



Structures of Education and Training Systems in Europe

United Kingdom - England

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STRUCTURES OF EDUCATION AND TRAINING SYSTEMS IN EUROPE

UNITED KINGDOM – ENGLAND

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If you wish to obtain more details on education systems in Europe, please consult the EURYBASE database (<http://www.eurydice.org>), the Cedefop database (http://www.cedefop.europa.eu/etv/Information_resources/NationalVet/Thematic/) and the website of the European Training Foundation (<http://www.etf.europa.eu/>)

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INTRODUCTION: GENERAL POLICY CONTEXT

England is a constituent part of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland.

It has no separate government of its own and English legislation is passed by the UK Government in Westminster. The United Kingdom has a constitutional monarchy and the Sovereign is Head of State and Head of Government. The UK Government comprises the Legislature (Parliament), the Executive (the Cabinet, which consists of about 20 Ministers, usually heads of the government departments and chosen by the Prime Minister) and the Judiciary.

Parliament consists of the Queen, the House of Lords comprising both appointed and hereditary members, and the elected House of Commons. Parliament passes laws, monitors government policy and administration, controls finance, enables the Government to levy taxes, protects and safeguards the rights of the individual, examines European Union (EU) proposals and debates current major issues. Most of the work of Parliament is conducted in the House of Commons which is composed of 646 elected members, known as Members of Parliament (MPs). Most MPs belong to political parties. The main political parties are Labour, Conservative and the Liberal Democrats. The political party which wins the most parliamentary seats in a general election forms the next government (the Executive) which is led by the party leader who becomes Prime Minister. Following the May 2005 general election, the Labour Party is currently serving its third term of office.

In 1999, Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland⁽¹⁾ were granted devolved powers from the UK Government to administer their domestic affairs, although they still retain representation in the UK Parliament at Westminster. Westminster, as the sovereign parliament of the UK, retains the power to legislate about any matter, including devolved matters, but will not normally do so without the agreement of the devolved governments.

The United Kingdom does not have a written constitution setting out the fundamental principles on which the rights and responsibilities of citizens are based. However, the Human Rights Act (1998), which applies to all parts of the UK, incorporates into law nearly all the rights contained in the European Convention on Human Rights and gives citizens a clear legal statement of their basic rights and fundamental freedoms. With regard to education, the Act states that nobody should be denied the right to education. Parents also have the right to ensure that their religious or philosophical beliefs are respected when public bodies provide education or teaching to their children.

In addition, the Equality Act 2006 introduced a number of measures to promote equality across a broad range of areas in England, Wales and Scotland. It established the Commission for Equality and Human Rights (CEHR), which aims to reduce inequality, eliminate discrimination, strengthen good relations between people, and promote and protect human rights. The Commission enforces equality legislation on age, disability, gender, race, religion or belief, sexual orientation or transgender status, and encourages compliance with the Human Rights Act.

The framework for the education system in England is set out in a number of Acts of Parliament, many of which also apply in part, to Wales. For the school system, the framework Acts are the Education Act 1996 which defines primary, secondary and further education and outlines the principles underlying compulsory education and the School Standards and Framework Act 1998 which established a new legal framework for maintained primary and secondary schools. The framework for further education is set out in the Learning and Skills Act 2000. The Education and Skills Act 2008 includes provisions to raise the compulsory age of participation in education, training or work-based learning to 18 from

⁽¹⁾ In 2002, the Northern Ireland Assembly was suspended due to the political situation and returned to direct control by the Government at Westminster. However, power was restored to the Northern Ireland Assembly in 2007 and since then, the Assembly has once again been able to legislate in devolved areas.

2015. Higher education is defined by the Education Reform Act 1988 but higher education institutions (HEIs) are diverse and there is no single legal framework setting out the legal basis on which they run their affairs. The Government controls the right of HEIs to award their own degrees under the provision of the Further and Higher Education Act 1992.

