

Credential Templates, United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland

International Qualifications Assessment Service (IQAS), Government of Alberta

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Country:
United Kingdom

Official Country Name:
United Kingdom

Region:
England, Wales and
Northern Ireland

Status: Pending
Category: Secondary School

Date Entered: December 8, 2006
Date Revised: December 8, 2006

Credential Actual Name:
General Certificate of Secondary Education
(GCSE in academic or applied subjects)

Credential English Name:

Credential Alternate or Former Name(s): **Credential Alternate English Name(s):**

- General Certificate of Education
Ordinary Level (GCE O level,
discontinued in 1986)
- Certificate of Secondary Education
(CSE, discontinued in 1986)

Time Period Credential Offered: Current (since 1988)

Issuing Body: Awarding bodies (see list of awarding bodies, p. 11)

Admission Requirements:

The completion of elementary school, which represents six years of schooling in England and Wales, and seven years in Northern Ireland.

Program Description:

Five years of secondary school education – that represents a total of 11 years of combined elementary and secondary education in England and Wales, and 12 years in Northern Ireland. (See rationale for a more complete description.)

Provides Access to in the Home Country:

- Further education in secondary schools, further education colleges (sometimes called sixth form colleges), or technical and vocational education
- Employment

Placement Recommendations:

PIER (Projects for International Education Research) World Education Series, 1991 (US)

- The General Certificate of Secondary Education (GCSE) may be considered for freshman admission with a minimum of 5 passes in different subjects, including English and math, with grades A-C.

NOOSR (National Office of Overseas Skills Recognition), 1992 (Australia)

- The General Certificate of Secondary Education can be regarded as at least comparable to the educational level of and Australian Year 10 award for employment purposes and as running at Year 11 level in the subjects studied.

The New Country Index - International Education Research Foundation, 2004 (US)

- The General Certificate of Secondary Education is comparable to the completion of high school.

IQAS Recommendations for:

Employment

The General Certificate of Secondary Education [and the former General Certificate of Education Ordinary Level] [with a minimum of 5 courses passed] generally compares to the completion of Grade Twelve for employment purposes.

The Certificate of Secondary Education generally compares to the completion of Grade 12 for employment purposes, if at least 5 courses passed with a grade of 1. Otherwise, the CSE generally compares to the completion of Grade 11.

Post-secondary Admission

The General Certificate of Secondary Education [and the former General Certificate of Education Ordinary Level] [with a minimum of 5 courses passed] generally compares to the completion of Grade 12 for employment purposes.

The Certificate of Secondary Education generally compares to the completion of Grade 12 for employment purposes, if at least 5 courses passed with a grade of 1. Otherwise, the CSE generally compares to the completion of Grade 11.

Course Equivalencies

General Certificate of Secondary Education (and General Certificate of Education Ordinary Level) courses generally compare to:

GCSE Grades A* to C (GCE O Level Grades A to C)	GCSE Grades D to G (GCE O Level Grades D to E)
- Sciences 30-level	- Sciences 20-level
- Applied Math 30	- Pure Math 20
- English LA 30-2	- English LA 20-1

Certificate of Secondary Education courses generally compare to:

CSE Grade 1	CSE Grades 2 to 5
- Sciences 30-level	- Sciences 20-level
- Applied Math 30	- Applied Math 20
- English LA 30-2	- English LA 20-2

Rationale:

Background

The education systems of England, Wales and Northern Ireland share a similar structure. Maintained or state (publicly funded) schools offer optional pre-primary education for children between the ages of 3 and 5, followed by compulsory primary education from age 5 to 11 (or 4

to 11 in Northern Ireland), compulsory secondary education from age 11 to 16, and optional secondary or further education from age 16 to 18. Independent (private) schools generally follow a similar structure, but may use the term pre-preparatory to refer to pre-primary education and preparatory education instead of primary education. It is useful to note that the British commonly use the term “public school” to refer to private schools.

Table 1. Structure of school education in England, Wales and Northern Ireland

Years of Schooling	Age Group	Education Stage	Level of Education
13	16 to 18	Sixth Form	Further Education
12			
11	14 to 16	Key Stage 4	Secondary Education
10			
9	11 to 14	Key Stage 3	
8			
7			
6	7 to 11	Key Stage 2	Primary education (called preparatory education in some private schools)
5			
4			
3			
2	5 to 7	Key Stage 1	
1			
Nursery School	3 to 5	Foundation Stage	Pre-primary education (called pre-preparatory education in some private schools)

Compulsory education

Note: There is one additional year of primary education in Northern Ireland where children start school at the age of four, bringing the number of years of compulsory education to 12.

The compulsory part of education is divided in to **four key stages** as illustrated in the table above. Key Stage 1 covers the first two years of primary school, when students are normally aged 5 to 7. Key Stage 2 is for children aged 7 to 11. It is the second and last stage of primary schooling.

Key Stage 3 is the first part of secondary school. Students usually start Key Stage 3 at the age of 11 and complete it by age 14. Key Stage 4, for students 14 to 16, is the last part of compulsory education. At the end of Key Stage 4, students can stay in school or transfer to a further education college to take additional courses that lead to employment, further or higher education.

Curriculum

Since it was introduced in 1988, maintained primary and secondary schools in England, Wales and Northern Ireland follow a compulsory **National Curriculum**. Independent schools do not have to adhere to any set curriculum. However, the goal of schooling remains the same in both cases: preparing students for examinations leading to admission into further or higher education.

England

In England, the Qualifications and Curriculum Authority (QCA), a non-governmental, public agency sponsored by the Department for Education and Skills (DfES), develops and reviews the curriculum. It includes 12 main subjects taken over the course of the four key stages of education as shown in Table 2 below. English, mathematics and science are the three core subjects, while the others are considered non-core, foundation subjects.

Table 2. Compulsory National Curriculum for England

Key Stages Years of schooling	1 1-2	2 3-6	3 7-9	4 10-11
English	*	*	*	*
Mathematics	*	*	*	*
Science	*	*	*	*
Design and Technology	*	*	*	
Information and Communication Technology	*	*	*	*
History	*	*	*	
Geography	*	*	*	
Modern Foreign Languages			*	
Art and Design	*	*	*	
Music	*	*	*	
Physical Education	*	*	*	*
Citizenship			*	*

Source: Department of Education and Skillsⁱ

As shown in the table above, in Key Stage 4 (years 10 and 11), there are fewer required subjects to give students more flexibility and choice in the subjects they choose to study. Schools can therefore offer many optional courses in addition to National Curriculum subjects, including academic, vocational and technical subjects. Students choose which courses they take based on their abilities and interests, and on the path they intend to follow once they leave secondary education. For example, students who plan to go to university may choose different courses than students who plan to go to a technical college or to enter the work force immediately.

In addition to the National Curriculum, schools must offer these other statutory subjects:

- Religious education in all key stages (parents may opt out)
- Careers education in Key Stage 3 and 4
- Sex education in Key Stage 3 and 4
- Work-related learning in Key Stage 4
- Personal, social and health education in all key stages (non-statutory)

There are no statutory hours of instruction for each subject. However, the government offers some guidance in the form of “starting points” timetables for key stages 1 to 3. The *Starting Points* allocate more time for the teaching of English, mathematics and science as compared to the other subjects. There is also time left for schools to teach other subjects or add more time to one or more curriculum subjects.ⁱⁱ

The curriculum is under review in England, especially for students 14 to 19. Several changes are

planned over the next few years.ⁱⁱⁱ

Wales

The Qualifications, Curriculum and Assessment Authority (ACCAC) develops the Welsh curriculum. It is very similar to that of England, with a few exceptions:

- Welsh is part of the core subjects with English, mathematics and science. It is taught as a first language in Welsh-medium schools and as a second language in English-medium schools.
- The teaching of English is not statutory at Key Stage 1.
- Key Stage 4 only has five compulsory National Curriculum subjects (English, Welsh, Mathematics, Science and Physical Education) leaving more room for optional courses and individualized learning.

Wales is presently conducting a review of the curriculum based on the publication of *A Learning Country* in 2001^{iv}. Reforms will continue over the coming years.

Northern Ireland

The Council for the Curriculum, Examinations and Assessment (CCEA) advises the government on the development of the curriculum in Northern Ireland. The curriculum is similar to the English one, but it is organized differently. Rather than being composed of compulsory subjects, it consists of seven compulsory areas of study and six cross-curricular themes:

Table 3. Northern Ireland Curriculum

Compulsory areas of study	Cross-curricular themes
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Religious Education• English• Mathematics• Science and Technology (including design)• The Environment and Society (history, geography, business studies, economics, political studies, home economics, and social and environmental studies)• Creative and Expressive Studies (physical education, art and design, music)• Languages Studies (Irish, French, German, Italian, Spanish) (at secondary level only)	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Information Technology• Education for Mutual Understanding• Cultural Heritage• Health Education• Economic Awareness (at secondary level only)• Careers Education (at secondary level only)

Students must take at least one subject in each area of study in each Key Stage. The only exception is Language Studies, which is only compulsory in secondary education (key stages 3 and 4). In addition to the compulsory curriculum, there is considerable room for schools to offer additional courses.

Religious education is compulsory, but as in England and Wales, parents may withdraw their children from those classes. Sex education, though not a separate subject in the curriculum, is taught through science and as part of the health education theme. Irish language is an additional compulsory subject in Irish language schools throughout elementary and secondary education.

The cross-curricular themes are not subjects on their own, but topics which are taught through the compulsory subjects. Two of those themes, Education for Mutual Understanding and Cultural Awareness, are peculiar to Northern Ireland's circumstances. Their objective is to improve understanding and foster mutual respect between the Catholic and Protestant cultures.

As elsewhere in the United Kingdom, the curriculum is currently under review in Northern Ireland. The revised curriculum will be phased in over a number of years starting in 2006. The government plans to have a new *Curriculum Entitlement Framework* in place by 2009.^v

School year

The school year varies by school and by region, but generally starts between the middle of August and the beginning of September, and lasts until the end of June to the end of July. The year is usually divided into three terms: Autumn, Spring and Summer. Each term has a week of holiday around mid-term, and two-week holidays (corresponding to Christmas and Easter) separate the Autumn and Spring, and Spring and Summer terms. The Summer holiday, between school years, is usually around one and a half to two months in duration. Some schools have a six-term year with two terms before Christmas and four terms after. Regardless of the format or exact dates of the school year, schools must open for teaching 190 days (380 half-days) per school year in England and Wales. In Northern Ireland, schools must be operational for a minimum of 195 days.

Instruction hours

The number of teaching hours is not legislated, so it varies by school and by region. However, the central government has guidelines that schools can use to plan their schedules. The recommended minimum number of teaching hours for each key stage varies from 21 hours per week in Key Stage 1 to 25 hours per week in Key Stage 4 (see table below). Those recommendations amount to yearly instruction hours that range from 798 in Key Stage 1 to 950 in Key Stage 4. Comparatively, Alberta students receive 950 hours of instruction per year from Grade 1 to Grade 9 and have access to 1,000 hours per year from Grade 10 to Grade 12.

Secondary education (Key Stages 3 and 4)

Students enter secondary education after the completion of primary school, usually at the age of 11. Education is only mandatory until the age of 16.

Types of secondary schools

There are four main types of secondary schools in England and Wales:

- Comprehensive schools – these schools teach a broad curriculum.
- Grammar schools – these are usually selective schools that focus more heavily on academic subjects. They are specifically intended for students who want to pursue university studies.
- Secondary modern schools – these schools teach a broad but more practical curriculum than comprehensive schools.
- City technology colleges – these specialize in technological or business-related subjects.

Around 90 percent of students attend comprehensive schools, close to 10 percent attend grammar schools and the rest of the student population attends secondary modern schools, city technology colleges or other less common types of schools.

Northern Ireland also has different types of secondary schools, including comprehensive schools with a broad curriculum and grammar schools for academically gifted students. Although all Northern Ireland schools are open to all students regardless of their religion, Protestant and Catholic students often attend separate schools, while a few go to integrated schools, where both Protestant and Catholic students are taught together.

Northern Ireland still employs a selective system based on testing at age 11 to determine what type of secondary school students will attend. However, the selective system is being phased out and is set to be replaced by a fully comprehensive system by 2008.

Secondary education qualifications

Students in England, Wales and Northern Ireland have been taking some form of public examination at the end of secondary education since the 1950s. For many years, these exams shaped the syllabuses taught in schools. Since 1988, the examinations have been based on the National Curriculum. Independent schools who do not follow the National Curriculum still prepare their students for secondary school examinations leading to admission into further or higher education.

General Certificate of Secondary Education

At the end of secondary school (a total of 11 years of schooling), normally at the age of 16, students in England, Wales and Northern Ireland take General Certificate of Secondary Education (GCSE) examinations. Introduced in 1986 and administered for the first time in 1988, the GCSE is the public examination replacing the General Certificate of Education Ordinary level (GCE-O level) and Certificate of Secondary Education (CSE). GCE-O level and CSE are described in more detail further in this section (see *Secondary education qualifications (Pre-1988)*, p. 9).

GCSE examinations (also referred to simply as GCSEs) are administered at the end of secondary education (Key Stage 4), which corresponds to the end of compulsory education. Although optional, most students take GCSEs at the term of their secondary education.

GCSE examinations are offered in each subject of the National Curriculum of Key Stage 4 (English, mathematics, science, information and communication technology, physical education, religious education, careers education, sex education, and citizenship) as well as in all optional subjects offered in schools. In total, there are about 80 GCSEs available.

Students generally take around nine GCSE examinations, but may take more or fewer. GCSEs often include a coursework portion, marked by the teacher, which counts toward the final grade. Coursework can include essays, fieldwork reports, artwork, making products, or investigations. The percentage value of the coursework varies from subject to subject, but is usually between 20 and 40 percent. Coursework of more practical subjects, such as art and ICT, tends to represent a greater percentage of that subject's total score.

GCSE examinations are offered in different **tiers** for students of different abilities. Until recently, most subjects had three tiers: foundation, intermediate and higher. Mathematics is now

the only subject with three tiers, but that is being reduced to two tiers starting in 2006. Currently, the majority of subjects have only two tiers (foundation and higher), while a few only have one tier.

Teachers decide what tier students will enter for each subject based on their classroom performance. The higher tier examination is aimed at students performing at the level of grades A* to D and the foundation tier to students in the C to G grade range. The overlap between tiers offers some protection for students being placed in the wrong tier, or performing better or worse than expected on the exam.

The lowest grade one can achieve by passing the higher tier examination is D and the highest grade awarded at the foundation tier is C. Therefore, a student sitting a foundation level exam cannot achieve a grade of A as the highest award for that tier is grade C. Grades on GCSEs range from A* (exceptional performance) to G. Failure to attain the minimum grade in either tier results in a U grade.

Table 4. GCSE Grade Scale

Grade	Corresponding Tier
A*	Higher Tier
A	
B	
C	
D	(Tiers Overlap)
E	Foundation Tier
F	
G	
U	Unclassified

Note: The examination tier is not indicated on the certificate.

In addition to the normal GCSEs, there are **GCSE short courses** in certain subjects. These are equivalent to half of a normal GCSE course in duration and content. GCSE short courses are worth half of a normal GCSE course. On the certificate, short courses are identified as such in the title of the course.

There are also **double award GCSEs** in some subjects (i.e. science), which lead to double grades. These courses count as two normal GCSEs. On certificates, double awards are recorded by listing the grade achieved twice (e.g. AA, CC, or GG) or by listing the subject, and grade, twice on two separate rows.

Secondary education qualifications (Pre-1988)

The two precursors to the GCSE were the **General Certificate of Education Ordinary level (GCE O level)** and the **Certificate of Secondary Education (CSE)**.

First introduced in 1951, GCE O level examinations were originally intended for the top 20 percent of students by ability, usually those attending grammar and independent schools. At that time, the majority of students attended secondary modern schools and did not receive any formal qualification upon leaving school.

The CSE was introduced in 1965 to provide examinations for a wider range of abilities. It offered a more skills-based syllabus to students who were less academically inclined. The CSE was graded on a scale of 1 to 5 where Grade 1 was generally compared to the GCE O level.^{vi}

Both the GCE O level and the CSE were replaced by the GCSE in 1986 (with the first GCSE examinations in 1988). However, GCE O levels are still offered in many parts of the world through British awarding bodies.

International General Certificate of Secondary Education

Overseas students can take the International General Certificate of Secondary Education (IGCSE). The IGCSE is taught in over 100 countries around the world. It is recognized as being equivalent to the GCSE by universities in the United Kingdom and elsewhere.

The IGCSE curriculum provides both practical experience and theoretical knowledge. It is not based on the National Curriculum, but rather it is suitable for teaching in many different countries as it may be adapted to the local context.

The IGCSE offers more than 60 subjects in five curricular areas: Languages, Humanities, Social Sciences, Mathematics, Creative, Technical and Vocational. Courses are available for different levels of ability, including students whose first language is other than English. They are recognized internationally by universities and employers.

Mostly taken by international students, the IGCSE is also open to students studying in independent schools in the United Kingdom.

Developed by the University of Cambridge International Examinations (CIE) in 1988, IGCSEs are administered through two awarding bodies: OCR and Edexcel Foundation (see *Awarding bodies*, p. 11).

GCSEs in applied (vocational) subjects

In addition to general (academic) courses, students can study vocational subjects at Key Stage 4 and beyond. Vocational courses are usually offered by secondary schools and further education colleges.

Introduced in 2002, GCSEs in vocational subjects typically count as double awards and are considered equivalent to two GCSEs. In practice, they normally require twice as much time as GCSEs to complete.

GCSEs are available in the following vocational subjects:

- applied art and design
- applied business
- applied ICT
- applied science
- engineering

- health and social care
- leisure and tourism
- manufacturing
- construction and the built environment (in pilot phase)

In the past, vocational courses at this level included General National Vocational Qualification (GNVQ), but these are being phased out and are to be completely withdrawn by October 2007. Part One GNVQs have already been replaced by GCSEs in vocational subjects.

Awarding bodies

GCSE examinations are administered by independent awarding bodies (also referred to as examining boards). There have been considerable changes in the names and numbers of awarding bodies over the years, some merging together and new ones being created.

In 2006, there are five awarding bodies serving England, Wales and Northern Ireland:

- Assessment and Qualifications Alliance (AQA) in England
- EDEXCEL Foundation in England
- Oxford, Cambridge and RSA Examinations (OCR) in England
- Welsh Joint Education Committee (WJEC) in Wales
- Council for the Curriculum, Examinations and Assessment (CCEA) in Northern Ireland

All awarding bodies are represented by the Joint Council for Qualifications (JCQ). The JCQ does not have any authority over the awarding bodies, but rather provides guidance, helping to establish common standards, policies and practices. The JCQ also ensures that examinations are administered in a consistent way, and compiles and publishes statistical data on the examinations.

There are also three regulatory authorities that monitor the standards and the quality of the examinations to ensure consistency across the system. These are:

- England – Qualifications and Curriculum Authority (QCA)
- Wales – Qualifications, Curriculum and Assessment Authority (ACCAC)
- Northern Ireland – Council for the Curriculum, Examinations and Assessments (CCAIE)

The awarding agencies coordinate the examination dates every year, usually between the end of May and the end of June. The only exceptions are modern foreign languages courses for which students complete an oral examination. Individual schools coordinate the dates of these examinations with the awarding bodies.

Examinations results are usually published in August of the same year. Each awarding body issues a certificate that lists the examinations taken by a student.

Students may request a copy of their marked examinations papers through their school. There is a process of appeal for students who want to contest their results. Re-sits are also available for students who want to repeat an examination. Replacement certificates are available directly from the awarding bodies (they also hold records of previous awarding bodies that no longer

exist).

Documentation

GCSEs, both academic and applied, are offered by external awarding bodies and have certificates or statement of results issued by the awarding bodies themselves. It is possible for the same student to have certificates from more than one awarding body.

Awarding bodies will generally produce a Certifying Statement of Results or duplicate copy of the original certificate/statement of results for students, either to them directly or to a third party.

The certificate or statement of results is not cumulative and so shows only the courses taken in that period (semester or year). A separate certificate is issued for each set of exams taken, including re-sits. Failed courses are sometimes recorded, but not always.

Certificates usually includes the following information:

- Personal data (name, date of birth, school or centre, identification number, etc.)
- Name of awarding body
- Qualification information (GCSE, Advanced GCE, short course, double award, etc.)
- List of courses and/or units taken (course or unit number/code and title)
- Grade achieved for each course and/or units – The grade is expressed in terms of letters.
- Explanatory notes (grading scale and other pertinent information)
- Date of issue

Summary of Rationale

The IQAS placement recommendation takes into account the following factors as outlined above:

- duration of the study
- outcome of the study
- it represents an exit credential from a secondary school system in the home country
- other placement recommendations

IQAS recommends that the General Certificate of Secondary Education [and the former General Certificate of Education Ordinary Level] [with a minimum of 5 courses passed] generally compares to the completion of Grade 12 for employment purposes.

The Certificate of Secondary Education generally compares to the completion of Grade 12 for employment purposes, if at least 5 courses passed with a grade of 1. Otherwise, the CSE generally compares to the completion of Grade 11.

Grading:

GCSE courses are graded on an ascending scale from A* to G (and U for unclassified). The grades are awarded according to the tier of the examination taken by the student as shown in the table below. The School Education chapter has more information on GCSE grading, including an explanation of the different tiers.

Table 5. GCSE grading scale

Grade	Corresponding Tier
A*	Higher Tier
A	
B	
C	
D	(Tiers Overlap)
E	Foundation Tier
F	
G	
U	Unclassified

Note: The examination tier is not indicated on the certificate.

Some GCSE courses, such as double award GCSEs and GCSEs in applied subjects count as two regular GCSEs. These courses are graded twice on the certificate as if they were two separate courses (i.e. AA, BB, CC, etc.). Such cases will be indicated in the title of the course.

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Country:
United Kingdom

Official Country Name:
United Kingdom

Region:
England, Wales and
Northern Ireland

Status: Pending
Category: Secondary School

Date Entered: December 8, 2006
Date Revised: December 8, 2006

Credential Actual Name:
Advanced General Certificate of Education
(GCE A Level in academic or applied
subjects)

Credential English Name:

Credential Alternate or Former Name(s): A levels
Credential Alternate English Name(s):

Time Period Credential Offered: Current
Issuing Body: Awarding bodies (see list of awarding bodies on p. 11)

Admission Requirements:

The completion of General Certificate of Secondary Education (GCSE), which represents five years of schooling after elementary education.

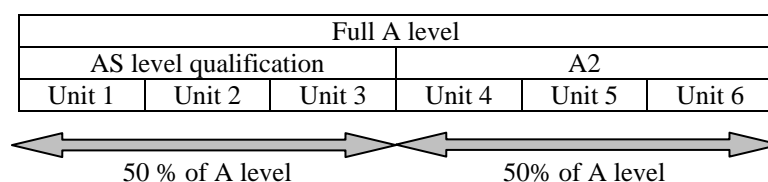
Program Description:

Two years of higher secondary education – that represents a total of 13 years of school education in England and Wales, and 14 years in Northern Ireland.

A levels are divided into two equal parts: **AS** and **A2**. The first year of A level study leads to the Advanced Subsidiary level qualification or AS. Most students take four or five AS courses. These represent half of what is needed for a full A level. AS courses cover the less demanding part of A levels. The second year, students may take additional AS courses in other subjects, or they may specialize in three or four of these subjects at A level.

The AS is upgraded to a full A level by continuing to study the same subject at a more in-depth level for another year. This second part of the A level is referred to as A2. Like the AS, the A2 is worth half of a full A level. However, unlike the AS, the A2 is not a qualification on its own, but because a student must earn the AS before proceeding to the A2 in the same subject, passing an A2 automatically results in an A level qualification. A2 courses cover the more demanding part of A levels.

Table 6. Structure of A level



As shown in Table 7 below, AS, A2 and A levels are broken down into units. The AS and A2 each contain three units, adding up to a total of six units for the full A level.

Prior to 2000 AS levels were known as Advanced Supplementary levels. They were considered an alternative to A levels, rather than a part of full A levels as the new Advanced Subsidiary levels are today. The older AS levels covered half of the content of full A levels, while remaining at the same academic level. Completion of two Advanced Supplementary levels was considered equivalent to the completion of one A level.

(See rationale for a more complete description of GCE A levels.)

Provides Access to in the Home Country:

- Higher education (e.g. university)
- Technical, vocational and professional education
- Employment

Placement Recommendations:

* Note: As noted above, the previous Advanced Supplementary Level is not the same as the new Advanced Subsidiary Level. The following recommendations apply only to the Advanced Supplementary Level.

PIER (Projects for International Education Research) World Education Series, 1991 (US)

- The General Certificate of Education Advanced Level (GCE A level) may be considered for undergraduate admission if anterior qualifications are considered appropriate preparation; may be considered for up to 1 year of advanced standing credit in each subject corresponding for an A-level pass.
- The General Certificate of Education Advanced Supplementary Level (GCE AS level) may be considered for undergraduate admission if anterior qualifications are considered appropriate preparation; may be considered for up to ½ year of advanced standing credit in each subject corresponding to an AS-level pass after a review of the syllabus.

NOOSR (National Office of Overseas Skills Recognition), 2006 (Australia)

- A General Certificate of Education (GCE), awarded before 2001 with at least two Advanced Level passes, plus three GCSE passes in different subjects can be regarded as comparable to the educational level of an Australian Senior Secondary Certificate of Education (Year 12 award).
- A GCE with four or five of the previous Advanced Supplementary passes can be regarded as comparable to completion of Year 12 in Australia.
- A GCE either with six of the previous Advanced Supplementary passes, or with four of the previous Advanced Supplementary passes and one Advanced Level pass can be regarded as comparable to the educational level of an Australian Senior Secondary Certificate of Education (Year 12 award).

The New Country Index - International Education Research Foundation, 2004 (US)

- The General Certificate of Education Advanced Supplementary Level (GCE AS Level) is

- compared to up to five semester credits of undergraduate coursework for each passing grade.
- The General Certificate of Education Advanced Level (GCE A Level) is compared to up to ten semester credits of undergraduate coursework for each passing grade.

IQAS Recommendations for:

Employment

If one A level (or two AS levels) is passed, the General Certificate of Education, in combination with GCSE [or the previous GCE O level] courses, generally compares to the completion of Grade Twelve.

If at least two A level (or at least four AS level) courses are passed, the GCE, in combination with GCSE [or the previous GCE O level] courses, generally compares to at least the completion of Grade Twelve including courses required for university admission.

Note: The GCE A level examinations are taken following 13 years of combined primary and secondary education and, in combination with the GCSE [or previous GCE O level] examinations, give access to university education in the United Kingdom. Some North American universities grant undergraduate transfer of credit for the Advanced level examinations.

Post-secondary Admission

If one A level (or two AS levels) is passed, the General Certificate of Education, in combination with GCSE [or the previous GCE O level] courses, generally compares to the completion of Grade Twelve.

If at least two A level (or at least four AS level) courses are passed, the GCE, in combination with GCSE [or the previous GCE O level] courses, generally compares to at least the completion of Grade Twelve including courses required for university admission.

Note: The GCE A level examinations are taken following 13 years of combined primary and secondary education and, in combination with the GCSE [or previous GCE O level] examinations, give access to university education in the United Kingdom. Some North American universities grant undergraduate transfer of credit for the Advanced level examinations.

Course Equivalencies

Advanced General Certificate of Education (A level or AS level) courses generally compare to at least:

- 30 level science courses
- Pure Math 30
- English Language Arts 30-1

Note: The GCE A level examinations are taken following 13 years of combined primary and secondary education and, in combination with the GCSE [or previous GCE O level] examinations, give access to university education in the United Kingdom. Some North American universities grant undergraduate transfer of credit for the Advanced level examinations.

Rationale:

Background

After completing their GCSE examinations, England, Wales and Northern Ireland students may continue their education by taking Advanced General Certificate of Education (GCE A level) courses and/or other advanced level qualifications through their secondary school, at a sixth form college or at a further education college.

Advanced General Certificate of Education (A levels, AS and A2)

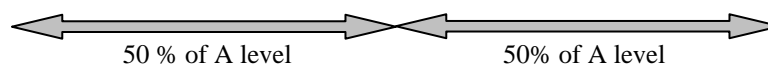
GCE A levels, also called simply GCEs or A levels, are considered the main route to higher education. They are two-year courses normally taken as a progression from GCSE courses. However, students may be able to take an A level without having taken the corresponding GCSE as some subjects are not offered at the GCSE level (e.g. law). GCE A levels are available in over 70 subjects.

A levels are divided into two equal parts: **AS** and **A2**. The first year of A level study leads to the Advanced Subsidiary level qualification or AS. Most students take four or five AS courses. These represent half of what is needed for a full A level. AS courses cover the less demanding part of A levels. The second year, students may take additional AS courses in other subjects, or they may specialize in three or four of these subjects at A level.

The AS is upgraded to a full A level by continuing to study the same subject at a more in-depth level for another year. This second part of the A level is referred to as A2. Like the AS, the A2 is worth half of a full A level. However, unlike the AS, the A2 is not a qualification on its own, but because a student must earn the AS before proceeding to the A2 in the same subject, passing an A2 automatically results in an A level qualification. A2 courses cover the more demanding part of A levels.

Table 7. Structure of A level

Full A level					
AS level qualification			A2		
Unit 1	Unit 2	Unit 3	Unit 4	Unit 5	Unit 6



As shown in Table 7 above, AS, A2 and A levels are broken down into units. The AS and A2 each contain three units, adding up to a total of six units for the full A level.

Prior to 2000 AS levels were known as Advanced Supplementary levels. They were considered an alternative to A levels, rather than a part of full A levels as the new Advanced Subsidiary levels are today. The older AS levels covered half of the content of full A levels, while remaining at the same academic level. Completion of two Advanced Supplementary levels was considered equivalent to the completion of one A level.

Assessment of A levels is based on a combination of coursework (usually around 30 percent of the grade) and examinations (usually 70 percent of the total grade). Some courses also include practical tests. The coursework is assessed internally by the teacher (subject to external

moderation), while examinations are administered externally by an awarding body (see *Awarding bodies*, p. 11). Grades on the AS and A2 each make up 50 percent of the total A level grade.

Advanced Extension Award (AEA)

Since 2002, there is a new qualification intended for the top 10 percent of students: the Advanced Extension Award (AEA). AEAs replace the old Special (S) Papers. They are available in a range of subjects and are more demanding than A levels. All AEAs are 100 percent externally assessed by the awarding bodies (see *Awarding bodies*, p. 11).

GCE A levels in applied subjects

Secondary schools and further education colleges also offer A levels in vocational subjects. This sector is in the midst of reforms, so several different qualifications are available, but some are being phased out. The most current qualification, introduced in September 2005, is the GCE A level in applied subjects. This qualification follows the same A/AS structure as the academic GCEs.

GCE A levels in applied subjects are offered in four formats:

- ASGCE (3 AS units) = 1 AS level
- ASGCE double award (6 units) = 2 AS levels
- AGCE (6 units: 3 AS units + 3 A2 units) = 1 A level
- AGCE double award (12 units: 6 AS units + 6 A2 units) = 2 A levels; graded AA, BB-EE

Students may take both types of GCE A levels (academic or applied) during their studies. The applied GCEs are available in a wide range of subjects (see table below), some of them in the same or similar subjects than academic GCEs. The main differences between the two are that GCEs in applied subjects are more work-related and have more internal assessment than the academic GCEs.

Table 8. GCEs in applied subjects

Art & Design
Business*
Engineering*
Health & Social Care*
ICT*
Leisure & Recreation
Media (Communication & Production)
Performing Arts
Science
Travel & Tourism

* The 3-unit qualification is available only in those subjects.

Both types of A levels are equivalent to Level 3 qualifications in the National Qualifications Framework (described below) and both give access to employment and higher education.

From 2000 to 2004, the GCE A level in applied subjects were called Vocational A levels or Vocational Certificate of Education (VCEs). Teaching of all VCEs is ending in 2006, with final

examination re-sits in January 2007. Before VCEs, students took Advanced General National Vocational Qualifications (Advanced GNVQs).

Awarding bodies

GCE examinations are administered by independent awarding bodies (also referred to as examining boards). There have been considerable changes in the names and numbers of awarding bodies over the years, some merging together and new ones being created.

In 2006, there are five awarding bodies serving England, Wales and Northern Ireland:

- Assessment and Qualifications Alliance (AQA) in England
- EDEXCEL Foundation in England
- Oxford, Cambridge and RSA Examinations (OCR) in England
- Welsh Joint Education Committee (WJEC) in Wales
- Council for the Curriculum, Examinations and Assessment (CCEA) in Northern Ireland

All awarding bodies are represented by the Joint Council for Qualifications (JCQ). The JCQ does not have any authority over the awarding bodies, but rather provides guidance, helping to establish common standards, policies and practices. The JCQ also ensures that examinations are administered in a consistent way, and compiles and publishes statistical data on the examinations.

There are also three regulatory authorities that monitor the standards and the quality of the examinations to ensure consistency across the system. These are:

- England – Qualifications and Curriculum Authority (QCA)
- Wales – Qualifications, Curriculum and Assessment Authority (ACCAC)
- Northern Ireland – Council for the Curriculum, Examinations and Assessments (CCAEE)

The awarding agencies coordinate the examination dates every year, usually between the end of May and the end of June. The only exceptions are modern foreign languages courses for which students complete an oral examination. Individual schools coordinate the dates of these examinations with the awarding bodies.

Examinations results are usually published in August of the same year. Each awarding body issues a certificate that lists the examinations taken by a student.

Students may request a copy of their marked examinations papers through their school. There is a process of appeal for students who want to contest their results. Re-sits are also available for students who want to repeat an examination. Replacement certificates are available directly from the awarding bodies (they also hold records of previous awarding bodies that no longer exist).

Documentation

GCE A levels, both academic and applied, are offered by external awarding bodies and have certificates or statement of results issued by the awarding bodies themselves. It is possible for the same student to have certificates from more than one awarding body.

Awarding bodies will generally produce a Certifying Statement of Results or duplicate copy of the original certificate/statement of results for students, either to them directly or to a third party.

The certificate or statement of results is not cumulative and so shows only the courses taken in that period (semester or year). A separate certificate is issued for each set of exams taken, including re-sits. Failed courses are sometimes recorded, but not always.

Certificates usually includes the following information:

- Personal data (name, date of birth, school or centre, identification number, etc.)
- Name of awarding body
- Qualification information (GCSE, Advanced GCE, short course, double award, etc.)
- List of courses and/or units taken (course or unit number/code and title)
- Grade achieved for each course and/or units – The grade is expressed in terms of letters and the raw score is sometimes provided in numbers.
- Explanatory notes (grading scale and other pertinent information)
- Date of issue

Summary of Rationale

The IQAS placement recommendation takes into account the following factors as outlined above:

- duration of the study
- outcome of the study
- it represents an exit credential from a secondary school system in the home country
- other placement recommendations

IQAS recommends that if one A level (or two AS levels) is passed, the General Certificate of Education, in combination with GCSE [or the previous GCE O level] courses generally compares to the completion of Grade Twelve.

If at least two A level (or at least four AS level) courses are passed, the GCE, in combination with GCSE [or the previous GCE O level] courses generally compares to at least the completion of Grade Twelve including courses required for university admission.

Note: The GCE A level examinations are taken following 13 years of combined primary and secondary education and, in combination with the GCSE [or previous GCE O level] examinations, give access to university education in the United Kingdom. Some North American universities grant undergraduate transfer of credit for the Advanced level examinations.

Grading:

GCEs are graded on an ascending scale A to E, with A being the highest mark and E the minimum passing grade. A grade of N is awarded for narrow failure and U for unclassified.

Table 9. Grading scale for A levels

Grade	Description	IQAS Grade (%)
A	Highest Mark	95
B		85
C		75
D		65
E	Pass	55
N	Narrow Failure	Fail
U	Unclassified	Fail

Grading is the same for A levels in applied subjects as for A levels in academic subjects. However, some GCE A levels in applied subjects come in double awards that have the value of two regular GCE A levels. These courses are graded twice on the certificate as if they were two separate courses (i.e. AA, BB, CC, etc.).

Advanced Extension Awards (AEAs)

AEAs are graded on a two-point scale, Merit or Distinction, where Distinction is the higher of the two. Students who fail to achieve the Merit level receive the mention *ungraded* on their certificate.

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Country:
United Kingdom

Official Country Name:
United Kingdom

Region:
Scotland

Status: Pending
Category: Secondary School

Date Entered: December 8, 2006
Date Revised: December 8, 2006

Credential Actual Name:
Scottish Qualifications Certificate
(*Lower Secondary*)

Credential English Name:

Credential Alternate or Former Name(s): **Credential Alternate English Name(s):**

- Scottish Qualifications Certificate (SQC) – National Courses at Access and Intermediate Levels, and Standard Grades, or any combination of the above
- Scottish Certificate of Education (SCE) – Standard Grades (no longer in use)

Time Period Credential Offered: Current
Issuing Body: Scottish Qualifications Authority (SQA)

Admission Requirements:
The completion of elementary school, which represents seven years of education.

Program Description:
Four years of lower secondary education – that represents a total of 11 years of combined elementary and secondary education.

Provides Access to in the Home Country:

- Further education in schools or further education colleges
- Technical, vocational and professional education
- Employment

Placement Recommendations:
PIER (Projects for International Education Research) World Education Series, 1991 (US)
- The Scottish Certificate of Education Standard Grade is considered appropriate preparation for a student to be placed in U.S. grade 12.

NOOSR (National Office of Overseas Skills Recognition), 1992 (Australia)
- The Scottish Certificate of Education, Standard Grade, can be regarded as at least comparable to the educational level of an Australian Year 10 award for employment purposes and as running at Year 11 level in the subjects studied.

The New Country Index - International Education Research Foundation, 2004 (US)

- The Intermediate I (Standard Grade) is considered comparable to the completion of 10th grade.
- The Intermediate II (Credit Standard) is considered comparable to the completion of 11th grade.

IQAS Recommendations for:

Employment

The Scottish Qualifications Certificate [listing Standard Grades, National Courses* or a combination of both], or the prior Scottish Certificate of Education, (Standard Grades), generally compares to the completion of Grade 12 for employment if at least five subjects passed.

* Note: Each National Course consists of three units, each of which must be passed at level Access 3 or above.

Post-secondary Admission

The Scottish Qualifications Certificate [listing Standard Grades, National Courses* or a combination of both], or the prior Scottish Certificate of Education, (Standard Grades), generally compares to the completion of Grade 12 for employment if at least five subjects passed.

* Note: Each National Course consists of three units, each of which must be passed at level Access 3 or above.

Course Equivalencies

30 level courses (30 for individual sciences – e.g. Applied Math 30, English LA 30-2, Bio 30, etc.), or
20 level courses (depending upon grade achieved)

For more detailed information on course equivalencies, see grading tables (p. 29).

Rationale:

Background

Structure of school education

In Scotland, like elsewhere in the United Kingdom, nursery school for children aged 3 to 5 is optional. Education is compulsory between the ages of 5 and 16; it includes seven years of primary education, from age 5 to 12 (P1 to P7), and four years of lower secondary education from age 12 to 16 (S1 to S4). At the age of 16, students may leave school or continue on to upper secondary education (S5 and S6).

Table 10. Structure of school education in Scotland

Years of Schooling	Age Group	Level of Education	Education Stage	
13	17-18	S6	Upper Secondary Education	} Compulsory Education
12	16-17	S5		
11	15-16	S4	Lower Secondary Education	
10	14-15	S3		
9	13-14	S2		
8	12-13	S1		
7	11-12	P7	Elementary Education	
6	10-11	P6		
5	9-10	P5		
4	8-9	P4		
3	7-8	P3		
2	6-7	P2		
1	5-6	P1		
	3-5	Nursery School	Pre-primary Education	

Hours of instruction

As in the rest of the United Kingdom, there is no mandated number of hours of instruction in Scotland, so each school decides how to plan their schedule. In practice however, most school pupils receive around 25 hours of instruction per week in primary school and 27 hours per week in secondary school, approximately 38 weeks of school per year.

