learning, and there is increasing interest in new methods of recognition or accreditation (See 7.7).

Adults may take courses leading to any of the **nationally recognised qualifications** such as the General Certificate of Secondary Education (GCSE - see 3B.3); General Certificate of Education Advanced-level (GCE A-level) or

General Certificate of Education Advanced Subsidiary Qualification (GCE AS qualifications) (see 4.2); General National Vocational Qualifications (GNVQs) or, as explained above National Vocational Qualifications (NVQs).

**Adult literacy and basic skills courses** are designed specifically for adults and include very flexible and informal programmes; they often take the form of drop-in workshops, where voluntary tutors provide tuition on a one-to-one basis. New adult literacy and numeracy core curricula have been developed which describe the content of what should be taught in literacy and numeracy programmes in: further and adult education; the workplace and programmes for the unemployed; prisons; community-based and family literacy and numeracy programmes.

**Access courses** prepare mainly mature students without academic qualifications for higher education: some provide access to a particular institution of higher education, which may thus be involved in designing the course, but most are designed to offer access to higher education in general.

**Recreational or non-vocational courses** which do not lead to any particular qualification are also offered by many institutions, in particular, by LEA-run adult education centres.

#### Government-supported training schemes

There are a number of Government-supported training schemes for adults. **Work-based learning for adults (WBLA)** is now the responsibility of the **Jobcentre Plus** (formerly known as the Employment Service), part of the Department for Work and Pensions in England, and of the **National Council – ELWa** in Wales. The aim of WBLA is to help adults, particularly those with poor employability skills and the long-term unemployed, to move into sustained employment, including self-employment. Several different models of education and training are offered within the programme including:

- a combination of employability training and occupational training;
- employed status with additional training; and
- occupational training which significantly improves skills in demand in the local labour market.

The programme also offers transitional support to participants immediately following their entry into employment and encourages the use of lifelong learning.

The **New Deal** is a key part of the Government's Welfare to Work strategy. It is an active labour market policy designed to move people into work quickly, and provide those who need it

with extra help to improve their employability. The New Deal for people aged 25 plus and aged 50 plus aim to help people who have been unemployed for two years (six months for those aged 50 plus) or more back into work. In 2001, New Deal programmes for Lone Parents, Partners of Unemployed People and for Disabled People were introduced. A personal adviser helps people seeking work to develop a plan that suits their needs. The programmes include measures such as subsidised employment and education and training opportunities.

The **Modern Skills Diploma for Adults** is a Welsh initiative to raise adult skills levels in business. The diploma programme combines practical training and off-the-job learning, along the lines of the Modern Apprenticeships (see 5.1), leading to a National Vocational Qualification at NVQ level three (see 3B.3)

#### Other Initiatives

A wide range of public and private sector programmes and initiatives could be mentioned in this context. The **Open University** is particularly important, providing 200,000 people at any one time with the opportunity to study in their homes with higher education distance learning packages.

Recognising the need to overcome barriers to learning in order to tackle basic skills problems, the Government has launched a range of initiatives to take learning to the learner, whether in the community or in the workplace. An example of this is the **Union Learning Fund (ULF)**. Trades unions have a long tradition of providing their own training. Government and the trade unions recently have become active partners in providing learning programmes that target basic skills and other training needs. Pilot projects have been subject to external, impact evaluation. Recent legislation has also established Union Learning Representatives in the workplace.

## 7.6 Guidance/counselling services

The Government funds the development and maintenance of '**learnirect**', the national information and advice service on lifelong learning opportunities. The purpose of '**learnirect**' is to provide direct and easy access to lifelong learning to a wide range of adults, by telephone, on the Internet and in a network of local learning centres. '**learnirect**' delivers the learning services of the **University for Industry (Ufi)**, a government initiative announced in

1998 with a remit to stimulate demand for lifelong learning amongst businesses and individuals, and to promote the availability of, and improve access to, relevant, high-quality and innovative learning, in particular through the use of information and communications technologies.

The new **Job Centre Plus** network, part of the Department for Work and Pensions, will provide a one-stop-shop for advice on work, training and social benefits.

For information about guidance services for young adults, including the **Connexions Service**, see 4.3.

## 7.7 Assessment, accreditation and recognition

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Assessment and certification for the wide range of education and training programmes available to adults is discussed in 7.5 where appropriate.