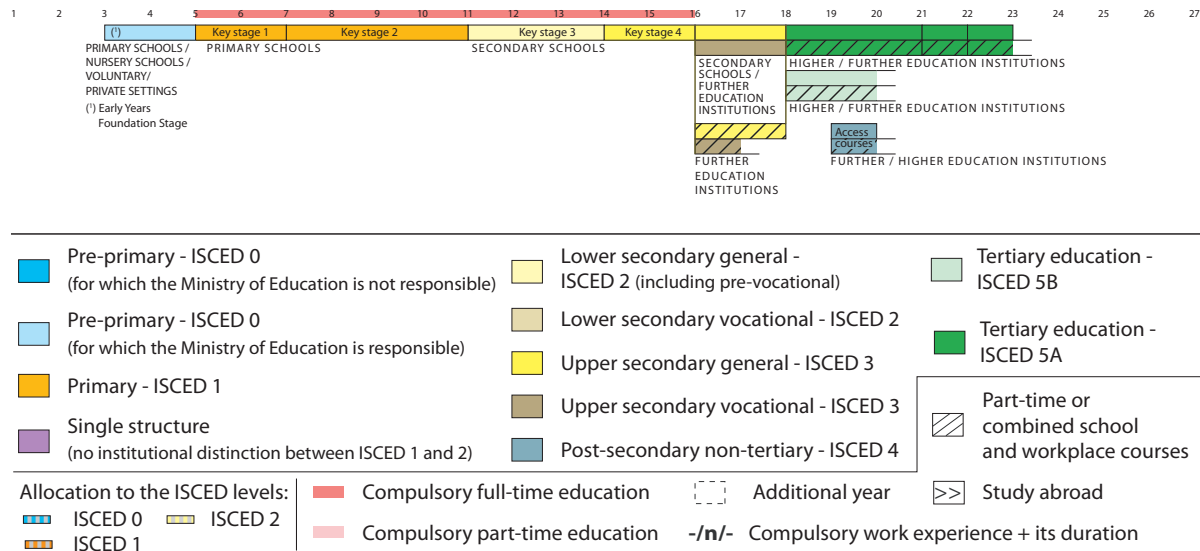
The structure of local government is not uniform across the country. In some parts of the country, all public services are provided by the single-tier local authority, which may be a London borough, a metropolitan borough or a unitary authority. In other parts of the country, a two-tier system is in operation, with the top-tier local authority, the county council, providing the bulk of services such as education and social services, and smaller district councils providing other services such as housing and refuse collection.

In 2008, the population of England was estimated at 51 446 200. The population of the UK as a whole was estimated at 61 383 200. The official language by custom and practice is English. It is also the language of instruction. However, there is a wide range of community languages which are sustained within immigrant communities ⁽²⁾. The most predominant group are South Asian languages such as Punjabi, Urdu, Gujarati, Hindi and Bengali.

⁽²⁾ A survey of community languages conducted by CILT, the National Centre for Languages in 2005, found that at least 300 languages were spoken by school pupils in England.

1. INITIAL EDUCATION AND TRAINING: ORGANISATION, FUNDING AND QUALITY ASSURANCE

1.1 Organisation of the initial education and training system



ISCED 0 covers pre-primary education. Participation at this level is not compulsory, but publicly-funded provision is available for all three- and four-year-olds, and also for some two-year-olds in deprived areas. It can be provided in schools or by funded providers in the private and voluntary sectors. The Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS), introduced in September 2008, provides a single framework of curricular and care requirements for children from birth to age five.

ISCED 1 covers primary education for children aged between five and 11. Primary education is divided into two phases: key stage 1 (ages five to seven), and key stage 2 (ages seven to 11). At primary school, children follow a general programme of education as set out in the National Curriculum.

ISCED 2 covers secondary education for students aged between 11 and 14. During this phase, known as key stage 3, students follow a general programme of education as set out in the National Curriculum.

ISCED 3 covers secondary education for students aged between 14 and 16. This phase is known as key stage 4 and is generally provided in the same school as key stage 3. At key stage 4, students select specific programmes of study which lead to a number of nationally recognised qualifications normally taken at 16. These can be in vocational subjects, or, more commonly, in general subjects. Compulsory school ends at 16.

ISCED 3 also covers post-compulsory advanced level programmes. When taken by school leavers, they typically last for two years (ages 16 to 18). Students at this stage are also assessed by means of external qualifications. They may choose between general (academic) and vocational subjects or courses, or take a mixture of the two. Where students follow post-compulsory advanced level programmes in schools, the sixth form is the term used to describe this school phase. Sixth forms tend to offer more general programmes, although vocational programmes are also available. Sixth form colleges are also major providers of general programmes. Another option is for students to transfer to a further education (FE) college (see introduction to chapter 4).