Types of schools based on funding

Based on different funding patterns, there are two main types of schools:

- maintained (publicly-funded, also called state schools). Maintained schools receive public funding from the Education Authorities.
- independent (fee-paying, private school). Here, as in the rest of the United Kingdom, independent schools are often referred to as “public” schools.

The majority of schools are non-denominational, but by legislation, separate Roman Catholic schools are provided by the state system with an element of control by the Roman Catholic Church.

Administration

The Government body responsible for the administration of school education in Scotland is the Scottish Executive Education Department (SEED). Administration is shared between regional and local government bodies, as well as other involved parties, including the schools themselves.

Curriculum

In Scotland, there is no national curriculum, but there is broad consensus on what should be taught in schools. That consensus is reflected in the *5-14 National Guidelines* developed by the Scottish Executive Education Department (SEED) and Learning and Training Scotland (LTS). These guidelines provide advice to school authorities, individual schools and head teachers on curriculum structure, delivery and subject areas.

Guidelines have been issued for a number of curricular areas:

Art and Design	Drama
English Language	Gaelic
Health Education	ICT
Latin	Mathematics
Modern Languages	Music
People and Place	People in Society
People in the Past	Personal and Social Development
Physical Education	Religious and Moral Education
Religious Education: Roman Catholic Schools	Science
Technology	

During the last two years of compulsory secondary education, five Core Skills are integrated into the courses: problem solving, communication, numeracy, information technology, and working with others. Core Skills are described further.

School year

The school year in Scotland is the same length as in England and Wales. Here, too, it varies by region as each Education Authority sets its own specific term dates and holidays. Usually, school begins in the second or third week of August and last until the end of June. There are breaks of one or two weeks in October, at Christmas and Easter, and sometimes in February. Regardless of the format or exact dates of the school year, schools must open for teaching 190 days (380 half-days) per school year.

Pre-primary education

Scotland has a *Curriculum Framework for Children 3 to 5*^{vii} that is used as a guideline for pre-school education. The current pre-school curriculum includes the following key objectives: emotional, personal and social development; communication and language; knowledge and understanding of the world; expressive and aesthetic development, and; physical development and movement.

Primary education (P1 to P7)

In Scotland children attend primary (elementary) school from 5 to 12. Primary schools are the same as in the rest of the United Kingdom (see the General Certificate of Secondary Education credential template) and also usually co-educational.

There is no prescribed curriculum in Scotland, but there are National Guidelines from ages 5 to 14.

Assessment

Scotland does not have external national assessments. Teachers are responsible for assessing their students in English and mathematics based not on a certain age, but when they judge that the students have met the requirements of a certain level and are ready to move on to the next level. The government provides guidance to teachers on these assessments through its *National Assessment Bank 5-14*.

Lower Secondary Education (S1 – S4)

In Scotland students enter secondary education after the completion of elementary education, usually at the age of 12. Lower secondary education is four years in length. It includes levels S1 to S4. The completion of lower secondary education marks the end of compulsory education.

National Qualifications

Introduced for teaching in 1999, the Scottish National Qualifications can be compared to General Certificate of Secondary Education (GCSEs) and Advanced General Certificate of Education (GCE A levels) in the rest of the United Kingdom. The first candidates gained their certificates in 2000. National qualifications include Standard Grades, National Units, National Courses and Scottish Group Awards, each described below.

Standard Grades

Standard Grades were introduced in 1986 to replace Scottish Certificate of Education (SCE) Ordinary Grades (see below). They are a type of National Qualifications. Standard Grades are usually taken over two years of study during the third and fourth year of lower secondary school. Most students take seven or eight Standard Grade subjects including English and mathematics. Standard Grades include coursework, which is marked by the teacher throughout the year, and a final, external examination administered by the Scottish Qualifications Authority (SQA) at the end of the school year.

There are three levels of Standard Grades: Foundation, General and Credit. Students usually take examinations at two levels, either Foundation and General, or General and Credit. This is to ensure that they can achieve the best grade for their level of ability. As with the GCSE tiers, each Standard Grade level allows students to earn a range of grades with the most challenging level (Credit) giving the highest grades. Unlike the GCSE, there is no overlap of grades between Standard Grade levels.

Standard Grades are scored on a reverse, 7-point scale, 1 being the highest grade and 7 awarded for students who have completed the course but failed to achieve at least grade 6. The table below indicates the grades associated with each level.

Table 11. Standard Grade grading scale

Standard Grade Level	Grade Range
Credit	1 or 2
General	3 or 4
Foundation	5 or 6
Course completed	7

National Units and National Courses

National Courses are newer and increasingly common National Qualifications that students can take in addition to or instead of Standard Grades. The first three levels of National Courses are Access 1, 2 and 3. Access 1 and 2 are intended for students who need support in their learning, while Access 3 is comparable to the Standard Grade Foundation level. The next two levels of National Courses are Intermediate 1 and 2, which are intended for more advanced students.

Intermediate 1 and 2 can be compared to the Standard Grade General and Credit levels respectively. However, although they are equivalent in the qualifications framework, Intermediate 1 and 2 are considered slightly more difficult and a better preparation for further education than Standard Grades. Some schools no longer offer Standard Grades in favour of National Courses, while other schools still offer both.

Table 12. Comparison between Standard Grades levels and National Courses levels

Standard Grades	National Courses
Credit	Intermediate 2
General	Intermediate 1
Foundation	Access 3
(no corresponding level)	Access 2
(no corresponding level)	Access 1

National Courses usually consist of three **National Units**, which are qualifications in their own right. Each National Unit represents about 40 hours of study. Students must successfully complete three National Units in a subject to qualify for a National Course.

All National Units are assessed internally by the teacher. National Courses at Access 1, 2 and 3 have no external assessment. However, for Intermediate 1 and 2 National Courses, students must pass a final external assessment administered by the Scottish Qualifications Authority (SQA). This external assessment can take the form of an exam, project work or folios completed during the course.

Grades are based on the performance on the external assessment, but students must pass all three National Unit assessments as well as the external assessment to achieve the National Course qualification.

Grading

The grading scale for National Courses goes from A to D, where A is the highest grade and D is a fail. A grade of D represents a mark of 45 to 49 percent. When a student performs below 45 percent, no award is given.

Table 13. National Course grading scale

Grade	Description
A	Highest Grade
B	--
C	Pass
D	Fail

Scottish Group Awards

Scottish Group Awards (SGAs) are larger-scale qualifications that consist of groups of inter-related National Units or Courses that form coherent programmes of study. For example, the SGA in Science at Higher level requires the completion of 17 National Units (at least nine of which at Higher level), three exams at Higher level with a grade C minimum, plus required Core Skills.

SGAs are available at all levels of National Qualifications, from Access 2 to Advanced Higher. They are usually earned during one or, more often, two years of study.

There are two types of Scottish Group Awards:

- General Awards – in which the number of courses, units and Core Skills are specified, but there are no subject requirements
- Named Awards – where there are subject requirements in addition to minimum numbers of courses, units and Core Skills

SGAs are recorded on the Scottish Qualifications Certificate (SQC).

Core Skills

Core Skills, listed in the table below, are defined as broad, transferable skills that students acquire throughout their education to help them participate fully and responsibly in society. The development of Core Skills is part of all courses in Scotland, from the school curriculum to National Qualifications, vocational qualifications and higher education degrees. They are often embedded into subjects and awarded automatically, but there are also specific Core Skills courses and assignments for students who are missing some.

Table 14. Core Skills in the Scottish curriculum

Problem solving
Communication
Numeracy
Information technology
Working with others

Since 2000, all candidates who achieve SQA qualifications receive a Core Skills profile, as part of their formal certification. Candidates gain credit for achieving Core Skills at different levels and this is recorded on their Scottish Qualifications Certificate. This profile can be achieved through Core Skills units, done in the workplace or in school or college, or through other qualifications that cover Core Skills. Further information on Core Skills can be obtained from the SQA website (<http://www.sqa.org.uk>).

Historical background of Scottish qualifications/examinations

The Scottish Certificate of Education (SCE) was the predecessor to today's Scottish Qualifications Certificate (SQC). The SCE was issued until January 2000 when it was replaced by the SQC.

SCE qualifications were the main qualifications taken by secondary school students at the end of compulsory education. The SCE qualifications included Ordinary Grades, which were later replaced by Standard Grades, and Higher Grades.

Originally intended for the top 30 percent of students, by 1985, SCE Ordinary Grades were awarded to the majority of students. Still, some students left school with no certificate of achievement. The SCE Standard Grade was designed to be accessible to all students and to give

a better preparation to the Higher Grade examinations.

Documentation

Scottish Qualifications Certificate

Since the year 2000 all qualifications obtained throughout secondary education will appear on the Scottish Qualifications Certificate. It replaces the Scottish Certificate of Education (SCE), Certificate of Sixth Year Studies (CSYS) and the Record of Education and Training (RET).

The SQC is a complete, cumulative record of the qualifications earned by a student at school, in college and in the workplace. All Scottish qualifications are included except for university degrees. Qualifications achieved prior to 1994 do not appear on the SQC. The SQC is awarded by the Scottish Qualifications Authority (SQA).

For students leaving full-time school, qualifications listed on the SQC could include:

- Standard Grades
- National Units and Courses (Access 1, 2 and 3, Intermediate 1 and 2, Higher and Advanced Higher)
- Scottish Group Awards (SGA)

Summary of Rationale

The IQAS placement recommendation takes into account the following factors as outlined above:

- duration of the study
- outcome of the study
- it represents an exit credential from a secondary school system in the home country
- other placement recommendations

IQAS recommends that the Scottish Qualifications Certificate [listing Standard Grades, National Courses* or a combination of both], or the prior Scottish Certificate of Education, Standard Grades), generally compares to the completion of Grade 12 for employment if at least five subjects passed.

*** Note: Each National Course consists of three units, each of which must be passed at level Access 3 or above.**

Grading:

Standard Grades

Standard Grades are scored on a reverse, 7-point scale, 1 being the highest grade and 7 awarded for students who have completed the course but failed to achieve at least grade 6. The table below indicates the grades associated with each level.

Table 15. Standard Grade grading scale

Standard Grade Level	Grade	IQAS Grade (%)	IQAS Course-level Equivalency
----------------------	-------	----------------	-------------------------------

	2	85	
General	3	70	
	4	65	
Foundation	5	55	20-level sciences, Pure Math 20, English LA 20-1
	6	50	
Course completed	7	Course completed, exam failed	

Explanation of the different levels is provided in the chapter on School Education.

National Courses

National Courses are newer qualifications offered in secondary education in Scotland. They are available in seven different levels: Access 1, 2 and 3; Intermediate 1 and 2; Higher and Advanced Higher.

The grading scale for all National Courses goes from A to D, where A is the highest grade and D is a fail. A grade of D represents a mark of 45 to 49 percent. When a student performs below 45 percent, no award is given.

Table 16. National Course grading scale (including Intermediate 1 and 2)

Grade	Description	IQAS Grade (%)	IQAS Course-level Equivalency
A	Highest Grade	90	30-level sciences, Applied Math 30, English LA 30-2
B	--	75	
C	Pass	60	
D	Fail	Fail	--

Grading prior to 1986

In the period prior to 1973, only two grades were used: pass or fail.

Table 17. SCE Standard or Ordinary Grade grading scale for the period prior to 1973*

Grade	IQAS Grade	IQAS Course-level Equivalency
Pass	75%	30-level sciences, Applied Math 30, English LA 30-2

Table 18. SCE Standard or Ordinary Grade grading scale for the 1973-1985 period

Grade	IQAS Grade	IQAS Course-level Equivalency
A	90%	30-level sciences, Applied Math 30, English LA 30-2
B	75%	
C	60%	

Country: United Kingdom **Official Country Name:** United Kingdom **Region:** Scotland

Status: Pending **Date Entered:** December 8, 2006
Category: Secondary School **Date Revised:** December 8, 2006

Credential Actual Name: Scottish Qualifications Certificate
(Upper Secondary) **Credential English Name:**

Credential Alternate or Former Name(s): **Credential Alternate English Name(s):**

- Scottish Qualifications Certificate (SQC) – National Courses at Higher and Advanced Higher levels
- Scottish Certificate of Education (SCE) – Higher Grades (no longer in use)
- Scottish Certificate of Sixth Year Studies (SCYS) (no longer in use)

Time Period Credential Offered: Current
Issuing Body: Scottish Qualifications Authority (SQA)

Admission Requirements:
The completion of lower secondary school.

Program Description:
One or two years of upper secondary education – that represents a total of 12 or 13 years of combined elementary and secondary education.

Provides Access to in the Home Country:

- Higher education (e.g. university)
- Professional, technical and vocational education
- Employment

Placement Recommendations:

PIER (Projects for International Education Research) World Education Series, 1991 (US)

- The Scottish Certificate of Education Higher Grade may be considered for freshman admission with a minimum of 2 Highers plus 3 academic Ordinary or Standard Grade subjects in different areas.
- The Certificate of Sixth Year Study is considered as an academic enrichment program at the upper secondary level.

NOOSR (National Office of Overseas Skills Recognition), 2006 (Australia)

- A Scottish Qualifications Certificate (SQC) with a minimum of three Higher passes can be regarded as comparable to the educational level of an Australian Senior Secondary

Certificate (Year 12 award).

- The previous award, a Scottish Certificate of Education (SCE), with a minimum of four Higher Grade passes can be regarded as comparable to the educational level of an Australian Senior Secondary Certificate (Year 12 award).

The New Country Index - International Education Research Foundation, 2004 (US)

- The Higher Grade is comparable to the completion of high school.
- The Certificate of Sixth Year Studies or Advanced Higher is comparable to the completion of high school.

IQAS Recommendations for:

Employment

The Scottish Qualifications Certificate [listing National Courses at Higher or Advanced Higher levels] (or the former Scottish Certificate of Education – Higher Grade) generally compares to the completion of Grade 12.

If at least three Higher Grade courses passed, the Scottish Qualifications Certificate [listing National Courses at Higher or Advanced Higher levels] (or the former Scottish Certificate of Education – Higher Grade) generally compares to the completion of Grade 12 including courses required for university admission.

The former Scottish Certificate of Sixth Year Studies (SCYS) represented one year of additional study beyond the Scottish Certificate of Education (SCE) – Higher Grades.

Post-secondary Admission

The Scottish Qualifications Certificate [listing National Courses at Higher or Advanced Higher levels] (or the former Scottish Certificate of Education – Higher Grade) generally compares to the completion of Grade 12.

If at least three Higher Grade courses passed, the Scottish Qualifications Certificate [listing National Courses at Higher or Advanced Higher levels] (or the former Scottish Certificate of Education – Higher Grade) generally compares to the completion of Grade 12 including courses required for university admission.

The former Scottish Certificate of Sixth Year Studies (SCYS) represented one year of additional study beyond the Scottish Certificate of Education (SCE) – Higher Grades.

Course Equivalencies

30-level courses

Rationale:

Background

Structure of school education

In Scotland, like elsewhere in the United Kingdom, nursery school for children aged 3 to 5 is

optional. Education is compulsory between the ages of 5 and 16; it includes seven years of primary education, from age 5 to 12 (P1 to P7), and four years of lower secondary education from age 12 to 16 (S1 to S4). At the age of 16, students may leave school or continue on to upper secondary education (S5 and S6).

Table 19. Structure of school education in Scotland

Years of Schooling	Age Group	Level of Education	Education Stage	
13	17-18	S6	Upper Secondary Education	} Compulsory Education
12	16-17	S5		
11	15-16	S4	Lower Secondary Education	
10	14-15	S3		
9	13-14	S2		
8	12-13	S1		
7	11-12	P7	Elementary Education	
6	10-11	P6		
5	9-10	P5		
4	8-9	P4		
3	7-8	P3		
2	6-7	P2		
1	5-6	P1		
	3-5	Nursery School	Pre-primary Education	

Hours of instruction

As in the rest of the United Kingdom, there is no mandated number of hours of instruction in Scotland, so each school decides how to plan their schedule. In practice however, most school pupils receive around 25 hours of instruction per week in primary school and 27 hours per week in secondary school, approximately 38 weeks of school per year.

Types of schools based on funding

Based on different funding patterns, there are two main types of schools:

- maintained (publicly-funded, also called state schools). Maintained schools receive public funding from the Education Authorities.
- independent (fee-paying, private school). Here, as in the rest of the United Kingdom, independent schools are often referred to as “public” schools.

The majority of schools are non-denominational, but by legislation, separate Roman Catholic schools are provided by the state system with an element of control by the Roman Catholic Church.

Administration

The Government body responsible for the administration of school education in Scotland is the Scottish Executive Education Department (SEED). Administration is shared between regional and local government bodies, as well as other involved parties, including the schools themselves.

Curriculum

In Scotland, there is no national curriculum, but there is broad consensus on what should be taught in schools. That consensus is reflected in the *5-14 National Guidelines* developed by the Scottish Executive Education Department (SEED) and Learning and Training Scotland (LTS). These guidelines provide advice to school authorities, individual schools and head teachers on curriculum structure, delivery and subject areas.

Guidelines have been issued for a number of curricular areas:

Art and Design	Drama
English Language	Gaelic
Health Education	ICT
Latin	Mathematics
Modern Languages	Music
People and Place	People in Society
People in the Past	Personal and Social Development
Physical Education	Religious and Moral Education
Religious Education: Roman Catholic Schools	Science
Technology	

During the last two years of compulsory secondary education, five Core Skills are integrated into the courses: problem solving, communication, numeracy, information technology, and working with others. Core Skills are described further.

School year

The school year in Scotland is the same length as in England and Wales. Here, too, it varies by region as each Education Authority sets its own specific term dates and holidays. Usually, school begins in the second or third week of August and last until the end of June. There are breaks of one or two weeks in October, at Christmas and Easter, and sometimes in February. Regardless of the format or exact dates of the school year, schools must open for teaching 190 days (380 half-days) per school year.

Pre-primary education

Scotland has a *Curriculum Framework for Children 3 to 5*^{viii} that is used as a guideline for pre-school education. The current pre-school curriculum includes the following key objectives: emotional, personal and social development; communication and language; knowledge and understanding of the world; expressive and aesthetic development, and; physical development and movement.

Primary education (P1 to P7)

In Scotland children attend primary (elementary) school from 5 to 12. Primary schools are the same as in the rest of the United Kingdom (see the General Certificate of Secondary Education credential template) and also usually co-educational.

There is no prescribed curriculum in Scotland, but there are National Guidelines from ages 5 to 14.

Assessment

Scotland does not have external national assessments. Teachers are responsible for assessing their students in English and mathematics based not on a certain age, but when they judge that the students have met the requirements of a certain level and are ready to move on to the next level. The government provides guidance to teachers on these assessments through its *National Assessment Bank 5-14*.

Lower Secondary Education (S1 – S4)

In Scotland students enter secondary education after the completion of elementary education, usually at the age of 12. Lower secondary education is four years in length. It includes levels S1 to S4. The completion of lower secondary education marks the end of compulsory education.

Higher Secondary Education (S5 – S6)

After they complete their lower secondary education, students can continue for an additional one or two years in upper secondary education (S5 and S6).

National Qualifications

Introduced for teaching in 1999, the Scottish National Qualifications can be compared to General Certificate of Secondary Education (GCSEs) and Advanced General Certificate of Education (GCE A levels) in the rest of the United Kingdom. The first candidates gained their certificates in 2000. National qualifications cover both lower and higher secondary education. They include Standard Grades (lower secondary), National Units (lower and higher secondary), National Courses (lower and higher secondary) and Scottish Group Awards (lower and higher secondary). For a description of lower secondary qualifications, see the Scottish Qualifications Certificate (*Lower secondary*) credential template or the School Education chapter in the *Country Education Profile – The United Kingdom*.

National Units and National Courses

National Courses are newer qualifications offered in secondary education in Scotland. They are available in seven different levels: Access 1, 2 and 3; Intermediate 1 and 2; Higher and Advanced Higher. The first five levels of National Courses (Access 1, 2 and 3, and Intermediate 1 and 2) are taken during lower secondary. The upper two levels, Higher and Advanced Higher, are offered during higher secondary.

Highers and Advanced Highers

The Scottish Qualifications Certificate (SQC) Highers and Advanced Highers are equivalent to the Advanced General Certificate of Education (GCE A levels) in the rest of the United Kingdom (see the Advanced General Certificate of Education credential template). Taken in the fifth and sixth year of secondary school, these courses are the main qualifications required for entry in a university or college.

Generally, minimum entry requirements for undergraduate programmes are as follows:

- Undergraduate Certificate = one Higher
- Undergraduate Diploma = two Highers
- Undergraduate Degree = three Highers

Universities may also consider Advanced Highers for exemption from some first year courses.

Both Highers and Advanced Highers are National Courses and are part of the Scottish Qualifications Framework at levels 6 and 7 respectively. They generally compare to GCE A levels in the rest of the United Kingdom.

Introduced in 1999 as part of the Higher Still reforms, Highers replace the previous Scottish Certificate of Education (SCE) Higher Grade courses and Advanced Highers replace the Certificate of Sixth Year Study (CSYS) (the SCE and CSYS are briefly described further).

Highers are usually taken following the completion of Standard Grade Credit level courses or Intermediate 2 National Courses (see Scottish Qualifications Certificate (*Lower Secondary*) credential template for a description of these courses).

As all National Courses, Highers and Advanced Highers usually consist of three **National Units**, which are qualifications in their own right. Each National Unit represents about 40 hours of study. Students must successfully complete three National Units in a subject to qualify for a National Course.

All National Units are assessed internally by the teacher. Except for Access-level courses, students following National Courses must also pass a final external assessment administered by the Scottish Qualifications Authority (SQA). This external assessment can take the form of an exam, project work or folios completed during the course.

Grades are based on the performance on the external assessment, but students must pass all three National Unit assessments as well as the external assessment to achieve the National Course qualification.

Grading

The grading scale for National Courses goes from A to D, where A is the highest grade and D is a fail. A grade of D represents a mark of 45 to 49 percent. When a student performs below 45 percent, no award is given.

Table 20. National Course grading scale

Grade	Description
A	Highest Grade
B	--
C	Pass
D	Fail

Core Skills

Core Skills, listed in the table below, are defined as broad, transferable skills that students acquire throughout their education to help them participate fully and responsibly in society. The development of Core Skills is part of all courses in Scotland, from the school curriculum to

National Qualifications, vocational qualifications and higher education degrees. They are often embedded into subjects and awarded automatically, but there are also specific Core Skills courses and assignments for students who are missing some.

Table 21. Core Skills in the Scottish curriculum

Problem solving
Communication
Numeracy
Information technology
Working with others

Since 2000, all candidates who achieve SQA qualifications receive a Core Skills profile, as part of their formal certification. Candidates gain credit for achieving Core Skills at different levels and this is recorded on their Scottish Qualifications Certificate. This profile can be achieved through Core Skills units, done in the workplace or in school or college, or through other qualifications that cover Core Skills. Further information on Core Skills can be obtained from the SQA website (<http://www.sqa.org.uk>).

Scottish Group Awards

Scottish Group Awards (SGAs) are larger-scale qualifications that consist of groups of inter-related National Units or Courses that form coherent programmes of study. For example, the SGA in Science at Higher level requires the completion of 17 National Units (at least nine of which at Higher level), three exams at Higher level with a grade C minimum, plus required Core Skills.

SGAs are available at all levels of National Qualifications, from Access 2 to Advanced Higher. They are usually earned during one or, more often, two years of study.

There are two types of Scottish Group Awards:

- General Awards – in which the number of courses, units and Core Skills are specified, but there are no subject requirements
- Named Awards – where there are subject requirements in addition to minimum numbers of courses, units and Core Skills

SGAs are recorded on the Scottish Qualifications Certificate (SQC).

Historical background of Scottish qualifications/examinations

The Scottish Certificate of Education (SCE) was the predecessor to today's Scottish Qualifications Certificate (SQC). The SCE was issued until January 2000 when it was replaced by the SQC.

SCE qualifications were the main qualifications taken by secondary school students at the end of compulsory education. The SCE qualifications included Ordinary Grades, which were later replaced by Standard Grades, and Higher Grades.

Originally intended for the top 30 percent of students, by 1985, SCE Ordinary Grades were

awarded to the majority of students. Still, some students left school with no certificate of achievement. The SCE Standard Grade was designed to be accessible to all students and to give a better preparation to the Higher Grade examinations.

At the end of compulsory education, students who stayed in school could take additional qualifications including SCE Higher Grades in their fifth year of secondary school and the Certificate of Sixth Year Study (CSYS) in their sixth. The CSYS was recorded on a separate certificate.

In 1999, the Higher Still Reforms restructured upper secondary qualifications, keeping the Higher Grade, and changing the CSYS to Advanced Higher. Both Highers and Advanced Highers are now National Courses that are part of the broader National Qualifications.

Documentation

Scottish Qualifications Certificate

Since the year 2000 all qualifications obtained throughout secondary education will appear on the Scottish Qualifications Certificate. It replaces the Scottish Certificate of Education (SCE), Certificate of Sixth Year Studies (CSYS) and the Record of Education and Training (RET).

The SQC is a complete, cumulative record of the qualifications earned by a student at school, in college and in the workplace. All Scottish qualifications are included except for university degrees. Qualifications achieved prior to 1994 do not appear on the SQC. The SQC is awarded by the Scottish Qualifications Authority (SQA).

For students leaving full-time school, qualifications listed on the SQC could include:

- Standard Grades
- National Units and Courses (Access 1, 2 and 3, Intermediate 1 and 2, Higher and Advanced Higher)
- Scottish Group Awards (SGA)

Summary of Rationale

The IQAS placement recommendation takes into account the following factors as outlined above:

- duration of the study
- outcome of the study
- it represents an exit credential from a secondary school system in the home country
- other placement recommendations

IQAS recommends that the Scottish Qualifications Certificate [listing National Courses at Higher or Advanced Higher levels] (or the former Scottish Certificate of Education – Higher Grade) generally compares to the completion of Grade 12.

If at least three Higher Grade courses passed, the Scottish Qualifications Certificate [listing National Courses at Higher or Advanced Higher levels] (or the former Scottish Certificate of Education – Higher Grade) generally compares to the completion of Grade

12 including courses required for university admission.

The former Scottish Certificate of Sixth Year Studies (SCYS) represented one year of additional study beyond the Scottish Certificate of Education (SCE) – Higher Grades.

Grading:

National Courses

The grading scale for all National Courses goes from A to D, where A is the highest grade and D is a fail. A grade of D represents a mark of 45 to 49 percent. When a student performs below 45 percent, no award is given.

Table 22. National Course grading scale (including Highers and Advanced Highers)*

Grade	Description	IQAS Grade	IQAS Course-level Equivalency
A	Highest Grade	90%	30-level courses
B	--	75%	30-level courses
C	Pass	60%	30-level courses
D	Fail	Fail	--

* The same grading scale applies to the Scottish Certificate of Education (SCE) – Higher Grades.

Grading prior to 1986

Table 23. SCE Highers grading scale for the 1973-1985 period

Grade	IQAS Grade	IQAS Course-level Equivalency
A	90%	30-level courses
B	75%	30-level courses
C	60%	30-level courses

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Country:
United Kingdom

Official Country Name:
United Kingdom

Region:
United Kingdom

Status: Pending

Date Entered: December 8, 2006

Category: Higher Education (vocationally-related qualification)

Date Revised: December 8, 2006

Credential Actual Name:
Higher National Certificate/Diploma (HNC/HND)

Credential English Name:

Credential Alternate Actual Name(s):
Business and Technician Education Council
Higher National Certificate/Diploma (BTEC HNC/HND)

Credential Alternate English Name(s):

Time Period Credential Offered: Current

Issuing Body: Edexcel (with the BTEC prefix) in England, Wales and Northern Ireland, and the Scottish Qualifications Authority (SQA) in Scotland

Admission Requirements:

There are no standard admission requirements for Higher National Certificates/Diplomas (HNCs/HNDs), but students applying for HNC and HND programmes are normally at least 18 years old. Entry requirements may include a Business and Technician Education Council (BTEC) National qualification, GCSE and GCE A level courses (Intermediate or Higher Grade courses in Scotland) or other equivalent qualifications or experience.

Program Description:

Higher National Certificates (HNCs) and Diplomas (HNDs) are awarded by Edexcel as BTEC qualifications in England, Wales and Northern Ireland. In Scotland, the same qualifications are awarded as HNC and HND (without the *BTEC*) by the Scottish Qualifications Authority (SQA).

Both HNCs and HNDs are vocationally-related higher education qualifications. Although the qualifications are awarded by Edexcel and SQA, the courses are offered through universities and colleges.

The HNC normally requires 600 guided learning hours, usually taken over one year of full-time study (or two years part-time). The HND requires 960 guided learning hours and is usually taken over two or three years of full-time study.

Credit from HNCs and HNDs can often be applied toward degrees. Completion of an HNC may give access to the second year of a degree (ordinary or honours bachelor degree) in a related subject, while completion of an HND may give access to the second or third year of a related degree.

Examples of HNCs and HNDs include HNC in Applied Science, HNC in Business and Marketing, HNC in Computing, HND in Early Childhood Studies, HND in Sports Science, HND in Civil Engineering.

For background/historical information on the BTEC qualifications, see Rationale below.

Provides Access to in the Home Country:

- Further education (e.g. bachelor degrees, other vocational qualifications)
- Employment

Placement Recommendations:

PIER (Projects for International Education Research) World Education Series, 1991 (US)

- The BTEC Higher National Certificate may be considered for undergraduate admission with up to 1 year of undergraduate transfer credit, determined through a course-by-course analysis.
- The BTEC Higher National Diploma may be considered for undergraduate admission with up to 1 ½ years of undergraduate transfer credit, determined through a course-by-course analysis.
- The Scottish Qualifications Authority (SQA) Higher National Certificate may be considered for up to 1 year of undergraduate transfer credit, determined through a course-by-course analysis.
- The SQA Higher National Diploma may be considered for up to 1 or 2 years of undergraduate transfer credit, determined through a course-by-course analysis.

NOOSR (National Office of Overseas Skills Recognition), 2006 (Australia)

- The BTEC [or SQA] Higher National Certificate is assessed as comparable to the educational level of an AQF [Australian Qualifications Framework] Advanced Diploma.
- The BTEC [or SQA] Higher National Diploma is assessed as comparable to the educational level of an AQF [Australian Qualifications Framework] Advanced Diploma.

The New Country Index - International Education Research Foundation, 2004 (US)

- The BTEC Higher National Certificate is considered comparable to [...] up to 30 semester credits of undergraduate coursework for each year of full-time study.
- The BTEC Higher National Diploma is considered comparable to [...] up to 60 semester credits of upper division coursework.
- The Higher National Certificate from Scottish Qualifications Authority (SQA) is considered comparable to up to 30 semester credits of lower division coursework.
- The Higher National Diploma from SQA is considered comparable to up to 60 semester credits of undergraduate coursework.

IQAS Recommendations for:

Employment

The (BTEC) Higher National Certificate generally compares to the completion of a two-year post-secondary Diploma with a focus in xx.

The (BTEC) Higher National Diploma generally compares to the completion of a three-year

post-secondary Diploma with a focus in xx.

Post-secondary Admission

The (BTEC) Higher National Certificate generally compares to the completion of a two-year post-secondary Diploma with a focus in xx.

The (BTEC) Higher National Diploma generally compares to the completion of a three-year post-secondary Diploma with a focus in xx.

Course Equivalencies

30-level courses if no secondary documents available

Rationale:

Background

Note: Higher National Certificates and Diplomas (HNCs/HNDs) are among the qualifications that overlap both the vocational/technical education and higher education sectors. Therefore, this section describes elements of both sectors that are relevant to HNCs/HNDs.

Technical and vocational education plays a large role in British education. The government views that sector as essential to the economy, and encourages educational institutions to work with business and industry to provide programmes that meet the needs of the growing economy.

For the sake of brevity, the expression vocational education will be used throughout this section to mean technical and vocational education.

Vocational education is introduced in secondary education and continues into further and higher education. There is often no clear distinction between general/academic qualifications and vocational qualifications. Both are offered through a wide range of higher education institutions (HEIs) such as schools, colleges and universities.

Business and Technician Education Council (BTEC) qualifications

Formed in 1983 from the merger of the Business Education Council (BEC) and the Technician Education Council (TEC), the Business and Technician Education Council (BTEC) was a major vocational qualifications provider in Britain. In 1996, BTEC and the University of London Examinations & Assessment Council (ULEAC) merged to form Edexcel Foundation. Although the qualifications are now awarded by Edexcel, they are still referred to as BTEC qualifications. They are available in England, Wales and Northern Ireland.

There are many different BTEC qualifications at every level of the National Qualifications Framework (NQF), from Entry Level BTEC Certificates, to Level 8 BTEC Advanced Professional Diplomas, Certificates and Awards.

BTEC qualifications are offered by schools, colleges and universities. There are no standard entry requirements for BTEC qualifications; the requirements are set by each institution and vary depending on the course.

In older BTEC qualifications, duration of study was more important than in the new system (i.e. Diploma = 2 years full time, Certificate = 1 year full time). With the newer BTEC qualifications, beginning in 2004, units can be taken over a more flexible period of study.

BTEC qualifications are usually composed of a number of core units and specialist units (options). The units are assessed through assignments based on work-related situations or teamwork activities, or through a final major project (e.g. for creative arts qualifications). Grading is a simple four level scale: fail, pass, merit or distinction.

BTEC Certificate in Skills for Working Life and BTEC Certificate in Life Skills These Entry Level courses are offered to students 14 years of age and older, in schools and colleges of further education. They allow students to progress to Level 1 qualifications. Topics include arts & media, business administration & retail, hair & beauty, health & social care, hospitality & catering, information & communication technology, sport & recreation, citizenship & community studies, independent living skills, and relationship.

BTEC Introductory Diplomas and Certificates

BTEC Introductory Diplomas and Certificates are Level 1 qualifications. The BTEC Introductory Certificate generally represents 4 units (180 hours) and is considered equivalent to 2 GCSEs grades D-G, while the Introductory Diploma generally represents 8 units (360 hours) and is considered equivalent to 4 GCSEs grades D-G.

BTEC First Diplomas and Certificates

BTEC First Diplomas and Certificates are Level 2 qualifications offered to students aged 16 or older. They are generally considered to be initial vocational qualifications for school leavers. There are no standard entry requirements for BTEC First Diplomas and Certificates, but institutions may require a number of GCSE courses or equivalent Level 1 or 2 qualifications, a BTEC Introductory Diploma or Certificate, or related work experience.

- The First Certificate is made of a combination of core units and specialist units totalling 180 guided learning hours and is comparable to 2 GCSEs grades A*-C. *Note that First Certificates were unavailable between 2001 and 2004.*
- The First Diploma is also made of a combination of core units and specialist units totalling 360 guided learning hours, and is comparable to 4 GCSEs grades A*-C.

The number of core units and specialist units for each qualification depends on the field of study. All BTEC First Certificates and Diplomas give access to employment or further study.

BTEC National Diplomas, Certificates and Awards

BTEC Nationals are Level 3 qualifications that give access to employment or to further or higher education. Students must be at least 16 years old. Entry requirements vary by institution and may include GCSE courses, BTEC First Diploma or Certificate, other Level 2 or 3 qualifications, or work experience.

- The National Award normally consists of 6 units and is equivalent to one GCE A level. It is graded pass, merit or distinction (P, M, D).

- The National Certificate is generally 12 units in length and is considered equivalent to two GCE A levels. It is given a double grade on the certificate (i.e. PP, MP, MM).
- The National Diploma is usually 18 units and considered equivalent to three GCE A levels. It is triple-graded on the certificate (i.e. PPP, PPM).

BTEC National qualifications have gone through some changes over the last few years, with newer BTEC Nationals introduced in 2002. Notable changes are the availability of the National Award and the number of units required for each qualification.

Table 24. Number of units in old and new BTEC Nationals

	Old BTEC Nationals	New BTEC Nationals
National Award	Not available	6
National Certificate	10	12
National Diploma	16	18

BTEC Higher National Certificates and Diplomas

Higher National Certificates (HNCs) and Diplomas (HNDs) are Level 5 qualifications awarded by Edexcel as BTEC qualifications in England, Wales and Northern Ireland. In Scotland, the same qualifications are awarded as HNC and HND (without the *BTEC*) by the Scottish Qualifications Authority (SQA).

Students applying for HNC and HND programmes are normally at least 18 years old. Entry requirements may include a BTEC National qualification, GCSE and GCE A level courses or other equivalent qualifications or experience.

HNCs and HNDs are vocationally-related higher education qualifications offered by universities and colleges. The HNC normally required 600 guided learning hours, usually taken over one year of full-time study (or two years part-time). The HND requires 960 guided learning hours and is usually taken over two or three years of full-time study.

Credit from HNCs and HNDs can often be applied toward degrees. Completion of an HNC may give access to the second year of a degree (ordinary or honours bachelor degree) in a related subject, while completion of an HND may give access to the second or third year of a related degree.

BTEC Professional Awards, Certificates and Diplomas

BTEC Professional Awards, Certificates and Diplomas (also referred to as BTEC Specialist Awards, Certificates and Diplomas) are offered at levels 1 through 8 of the NQF. They are available in several disciplines such as Art & Design, Business & Administration, Counselling, Health & Social Care, IT & Computing, Management, Nutrition, and Teaching & Learning. The number of units and learning hours varies depending on the subject and level taken. Entry requirements also vary depending on the programme.

BTEC Customized Framework

BTEC qualifications can be customized by centres through the BTEC Customized Framework. This framework allows employers or other learning providers to have qualifications or professional development programmes accredited through Edexcel as BTEC qualifications. BTEC Short Courses, BTEC Introductory, First, Nationals and Higher Nationals can all be customized.

Higher Education Institutions

There are two main types of higher education institutions (HEIs) in the United Kingdom: universities and colleges of higher education. These and the other types of HEIs are described briefly below.

Universities are independent, self-governing institutions. All universities in the United Kingdom are *recognised bodies*, meaning that they have the power to award degrees (see *Recognised bodies and listed bodies* below). They decide their own admission criteria, develop courses and decide which degrees they offer. Most universities conduct research as well as teaching.

University colleges and institutes are institutions that are part of larger universities. Some university colleges and institutes are small and specialize in one area of study, while others are large institutions that offer many different programmes. For example, the University of London consists of 20 self-governing colleges and a School of Advanced Study that is composed of 10 member institutes. Degrees at these university colleges and institutes are awarded by the main university.

Colleges of higher education are another type of higher education institution. Some colleges of higher education are *recognised bodies* (see below) and have the power to award degrees. Others offer higher education courses that lead to degrees awarded by another recognised body.

Some **colleges of further education, institutes, foundations, academies and schools** also offer higher education courses leading to degrees awarded by *recognised bodies*. Some of these, especially colleges of further education, also offer programmes that lead to qualifications other than higher education qualifications (i.e. Advanced General Certificate of Education or A levels).

Recognised bodies and listed bodies

The governments of the United Kingdom recognise the degree awarding powers of universities and colleges. These **recognised bodies**, as they are called, have been granted degree awarding powers by either a Royal Charter (see below) or an Act of Parliament. All universities and some colleges of higher education are recognised bodies. In 2006, there are over 130 such institutions.

In addition to the recognised bodies, there are over 550 other institutions that offer courses leading to a degree but do not themselves have the power to award degrees. These are known as **listed bodies**. Their courses are validated by a university or college that has degree awarding powers.

The lists of recognised bodies and listed bodies can be found on the website of the Department

for Education and Skills (<http://www.dfes.gov.uk/recognisedukdegrees/>).

Royal Charters and the Privy Council

The older universities (pre-1992) operate under Royal Charters. These charters set out the university's constitution, and statutes, detailing how the university should operate. Royal Charters were granted to universities by the Sovereign on the advice of the Privy Council, who also approved any amendments made to the charters.

Most newer universities (post-1992) and other HEIs operate under Instruments or Articles of Government. The Privy Council must also approve any changes to these.