The recognition and accreditation of **informal and non-formal learning** is of growing importance. The Learning and Skills Council (LSC) is working with the National Institute for Adult and Continuing Education (NIACE) on a national system for recognising and recording progress and achievement in non-accredited learning. A national approach is being piloted, comprising two elements: a staged process through which providers recognise and record the progress and achievements of learners; and a national system for validating the recognition systems that providers have in place.

Other systems for validating prior learning include the **Accreditation of Prior Learning (APL)**, a portfolio system through which people without traditional qualifications may gain access to higher education, and a range of credit systems such as that operated by the **National Open College Network (NOCN)**, which enables learners to build up credits across a national network of centres.

## 7.8 Statistics

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On 1 November 2002, 2.2 million learners were enrolled on LSC funded further education (FE) provision in England. 27 per cent or 597 000 of the learners on council-funded provision

were aged under 19 and 83 per cent of these were in full-time full-year education. In 2001, there were 422 FE colleges and external institutions funded by LSC in England.

Source: Government Supported Further Education and Work Based Learning for Young People - 1 November 2002 (LSC Statistical First Release, 31/03/03).

According to the Government's 2001 *National Adult Learning Survey* (DfES, 2001) in England and Wales, 76 per cent of adults are estimated to have participated in learning activities, a 2 per cent increase on 1997. About 80 per cent of the learning that takes place on taught courses is vocational. Vocational courses tend to be of short description, with some 60 per cent provided by an employer and 40 per cent of provision made by education and training institutions.

Participation varies between different groups:

- Participation declines with age: 80+ per cent participation is found among 20-49 years olds, and only 25 % among people aged 70+;
- Women are less likely to engage than men (73:79 per cent);
- Disability is associated with lower participation;
- There is a strong correlation between educational background and participation: 55 per cent of those who left full-time education with no qualifications reported some kind of learning, compared to 95 per cent of those with a qualification at level 3 (see 3B.3) or above;
- Those least qualified on leaving full-time education were most likely to achieve a qualification subsequently; 71 per cent of those who left school with no qualification subsequently achieved one;
- Highest participation rates are found among those in paid work. 89 per cent of full-time, 82 per cent of self-employed and 81 per cent of part-time workers had engaged in learning over the year. Those outside the labour market recorded considerably lower participation: 68 per cent of unemployed people and 52 per cent of those looking after a family. The proportion of self-employed people engaging in learning has increased.

Earnings correlate with participation in learning: 91 per cent of high-income households report participating in learning compared to 53 per cent in the lowest income bracket.

*Adult Learning in England: A Review* (Hillage et al., 2000) indicates that over 80 per cent of

firms with 25+ employees and over 90 per cent of those with 200+ employees provide off the job training,. Much of this training concerns induction, health and safety – and four out of five employers provide job specific training.

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# NORTHERN IRELAND

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## 1. RESPONSIBILITIES AND ADMINISTRATION

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### 1.1 Background

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For information on the government, legislation, religion, languages, area and population, please refer to the United Kingdom introductory section at the start of this document.

This section includes information specific to Northern Ireland only; where provision is similar in England and Wales, cross references to this separate description are made. There is also a separate description available for Scotland.

### 1.2 Basis of the education system: principles and legislation

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Following the suspension of the Northern Ireland Parliament in 1972, when direct rule from the UK Parliament at Westminster was substituted, the vast majority of Northern Ireland's primary legislation was in the form of Orders. These were laid before Parliament under the Northern Ireland Act 1974. Much of the legislation paralleled that for England and Wales, but some provisions were specific to Northern Ireland.

On 2 December 1999, power was devolved to the Northern Ireland Assembly and its Executive Committee of Ministers (the Northern Ireland Executive), giving the Assembly legislative authority in the fields previously administered by the Northern Ireland departments, including education. (The Secretary of State for Northern Ireland is appointed by the UK Prime Minister and remained responsible for matters not devolved to the Assembly, including international relations, and represents the interests of Northern Ireland in the UK Cabinet.)

Due to difficulties in the peace process, the Northern Ireland Assembly was suspended at midnight on 14 October 2002, and the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland assumed

responsibility for the direction of the Northern Ireland departments.

The Northern Ireland education system is based on the principle that all children between the ages of four and 16 must receive efficient full-time education. All children between these ages are entitled to free education, and any subsequent education is also normally free for students up to the age of 19 (subject to residency requirements).