A wide range of general and vocational qualifications at ISCED 3 are also available to learners of all ages. FE colleges are major providers to both 16- to 19-year-olds and older learners. Programmes for older learners at ISCED 3 vary in their duration.

ISCED 4 applies to one very specific programme – the access course. Access courses are provided by further education colleges and are aimed at mature students wishing to gain entry to higher education. They are designed and taught to meet the needs of adult learners.

ISCED 5 and 6 cover higher education programmes, which includes bachelor's degrees, master's degrees and doctorates as well as a number of shorter vocationally oriented programmes. Higher education is provided in 133 higher education institutions (HEIs), including 90 universities. It is also provided in some further education colleges.

1.2 Distribution of responsibilities

Education in England is administered at both national and local level. The education system is characterised by its decentralised nature. Responsibility for different aspects of the service is shared between central government, local government, churches and other voluntary bodies, the governing bodies of educational institutions and the teaching profession.

For more detailed information on the distribution of responsibilities in different sectors of education, see sub-sections below.

Distribution of responsibilities for education in schools

Education in schools includes: the reception class for four- to five-year-olds in primary schools, classified as ISCED 0; ISCED 1 covering primary education for children aged five to 11; ISCED 2 covering secondary education for 11- to 14-year-olds and ISCED 3 covering secondary education for 14- to 18-year-olds.

At national level, the **Department for Children, Schools and Families (DCSF)** has overall responsibility for the central administration of all aspects of education and related services, excluding further and higher education, which come within the remit of the Department for Business, Innovation and Skills (BIS). DCSF responsibilities include planning and monitoring the education service in pre-school institutions and schools, ensuring the provision of integrated services for children, and bringing together policy relating to children and young people.

The DCSF's main functions include advising ministers on education policy; framing legislation; accounting for the effectiveness of the education system; and allocating, monitoring and accounting for resources.

The DCSF is kept informed on the quality of education and care by the non-ministerial government department, the **Office for Standards in Education, Children's Services and Skills (Ofsted)**. For further information on Ofsted's work, see section 1.4.

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

The Apprenticeships, Skills, Children and Learning Act, passed in November 2009, formally established the **Qualifications and Curriculum Development Agency (QCDA)**, which replaces the Qualifications and Curriculum Authority (QCA). The QCDA is a new NDPB with responsibility for developing the pre-school, primary and secondary curricula; improving and delivering National Curriculum and early years assessments; and reviewing and reforming qualifications.

The Act also formally established the **Office of the Qualifications and Examinations Regulator (Ofqual)** ⁽³⁾ as the new independent regulator of qualifications, tests and examinations. Key aspects of Ofqual's role include ensuring that organisations which offer and deliver qualifications (awarding bodies or awarding organisations – see below) have good systems in place and are held to account for their performance; standards in qualifications, tests and examinations are monitored and the findings are reported; there is fair access to examinations for all candidates; and the quality of marking is high.

England shares a common system of external qualifications with Wales and Northern Ireland (for full details, see section 4.4). These qualifications are normally taken between the ages of 16 and 18 (at ISCED 3) and are provided by independent organisations known as **awarding bodies** or **awarding organisations**. These organisations are funded by examination fees. Awarding organisations are subject to statutory regulation and their role involves: developing qualifications; assessing and quality assuring qualifications; awarding qualifications; and providing customer service to centres (including schools, further education colleges and adult education centres) offering courses leading to their qualifications.

The three principal awarding organisations in England are: the Assessment and Qualifications Alliance (AQA); Edexcel; and the OCR (Oxford, Cambridge and RSA Examinations). These awarding organisations offer both general and vocational qualifications. They offer the same type of qualifications, which must be centrally approved, but schools are free to choose examination specifications from any one of the five providers across England, Wales and Northern Ireland.

The **Training and Development Agency for Schools (TDA)** is an executive NDPB of the Department for Children, Schools and Families (DCSF). The TDA is responsible for initial teacher training and continuing professional development of the whole school workforce, including teachers and support staff, including teaching assistants.

The **National College for Leadership of Schools and Children's Services**, another NDPB of the DCSF, offers headteachers, school leaders and senior leaders of children's services opportunities for professional leadership development.