Other roles of the Privy Council are to approve the use of the title “university” in an institution's name, and to approve degree granting powers of an institution. For more information please see <http://www.privy-council.org.uk>

Higher education institutions pre-1992 (Polytechnics)

Prior to the Further and Higher Education Act of 1992, polytechnics were another type of higher education institution. Created in the late 1960s to expand the higher education system and offer more opportunities for higher education, polytechnics were formed from amalgamation of colleges and other higher education institutions. Polytechnics offered higher and further education programmes, often professionally oriented, to meet the needs of business and industry. They offered the full spectrum of higher education qualifications, including certificates, diplomas, bachelor's degrees, master's degrees and doctorates.^{ix} The polytechnics were converted into universities with the Further and Higher Education Act of 1992.

Polytechnics and other non-university higher education institutions awarded degrees through the Council for National Academic Awards (CNAA). Established in 1964, the CNAA was the largest degree-awarding body in the United Kingdom until it was abolished by the Further and Higher Education Act in 1992. Over 140 HEIs had their courses and degrees approved by the CNAA. CNAA awards were considered comparable to those of universities and are recognised by professional associations and employers.

When the CNAA was abolished, the Open University Validation Services (OUVS - <http://www.open.ac.uk/validate>) accepted responsibility for maintaining and providing access to CNAA records.

Independent sector

There are a growing number of independent higher education institutions in the United Kingdom. However, as they are not required to register with authorities, the exact number is not known, but is estimated at over 3,000.^x Independent HE providers are often not subjected to external accreditation, so quality can be difficult to assess. The British Accreditation Council (BAC) is the national non-profit organization that provides accreditation to independent higher and further education institutions. In 2006, over 200 independent colleges are accredited by the BAC (<http://www.the-bac.org/direct.htm>).

Independent HE providers cannot legally offer British qualifications. Only *recognised bodies*

can offer degrees and *listed bodies* can only offer courses leading to degrees (see above). BAC accredited independent colleges may offer courses leading to qualifications from overseas universities and colleges provided that these are, in turn, recognized in their own country. The overseas university or college is the awarding body in these cases and not the independent college.

Quality assurance

Several governmental and non-governmental agencies measure quality in the Higher Education sector. The reports and “league tables” (university and college rankings) produced by these quality assurance agencies provide valuable information to prospective students, employers and others. Funding agencies also use the information to distribute grants to institutions based on the quality of their research or teaching, for example.

The Quality Assurance Agency (QAA), formed in 1997, plays a key role in quality assurance in British higher education. In addition to conducting external reviews of HEIs throughout the United Kingdom, the QAA also performs subjects reviews, helps define academic standards, provides guidelines on good practice, reviews quality of research to recommend funding allocations. Publishes reports on each university and college, highlighting strengths and areas for improvement to help students in their decision of which institution to attend. These reports can be found on the QAA website (<http://www.qaa.ac.uk/default.asp>).

The Teaching Quality Information (TQI) is another resource in HE quality assurance. The TQI website (<http://www2.tqi.ac.uk/sites/tqi/home/index.cfm>) provides reports and other official information about the quality of teaching in institutions and programmes throughout the United Kingdom. This information includes statistical data and results of a national student survey.

Other quality assurance indicators:

- Research Assessment Exercise (RAE) – The RAE is a government-led evaluation of the quality of research in HEIs conducted every five years or so. HEIs receive funding based on the quality of their research. (www.hero.ac.uk/rae/)
- Higher Education Statistical Agency (HESA) Performance Indicators – Each year, on behalf of the government, HESA publishes data on the performance of HEIs in widening participation, student retention, learning and teaching outcomes, research output and employment of graduates. (www.hesa.ac.uk/pi/)
- Professional Body Accreditation – various professional bodies visit departments of HEIs before giving their accreditation to a programme.
- General league tables – Various media sources, such as *The Guardian*, *The Times*, *The Daily Telegraph* and *The Sunday Times*, rank the HEIs each year based on specific criteria.

Universities and Colleges Admissions Service (UCAS)

The Universities and Colleges Admission Service (UCAS) handles almost all applications for full time, undergraduate higher education courses, including HNCs and HNDs. Students send one application directly to UCAS, indicating up to six choices of courses that they want to apply to. Students cannot apply to both Oxford and Cambridge on the same application. UCAS then forwards the applications to the institutions who decide whether to offer the student a place or not. Offers can be *unconditional*, meaning that the student already meets the institution’s

requirement and is accepted as is, or *conditional* where the student has to meet additional requirements (e.g. achieve a certain result on a future examination) by September 1 of the year of admission.

The **deadline** for most applications is January 15 (for admission in September of the same year). Applications to the universities of Oxford and Cambridge, and courses in medicine, dentistry and veterinary science/medicine have an earlier deadline of October 15 (for admission the following September). Applications for some art and design courses are due later, by March 15. Late applications (those received between January 16 and June 30) will be submitted to universities and colleges, but they will only be considered if the institutions want to make more offers.

Students who did not secure a place from their original application may use UCAS Extra or Clearing services. **Extra** gives students a chance to look for alternatives to their first six choices if these did not result in an offer made or the acceptance of one. Universities and colleges that still have vacancies will post them on the UCAS website and eligible students can have an application sent directly to them. Extra operates from the middle of March to the end of June.

Clearing is intended for students who did not receive any offer from their application and did not find a place through Extra, or who missed the first deadline. Through this process, UCAS tries to match students to the remaining places in universities and colleges. The Clearing application deadline is the last week of September of each year.

UCAS also operates a points system called the **UCAS Tariff**. In this system, all qualifications considered for admission are awarded a certain number of points that students can use to meet course entry requirements. Some universities and colleges require that students have a minimum number of points to be admitted into their programmes. More information on this as well as the UCAS Tariff table can be found on the UCAS website (<http://wwwucas.com/candq/tariff/>).

UCAS has a searchable list of all courses in UCAS universities and colleges. The information provided on the courses include entry requirements, course description (<http://wwwucas.com/search/index.html>). There is also an institution guide that includes contact details, notes about the institutions and statistics about courses and students on the UCAS website (<http://wwwucas.com/instit/index.html>).

Academic Year

There is no standard academic year in HEIs in the United Kingdom. However, most universities have three equal terms per year. The typical year runs from the end of September or the beginning of October until the middle of June. Each term has 10 teaching weeks for a total of 30 teaching weeks. Notable exceptions include Oxford and Cambridge, both of which have only 24 weeks per academic year, from the second week of October to mid-June. Each term at Oxford and Cambridge has only eight teaching weeks. Some institutions also offer a semester format.

Types of study

Full time and part time

Most bachelor's degree programmes take three or four years of full time study to complete.

Some degrees take longer, such as law or medicine. In many cases, higher education programmes can also be studied part time over a longer period of time.

Sandwich courses

Sandwich degree courses involve a period of work experience or language training “sandwiched” between two or three periods of study. Usually, the work experience or language training is one year in duration and takes place in the workplace, in another university or in a foreign country. In Alberta, this type of study is referred to as a co-op programme.

Distance and flexible learning

Distance learning, also called flexible or open learning, is becoming increasingly common in the United Kingdom, as elsewhere in the world. Many HEIs now offer courses through video, printed and online material, permitting students to study from home. Some programmes require the student to periodically go to the campus, but others are offered entirely from a distance. These courses are particularly attractive to students who work full time or have other commitments, such as stay-at-home parents.

One notable contributor to distance learning is the Open University (OU). Entirely dedicated to distance learning, the OU offers courses to students in the United Kingdom, as well as many other countries within and outside of Europe. The first students started in 1971, and today, there are more than 150,000 undergraduate and 30,000 graduate students.

More information on distance learning and HEIs offering such programmes can be found on *Hobson’s Distance Learning* website (www.distancelearning.hobsons.com/) or through the *Prospects* website (www.prospects.ac.uk, choose “distance learning” in the mode of study of the advanced search page).

Bologna Process

The United Kingdom is one of the signatory countries of the Bologna Process. Launched in 1999, the Bologna Process aims to establish a common European system of higher education at both undergraduate and graduate levels by 2010. More information on the Bologna Process in general and in the United Kingdom can be found on the Europe Unit website (www.europeunit.ac.uk/bologna_process).

Summary of the United Kingdom’s position on two key elements of the Bologna Process:

- Credits – The use of credits in HEIs in the United Kingdom is common, but not universal. Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland apply credits more thoroughly than England. Generally, one academic year in the United Kingdom is equated to 120 credits, where in the Bologna Process it equals 60 Europe Credit Transfer System (ECTS) credits (i.e. 1 ECTS credit = 2 UK credits). The United Kingdom bases the number of credits on learning outcome rather than the number of hours of study.
- Diploma Supplement – Some but not all HEIs in the United Kingdom issue the Diploma Supplement to their students. It is issued free of charge in English or in Welsh (in Wales). All HEIs are being encouraged to offer the Diploma Supplement.

Qualifications Frameworks

In all parts of the United Kingdom, qualifications fit into frameworks that serve as general indicators of the level of education attained. England, Wales and Northern Ireland share their frameworks while Scotland has its own separate, though very similar, framework. Both are illustrated below.

Qualifications Framework for England, Wales and Northern Ireland

England, Wales and Northern Ireland share two qualifications frameworks: one covers all national qualifications, and the other covers higher education qualifications. The frameworks have been put side by side in an effort to compare all qualifications with each other. **It is important to note that the levels are only used for general comparison and do not indicate that the qualifications have the same content or outcome.**

Table 25. National Qualifications Framework for England, Wales and Northern Ireland

National Qualifications Framework		Framework for Higher Education Qualification levels (FHEQ)
Original levels	Revised levels	
5 – e.g. Level 5 NVQ	8 – Specialist awards	D (doctoral) – Doctorates
	7 – Level 7 Diploma	M (master's) – Master's degrees, postgraduate certificates and diplomas
4 – e.g. Level 4 NVQ, Level 4 Diploma, Level 4 BTEC HND, Level 4 Certificate	6 – Level 6 Diploma	H (honours) – Bachelor's degrees, graduate certificates and diplomas
	5 – Level 5 BTEC HND	I (intermediate) – Diplomas of higher education and further education, foundation degrees, higher national diplomas
	4 – Level 4 Certificate	C (certificate) – Certificates of higher education
3 – e.g. Level 3 Certificate, Level 3 NVQ, A levels		
2 – e.g. Level 2 Diploma, Level 2 NVQ, GCSEs Grades A*-C		
1 – e.g. Level 1 Certificate, Level 1 NVQ, GCSEs Grades D-G		
Entry – Entry Level Certificate in Adult Literacy		

Scottish Credit and Qualifications Framework

Scotland has a different qualifications framework, called the Scottish Credit and Qualifications Framework (SCQF). The SCQF includes all qualifications, including higher education qualifications. As for the National Qualifications Framework, **it is important to note that the levels are for general comparison purposes only and do not indicate same content or outcome for qualifications at the same level.**

Table 26. Scottish Credit and Qualifications Framework

SCQF level	National qualifications	Higher National	Qualifications awarded by higher	SVQs**
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(SHE = Scottish Higher Education level)	(units, courses and group awards)	qualifications	education institutions in Scotland	
12 (SHE D*)			Doctorates	
11 (SHE M*)			Masters/Postgraduate Diploma and Certificate	SVQ 5
10 (SHE H*)			Honours degree	
9 (SHE 3)			Degree	
8 (SHE 2)		Higher National Diploma	Diploma of Higher Education	SVQ 4
7 (SHE 1)	Advanced Higher	Higher National Certificate	Certificate of Higher Education	
6	Higher			SVQ 3
5	Intermediate 2/ Credit Standard Grade			SVQ 2
4	Intermediate 1/ General Standard Grade			SVQ 1
3	Access 3/Foundation Standard Grade			
2	Access 2			
1	Access 1			

* Labels H, M and D refer to Honours, Masters, and Doctoral and are used consistently across the UK.

** Provisional: work is continuing to refine the placing of SVQs within the SCQF.

Documentation

Students graduating from higher education programmes are issued different documents depending on the institution they attend and when. There is no standard documentation in this sector of education. Common documents include transcripts, degree certificates and diplomas, professional certification and/or registration.

It is important to note that for many years, universities and colleges did not typically issue any transcripts – they only issued degree certificates. Even today, some universities still may not provide any transcripts.

Summary of Rationale

The IQAS placement recommendation takes into account the following factors as outlined above:

- admission requirements
- general content
- length of study
- outcome of study
- other placement recommendations

IQAS recommends that the (BTEC) Higher National Certificate generally compares to the

completion of a two-year post-secondary Diploma with a focus in xx.

The (BTEC) Higher National Diploma generally compares to the completion of a three-year post-secondary Diploma with a focus in xx.

Grading:

Higher National Certificates and Diplomas are graded on a three level scale, from pass (lowest) to distinction (highest) as described in the table below. Those who don't pass receive a fail grade.

Table 27. HNC/HND Grading Scale

Grade	Description	IQAS Grade (%)
D	Distinction	90
M	Merit	75
P	Pass	60

© 2006 the Crown in right of the Province of Alberta, [International Qualifications Assessment Service \(IQAS\)](#), 9th Floor, 108 Street Building, 9942 - 108 Street, Edmonton, Alberta, Canada T5K 2J5

Country:
United Kingdom

Official Country Name:
United Kingdom

Region:
United Kingdom

Status: Pending
Category: Higher Education

Date Entered: December 8, 2006
Date Revised: December 8, 2006

Credential Actual Name:
Certificate/Diploma of Higher Education
(Cert HE/Dip HE)

Credential English Name:

Credential Alternate Actual Name(s):

Credential Alternate English Name(s):

Time Period Credential Offered: Current

Issuing Body: Higher education institutions (universities, colleges, schools, foundations, etc.)

Admission Requirements:

There are no standard admission requirements for Certificates/Diplomas of Higher Education in England, Wales or Northern Ireland, but generally these have lower requirements than Bachelor degrees. Courses required for entry may include Advanced General Certificate of Education (GCE A level) courses, General Certificate of Secondary Education (GCSE) courses, or simply a strong interest in the subject. Other qualifications may be used to meet admission requirements, including vocational courses and work experience.

Students lacking the requirements to be accepted into Bachelor degree programmes may start with a Certificate or Diploma of Higher Education programme and then continue on to earn a degree.

In Scotland the general minimum admission requirements for Certificate/Diploma of Higher Education programmes are:

- Undergraduate Certificate = one Higher
- Undergraduate Diploma = two Highers

Some universities also consider Advanced Highers for exemption from some first year courses. Vocational qualifications and work experience may also be considered as entry requirements.

Program Description:

Certificates of Higher Education (Cert HE) are generally one year in length and are usually taken as a qualification on their own. However, they may lead to further study. Examples of this qualification include the Cert HE in Business, Cert HE in Food Science, Cert HE in Fine Arts with Design, Cert HE Introduction to Secondary Teaching, Cert HE in Information Technology and Media.

Diplomas of Higher Education (Dip HE) are usually two year courses, of similar academic level than a degree programme but with less content. Some Dip HEs are three years in length (e.g.

nursing). Dip HE can give access to a profession, as in nursing or social work, or it can give access to the final year of a full bachelor's degree. Some examples of this qualification include the Dip HE in Nursing, Dip HE in Business Management, Dip HE in Midwifery, Dip HE in Sports Science, Dip HE in Education Studies.

Provides Access to in the Home Country:

- Further education (i.e. bachelor degrees)
- Employment
- Access to a profession in some cases (e.g. nursing, social work)

Placement Recommendations:

PIER (Projects for International Education Research) World Education Series, 1991 (US)

- The Certificate of Higher Education may be considered for up to 1 year of undergraduate transfer credit, determined through a course-by-course analysis.
- The Diploma of Higher Education may be considered for up to 2 years of undergraduate transfer credit, determined through a course-by-course analysis

NOOSR (National Office of Overseas Skills Recognition), 2006 (Australia)

- A Certificate of Higher Education normally requiring one year of full-time study and awarded by a listed institution is assessed as comparable to the education level of an AQF [Australian Qualifications Framework] Diploma.
- A Diploma of Higher Education normally requiring two years of full-time study and awarded by a listed institution is assessed as comparable to the education level of an AQF Associate Degree.

The New Country Index - International Education Research Foundation, 2004 (US)

- The Diploma of Higher Education in Midwifery is considered comparable to an AAS [*Associate Degree in Applied Science*] in Midwifery with up to 90 semester credits of undergraduate coursework.
- No recommendation is provided for a general Certificate/Diploma of Higher Education.

IQAS Recommendations for:

Employment

A one-year Certificate (or Diploma) of Higher Education generally compares to the completion of a one-year post-secondary Certificate with a focus in xxx.

A two-year Diploma (or Certificate) of Higher Education generally compares to the completion of a two-year post-secondary Diploma with a focus in xxx.

Post-secondary Admission

A one-year Certificate (or Diploma) of Higher Education generally compares to the completion of a one-year post-secondary Certificate with a focus in xxx.

A two-year Diploma (or Certificate) of Higher Education generally compares to the completion of a two-year post-secondary Diploma with a focus in xxx.

Course Equivalencies

30-level courses if no secondary documents available

Rationale:

Background

Undergraduate Qualifications

The main undergraduate qualifications in the United Kingdom are:

- Higher National Certificates and Diplomas (HNCs and HNDs)
- Certificates and Diplomas of Higher Education (Cert HE and Dip HE)
- Foundation degrees
- Bachelor degrees (also called first degrees)

Bachelor degrees are the most common undergraduate qualification.

Classes are expressed in terms of modules, units or credits depending on the institution and programme.

A search of all available undergraduate courses, including entry requirements and course description, is provided by the Universities and Colleges Admissions Service (UCAS) on their website: <http://www.ucas.com/>.

Higher Education Institutions

There are two main types of higher education institutions (HEIs) in the United Kingdom: universities and colleges of higher education. These and the other types of HEIs are described briefly below.

Universities are independent, self-governing institutions. All universities in the United Kingdom are *recognised bodies*, meaning that they have the power to award degrees (see *Recognised bodies and listed bodies* below). They decide their own admission criteria, develop courses and decide which degrees they offer. Most universities conduct research as well as teaching.

University colleges and institutes are institutions that are part of larger universities. Some university colleges and institutes are small and specialize in one area of study, while others are large institutions that offer many different programmes. For example, the University of London consists of 20 self-governing colleges and a School of Advanced Study that is composed of 10 member institutes. Degrees at these university colleges and institutes are awarded by the main university.

Colleges of higher education are another type of higher education institution. Some colleges of higher education are *recognised bodies* (see below) and have the power to award degrees. Others offer higher education courses that lead to degrees awarded by another recognised body.

Some **colleges of further education, institutes, foundations, academies** and **schools** also offer higher education courses leading to degrees awarded by *recognised bodies*. Some of these,

especially colleges of further education, also offer programmes that lead to qualifications other than higher education qualifications (i.e. Advanced General Certificate of Education or A levels).

Recognised bodies and listed bodies

The governments of the United Kingdom recognise the degree awarding powers of universities and colleges. These **recognised bodies**, as they are called, have been granted degree awarding powers by either a Royal Charter (see below) or an Act of Parliament. All universities and some colleges of higher education are recognised bodies. In 2006, there are over 130 such institutions.

In addition to the recognised bodies, there are over 550 other institutions that offer courses leading to a degree but do not themselves have the power to award degrees. These are known as **listed bodies**. Their courses are validated by a university or college that has degree awarding powers.

The lists of recognised bodies and listed bodies can be found on the website of the Department for Education and Skills (<http://www.dfes.gov.uk/recognisedukdegrees/>).

Royal Charters and the Privy Council

The older universities (pre-1992) operate under Royal Charters. These charters set out the university's constitution, and statutes, detailing how the university should operate. Royal Charters were granted to universities by the Sovereign on the advice of the Privy Council, who also approved any amendments made to the charters.

Most newer universities (post-1992) and other HEIs operate under Instruments or Articles of Government. The Privy Council must also approve any changes to these.

Other roles of the Privy Council are to approve the use of the title “university” in an institution's name, and to approve degree granting powers of an institution. For more information please see <http://www.privy-council.org.uk>

Higher education institutions pre-1992 (Polytechnics)

Prior to the Further and Higher Education Act of 1992, polytechnics were another type of higher education institution. Created in the late 1960s to expand the higher education system and offer more opportunities for higher education, polytechnics were formed from amalgamation of colleges and other higher education institutions. Polytechnics offered higher and further education programmes, often professionally oriented, to meet the needs of business and industry. They offered the full spectrum of higher education qualifications, including certificates, diplomas, bachelor's degrees, master's degrees and doctorates.^{xi} The polytechnics were converted into universities with the Further and Higher Education Act of 1992.

Polytechnics and other non-university higher education institutions awarded degrees through the Council for National Academic Awards (CNAA). Established in 1964, the CNAA was the largest degree-awarding body in the United Kingdom until it was abolished by the Further and Higher Education Act in 1992. Over 140 HEIs had their courses and degrees approved by the CNAA. CNAA awards were considered comparable to those of universities and are recognised

by professional associations and employers.

When the CNAA was abolished, the Open University Validation Services (OUVS - <http://www.open.ac.uk/validate>) accepted responsibility for maintaining and providing access to CNAA records.

Independent sector

There are a growing number of independent higher education institutions in the United Kingdom. However, as they are not required to register with authorities, the exact number is not known, but is estimated at over 3,000.^{xiii} Independent HE providers are often not subjected to external accreditation, so quality can be difficult to assess. The British Accreditation Council (BAC) is the national non-profit organization that provides accreditation to independent higher and further education institutions. In 2006, over 200 independent colleges are accredited by the BAC (<http://www.the-bac.org/direct.htm>).

Independent HE providers cannot legally offer British qualifications. Only *recognised bodies* can offer degrees and *listed bodies* can only offer courses leading to degrees (see above). BAC accredited independent colleges may offer courses leading to qualifications from overseas universities and colleges provided that these are, in turn, recognized in their own country. The overseas university or college is the awarding body in these cases and not the independent college.

Quality assurance

Several governmental and non-governmental agencies measure quality in the Higher Education sector. The reports and “league tables” (university and college rankings) produced by these quality assurance agencies provide valuable information to prospective students, employers and others. Funding agencies also use the information to distribute grants to institutions based on the quality of their research or teaching, for example.

The Quality Assurance Agency (QAA), formed in 1997, plays a key role in quality assurance in British higher education. In addition to conducting external reviews of HEIs throughout the United Kingdom, the QAA also performs subjects reviews, helps define academic standards, provides guidelines on good practice, reviews quality of research to recommend funding allocations. Publishes reports on each university and college, highlighting strengths and areas for improvement to help students in their decision of which institution to attend. These reports can be found on the QAA website (<http://www.qaa.ac.uk/default.asp>).

The Teaching Quality Information (TQI) is another resource in HE quality assurance. The TQI website (<http://www2.tqi.ac.uk/sites/tqi/home/index.cfm>) provides reports and other official information about the quality of teaching in institutions and programmes throughout the United Kingdom. This information includes statistical data and results of a national student survey.

Other quality assurance indicators:

- Research Assessment Exercise (RAE) – The RAE is a government-led evaluation of the quality of research in HEIs conducted every five years or so. HEIs receive funding based on the quality of their research. (www.hero.ac.uk/rae/)

- Higher Education Statistical Agency (HESA) Performance Indicators – Each year, on behalf of the government, HESA publishes data on the performance of HEIs in widening participation, student retention, learning and teaching outcomes, research output and employment of graduates. (www.hesa.ac.uk/pi/)
- Professional Body Accreditation – various professional bodies visit departments of HEIs before giving their accreditation to a programme.
- General league tables – Various media sources, such as *The Guardian*, *The Times*, *The Daily Telegraph* and *The Sunday Times*, rank the HEIs each year based on specific criteria.

Universities and Colleges Admissions Service (UCAS)

The Universities and Colleges Admission Service (UCAS) handles almost all applications for full time, undergraduate higher education courses. Students send one application directly to UCAS, indicating up to six choices of courses that they want to apply to. Students cannot apply to both Oxford and Cambridge on the same application. UCAS then forwards the applications to the institutions who decide whether to offer the student a place or not. Offers can be *unconditional*, meaning that the student already meets the institution's requirement and is accepted as is, or *conditional* where the student has to meet additional requirements (e.g. achieve a certain result on a future examination) by September 1 of the year of admission.

The **deadline** for most applications is January 15 (for admission in September of the same year). Applications to the universities of Oxford and Cambridge, and courses in medicine, dentistry and veterinary science/medicine have an earlier deadline of October 15 (for admission the following September). Applications for some art and design courses are due later, by March 15. Late applications (those received between January 16 and June 30) will be submitted to universities and colleges, but they will only be considered if the institutions want to make more offers.

Students who did not secure a place from their original application may use UCAS Extra or Clearing services. **Extra** gives students a chance to look for alternatives to their first six choices if these did not result in an offer made or the acceptance of one. Universities and colleges that still have vacancies will post them on the UCAS website and eligible students can have an application sent directly to them. Extra operates from the middle of March to the end of June.

Clearing is intended for students who did not receive any offer from their application and did not find a place through Extra, or who missed the first deadline. Through this process, UCAS tries to match students to the remaining places in universities and colleges. The Clearing application deadline is the last week of September of each year.

UCAS also operates a points system called the **UCAS Tariff**. In this system, all qualifications considered for admission are awarded a certain number of points that students can use to meet course entry requirements. Some universities and colleges require that students have a minimum number of points to be admitted into their programmes. More information on this as well as the UCAS Tariff table can be found on the UCAS website (<http://www.ucas.com/candq/tariff/>).

UCAS has a searchable list of all courses in UCAS universities and colleges. The information provided on the courses include entry requirements, course description

(<http://www.ucas.com/search/index.html>). There is also an institution guide that includes contact details, notes about the institutions and statistics about courses and students on the UCAS website (<http://www.ucas.com/instit/index.html>).

Admission requirements

There are no standard admission requirements into higher education. Each university or college can set its own requirements. However, in practice, most universities and colleges have fairly similar entry requirements.

England, Wales and Northern Ireland

Generally, entry into an undergraduate bachelor's degree requires at least two Advanced General Certificate of Education courses (GCE A levels) at grade E or above (or the equivalent), in addition to the appropriate General Certificate of Secondary Education courses (GCSEs).

Advanced Subsidiary (formerly Advanced Supplementary) GCEs (AS levels) are also considered for admission by some HEIs, two AS levels usually counting as one A level. More prestigious universities or colleges typically have higher requirements. Some institutions also interview potential students to determine their admissibility.

The most common type of qualification used for admission into undergraduate programmes are GCE A levels taken in a secondary school or in a further education college.

Other qualifications may also be accepted for entry into a programme by some HEIs. These can include Business and Technology Education Council (BTEC) and other vocational qualifications (i.e. National Vocational Qualifications (NVQs), and Scottish Vocational Qualifications (SVQs)). Work experience, Access courses and other programmes intended for adults wanting to further their education can also be considered as entry requirements into higher education.

Scotland

In Scotland the general minimum admission requirements for undergraduate programmes are:

- Undergraduate Certificate = one Higher
- Undergraduate Diploma = two Highers
- Undergraduate Degree = three Highers

Some universities also consider Advanced Highers for exemption from some first year courses.

Vocational qualifications and work experience may also be considered as entry requirements.

Academic Year

There is no standard academic year in HEIs in the United Kingdom. However, most universities have three equal terms per year. The typical year runs from the end of September or the beginning of October until the middle of June. Each term has 10 teaching weeks for a total of 30 teaching weeks. Notable exceptions include Oxford and Cambridge, both of which have only 24 weeks per academic year, from the second week of October to mid-June. Each term at Oxford

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Summary of the United Kingdom's position on two key elements of the Bologna Process:

- Credits – The use of credits in HEIs in the United Kingdom is common, but not universal. Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland apply credits more thoroughly than England. Generally, one academic year in the United Kingdom is equated to 120 credits, where in the Bologna Process it equals 60 Europe Credit Transfer System (ECTS) credits (i.e. 1 ECTS credit = 2 UK credits). The United Kingdom bases the number of credits on learning

outcome rather than the number of hours of study.

- Diploma Supplement – Some but not all HEIs in the United Kingdom issue the Diploma Supplement to their students. It is issued free of charge in English or in Welsh (in Wales). All HEIs are being encouraged to offer the Diploma Supplement.

Qualifications Frameworks

In all parts of the United Kingdom, qualifications fit into frameworks that serve as general indicators of the level of education attained. England, Wales and Northern Ireland share their frameworks while Scotland has its own separate, though very similar, framework. Both are illustrated below.

Qualifications Framework for England, Wales and Northern Ireland

England, Wales and Northern Ireland share two qualifications frameworks: one covers all national qualifications, and the other covers higher education qualifications. The frameworks have been put side by side in an effort to compare all qualifications with each other. **It is important to note that the levels are only used for general comparison and do not indicate that the qualifications have the same content or outcome.**

Table 28. National Qualifications Framework for England, Wales and Northern Ireland

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Original levels	Revised levels	
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	7 – Level 7 Diploma	M (master's) – Master's degrees, postgraduate certificates and diplomas
4 – e.g. Level 4 NVQ, Level 4 Diploma, Level 4 BTEC HND, Level 4 Certificate	6 – Level 6 Diploma	H (honours) – Bachelor's degrees, graduate certificates and diplomas
	5 – Level 5 BTEC HND	I (intermediate) – Diplomas of higher education and further education, foundation degrees, higher national diplomas
	4 – Level 4 Certificate	C (certificate) – Certificates of higher education
3 – e.g. Level 3 Certificate, Level 3 NVQ, A levels		
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Entry – Entry Level Certificate in Adult Literacy		

Scottish Credit and Qualifications Framework

Scotland has a different qualifications framework, called the Scottish Credit and Qualifications Framework (SCQF). The SCQF includes all qualifications, including higher education

qualifications. As for the National Qualifications Framework, **it is important to note that the levels are for general comparison purposes only and do not indicate same content or outcome for qualifications at the same level.**

Table 29. Scottish Credit and Qualifications Framework

SCQF level (SHE = Scottish Higher Education level)	National qualifications (units, courses and group awards)	Higher National qualifications	Qualifications awarded by higher education institutions in Scotland	SVQs**
12 (SHE D*)			Doctorates	
11 (SHE M*)			Masters/Postgraduate Diploma and Certificate	SVQ 5
10 (SHE H*)			Honours degree	
9 (SHE 3)			Degree	
8 (SHE 2)		Higher National Diploma	Diploma of Higher Education	SVQ 4
7 (SHE 1)	Advanced Higher	Higher National Certificate	Certificate of Higher Education	
6	Higher			SVQ 3
5	Intermediate 2/ Credit Standard Grade			SVQ 2
4	Intermediate 1/ General Standard Grade			SVQ 1
3	Access 3/Foundation Standard Grade			
2	Access 2			
1	Access 1			

* Labels H, M and D refer to Honours, Masters, and Doctoral and are used consistently across the UK.

** Provisional: work is continuing to refine the placing of SVQs within the SCQF.

Documentation

Students graduating from higher education programmes are issued different documents depending on the institution they attend and when. There is no standard documentation in this sector of education. Common documents include transcripts, degree certificates and diplomas, professional certification and/or registration.

It is important to note that for many years, universities and colleges did not typically issue any transcripts – they only issued degree certificates. Even today, some universities still may not provide any transcripts.

Summary of Rationale

The IQAS placement recommendation takes into account the following factors as outlined above:

- admission requirements
- general content

- length of study
- outcome of study
- other placement recommendations

IQAS recommends that the one-year Certificate (or Diploma) of Higher Education generally compares to the completion of a one-year post-secondary Certificate with a focus in xxx.

The two-year Diploma (or Certificate) of Higher Education generally compares to the completion of a two-year post-secondary Diploma with a focus in xxx.

Grading:

Generally, Higher Education grades in the United Kingdom are lower than they are in Canada. The pass grade is often as low as 35 percent, so a grade of 60 could be considered very good or excellent.

There is no standard grading scale used by all universities, so the following tables are meant to be used for general guidance only.

Table 30. Comparison between UK grades and IQAS grades (example)

UK Grades		IQAS Grade (%)
70-100	A	90
60-69	B	75
50-59	C	65
40-49	D	60
35-39	E	55
0-34	--	Fail

Note: The IQAS grade represents a suggested mid-point in a range of possible grades.

Table 31. Summary of grading scale from the University of Glamorgan (Scotland)

Grade (%)	IQAS Grade (%)
70-100	90
60-69.9	75
50-59.9	65
40-49.9	55
<40	Fail

Note: The IQAS grade represents a suggested mid-point in a range of possible grades.

Some universities also use the European Credit Transfer System (ECTS) grading scale. For an explanation of ECTS, see the *Higher Education* chapter.

Table 32. ECTS Grading Scale

ECTS	Definition	Distribution
------	------------	--------------

Grade		(%)
A	Excellent – outstanding performance with only minor errors	10
B	Very good – above the average standard but with some errors	25
C	Good – generally sound work with a number of notable errors	30
D	Satisfactory – fair but with significant shortcomings	25
E	Sufficient – performance meets the minimum criteria	10
FX	Fail – some more work required before the credit can be awarded	--
F	Fail – considerable further work is required	--

Source: University of Warwick Academic Office^{xiii}

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Country: United Kingdom	Official Country Name: United Kingdom	Region: England, Wales and Northern Ireland
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Status: Pending	Date Entered: December 8, 2006
Category: Higher Education	Date Revised: December 8, 2006

Credential Actual Name: Foundation Degree	Credential English Name:
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Credential Alternate Actual Name(s): Foundation degree in Arts (FdA) Foundation degree in Science (FdSc) Foundation degree in Education (FdEd) Foundation degree in Engineering (FdEng) Foundation degree in Technology (FdTech) Foundation degree in xx	Credential Alternate English Name(s):
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Time Period Credential Offered: Current (newer qualification introduced in 2001)
Issuing Body: Higher education institutions (universities, colleges, schools, foundations, etc.), and, in some cases, Edexcel (with the BTEC prefix)

Admission Requirements:

There are no standard admission requirements for foundation degrees, but these tend to be more flexible than the requirements for access to bachelor degrees. Admission requirements may include General Certificate of Secondary Education (GCSE) or Advanced General Certificate of Education (GCE A level) courses, but applicants can also use work experience and vocational qualifications for entry into those programmes.

Program Description:

Introduced in 2001, foundation degrees (Fds) are employment-related higher education qualifications. They are developed by employers who also help deliver the programme. Foundation degrees are designed to be accessible to many different kinds of students, from new graduates of further education programmes to adults already in the workplace. The degrees are flexible, meaning they can be studied part time or full time, online or at work. The duration of a full time foundation degree is typically two years, but many students study part time.

Like bachelor degrees (see below), foundation degrees come in two main types: Foundation Degree in Science (FdSc) and Foundation Degree in Arts (FdA). There are also other types of Fds, such as Fd Technology (FdTech) and Fd Engineering (FdEng). There are already over 1600 foundation degree courses available with 800 more being developed. At present, foundation degrees are not offered in Scotland.

A few examples of foundation degrees include FdSc in Civil Engineering, FdEng in Electrical and Electronic Engineering, FdA in Culinary Arts, FdA in Early Years Education, FdSc in

Health and Social Care, FdA in Mental Health, FdSc in Business Information Technology, FdA in Law, FdA in History with English.

Foundation degrees may lead to other HE qualifications such as professional qualifications or the final year of a related bachelor degree.

The popularity of foundation degrees is growing. When they were introduced in 2001, only 4,000 students were enrolled in these degrees. By the academic year of 2005-2006, 47,000 students were studying for foundation degrees, half of which part time.

Provides Access to in the Home Country:

- Further education (i.e. bachelor degrees)
- Employment
- Access to a profession in some cases

Placement Recommendations:

PIER (Projects for International Education Research) World Education Series, 1991 (US)

No recommendation is provided for foundation degrees as this publication predates the introduction of this qualification.

NOOSR (National Office of Overseas Skills Recognition), 2006 (Australia)

A Foundation degree normally requiring two years of full-time study or equivalent and awarded by a listed institution is assessed as comparable to the educational level of an AQF [Australian Qualifications Framework] Advanced Diploma.

The New Country Index - International Education Research Foundation, 2004 (US)

No recommendation is provided for foundation degrees.

IQAS Recommendations for:

Employment

The Foundation degree generally compares to the completion of two years of undergraduate study in xxx [or] a two-year post-secondary diploma with a focus in xxx [if more appropriate].

Post-secondary Admission

The Foundation degree generally compares to the completion of two years of undergraduate study in xxx [or] a two-year post-secondary diploma with a focus in xxx [if more appropriate].

Course Equivalencies

30-level courses if no secondary documents available

Rationale:

Background

Undergraduate Qualifications

The main undergraduate qualifications in the United Kingdom are:

- Higher National Certificates and Diplomas (HNCs and HNDs)
- Certificates and Diplomas of Higher Education (Cert HE and Dip HE)
- Foundation degrees
- Bachelor degrees (also called first degrees)

Bachelor degrees are the most common undergraduate qualification.

Classes are expressed in terms of modules, units or credits depending on the institution and programme.

A search of all available undergraduate courses, including entry requirements and course description, is provided by the Universities and Colleges Admissions Service (UCAS) on their website: <http://www.ucas.com/>.

Higher Education Institutions

There are two main types of higher education institutions (HEIs) in the United Kingdom: universities and colleges of higher education. These and the other types of HEIs are described briefly below.

Universities are independent, self-governing institutions. All universities in the United Kingdom are *recognised bodies*, meaning that they have the power to award degrees (see *Recognised bodies and listed bodies* below). They decide their own admission criteria, develop courses and decide which degrees they offer. Most universities conduct research as well as teaching.

University colleges and **institutes** are institutions that are part of larger universities. Some university colleges and institutes are small and specialize in one area of study, while others are large institutions that offer many different programmes. For example, the University of London consists of 20 self-governing colleges and a School of Advanced Study that is composed of 10 member institutes. Degrees at these university colleges and institutes are awarded by the main university.

Colleges of higher education are another type of higher education institution. Some colleges of higher education are *recognised bodies* (see below) and have the power to award degrees. Others offer higher education courses that lead to degrees awarded by another recognised body.

Some **colleges of further education**, **institutes**, **foundations**, **academies** and **schools** also offer higher education courses leading to degrees awarded by *recognised bodies*. Some of these, especially colleges of further education, also offer programmes that lead to qualifications other than higher education qualifications (i.e. Advanced General Certificate of Education or A levels).

Recognised bodies and listed bodies

The governments of the United Kingdom recognise the degree awarding powers of universities and colleges. These **recognised bodies**, as they are called, have been granted degree awarding powers by either a Royal Charter (see below) or an Act of Parliament. All universities and some

colleges of higher education are recognised bodies. In 2006, there are over 130 such institutions.

In addition to the recognised bodies, there are over 550 other institutions that offer courses leading to a degree but do not themselves have the power to award degrees. These are known as **listed bodies**. Their courses are validated by a university or college that has degree awarding powers.

The lists of recognised bodies and listed bodies can be found on the website of the Department for Education and Skills (<http://www.dfes.gov.uk/recognisedukdegrees/>).

Royal Charters and the Privy Council

The older universities (pre-1992) operate under Royal Charters. These charters set out the university's constitution, and statutes, detailing how the university should operate. Royal Charters were granted to universities by the Sovereign on the advice of the Privy Council, who also approved any amendments made to the charters.

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Other roles of the Privy Council are to approve the use of the title "university" in an institution's name, and to approve degree granting powers of an institution. For more information please see <http://www.privy-council.org.uk>

Higher education institutions pre-1992 (Polytechnics)

Prior to the Further and Higher Education Act of 1992, polytechnics were another type of higher education institution. Created in the late 1960s to expand the higher education system and offer more opportunities for higher education, polytechnics were formed from amalgamation of colleges and other higher education institutions. Polytechnics offered higher and further education programmes, often professionally oriented, to meet the needs of business and industry. They offered the full spectrum of higher education qualifications, including certificates, diplomas, bachelor's degrees, master's degrees and doctorates.^{xiv} The polytechnics were converted into universities with the Further and Higher Education Act of 1992.