The fundamental reforms embodied in the Education Reform (Northern Ireland) Order 1989 reflected many of the provisions of the Education Reform Act 1988 for England and Wales, but included some important measures which were particular to Northern Ireland, such as the importance of education in improving understanding and tolerance between the communities in Northern Ireland. Subsequent legislation has introduced similar, but not identical, reforms to those in England and Wales and includes the Education and Libraries (NI) Order 1993, the Education (Northern Ireland) Order 1996, the Education (Northern Ireland) Order 1997 and the Education (Northern Ireland) Order 1998).

### 1.3 Organisation and administration of the education system

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The administration of the education system is effected at national and local government level. Governing bodies have a high degree of autonomy for the management of their institutions.

#### **Central government and national agencies**

Public education in Northern Ireland is administered centrally by the **Department of Education (DE)** and the **Department for Employment and Learning (DEL)** and locally by five Education and Library Boards (Boards). The

**Council for Catholic-Maintained Schools (CCMS)**, which was established by the Education Reform Order 1989, has certain responsibilities for all Catholic-maintained schools.

Since the suspension of the Northern Ireland Assembly in October 2002, the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland has responsibility for the direction of the Northern Ireland education departments. Prior to this suspension, the Executive included: a Minister for Education who lead the Department for Education (DE) and was responsible for policy, legislation and resource issues relating to schools and the Youth Service; and a Minister for Employment and Learning who lead the Department for Employment and Learning (DEL) and was responsible for further and higher education, training and employment.

The **Department of Education (DE)** is responsible for all policy, legislation and resource issues relating to schools and the Youth Service. Its specific areas of responsibility are for the school curriculum, pupil assessment and examinations, raising standards in teaching and learning, transfer procedures and selection (for post-primary education), open enrolment, pupil support, special education, the youth service and community relations among young people. In addition, the DE has responsibility for strategic planning and finance and the education and training inspection of all phases of education.

The main responsibilities of the **Department for Employment and Learning (DEL)** include: further and higher education; vocational training; employment services; employment law and labour relations; teacher training and teacher education; student support and post-graduate awards; and training grants. Within this Department, the Further and Higher Education Division has particular responsibility for the development of policy and the planning, funding and administration of further and higher education. Additional advice is provided by the Northern Ireland Higher Education Council (NIHEC) and the Further Education Consultative Committee.

As in England and Wales, there are also a number of **non-departmental public bodies (NDPBs)**, which may be established by statute but are not government departments nor parts of a department. They normally operate within broad policy guidelines set by departmental ministers. Their duties may include executive, administrative, regulatory or commercial functions. They employ their own staff.

The **Northern Ireland Council for the Curriculum, Examinations and Assessment (CCEA)** is a statutory NDPB whose members are

appointed by DE and include representatives from education, industry and commerce as well as two assessors from DE. Its prime duty is to advise DE on all aspects affecting the school curriculum, and on assessment and qualifications. It produces information and guidance materials for schools (although the final choice of teaching methods and materials rests with schools). It is also the awarding body, in Northern Ireland, for qualifications such as GCSEs and GCE A-levels (see 3B.3 and 4.2 of the England and Wales document).

The **Council for Catholic-Maintained Schools (CCMS)** is a statutory NDPB whose members consist of trustee representatives appointed by the Northern Ireland Bishops, and persons appointed by the Head of DE in consultation with the Bishops, the parents and teachers. The main purpose of the CCMS is to promote high standards of education in Catholic-maintained schools for which it provides an upper tier of management. It promotes and coordinates the planning of provision in the Catholic-maintained sector, employs teachers, and promotes effective management in Catholic-maintained schools.

### Local administration

Responsibility for pre-school and school education at local level rests with the five **Education and Library Boards**, each of which includes one or more of the 26 democratically elected district council areas. Boards are reappointed every four years, following the district council elections. Forty per cent of the members of each Board is made up of district councillors who have been nominated for appointment by their respective district council; 22 per cent represent the interests of the Protestant and Catholic Churches and the remaining members are appointed by the Minister on the basis of their interest in the services for which the Boards are responsible; for example teachers, library and youth interests, trade unionists and business interests are represented.

The Education and Library Boards are responsible for funding controlled schools (revenue and capital) and maintained schools (revenue only). They also provide youth services and library and information services in the local communities. They must ensure that there are sufficient schools to meet local needs. They are responsible for enforcing school attendance and provide a curriculum advisory and support service to all the schools in their area. They are required to prepare a statement of their arrangements for the education of children with behavioural difficulties. Boards provide school meals services and transport to and from

school. They also employ teachers and have other management responsibilities for controlled schools. They award university and other scholarships.