Becta is a government-funded agency, operating on a UK-wide basis, which works with the DCSF and other partners to ensure that the potential of technology is taken fully into account in developing future policy. It leads the coordination, development and delivery of the Government's strategy to harness the power of technology to help improve education, skills and children's services.

As well as NDPBs, there are many bodies which, in addition to their other functions, provide advice to government or represent the interests of particular groups or sectors. They include the **General Teaching Council for England (GTC)**, an independent professional body for teaching. All teachers wishing to teach in maintained schools (schools funded through their local authority) are required to register with the Council. It maintains a register of teachers and a Code of Practice for the profession.

The management and administration of education is not generally effected at regional level. However, there are nine **Government Offices for the Regions**, which are responsible for managing and delivering some government plans and programmes within the field of education and skills. The Government Offices (GOs) operate as a network which aims to connect central government with local

⁽³⁾ The Qualifications and Curriculum Authority (QCA) was set up under the Education Act 1997 to develop and regulate the national curriculum, assessments in schools and qualifications. In 2007 the Government decided to set up an independent examinations regulator, Ofqual, which has now taken on most of QCA's regulatory functions. Ofqual was set up in interim form in April 2008, but was formally established under the Apprenticeships, Skills, Children and Learning Act in November 2009. The Act also replaced the QCA with the Qualifications and Curriculum Development Agency, which will deliver and build on QCA's non-regulatory work.

people and organisations; enhance national policy by ensuring that this takes account of the differing needs of each region; integrate regional strategies; and ensure the effective delivery of government programmes regionally and locally.

At local level, responsibility for the management and administration of education lies with 150 **local authorities (LAs)**.

Major changes have taken place in educational administration at local level following the 'Every Child Matters' Green Paperⁱ, published in 2003. It proposed a range of measures to reform and improve children's care and to provide children with the support they need to achieve the five outcomes of: being healthy; staying safe; enjoying and achieving; making a positive contribution; and economic wellbeing. The Green Paper formed the basis of the Children Act 2004. The key focus of this legislation was to integrate services provided for children, and to centre these services more effectively around the needs of children, young people and families. As a result, LAs have established integrated departments responsible for, at a minimum, education for children and young people, children's social services, and children's health and multi-agency functions.

LAs have a statutory duty to secure the provision of primary and compulsory secondary education (pupils aged five to 16). Other key responsibilities regarding schools include: school admissions; financial administration; promoting high standards and the fulfilment of potential; staffing and staff development; ensuring regular school attendance; support for inclusion, special educational needs and behaviour support; dealing with complaints; school meals; grants and allowances and transport to school.

The extent of LA control over the education system has diminished in recent decades. Following the introduction of local management of schools (LMS) under the Education Reform Act 1988, most school administration and management functions are now delegated to school governing bodies.

Governing bodies are responsible and accountable for all major decisions about a school and its future. They normally comprise between nine and 20 members. Governors have a legal responsibility to conduct the school with a view to promoting high standards of educational achievement. The school governing body decides the general direction of the school and its curriculum, subject to the requirements of the National Curriculum. It must ensure that the National Curriculum is implemented and that religious education is taught. It also decides how the budget will be spent, determines the number and composition of the staff, and is responsible for selecting the headteacher and other members of the school's leadership group. The headteacher and staff report to the governing body on the school's overall performance, and in its turn the governing body should ensure accountability to parents and the wider local community. Since September 2007, governing bodies have had a duty to promote community cohesion.

All schools have a **headteacher**, who is responsible for the internal organisation, management and control of the school. Headteachers have a wide range of professional duties, including formulating the overall aims and objectives of the school; appointment and management of staff; evaluating the standards of teaching and learning at the school; determining and implementing an appropriate curriculum for the school; reviewing staff performance; ensuring that the performance of pupils is monitored and recorded; ensuring an acceptable standard of pupil behaviour; and promoting good relations between the school and parents.

A school's staffing structure typically includes the **Senior Leadership Team (SLT)**. As well as the headteacher, the SLT would include one or more deputy headteachers and one or more assistant headteachers. A small primary school might have just one deputy head who would combine management duties with classroom teaching, while a large secondary school might have up to half a dozen deputies and assistant heads who would spend only a small proportion of their time in the

classroom. Sometimes, the SLT may also include staff who are not teachers, for example a bursar or school business manager.