Polytechnics and other non-university higher education institutions awarded degrees through the Council for National Academic Awards (CNAA). Established in 1964, the CNAA was the largest degree-awarding body in the United Kingdom until it was abolished by the Further and Higher Education Act in 1992. Over 140 HEIs had their courses and degrees approved by the CNAA. CNAA awards were considered comparable to those of universities and are recognised by professional associations and employers.

When the CNAA was abolished, the Open University Validation Services (OUVS - <http://www.open.ac.uk/validate>) accepted responsibility for maintaining and providing access to CNAA records.

Independent sector

There are a growing number of independent higher education institutions in the United

Kingdom. However, as they are not required to register with authorities, the exact number is not known, but is estimated at over 3,000.^{xv} Independent HE providers are often not subjected to external accreditation, so quality can be difficult to assess. The British Accreditation Council (BAC) is the national non-profit organization that provides accreditation to independent higher and further education institutions. In 2006, over 200 independent colleges are accredited by the BAC (<http://www.the-bac.org/direct.htm>).

Independent HE providers cannot legally offer British qualifications. Only *recognised bodies* can offer degrees and *listed bodies* can only offer courses leading to degrees (see above). BAC accredited independent colleges may offer courses leading to qualifications from overseas universities and colleges provided that these are, in turn, recognized in their own country. The overseas university or college is the awarding body in these cases and not the independent college.

Quality assurance

Several governmental and non-governmental agencies measure quality in the Higher Education sector. The reports and “league tables” (university and college rankings) produced by these quality assurance agencies provide valuable information to prospective students, employers and others. Funding agencies also use the information to distribute grants to institutions based on the quality of their research or teaching, for example.

The Quality Assurance Agency (QAA), formed in 1997, plays a key role in quality assurance in British higher education. In addition to conducting external reviews of HEIs throughout the United Kingdom, the QAA also performs subjects reviews, helps define academic standards, provides guidelines on good practice, reviews quality of research to recommend funding allocations. Publishes reports on each university and college, highlighting strengths and areas for improvement to help students in their decision of which institution to attend. These reports can be found on the QAA website (<http://www.qaa.ac.uk/default.asp>).

The Teaching Quality Information (TQI) is another resource in HE quality assurance. The TQI website (<http://www2.tqi.ac.uk/sites/tqi/home/index.cfm>) provides reports and other official information about the quality of teaching in institutions and programmes throughout the United Kingdom. This information includes statistical data and results of a national student survey.

Other quality assurance indicators:

- Research Assessment Exercise (RAE) – The RAE is a government-led evaluation of the quality of research in HEIs conducted every five years or so. HEIs receive funding based on the quality of their research. (www.hero.ac.uk/rae/)
- Higher Education Statistical Agency (HESA) Performance Indicators – Each year, on behalf of the government, HESA publishes data on the performance of HEIs in widening participation, student retention, learning and teaching outcomes, research output and employment of graduates. (www.hesa.ac.uk/pi/)
- Professional Body Accreditation – various professional bodies visit departments of HEIs before giving their accreditation to a programme.
- General league tables – Various media sources, such as *The Guardian*, *The Times*, *The Daily Telegraph* and *The Sunday Times*, rank the HEIs each year based on specific criteria.

Universities and Colleges Admissions Service (UCAS)

The Universities and Colleges Admission Service (UCAS) handles almost all applications for full time, undergraduate higher education courses. Students send one application directly to UCAS, indicating up to six choices of courses that they want to apply to. Students cannot apply to both Oxford and Cambridge on the same application. UCAS then forwards the applications to the institutions who decide whether to offer the student a place or not. Offers can be *unconditional*, meaning that the student already meets the institution's requirement and is accepted as is, or *conditional* where the student has to meet additional requirements (e.g. achieve a certain result on a future examination) by September 1 of the year of admission.

The **deadline** for most applications is January 15 (for admission in September of the same year). Applications to the universities of Oxford and Cambridge, and courses in medicine, dentistry and veterinary science/medicine have an earlier deadline of October 15 (for admission the following September). Applications for some art and design courses are due later, by March 15. Late applications (those received between January 16 and June 30) will be submitted to universities and colleges, but they will only be considered if the institutions want to make more offers.

Students who did not secure a place from their original application may use UCAS Extra or Clearing services. **Extra** gives students a chance to look for alternatives to their first six choices if these did not result in an offer made or the acceptance of one. Universities and colleges that still have vacancies will post them on the UCAS website and eligible students can have an application sent directly to them. Extra operates from the middle of March to the end of June.

Clearing is intended for students who did not receive any offer from their application and did not find a place through Extra, or who missed the first deadline. Through this process, UCAS tries to match students to the remaining places in universities and colleges. The Clearing application deadline is the last week of September of each year.

UCAS also operates a points system called the **UCAS Tariff**. In this system, all qualifications considered for admission are awarded a certain number of points that students can use to meet course entry requirements. Some universities and colleges require that students have a minimum number of points to be admitted into their programmes. More information on this as well as the UCAS Tariff table can be found on the UCAS website (<http://www.ucas.com/candq/tariff/>).

UCAS has a searchable list of all courses in UCAS universities and colleges. The information provided on the courses include entry requirements, course description (<http://www.ucas.com/search/index.html>). There is also an institution guide that includes contact details, notes about the institutions and statistics about courses and students on the UCAS website (<http://www.ucas.com/instit/index.html>).

Admission requirements

There are no standard admission requirements into higher education. Each university or college can set its own requirements. However, in practice, most universities and colleges have fairly similar entry requirements.

England, Wales and Northern Ireland

Generally, entry into an undergraduate bachelor's degree requires at least two Advanced General Certificate of Education courses (GCE A levels) at grade E or above (or the equivalent), in addition to the appropriate General Certificate of Secondary Education courses (GCSEs).

Advanced Subsidiary (formerly Advanced Supplementary) GCEs (AS levels) are also considered for admission by some HEIs, two AS levels usually counting as one A level. More prestigious universities or colleges typically have higher requirements. Some institutions also interview potential students to determine their admissibility.

The most common type of qualification used for admission into undergraduate programmes are GCE A levels taken in a secondary school or in a further education college.

Other qualifications may also be accepted for entry into a programme by some HEIs. These can include Business and Technology Education Council (BTEC) and other vocational qualifications (i.e. National Vocational Qualifications (NVQs), and Scottish Vocational Qualifications (SVQs)). Work experience, Access courses and other programmes intended for adults wanting to further their education can also be considered as entry requirements into higher education.

Academic Year

There is no standard academic year in HEIs in the United Kingdom. However, most universities have three equal terms per year. The typical year runs from the end of September or the beginning of October until the middle of June. Each term has 10 teaching weeks for a total of 30 teaching weeks. Notable exceptions include Oxford and Cambridge, both of which have only 24 weeks per academic year, from the second week of October to mid-June. Each term at Oxford and Cambridge has only eight teaching weeks. Some institutions also offer a semester format.

Types of study

Full time and part time

Most bachelor's degree programmes take three or four years of full time study to complete. Some degrees take longer, such as law or medicine. In many cases, higher education programmes can also be studied part time over a longer period of time.

Sandwich courses

Sandwich degree courses involve a period of work experience or language training "sandwiched" between two or three periods of study. Usually, the work experience or language training is one year in duration and takes place in the workplace, in another university or in a foreign country. In Alberta, this type of study is referred to as a co-op programme.

Distance and flexible learning

Distance learning, also called flexible or open learning, is becoming increasingly common in the United Kingdom, as elsewhere in the world. Many HEIs now offer courses through video, printed and online material, permitting students to study from home. Some programmes require

the student to periodically go to the campus, but others are offered entirely from a distance. These courses are particularly attractive to students who work full time or have other commitments, such as stay-at-home parents.

One notable contributor to distance learning is the Open University (OU). Entirely dedicated to distance learning, the OU offers courses to students in the United Kingdom, as well as many other countries within and outside of Europe. The first students started in 1971, and today, there are more than 150,000 undergraduate and 30,000 graduate students.

More information on distance learning and HEIs offering such programmes can be found on *Hobson's Distance Learning* website (www.distancelearning.hobsons.com/) or through the *Prospects* website (www.prospects.ac.uk, choose “distance learning” in the mode of study of the advanced search page).

Bologna Process

The United Kingdom is one of the signatory countries of the Bologna Process. Launched in 1999, the Bologna Process aims to establish a common European system of higher education at both undergraduate and graduate levels by 2010. More information on the Bologna Process in general and in the United Kingdom can be found on the Europe Unit website (www.europeunit.ac.uk/bologna_process).

Summary of the United Kingdom's position on two key elements of the Bologna Process:

- Credits – The use of credits in HEIs in the United Kingdom is common, but not universal. Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland apply credits more thoroughly than England. Generally, one academic year in the United Kingdom is equated to 120 credits, where in the Bologna Process it equals 60 Europe Credit Transfer System (ECTS) credits (i.e. 1 ECTS credit = 2 UK credits). The United Kingdom bases the number of credits on learning outcome rather than the number of hours of study.
- Diploma Supplement – Some but not all HEIs in the United Kingdom issue the Diploma Supplement to their students. It is issued free of charge in English or in Welsh (in Wales). All HEIs are being encouraged to offer the Diploma Supplement.

Qualifications Frameworks

In all parts of the United Kingdom, qualifications fit into frameworks that serve as general indicators of the level of education attained. England, Wales and Northern Ireland share their frameworks while Scotland has its own separate, though very similar, framework.

Qualifications Framework for England, Wales and Northern Ireland

England, Wales and Northern Ireland share two qualifications frameworks: one covers all national qualifications, and the other covers higher education qualifications. The frameworks have been put side by side in an effort to compare all qualifications with each other. **It is important to note that the levels are only used for general comparison and do not indicate that the qualifications have the same content or outcome.**

Table 33. National Qualifications Framework for England, Wales and Northern Ireland

National Qualifications Framework		Framework for Higher Education Qualification levels (FHEQ)
Original levels	Revised levels	
5 – e.g. Level 5 NVQ	8 – Specialist awards	D (doctoral) – Doctorates
	7 – Level 7 Diploma	M (master's) – Master's degrees, postgraduate certificates and diplomas
4 – e.g. Level 4 NVQ, Level 4 Diploma, Level 4 BTEC HND, Level 4 Certificate	6 – Level 6 Diploma	H (honours) – Bachelor's degrees, graduate certificates and diplomas
	5 – Level 5 BTEC HND	I (intermediate) – Diplomas of higher education and further education, foundation degrees, higher national diplomas
	4 – Level 4 Certificate	C (certificate) – Certificates of higher education
3 – e.g. Level 3 Certificate, Level 3 NVQ, A levels		
2 – e.g. Level 2 Diploma, Level 2 NVQ, GCSEs Grades A*-C		
1 – e.g. Level 1 Certificate, Level 1 NVQ, GCSEs Grades D-G		
Entry – Entry Level Certificate in Adult Literacy		

Documentation

Students graduating from higher education programmes are issued different documents depending on the institution they attend and when. There is no standard documentation in this sector of education. Common documents include transcripts, degree certificates and diplomas, professional certification and/or registration.

It is important to note that for many years, universities and colleges did not typically issue any transcripts – they only issued degree certificates. Even today, some universities still may not provide any transcripts.

Summary of Rationale

The IQAS placement recommendation takes into account the following factors as outlined above:

- admission requirements
- general content
- length of study
- other placement recommendations
- outcome of study

IQAS recommends that the Foundation degree generally compares to the completion of two years of undergraduate study in xxx [or] a two-year post-secondary diploma with a

focus in xxx [if more appropriate].

Grading:

Generally, Higher Education grades in the United Kingdom are lower than they are in Canada. The pass grade is often as low as 35 percent, so a grade of 60 could be considered very good or excellent.

There is no standard grading scale used by all universities, so the following tables are meant to be used for general guidance only.

Table 34. Comparison between UK grades and IQAS grades (example)

UK Grades		IQAS Grade (%)
70-100	A	90
60-69	B	75
50-59	C	65
40-49	D	60
35-39	E	55
0-34	--	Fail

Note: The IQAS grade represents a suggested mid-point in a range of possible grades.

Table 35. Summary of grading scale from the University of Glamorgan (Scotland)

Grade (%)	IQAS Grade (%)
70-100	90
60-69.9	75
50-59.9	65
40-49.9	55
<40	Fail

Note: The IQAS grade represents a suggested mid-point in a range of possible grades.

Some universities also use the European Credit Transfer System (ECTS) grading scale. For an explanation of ECTS, see the *Higher Education* chapter.

Table 36. ECTS Grading Scale

ECTS Grade	Definition	Distribution (%)
A	Excellent – outstanding performance with only minor errors	10
B	Very good – above the average standard but with some errors	25
C	Good – generally sound work with a number of notable errors	30
D	Satisfactory – fair but with significant shortcomings	25
E	Sufficient – performance meets the minimum criteria	10
FX	Fail – some more work required before the credit can be awarded	--
F	Fail – considerable further work is required	--

Source: University of Warwick Academic Office^{xvi}

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Country: United Kingdom	Official Country Name: United Kingdom	Region: England, Wales and Northern Ireland
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Status: Pending	Date Entered: December 8, 2006
Category: Higher Education	Date Revised: December 8, 2006

Credential Actual Name: Bachelor's Degree (Honours or Ordinary)	Credential English Name:
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Credential Alternate Actual Name(s): Bachelor of Science (BSc) Bachelor of Arts (BA) Bachelor of Architecture (BArch) Bachelor of Music (BMus) etc.	Credential Alternate English Name(s):
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Time Period Credential Offered: Current
Issuing Body: Recognised bodies (all universities and some colleges of higher education)
(see *Recognised bodies and listed bodies* in the rationale below, p.45)

Admission Requirements:

No standard requirements, although most bachelor's degree programmes require a minimum of two Advanced General Certificate of Education (GCE A level) courses with the appropriate General Certificate of Secondary Education (GCSE) courses. More prestigious institutions will usually require at least three A level passes for admission. Other qualifications may be used to meet admission requirements, including technical and vocational courses, and work experience.

Program Description:

The most common category of degree awarded is the bachelor or first degree. All types of bachelor's degrees, including the Bachelor of Arts (BA) and the Bachelor of Science (BSc) are considered first degrees.

Bachelor's degrees usually take three, or sometimes four years of full time study to complete. The typical course load for a bachelor's degree is between three and six classes per term, most students taking four or five classes.

Titles of degrees include the Bachelor of Arts (BA) and the Bachelor of Science (BSc), which are the two most common degrees. However, there are other bachelor's degree titles as well such as the Bachelor of Education (BEd), the Bachelor of Engineering (BEng), the Bachelor of Law (LLB), and others.

Bachelor's degrees are either honours degrees or ordinary/pass degrees. Honours degrees are studied at a more complex level than ordinary degrees. There are single subject degrees (single honours), two subjects degrees (joint honours), or two or three subjects degrees (combined

honours).

Honours degrees are divided in four classes (levels of achievement):

- First Class
- Upper Second Class (2:1)
- Lower Second Class (2:2)
- Third Class

Upper second class (2:1) is usually considered as the minimum grade for entry into postgraduate studies. Students who do not achieve the minimum standard of an honours degree will be awarded an ordinary/pass degree.

There is also an *aegrotat* degree awarded to students who could not complete their final exams because of illness. The honours degree (aegrotat) or ordinary degree (aegrotat) is awarded on the understanding that the student would have passed if they had not been ill.

(See separate credential templates for Scottish bachelor's degrees and professional bachelor's degrees.)

Provides Access to in the Home Country:

- Graduate education (i.e. master's degrees)
- Employment
- Professional certification in some cases

Placement Recommendations:

PIER (Projects for International Education Research) World Education Series, 1991 (US)

- The Bachelor of Arts/Bachelor of Science (Unclassified/Ordinary) may be considered for graduate admission if the program followed is appropriate preparation.
- The Bachelor of Arts/Bachelor of Science (Honours) may be considered for graduate admission.

NOOSR (National Office of Overseas Skills Recognition), 2006 (Australia)

- A Bachelor degree normally requiring three or more years of full-time study and awarded by a listed institution is assessed as comparable to the educational level of an Australian Bachelor degree. (*NOOSR recommends that when assessing Honours degree comparability, Australian assessors should evaluate each degree on a case-by-case basis.*)

The New Country Index - International Education Research Foundation, 2004 (US)

- The Bachelor of Arts/Bachelor of Science (unclassified/ordinary or honours)/Bachelor of Arts/Bachelor of Science Joint Honours is considered comparable to a BA/BS/Bachelor of...

IQAS Recommendations for:

Employment

The Bachelor's degree (Ordinary/Pass) generally compares to the completion of a four-year Bachelor's degree with a focus in xx.

The Bachelor's degree (Honours) generally compares to the completion of a four-year Bachelor's degree (Honours) with a focus in xx.

Professional degrees such as medicine, engineering, teacher education and nursing are addressed in separate credential templates.

Post-secondary Admission

The Bachelor's degree (Ordinary/Pass) generally compares to the completion of a four-year Bachelor's degree with a focus in xx.

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Course Equivalencies

30-level courses if no secondary documents available

Rationale:

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Independent HE providers cannot legally offer British qualifications. Only *recognised bodies* can offer degrees and *listed bodies* can only offer courses leading to degrees (see above). BAC accredited independent colleges may offer courses leading to qualifications from overseas universities and colleges provided that these are, in turn, recognized in their own country. The overseas university or college is the awarding body in these cases and not the independent college.

Quality assurance

Several governmental and non-governmental agencies measure quality in the Higher Education sector. The reports and “league tables” (university and college rankings) produced by these quality assurance agencies provide valuable information to prospective students, employers and others. Funding agencies also use the information to distribute grants to institutions based on the quality of their research or teaching, for example.

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Other quality assurance indicators:

- Research Assessment Exercise (RAE) – The RAE is a government-led evaluation of the quality of research in HEIs conducted every five years or so. HEIs receive funding based on the quality of their research. (www.hero.ac.uk/rae/)
- Higher Education Statistical Agency (HESA) Performance Indicators – Each year, on behalf of the government, HESA publishes data on the performance of HEIs in widening participation, student retention, learning and teaching outcomes, research output and employment of graduates. (www.hesa.ac.uk/pi/)
- Professional Body Accreditation – various professional bodies visit departments of HEIs before giving their accreditation to a programme.
- General league tables – Various media sources, such as *The Guardian*, *The Times*, *The Daily Telegraph* and *The Sunday Times*, rank the HEIs each year based on specific criteria.

Universities and Colleges Admissions Service (UCAS)

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Admission requirements

There are no standard admission requirements into higher education. Each university or college can set its own requirements. However, in practice, most universities and colleges have fairly similar entry requirements.

England, Wales and Northern Ireland

Generally, entry into an undergraduate bachelor's degree requires at least two Advanced General Certificate of Education courses (GCE A levels) at grade E or above (or the equivalent), in addition to the appropriate General Certificate of Secondary Education courses (GCSEs).

Advanced Subsidiary (formerly Advanced Supplementary) GCEs (AS levels) are also considered for admission by some HEIs, two AS levels usually counting as one A level. More prestigious universities or colleges typically have higher requirements. Some institutions also interview potential students to determine their admissibility.

The most common type of qualification used for admission into undergraduate programmes are GCE A levels taken in a secondary school or in a further education college.

Other qualifications may also be accepted for entry into a programme by some HEIs. These can include Business and Technology Education Council (BTEC) and other vocational qualifications (i.e. National Vocational Qualifications (NVQs), and Scottish Vocational Qualifications (SVQs)). Work experience, Access courses and other programmes intended for adults wanting to further their education can also be considered as entry requirements into higher education.

Academic Year

There is no standard academic year in HEIs in the United Kingdom. However, most universities have three equal terms per year. The typical year runs from the end of September or the beginning of October until the middle of June. Each term has 10 teaching weeks for a total of 30 teaching weeks. Notable exceptions include Oxford and Cambridge, both of which have only 24 weeks per academic year, from the second week of October to mid-June. Each term at Oxford and Cambridge has only eight teaching weeks. Some institutions also offer a semester format.

Types of study

Full time and part time

Most bachelor's degree programmes take three or four years of full time study to complete. Some degrees take longer, such as law or medicine. In many cases, higher education programmes can also be studied part time over a longer period of time.

Sandwich courses

Sandwich degree courses involve a period of work experience or language training "sandwiched" between two or three periods of study. Usually, the work experience or language training is one year in duration and takes place in the workplace, in another university or in a foreign country. In Alberta, this type of study is referred to as a co-op programme.

Distance and flexible learning

Distance learning, also called flexible or open learning, is becoming increasingly common in the United Kingdom, as elsewhere in the world. Many HEIs now offer courses through video, printed and online material, permitting students to study from home. Some programmes require the student to periodically go to the campus, but others are offered entirely from a distance. These courses are particularly attractive to students who work full time or have other commitments, such as stay-at-home parents.

One notable contributor to distance learning is the Open University (OU). Entirely dedicated to distance learning, the OU offers courses to students in the United Kingdom, as well as many other countries within and outside of Europe. The first students started in 1971, and today, there are more than 150,000 undergraduate and 30,000 graduate students.

More information on distance learning and HEIs offering such programmes can be found on *Hobson's Distance Learning* website (www.distancelearning.hobsons.com/) or through the *Prospects* website (www.prospects.ac.uk, choose "distance learning" in the mode of study of the advanced search page).

Bologna Process

The United Kingdom is one of the signatory countries of the Bologna Process. Launched in 1999, the Bologna Process aims to establish a common European system of higher education at both undergraduate and graduate levels by 2010. More information on the Bologna Process in general and in the United Kingdom can be found on the Europe Unit website (www.europeunit.ac.uk/bologna_process).

Summary of the United Kingdom's position on two key elements of the Bologna Process:

- Credits – The use of credits in HEIs in the United Kingdom is common, but not universal. Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland apply credits more thoroughly than England. Generally, one academic year in the United Kingdom is equated to 120 credits, where in the Bologna Process it equals 60 Europe Credit Transfer System (ECTS) credits (i.e. 1 ECTS credit = 2 UK credits). The United Kingdom bases the number of credits on learning outcome rather than the number of hours of study.
- Diploma Supplement – Some but not all HEIs in the United Kingdom issue the Diploma Supplement to their students. It is issued free of charge in English or in Welsh (in Wales). All HEIs are being encouraged to offer the Diploma Supplement.

Qualifications Frameworks

In all parts of the United Kingdom, qualifications fit into frameworks that serve as general indicators of the level of education attained. England, Wales and Northern Ireland share their frameworks while Scotland has its own separate, though very similar, framework.

Qualifications Framework for England, Wales and Northern Ireland

England, Wales and Northern Ireland share two qualifications frameworks: one covers all national qualifications, and the other covers higher education qualifications. The frameworks have been put side by side in an effort to compare all qualifications with each other. **It is important to note that the levels are only used for general comparison and do not indicate that the qualifications have the same content or outcome.**

Table 37. National Qualifications Framework for England, Wales and Northern Ireland

National Qualifications Framework		Framework for Higher Education Qualification levels (FHEQ)
Original levels	Revised levels	
5 – e.g. Level 5 NVQ	8 – Specialist awards	D (doctoral) – Doctorates
	7 – Level 7 Diploma	M (master's) – Master's degrees, postgraduate certificates and diplomas
4 – e.g. Level 4 NVQ, Level 4 Diploma, Level 4 BTEC HND, Level 4 Certificate	6 – Level 6 Diploma	H (honours) – Bachelor's degrees, graduate certificates and diplomas
	5 – Level 5 BTEC HND	I (intermediate) – Diplomas of higher education and further education, foundation degrees, higher national diplomas
	4 – Level 4 Certificate	C (certificate) – Certificates of higher education
3 – e.g. Level 3 Certificate, Level 3 NVQ, A levels		
2 – e.g. Level 2 Diploma, Level 2 NVQ, GCSEs Grades A*-C		
1 – e.g. Level 1 Certificate, Level 1 NVQ, GCSEs Grades D-G		
Entry – Entry Level Certificate in Adult Literacy		

Documentation

Students graduating from higher education programmes are issued different documents depending on the institution they attend and when. There is no standard documentation in this sector of education. Common documents include transcripts, degree certificates and diplomas, professional certification and/or registration.

It is important to note that for many years, universities and colleges did not typically issue any transcripts – they only issued degree certificates. Even today, some universities still may not provide any transcripts.

Summary of Rationale

The IQAS placement recommendation takes into account the following factors as outlined above:

- admission requirements
- general content
- length of study
- outcome of study
- other placement recommendations
- admission to graduate programs in Canadian universities

IQAS recommends that the Bachelor's degree (Ordinary/Pass) generally compares to the completion of a four-year Bachelor's degree with a focus in xx.

The Bachelor's degree (Honours) generally compares to the completion of a four-year Bachelor's degree (Honours) with a focus in xx.

Professional degrees such as medicine, engineering, teacher education and nursing are addressed in separate credential templates.

Grading:

Bachelor's (honours) degrees are usually graded on a class scale, from pass (lowest), to first class honours. A grade of second class honours, upper division (Upper Second Class) is usually required for entry into postgraduate programmes. Some universities have a numeral scale associated with the degree classifications, but others do not.

Generally, Higher Education grades in the United Kingdom are lower than they are in Canada. The pass grade is often as low as 35 percent, so a grade of 60 could be considered very good or excellent.

There is no standard grading scale used by all universities, so the following tables are meant to be used for general guidance only.

Table 38. Comparison between UK grades, degree classifications, and IQAS grades (example)

UK Grades		Degree Class *	IQAS Grade (%)
70-100	A	First Class	90
60-69	B	Upper Second Class	75
50-59	C	Lower Second Class	65
40-49	D	Third Class	60
35-39	E	Pass (Ordinary)	55
0-34	--	Fail	Fail

* Institutions have different ways of expressing honours classes, from spelling it out (First, Second, Third), to using Arabic numerals (1, 2; 1, 2; 2, 3), Roman numerals (I, II; I, II, III), or a combination of the previous (i.e. Second Class, Division I, II.1).

Note: The IQAS grade represents a suggested mid-point in a range of possible grades.

Table 39. Summary of grading scale from the University of Glamorgan (Scotland)

Grade (%)	Degree Class	IQAS Grade (%)
70-100	First	90
60-69.9	Upper Second	75
50-59.9	Lower second	65
40-49.9	Third	55
<40	Fail	Fail

Note: The IQAS grade represents a suggested mid-point in a range of possible grades.

Some universities use the European Credit Transfer System (ECTS) grading scale instead of or in addition to the more common degree classification described above. For an explanation of ECTS, see the *Higher Education* chapter

Table 40. ECTS Grading Scale

ECTS Grade	Definition	Distribution (%)
A	Excellent – outstanding performance with only minor errors	10
B	Very good – above the average standard but with some errors	25
C	Good – generally sound work with a number of notable errors	30
D	Satisfactory – fair but with significant shortcomings	25
E	Sufficient – performance meets the minimum criteria	10
FX	Fail – some more work required before the credit can be awarded	--
F	Fail – considerable further work is required	--

Source: University of Warwick Academic Office^{xix}

© 2006 the Crown in right of the Province of Alberta, [International Qualifications Assessment Service \(IQAS\)](#), 9th Floor, 108 Street Building, 9942 - 108 Street, Edmonton, Alberta, Canada T5K 2J5

Country:
United Kingdom

Official Country Name:
United Kingdom

Region:
Scotland

Status: Pending
Category: Higher Education

Date Entered: December 8, 2006
Date Revised: December 8, 2006

Credential Actual Name:
Bachelor's Degree (Honours and Ordinary)

Credential English Name:

Credential Alternate Actual Name(s):
General Degree
First Degree
Master's Degree (MA)
Bachelor of Science (BSc)
Bachelor of Arts (BA)
etc.

Credential Alternate English Name(s):

Time Period Credential Offered: Current

Issuing Body: Recognised bodies (all universities and some colleges of higher education)
(see *Recognised bodies and listed bodies* in the rationale below, p.45)

Admission Requirements:

There are no standard admission requirements, but in general, admission to a Bachelor's degree programme is three Highers. (For students from other parts of the United Kingdom, admission requirements to Scottish degree programmes is usually a combination of Advanced General Certificate of Education (GCE A level) and General Certificate of Secondary Education (GCSE) courses.)

Some universities also consider Advanced Highers for exemption from some first year courses.

Vocational qualifications and work experience may also be considered as entry requirements.

Program Description:

The most common first degree in Scotland is the bachelor's degree. However, bachelor's degrees here are different from those in the rest of the United Kingdom. In Scotland, all honours degrees require four years of study. The first two years are more general in nature, during which students study a broad variety of subjects. During the last two years, students specialize in one (or two) subjects to receive an honours degree. The final year also usually includes a dissertation.

Some universities, especially Scotland's "ancient universities" (Aberdeen, Edinburgh, Glasgow and St. Andrews), call their honours degree a master degree (MA(Hons)). Elsewhere, it is referred to as a bachelor's degree (BA, BEng or BSc(Hons)).

Students also have the option to study for an ordinary or general degree. Unlike in the rest of the

United Kingdom where the ordinary degree is rather uncommon and often considered a “failed” honours degree, the ordinary/general degree is a separate, well-regarded programme in Scotland. The ordinary/general degree is three years in length when studied full time. The first two years are similar to those of the honours degree and consist of a variety of subjects. The final year is another year of general studies. There is no dissertation in the ordinary/general degree.

Like the honours degree, the ordinary/general degree is referred to as a master degree (MA) by some universities (i.e. the “ancient universities”), and a bachelor’s degree (BA, BEng, or BSc) by others.

Admission to bachelor’s degree programmes in Scotland normally requires a minimum of three or four *Highers*. Alternative routes such as Access courses, Higher National Certificates or Diplomas (HNCs or HNDs) may also fulfill entry requirements. Relevant HNCs and HNDs will sometimes give access to the first, second or even third year of a degree.

Honours degrees are divided in four classes (levels of achievement):

- First Class
- Upper Second Class (2:1)
- Lower Second Class (2:2)
- Third Class

Upper second class (2:1) is usually considered as the minimum grade for entry into postgraduate studies. Students who do not achieve the minimum standard of an honours degree will be awarded an ordinary/pass degree.

(See separate credential templates for bachelor’s degrees from other parts of the United Kingdom and for professional bachelor’s degrees.)

Provides Access to in the Home Country:

- Graduate education (i.e. master degrees)
- Employment
- Professional certification in some cases

Placement Recommendations:

PIER (Projects for International Education Research) World Education Series, 1991 (US)

- The three-year First Degree Ordinary, General, or Designated (MA, BA, BSc, BAcc, LLB, BLE, BMus, etc.) may be considered for undergraduate admission with up to 3 years of undergraduate transfer credits, determined through a course-by-course analysis.
- The four-year First Degree may be considered for graduate admission.

NOOSR (National Office of Overseas Skills Recognition), 2006 (Australia)

- A Bachelor degree normally requiring three or more years of full-time study and awarded by a listed institution is assessed as comparable to the educational level of an Australian Bachelor degree. (*NOOSR recommends that when assessing Honours degree comparability, Australian assessors should evaluate each degree on a case-by-case basis.*)

- A Master of Arts [ordinary, general or honours] (MA or MA hon) awarded by one of the universities below as a first degree rather than a postgraduate award is assessed as comparable to the educational level of an Australian Bachelor degree:
 - o University of St Andrews
 - o University of Glasgow
 - o University of Aberdeen
 - o University of Edinburgh
 - o University of Dundee

The New Country Index - International Education Research Foundation, 2004 (US)

- The Bachelor's degree (Ordinary or General) and the Master's degree (Ordinary or General) can be considered comparable to up to 90 semester credits of undergraduate coursework.
- The Bachelor's degree (Honours) and the Master's degree (Honours) is considered comparable to a BA/BS/Bachelor of...

IQAS Recommendations for:

Employment

A four-year Bachelor's degree (Honours) generally compares to the completion of a four-year Bachelor's degree with a focus in xx.

A three-year Bachelor's degree (Ordinary/General) generally compares to the completion of a three-year Bachelor's degree (with a focus in xx).

Post-secondary Admission

A four-year Bachelor's degree (Honours) generally compares to the completion of a four-year Bachelor's degree with a focus in xx.

A three-year Bachelor's degree (Ordinary/General) generally compares to the completion of a three-year Bachelor's degree (with a focus in xx).

Course Equivalencies

30-level courses if no secondary documents available

Rationale:

Background

Undergraduate Qualifications

The main undergraduate qualifications in the United Kingdom are:

- Higher National Certificates and Diplomas (HNCs and HNDs)
- Certificates and Diplomas of Higher Education (Cert HE and Dip HE)
- Foundation degrees
- Bachelor degrees (also called first degrees)

Bachelor degrees are the most common undergraduate qualification.

Classes are expressed in terms of modules, units or credits depending on the institution and

programme.

A search of all available undergraduate courses, including entry requirements and course description, is provided by the Universities and Colleges Admissions Service (UCAS) on their website: <http://www.ucas.com/>.

Higher Education Institutions

There are two main types of higher education institutions (HEIs) in the United Kingdom: universities and colleges of higher education. These and the other types of HEIs are described briefly below.

Universities are independent, self-governing institutions. All universities in the United Kingdom are *recognised bodies*, meaning that they have the power to award degrees (see *Recognised bodies and listed bodies* below). They decide their own admission criteria, develop courses and decide which degrees they offer. Most universities conduct research as well as teaching.

University colleges and institutes are institutions that are part of larger universities. Some university colleges and institutes are small and specialize in one area of study, while others are large institutions that offer many different programmes. For example, the University of London consists of 20 self-governing colleges and a School of Advanced Study that is composed of 10 member institutes. Degrees at these university colleges and institutes are awarded by the main university.

Colleges of higher education are another type of higher education institution. Some colleges of higher education are *recognised bodies* (see below) and have the power to award degrees. Others offer higher education courses that lead to degrees awarded by another recognised body.

Some **colleges of further education, institutes, foundations, academies and schools** also offer higher education courses leading to degrees awarded by *recognised bodies*. Some of these, especially colleges of further education, also offer programmes that lead to qualifications other than higher education qualifications (i.e. Advanced General Certificate of Education or A levels).

Recognised bodies and listed bodies

The governments of the United Kingdom recognise the degree awarding powers of universities and colleges. These **recognised bodies**, as they are called, have been granted degree awarding powers by either a Royal Charter (see below) or an Act of Parliament. All universities and some colleges of higher education are recognised bodies. In 2006, there are over 130 such institutions.

In addition to the recognised bodies, there are over 550 other institutions that offer courses leading to a degree but do not themselves have the power to award degrees. These are known as **listed bodies**. Their courses are validated by a university or college that has degree awarding powers.

The lists of recognised bodies and listed bodies can be found on the website of the Department

for Education and Skills (<http://www.dfes.gov.uk/recognisedukdegrees/>).

Royal Charters and the Privy Council

The older universities (pre-1992) operate under Royal Charters. These charters set out the university's constitution, and statutes, detailing how the university should operate. Royal Charters were granted to universities by the Sovereign on the advice of the Privy Council, who also approved any amendments made to the charters.

Most newer universities (post-1992) and other HEIs operate under Instruments or Articles of Government. The Privy Council must also approve any changes to these.

Other roles of the Privy Council are to approve the use of the title “university” in an institution's name, and to approve degree granting powers of an institution. For more information please see <http://www.privy-council.org.uk>

Higher education institutions pre-1992 (Polytechnics)

Prior to the Further and Higher Education Act of 1992, polytechnics were another type of higher education institution. Created in the late 1960s to expand the higher education system and offer more opportunities for higher education, polytechnics were formed from amalgamation of colleges and other higher education institutions. Polytechnics offered higher and further education programmes, often professionally oriented, to meet the needs of business and industry. They offered the full spectrum of higher education qualifications, including certificates, diplomas, bachelor's degrees, master degrees and doctorates.^{xx} The polytechnics were converted into universities with the Further and Higher Education Act of 1992.

Polytechnics and other non-university higher education institutions awarded degrees through the Council for National Academic Awards (CNAA). Established in 1964, the CNAA was the largest degree-awarding body in the United Kingdom until it was abolished by the Further and Higher Education Act in 1992. Over 140 HEIs had their courses and degrees approved by the CNAA. CNAA awards were considered comparable to those of universities and are recognised by professional associations and employers.

When the CNAA was abolished, the Open University Validation Services (OUVS - <http://www.open.ac.uk/validate>) accepted responsibility for maintaining and providing access to CNAA records.

Independent sector

There are a growing number of independent higher education institutions in the United Kingdom. However, as they are not required to register with authorities, the exact number is not known, but is estimated at over 3,000.^{xxi} Independent HE providers are often not subjected to external accreditation, so quality can be difficult to assess. The British Accreditation Council (BAC) is the national non-profit organization that provides accreditation to independent higher and further education institutions. In 2006, over 200 independent colleges are accredited by the BAC (<http://www.the-bac.org/direct.htm>).

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Admission requirements

There are no standard admission requirements into higher education. Each university or college can set its own requirements. However, in practice, most universities and colleges have fairly similar entry requirements.

In Scotland the general minimum admission requirements for undergraduate programmes are:

- Undergraduate Certificate = one Higher
- Undergraduate Diploma = two Highers
- Undergraduate Degree = three Highers

Some universities also consider Advanced Highers for exemption from some first year courses.

Admission requirements for students from other parts of the United Kingdom are usually a combination of General Certificate of Secondary Education (GCSE) and Advanced General Certificate of Education (GCE A level) courses.

Vocational qualifications and work experience may also be considered as entry requirements.

Academic Year

There is no standard academic year in HEIs in the United Kingdom. However, most universities have three equal terms per year. The typical year runs from the end of September or the beginning of October until the middle of June. Each term has 10 teaching weeks for a total of 30 teaching weeks. Some institutions also offer a semester format.

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Distance and flexible learning

Distance learning, also called flexible or open learning, is becoming increasingly common in the United Kingdom, as elsewhere in the world. Many HEIs now offer courses through video, printed and online material, permitting students to study from home. Some programmes require the student to periodically go to the campus, but others are offered entirely from a distance. These courses are particularly attractive to students who work full time or have other commitments, such as stay-at-home parents.

One notable contributor to distance learning is the Open University (OU). Entirely dedicated to distance learning, the OU offers courses to students in the United Kingdom, as well as many other countries within and outside of Europe. The first students started in 1971, and today, there are more than 150,000 undergraduate and 30,000 graduate students.

More information on distance learning and HEIs offering such programmes can be found on *Hobson's Distance Learning* website (www.distancelearning.hobsons.com) or through the *Prospects* website (www.prospects.ac.uk, choose "distance learning" in the mode of study of the advanced search page).

Bologna Process

The United Kingdom is one of the signatory countries of the Bologna Process. Launched in 1999, the Bologna Process aims to establish a common European system of higher education at

both undergraduate and graduate levels by 2010. More information on the Bologna Process in general and in the United Kingdom can be found on the Europe Unit website (www.europeunit.ac.uk/bologna_process).

Summary of the United Kingdom's position on two key elements of the Bologna Process:

- Credits – The use of credits in HEIs in the United Kingdom is common, but not universal. Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland apply credits more thoroughly than England. Generally, one academic year in the United Kingdom is equated to 120 credits, where in the Bologna Process it equals 60 Europe Credit Transfer System (ECTS) credits (i.e. 1 ECTS credit = 2 UK credits). The United Kingdom bases the number of credits on learning outcome rather than the number of hours of study.
- Diploma Supplement – Some but not all HEIs in the United Kingdom issue the Diploma Supplement to their students. It is issued free of charge in English or in Welsh (in Wales). All HEIs are being encouraged to offer the Diploma Supplement.

Qualifications Frameworks

In all parts of the United Kingdom, qualifications fit into frameworks that serve as general indicators of the level of education attained. England, Wales and Northern Ireland share their frameworks while Scotland has its own separate, though very similar, framework. Both are illustrated below.