### Educational institutions

As in England and Wales, educational institutions enjoy a high degree of autonomy.

Publicly funded **schools** in Northern Ireland are known as grant-aided schools. There are five categories of grant-aided schools: controlled schools; controlled integrated schools, grant-maintained integrated schools and voluntary grammar schools. All publicly funded schools in Northern Ireland have a board of governors which is responsible for making decisions on the general direction of the school and its curriculum. As in England and Wales, the composition of the boards of governors of schools normally reflects several sectors of **the community**, including the local business community and the local authority or the founding body, alongside elected parents and teachers.

There are both general and specialist **further education (FE) colleges**, providing both full-time and part-time courses. Since incorporation in April 1998, the responsibility for the management of further education colleges has been transferred to the governing bodies, whose roles and responsibilities are similar to those of the governing bodies of further education institutions in England and Wales. Governing bodies must consist of between 12 and 18 members, including the principal. Members must also include representatives elected by the staff, representatives elected by the students, nominees of the Education and Library Board and members co-opted by the governing body. At least half of the members must be drawn from business, industry and the professions. Colleges are also responsible for providing recreational courses for adults.

All **higher education institutions** are autonomous bodies with full responsibility for educational provision and internal organisation.

### 1.4 Inspection and quality assurance

As in England and Wales, the board of governors and headteacher of each individual school have a responsibility for institutional self-evaluation. However, the Education and Library Boards do not have the same obligations and powers with respect to quality as do local education authorities in England and Wales.

The **Education and Training Inspectorate (ETI)**, a branch of the Department of Education (DE)

and is responsible for inspecting and reporting on the quality of education in schools in Northern Ireland. Inspectors are civil service employees of DE. Each school is formally inspected by a team of inspectors at least once every seven years. Inspections are designed to evaluate the work of each school, taking account of its individual circumstances and conditions, and focusing on the ethos of the school, the quality of teaching and learning, and the quality of management. All ETI reports on the education system, including reports of school inspections, are published.

The ETI also assesses the vocational education and training of young people and adults in grant-aided training organisations, and reports on these to the Learning and Skills Advisory Board at the Department for Employment and Learning. It also assesses the support services of the Education and Library Boards, adult and community education, and initial teacher training institutions.

Higher education institutions in Northern Ireland are subject to the same system of academic review as those in England. The system is operated by the Quality Assurance Agency (see England and Wales section 1.4).

### 1.5 Financing, fees, loans and grants

All publicly funded **schools** have their recurrent costs fully funded by the Department of Education (DE), either directly or through the Education and Library Boards. The Department also provides up to 100 per cent of capital funding, depending on the category of school.

Local Management of Schools (LMS), introduced from 1989, requires a high level of financial delegation to schools. Funding is allocated to schools according to a formula determined by pupil numbers and other factors such as the premises, size of school, social/educational need, etc. All Board formulae conform to a broad framework set down by the DE. Many schools also attract additional grants from specific initiatives and raise extra funds through voluntary contributions etc. A review of school funding is currently taking place with the aim of introducing a common funding formula for all Northern Ireland grant-aided schools.

With the exception of voluntary grammar schools, which charge a small fee, publicly funded schools (known as grant-aided schools) **do not charge** for tuition, books and stationery. As in England and Wales, schools may invite



parents to make voluntary contributions for some activities.

The school board of governors and principal (headteacher) are entirely responsible for the expenditure of the school's annual budget, which covers most staff costs, recurrent equipment, books and materials, and most premises' running costs, repairs and maintenance.

**Further education** colleges receive their funding directly from the Department for Employment and Learning. A new funding formula is under consideration, and transitional arrangements are currently in force.

In publicly-funded further education institutions, 16- to 18-year-olds from the UK and the European Union/European Economic Area who have ordinarily been resident in the UK for the previous three years are exempt from tuition fees. However, they may incur some costs (for further information see England and Wales section 1.5). In Northern Ireland, following the Student Support Review, fees have been abolished for students over 19, on full-time vocational courses in further education.

**Higher education** institutions are funded through the Department for Employment and Learning on the advice of the Northern Ireland Higher Education Council and the Higher Education Funding Council for England (HEFCE). In most other respects, arrangements are similar to arrangements in England and Wales.

