

# The educational system of the United Kingdom: the admission and placement of UK students

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# Secondary education in the UK: structure 1

- Covers students aged 11 to 18
- Types of secondary school:
  - Comprehensive Secondary Schools
  - County Grammar Schools
  - Secondary Modern Schools
  - Voluntary Secondary Schools
  - City Technology Colleges
  - Independent Schools ("Public Schools")

# Secondary education in the UK: structure 2

- Higher secondary schools
  - Sixth Form Colleges (16-18)
  - Tertiary Colleges (16-18)
  - Colleges of Further Education (14-19)
    - Vocational courses (technical and craft courses)
    - Edexcel courses
    - A levels
  - Colleges of Further Education (18+)
    - Academic transfer eg Access courses
    - Diploma in Foundation Studies (Art & Design)
    - Degree courses franchised by a university



# Secondary education in the UK: awards and qualifications 1

- City and Guilds of London Institute
  - Craft and technician training (16 – 20)
- The Royal Society of Arts
  - Commercial courses
- London Chamber of Commerce and Industry
  - Commercial courses
- Pitman Examinations Institute
  - Secretarial courses
- Edexcel: First and National Diplomas and Certificates
  - Vocational courses (16 – 18)

# Secondary education in the UK: awards and qualifications 2

- General Certificate of Secondary Education (GCSE)
  - Normally taken by 16 year olds
  - Graded A – G plus unclassified (U)
  - High achievement A – C
  - Intermediate achievement C – E
  - Low achievement D - G

# Secondary education in the UK: awards and qualifications 3

- GCE Advanced level (A level)
  - Normally taken by 18 year olds
- GCE Advanced Subsidiary level (AS level)
  - Normally taken by 17 year olds



# Secondary education in the UK: The Education Reform Act 1988

- Diminution of the power of local authorities
- Introduction of a National Curriculum
- Key Stages and assessment at 7, 11, 14 and 16
- Local management of schools

# Secondary education in the UK: The Tomlinson Report

- Inquiry into A level standards (2002)
- Working Group on 14-19 Reform
- Final Tomlinson report:
  - Replace GCSEs, A levels, vocational awards with a new single diploma
  - Reduce number of examinations
  - Replace coursework with single project
  - Diploma to have four levels from pre-GCSE to A level
  - Extra “stretch” for A levels before diploma introduced
  - Modular structure with equivalent weight given to vocational elements
  - Core elements: maths, ICT, communications skills



# Secondary education in the UK: The White Paper

- 14-19 Education and Skills
- Proposals aimed at ending snobbery over vocational education as “second best”
- Protection of the gold standard of GCSE and A levels
- Four pillars of the White Paper:
  - Vocational opportunities from age 14
  - Renewed focus on the basics: Maths and English for all
  - “Stretch” for the most able students
  - Ending disengagement which leads pupils to leave education early

# Secondary education in Scotland

- Different history from England and Wales
- Long history of educational opportunities for poorer children
- Separate education system: secondary and further/higher education
- Standard Grade examinations (15/16 year olds)
- Less specialisation than English system eg 3 x A levels vs 5 x Scottish Highers
- Scottish Highers (17 year olds: entrance to Scottish universities)
- Advanced Highers (18 year olds: entrance to English universities)
- Amalgamation of SEB (awarded highers and standard grades) and SCOTVEC (GSVQs etc) to form Scottish Qualifications Authority (SQA)

# QCA qualifications framework FE/HE

National Qualifications Framework		Framework for HE Qualifications
Level 5 NVQ Construction; Level 5 Diploma in Translation	Level 8	<b>D</b> - Doctorate
	Level 7	<b>M</b> – Masters' degree; PG Cert, PG Dip
Level 4 NVQ Advice & Guidance; Level 4 BTEC HND 3D Design;	Level 6	<b>H</b> - Honours degree; graduate cert., graduate dip.
	Level 5	<b>I</b> – Dip. HE; Foundation degree; HND
	Level 4	<b>C</b> – Cert. HE
Level 3 Cert. Small Animal Care; A level	Level 3	
Level 2 Dip. Beauty Specialists; GCSE grades A* - C	Level 2	
Level 1 NVQ Bakery; GCSE grades D - G	Level 1	



# Higher education in the United Kingdom

- History and structure
- Awards and qualifications
- Legislation and policy directions
- Funding and student finance
- Widening participation
- Curricula and pedagogic issues
- Quality and standards
- Admissions
- Measuring and recording student achievement
- Research and enterprise
- The UK and Europe

# Summary of change since 1990

- Elitist system to a mass system
- High degree of specialisation to more flexible curriculum choices ie single honours to range of combinations
- Three year degree structure remains but with high degree of modularity, credit accumulation and transfer
- Assessment by examination replaced by examination and coursework
- Range of obstacles for US students to study in UK now removed