Scottish Credit and Qualifications Framework

Scotland has a different qualifications framework, called the Scottish Credit and Qualifications Framework (SCQF). The SCQF includes all qualifications, including higher education qualifications. As for the National Qualifications Framework, **it is important to note that the levels are for general comparison purposes only and do not indicate same content or outcome for qualifications at the same level.**

Table 41. Scottish Credit and Qualifications Framework

SCQF level (SHE = Scottish Higher Education level)	National qualifications (units, courses and group awards)	Higher National qualifications	Qualifications awarded by higher education institutions in Scotland	SVQs**
12 (SHE D*)			Doctorates	
11 (SHE M*)			Master's/Postgraduate Diploma and Certificate	SVQ 5
10 (SHE H*)			Honours degree	
9 (SHE 3)			Degree	
8 (SHE 2)		Higher National Diploma	Diploma of Higher Education	SVQ 4
7 (SHE 1)	Advanced Higher	Higher National Certificate	Certificate of Higher Education	
6	Higher			SVQ 3
5	Intermediate 2/ Credit Standard Grade			SVQ 2
4	Intermediate 1/ General Standard Grade			SVQ 1

3	Access 3/Foundation Standard Grade			
2	Access 2			
1	Access 1			

* Labels H, M and D refer to Honours, Master's, and Doctoral and are used consistently across the UK.

** Provisional: work is continuing to refine the placing of SVQs within the SCQF.

Documentation

Students graduating from higher education programmes are issued different documents depending on the institution they attend and when. There is no standard documentation in this sector of education. Common documents include transcripts, degree certificates and diplomas, professional certification and/or registration.

It is important to note that for many years, universities and colleges did not typically issue any transcripts – they only issued degree certificates. Even today, some universities still may not provide any transcripts.

Summary of Rationale

The IQAS placement recommendation takes into account the following factors as outlined above:

- admission requirements
- general content
- length of study
- outcome of study
- other placement recommendations
- admission to graduate programs in Canadian universities

IQAS recommends that a four-year Bachelor's degree (Honours) generally compares to the completion of a four-year Bachelor's degree with a focus in xx.

A three-year Bachelor's degree (Ordinary/General) generally compares to the completion of a three-year Bachelor's degree (with a focus in xx).

Grading:

Bachelor's (honours) degrees are usually graded on a class scale, from pass (lowest), to first class honours. A grade of second class honours, upper division (Upper Second Class) is usually required for entry into postgraduate programmes. Some universities have a numeral scale associated with the degree classifications, but others do not.

Generally, Higher Education grades in the United Kingdom are lower than they are in Canada. The pass grade is often as low as 35 percent, so a grade of 60 could be considered very good or excellent.

There is no standard grading scale used by all universities, so the following tables are meant to be used for general guidance only.

Table 42. Comparison between UK grades, degree classifications, and IQAS grades (example)

UK Grades		Degree Class *	IQAS Grade (%)
70-100	A	First Class	90
60-69	B	Upper Second Class	75
50-59	C	Lower Second Class	65
40-49	D	Third Class	60
35-39	E	Pass (Ordinary)	55
0-34	--	Fail	Fail

* Institutions have different ways of expressing honours classes, from spelling it out (First, Second, Third), to using Arabic numerals (1, 2;1, 2;2, 3), Roman numerals (I, II;I, II.II, III), or a combination of the previous (i.e. Second Class, Division I, II.1).

Note: The IQAS grade represents a suggested mid-point in a range of possible grades.

Table 43. Summary of grading scale from the University of Glamorgan (Scotland)

Grade (%)	Degree Class	IQAS Grade (%)
70-100	First	90
60-69.9	Upper Second	75
50-59.9	Lower second	65
40-49.9	Third	55
<40	Fail	Fail

Note: The IQAS grade represents a suggested mid-point in a range of possible grades.

Some universities use the European Credit Transfer System (ECTS) grading scale instead of or in addition to the more common degree classification described above. For an explanation of ECTS, see the *Higher Education* chapter

Table 44. ECTS Grading Scale

ECTS Grade	Definition	Distribution (%)
A	Excellent – outstanding performance with only minor errors	10
B	Very good – above the average standard but with some errors	25
C	Good – generally sound work with a number of notable errors	30
D	Satisfactory – fair but with significant shortcomings	25
E	Sufficient – performance meets the minimum criteria	10
FX	Fail – some more work required before the credit can be awarded	--
F	Fail – considerable further work is required	--

Source: University of Warwick Academic Office^{xxii}

Country:
United Kingdom

Official Country Name:
United Kingdom

Region:
United Kingdom

Status: Pending
Category: Higher Education

Date Entered: December 8, 2006
Date Revised: December 8, 2006

Credential Actual Name:
Bachelor of Education (BEd)

Credential English Name:

Other Teaching Credentials:

- Bachelor of Arts/Bachelor of Science with Qualified Teacher Status (BA/BSc with QTS)
- Postgraduate Certificate in Education (PGCE)
- Postgraduate Diploma in Education (PGDE)

Credential Alternate English Name(s):

Time Period Credential Offered: Current

Issuing Body: Recognised bodies (all universities and some colleges of higher education) (More information on *Recognised bodies and listed bodies* is provided in the Rationale below, p. 45.)

Admission Requirements:

Bachelor of Education, Bachelor of Arts/Science: No standard requirements, although most bachelor's degree programmes require a minimum of two Advanced General Certificate of Education (GCE A level) courses with the appropriate General Certificate of Secondary Education (GCSE) courses. More prestigious institutions will usually require at least three A level passes for admission. Other qualifications may be used to meet admission requirements, including technical and vocational courses, and work experience.

Postgraduate diploma/certificate in Education: Successful completion of an undergraduate degree (usually an honours bachelor's degree).

Program Description:

England and Wales

All maintained schools teachers in England and Wales must have **Qualified Teacher Status (QTS)** and be registered with the General Teaching Council for England (www.gtce.org.uk) or the General Teaching Council for Wales (www.gtcw.org.uk), as appropriate. Independent school teachers are not required to have QTS, but may be asked to do so by their school.

There are different routes to obtaining QTS. The most direct route is through the completion of a **Bachelor of Education (BEd)**. Graduates of the BEd receive their teacher training while they are completing their degree. The BEd is an Honours degree that takes three or four years of full-time study to complete. Graduates are awarded QTS.

However, the most common route to QTS is through the completion of a Bachelor's degree (e.g. Bachelor of Arts or Bachelor of Science) in the subject one wants to teach (for secondary education) or that provides broad general knowledge of curriculum subjects (for elementary education). Teaching students then enrol in a Post Graduate Certificate of Education (PGCE) or in a School Centred Initial Teacher Training (SCITT) programme, both of which lead to QTS:

- The **Post Graduate Certificate of Education (PGCE)** is offered by universities and colleges and takes one to two years of full-time study to complete. The PGCE is primarily aimed at developing teaching skills.
- **School Centred Initial Teacher Training (SCITT)** is a one-year programme where the teacher-in-training spends most of the time in the classroom, getting direct experience teaching. Some SCITTs also lead to the awarding of the PGCE.

Another way to become a teacher is by completing a **Bachelor of Arts (BA) or Bachelor of Science (BSc) with QTS**. These honours degree courses incorporate teacher training in their programme and generally take three or four years of full-time study to complete.

There are also work-based, combination work-based/academic, and assessment only programmes that take into account individual background and experience. More information on these alternative routes can be found on the Training and Development Agency for Schools (TDA) website (<http://www.tda.gov.uk/>). (The TDA was known as the Teacher Training Agency (TTA) prior to 2005.)

Northern Ireland

Teachers in primary and secondary schools in Northern Ireland are also required to have initial teacher training (ITT) through a degree. One route is the Bachelor in Education (BEd) in either primary or secondary education in a university or college. Another route is the one-year Post Graduate Certificate of Education (PGCE) taken following the completion of an undergraduate degree. Completion of one of these degrees, plus registration with the General Teaching Council for Northern Ireland (www.gtcni.org.uk) gives teachers eligibility to teach in Northern Ireland.

Teachers in further education are not required to have a teaching qualification. However, new further education teachers who do not already have a BEd or a PGCE are required to pass the Postgraduate Certificate in Further and Higher Education (PGCFHE) available through some Northern Ireland universities.

Scotland

All school teachers in Scotland must be graduates of a degree programme which is accredited by the General Teaching Council for Scotland. These degrees, called Initial Teacher Education (ITE) programmes, are offered by Scottish universities.

For **pre-primary** (ages 3 to 5) and **primary education**, teachers must complete one of the following degrees:

- a four-year Bachelor of Education (BEd) in Primary Education, or

- a one-year Professional Graduate Diploma in Education (PGDE; also called a Teaching Certificate in Education) following the completion of a four-year Bachelor's degree

To teach at the **secondary education** level, there are three possible routes:

- a four-year Bachelor of Education (BEd), or
- a combined (or concurrent) degree with specialisation subject courses, education courses, and school experience, or
- a one-year Professional Graduate Diploma in Education (PGDE) taken full-time or part-time (this is the most popular way of becoming a secondary school teacher)

All teachers in maintained schools must be registered with the General Teaching Council for Scotland (www.gtcs.org.uk). After successfully completing an initial probationary period (normally one to two years) during which their teaching is monitored, teachers are granted Full Registration status.

Teachers in independent schools do not have to register with the General Teaching Council for Scotland, but they may be encouraged to do so by their school.

Graduate degrees in Education

There are master's and doctorate degree programmes in the field of education offered at institutions throughout the United Kingdom. However, these do not generally lead to the profession of teaching. Graduate programmes in education are usually open to graduates of any undergraduate degree, including Bachelor of Education, and focus on specific aspects of education, including research, rather than teaching skills in general.

Provides Access to in the Home Country:

- Further education (i.e. master's degrees)
- Employment
- Access to a profession

Placement Recommendations:

PIER (Projects for International Education Research) World Education Series, 1991 (US)

England, Wales and Northern Ireland:

- A Postgraduate Certificate in Education (PGCE) may be considered comparable to a 1-year undergraduate teacher training program.

Scotland:

- A Postgraduate Certificate in Education (PGCE) following a BA/BSc may be considered for graduate admission.
- A Diploma in Education (DipEd) following a Bachelor's degree and teaching qualifications may be considered for graduate admission and transfer credit, determined through a course-by-course analysis.

NOOSR (National Office of Overseas Skills Recognition), 2006 (Australia)

- A Postgraduate Certificate in Education normally requiring one academic year of full-time study awarded by a listed institution is assessed as comparable to the educational level of an Australian Graduate Diploma.

The New Country Index - International Education Research Foundation, 2004 (US)

England, Wales and Northern Ireland:

- The Postgraduate Certificate in Education may be considered comparable to the completion of a teacher certification program (postbaccalaureate).

Scotland:

- The Postgraduate Certificate in Education (Primary or Secondary) may be considered comparable to the completion of a 1-year teacher certification program (postbaccalaureate).

IQAS Recommendations for:

Employment

The Bachelor of Education (BEd) generally compares to the completion of a four-year Bachelor of Education with a focus in elementary/secondary education.

The Postgraduate Certificate/Diploma of Education (PGCE/PGDE) generally compares to the completion of a Bachelor of Education after-degree programme.

Post-secondary Admission

The Bachelor of Education (BEd) generally compares to the completion of a four-year Bachelor of Education with a focus in elementary/secondary education.

The Postgraduate Certificate/Diploma of Education (PGCE/PGDE) generally compares to the completion of a Bachelor of Education after-degree programme.

Course Equivalencies

30-level courses if no secondary documents available

Rationale:

Background

Undergraduate Qualifications

The main undergraduate qualifications in the United Kingdom are:

- Higher National Certificates and Diplomas (HNCs and HNDs)
- Certificates and Diplomas of Higher Education (Cert HE and Dip HE)
- Foundation degrees
- Bachelor degrees (also called first degrees)

Bachelor degrees are the most common undergraduate qualification.

Classes are expressed in terms of modules, units or credits depending on the institution and programme.

A search of all available undergraduate courses, including entry requirements and course description, is provided by the Universities and Colleges Admissions Service (UCAS) on their website: <http://wwwucas.com/>.

Bachelor's Degrees

The most common category of degree awarded is the bachelor or first degree. All types of bachelor's degrees, including the Bachelor of Arts (BA) and the Bachelor of Science (BSc) are considered first degrees.

Bachelor's degrees usually take three, or sometimes four years of full time study to complete. The typical course load for a bachelor's degree is between three and six classes per term, most students taking four or five classes.

Titles of degrees include the Bachelor of Arts (BA) and the Bachelor of Science (BSc), which are the two most common degrees. However, there are other bachelor's degree titles as well such as the Bachelor of Education (BEd), the Bachelor of Engineering (BEng), the Bachelor of Law (LLB), and others.

Bachelor's degrees are either honours degrees or ordinary/pass degrees. Honours degrees are studied at a more complex level than ordinary degrees. There are single subject degrees (single honours), two subjects degrees (joint honours), or two or three subjects degrees (combined honours).

Honours degrees are divided in four classes (levels of achievement):

- First Class
- Upper Second Class (2:1)
- Lower Second Class (2:2)
- Third Class

Upper second class (2:1) is usually considered as the minimum grade for entry into postgraduate studies. Students who do not achieve the minimum standard of an honours degree will be awarded an ordinary/pass degree.

There is also an *aegrotat* degree awarded to students who could not complete their final exams because of illness. The honours degree (aegrotat) or ordinary degree (aegrotat) is awarded on the understanding that the student would have passed if they had not been ill.

Scottish Bachelor Degree

The most common first degree in Scotland is also the bachelor degree. However, bachelor degrees here are different from those in the rest of the United Kingdom. In Scotland, all honours degrees require four years of study. The first two years are more general in nature, during which students study a broad variety of subjects. During the last two years, students specialize in one (or two) subjects to receive an honours degree. The final year also usually includes a dissertation.

Some universities, especially Scotland's "ancient universities" (Aberdeen, Edinburgh, Glasgow and St. Andrews), call their honours degree a master degree (MA(Hons)). Elsewhere, it is referred to as a bachelor degree (BA, BEng or BSc(Hons)).

Students also have the option to study for an ordinary or general degree. Unlike in the rest of the United Kingdom where the ordinary degree is rather uncommon and often considered a “failed” honours degree, the ordinary/general degree is a separate, well-regarded programme in Scotland. The ordinary/general degree is three years in length when studied full time. The first two years are similar to those of the honours degree and consist of a variety of subjects. The final year is another year of general studies. There is no dissertation in the ordinary/general degree.

Like the honours degree, the ordinary/general degree is referred to as a master degree (MA) by some universities (i.e. the “ancient universities”), and a bachelor degree (BA, BEng, or BSc) by others.

Admission to bachelor degree programmes in Scotland normally requires a minimum of three or four *Highers*. Alternative routes such as Access courses, HNCs or HNDs may also fulfill entry requirements. Relevant HNCs and HNDs will sometimes give access to the first, second or even third year of a degree.

Graduate qualifications

Graduate qualifications, referred to as postgraduate qualifications in the United Kingdom, include postgraduate certificates and diplomas, masters degrees and doctorates. Postgraduate courses are usually taken after the completion of an honours degree.

More information on postgraduate courses, including course description and institution information is available on the *Prospects* website (www.prospects.ac.uk) and on the *Hobsons Postgrad* website (www.postgrad.hobsons.com).

Postgraduate certificates and diplomas

Postgraduate certificates (PG Cert) and diplomas (PG Dip) usually last six to nine months and are taken following the successful completion of an undergraduate degree (normally a bachelor degree). They are most often closely related to the subject of the first degree. Postgraduate certificates and diplomas may lead to further study (master degree) or they may represent by themselves the professional qualification needed for entry into a particular career.

Higher Education Institutions

There are two main types of higher education institutions (HEIs) in the United Kingdom: universities and colleges of higher education. These and the other types of HEIs are described briefly below.

Universities are independent, self-governing institutions. All universities in the United Kingdom are *recognised bodies*, meaning that they have the power to award degrees (see *Recognised bodies and listed bodies* below). They decide their own admission criteria, develop courses and decide which degrees they offer. Most universities conduct research as well as teaching.

University colleges and **institutes** are institutions that are part of larger universities. Some university colleges and institutes are small and specialize in one area of study, while others are

large institutions that offer many different programmes. For example, the University of London consists of 20 self-governing colleges and a School of Advanced Study that is composed of 10 member institutes. Degrees at these university colleges and institutes are awarded by the main university.

Colleges of higher education are another type of higher education institution. Some colleges of higher education are *recognised bodies* (see below) and have the power to award degrees. Others offer higher education courses that lead to degrees awarded by another recognised body.

Some **colleges of further education, institutes, foundations, academies** and **schools** also offer higher education courses leading to degrees awarded by *recognised bodies*. Some of these, especially colleges of further education, also offer programmes that lead to qualifications other than higher education qualifications (i.e. Advanced General Certificate of Education or A levels).

Recognised bodies and listed bodies

The governments of the United Kingdom recognise the degree awarding powers of universities and colleges. These **recognised bodies**, as they are called, have been granted degree awarding powers by either a Royal Charter (see below) or an Act of Parliament. All universities and some colleges of higher education are recognised bodies. In 2006, there are over 130 such institutions.

In addition to the recognised bodies, there are over 550 other institutions that offer courses leading to a degree but do not themselves have the power to award degrees. These are known as **listed bodies**. Their courses are validated by a university or college that has degree awarding powers.

The lists of recognised bodies and listed bodies can be found on the website of the Department for Education and Skills (<http://www.dfes.gov.uk/recognisedukdegrees/>).

Royal Charters and the Privy Council

The older universities (pre-1992) operate under Royal Charters. These charters set out the university's constitution, and statutes, detailing how the university should operate. Royal Charters were granted to universities by the Sovereign on the advice of the Privy Council, who also approved any amendments made to the charters.

Most newer universities (post-1992) and other HEIs operate under Instruments or Articles of Government. The Privy Council must also approve any changes to these.

Other roles of the Privy Council are to approve the use of the title "university" in an institution's name, and to approve degree granting powers of an institution. For more information please see <http://www.privy-council.org.uk>

Higher education institutions pre-1992 (Polytechnics)

Prior to the Further and Higher Education Act of 1992, polytechnics were another type of higher education institution. Created in the late 1960s to expand the higher education system and offer more opportunities for higher education, polytechnics were formed from amalgamation of

colleges and other higher education institutions. Polytechnics offered higher and further education programmes, often professionally oriented, to meet the needs of business and industry. They offered the full spectrum of higher education qualifications, including certificates, diplomas, bachelor's degrees, master's degrees and doctorates.^{xxiii} The polytechnics were converted into universities with the Further and Higher Education Act of 1992.

Polytechnics and other non-university higher education institutions awarded degrees through the Council for National Academic Awards (CNAA). Established in 1964, the CNAA was the largest degree-awarding body in the United Kingdom until it was abolished by the Further and Higher Education Act in 1992. Over 140 HEIs had their courses and degrees approved by the CNAA. CNAA awards were considered comparable to those of universities and are recognised by professional associations and employers.

When the CNAA was abolished, the Open University Validation Services (OUVS - <http://www.open.ac.uk/validate>) accepted responsibility for maintaining and providing access to CNAA records.

Independent sector

There are a growing number of independent higher education institutions in the United Kingdom. However, as they are not required to register with authorities, the exact number is not known, but is estimated at over 3,000.^{xxiv} Independent HE providers are often not subjected to external accreditation, so quality can be difficult to assess. The British Accreditation Council (BAC) is the national non-profit organization that provides accreditation to independent higher and further education institutions. In 2006, over 200 independent colleges are accredited by the BAC (<http://www.the-bac.org/direct.htm>).

Independent HE providers cannot legally offer British qualifications. Only *recognised bodies* can offer degrees and *listed bodies* can only offer courses leading to degrees (see above). BAC accredited independent colleges may offer courses leading to qualifications from overseas universities and colleges provided that these are, in turn, recognized in their own country. The overseas university or college is the awarding body in these cases and not the independent college.

Quality assurance

Several governmental and non-governmental agencies measure quality in the Higher Education sector. The reports and “league tables” (university and college rankings) produced by these quality assurance agencies provide valuable information to prospective students, employers and others. Funding agencies also use the information to distribute grants to institutions based on the quality of their research or teaching, for example.

The Quality Assurance Agency (QAA), formed in 1997, plays a key role in quality assurance in British higher education. In addition to conducting external reviews of HEIs throughout the United Kingdom, the QAA also performs subjects reviews, helps define academic standards, provides guidelines on good practice, reviews quality of research to recommend funding allocations. Publishes reports on each university and college, highlighting strengths and areas for improvement to help students in their decision of which institution to attend. These reports

can be found on the QAA website (<http://www.qaa.ac.uk/default.asp>).

The Teaching Quality Information (TQI) is another resource in HE quality assurance. The TQI website (<http://www2.tqi.ac.uk/sites/tqi/home/index.cfm>) provides reports and other official information about the quality of teaching in institutions and programmes throughout the United Kingdom. This information includes statistical data and results of a national student survey.

Other quality assurance indicators:

- Research Assessment Exercise (RAE) – The RAE is a government-led evaluation of the quality of research in HEIs conducted every five years or so. HEIs receive funding based on the quality of their research. (www.hero.ac.uk/rae/)
- Higher Education Statistical Agency (HESA) Performance Indicators – Each year, on behalf of the government, HESA publishes data on the performance of HEIs in widening participation, student retention, learning and teaching outcomes, research output and employment of graduates. (www.hesa.ac.uk/pi/)
- Professional Body Accreditation – various professional bodies visit departments of HEIs before giving their accreditation to a programme.
- General league tables – Various media sources, such as *The Guardian*, *The Times*, *The Daily Telegraph* and *The Sunday Times*, rank the HEIs each year based on specific criteria.

Universities and Colleges Admissions Service (UCAS)

The Universities and Colleges Admission Service (UCAS) handles almost all applications for full time, undergraduate higher education courses. Students send one application directly to UCAS, indicating up to six choices of courses that they want to apply to. Students cannot apply to both Oxford and Cambridge on the same application. UCAS then forwards the applications to the institutions who decide whether to offer the student a place or not. Offers can be *unconditional*, meaning that the student already meets the institution's requirement and is accepted as is, or *conditional* where the student has to meet additional requirements (e.g. achieve a certain result on a future examination) by September 1 of the year of admission.

The **deadline** for most applications is January 15 (for admission in September of the same year). Applications to the universities of Oxford and Cambridge, and courses in medicine, dentistry and veterinary science/medicine have an earlier deadline of October 15 (for admission the following September). Applications for some art and design courses are due later, by March 15. Late applications (those received between January 16 and June 30) will be submitted to universities and colleges, but they will only be considered if the institutions want to make more offers.

Students who did not secure a place from their original application may use UCAS Extra or Clearing services. **Extra** gives students a chance to look for alternatives to their first six choices if these did not result in an offer made or the acceptance of one. Universities and colleges that still have vacancies will post them on the UCAS website and eligible students can have an application sent directly to them. Extra operates from the middle of March to the end of June.

Clearing is intended for students who did not receive any offer from their application and did not find a place through Extra, or who missed the first deadline. Through this process, UCAS

tries to match students to the remaining places in universities and colleges. The Clearing application deadline is the last week of September of each year.

UCAS also operates a points system called the **UCAS Tariff**. In this system, all qualifications considered for admission are awarded a certain number of points that students can use to meet course entry requirements. Some universities and colleges require that students have a minimum number of points to be admitted into their programmes. More information on this as well as the UCAS Tariff table can be found on the UCAS website (<http://www.ucas.com/candq/tariff/>).

UCAS has a searchable list of all courses in UCAS universities and colleges. The information provided on the courses include entry requirements, course description (<http://www.ucas.com/search/index.html>). There is also an institution guide that includes contact details, notes about the institutions and statistics about courses and students on the UCAS website (<http://www.ucas.com/instit/index.html>).

Admission requirements

There are no standard admission requirements into higher education. Each university or college can set its own requirements. However, in practice, most universities and colleges have fairly similar entry requirements.

England, Wales and Northern Ireland

Generally, entry into an undergraduate bachelor's degree requires at least two Advanced General Certificate of Education courses (GCE A levels) at grade E or above (or the equivalent), in addition to the appropriate General Certificate of Secondary Education courses (GCSEs).

Advanced Subsidiary (formerly Advanced Supplementary) GCEs (AS levels) are also considered for admission by some HEIs, two AS levels usually counting as one A level. More prestigious universities or colleges typically have higher requirements. Some institutions also interview potential students to determine their admissibility.

The most common type of qualification used for admission into undergraduate programmes are GCE A levels taken in a secondary school or in a further education college.

Other qualifications may also be accepted for entry into a programme by some HEIs. These can include Business and Technology Education Council (BTEC) and other vocational qualifications (i.e. National Vocational Qualifications (NVQs), and Scottish Vocational Qualifications (SVQs)). Work experience, Access courses and other programmes intended for adults wanting to further their education can also be considered as entry requirements into higher education.

Scotland

In Scotland the general minimum admission requirements for undergraduate programmes are:

- Undergraduate Certificate = one Higher
- Undergraduate Diploma = two Highers
- Undergraduate Degree = three Highers

Some universities also consider Advanced Highers for exemption from some first year courses.

Vocational qualifications and work experience may also be considered as entry requirements.

Academic Year

There is no standard academic year in HEIs in the United Kingdom. However, most universities have three equal terms per year. The typical year runs from the end of September or the beginning of October until the middle of June. Each term has 10 teaching weeks for a total of 30 teaching weeks. Notable exceptions include Oxford and Cambridge, both of which have only 24 weeks per academic year, from the second week of October to mid-June. Each term at Oxford and Cambridge has only eight teaching weeks. Some institutions also offer a semester format.

Types of study

Full time and part time

Most bachelor's degree programmes take three or four years of full time study to complete. Some degrees take longer, such as law or medicine. In many cases, higher education programmes can also be studied part time over a longer period of time.

Sandwich courses

Sandwich degree courses involve a period of work experience or language training "sandwiched" between two or three periods of study. Usually, the work experience or language training is one year in duration and takes place in the workplace, in another university or in a foreign country. In Alberta, this type of study is referred to as a co-op programme.

Distance and flexible learning

Distance learning, also called flexible or open learning, is becoming increasingly common in the United Kingdom, as elsewhere in the world. Many HEIs now offer courses through video, printed and online material, permitting students to study from home. Some programmes require the student to periodically go to the campus, but others are offered entirely from a distance. These courses are particularly attractive to students who work full time or have other commitments, such as stay-at-home parents.

One notable contributor to distance learning is the Open University (OU). Entirely dedicated to distance learning, the OU offers courses to students in the United Kingdom, as well as many other countries within and outside of Europe. The first students started in 1971, and today, there are more than 150,000 undergraduate and 30,000 graduate students.

More information on distance learning and HEIs offering such programmes can be found on *Hobson's Distance Learning* website (www.distancelearning.hobsons.com/) or through the *Prospects* website (www.prospects.ac.uk, choose "distance learning" in the mode of study of the advanced search page).

Bologna Process

The United Kingdom is one of the signatory countries of the Bologna Process. Launched in 1999, the Bologna Process aims to establish a common European system of higher education at

both undergraduate and graduate levels by 2010. More information on the Bologna Process in general and in the United Kingdom can be found on the Europe Unit website (www.europeunit.ac.uk/bologna_process).

Summary of the United Kingdom's position on two key elements of the Bologna Process:

- Credits – The use of credits in HEIs in the United Kingdom is common, but not universal. Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland apply credits more thoroughly than England. Generally, one academic year in the United Kingdom is equated to 120 credits, where in the Bologna Process it equals 60 Europe Credit Transfer System (ECTS) credits (i.e. 1 ECTS credit = 2 UK credits). The United Kingdom bases the number of credits on learning outcome rather than the number of hours of study.
- Diploma Supplement – Some but not all HEIs in the United Kingdom issue the Diploma Supplement to their students. It is issued free of charge in English or in Welsh (in Wales). All HEIs are being encouraged to offer the Diploma Supplement.

Qualifications Frameworks

In all parts of the United Kingdom, qualifications fit into frameworks that serve as general indicators of the level of education attained. England, Wales and Northern Ireland share their frameworks while Scotland has its own separate, though very similar, framework. Both are illustrated below.

Qualifications Framework for England, Wales and Northern Ireland

England, Wales and Northern Ireland share two qualifications frameworks: one covers all national qualifications, and the other covers higher education qualifications. The frameworks have been put side by side in an effort to compare all qualifications with each other. **It is important to note that the levels are only used for general comparison and do not indicate that the qualifications have the same content or outcome.**

Table 45. National Qualifications Framework for England, Wales and Northern Ireland

National Qualifications Framework		Framework for Higher Education Qualification levels (FHEQ)
Original levels	Revised levels	
5 – e.g. Level 5 NVQ	8 – Specialist awards	D (doctoral) – Doctorates
	7 – Level 7 Diploma	M (master's) – Master's degrees, postgraduate certificates and diplomas
4 – e.g. Level 4 NVQ, Level 4 Diploma, Level 4 BTEC HND, Level 4 Certificate	6 – Level 6 Diploma	H (honours) – Bachelor's degrees, graduate certificates and diplomas
	5 – Level 5 BTEC HND	I (intermediate) – Diplomas of higher education and further education, foundation degrees, higher national diplomas
	4 – Level 4 Certificate	C (certificate) – Certificates of higher education
3 – e.g. Level 3 Certificate, Level 3 NVQ, A levels		

2 – e.g. Level 2 Diploma, Level 2 NVQ, GCSEs Grades A*-C	
1 – e.g. Level 1 Certificate, Level 1 NVQ, GCSEs Grades D-G	
Entry – Entry Level Certificate in Adult Literacy	

Scottish Credit and Qualifications Framework

Scotland has a different qualifications framework, called the Scottish Credit and Qualifications Framework (SCQF). The SCQF includes all qualifications, including higher education qualifications. As for the National Qualifications Framework, **it is important to note that the levels are for general comparison purposes only and do not indicate same content or outcome for qualifications at the same level.**

Table 46. Scottish Credit and Qualifications Framework

SCQF level (SHE = Scottish Higher Education level)	National qualifications (units, courses and group awards)	Higher National qualifications	Qualifications awarded by higher education institutions in Scotland	SVQs**
12 (SHE D*)			Doctorates	
11 (SHE M*)			Master's/Postgraduate Diploma and Certificate	SVQ 5
10 (SHE H*)			Honours degree	
9 (SHE 3)			Degree	
8 (SHE 2)		Higher National Diploma	Diploma of Higher Education	SVQ 4
7 (SHE 1)	Advanced Higher	Higher National Certificate	Certificate of Higher Education	
6	Higher			SVQ 3
5	Intermediate 2/ Credit Standard Grade			SVQ 2
4	Intermediate 1/ General Standard Grade			SVQ 1
3	Access 3/Foundation Standard Grade			
2	Access 2			
1	Access 1			

* Labels H, M and D refer to Honours, Master's, and Doctoral and are used consistently across the UK.

** Provisional: work is continuing to refine the placing of SVQs within the SCQF.

Documentation

Students graduating from higher education programmes are issued different documents depending on the institution they attend and when. There is no standard documentation in this sector of education. Common documents include transcripts, degree certificates and diplomas, professional certification and/or registration.

It is important to note that for many years, universities and colleges did not typically issue any transcripts – they only issued degree certificates. Even today, some universities still may not provide any transcripts.

Summary of Rationale

The IQAS placement recommendation takes into account the following factors as outlined above:

- admission requirements
- general content
- length of study
- outcome of study
- other placement recommendations

IQAS recommends that the Bachelor of Education (BEd) generally compares to the completion of a four-year Bachelor of Education with a focus in elementary/secondary education.

The Postgraduate Certificate/Diploma of Education (PGCE/PGDE) generally compares to the completion of a Bachelor of Education after-degree programme.

Grading:

Generally, Higher Education grades in the United Kingdom are lower than they are in Canada. The pass grade is often as low as 35 percent, so a grade of 60 could be considered very good or excellent.

There is no standard grading scale used by all universities, so the following tables are meant to be used for general guidance only.

Table 47. Comparison between UK grades and IQAS grades (example)

UK Grades		IQAS Grade (%)
70-100	A	90
60-69	B	75
50-59	C	65
40-49	D	60
35-39	E	55
0-34	--	Fail

Note: The IQAS grade represents a suggested mid-point in a range of possible grades.

Table 48. Summary of grading scale from the University of Glamorgan (Scotland)

Grade (%)	IQAS Grade (%)
70-100	90

50-59.9	65
40-49.9	55
<40	Fail

Note: The IQAS grade represents a suggested mid-point in a range of possible grades.

Some universities also use the European Credit Transfer System (ECTS) grading scale. For an explanation of ECTS, see the *Higher Education* chapter.

Table 49. ECTS Grading Scale

ECTS Grade	Definition	Distribution (%)
A	Excellent – outstanding performance with only minor errors	10
B	Very good – above the average standard but with some errors	25
C	Good – generally sound work with a number of notable errors	30
D	Satisfactory – fair but with significant shortcomings	25
E	Sufficient – performance meets the minimum criteria	10
FX	Fail – some more work required before the credit can be awarded	--
F	Fail – considerable further work is required	--

Source: University of Warwick Academic Office^{xxv}

© 2006 the Crown in right of the Province of Alberta, [International Qualifications Assessment Service \(IQAS\)](#), 9th Floor, 108 Street Building, 9942 - 108 Street, Edmonton, Alberta, Canada T5K 2J5

Country:
United Kingdom

Official Country Name:
United Kingdom

Region:
United Kingdom

Status: Pending
Category: Higher Education

Date Entered: December 8, 2006
Date Revised: December 8, 2006

Credential Actual Name:
Bachelor of Nursing (BN)

Credential English Name:

Other Nursing Credentials:
Bachelor of Science in Nursing (BSc)
Bachelor of Arts in Nursing (BA)
Diploma of Higher Education in Nursing
(Dip HE)

Credential Alternate English Name(s):

Time Period Credential Offered: Current

Issuing Body: Recognised bodies (all universities and some colleges of higher education)
(see *Recognised bodies and listed bodies* in the rationale below, p.45)

Admission Requirements:

No standard requirements, although most bachelor's degree programmes require a minimum of two Advanced General Certificate of Education (GCE A level) courses with the appropriate General Certificate of Secondary Education (GCSE) courses, or the equivalent combination of Highers and Advanced Highers from Scottish students. More prestigious institutions will usually require at least three A level passes for admission. Other qualifications may be used to meet admission requirements, including technical and vocational courses, and work experience.

Generally, diploma programme requirements are lower than degree programmes. They usually include a minimum of five GCSEs (or the equivalent Highers from Scottish students) or other comparable qualifications.

Program Description:

Bachelor's degrees in Nursing (Bachelor of Nursing or Bachelor of Science in Nursing) are typically three-year programmes (four in Scotland). Nursing diplomas (DipHE) also last three years. Only graduates of degree programmes have access to senior level positions and work in education and management.

All nursing programmes consist of 50 percent theory and 50 percent practice:

- **Theory:** The first year for both types of programmes is a Common Foundation Programme (CFP) that introduces the basic principles of nursing. The second and third years, students specialize in one of the four areas of nursing: adult, child, learning disability, or mental health.
- **Practice:** The other half of nursing programmes consists of supervised clinical practice in a hospital or other community healthcare facility.

Table 50. Sample curriculum for a three-year Bachelor of Science in Nursing

Year 1 Multiprofessional Foundation Programme Foundations of Nursing Foundations of Healthcare Practice Ethical Practices in Health and Social Care Psychosocial Aspects of Healthcare Nursing Different Client Groups
Year 2 Contemporary Influences in Delivery of Health and Social Care Critical Appraisal Skills in Healthcare Practice Pathway-specific modules Clinical and practice placements
Year 3 Teaching and Learning in Nursing Practice Leading and Managing Nursing Care Pathway-specific modules Clinical and practice placements

Source: Kingston University: www.kingston.ac.uk (2006)

Some institutions also offer accelerated or short programmes for graduates of health-related degrees or for applicants presenting relevant prior learning. These programmes generally last two years, of which six months are spent on the Common Foundation Programme (CFP) and 18 months in one of the areas of specialty.

Once they graduate from an approved programme, all nurses must register with the Nursing and Midwifery Council (NMC) in order to practice in the United Kingdom. More information about the registration process can be found on the NMC website: www.nmc-uk.org.

Provides Access to in the Home Country:

- Further education
- Employment (senior, education and management positions only available to degree graduates)
- Professional registration

Placement Recommendations:

PIER (Projects for International Education Research) World Education Series, 1991 (US)

- A Diploma in Higher Education in Nursing (Dip HE) may be considered for up to 2 years of undergraduate transfer credit, determined through a course-by-course analysis.
- A Bachelor in Nursing (BN, BA or BSc) may be considered for graduate admission if the program is appropriate preparation.
- A Bachelor in Nursing (Honours) [BN (Hons), BA (Hons) or BSc (Hons)] may be considered for graduate admission.

NOOSR (National Office of Overseas Skills Recognition), 2006 (Australia)

- No recommendation is provided for nursing qualifications.

The New Country Index - International Education Research Foundation, 2004 (US)

England, Wales and Northern Ireland:

- The Bachelor of Nursing is considered comparable to a BS in Nursing.

Scotland:

- The Bachelor of Nursing (Honours) is considered comparable to a BSN/BN.

IQAS Recommendations for:

Employment

The Bachelor's degree in Nursing (BN, BA or BSc) generally compares to the completion of a four-year Bachelor of Science degree with a focus in Nursing.

The Diploma of Higher Education in Nursing (Dip HE) generally compares to the completion of a three-year post-secondary Diploma with a focus in nursing.

Post-secondary Admission

The Bachelor's degree in Nursing (BN, BA or BSc) generally compares to the completion of a four-year Bachelor of Science degree with a focus in Nursing.

The Diploma of Higher Education in Nursing (Dip HE) generally compares to the completion of a three-year post-secondary Diploma with a focus in nursing.

Course Equivalencies

30-level courses if no secondary documents available

Rationale:

Background

Undergraduate Qualifications

The main undergraduate qualifications in the United Kingdom are:

- Higher National Certificates and Diplomas (HNCs and HNDs)
- Certificates and Diplomas of Higher Education (Cert HE and Dip HE)
- Foundation degrees
- Bachelor degrees (also called first degrees)

Bachelor degrees are the most common undergraduate qualification.

Classes are expressed in terms of modules, units or credits depending on the institution and programme.

A search of all available undergraduate courses, including entry requirements and course description, is provided by the Universities and Colleges Admissions Service (UCAS) on their website: <http://www.ucas.com/>.

Diploma of Higher Education

Diplomas of Higher Education (Dip HE) are usually two year courses, similar to a degree but with less content. Some Dip HE programmes last three years (e.g. Dip HE in Nursing). Dip HE sometimes give access to a profession, as in nursing or social work, or it can give access to the final year of a full bachelor degree. Some examples of this qualification include the Dip HE in

Nursing, Dip HE in Business Management, Dip HE in Midwifery, Dip HE in Sports Science, Dip HE in Education Studies.

Bachelor's Degrees

The most common category of degree awarded is the bachelor or first degree. All types of bachelor's degrees, including the Bachelor of Arts (BA) and the Bachelor of Science (BSc) are considered first degrees.

Bachelor's degrees usually take three, or sometimes four years of full time study to complete. The typical course load for a bachelor's degree is between three and six classes per term, most students taking four or five classes.

Titles of degrees include the Bachelor of Arts (BA) and the Bachelor of Science (BSc), which are the two most common degrees. However, there are other bachelor's degree titles as well such as the Bachelor of Education (BEd), the Bachelor of Engineering (BEng), the Bachelor of Law (LLB), and others.

Bachelor's degrees are either honours degrees or ordinary/pass degrees. Honours degrees are studied at a more complex level than ordinary degrees. There are single subject degrees (single honours), two subjects degrees (joint honours), or two or three subjects degrees (combined honours).