Subject to personal or parental income, students may receive financial support towards the cost of tuition fees and, where appropriate, help with living costs. There are different arrangements for undergraduate and postgraduate students. Support may be available through student loans, and, for students from low income families, grants and bursaries.

## 1.6 Advisory and consultative bodies

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The **Northern Ireland Council for the Curriculum, Examinations and Assessment (CCEA)** is publicly funded by the Department of Education (DE) and has a statutory responsibility to give advice to the DE about the curriculum, assessment, examinations and external qualifications.

The **Northern Ireland Council for Integrated Education (NICIE)** was incorporated as a company in 1989. It aims to create a representative structure within which debate and policy development on issues affecting integrated education as a whole can take place. It receives funding from the Department of Education as part of its new statutory responsibility to encourage and facilitate integrated education.

As in England and Wales, **interest groups**, which in many cases operate UK-wide, exist to represent parents, teachers, governors, students, employers, trade unions and political and religious groups.

## 1.7 Private schools

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As in England and Wales, the Government is expanding **pre-compulsory** education in cooperation with the voluntary and private sector institutions, which may be paid a grant for educating three- and four-year-olds, subject to meeting certain conditions and requirements.

There are few **independent schools** in Northern Ireland. They receive no direct state funding.

## 2. PRE-PRIMARY EDUCATION

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In Northern Ireland, compulsory education begins at age four. Pre-school provision is therefore defined as education provided for a child (whether at a school or any other premises) after he or she has attained the age of two years and before he or she has reached compulsory school age (four years), other than in the reception class of a primary school. As in England and Wales, a National Childcare Strategy relating to education and day care has been developed.

Provision of pre-school or nursery education is not a statutory requirement in Northern Ireland, nor is participation compulsory. However, the Government began a pre-school education expansion programme in 1998, which initially targeted children from socially disadvantaged circumstances and the oldest children from the pre-school cohort. In September 2003, free places should be available for all children in the final pre-school year whose parents want them to attend.

### 2.1 Organisation

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Although not required by law to provide pre-school education, Education and Library Boards (Boards) are expected to produce plans detailing how they will secure pre-school education for children resident in their local area. As in England and Wales, the Boards form partnerships with pre-school education providers in all sectors (statutory, voluntary, private, integrated and Irish-medium). The partnerships collaborate on the provision of pre-school education and share good practice.

Nursery schools and nursery classes in Northern Ireland normally admit children from the age of around three years, depending on the admissions policy and the number of places available. Education and Library Boards must make arrangements for parents of pre-school children to apply for admission to pre-school education at a school, should they so wish. They must also publish the arrangements for the admission of children to nursery education at each school in their area. The types of pre-school institution in Northern Ireland are similar to those described for England and Wales (see

section.

As in England and Wales, pre-school provision in Northern Ireland is available on a full- or a part-time basis. Opening hours and attendance times are also similar.

Classroom organisation is left largely to the discretion of the institution, with children either in mixed-age groups or grouped according to age, depending on the number of pupils and the size of the classes.

### 2.2 Curriculum/assessment

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There is no nationally prescribed curriculum for nursery education in Northern Ireland, but providers receiving government funding are expected to follow curriculum guidance issued by the Northern Ireland Council for the Curriculum, Examinations and Assessment (CCEA). This guidance takes account of the Northern Ireland curriculum and lists the following areas of learning, which should provide fully for the developmental needs of each child: personal, social and emotional development; physical development; creative aesthetic development; language development; early mathematical experiences; early experiences in science and technology; and knowledge and appreciation of the environment. There are no regulations specifically governing the assessment of nursery pupils' performance, but monitoring of progress is promoted as good practice.

The Government in Northern Ireland are currently involved in developing proposals to reform what is taught in pre-school education. A new foundation stage to cover both pre-school and the first two years of primary school (children aged three to six years) is expected to be implemented from September 2004. This would place an emphasis on establishing children's attitudes to school and developing their personal skills.

The headteacher and staff decide on the timetable, teaching methods and materials used in nursery schools and classes. Education and Library Boards in Northern Ireland play a similar role to local education authorities (LEAs) in giving advice about the organisation of teaching

and the teaching programme whilst having no powers to impose teaching methods.

The recommended (but not statutory) ratio of staff to pre-school children in grant-aided (Government-funded) schools in Northern Ireland is two members of staff to 26 children in full-time pre-school education. As in England and Wales, one of the members of staff should be a qualified teacher, the other a qualified nursery assistant.