# History and structure of UK higher education

- Ancient universities eg Oxford 1167
- Old universities:
  - University of London; Victorian “civic” universities; 20<sup>th</sup> century “redbrick”; Scottish, Welsh and NI universities; the Open University; technological and campus universities of the 1960s
- New universities (ex polytechnics)
- Colleges and University Colleges
- Specialist colleges eg Art and Music
- Higher education in Further Education (FE) colleges



# Higher education awards and qualifications

- Higher education levels and qualifications:
  - Certificate level (120 C level credits)
  - Intermediate level eg Diploma in HE, HND/HNC, Foundation degrees, non-honours degrees (240 I level credits)
  - Honours degrees (360 H level credits)
  - Masters degrees (180 M level credits)
  - Doctoral degrees
- Three undergraduate levels and two postgraduate levels

# Higher education legislation: major policy changes

- The Robbins Report 1963
- Education Reform Act 1988
- Further and Higher Education Act 1992
- The Dearing Report 1997
- Teaching and Higher Education Act 1998
- Higher Education Act 2004

# Funding of higher education and student finance

- National funding councils for England, Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland (*hefce.ac.uk*)
- Funding for ug and pg teaching costs and research
- Funding for teaching allocated by formula (student nos)
- Up front fees for ug courses introduced in 1998-99 (currently £1,200 pa)
- From 2006 partial de-regulation of ug fees, charged to students on completion (maximum £3,000 pa)
- Maintenance grants abolished in 1998; to be reintroduced in 2005-06



# Widening participation (WP)

- Access or WP central policy of Labour government
- Target 50% participation rate 18-30 year olds by year 2010 (currently 43%; Scotland higher)
- Aim to reach “non-traditional” groups
- Target groups: social classes 3, 4 and 5 and ethnic minorities

# Curricula and pedagogic issues

- Specialisation: movement away from single honours programmes
- Methods of assessment more diverse – fewer formal examinations
- Growth of modular courses
- Widespread acceptance of credit accumulation and transfer
- Introduction of Foundation Degrees (2 year programmes)

# Quality and standards

- In the 20 years up to 1997 HE student numbers more than doubled
- Unit of funding per student fell by 40%
- In a mass system standards must be made explicit for public trust
- Quality Assurance Agency (QAA) established in 1997
- QAA mission to safeguard the public interest in sound standards and to encourage continuous improvement in the management of quality
- *[www.qaa.ac.uk](http://www.qaa.ac.uk)*



# Admissions to higher education

- Admission to all full-time undergraduate courses in the UK through the Universities and Colleges Admissions Service (UCAS)
- Students apply for up to six courses; applications considered simultaneously (Route A)
- Applications for Art & Design courses considered sequentially (Route B)
- Applicants with no offers enter Clearing process, with those who fail to meet conditional entry requirements
- Applications for other courses (pg, part-time, etc) are made direct to institutions
- The Schwarz Report (Fair Admissions):
  - Post qualification admission (PQA)
  - Centralised professionalised admissions
  - Universal aptitude test to help students from poorer backgrounds
- *[www.ucas.ac.uk](http://www.ucas.ac.uk)*

# Measuring and recording student achievement

- Progress files: Reflection on own learning
- Common format
- Transcripts: verifiable record of achievement
- Consistent data set
- Personal development planning (PDP)

# Research and enterprise

- Dual support system
- Public funding via selectivity audit:  
Research Assessment Exercise
- Public funding via Research Councils:  
projects, studentships, fellowships etc
- The Lambert Review
- Third stream income



# The UK and Europe

- European Union now 25 member states
- The Bologna process
- Harmonisation of the architecture of the European higher education system
- Bologna priorities:
  - Quality assurance
  - Two cycle degree system (ug/pg)
  - Recognition of degrees and periods of study

# Higher education in Scotland

- Scotland had five “ancient” universities whilst England had only two by 1582
- Scottish honours degrees normally four years but with MA/MSc qualification
- Initially more broadly based than England: “common start and late differentiation”
- Higher education in Scotland generally highly regarded
- Scottish Education Act of 1696 first national system of education in the world since Sparta

# Further education

- The term “Further Education” introduced in 1944 for 16 year olds and over
- Overlaps secondary and higher education covering both academic and vocational qualifications; broader mandate, greater variety of courses
- Learning and Skills Council (LSC) established in 2001 for all education over 16:
  - Further education
  - Work based training
  - School sixth forms
  - Workforce development
  - Adult and community learning
  - Information, advice and guidance for adults
  - Education business links



# Professional qualifications

- British higher education the “product of tradition and pragmatism rather than logic...” (Becher 1987)
- Professional associations evolved from uniquely British traditions, often from the Middle Ages and the medieval guilds
- Concepts of “kinship” and “common interest”
- Range of professions from Royal Charters (awarded by the Privy Council) to loose professional associations
- Qualifications: completion of an educational programme; passing of association’s own qualifying examinations