Honours degrees are divided in four classes (levels of achievement):

- First Class
- Upper Second Class (2:1)
- Lower Second Class (2:2)
- Third Class

Upper second class (2:1) is usually considered as the minimum grade for entry into postgraduate studies. Students who do not achieve the minimum standard of an honours degree will be awarded an ordinary/pass degree.

There is also an *aegrotat* degree awarded to students who could not complete their final exams because of illness. The honours degree (aegrotat) or ordinary degree (aegrotat) is awarded on the understanding that the student would have passed if they had not been ill.

Scottish Bachelor Degree

The most common first degree in Scotland is also the bachelor degree. However, bachelor degrees here are different from those in the rest of the United Kingdom. In Scotland, all honours degrees require four years of study. The first two years are more general in nature, during which students study a broad variety of subjects. During the last two years, students specialize in one (or two) subjects to receive an honours degree. The final year also usually includes a dissertation.

Some universities, especially Scotland's "ancient universities" (Aberdeen, Edinburgh, Glasgow and St. Andrews), call their honours degree a master degree (MA(Hons)). Elsewhere, it is

referred to as a bachelor degree (BA, BEng or BSc(Hons)).

Students also have the option to study for an ordinary or general degree. Unlike in the rest of the United Kingdom where the ordinary degree is rather uncommon and often considered a “failed” honours degree, the ordinary/general degree is a separate, well-regarded programme in Scotland. The ordinary/general degree is three years in length when studied full time. The first two years are similar to those of the honours degree and consist of a variety of subjects. The final year is another year of general studies. There is no dissertation in the ordinary/general degree.

Like the honours degree, the ordinary/general degree is referred to as a master degree (MA) by some universities (i.e. the “ancient universities”), and a bachelor degree (BA, BEng, or BSc) by others.

Admission to bachelor degree programmes in Scotland normally requires a minimum of three or four *Highers*. Alternative routes such as Access courses, HNCs or HNDs may also fulfill entry requirements. Relevant HNCs and HNDs will sometimes give access to the first, second or even third year of a degree.

Higher Education Institutions

There are two main types of higher education institutions (HEIs) in the United Kingdom: universities and colleges of higher education. These and the other types of HEIs are described briefly below.

Universities are independent, self-governing institutions. All universities in the United Kingdom are *recognised bodies*, meaning that they have the power to award degrees (see *Recognised bodies and listed bodies* below). They decide their own admission criteria, develop courses and decide which degrees they offer. Most universities conduct research as well as teaching.

University colleges and institutes are institutions that are part of larger universities. Some university colleges and institutes are small and specialize in one area of study, while others are large institutions that offer many different programmes. For example, the University of London consists of 20 self-governing colleges and a School of Advanced Study that is composed of 10 member institutes. Degrees at these university colleges and institutes are awarded by the main university.

Colleges of higher education are another type of higher education institution. Some colleges of higher education are *recognised bodies* (see below) and have the power to award degrees. Others offer higher education courses that lead to degrees awarded by another recognised body.

Some **colleges of further education, institutes, foundations, academies** and **schools** also offer higher education courses leading to degrees awarded by *recognised bodies*. Some of these, especially colleges of further education, also offer programmes that lead to qualifications other than higher education qualifications (i.e. Advanced General Certificate of Education or A levels).

Recognised bodies and listed bodies

The governments of the United Kingdom recognise the degree awarding powers of universities and colleges. These **recognised bodies**, as they are called, have been granted degree awarding powers by either a Royal Charter (see below) or an Act of Parliament. All universities and some colleges of higher education are recognised bodies. In 2006, there are over 130 such institutions.

In addition to the recognised bodies, there are over 550 other institutions that offer courses leading to a degree but do not themselves have the power to award degrees. These are known as **listed bodies**. Their courses are validated by a university or college that has degree awarding powers.

The lists of recognised bodies and listed bodies can be found on the website of the Department for Education and Skills (<http://www.dfes.gov.uk/recognisedukdegrees/>).

Royal Charters and the Privy Council

The older universities (pre-1992) operate under Royal Charters. These charters set out the university's constitution, and statutes, detailing how the university should operate. Royal Charters were granted to universities by the Sovereign on the advice of the Privy Council, who also approved any amendments made to the charters.

Most newer universities (post-1992) and other HEIs operate under Instruments or Articles of Government. The Privy Council must also approve any changes to these.

Other roles of the Privy Council are to approve the use of the title “university” in an institution's name, and to approve degree granting powers of an institution. For more information please see <http://www.privy-council.org.uk>

Higher education institutions pre-1992 (Polytechnics)

Prior to the Further and Higher Education Act of 1992, polytechnics were another type of higher education institution. Created in the late 1960s to expand the higher education system and offer more opportunities for higher education, polytechnics were formed from amalgamation of colleges and other higher education institutions. Polytechnics offered higher and further education programmes, often professionally oriented, to meet the needs of business and industry. They offered the full spectrum of higher education qualifications, including certificates, diplomas, bachelor's degrees, master's degrees and doctorates.^{xxvi} The polytechnics were converted into universities with the Further and Higher Education Act of 1992.

Polytechnics and other non-university higher education institutions awarded degrees through the Council for National Academic Awards (CNAA). Established in 1964, the CNAA was the largest degree-awarding body in the United Kingdom until it was abolished by the Further and Higher Education Act in 1992. Over 140 HEIs had their courses and degrees approved by the CNAA. CNAA awards were considered comparable to those of universities and are recognised by professional associations and employers.

When the CNAA was abolished, the Open University Validation Services (OUVS -

<http://www.open.ac.uk/validate>) accepted responsibility for maintaining and providing access to CNAA records.

Independent sector

There are a growing number of independent higher education institutions in the United Kingdom. However, as they are not required to register with authorities, the exact number is not known, but is estimated at over 3,000.^{xxvii} Independent HE providers are often not subjected to external accreditation, so quality can be difficult to assess. The British Accreditation Council (BAC) is the national non-profit organization that provides accreditation to independent higher and further education institutions. In 2006, over 200 independent colleges are accredited by the BAC (<http://www.the-bac.org/direct.htm>).

Independent HE providers cannot legally offer British qualifications. Only *recognised bodies* can offer degrees and *listed bodies* can only offer courses leading to degrees (see above). BAC accredited independent colleges may offer courses leading to qualifications from overseas universities and colleges provided that these are, in turn, recognized in their own country. The overseas university or college is the awarding body in these cases and not the independent college.

Quality assurance

Several governmental and non-governmental agencies measure quality in the Higher Education sector. The reports and “league tables” (university and college rankings) produced by these quality assurance agencies provide valuable information to prospective students, employers and others. Funding agencies also use the information to distribute grants to institutions based on the quality of their research or teaching, for example.

The Quality Assurance Agency (QAA), formed in 1997, plays a key role in quality assurance in British higher education. In addition to conducting external reviews of HEIs throughout the United Kingdom, the QAA also performs subjects reviews, helps define academic standards, provides guidelines on good practice, reviews quality of research to recommend funding allocations. Publishes reports on each university and college, highlighting strengths and areas for improvement to help students in their decision of which institution to attend. These reports can be found on the QAA website (<http://www.qaa.ac.uk/default.asp>).

The Teaching Quality Information (TQI) is another resource in HE quality assurance. The TQI website (<http://www2.tqi.ac.uk/sites/tqi/home/index.cfm>) provides reports and other official information about the quality of teaching in institutions and programmes throughout the United Kingdom. This information includes statistical data and results of a national student survey.

Other quality assurance indicators:

- Research Assessment Exercise (RAE) – The RAE is a government-led evaluation of the quality of research in HEIs conducted every five years or so. HEIs receive funding based on the quality of their research. (www.hero.ac.uk/rae/)
- Higher Education Statistical Agency (HESA) Performance Indicators – Each year, on behalf of the government, HESA publishes data on the performance of HEIs in widening participation, student retention, learning and teaching outcomes, research output and

- employment of graduates. (www.hesa.ac.uk/pi/)
- Professional Body Accreditation – various professional bodies visit departments of HEIs before giving their accreditation to a programme.
- General league tables – Various media sources, such as *The Guardian*, *The Times*, *The Daily Telegraph* and *The Sunday Times*, rank the HEIs each year based on specific criteria.

Universities and Colleges Admissions Service (UCAS)

The Universities and Colleges Admission Service (UCAS) handles almost all applications for full time, undergraduate higher education courses. Students send one application directly to UCAS, indicating up to six choices of courses that they want to apply to. Students cannot apply to both Oxford and Cambridge on the same application. UCAS then forwards the applications to the institutions who decide whether to offer the student a place or not. Offers can be *unconditional*, meaning that the student already meets the institution's requirement and is accepted as is, or *conditional* where the student has to meet additional requirements (e.g. achieve a certain result on a future examination) by September 1 of the year of admission.

The **deadline** for most applications is January 15 (for admission in September of the same year). Applications to the universities of Oxford and Cambridge, and courses in medicine, dentistry and veterinary science/medicine have an earlier deadline of October 15 (for admission the following September). Applications for some art and design courses are due later, by March 15. Late applications (those received between January 16 and June 30) will be submitted to universities and colleges, but they will only be considered if the institutions want to make more offers.

Students who did not secure a place from their original application may use UCAS Extra or Clearing services. **Extra** gives students a chance to look for alternatives to their first six choices if these did not result in an offer made or the acceptance of one. Universities and colleges that still have vacancies will post them on the UCAS website and eligible students can have an application sent directly to them. Extra operates from the middle of March to the end of June.

Clearing is intended for students who did not receive any offer from their application and did not find a place through Extra, or who missed the first deadline. Through this process, UCAS tries to match students to the remaining places in universities and colleges. The Clearing application deadline is the last week of September of each year.

UCAS also operates a points system called the **UCAS Tariff**. In this system, all qualifications considered for admission are awarded a certain number of points that students can use to meet course entry requirements. Some universities and colleges require that students have a minimum number of points to be admitted into their programmes. More information on this as well as the UCAS Tariff table can be found on the UCAS website (<http://www.ucas.com/candq/tariff/>).

UCAS has a searchable list of all courses in UCAS universities and colleges. The information provided on the courses include entry requirements, course description (<http://www.ucas.com/search/index.html>). There is also an institution guide that includes contact details, notes about the institutions and statistics about courses and students on the UCAS website (<http://www.ucas.com/instit/index.html>).

Admission requirements

There are no standard admission requirements into higher education. Each university or college can set its own requirements. However, in practice, most universities and colleges have fairly similar entry requirements.

England, Wales and Northern Ireland

Generally, entry into an undergraduate bachelor's degree requires at least two Advanced General Certificate of Education courses (GCE A levels) at grade E or above (or the equivalent), in addition to the appropriate General Certificate of Secondary Education courses (GCSEs).

Advanced Subsidiary (formerly Advanced Supplementary) GCEs (AS levels) are also considered for admission by some HEIs, two AS levels usually counting as one A level. More prestigious universities or colleges typically have higher requirements. Some institutions also interview potential students to determine their admissibility.

The most common type of qualification used for admission into undergraduate programmes are GCE A levels taken in a secondary school or in a further education college.

Other qualifications may also be accepted for entry into a programme by some HEIs. These can include Business and Technology Education Council (BTEC) and other vocational qualifications (i.e. National Vocational Qualifications (NVQs), and Scottish Vocational Qualifications (SVQs)). Work experience, Access courses and other programmes intended for adults wanting to further their education can also be considered as entry requirements into higher education.

Scotland

In Scotland the general minimum admission requirements for undergraduate programmes are:

- Undergraduate Certificate = one Higher
- Undergraduate Diploma = two Highers
- Undergraduate Degree = three Highers

Some universities also consider Advanced Highers for exemption from some first year courses.

Vocational qualifications and work experience may also be considered as entry requirements.

Academic Year

There is no standard academic year in HEIs in the United Kingdom. However, most universities have three equal terms per year. The typical year runs from the end of September or the beginning of October until the middle of June. Each term has 10 teaching weeks for a total of 30 teaching weeks. Notable exceptions include Oxford and Cambridge, both of which have only 24 weeks per academic year, from the second week of October to mid-June. Each term at Oxford and Cambridge has only eight teaching weeks. Some institutions also offer a semester format.

Types of study

Full time and part time

Most bachelor's degree programmes take three or four years of full time study to complete. Some degrees take longer, such as law or medicine. In many cases, higher education programmes can also be studied part time over a longer period of time.

Sandwich courses

Sandwich degree courses involve a period of work experience or language training "sandwiched" between two or three periods of study. Usually, the work experience or language training is one year in duration and takes place in the workplace, in another university or in a foreign country. In Alberta, this type of study is referred to as a co-op programme.

Distance and flexible learning

Distance learning, also called flexible or open learning, is becoming increasingly common in the United Kingdom, as elsewhere in the world. Many HEIs now offer courses through video, printed and online material, permitting students to study from home. Some programmes require the student to periodically go to the campus, but others are offered entirely from a distance. These courses are particularly attractive to students who work full time or have other commitments, such as stay-at-home parents.

One notable contributor to distance learning is the Open University (OU). Entirely dedicated to distance learning, the OU offers courses to students in the United Kingdom, as well as many other countries within and outside of Europe. The first students started in 1971, and today, there are more than 150,000 undergraduate and 30,000 graduate students.

More information on distance learning and HEIs offering such programmes can be found on *Hobson's Distance Learning* website (www.distancelearning.hobsons.com/) or through the *Prospects* website (www.prospects.ac.uk, choose "distance learning" in the mode of study of the advanced search page).

Bologna Process

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10 (SHE H*)			Honours degree	
9 (SHE 3)			Degree	
8 (SHE 2)		Higher National Diploma	Diploma of Higher Education	SVQ 4
7 (SHE 1)	Advanced Higher	Higher National Certificate	Certificate of Higher Education	
6	Higher			SVQ 3
5	Intermediate 2/ Credit Standard Grade			SVQ 2
4	Intermediate 1/ General Standard Grade			SVQ 1
3	Access 3/Foundation Standard Grade			
2	Access 2			
1	Access 1			

* Labels H, M and D refer to Honours, Masters, and Doctoral and are used consistently across the UK.

** Provisional: work is continuing to refine the placing of SVQs within the SCQF.

Documentation

Students graduating from higher education programmes are issued different documents depending on the institution they attend and when. There is no standard documentation in this sector of education. Common documents include transcripts, degree certificates and diplomas, professional certification and/or registration.

It is important to note that for many years, universities and colleges did not typically issue any transcripts – they only issued degree certificates. Even today, some universities still may not provide any transcripts.

Summary of Rationale

The IQAS placement recommendation takes into account the following factors as outlined above:

- admission requirements
- general content
- length of study
- outcome of study

- other placement recommendations
- admission to graduate programs in Canadian universities

IQAS recommends that the Bachelor's degree in Nursing (BN, BA or BSc) generally compares to the completion of a four-year Bachelor of Science degree with a focus in Nursing.

The Diploma of Higher Education in Nursing (Dip HE) generally compares to the completion of a three-year post-secondary Diploma with a focus in nursing.

Grading:

Bachelor's (honours) degrees are usually graded on a class scale, from pass (lowest), to first class honours. A grade of second class honours, upper division (Upper Second Class) is usually required for entry into postgraduate programmes. Some universities have a numeral scale associated with the degree classifications, but others do not.

Generally, Higher Education grades in the United Kingdom are lower than they are in Canada. The pass grade is often as low as 35 percent, so a grade of 60 could be considered very good or excellent.

There is no standard grading scale used by all universities, so the following tables are meant to be used for general guidance only.

Table 53. Comparison between UK grades, degree classifications, and IQAS grades (example)

UK Grades		Degree Class *	IQAS Grade (%)
70-100	A	First Class	90
60-69	B	Upper Second Class	75
50-59	C	Lower Second Class	65
40-49	D	Third Class	60
35-39	E	Pass (Ordinary)	55
0-34	--	Fail	Fail

* Institutions have different ways of expressing honours classes, from spelling it out (First, Second, Third), to using Arabic numerals (1, 2:1, 2:2, 3), Roman numerals (I, II:I, II.II, III), or a combination of the previous (i.e. Second Class, Division I, II.1).

Note: The IQAS grade represents a suggested mid-point in a range of possible grades.

Table 54. Summary of grading scale from the University of Glamorgan (Scotland)

Grade (%)	Degree Class	IQAS Grade (%)
70-100	First	90
60-69.9	Upper Second	75
50-59.9	Lower second	65
40-49.9	Third	55
<40	Fail	Fail

Note: The IQAS grade represents a suggested mid-point in a range of possible grades.

Some universities use the European Credit Transfer System (ECTS) grading scale instead of or in addition to the more common degree classification described above. For an explanation of ECTS, see the *Higher Education* chapter

Table 55. ECTS Grading Scale

ECTS Grade	Definition	Distribution (%)
A	Excellent – outstanding performance with only minor errors	10
B	Very good – above the average standard but with some errors	25
C	Good – generally sound work with a number of notable errors	30
D	Satisfactory – fair but with significant shortcomings	25
E	Sufficient – performance meets the minimum criteria	10
FX	Fail – some more work required before the credit can be awarded	--
F	Fail – considerable further work is required	--

Source: University of Warwick Academic Office^{xxviii}

© 2006 the Crown in right of the Province of Alberta, [International Qualifications Assessment Service \(IQAS\)](#), 9th Floor, 108 Street Building, 9942 - 108 Street, Edmonton, Alberta, Canada T5K 2J5

Country:
United Kingdom

Official Country Name:
United Kingdom

Region:
United Kingdom

Status: Pending
Category: Higher Education

Date Entered: December 8, 2006
Date Revised: December 8, 2006

Credential Actual Name:
Bachelor of Medicine (MB)

Credential English Name:

Credential Alternate Actual Name(s):
Bachelor of Medicine and Bachelor of
Surgery (abbreviated MBChB, MBBCh,
BMBS, MBBS, BSMS, etc.)

Credential Alternate English Name(s):

Time Period Credential Offered: Current

Issuing Body: Medical schools recognized by the General Medical Council (see Program Description below)

Admission Requirements:

No standard academic requirements, although most bachelor of medicine programmes require a minimum of three Advanced General Certificate of Education (GCE A level) courses with the appropriate General Certificate of Secondary Education (GCSE) courses with emphasis on science and mathematics, or the equivalent combination of Highers and Advanced Highers from Scottish students. Other qualifications may be used to meet admission requirements, including technical and vocational courses, and work experience.

Many universities also require applicants to medicine degrees to take an aptitude test as part of the admission procedure. These include the United Kingdom Clinical Aptitude Test (UKCAT) and the BioMedical Admissions Test (BMAT).

Program Description:

Bachelor of Medicine degrees last between four and six years (depending on entry requirements/credentials):

- Graduate entry: 4-year programme for graduates of any other bachelor's (honours) degree
- Standard entry: 5-year programme for students with appropriate GCSE and A level course requirements
- Pre-medical entry: 6-year programme for students lacking appropriate entry requirements for standard entry into the 5-year programme

The General Medical Council (GMC) is responsible for ensuring the quality of medical undergraduate degrees. It does so by defining, along with the medical schools, standards for the knowledge, skills, attitudes and behaviours that should be taught in first medical degrees. The GMC also actively monitors the schools to ensure that the standards are being met.^{xxix}

There are currently (2006), 27 GMC-recognized medical schools in the United Kingdom. The list of those is maintained by the Council of Heads of Medical Schools (CHMS) and can be consulted on its website: www.chms.ac.uk.

The GMC does not prescribe a specific curriculum for undergraduate medical degrees. Instead, it recommends curricular outcomes, content, structure and delivery. Although they vary by school, all medicine programmes must meet the quality standards set by the GMC. The table below shows an example of a 5-year curriculum for a Bachelor of Medicine and Bachelor of Surgery.

Table 56. Sample curriculum for a 5-year Bachelor of Medicine and Bachelor of Surgery

Year	Courses or Modules
Year 1 (30 weeks)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Foundation Course • Pulmonary System Course • Cardiovascular System Course • Locomotor System Course • Common learning unit • Medicine in Practice • Other themes and topics
Year 2 (30 weeks)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Nervous System Course • Endocrine System Course • Reproductive System Course • Gastrointestinal System Course • Renal System Course • Common learning unit • Medicine in Practice • Other themes and topics
Year 3 (42 weeks)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Surgical Block <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Surgery A and Surgery B - Obstetrics and Gynaecology Modules • Medicine Block <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Medicine A and Medicine B Modules - Elderly Care - Palliative Medicine • Community Block <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Mental Health - Child Health - Primary Medical Care • Scientific Basis of Medicine • Revise/Exam
Year 4 (40 weeks)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Study in depth (24 weeks) • Research Methods and Medical Statistics • Clinical Elective • Law and Ethics • Dermatology • Genitourinary Medicine • Ophthalmology • Neurology • Orthopaedics • Ear, Nose and Throat • Common learning unit

Year 5 (48 weeks)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Special study module • Child Health • Mental Health • Medicine • Obstetrical and Gynaecological Surgery • General Practice • Common learning unit • Revision and finals • Graduation and holiday • Pre-PRHO (Pre-Registration House Officer)
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Source: University of Southampton (www.soton.ac.uk), 2006

All practicing doctors in the United Kingdom must be registered with the General Medical Council (GMC).^{xxix} There are six types of registration:

- Provisional registration
- Limited registration
- Full registration
- Specialist registration
- GP registration
- Temporary full registration

Provisional registration is attained upon successful completion of an approved undergraduate medical degree. At this level, doctors are known as Pre-Registration House Officers (PRHOs). Most PRHOs proceed to a two-year Foundation Programme immediately after graduation to further their training and gain **full registration** as doctors. Full registration is needed for unsupervised practice in the National Health Service (NHS). **Limited registration** is available for doctors in supervised practice in the NHS and usually leads to full registration.

Many doctor then continue on to a third stage of postgraduate training which allows them to become a Specialist or a General Practitioner (GP). **Specialist registration** is required to practice unsupervised in the private sector. **GP registration** is available to (and mandatory for) fully trained and qualified doctors who work in general practice. While in training, doctors are known as Specialist Registrars or GP Registrars. Doctors need to be Specialists or GPs to apply to senior medical positions such as consultant.

Temporary full registration is available to practicing doctors from other countries who go to the United Kingdom to provide medical services for a limited amount of time.

The list of all registered doctors in the United Kingdom can be consultant on the GMC website: <https://webcache.gmc-uk.org/ods/home.do>.

The Doctor of Medicine (M.D.) is a higher doctorate degree in the United Kingdom. It is usually reserved for those who have made significant academic contributions to the field of medicine, through research publications and a thesis.

Provides Access to in the Home Country:

- Further education (i.e. Foundation Programme, Postgraduate training)

- Employment (as a provisionally registered doctor)
- Professional registration (see different levels of registration in Program Description above)

Placement Recommendations:

PIER (Projects for International Education Research) World Education Series, 1991 (US)

- The Bachelor of Medicine (MB) and Bachelor of Surgery (ChB) is considered comparable to a first professional degree in medicine and may be considered for graduate admission.

NOOSR (National Office of Overseas Skills Recognition), 2006 (Australia)

- No placement recommendation is provided for the Bachelor of Medicine.

The New Country Index - International Education Research Foundation, 2004 (US)

- The Bachelor of Medicine and Bachelor of Surgery (MBCbB) is considered comparable to an MD.

IQAS Recommendations for:

Employment

The Bachelor of Medicine generally compares to the completion of a first professional degree in medicine [preceded by... if appropriate – note different structures].

Note: Medical degrees in the United Kingdom typically require five years of continuous study in the Faculty of Medicine. In Canada, medical degrees generally require at least two years of study in science following by four years of professional medical studies.

Post-secondary Admission

The Bachelor of Medicine generally compares to the completion of a first professional degree in medicine [preceded by... if appropriate – note different structures].

Note: Medical degrees in the United Kingdom typically require five years of continuous study in the Faculty of Medicine. In Canada, medical degrees generally require at least two years of study in science following by four years of professional medical studies.

Course Equivalencies

30-level courses if no secondary documents available

Rationale:

Background

Undergraduate Qualifications

The main undergraduate qualifications in the United Kingdom are:

- Higher National Certificates and Diplomas (HNCs and HNDs)
- Certificates and Diplomas of Higher Education (Cert HE and Dip HE)
- Foundation degrees
- Bachelor degrees (also called first degrees)

Bachelor degrees are the most common undergraduate qualification.

Classes are expressed in terms of modules, units or credits depending on the institution and programme.

A search of all available undergraduate courses, including entry requirements and course description, is provided by the Universities and Colleges Admissions Service (UCAS) on their website: <http://www.ucas.com/>.

Bachelor's Degrees

The most common category of degree awarded is the bachelor or first degree. All types of bachelor's degrees, including the Bachelor of Arts (BA) and the Bachelor of Science (BSc) are considered first degrees.

Bachelor's degrees usually take three, or sometimes four years of full time study to complete. The typical course load for a bachelor's degree is between three and six classes per term, most students taking four or five classes.

Titles of degrees include the Bachelor of Arts (BA) and the Bachelor of Science (BSc), which are the two most common degrees. However, there are other bachelor's degree titles as well such as the Bachelor of Education (BEd), the Bachelor of Engineering (BEng), the Bachelor of Law (LLB), and others.

Professional bachelor's degrees in architecture, dentistry and veterinary medicine usually last five years, while first degrees in medicine last five or six years. First degrees in Medicine carry the title Bachelor of Medicine (MB) or the combined title of Bachelor of Medicine, Bachelor of Surgery (MB ChB, MB BS, etc.).

Bachelor's degrees are either honours degrees or ordinary/pass degrees. Honours degrees are studied at a more complex level than ordinary degrees. There are single subject degrees (single honours), two subjects degrees (joint honours), or two or three subjects degrees (combined honours).

Honours degrees are divided in four classes (levels of achievement):

- First Class
- Upper Second Class (2:1)
- Lower Second Class (2:2)
- Third Class

Upper second class (2:1) is usually considered as the minimum grade for entry into postgraduate studies. Students who do not achieve the minimum standard of an honours degree will be awarded an ordinary/pass degree.

There is also an *aegrotat* degree awarded to students who could not complete their final exams because of illness. The honours degree (*aegrotat*) or ordinary degree (*aegrotat*) is awarded on the understanding that the student would have passed if they had not been ill.

Scottish Bachelor Degree

The most common first degree in Scotland is also the bachelor degree. However, bachelor degrees here are different from those in the rest of the United Kingdom. In Scotland, all honours degrees require four years of study. The first two years are more general in nature, during which students study a broad variety of subjects. During the last two years, students specialize in one (or two) subjects to receive an honours degree. The final year also usually includes a dissertation.

Some universities, especially Scotland's "ancient universities" (Aberdeen, Edinburgh, Glasgow and St. Andrews), call their honours degree a master degree (MA(Hons)). Elsewhere, it is referred to as a bachelor degree (BA, BEng or BSc(Hons)).

Students also have the option to study for an ordinary or general degree. Unlike in the rest of the United Kingdom where the ordinary degree is rather uncommon and often considered a "failed" honours degree, the ordinary/general degree is a separate, well-regarded programme in Scotland. The ordinary/general degree is three years in length when studied full time. The first two years are similar to those of the honours degree and consist of a variety of subjects. The final year is another year of general studies. There is no dissertation in the ordinary/general degree.

Like the honours degree, the ordinary/general degree is referred to as a master degree (MA) by some universities (i.e. the "ancient universities"), and a bachelor degree (BA, BEng, or BSc) by others.

Admission to bachelor degree programmes in Scotland normally requires a minimum of three or four *Highers*. Alternative routes such as Access courses, HNCs or HNDs may also fulfill entry requirements. Relevant HNCs and HNDs will sometimes give access to the first, second or even third year of a degree.

Higher Education Institutions

There are two main types of higher education institutions (HEIs) in the United Kingdom: universities and colleges of higher education. These and the other types of HEIs are described briefly below.

Universities are independent, self-governing institutions. All universities in the United Kingdom are *recognised bodies*, meaning that they have the power to award degrees (see *Recognised bodies and listed bodies* below). They decide their own admission criteria, develop courses and decide which degrees they offer. Most universities conduct research as well as teaching.

University colleges and **institutes** are institutions that are part of larger universities. Some university colleges and institutes are small and specialize in one area of study, while others are large institutions that offer many different programmes. For example, the University of London consists of 20 self-governing colleges and a School of Advanced Study that is composed of 10 member institutes. Degrees at these university colleges and institutes are awarded by the main university.

Colleges of higher education are another type of higher education institution. Some colleges of higher education are *recognised bodies* (see below) and have the power to award degrees. Others offer higher education courses that lead to degrees awarded by another recognised body.

Some **colleges of further education, institutes, foundations, academies** and **schools** also offer higher education courses leading to degrees awarded by *recognised bodies*. Some of these, especially colleges of further education, also offer programmes that lead to qualifications other than higher education qualifications (i.e. Advanced General Certificate of Education or A levels).

Recognised bodies and listed bodies

The governments of the United Kingdom recognise the degree awarding powers of universities and colleges. These **recognised bodies**, as they are called, have been granted degree awarding powers by either a Royal Charter (see below) or an Act of Parliament. All universities and some colleges of higher education are recognised bodies. In 2006, there are over 130 such institutions.

In addition to the recognised bodies, there are over 550 other institutions that offer courses leading to a degree but do not themselves have the power to award degrees. These are known as **listed bodies**. Their courses are validated by a university or college that has degree awarding powers.

The lists of recognised bodies and listed bodies can be found on the website of the Department for Education and Skills (<http://www.dfes.gov.uk/recognisedukdegrees/>).

Royal Charters and the Privy Council

The older universities (pre-1992) operate under Royal Charters. These charters set out the university's constitution, and statutes, detailing how the university should operate. Royal Charters were granted to universities by the Sovereign on the advice of the Privy Council, who also approved any amendments made to the charters.

Most newer universities (post-1992) and other HEIs operate under Instruments or Articles of Government. The Privy Council must also approve any changes to these.

Other roles of the Privy Council are to approve the use of the title "university" in an institution's name, and to approve degree granting powers of an institution. For more information please see <http://www.privy-council.org.uk>

Higher education institutions pre-1992 (Polytechnics)

Prior to the Further and Higher Education Act of 1992, polytechnics were another type of higher education institution. Created in the late 1960s to expand the higher education system and offer more opportunities for higher education, polytechnics were formed from amalgamation of colleges and other higher education institutions. Polytechnics offered higher and further education programmes, often professionally oriented, to meet the needs of business and industry. They offered the full spectrum of higher education qualifications, including certificates, diplomas, bachelor's degrees, master's degrees and doctorates.^{xxx} The polytechnics

were converted into universities with the Further and Higher Education Act of 1992.

Polytechnics and other non-university higher education institutions awarded degrees through the Council for National Academic Awards (CNAA). Established in 1964, the CNAA was the largest degree-awarding body in the United Kingdom until it was abolished by the Further and Higher Education Act in 1992. Over 140 HEIs had their courses and degrees approved by the CNAA. CNAA awards were considered comparable to those of universities and are recognised by professional associations and employers.

When the CNAA was abolished, the Open University Validation Services (OUVS - <http://www.open.ac.uk/validate>) accepted responsibility for maintaining and providing access to CNAA records.

Independent sector

There are a growing number of independent higher education institutions in the United Kingdom. However, as they are not required to register with authorities, the exact number is not known, but is estimated at over 3,000.^{xxx} Independent HE providers are often not subjected to external accreditation, so quality can be difficult to assess. The British Accreditation Council (BAC) is the national non-profit organization that provides accreditation to independent higher and further education institutions. In 2006, over 200 independent colleges are accredited by the BAC (<http://www.the-bac.org/direct.htm>).

Independent HE providers cannot legally offer British qualifications. Only *recognised bodies* can offer degrees and *listed bodies* can only offer courses leading to degrees (see above). BAC accredited independent colleges may offer courses leading to qualifications from overseas universities and colleges provided that these are, in turn, recognized in their own country. The overseas university or college is the awarding body in these cases and not the independent college.

Quality assurance

Several governmental and non-governmental agencies measure quality in the Higher Education sector. The reports and “league tables” (university and college rankings) produced by these quality assurance agencies provide valuable information to prospective students, employers and others. Funding agencies also use the information to distribute grants to institutions based on the quality of their research or teaching, for example.

The Quality Assurance Agency (QAA), formed in 1997, plays a key role in quality assurance in British higher education. In addition to conducting external reviews of HEIs throughout the United Kingdom, the QAA also performs subjects reviews, helps define academic standards, provides guidelines on good practice, reviews quality of research to recommend funding allocations. Publishes reports on each university and college, highlighting strengths and areas for improvement to help students in their decision of which institution to attend. These reports can be found on the QAA website (<http://www.qaa.ac.uk/default.asp>).

The Teaching Quality Information (TQI) is another resource in HE quality assurance. The TQI website (<http://www2.tqi.ac.uk/sites/tqi/home/index.cfm>) provides reports and other official

information about the quality of teaching in institutions and programmes throughout the United Kingdom. This information includes statistical data and results of a national student survey.

Other quality assurance indicators:

- Research Assessment Exercise (RAE) – The RAE is a government-led evaluation of the quality of research in HEIs conducted every five years or so. HEIs receive funding based on the quality of their research. (www.hero.ac.uk/rae/)
- Higher Education Statistical Agency (HESA) Performance Indicators – Each year, on behalf of the government, HESA publishes data on the performance of HEIs in widening participation, student retention, learning and teaching outcomes, research output and employment of graduates. (www.hesa.ac.uk/pi/)
- Professional Body Accreditation – various professional bodies visit departments of HEIs before giving their accreditation to a programme.
- General league tables – Various media sources, such as *The Guardian*, *The Times*, *The Daily Telegraph* and *The Sunday Times*, rank the HEIs each year based on specific criteria.

Universities and Colleges Admissions Service (UCAS)

The Universities and Colleges Admission Service (UCAS) handles almost all applications for full time, undergraduate higher education courses. Students send one application directly to UCAS, indicating up to six choices of courses that they want to apply to. Students cannot apply to both Oxford and Cambridge on the same application. UCAS then forwards the applications to the institutions who decide whether to offer the student a place or not. Offers can be *unconditional*, meaning that the student already meets the institution's requirement and is accepted as is, or *conditional* where the student has to meet additional requirements (e.g. achieve a certain result on a future examination) by September 1 of the year of admission.

The **deadline** for most applications is January 15 (for admission in September of the same year). Applications to the universities of Oxford and Cambridge, and courses in medicine, dentistry and veterinary science/medicine have an earlier deadline of October 15 (for admission the following September). Applications for some art and design courses are due later, by March 15. Late applications (those received between January 16 and June 30) will be submitted to universities and colleges, but they will only be considered if the institutions want to make more offers.

Students who did not secure a place from their original application may use UCAS Extra or Clearing services. **Extra** gives students a chance to look for alternatives to their first six choices if these did not result in an offer made or the acceptance of one. Universities and colleges that still have vacancies will post them on the UCAS website and eligible students can have an application sent directly to them. Extra operates from the middle of March to the end of June.

Clearing is intended for students who did not receive any offer from their application and did not find a place through Extra, or who missed the first deadline. Through this process, UCAS tries to match students to the remaining places in universities and colleges. The Clearing application deadline is the last week of September of each year.

UCAS also operates a points system called the **UCAS Tariff**. In this system, all qualifications

considered for admission are awarded a certain number of points that students can use to meet course entry requirements. Some universities and colleges require that students have a minimum number of points to be admitted into their programmes. More information on this as well as the UCAS Tariff table can be found on the UCAS website (<http://www.ucas.com/candq/tariff/>).

UCAS has a searchable list of all courses in UCAS universities and colleges. The information provided on the courses include entry requirements, course description (<http://www.ucas.com/search/index.html>). There is also an institution guide that includes contact details, notes about the institutions and statistics about courses and students on the UCAS website (<http://www.ucas.com/instit/index.html>).

Admission requirements

There are no standard admission requirements into higher education. Each university or college can set its own requirements. However, in practice, most universities and colleges have fairly similar entry requirements.

England, Wales and Northern Ireland

Generally, entry into an undergraduate bachelor's degree requires at least two Advanced General Certificate of Education courses (GCE A levels) at grade E or above (or the equivalent), in addition to the appropriate General Certificate of Secondary Education courses (GCSEs).

Advanced Subsidiary (formerly Advanced Supplementary) GCEs (AS levels) are also considered for admission by some HEIs, two AS levels usually counting as one A level. More prestigious universities or colleges typically have higher requirements. Some institutions also interview potential students to determine their admissibility.

The most common type of qualification used for admission into undergraduate programmes are GCE A levels taken in a secondary school or in a further education college.

Other qualifications may also be accepted for entry into a programme by some HEIs. These can include Business and Technology Education Council (BTEC) and other vocational qualifications (i.e. National Vocational Qualifications (NVQs), and Scottish Vocational Qualifications (SVQs)). Work experience, Access courses and other programmes intended for adults wanting to further their education can also be considered as entry requirements into higher education.

Scotland

In Scotland the general minimum admission requirements for undergraduate programmes are:

- Undergraduate Certificate = one Higher
- Undergraduate Diploma = two Highers
- Undergraduate Degree = three Highers

Some universities also consider Advanced Highers for exemption from some first year courses.

Vocational qualifications and work experience may also be considered as entry requirements.

Academic Year

There is no standard academic year in HEIs in the United Kingdom. However, most universities have three equal terms per year. The typical year runs from the end of September or the beginning of October until the middle of June. Each term has 10 teaching weeks for a total of 30 teaching weeks. Notable exceptions include Oxford and Cambridge, both of which have only 24 weeks per academic year, from the second week of October to mid-June. Each term at Oxford and Cambridge has only eight teaching weeks. Some institutions also offer a semester format.

Types of study

Full time and part time

Most bachelor's degree programmes take three or four years of full time study to complete. Some degrees take longer, such as law or medicine. In many cases, higher education programmes can also be studied part time over a longer period of time.

Sandwich courses

Sandwich degree courses involve a period of work experience or language training "sandwiched" between two or three periods of study. Usually, the work experience or language training is one year in duration and takes place in the workplace, in another university or in a foreign country. In Alberta, this type of study is referred to as a co-op programme.

Distance and flexible learning

Distance learning, also called flexible or open learning, is becoming increasingly common in the United Kingdom, as elsewhere in the world. Many HEIs now offer courses through video, printed and online material, permitting students to study from home. Some programmes require the student to periodically go to the campus, but others are offered entirely from a distance. These courses are particularly attractive to students who work full time or have other commitments, such as stay-at-home parents.

One notable contributor to distance learning is the Open University (OU). Entirely dedicated to distance learning, the OU offers courses to students in the United Kingdom, as well as many other countries within and outside of Europe. The first students started in 1971, and today, there are more than 150,000 undergraduate and 30,000 graduate students.

More information on distance learning and HEIs offering such programmes can be found on *Hobson's Distance Learning* website (www.distancelearning.hobsons.com/) or through the *Prospects* website (www.prospects.ac.uk, choose "distance learning" in the mode of study of the advanced search page).

Bologna Process

The United Kingdom is one of the signatory countries of the Bologna Process. Launched in 1999, the Bologna Process aims to establish a common European system of higher education at both undergraduate and graduate levels by 2010. More information on the Bologna Process in general and in the United Kingdom can be found on the Europe Unit website (www.europeunit.ac.uk/bologna_process).

Summary of the United Kingdom's position on two key elements of the Bologna Process:

- Credits – The use of credits in HEIs in the United Kingdom is common, but not universal. Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland apply credits more thoroughly than England. Generally, one academic year in the United Kingdom is equated to 120 credits, where in the Bologna Process it equals 60 Europe Credit Transfer System (ECTS) credits (i.e. 1 ECTS credit = 2 UK credits). The United Kingdom bases the number of credits on learning outcome rather than the number of hours of study.
- Diploma Supplement – Some but not all HEIs in the United Kingdom issue the Diploma Supplement to their students. It is issued free of charge in English or in Welsh (in Wales). All HEIs are being encouraged to offer the Diploma Supplement.

Qualifications Frameworks

In all parts of the United Kingdom, qualifications fit into frameworks that serve as general indicators of the level of education attained. England, Wales and Northern Ireland share their frameworks while Scotland has its own separate, though very similar, framework. Both are illustrated below.