### 2.3 Teachers

Teachers employed in grant-aided schools must have qualifications approved by the Department of Education (DE) Northern Ireland. Similar conditions of service to those for teachers in England and Wales apply in Northern Ireland. See 2.3 for England and Wales.

### 2.4 Statistics

	Number nursery 2001/02	of schools	Pupil Teacher Ratio  Nursery Schools 2001/02
Northern Ireland	96		24.4

Source: DEPARTMENT FOR EDUCATION AND SKILLS (2002). Education and Training Statistics in the United Kingdom 2002 Edition. London: TSO.

At the end of 2001, 67 per cent of the three- and four-year-old population participated in either pre-school or primary education (NB. compulsory education begins at age 4).

Source: Department of Education, Northern Ireland.

For numbers of pupils, see section 2.4 of the description for England and Wales.

### 3. COMPULSORY EDUCATION

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The period of **compulsory education** in Northern Ireland is from age four to 16. It is divided into four **key stages**: key stage 1 for pupils aged four to eight; key stage 2 for pupils aged eight to 11; key stage 3 for pupils aged 11 to 14 and key stage 4 for pupils aged 14 to 16.

Key stages 1 and 2 are provided in **primary schools**, and key stages 3 and 4 are provided in secondary schools, known in Northern Ireland as **post-primary schools**. Many post-primary schools cater for pupils up to the end of compulsory education (16) only, but others also provide post-compulsory education for young people up to the age of 18+.

The **basic principles** underlying compulsory education in Northern Ireland are similar to those which apply in England and Wales, but there are some significant structural differences. Although a number of integrated schools have been established aiming to educate Catholic and Protestant children together, for historical reasons, the school system in Northern Ireland remains largely segregated on religious lines. The main categories of publicly funded schools in Northern Ireland are controlled schools (educating mainly Protestant children), controlled integrated schools (educating Protestant and Catholic children together), maintained schools (educating mainly Catholic children), grant-maintained integrated schools (educating Protestant and Catholic children together) and voluntary grammar schools (which may have either Roman Catholic or non-denominational management and educate either Catholic or Protestant children).

Parents may apply to any school for a place for their child. If there are more applications than places at a school, arrangements for **allocating places** are broadly similar to those which operate in England and Wales. Primary schools are coeducational and accept all pupils without regard to their academic ability. However, in contrast to England and Wales, secondary education remains largely a selective system: around 35 per cent of pupils attend grammar schools and the remaining 65 per cent attend other secondary schools, according to their performance in transfer tests, taken at age 11. Almost half of grammar schools are single-sex, but the majority of other secondary schools are coeducational. An independent review body has recently published proposals regarding the future of the selective system of entry into post-primary

education in Northern Ireland. These proposals are currently the subject of extensive consultation.

As in England and Wales, the **size of schools** varies widely, but Northern Ireland has a larger proportion of small, rural primary schools.

## 3A. Primary education

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### 3A.1 Primary school organisation

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Schools in Northern Ireland are required to be open for 190 days a year. The actual dates of terms and holidays are set by the Education and Library Boards for controlled schools and, for all other types of schools, by the board of governors. The school year runs from the beginning of September to the end of the following June, with eight weeks' summer break and approximately two weeks at Christmas and Easter.

Pupils under the age of eight are required to attend school for a minimum of three hours a day, although they usually attend for longer than this. Those aged over eight must attend for four-and-a-half hours a day, in two sessions. Classes normally take place five days per week, Monday to Friday. Schools are generally open between 9.00 a.m. and 3.30/4.00 p.m.

Pupils are placed in a class according to their age and progress to the next class at the end of the school year.

### 3A.2 Primary curriculum

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As in England and Wales, schools can develop the whole curriculum to express their particular ethos and meet pupils' individual needs and circumstances. All publicly funded primary schools are required to provide the **Northern Ireland Curriculum**, as well as religious education and collective worship. The minimum requirements are English, mathematics, science

and technology, history, geography, art and design, music, and physical education. Irish is a requirement in Irish-speaking schools. In addition, there are four educational themes, to be woven through the main subjects of the curriculum: education for mutual understanding, cultural heritage, health education and information technology.

As in England and Wales, the amount of time to be allocated to each curriculum subject is not prescribed. The recommended daily literacy and numeracy lessons in primary schools in England have not been introduced in Northern Ireland. Teachers are largely free to choose their own teaching methods and textbooks. Audio-visual materials and information and communications technology are routinely used.

A revised Northern Ireland Curriculum for primary and post-primary level education is expected to be introduced from September 2004.

### 3A.3 Primary level assessment/certification/guidance

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All pupils who are in their first year of compulsory education must be assessed in accordance with statutory baseline assessment arrangements. The assessment takes place at any time during a child's first year in primary school, but must be completed before the end of this first year of compulsory education.

Teachers and schools continuously assess their pupils' progress. In addition, the statutory assessment arrangements for the Northern Ireland Curriculum are as follows:

At the end of **key stage 1** (age 8), pupils are assessed by their teachers in English and mathematics (in Irish-speaking schools, in Irish and mathematics). At the end of **key stage 2** (age 11) pupils are again assessed by their teachers in English and mathematics (in Irish-speaking schools, in English, Irish and mathematics). In contrast to England and Wales, pupils are not required to sit formal tests, but the Northern Ireland Council for the Curriculum, Examinations and Assessment (CCEA; see 1.3) provides assessment materials and moderates the assessments.

The outcomes from key stage 2 assessments are not used to decide the type of post-primary schools to be attended by pupils. Instead, those pupils wishing to transfer to a selective 'grammar' school education take 'transfer tests' in English, mathematics, and science and

technology.

There is no certificate awarded to pupils on completion of primary education in Northern Ireland.

### 3A.4 Teachers at primary and secondary level

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**Teachers** employed in publicly funded schools must have eligibility to teach, which is normally achieved by completing an initial teacher training (ITT) course accredited by the Department of Education.

As in England and Wales, there are two traditional routes which lead to recognition as a qualified teacher: the concurrent model, which leads to a degree in education, normally the Bachelor of Education (BEd); and the consecutive model, which leads to the Postgraduate Certificate in Education (PGCE). Curricula are broadly similar to those in England and Wales.

As in England and Wales, teachers in primary schools are mainly generalists, and teachers in post-primary schools are mainly subject specialists.

Teachers are not civil servants. They are employees of the Education and Library Board or the school board of governors (depending on the type of school). In most respects, arrangements are broadly similar to those in operation in England and Wales.

All teachers in publicly funded schools in Northern Ireland are required to be registered with the General Teaching Council for Northern Ireland, which was established in 2002 to advise the Department of Education and employing authorities on matters affecting teachers' professional standards.

### 3A.5 Statistics (primary and secondary)

2001/02	Publicly funded schools	Pupils	Teachers (full-time equivalent)	Pupil teacher ratio
Primary	920	179 000	8 600*	19.8
Secondary (post-primary)	235	155 500**	9 700	14.4
* includes nursery teachers				
** includes post-compulsory students in schools				

Source: DEPARTMENT FOR EDUCATION AND SKILLS (2002). *Education and Training Statistics in the United Kingdom 2002 Edition*. London: TSO.

study at **key stage 4** are: English; mathematics; science; history or geography or business studies or home economics or economics or political studies or social and environmental studies; physical education; and modern languages.

As at primary level, cross-curricular themes form part of the curriculum. At secondary level these include economic awareness and careers education in addition to education for mutual understanding, cultural heritage, health education and information technology.

Although, as in England and Wales, the amount of time to be allocated to each curriculum subject is not prescribed, at key stage 4, the Department of Education does recommend minimum time requirements for each area of study and for religious education. Teachers are largely free to choose their own teaching methods and textbooks. Audio-visual materials and information and communications technology are routinely used.

## 3B. Secondary education

### 3B.1 Secondary school organisation

The arrangements for the **school day, week** and **year** are as at primary level. See 3A.1.

### 3B.2 Secondary curriculum

As at primary level, schools are expected to develop the whole curriculum to express their particular ethos and meet pupils' individual needs and circumstances, whilst also providing the **Northern Ireland Curriculum** and religious education and collective worship. Within the Northern Ireland Curriculum, the compulsory areas of study in secondary education (**key stages 3 and 4**) are: English; mathematics; science and technology; the environment and society; creative and expressive studies; and languages.

Within each area of study, there are a number of contributory subjects, of which the following are compulsory at **key stage 3**: English, mathematics, science, technology and design, history, geography, physical education, art and design, music, and a modern language.

The compulsory subjects within the areas of

### 3B.3 Secondary-level assessment/certification/guidance

Teachers and schools continuously assess their pupils' progress. In addition, the statutory assessment arrangements for the Northern Ireland Curriculum are as follows:

At the end of **key stage 3**, pupils are assessed by teachers in English, mathematics and science. In addition, pupils are required to sit tests in these subjects set and marked by the Northern Ireland Council for the Curriculum, Examinations and Assessment (CCEA). In Irish-speaking schools, pupils take tests and are assessed by their teachers in Irish in addition.