Qualifications Framework for England, Wales and Northern Ireland

England, Wales and Northern Ireland share two qualifications frameworks: one covers all national qualifications, and the other covers higher education qualifications. The frameworks have been put side by side in an effort to compare all qualifications with each other. **It is important to note that the levels are only used for general comparison and do not indicate that the qualifications have the same content or outcome.**

Table 57. National Qualifications Framework for England, Wales and Northern Ireland

National Qualifications Framework		Framework for Higher Education Qualification levels (FHEQ)
Original levels	Revised levels	
5 – e.g. Level 5 NVQ	8 – Specialist awards	D (doctoral) – Doctorates
	7 – Level 7 Diploma	M (master's) – Master's degrees, postgraduate certificates and diplomas
4 – e.g. Level 4 NVQ, Level 4 Diploma, Level 4 BTEC HND, Level 4 Certificate	6 – Level 6 Diploma	H (honours) – Bachelor's degrees, graduate certificates and diplomas
	5 – Level 5 BTEC HND	I (intermediate) – Diplomas of higher education and further education, foundation degrees, higher national diplomas
	4 – Level 4 Certificate	C (certificate) – Certificates of higher education
3 – e.g. Level 3 Certificate, Level 3 NVQ, A levels		
2 – e.g. Level 2 Diploma, Level 2 NVQ, GCSEs Grades A*-C		

Entry – Entry Level Certificate in Adult Literacy	
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Scottish Credit and Qualifications Framework

Scotland has a different qualifications framework, called the Scottish Credit and Qualifications Framework (SCQF). The SCQF includes all qualifications, including higher education qualifications. As for the National Qualifications Framework, **it is important to note that the levels are for general comparison purposes only and do not indicate same content or outcome for qualifications at the same level.**

Table 58. Scottish Credit and Qualifications Framework

SCQF level (SHE = Scottish Higher Education level)	National qualifications (units, courses and group awards)	Higher National qualifications	Qualifications awarded by higher education institutions in Scotland	SVQs**
12 (SHE D*)			Doctorates	
11 (SHE M*)			Masters/Postgraduate Diploma and Certificate	SVQ 5
10 (SHE H*)			Honours degree	
9 (SHE 3)			Degree	
8 (SHE 2)		Higher National Diploma	Diploma of Higher Education	SVQ 4
7 (SHE 1)	Advanced Higher	Higher National Certificate	Certificate of Higher Education	
6	Higher			SVQ 3
5	Intermediate 2/ Credit Standard Grade			SVQ 2
4	Intermediate 1/ General Standard Grade			SVQ 1
3	Access 3/Foundation Standard Grade			
2	Access 2			
1	Access 1			

* Labels H, M and D refer to Honours, Masters, and Doctoral and are used consistently across the UK.

** Provisional: work is continuing to refine the placing of SVQs within the SCQF.

Documentation

Students graduating from higher education programmes are issued different documents depending on the institution they attend and when. There is no standard documentation in this sector of education. Common documents include transcripts, degree certificates and diplomas, professional certification and/or registration.

It is important to note that for many years, universities and colleges did not typically issue any transcripts – they only issued degree certificates. Even today, some universities still may not provide any transcripts.

Summary of Rationale

The IQAS placement recommendation takes into account the following factors as outlined above:

- admission requirements
- general content
- length of study
- outcome of study
- other placement recommendations

IQAS recommends that the Bachelor of Medicine generally compares to the completion of a first professional degree in medicine [preceded by... if appropriate – note different structures].

Note: Medical degrees in the United Kingdom typically require five years of continuous study in the Faculty of Medicine. In Canada, medical degrees generally require at least two years of study in science following by four years of professional medical studies.

Grading:

Bachelor's (honours) degrees are usually graded on a class scale, from pass (lowest), to first class honours. A grade of second class honours, upper division (Upper Second Class) is usually required for entry into postgraduate programmes. Some universities have a numeral scale associated with the degree classifications, but others do not.

Generally, Higher Education grades in the United Kingdom are lower than they are in Canada. The pass grade is often as low as 35 percent, so a grade of 60 could be considered very good or excellent.

There is no standard grading scale used by all universities, so the following tables are meant to be used for general guidance only.

Table 59. Comparison between UK grades, degree classifications, and IQAS grades (example)

UK Grades		Degree Class *	IQAS Grade (%)
70-100	A	First Class	90
60-69	B	Upper Second Class	75
50-59	C	Lower Second Class	65
40-49	D	Third Class	60
35-39	E	Pass (Ordinary)	55
0-34	--	Fail	Fail

* Institutions have different ways of expressing honours classes, from spelling it out (First, Second, Third), to using Arabic numerals (1, 2; 1, 2; 2, 3), Roman numerals (I, II; I, II, III), or a combination of the previous (i.e. Second Class, Division I, II.1).

Note: The IQAS grade represents a suggested mid-point in a range of possible grades.

Table 60. Summary of grading scale from the University of Glamorgan (Scotland)

Grade (%)	Degree Class	IQAS Grade (%)
70-100	First	90
60-69.9	Upper Second	75
50-59.9	Lower second	65
40-49.9	Third	55
<40	Fail	Fail

Note: The IQAS grade represents a suggested mid-point in a range of possible grades.

Some universities use the European Credit Transfer System (ECTS) grading scale instead of or in addition to the more common degree classification described above. For an explanation of ECTS, see the *Higher Education* chapter

Table 61. ECTS Grading Scale

ECTS Grade	Definition	Distribution (%)
A	Excellent – outstanding performance with only minor errors	10
B	Very good – above the average standard but with some errors	25
C	Good – generally sound work with a number of notable errors	30
D	Satisfactory – fair but with significant shortcomings	25
E	Sufficient – performance meets the minimum criteria	10
FX	Fail – some more work required before the credit can be awarded	--
F	Fail – considerable further work is required	--

Source: University of Warwick Academic Office^{xxiii}

© 2006 the Crown in right of the Province of Alberta, [International Qualifications Assessment Service \(IQAS\)](#), 9th Floor, 108 Street Building, 9942 - 108 Street, Edmonton, Alberta, Canada T5K 2J5

Country:
United Kingdom

Official Country Name:
United Kingdom

Region:
United Kingdom

Status: Pending
Category: Higher Education

Date Entered: December 8, 2006
Date Revised: December 8, 2006

Credential Actual Name:
Bachelor of Engineering (BEng)
(Honours or Ordinary)

Credential English Name:

Credential Alternate Actual Name(s):

- Bachelor of Science in Engineering (BScEng)
- Master of Engineering (MEng)
- Master of Science in Engineering (MScEng, rarely a first degree, usually a graduate course)
- Bachelor of Automotive Engineering
- Bachelor of Civil Engineering
- Bachelor of Computer Engineering
- Bachelor of Electrical Engineering
- Bachelor of Mechanical Engineering
- Etc.

Credential Alternate English Name(s):

Time Period Credential Offered: Current

Issuing Body: Recognised bodies (all universities and some colleges of higher education) (see *Recognised bodies and listed bodies* in the rationale below, p.45)

Admission Requirements:

No standard academic requirements, although most Bachelor of Engineering programmes require a minimum of two Advanced General Certificate of Education (GCE A level) courses with the appropriate General Certificate of Secondary Education (GCSE) courses with emphasis on science and mathematics, or the equivalent combination of Highers and Advanced Highers from Scottish students. More prestigious institutions usually have higher entry requirements. Other qualifications may be used to meet admission requirements, including technical and vocational courses, and work experience.

Program Description:

First degrees in engineering are either bachelor's (Bachelor of Engineering, BEng, or Bachelor of Science in Engineering, BScEng) or master's (Master of Engineering, MEng, or, rarely a first degree, Master of Science in Engineering, MScEng) degrees. Some universities offer a three or four year BEng, while others only offer the four or five year MEng. Both are normally considered first degrees.

Three-year programmes are usually full-time academic degrees, while four-year programmes

may include a “sandwich” year where students are placed with an employer for a year as part of their programme. There are also engineering degrees that include a Foundation year (year 0) for students lacking the appropriate entry requirements.

Table 62. Sample curriculum for a three-year Electronic Engineering BEng

1st year Eight core courses	Mathematics Engineering Mathematics I Engineering Science I Engineering Science II Computer Engineering I Linear Circuits and Dynamics Transferable Skills Engineering Labs I
2nd year Eight core courses	Engineering Maths II Computer Engineering II Engineering Labs II Microprocessor Systems Signals and Systems Analogue Electronics I Logic Communications
3rd year Seven core courses	Individual Project Control Engineering Management Communications II Analog Electronics II Introduction to Computer Networks Semiconductor Devices

Source: King's College London (www.kcl.ac.uk), 2006

Table 63. Sample curriculum for three-year BEng and four-year MEng (Mechanical Engineering)

Year	Bachelor of Engineering (3-year BEng)	Master of Engineering (4-year MEng)
Year 1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Circuits and Systems • Structural Mechanics • Properties of Materials • Electronics • Fluid Mechanics • Programming and Numerical Methods • Signals and Systems • Electromagnetism • Thermodynamics and Heat Transfer • Design and CAD and Mathematics • Practical and workshop activities 	Same as BEng
Year 2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Dynamics of Mechanical Systems • Structures • Mechanical Materials • Fluid Dynamics • Thermodynamics and Computational Methods • Multidisciplinary team project 	Same as BEng
Year 3	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Digital Control and Instrumentation • Management 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Individual project • MEng group project part one

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Elastic Analysis • Failure of Materials • Heat and Fluid Flow • Four options from the following subjects: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Risk, Reliability and Quality - Composite Materials - Tribology - Energy Systems and Turbomachinery - Aerodynamics • Individual project 	
Year 4		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • MEng group project continued • Design Study Management • Technology and Society • Personal and Professional Development • Four options from the following subjects: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Advanced Fluid Dynamics - Design of Mechanical Structures - Quality and Reliability Engineering - Robust Control - Understanding Surfaces in Engineering

Source: University of Leicester (www.le.ac.uk), 2006

Engineers do not have to be registered to practice their profession in the United Kingdom. However, employers may require them to do so. More information on the registration process can be found on the Engineering Council UK website: www.engc.org.uk.

Provides Access to in the Home Country:

- Further education (i.e. graduate degree)
- Employment
- Professional registration

Placement Recommendations:

PIER (Projects for International Education Research) World Education Series, 1991 (US)

- The Bachelor of Engineering (Unclassified/Ordinary) may be considered for graduate admission if the program followed is appropriate preparation.
- The Bachelor of Engineering (Honours) may be considered for graduate admission.
- The Master of Engineering is considered comparable to a first degree and may be considered for graduate admission.

NOOSR (National Office of Overseas Skills Recognition), 2006 (Australia)

- No placement recommendation is provided for the Bachelor of Engineering.

The New Country Index - International Education Research Foundation, 2004 (US)

- The Bachelor of Engineering (Honours) is considered comparable to a BS in Engineering.

IQAS Recommendations for:**Employment**

The Bachelor of Engineering generally compares to the completion of a four-year Bachelor of Science degree with a focus in [...] Engineering [*if sandwich degree programme*, plus one year of co-op work experience].

Post-secondary Admission

The Bachelor of Engineering generally compares to the completion of a four-year Bachelor of Science degree with a focus in [...] Engineering [*if sandwich degree programme*, plus one year of co-op work experience].

Course Equivalencies

30-level courses if no secondary documents available

Rationale:

Background

Undergraduate Qualifications

The main undergraduate qualifications in the United Kingdom are:

- Higher National Certificates and Diplomas (HNCs and HNDs)
- Certificates and Diplomas of Higher Education (Cert HE and Dip HE)
- Foundation degrees
- Bachelor degrees (also called first degrees)

Bachelor degrees are the most common undergraduate qualification.

Classes are expressed in terms of modules, units or credits depending on the institution and programme.

A search of all available undergraduate courses, including entry requirements and course description, is provided by the Universities and Colleges Admissions Service (UCAS) on their website: <http://www.ucas.com/>.

Bachelor's Degrees

The most common category of degree awarded is the bachelor or first degree. All types of bachelor's degrees, including the Bachelor of Arts (BA) and the Bachelor of Science (BSc) are considered first degrees.

Bachelor's degrees usually take three, or sometimes four years of full time study to complete. The typical course load for a bachelor's degree is between three and six classes per term, most students taking four or five classes.

Titles of degrees include the Bachelor of Arts (BA) and the Bachelor of Science (BSc), which are the two most common degrees. However, there are other bachelor's degree titles as well such as the Bachelor of Education (BEd), the Bachelor of Engineering (BEng), the Bachelor of Law (LLB), and others.

Professional bachelor's degrees in architecture, dentistry and veterinary medicine usually last five years, while first degrees in medicine last five or six years. First degrees in Medicine carry the title Bachelor of Medicine (MB) or the combined title of Bachelor of Medicine, Bachelor of Surgery (MB ChB or MB BS).

Bachelor's degrees are either honours degrees or ordinary/pass degrees. Honours degrees are studied at a more complex level than ordinary degrees. There are single subject degrees (single honours), two subjects degrees (joint honours), or two or three subjects degrees (combined honours).

Honours degrees are divided in four classes (levels of achievement):

- First Class
- Upper Second Class (2:1)
- Lower Second Class (2:2)

- Third Class

Upper second class (2:1) is usually considered as the minimum grade for entry into postgraduate studies. Students who do not achieve the minimum standard of an honours degree will be awarded an ordinary/pass degree.

There is also an *aegrotat* degree awarded to students who could not complete their final exams because of illness. The honours degree (aegrotat) or ordinary degree (aegrotat) is awarded on the understanding that the student would have passed if they had not been ill.

Scottish Bachelor Degree

The most common first degree in Scotland is also the bachelor degree. However, bachelor degrees here are different from those in the rest of the United Kingdom. In Scotland, all honours degrees require four years of study. The first two years are more general in nature, during which students study a broad variety of subjects. During the last two years, students specialize in one (or two) subjects to receive an honours degree. The final year also usually includes a dissertation.

Some universities, especially Scotland's "ancient universities" (Aberdeen, Edinburgh, Glasgow and St. Andrews), call their honours degree a master degree (MA(Hons)). Elsewhere, it is referred to as a bachelor degree (BA, BEng or BSc(Hons)).

Students also have the option to study for an ordinary or general degree. Unlike in the rest of the United Kingdom where the ordinary degree is rather uncommon and often considered a "failed" honours degree, the ordinary/general degree is a separate, well-regarded programme in Scotland. The ordinary/general degree is three years in length when studied full time. The first two years are similar to those of the honours degree and consist of a variety of subjects. The final year is another year of general studies. There is no dissertation in the ordinary/general degree.

Like the honours degree, the ordinary/general degree is referred to as a master degree (MA) by some universities (i.e. the "ancient universities"), and a bachelor degree (BA, BEng, or BSc) by others.

Admission to bachelor degree programmes in Scotland normally requires a minimum of three or four *Highers*. Alternative routes such as Access courses, HNCs or HNDs may also fulfill entry requirements. Relevant HNCs and HNDs will sometimes give access to the first, second or even third year of a degree.

Higher Education Institutions

There are two main types of higher education institutions (HEIs) in the United Kingdom: universities and colleges of higher education. These and the other types of HEIs are described briefly below.

Universities are independent, self-governing institutions. All universities in the United Kingdom are *recognised bodies*, meaning that they have the power to award degrees (see

Recognised bodies and listed bodies below). They decide their own admission criteria, develop courses and decide which degrees they offer. Most universities conduct research as well as teaching.

University colleges and institutes are institutions that are part of larger universities. Some university colleges and institutes are small and specialize in one area of study, while others are large institutions that offer many different programmes. For example, the University of London consists of 20 self-governing colleges and a School of Advanced Study that is composed of 10 member institutes. Degrees at these university colleges and institutes are awarded by the main university.

Colleges of higher education are another type of higher education institution. Some colleges of higher education are *recognised bodies* (see below) and have the power to award degrees. Others offer higher education courses that lead to degrees awarded by another recognised body.

Some **colleges of further education, institutes, foundations, academies and schools** also offer higher education courses leading to degrees awarded by *recognised bodies*. Some of these, especially colleges of further education, also offer programmes that lead to qualifications other than higher education qualifications (i.e. Advanced General Certificate of Education or A levels).

Recognised bodies and listed bodies

The governments of the United Kingdom recognise the degree awarding powers of universities and colleges. These **recognised bodies**, as they are called, have been granted degree awarding powers by either a Royal Charter (see below) or an Act of Parliament. All universities and some colleges of higher education are recognised bodies. In 2006, there are over 130 such institutions.

In addition to the recognised bodies, there are over 550 other institutions that offer courses leading to a degree but do not themselves have the power to award degrees. These are known as **listed bodies**. Their courses are validated by a university or college that has degree awarding powers.

The lists of recognised bodies and listed bodies can be found on the website of the Department for Education and Skills (<http://www.dfes.gov.uk/recognisedukdegrees/>).

Royal Charters and the Privy Council

The older universities (pre-1992) operate under Royal Charters. These charters set out the university's constitution, and statutes, detailing how the university should operate. Royal Charters were granted to universities by the Sovereign on the advice of the Privy Council, who also approved any amendments made to the charters.

Most newer universities (post-1992) and other HEIs operate under Instruments or Articles of Government. The Privy Council must also approve any changes to these.

Other roles of the Privy Council are to approve the use of the title "university" in an institution's name, and to approve degree granting powers of an institution. For more information please see

<http://www.privy-council.org.uk>

Higher education institutions pre-1992 (Polytechnics)

Prior to the Further and Higher Education Act of 1992, polytechnics were another type of higher education institution. Created in the late 1960s to expand the higher education system and offer more opportunities for higher education, polytechnics were formed from amalgamation of colleges and other higher education institutions. Polytechnics offered higher and further education programmes, often professionally oriented, to meet the needs of business and industry. They offered the full spectrum of higher education qualifications, including certificates, diplomas, bachelor's degrees, master's degrees and doctorates.^{xxxiii} The polytechnics were converted into universities with the Further and Higher Education Act of 1992.

Polytechnics and other non-university higher education institutions awarded degrees through the Council for National Academic Awards (CNAA). Established in 1964, the CNAA was the largest degree-awarding body in the United Kingdom until it was abolished by the Further and Higher Education Act in 1992. Over 140 HEIs had their courses and degrees approved by the CNAA. CNAA awards were considered comparable to those of universities and are recognised by professional associations and employers.

When the CNAA was abolished, the Open University Validation Services (OUVS - <http://www.open.ac.uk/validate>) accepted responsibility for maintaining and providing access to CNAA records.

Independent sector

There are a growing number of independent higher education institutions in the United Kingdom. However, as they are not required to register with authorities, the exact number is not known, but is estimated at over 3,000.^{xxxiv} Independent HE providers are often not subjected to external accreditation, so quality can be difficult to assess. The British Accreditation Council (BAC) is the national non-profit organization that provides accreditation to independent higher and further education institutions. In 2006, over 200 independent colleges are accredited by the BAC (<http://www.the-bac.org/direct.htm>).

Independent HE providers cannot legally offer British qualifications. Only *recognised bodies* can offer degrees and *listed bodies* can only offer courses leading to degrees (see above). BAC accredited independent colleges may offer courses leading to qualifications from overseas universities and colleges provided that these are, in turn, recognized in their own country. The overseas university or college is the awarding body in these cases and not the independent college.

Quality assurance

Several governmental and non-governmental agencies measure quality in the Higher Education sector. The reports and "league tables" (university and college rankings) produced by these quality assurance agencies provide valuable information to prospective students, employers and others. Funding agencies also use the information to distribute grants to institutions based on the quality of their research or teaching, for example.

The Quality Assurance Agency (QAA), formed in 1997, plays a key role in quality assurance in British higher education. In addition to conducting external reviews of HEIs throughout the United Kingdom, the QAA also performs subjects reviews, helps define academic standards, provides guidelines on good practice, reviews quality of research to recommend funding allocations. Publishes reports on each university and college, highlighting strengths and areas for improvement to help students in their decision of which institution to attend. These reports can be found on the QAA website (<http://www.qaa.ac.uk/default.asp>).

The Teaching Quality Information (TQI) is another resource in HE quality assurance. The TQI website (<http://www2.tqi.ac.uk/sites/tqi/home/index.cfm>) provides reports and other official information about the quality of teaching in institutions and programmes throughout the United Kingdom. This information includes statistical data and results of a national student survey.

Other quality assurance indicators:

- Research Assessment Exercise (RAE) – The RAE is a government-led evaluation of the quality of research in HEIs conducted every five years or so. HEIs receive funding based on the quality of their research. (www.hero.ac.uk/rae/)
- Higher Education Statistical Agency (HESA) Performance Indicators – Each year, on behalf of the government, HESA publishes data on the performance of HEIs in widening participation, student retention, learning and teaching outcomes, research output and employment of graduates. (www.hesa.ac.uk/pi/)
- Professional Body Accreditation – various professional bodies visit departments of HEIs before giving their accreditation to a programme.
- General league tables – Various media sources, such as *The Guardian*, *The Times*, *The Daily Telegraph* and *The Sunday Times*, rank the HEIs each year based on specific criteria.

Universities and Colleges Admissions Service (UCAS)

The Universities and Colleges Admission Service (UCAS) handles almost all applications for full time, undergraduate higher education courses. Students send one application directly to UCAS, indicating up to six choices of courses that they want to apply to. Students cannot apply to both Oxford and Cambridge on the same application. UCAS then forwards the applications to the institutions who decide whether to offer the student a place or not. Offers can be *unconditional*, meaning that the student already meets the institution's requirement and is accepted as is, or *conditional* where the student has to meet additional requirements (e.g. achieve a certain result on a future examination) by September 1 of the year of admission.

The **deadline** for most applications is January 15 (for admission in September of the same year). Applications to the universities of Oxford and Cambridge, and courses in medicine, dentistry and veterinary science/medicine have an earlier deadline of October 15 (for admission the following September). Applications for some art and design courses are due later, by March 15. Late applications (those received between January 16 and June 30) will be submitted to universities and colleges, but they will only be considered if the institutions want to make more offers.

Students who did not secure a place from their original application may use UCAS Extra or

Clearing services. **Extra** gives students a chance to look for alternatives to their first six choices if these did not result in an offer made or the acceptance of one. Universities and colleges that still have vacancies will post them on the UCAS website and eligible students can have an application sent directly to them. Extra operates from the middle of March to the end of June.

Clearing is intended for students who did not receive any offer from their application and did not find a place through Extra, or who missed the first deadline. Through this process, UCAS tries to match students to the remaining places in universities and colleges. The Clearing application deadline is the last week of September of each year.

UCAS also operates a points system called the **UCAS Tariff**. In this system, all qualifications considered for admission are awarded a certain number of points that students can use to meet course entry requirements. Some universities and colleges require that students have a minimum number of points to be admitted into their programmes. More information on this as well as the UCAS Tariff table can be found on the UCAS website (<http://wwwucas.com/candq/tariff/>).

UCAS has a searchable list of all courses in UCAS universities and colleges. The information provided on the courses include entry requirements, course description (<http://wwwucas.com/search/index.html>). There is also an institution guide that includes contact details, notes about the institutions and statistics about courses and students on the UCAS website (<http://wwwucas.com/instit/index.html>).

Admission requirements

There are no standard admission requirements into higher education. Each university or college can set its own requirements. However, in practice, most universities and colleges have fairly similar entry requirements.

England, Wales and Northern Ireland

Generally, entry into an undergraduate bachelor's degree requires at least two Advanced General Certificate of Education courses (GCE A levels) at grade E or above (or the equivalent), in addition to the appropriate General Certificate of Secondary Education courses (GCSEs).

Advanced Subsidiary (formerly Advanced Supplementary) GCEs (AS levels) are also considered for admission by some HEIs, two AS levels usually counting as one A level. More prestigious universities or colleges typically have higher requirements. Some institutions also interview potential students to determine their admissibility.

The most common type of qualification used for admission into undergraduate programmes are GCE A levels taken in a secondary school or in a further education college.

Other qualifications may also be accepted for entry into a programme by some HEIs. These can include Business and Technology Education Council (BTEC) and other vocational qualifications (i.e. National Vocational Qualifications (NVQs), and Scottish Vocational Qualifications (SVQs)). Work experience, Access courses and other programmes intended for adults wanting to further their education can also be considered as entry requirements into higher education.

Scotland

In Scotland the general minimum admission requirements for undergraduate programmes are:

- Undergraduate Certificate = one Higher
- Undergraduate Diploma = two Highers
- Undergraduate Degree = three Highers

Some universities also consider Advanced Highers for exemption from some first year courses.

Vocational qualifications and work experience may also be considered as entry requirements.

Academic Year

There is no standard academic year in HEIs in the United Kingdom. However, most universities have three equal terms per year. The typical year runs from the end of September or the beginning of October until the middle of June. Each term has 10 teaching weeks for a total of 30 teaching weeks. Notable exceptions include Oxford and Cambridge, both of which have only 24 weeks per academic year, from the second week of October to mid-June. Each term at Oxford and Cambridge has only eight teaching weeks. Some institutions also offer a semester format.

Types of study

Full time and part time

Most bachelor's degree programmes take three or four years of full time study to complete. Some degrees take longer, such as law or medicine. In many cases, higher education programmes can also be studied part time over a longer period of time.

Sandwich courses

Sandwich degree courses involve a period of work experience or language training "sandwiched" between two or three periods of study. Usually, the work experience or language training is one year in duration and takes place in the workplace, in another university or in a foreign country. In Alberta, this type of study is referred to as a co-op programme.

Distance and flexible learning

Distance learning, also called flexible or open learning, is becoming increasingly common in the United Kingdom, as elsewhere in the world. Many HEIs now offer courses through video, printed and online material, permitting students to study from home. Some programmes require the student to periodically go to the campus, but others are offered entirely from a distance. These courses are particularly attractive to students who work full time or have other commitments, such as stay-at-home parents.

One notable contributor to distance learning is the Open University (OU). Entirely dedicated to distance learning, the OU offers courses to students in the United Kingdom, as well as many other countries within and outside of Europe. The first students started in 1971, and today, there are more than 150,000 undergraduate and 30,000 graduate students.

More information on distance learning and HEIs offering such programmes can be found on

Hobson's Distance Learning website (www.distancelearning.hobsons.com/) or through the Prospects website (www.prospects.ac.uk, choose "distance learning" in the mode of study of the advanced search page).

Bologna Process

The United Kingdom is one of the signatory countries of the Bologna Process. Launched in 1999, the Bologna Process aims to establish a common European system of higher education at both undergraduate and graduate levels by 2010. More information on the Bologna Process in general and in the United Kingdom can be found on the Europe Unit website (www.europeunit.ac.uk/bologna_process).

Summary of the United Kingdom's position on two key elements of the Bologna Process:

- Credits – The use of credits in HEIs in the United Kingdom is common, but not universal. Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland apply credits more thoroughly than England. Generally, one academic year in the United Kingdom is equated to 120 credits, where in the Bologna Process it equals 60 Europe Credit Transfer System (ECTS) credits (i.e. 1 ECTS credit = 2 UK credits). The United Kingdom bases the number of credits on learning outcome rather than the number of hours of study.
- Diploma Supplement – Some but not all HEIs in the United Kingdom issue the Diploma Supplement to their students. It is issued free of charge in English or in Welsh (in Wales). All HEIs are being encouraged to offer the Diploma Supplement.

Qualifications Frameworks

In all parts of the United Kingdom, qualifications fit into frameworks that serve as general indicators of the level of education attained. England, Wales and Northern Ireland share their frameworks while Scotland has its own separate, though very similar, framework. Both are illustrated below.

Qualifications Framework for England, Wales and Northern Ireland

England, Wales and Northern Ireland share two qualifications frameworks: one covers all national qualifications, and the other covers higher education qualifications. The frameworks have been put side by side in an effort to compare all qualifications with each other. **It is important to note that the levels are only used for general comparison and do not indicate that the qualifications have the same content or outcome.**

Table 64. National Qualifications Framework for England, Wales and Northern Ireland

National Qualifications Framework		Framework for Higher Education Qualification levels (FHEQ)
Original levels	Revised levels	
5 – e.g. Level 5 NVQ	8 – Specialist awards	D (doctoral) – Doctorates
	7 – Level 7 Diploma	M (master's) – Master's degrees, postgraduate certificates and diplomas
4 – e.g. Level 4 NVQ, Level 4 Diploma, Level 4 BTEC HND, Level	6 – Level 6 Diploma	H (honours) – Bachelor's degrees, graduate certificates and diplomas

4 Certificate	5 – Level 5 BTEC HND	I (intermediate) – Diplomas of higher education and further education, foundation degrees, higher national diplomas
	4 – Level 4 Certificate	C (certificate) – Certificates of higher education
3 – e.g. Level 3 Certificate, Level 3 NVQ, A levels		
2 – e.g. Level 2 Diploma, Level 2 NVQ, GCSEs Grades A*-C		
1 – e.g. Level 1 Certificate, Level 1 NVQ, GCSEs Grades D-G		
Entry – Entry Level Certificate in Adult Literacy		

Scottish Credit and Qualifications Framework

Scotland has a different qualifications framework, called the Scottish Credit and Qualifications Framework (SCQF). The SCQF includes all qualifications, including higher education qualifications. As for the National Qualifications Framework, **it is important to note that the levels are for general comparison purposes only and do not indicate same content or outcome for qualifications at the same level.**

Table 65. Scottish Credit and Qualifications Framework

SCQF level (SHE = Scottish Higher Education level)	National qualifications (units, courses and group awards)	Higher National qualifications	Qualifications awarded by higher education institutions in Scotland	SVQs**
12 (SHE D*)			Doctorates	
11 (SHE M*)			Masters/Postgraduate Diploma and Certificate	SVQ 5
10 (SHE H*)			Honours degree	
9 (SHE 3)			Degree	
8 (SHE 2)		Higher National Diploma	Diploma of Higher Education	SVQ 4
7 (SHE 1)	Advanced Higher	Higher National Certificate	Certificate of Higher Education	
6	Higher			SVQ 3
5	Intermediate 2/ Credit Standard Grade			SVQ 2
4	Intermediate 1/ General Standard Grade			SVQ 1
3	Access 3/Foundation Standard Grade			
2	Access 2			
1	Access 1			

* Labels H, M and D refer to Honours, Masters, and Doctoral and are used consistently across the UK.

** Provisional: work is continuing to refine the placing of SVQs within the SCQF.

Documentation

Students graduating from higher education programmes are issued different documents depending on the institution they attend and when. There is no standard documentation in this sector of education. Common documents include transcripts, degree certificates and diplomas, professional certification and/or registration.

It is important to note that for many years, universities and colleges did not typically issue any transcripts – they only issued degree certificates. Even today, some universities still may not provide any transcripts.

Summary of Rationale

The IQAS placement recommendation takes into account the following factors as outlined above:

- admission requirements
- general content
- length of study
- outcome of study
- other placement recommendations

IQAS recommends that the Bachelor of Engineering generally compares to the completion of a four-year Bachelor of Science degree with a focus in [...] Engineering [*if sandwich programme*, plus one year of co-op work experience].

Grading:

Bachelor's (honours) degrees are usually graded on a class scale, from pass (lowest), to first class honours. A grade of second class honours, upper division (Upper Second Class) is usually required for entry into postgraduate programmes. Some universities have a numeral scale associated with the degree classifications, but others do not.

Generally, Higher Education grades in the United Kingdom are lower than they are in Canada. The pass grade is often as low as 35 percent, so a grade of 60 could be considered very good or excellent.

There is no standard grading scale used by all universities, so the following tables are meant to be used for general guidance only.

Table 66. Comparison between UK grades, degree classifications, and IQAS grades (example)

UK Grades		Degree Class *	IQAS Grade (%)
70-100	A	First Class	90
60-69	B	Upper Second Class	75
50-59	C	Lower Second Class	65
40-49	D	Third Class	60
35-39	E	Pass (Ordinary)	55
0-34	--	Fail	Fail

* Institutions have different ways of expressing honours classes, from spelling it out (First, Second, Third), to using Arabic numerals (1, 2:1, 2:2, 3), Roman numerals (I, II:I, II.II, III), or a combination of the previous (i.e. Second Class, Division I, II.1).

Note: The IQAS grade represents a suggested mid-point in a range of possible grades.

Table 67. Summary of grading scale from the University of Glamorgan (Scotland)

Grade (%)	Degree Class	IQAS Grade (%)
70-100	First	90
60-69.9	Upper Second	75
50-59.9	Lower second	65
40-49.9	Third	55
<40	Fail	Fail

Note: The IQAS grade represents a suggested mid-point in a range of possible grades.

Some universities use the European Credit Transfer System (ECTS) grading scale instead of or in addition to the more common degree classification described above. For an explanation of ECTS, see the *Higher Education* chapter

Table 68. ECTS Grading Scale

ECTS Grade	Definition	Distribution (%)
A	Excellent – outstanding performance with only minor errors	10
B	Very good – above the average standard but with some errors	25

C	Good – generally sound work with a number of notable errors	30
D	Satisfactory – fair but with significant shortcomings	25
E	Sufficient – performance meets the minimum criteria	10
FX	Fail – some more work required before the credit can be awarded	--
F	Fail – considerable further work is required	--

Source: University of Warwick Academic Office^{xxxv}

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Country:
United Kingdom

Official Country Name:
United Kingdom

Region:
United Kingdom

Status: Pending
Category: Higher Education

Date Entered: December 8, 2006
Date Revised: December 8, 2006

Credential Actual Name:
Postgraduate Certificate/Diploma

Credential English Name:

Credential Alternate Actual Name(s):
PG Cert, PG Dip

Credential Alternate English Name(s):

Time Period Credential Offered: Current

Issuing Body: Higher education institutions (universities, colleges, schools, foundations, etc.)

Admission Requirements:

Successful completion of an undergraduate degree, usually a bachelor degree in a related field.

Program Description:

Postgraduate certificates (PG Cert) and diplomas (PG Dip) usually last six to nine months and are taken following the successful completion of an undergraduate degree (normally a bachelor degree). They are most often closely related to the subject of the first degree. Postgraduate certificates and diplomas may lead to further study (master's degree) or they may represent by themselves the professional qualification needed for entry into a particular career.

More information on postgraduate courses, including course description and institution information is available on the *Prospects* website (www.prospects.ac.uk) and on the *Hobsons Postgrad* website (www.postgrad.hobsons.com).

Provides Access to in the Home Country:

- Further education (i.e. master degrees)
- Employment
- Access to a profession in some cases

Placement Recommendations:

PIER (Projects for International Education Research) World Education Series, 1991 (US)
England, Wales and Northern Ireland:

- A Postgraduate Diploma may be considered for graduate admission.

Scotland:

- No recommendation is provided for the Postgraduate Certificate.
- A Postgraduate Diploma following a 3-year first degree may be considered for graduate admission
- A Postgraduate Diploma following a 4-year first degree may be considered for graduate transfer credit, determined through a course-by-course analysis.

NOOSR (National Office of Overseas Skills Recognition), 2006 (Australia)

- A Postgraduate Diploma normally requiring one academic year of full-time study awarded by a listed institution is assessed as comparable to the educational level of an Australian Graduate Diploma.

The New Country Index - International Education Research Foundation, 2004 (US)

England, Wales and Northern Ireland:

- No recommendation is provided for the Postgraduate Certificate.
- The Postgraduate Diploma is considered comparable to up to 30 semester credits of graduate coursework.

Scotland:

- The Postgraduate Certificate is considered comparable to up to 30 semester credits of coursework for each year of full-time study.
- The Postgraduate Diploma is considered comparable to up to 30 semester credits of coursework for each year of full-time study.

IQAS Recommendations for:

Employment

The Postgraduate Certificate generally compares to the completion of a Graduate Certificate with a focus in xxx.

The Postgraduate Diploma generally compares to the completion of Graduate Diploma with a focus in xxx.

Post-secondary Admission

The Postgraduate Certificate generally compares to the completion of a Graduate Certificate with a focus in xxx.

The Postgraduate Diploma generally compares to the completion of Graduate Diploma with a focus in xxx.

Course Equivalencies

30-level courses if no secondary documents available

Rationale:

Background

Graduate qualifications

Graduate qualifications, referred to as postgraduate qualifications in the United Kingdom, include postgraduate certificates and diplomas, masters degrees and doctorates. Postgraduate courses are usually taken after the completion of an honours degree.

More information on postgraduate courses, including course description and institution information is available on the *Prospects* website (www.prospects.ac.uk) and on the *Hobsons Postgrad* website (www.postgrad.hobsons.com).

Higher Education Institutions

There are two main types of higher education institutions (HEIs) in the United Kingdom: universities and colleges of higher education. These and the other types of HEIs are described briefly below.

Universities are independent, self-governing institutions. All universities in the United Kingdom are *recognised bodies*, meaning that they have the power to award degrees (see *Recognised bodies and listed bodies* below). They decide their own admission criteria, develop courses and decide which degrees they offer. Most universities conduct research as well as teaching.

University colleges and institutes are institutions that are part of larger universities. Some university colleges and institutes are small and specialize in one area of study, while others are large institutions that offer many different programmes. For example, the University of London consists of 20 self-governing colleges and a School of Advanced Study that is composed of 10 member institutes. Degrees at these university colleges and institutes are awarded by the main university.

Colleges of higher education are another type of higher education institution. Some colleges of higher education are *recognised bodies* (see below) and have the power to award degrees. Others offer higher education courses that lead to degrees awarded by another recognised body.

Some **colleges of further education, institutes, foundations, academies** and **schools** also offer higher education courses leading to degrees awarded by *recognised bodies*. Some of these, especially colleges of further education, also offer programmes that lead to qualifications other than higher education qualifications (i.e. Advanced General Certificate of Education or A levels).

Recognised bodies and listed bodies

The governments of the United Kingdom recognise the degree awarding powers of universities and colleges. These **recognised bodies**, as they are called, have been granted degree awarding powers by either a Royal Charter (see below) or an Act of Parliament. All universities and some colleges of higher education are recognised bodies. In 2006, there are over 130 such institutions.

In addition to the recognised bodies, there are over 550 other institutions that offer courses leading to a degree but do not themselves have the power to award degrees. These are known as **listed bodies**. Their courses are validated by a university or college that has degree awarding powers.

The lists of recognised bodies and listed bodies can be found on the website of the Department for Education and Skills (<http://www.dfes.gov.uk/recognisedukdegrees/>).

Royal Charters and the Privy Council

The older universities (pre-1992) operate under Royal Charters. These charters set out the university's constitution, and statutes, detailing how the university should operate. Royal

Charters were granted to universities by the Sovereign on the advice of the Privy Council, who also approved any amendments made to the charters.

Most newer universities (post-1992) and other HEIs operate under Instruments or Articles of Government. The Privy Council must also approve any changes to these.

Other roles of the Privy Council are to approve the use of the title “university” in an institution’s name, and to approve degree granting powers of an institution. For more information please see <http://www.privacy-council.org.uk>

Higher education institutions pre-1992 (Polytechnics)

Prior to the Further and Higher Education Act of 1992, polytechnics were another type of higher education institution. Created in the late 1960s to expand the higher education system and offer more opportunities for higher education, polytechnics were formed from amalgamation of colleges and other higher education institutions. Polytechnics offered higher and further education programmes, often professionally oriented, to meet the needs of business and industry. They offered the full spectrum of higher education qualifications, including certificates, diplomas, bachelor’s degrees, master’s degrees and doctorates.^{xxxvi} The polytechnics were converted into universities with the Further and Higher Education Act of 1992.

Polytechnics and other non-university higher education institutions awarded degrees through the Council for National Academic Awards (CNAA). Established in 1964, the CNAA was the largest degree-awarding body in the United Kingdom until it was abolished by the Further and Higher Education Act in 1992. Over 140 HEIs had their courses and degrees approved by the CNAA. CNAA awards were considered comparable to those of universities and are recognised by professional associations and employers.

When the CNAA was abolished, the Open University Validation Services (OUVS - <http://www.open.ac.uk/validate>) accepted responsibility for maintaining and providing access to CNAA records.