Assessment arrangements at the end of **key stage 4** are similar to those in operation in England and Wales.

### 3B.4 Teachers

See 3A.4

### 3B.5 Statistics

See 3B.5

## 4. POST-COMPULSORY SECONDARY EDUCATION AND FURTHER EDUCATION

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Institutions are organised along similar lines to those in England and Wales but grammar schools focus largely on general (academic) subjects. There is no statutory curriculum at this level; students may choose from a range of courses which lead to nationally recognised qualifications (see England and Wales 3B.3, 4.2 and 5.5).

Further education teachers who do not have an initial teacher training qualification on appointment must hold an approved qualification, such as a university degree or a vocational qualification in the subject they wish to teach. They are contractually required to obtain the Postgraduate Certificate (Further and Higher Education) within three years of appointment and are encouraged to extend this training to obtain the Postgraduate Diploma (Further and Higher Education).

In 2001/02, there were 17 further education colleges in Northern Ireland. There are no sixth-form colleges in Northern Ireland.

Participation rates in full-time education (schools and colleges) in Northern Ireland 2001/2002

Age	%
16	78.1
17	66.7
16-17	72.4

Source: DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION NORTHERN IRELAND (2002). Participation in Full-time Education and Training by 16 and 17 year olds in Northern Ireland 2001/2. Statistical Press Release. Bangor: DE.

Number of teachers in further education institutions in Northern Ireland in 2001/02

Full-time	1815
Part-time headcount	3113
Total	4928

Source: DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION AND DEPARTMENT FOR EMPLOYMENT AND LEARNING (2003). Compendium of Northern Ireland Education Statistics 1989/90 to 2001/02. Bangor: DE.

## 5. INITIAL VOCATIONAL EDUCATION AND TRAINING

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In Northern Ireland, the organisation of initial vocational training differs in some respects from that in England and Wales. The Department for Employment and Learning (DEL), is responsible for the administration and delivery of all Government training programmes. Similar to those provided in England and Wales (see England and Wales 5.1), **Jobskills** comprises three separate but interlinked strands: Access, Traineeships and Modern Apprenticeships which lead to national vocational qualifications at levels one, two and three respectively (see 3B.3 of the England and Wales description).

The **Learning and Skills Advisory Board** advises the Department for Employment and Learning on the provision of further education and

training in Northern Ireland. The Board's primary role is to secure strong collaboration and co-operation between the department and the private sector.

Further education colleges provide full- and part-time courses of vocational education and training to students over compulsory school age (16 years). They are funded directly by the Department for Employment and Learning (DEL). Students may choose from a wide range of courses which lead to nationally recognised qualifications. Colleges may apply to DEL to become recognised training providers and, as such, may be given contracts to provide training as part of Government-funded schemes.



## 6. HIGHER EDUCATION

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The statutory framework under which higher education operates in Northern Ireland is different from that in England and Wales. Nevertheless, in most respects, higher education provision is broadly similar to that in England and Wales.

Higher education is provided by two universities. The merger, in 1984, of the Ulster Polytechnic with the New University of Ulster to form the University of Ulster effectively removed the binary divide which separated universities from

polytechnics and colleges. A number of mainly vocational higher education courses, covering a wide range of subject areas, is also provided in further education colleges.

Higher education institutions are funded through the Department for Employment and Learning on the advice of the Northern Ireland Higher Education Council and the Higher Education Funding Council for England (HEFCE). In most other respects, arrangements are similar to those in England and Wales.

## 7. CONTINUING EDUCATION AND TRAINING FOR ADULTS

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The responsible government departments in Northern Ireland are the **Department for Education (DE)** and the **Department for Employment and Learning (DEL)**.

There are some differences from England and Wales in the organisation, structure and financing of adult education and training in Northern Ireland. For example, further education colleges (see above) are the main providers of adult education, and, unlike colleges in England and Wales, they also have a statutory duty to provide recreational courses. Adults may choose from a wide range of full- and part-time courses of general education (including basic education), vocational education and training, and recreational activities. Courses may lead to nationally recognised qualifications.

Government-supported vocational training for adults, like initial vocational training is administered by the Department for Employment and Learning (DEL) (see section 5).