Independent sector

There are a growing number of independent higher education institutions in the United Kingdom. However, as they are not required to register with authorities, the exact number is not known, but is estimated at over 3,000.^{xxxvii} Independent HE providers are often not subjected to external accreditation, so quality can be difficult to assess. The British Accreditation Council (BAC) is the national non-profit organization that provides accreditation to independent higher and further education institutions. In 2006, over 200 independent colleges are accredited by the BAC (<http://www.the-bac.org/direct.htm>).

Independent HE providers cannot legally offer British qualifications. Only *recognised bodies* can offer degrees and *listed bodies* can only offer courses leading to degrees (see above). BAC accredited independent colleges may offer courses leading to qualifications from overseas universities and colleges provided that these are, in turn, recognized in their own country. The overseas university or college is the awarding body in these cases and not the independent

college.

Quality assurance

Several governmental and non-governmental agencies measure quality in the Higher Education sector. The reports and “league tables” (university and college rankings) produced by these quality assurance agencies provide valuable information to prospective students, employers and others. Funding agencies also use the information to distribute grants to institutions based on the quality of their research or teaching, for example.

The Quality Assurance Agency (QAA), formed in 1997, plays a key role in quality assurance in British higher education. In addition to conducting external reviews of HEIs throughout the United Kingdom, the QAA also performs subjects reviews, helps define academic standards, provides guidelines on good practice, reviews quality of research to recommend funding allocations. Publishes reports on each university and college, highlighting strengths and areas for improvement to help students in their decision of which institution to attend. These reports can be found on the QAA website (<http://www.qaa.ac.uk/default.asp>).

The Teaching Quality Information (TQI) is another resource in HE quality assurance. The TQI website (<http://www2.tqi.ac.uk/sites/tqi/home/index.cfm>) provides reports and other official information about the quality of teaching in institutions and programmes throughout the United Kingdom. This information includes statistical data and results of a national student survey.

Other quality assurance indicators:

- Research Assessment Exercise (RAE) – The RAE is a government-led evaluation of the quality of research in HEIs conducted every five years or so. HEIs receive funding based on the quality of their research. (www.hero.ac.uk/rae/)
- Higher Education Statistical Agency (HESA) Performance Indicators – Each year, on behalf of the government, HESA publishes data on the performance of HEIs in widening participation, student retention, learning and teaching outcomes, research output and employment of graduates. (www.hesa.ac.uk/pi/)
- Professional Body Accreditation – various professional bodies visit departments of HEIs before giving their accreditation to a programme.
- General league tables – Various media sources, such as *The Guardian*, *The Times*, *The Daily Telegraph* and *The Sunday Times*, rank the HEIs each year based on specific criteria.

Academic Year

There is no standard academic year in HEIs in the United Kingdom. However, most universities have three equal terms per year. The typical year runs from the end of September or the beginning of October until the middle of June. Each term has 10 teaching weeks for a total of 30 teaching weeks. Notable exceptions include Oxford and Cambridge, both of which have only 24 weeks per academic year, from the second week of October to mid-June. Each term at Oxford and Cambridge has only eight teaching weeks. Some institutions also offer a semester format.

Types of study

Full time and part time

Most bachelor's degree programmes take three or four years of full time study to complete. Some degrees take longer, such as law or medicine. In many cases, higher education programmes can also be studied part time over a longer period of time.

Sandwich courses

Sandwich degree courses involve a period of work experience or language training “sandwiched” between two or three periods of study. Usually, the work experience or language training is one year in duration and takes place in the workplace, in another university or in a foreign country. In Alberta, this type of study is referred to as a co-op programme.

Distance and flexible learning

Distance learning, also called flexible or open learning, is becoming increasingly common in the United Kingdom, as elsewhere in the world. Many HEIs now offer courses through video, printed and online material, permitting students to study from home. Some programmes require the student to periodically go to the campus, but others are offered entirely from a distance. These courses are particularly attractive to students who work full time or have other commitments, such as stay-at-home parents.

One notable contributor to distance learning is the Open University (OU). Entirely dedicated to distance learning, the OU offers courses to students in the United Kingdom, as well as many other countries within and outside of Europe. The first students started in 1971, and today, there are more than 150,000 undergraduate and 30,000 graduate students.

More information on distance learning and HEIs offering such programmes can be found on *Hobson's Distance Learning* website (www.distancelearning.hobsons.com/) or through the *Prospects* website (www.prospects.ac.uk, choose “distance learning” in the mode of study of the advanced search page).

Bologna Process

The United Kingdom is one of the signatory countries of the Bologna Process. Launched in 1999, the Bologna Process aims to establish a common European system of higher education at both undergraduate and graduate levels by 2010. More information on the Bologna Process in general and in the United Kingdom can be found on the Europe Unit website (www.europeunit.ac.uk/bologna_process).

Summary of the United Kingdom's position on two key elements of the Bologna Process:

- Credits – The use of credits in HEIs in the United Kingdom is common, but not universal. Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland apply credits more thoroughly than England. Generally, one academic year in the United Kingdom is equated to 120 credits, where in the Bologna Process it equals 60 Europe Credit Transfer System (ECTS) credits (i.e. 1 ECTS credit = 2 UK credits). The United Kingdom bases the number of credits on learning outcome rather than the number of hours of study.
- Diploma Supplement – Some but not all HEIs in the United Kingdom issue the Diploma Supplement to their students. It is issued free of charge in English or in Welsh (in Wales). All HEIs are being encouraged to offer the Diploma Supplement.

Qualifications Frameworks

In all parts of the United Kingdom, qualifications fit into frameworks that serve as general indicators of the level of education attained. England, Wales and Northern Ireland share their frameworks while Scotland has its own separate, though very similar, framework. Both are illustrated below.

Qualifications Framework for England, Wales and Northern Ireland

England, Wales and Northern Ireland share two qualifications frameworks: one covers all national qualifications, and the other covers higher education qualifications. The frameworks have been put side by side in an effort to compare all qualifications with each other. **It is important to note that the levels are only used for general comparison and do not indicate that the qualifications have the same content or outcome.**

Table 69. National Qualifications Framework for England, Wales and Northern Ireland

National Qualifications Framework		Framework for Higher Education Qualification levels (FHEQ)
Original levels	Revised levels	
5 – e.g. Level 5 NVQ	8 – Specialist awards	D (doctoral) – Doctorates
	7 – Level 7 Diploma	M (master's) – Master's degrees, postgraduate certificates and diplomas
4 – e.g. Level 4 NVQ, Level 4 Diploma, Level 4 BTEC HND, Level 4 Certificate	6 – Level 6 Diploma	H (honours) – Bachelor's degrees, graduate certificates and diplomas
	5 – Level 5 BTEC HND	I (intermediate) – Diplomas of higher education and further education, foundation degrees, higher national diplomas
	4 – Level 4 Certificate	C (certificate) – Certificates of higher education
3 – e.g. Level 3 Certificate, Level 3 NVQ, A levels		
2 – e.g. Level 2 Diploma, Level 2 NVQ, GCSEs Grades A*-C		
1 – e.g. Level 1 Certificate, Level 1 NVQ, GCSEs Grades D-G		
Entry – Entry Level Certificate in Adult Literacy		

Scottish Credit and Qualifications Framework

Scotland has a different qualifications framework, called the Scottish Credit and Qualifications Framework (SCQF). The SCQF includes all qualifications, including higher education qualifications. As for the National Qualifications Framework, **it is important to note that the levels are for general comparison purposes only and do not indicate same content or outcome for qualifications at the same level.**

Table 70. Scottish Credit and Qualifications Framework

SCQF level (SHE = Scottish Higher Education level)	National qualifications (units, courses and group awards)	Higher National qualifications	Qualifications awarded by higher education institutions in Scotland	SVQs**
12 (SHE D*)			Doctorates	
11 (SHE M*)			Masters/Postgraduate Diploma and Certificate	SVQ 5
10 (SHE H*)			Honours degree	
9 (SHE 3)			Degree	
8 (SHE 2)		Higher National Diploma	Diploma of Higher Education	SVQ 4
7 (SHE 1)	Advanced Higher	Higher National Certificate	Certificate of Higher Education	
6	Higher			SVQ 3
5	Intermediate 2/ Credit Standard Grade			SVQ 2
4	Intermediate 1/ General Standard Grade			SVQ 1
3	Access 3/Foundation Standard Grade			
2	Access 2			
1	Access 1			

* Labels H, M and D refer to Honours, Masters, and Doctoral and are used consistently across the UK.

** Provisional: work is continuing to refine the placing of SVQs within the SCQF.

Documentation

Students graduating from higher education programmes are issued different documents depending on the institution they attend and when. There is no standard documentation in this sector of education. Common documents include transcripts, degree certificates and diplomas, professional certification and/or registration.

It is important to note that for many years, universities and colleges did not typically issue any transcripts – they only issued degree certificates. Even today, some universities still may not provide any transcripts.

Summary of Rationale

The IQAS placement recommendation takes into account the following factors as outlined above:

- admission requirements
- general content
- length of study
- outcome of study
- other placement recommendations

IQAS recommends that the Postgraduate Certificate generally compares to the completion of a Graduate Certificate with a focus in xxx.

The Postgraduate Diploma generally compares to the completion of Graduate Diploma with a focus in xxx.

Grading:

Generally, Higher Education grades in the United Kingdom are lower than they are in Canada. The pass grade is often as low as 35 percent, so a grade of 60 could be considered very good or excellent.

There is no standard grading scale used by all universities, so the following tables are meant to be used for general guidance only.

Table 71. Comparison between UK grades and IQAS grades (example)

UK Grades		IQAS Grade (%)
70-100	A	90
60-69	B	75
50-59	C	65
40-49	D	60
35-39	E	55
0-34	--	Fail

Note: The IQAS grade represents a suggested mid-point in a range of possible grades.

Table 72. Summary of grading scale from the University of Glamorgan (Scotland)

Grade (%)	IQAS Grade (%)
70-100	90
60-69.9	75
50-59.9	65
40-49.9	55
<40	Fail

Note: The IQAS grade represents a suggested mid-point in a range of possible grades.

Some universities also use the European Credit Transfer System (ECTS) grading scale. For an explanation of ECTS, see the *Higher Education* chapter.

Table 73. ECTS Grading Scale

ECTS Grade	Definition	Distribution (%)
A	Excellent – outstanding performance with only minor errors	10
B	Very good – above the average standard but with some errors	25
C	Good – generally sound work with a number of notable errors	30
D	Satisfactory – fair but with significant shortcomings	25
E	Sufficient – performance meets the minimum criteria	10

FX	Fail – some more work required before the credit can be awarded	--
F	Fail – considerable further work is required	--

Source: University of Warwick Academic Office^{xxxviii}

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Country:
United Kingdom

Official Country Name:
United Kingdom

Region:
United Kingdom

Status: Pending
Category: Higher Education

Date Entered: December 8, 2006
Date Revised: December 8, 2006

Credential Actual Name:
Master's Degree

Credential English Name:

Credential Alternate Actual Name(s):
Master of Arts (MA)
Master of Science (MSc)
Master of Letters (MLitt)
Master of Business Administration (MBA)
Master of/by Research (MRe)
Master of xx
Etc.

Credential Alternate English Name(s):

Time Period Credential Offered: Current

Issuing Body: Recognised bodies (all universities and some colleges of higher education)
(More information on *Recognised bodies and listed bodies* is provided in the Rationale below, p. 45.)

Admission Requirements:

Successful completion of an undergraduate degree (usually an honours bachelor's degree in a related field).

Program Description:

Master's degrees generally take at least one year of full time study to complete (or two years part time). They are either *taught* or *research* degrees. Taught courses consist mostly of coursework and include a dissertation, while research degrees require students to produce an original research and thesis, and often, oral defence of the thesis.

There are two main types of **taught master's degrees**:

- Master of Arts (MA), usually in arts, business and social science subjects (though sometimes science subjects are offered as MA degrees also)
- Master of Science (MSc), usually offered in science subjects

Table 74. Sample curriculum for MSc in Public Policy

1. Three compulsory courses (30% of the programme)	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Theories and Actors of the Policy Process• Public Policy Economics and Analysis• Qualitative and Quantitative Research Methods
2. One of the following two courses (10% of the programme)	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Public Management: Theories and Innovations• Law and Regulation
3. Three courses from the options	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• British Government and Politics

(30% of the programme)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Comparative European Politics and Policy • Comparative Human Rights Law • Democracy, Citizenship and Constitutions • Etc.
4. Dissertation of 10,000 words (30% of the programme)	Student chooses the topic

Source: University College London (www.ucl.ac.uk), 2006

Taught master's degrees can have titles other than MA and MSc. For example, at Oxford, master's degrees for subjects in the arts and social studies carry the title of Master of Letters (MLitt). Some universities consider the Master of/by Research (MRe) a taught degree. The Master of Business Administration (MBA) is another type of taught master's degree.

It is important to note that some HEIs offer *research MA and MSc degrees*, so it is always useful to verify the nature of the degree at a particular institution.

Research master's degrees usually include the following main types:

- Master of/by Research (MRe), typically offered in science subjects, with at least 60% of content being individual project work
- Master of Philosophy (MPhil), a two-year full time (or four-year part time) research degree which can lead to the doctorate degree for able students. The MPhil is usually considered the first part of a research doctorate degree.

Some institutions also offer MA or MSc research degrees or, conversely, offer MRes as a taught degrees.

The use of titles varies by institution, so it is always important to verify course descriptions and details using one of the websites below.

Special case: Oxford and Cambridge universities will automatically award MA degrees to graduates of BA degrees a number of years after graduation, if they request it, and with the payment of a nominal fee.

Important note about Scottish Master's Degrees: Some universities, especially Scotland's "ancient universities" (Aberdeen, Edinburgh, Glasgow and St. Andrews), call their honours degree a master's degree (MA(Hons)). These should be considered undergraduate (bachelor) degrees, and not postgraduate degrees.

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Provides Access to in the Home Country:

- Further education (i.e. doctorate degrees)
- Employment
- Access to a profession in some cases

Placement Recommendations:

PIER (Projects for International Education Research) World Education Series, 1991 (US)

England, Wales and Northern Ireland:

- A Master's degree (MBA, MEd, MA/MSc, MPhil) may be considered comparable to a U.S. master's degree.

Scotland:

- A Master's degree (MLE, MMus, MUnivAdmin, MTh, MMedSci, MAppSci, MVM, LLM, MArch, MPH, MCom, MAcc, MBacc, MBA, MSc, MLitt, MPhil) may be considered comparable to a U.S. master's degree.

NOOSR (National Office of Overseas Skills Recognition), 2006 (Australia)

- A Master degree, awarded as a postgraduate degree following a period of postgraduate study by a listed institution or by the CNAA is assessed as comparable to the educational level of an Australian Master degree.

The New Country Index - International Education Research Foundation, 2004 (US)

England, Wales and Northern Ireland:

- The Master of Arts/Master of Science (MA/MSc), Master of Philosophy (MPhil), Master of Literature (MLitt) is considered comparable to an MA/MS/Master of...
- The Master of Business Administration (MBA) is considered comparable to an MBA.

Scotland:

- The Master's Degree/Master of Philosophy (MPhil)/Master of Letters (MLitt) is considered comparable to an MA/MS/Master of...

IQAS Recommendations for:**Employment**

The Master's Degree generally compares to the completion of a Master's Degree with a focus in xxx.

The Master of Philosophy degree generally compares to at least a Master's Degree with a focus in xxx.

Post-secondary Admission

The Master's Degree generally compares to the completion of a Master's Degree with a focus in xxx.

The Master of Philosophy degree generally compares to at least a Master's Degree with a focus in xxx.

Course Equivalencies

30-level courses if no secondary documents available

Rationale:**Background****Graduate qualifications**

Graduate qualifications, referred to as postgraduate qualifications in the United Kingdom, include postgraduate certificates and diplomas, masters degrees and doctorates. Postgraduate courses are usually taken after the completion of an honours degree.

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There are two main types of higher education institutions (HEIs) in the United Kingdom: universities and colleges of higher education. These and the other types of HEIs are described briefly below.

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Independent sector

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BAC (<http://www.the-bac.org/direct.htm>).

Independent HE providers cannot legally offer British qualifications. Only *recognised bodies* can offer degrees and *listed bodies* can only offer courses leading to degrees (see above). BAC accredited independent colleges may offer courses leading to qualifications from overseas universities and colleges provided that these are, in turn, recognized in their own country. The overseas university or college is the awarding body in these cases and not the independent college.

Quality assurance

Several governmental and non-governmental agencies measure quality in the Higher Education sector. The reports and “league tables” (university and college rankings) produced by these quality assurance agencies provide valuable information to prospective students, employers and others. Funding agencies also use the information to distribute grants to institutions based on the quality of their research or teaching, for example.

The Quality Assurance Agency (QAA), formed in 1997, plays a key role in quality assurance in British higher education. In addition to conducting external reviews of HEIs throughout the United Kingdom, the QAA also performs subjects reviews, helps define academic standards, provides guidelines on good practice, reviews quality of research to recommend funding allocations. Publishes reports on each university and college, highlighting strengths and areas for improvement to help students in their decision of which institution to attend. These reports can be found on the QAA website (<http://www.qaa.ac.uk/default.asp>).

The Teaching Quality Information (TQI) is another resource in HE quality assurance. The TQI website (<http://www2.tqi.ac.uk/sites/tqi/home/index.cfm>) provides reports and other official information about the quality of teaching in institutions and programmes throughout the United Kingdom. This information includes statistical data and results of a national student survey.

Other quality assurance indicators:

- Research Assessment Exercise (RAE) – The RAE is a government-led evaluation of the quality of research in HEIs conducted every five years or so. HEIs receive funding based on the quality of their research. (www.hero.ac.uk/rae/)
- Higher Education Statistical Agency (HESA) Performance Indicators – Each year, on behalf of the government, HESA publishes data on the performance of HEIs in widening participation, student retention, learning and teaching outcomes, research output and employment of graduates. (www.hesa.ac.uk/pi/)
- Professional Body Accreditation – various professional bodies visit departments of HEIs before giving their accreditation to a programme.
- General league tables – Various media sources, such as *The Guardian*, *The Times*, *The Daily Telegraph* and *The Sunday Times*, rank the HEIs each year based on specific criteria.

Academic Year

There is no standard academic year in HEIs in the United Kingdom. However, most universities have three equal terms per year. The typical year runs from the end of September or the beginning of October until the middle of June. Each term has 10 teaching weeks for a total of 30

teaching weeks. Notable exceptions include Oxford and Cambridge, both of which have only 24 weeks per academic year, from the second week of October to mid-June. Each term at Oxford and Cambridge has only eight teaching weeks. Some institutions also offer a semester format.

Types of study

Full time and part time

Most bachelor's degree programmes take three or four years of full time study to complete. Some degrees take longer, such as law or medicine. In many cases, higher education programmes can also be studied part time over a longer period of time.

Sandwich courses

Sandwich degree courses involve a period of work experience or language training "sandwiched" between two or three periods of study. Usually, the work experience or language training is one year in duration and takes place in the workplace, in another university or in a foreign country. In Alberta, this type of study is referred to as a co-op programme.

Distance and flexible learning

Distance learning, also called flexible or open learning, is becoming increasingly common in the United Kingdom, as elsewhere in the world. Many HEIs now offer courses through video, printed and online material, permitting students to study from home. Some programmes require the student to periodically go to the campus, but others are offered entirely from a distance. These courses are particularly attractive to students who work full time or have other commitments, such as stay-at-home parents.

One notable contributor to distance learning is the Open University (OU). Entirely dedicated to distance learning, the OU offers courses to students in the United Kingdom, as well as many other countries within and outside of Europe. The first students started in 1971, and today, there are more than 150,000 undergraduate and 30,000 graduate students.

More information on distance learning and HEIs offering such programmes can be found on *Hobson's Distance Learning* website (www.distancelearning.hobsons.com/) or through the *Prospects* website (www.prospects.ac.uk, choose "distance learning" in the mode of study of the advanced search page).

Bologna Process

The United Kingdom is one of the signatory countries of the Bologna Process. Launched in 1999, the Bologna Process aims to establish a common European system of higher education at both undergraduate and graduate levels by 2010. More information on the Bologna Process in general and in the United Kingdom can be found on the Europe Unit website (www.europeunit.ac.uk/bologna_process).

Summary of the United Kingdom's position on two key elements of the Bologna Process:

- Credits – The use of credits in HEIs in the United Kingdom is common, but not universal. Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland apply credits more thoroughly than England. Generally, one academic year in the United Kingdom is equated to 120 credits, where in the

Bologna Process it equals 60 Europe Credit Transfer System (ECTS) credits (i.e. 1 ECTS credit = 2 UK credits). The United Kingdom bases the number of credits on learning outcome rather than the number of hours of study.

- Diploma Supplement – Some but not all HEIs in the United Kingdom issue the Diploma Supplement to their students. It is issued free of charge in English or in Welsh (in Wales). All HEIs are being encouraged to offer the Diploma Supplement.

Qualifications Frameworks

In all parts of the United Kingdom, qualifications fit into frameworks that serve as general indicators of the level of education attained. England, Wales and Northern Ireland share their frameworks while Scotland has its own separate, though very similar, framework. Both are illustrated below.

Qualifications Framework for England, Wales and Northern Ireland

England, Wales and Northern Ireland share two qualifications frameworks: one covers all national qualifications, and the other covers higher education qualifications. The frameworks have been put side by side in an effort to compare all qualifications with each other. **It is important to note that the levels are only used for general comparison and do not indicate that the qualifications have the same content or outcome.**

Table 75. National Qualifications Framework for England, Wales and Northern Ireland

National Qualifications Framework		Framework for Higher Education Qualification levels (FHEQ)
Original levels	Revised levels	
5 – e.g. Level 5 NVQ	8 – Specialist awards	D (doctoral) – Doctorates
	7 – Level 7 Diploma	M (master's) – Master's degrees, postgraduate certificates and diplomas
4 – e.g. Level 4 NVQ, Level 4 Diploma, Level 4 BTEC HND, Level 4 Certificate	6 – Level 6 Diploma	H (honours) – Bachelor's degrees, graduate certificates and diplomas
	5 – Level 5 BTEC HND	I (intermediate) – Diplomas of higher education and further education, foundation degrees, higher national diplomas
	4 – Level 4 Certificate	C (certificate) – Certificates of higher education
3 – e.g. Level 3 Certificate, Level 3 NVQ, A levels		
2 – e.g. Level 2 Diploma, Level 2 NVQ, GCSEs Grades A*-C		
1 – e.g. Level 1 Certificate, Level 1 NVQ, GCSEs Grades D-G		
Entry – Entry Level Certificate in Adult Literacy		

Scottish Credit and Qualifications Framework

Scotland has a different qualifications framework, called the Scottish Credit and Qualifications Framework (SCQF). The SCQF includes all qualifications, including higher education qualifications. As for the National Qualifications Framework, **it is important to note that the levels are for general comparison purposes only and do not indicate same content or outcome for qualifications at the same level.**

Table 76. Scottish Credit and Qualifications Framework

SCQF level (SHE = Scottish Higher Education level)	National qualifications (units, courses and group awards)	Higher National qualifications	Qualifications awarded by higher education institutions in Scotland	SVQs**
12 (SHE D*)			Doctorates	
11 (SHE M*)			Master's/Postgraduate Diploma and Certificate	SVQ 5
10 (SHE H*)			Honours degree	
9 (SHE 3)			Degree	
8 (SHE 2)		Higher National Diploma	Diploma of Higher Education	SVQ 4
7 (SHE 1)	Advanced Higher	Higher National Certificate	Certificate of Higher Education	
6	Higher			SVQ 3
5	Intermediate 2/ Credit Standard Grade			SVQ 2
4	Intermediate 1/ General Standard Grade			SVQ 1
3	Access 3/Foundation Standard Grade			
2	Access 2			
1	Access 1			

* Labels H, M and D refer to Honours, Master's, and Doctoral and are used consistently across the UK.

** Provisional: work is continuing to refine the placing of SVQs within the SCQF.

Documentation

Students graduating from higher education programmes are issued different documents depending on the institution they attend and when. There is no standard documentation in this sector of education. Common documents include transcripts, degree certificates and diplomas, professional certification and/or registration.

It is important to note that for many years, universities and colleges did not typically issue any transcripts – they only issued degree certificates. Even today, some universities still may not provide any transcripts.

Summary of Rationale

The IQAS placement recommendation takes into account the following factors as outlined

above:

- admission requirements
- general content
- length of study
- outcome of study
- other placement recommendations

IQAS recommends that the Master's Degree generally compares to the completion of a Master's Degree with a focus in xxx.

The Master of Philosophy degree generally compares to at least a Master's Degree with a focus in xxx.

Grading:

Generally, Higher Education grades in the United Kingdom are lower than they are in Canada. The pass grade is often as low as 35 percent, so a grade of 60 could be considered very good or excellent.

There is no standard grading scale used by all universities, so the following tables are meant to be used for general guidance only.

Table 77. Comparison between UK grades and IQAS grades (example)

UK Grades		IQAS Grade (%)
70-100	A	90
60-69	B	75
50-59	C	65
40-49	D	60
35-39	E	55
0-34	--	Fail

Note: The IQAS grade represents a suggested mid-point in a range of possible grades.

Table 78. Summary of grading scale from the University of Glamorgan (Scotland)

Grade (%)	IQAS Grade (%)
70-100	90
60-69.9	75
50-59.9	65
40-49.9	55
<40	Fail

Note: The IQAS grade represents a suggested mid-point in a range of possible grades.

Some universities also use the European Credit Transfer System (ECTS) grading scale. For an explanation of ECTS, see the *Higher Education* chapter.

Table 79. ECTS Grading Scale

ECTS Grade	Definition	Distribution (%)
A	Excellent – outstanding performance with only minor errors	10
B	Very good – above the average standard but with some errors	25
C	Good – generally sound work with a number of notable errors	30
D	Satisfactory – fair but with significant shortcomings	25
E	Sufficient – performance meets the minimum criteria	10
FX	Fail – some more work required before the credit can be awarded	--
F	Fail – considerable further work is required	--

Source: University of Warwick Academic Office^{xli}

© 2006 the Crown in right of the Province of Alberta, [International Qualifications Assessment Service \(IQAS\)](#), 9th Floor, 108 Street Building, 9942 - 108 Street, Edmonton, Alberta, Canada T5K 2J5

Country:
United Kingdom

Official Country Name:
United Kingdom

Region:
United Kingdom

Status: Pending
Category: Higher Education

Date Entered: December 8, 2006
Date Revised: December 8, 2006

Credential Actual Name:
Doctorate Degree

Credential English Name:

Credential Alternate Actual Name(s):
Doctor of Philosophy (PhD/DPhil)
Doctor of Business Administration (DBA)
Doctor of Applied Social Research (DASR)
Doctor of Education Psychology (DEdPsy)
Education Doctorate (EdD)
Etc.

Credential Alternate English Name(s):

Time Period Credential Offered: Current

Issuing Body: Recognised bodies (all universities and some colleges of higher education)
(More information on *Recognised bodies and listed bodies* is provided in the Rationale below, p. 45.)

Admission Requirements:

Successful completion of a graduate degree (usually a master's degree in a related field)

Program Description:

Doctorate degrees, commonly referred to as PhD or DPhil, are advanced graduate degrees requiring at least three years of full time study (or six years part time). Entry requirements for doctorate degrees are typically either a research bachelor degree (honours, usually First Class or Upper Second Class), or a master degree. Those students who enter with only a bachelor degree are often enrolled in a two-year research programme (sometimes referred to as MPhil), and then proceed to the third year (PhD or DPhil) if deemed capable enough.

Although most doctorate degrees are research degrees, there are also some taught doctorates.

- Taught doctorate degrees, sometimes known as professional doctorate degrees, include coursework in their programmes, and a thesis of reduced scope. The names of these degrees may vary and include such titles as Doctor in Business Administration (DBA), Doctor of Applied Social Research (DASR), Doctor of Education Psychology (DEdPsy), Education Doctorate (EdD), etc.
- Research doctorate degrees focus more on original research and include completion of a longer, more in depth thesis. There is often no coursework in research doctorate degrees.

Note: Higher doctorate degrees

Higher doctorate degrees, such as the Doctor of Letters (DLitt), Doctor of Science (DSc) or Doctor of Laws (LLD) are awarded to people who have distinguished themselves academically

in their field, usually by their research and publications.

Provides Access to in the Home Country:

- Employment
- Access to a profession in some cases

Placement Recommendations:

PIER (Projects for International Education Research) World Education Series, 1991 (US)

- The Doctor of Philosophy (PhD)/Doctor of Business Administration (DBA) may be considered comparable to a U.S. earned doctorate.

NOOSR (National Office of Overseas Skills Recognition), 2006 (Australia)

- A Doctor of Philosophy (PhD or DPhil) awarded by a listed institution is assessed as comparable to the educational level of an Australian Doctoral degree.

The New Country Index - International Education Research Foundation, 2004 (US)

- The Doctor of Philosophy (PhD) is considered comparable to a PhD.

IQAS Recommendations for:

Employment

The Doctorate Degree generally compares to the completion of a Doctor of Philosophy degree with a focus in xxx.

Post-secondary Admission

The Doctorate Degree generally compares to the completion of a Doctor of Philosophy degree with a focus in xxx.

Rationale:

Background

Graduate qualifications

Graduate qualifications, referred to as postgraduate qualifications in the United Kingdom, include postgraduate certificates and diplomas, masters degrees and doctorates. Postgraduate courses are usually taken after the completion of an honours degree.

More information on postgraduate courses, including course description and institution information is available on the *Prospects* website (www.prospects.ac.uk) and on the *Hobsons Postgrad* website (www.postgrad.hobsons.com).

Higher Education Institutions

There are two main types of higher education institutions (HEIs) in the United Kingdom: universities and colleges of higher education. These and the other types of HEIs are described briefly below.

Universities are independent, self-governing institutions. All universities in the United

Kingdom are *recognised bodies*, meaning that they have the power to award degrees (see *Recognised bodies and listed bodies* below). They decide their own admission criteria, develop courses and decide which degrees they offer. Most universities conduct research as well as teaching.

University colleges and institutes are institutions that are part of larger universities. Some university colleges and institutes are small and specialize in one area of study, while others are large institutions that offer many different programmes. For example, the University of London consists of 20 self-governing colleges and a School of Advanced Study that is composed of 10 member institutes. Degrees at these university colleges and institutes are awarded by the main university.

Colleges of higher education are another type of higher education institution. Some colleges of higher education are *recognised bodies* (see below) and have the power to award degrees. Others offer higher education courses that lead to degrees awarded by another recognised body.

Some **colleges of further education, institutes, foundations, academies** and **schools** also offer higher education courses leading to degrees awarded by *recognised bodies*. Some of these, especially colleges of further education, also offer programmes that lead to qualifications other than higher education qualifications (i.e. Advanced General Certificate of Education or A levels).

Recognised bodies and listed bodies

The governments of the United Kingdom recognise the degree awarding powers of universities and colleges. These **recognised bodies**, as they are called, have been granted degree awarding powers by either a Royal Charter (see below) or an Act of Parliament. All universities and some colleges of higher education are recognised bodies. In 2006, there are over 130 such institutions.

In addition to the recognised bodies, there are over 550 other institutions that offer courses leading to a degree but do not themselves have the power to award degrees. These are known as **listed bodies**. Their courses are validated by a university or college that has degree awarding powers.

The lists of recognised bodies and listed bodies can be found on the website of the Department for Education and Skills (<http://www.dfes.gov.uk/recognisedukdegrees/>).

Royal Charters and the Privy Council

The older universities (pre-1992) operate under Royal Charters. These charters set out the university's constitution, and statutes, detailing how the university should operate. Royal Charters were granted to universities by the Sovereign on the advice of the Privy Council, who also approved any amendments made to the charters.

Most newer universities (post-1992) and other HEIs operate under Instruments or Articles of Government. The Privy Council must also approve any changes to these.

Other roles of the Privy Council are to approve the use of the title “university” in an institution's

name, and to approve degree granting powers of an institution. For more information please see <http://www.privacy-council.org.uk>

Higher education institutions pre-1992 (Polytechnics)

Prior to the Further and Higher Education Act of 1992, polytechnics were another type of higher education institution. Created in the late 1960s to expand the higher education system and offer more opportunities for higher education, polytechnics were formed from amalgamation of colleges and other higher education institutions. Polytechnics offered higher and further education programmes, often professionally oriented, to meet the needs of business and industry. They offered the full spectrum of higher education qualifications, including certificates, diplomas, bachelor's degrees, master's degrees and doctorates.^{xlii} The polytechnics were converted into universities with the Further and Higher Education Act of 1992.

Polytechnics and other non-university higher education institutions awarded degrees through the Council for National Academic Awards (CNAA). Established in 1964, the CNAA was the largest degree-awarding body in the United Kingdom until it was abolished by the Further and Higher Education Act in 1992. Over 140 HEIs had their courses and degrees approved by the CNAA. CNAA awards were considered comparable to those of universities and are recognised by professional associations and employers.

When the CNAA was abolished, the Open University Validation Services (OUVS - <http://www.open.ac.uk/validate>) accepted responsibility for maintaining and providing access to CNAA records.

Independent sector

There are a growing number of independent higher education institutions in the United Kingdom. However, as they are not required to register with authorities, the exact number is not known, but is estimated at over 3,000.^{xliii} Independent HE providers are often not subjected to external accreditation, so quality can be difficult to assess. The British Accreditation Council (BAC) is the national non-profit organization that provides accreditation to independent higher and further education institutions. In 2006, over 200 independent colleges are accredited by the BAC (<http://www.the-bac.org/direct.htm>).

Independent HE providers cannot legally offer British qualifications. Only *recognised bodies* can offer degrees and *listed bodies* can only offer courses leading to degrees (see above). BAC accredited independent colleges may offer courses leading to qualifications from overseas universities and colleges provided that these are, in turn, recognized in their own country. The overseas university or college is the awarding body in these cases and not the independent college.

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Types of study

Full time and part time

Most bachelor's degree programmes take three or four years of full time study to complete. Some degrees take longer, such as law or medicine. In many cases, higher education programmes can also be studied part time over a longer period of time.

Sandwich courses

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- Diploma Supplement – Some but not all HEIs in the United Kingdom issue the Diploma Supplement to their students. It is issued free of charge in English or in Welsh (in Wales). All HEIs are being encouraged to offer the Diploma Supplement.

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In all parts of the United Kingdom, qualifications fit into frameworks that serve as general indicators of the level of education attained. England, Wales and Northern Ireland share their frameworks while Scotland has its own separate, though very similar, framework. Both are illustrated below.

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Table 80. National Qualifications Framework for England, Wales and Northern Ireland

National Qualifications Framework		Framework for Higher Education Qualification levels (FHEQ)
Original levels	Revised levels	
5 – e.g. Level 5 NVQ	8 – Specialist awards	D (doctoral) – Doctorates
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	5 – Level 5 BTEC HND	I (intermediate) – Diplomas of higher education and further education, foundation degrees, higher national diplomas
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2 – e.g. Level 2 Diploma, Level 2 NVQ, GCSEs Grades A*-C		
1 – e.g. Level 1 Certificate, Level 1 NVQ, GCSEs Grades D-G		
Entry – Entry Level Certificate in Adult Literacy		

Scottish Credit and Qualifications Framework

Scotland has a different qualifications framework, called the Scottish Credit and Qualifications Framework (SCQF). The SCQF includes all qualifications, including higher education qualifications. As for the National Qualifications Framework, **it is important to note that the levels are for general comparison purposes only and do not indicate same content or outcome for qualifications at the same level.**

Table 81. Scottish Credit and Qualifications Framework

SCQF level (SHE = Scottish Higher Education level)	National qualifications (units, courses and group awards)	Higher National qualifications	Qualifications awarded by higher education institutions in Scotland	SVQs**
12 (SHE D*)			Doctorates	
11 (SHE M*)			Master's/Postgraduate Diploma and Certificate	SVQ 5
10 (SHE H*)			Honours degree	
9 (SHE 3)			Degree	

8 (SHE 2)		Higher National Diploma	Diploma of Higher Education	SVQ 4
7 (SHE 1)	Advanced Higher	Higher National Certificate	Certificate of Higher Education	
6	Higher			SVQ 3
5	Intermediate 2/ Credit Standard Grade			SVQ 2
4	Intermediate 1/ General Standard Grade			SVQ 1
3	Access 3/Foundation Standard Grade			
2	Access 2			
1	Access 1			

* Labels H, M and D refer to Honours, Master's, and Doctoral and are used consistently across the UK.

** Provisional: work is continuing to refine the placing of SVQs within the SCQF.

Documentation

Students graduating from higher education programmes are issued different documents depending on the institution they attend and when. There is no standard documentation in this sector of education. Common documents include transcripts, degree certificates and diplomas, professional certification and/or registration.

It is important to note that for many years, universities and colleges did not typically issue any transcripts – they only issued degree certificates. Even today, some universities still may not provide any transcripts.

Summary of Rationale

The IQAS placement recommendation takes into account the following factors as outlined above:

- admission requirements
- general content
- length of study
- outcome of study
- other placement recommendations

IQAS recommends that the Doctorate Degree generally compares to the completion of a Doctor of Philosophy degree with a focus in xxx.

Grading:

Generally, Higher Education grades in the United Kingdom are lower than they are in Canada. The pass grade is often as low as 35 percent, so a grade of 60 could be considered very good or excellent.

There is no standard grading scale used by all universities, so the following tables are meant to be used for general guidance only.

Table 82. Comparison between UK grades and IQAS grades (example)

UK Grades		IQAS Grade (%)
70-100	A	90
60-69	B	75
50-59	C	65
40-49	D	60
35-39	E	55
0-34	--	Fail

Note: The IQAS grade represents a suggested mid-point in a range of possible grades.

Table 83. Summary of grading scale from the University of Glamorgan (Scotland)

Grade (%)	IQAS Grade (%)
70-100	90
60-69.9	75
50-59.9	65
40-49.9	55
<40	Fail

Note: The IQAS grade represents a suggested mid-point in a range of possible grades.

Some universities also use the European Credit Transfer System (ECTS) grading scale. For an explanation of ECTS, see the *Higher Education* chapter.

Table 84. ECTS Grading Scale

ECTS Grade	Definition	Distribution (%)
A	Excellent – outstanding performance with only minor errors	10
B	Very good – above the average standard but with some errors	25
C	Good – generally sound work with a number of notable errors	30
D	Satisfactory – fair but with significant shortcomings	25
E	Sufficient – performance meets the minimum criteria	10
FX	Fail – some more work required before the credit can be awarded	--
F	Fail – considerable further work is required	--

Source: University of Warwick Academic Office^{xliv}

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- ⁱ National Curriculum online, Department of Education and Skills (http://www.nc.uk.net/nc_resources/html/ks3and4.shtml), accessed April 2006
- ⁱⁱ Designing and timetabling the primary curriculum: a practical guide for key stages 1 and 2; AND Designing the Key Stage 3 curriculum (<http://www.qca.org.uk/2799.html>), accessed June 2006
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- ^v Entitlement Framework – Initial Guidance, Department of Education of Northern Ireland (http://www.deni.gov.uk/2005_18-entitlement_framework-initial_guidance.pdf), accessed May 2006
- ^{vi} The educational system of the United Kingdom – The admission and placement of students from the United Kingdom and study abroad opportunities, PIER Workshop Report, Sylvia K. Higashi (Dir. and Ed.), Richard Weaver (Dir.), Alan Margolis (Ed.) (1991)
- ^{vii} A Curricular Framework for Children 3 to 5, Scottish Consultative Council on the Curriculum (1999) (http://www.ltscotland.org.uk/earlyyears/images/CF3to5_tcm4-115469.pdf), accessed April 2006
- ^{viii} A Curricular Framework for Children 3 to 5, Scottish Consultative Council on the Curriculum (1999) (http://www.ltscotland.org.uk/earlyyears/images/CF3to5_tcm4-115469.pdf), accessed April 2006
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