The staffing structure usually also includes a middle leadership layer. **Middle managers** might include heads of department or curriculum areas (in a secondary school), responsible for managing subject teaching in their areas, and also heads of year or key stage ⁽⁴⁾ managers, responsible for students' pastoral care.

Parents have a responsibility to ensure that children of compulsory school age receive an efficient full-time education suitable to their age, ability and aptitude, and to any special educational needs (SEN) they may have. In addition, parents may put themselves forward to serve as school governors.

Many schools have school councils in which **pupils**, often representing individual year groups, can make an active contribution to the school environment and ethos.

Distribution of responsibilities in the further education sector

The further education sector focused initially on technical education, but has since grown to encompass a much wider range of provision. It now provides education to school leavers from age 16 at ISCED 3 (see section 4), to adults who may be undertaking basic skills courses at ISCED 1 or general and vocational qualifications at ISCED 3 (see section 7 and 4); and to adult learners undertaking access to higher education courses at ISCED 4 (see section 5).

The **Department for Business, Innovation and Skills (BIS)** is the government department with overall responsibility for further education policy. Its other responsibilities include science and innovation, higher education and enterprise. Its mission is 'to create the conditions for business success by promoting innovation, enterprise and science and by giving everyone the skills and opportunities to succeed'.

The Learning and Skills Act 2000 integrated the planning and funding of all post-16 education and training below higher education into one sector, under the auspices of the **Learning and Skills Council**. The LSC works through a national office in Coventry and nine regional offices which oversee the work of local partnership teams throughout the country.

Plans are however in place to reform the administration and delivery of post-16 education and training. Subject to the passing of legislation, the LSC will be disbanded and responsibility for 16 to 19 education will transfer to local authorities (LAs) from 2010. LAs will be responsible for the commissioning and funding of provision for all children in the 0 to 19 age range. A new organisation, the **Young People's Learning Agency (YPLA)** will support LAs in carrying out their new duties.

Responsibility for post-19 education and training will transfer to a new **Skills Funding Agency (SFA)**. It will be supported by a new **Adult Advancement and Careers Service (AACCS)** and a **National Employer Service** offering skills advice and support to large national employers, which should both be operational from 2010. The SFA will also house the new **National Apprenticeship Service**, which was launched in April 2009. It provides leadership, support and advocacy for Apprenticeship programmes.

QCDA, Ofqual and awarding organisations have responsibilities with regard to further and adult education and training. For further information on the nature of these responsibilities, see above section on schools.

⁽⁴⁾ The statutory National Curriculum for compulsory education is divided into four key stages: key stage 1 (ages five to seven); key stage 2 (ages seven to 11); key stage 3 (ages 11 to 14) and key stage 4 (ages 14 to 16).

The **Learning and Skills Improvement Service (LSIS)**, a new sector-owned organisation launched in October 2008, supports excellence, leadership development and self-regulation in the further education sector.

Further education (FE) colleges are public corporations and are therefore subject to company law. They each have a **governing body or corporation**, usually comprising between 10 and 20 members, which fulfils a role similar to the board of directors of a company. They are responsible, within the limits imposed by their statutory obligations, for all decisions affecting the institution. Their main tasks are to set the strategic direction, mission and educational character of the institution; ensure accountability; and monitor and evaluate performance.

Day-to-day management, organisation and direction are the responsibility of the principal and the management team, working within the broad framework of policies and priorities determined by the governing body. The principal is directly accountable to the governing body/corporation for the performance of the institution, in terms of both academic and financial matters.

In FE institutions other than sixth-form colleges, an academic board must be created to advise the principal on the standards, planning, coordination, development and oversight of the academic work of the institution.

There is no nationally recommended internal organisational structure for further education colleges, and institutions are free to adapt their structures to meet changing circumstances. Most are organised into departments according to area of study.

Distribution of responsibilities for higher education

Higher education institutions providing programmes at ISCED 5 and 6 are classified as government-dependent private institutions. The Department for Business, Innovation and Skills (BIS) is responsible for higher education in England. Although the Government controls the right to award degrees and to use the title 'university', in other matters, such as degree structure, degree titles, programme development and quality assurance, the sector has a long tradition of autonomy. The representative bodies – Universities UK (UUK) and GuildHE – and the Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education (QAA), an independent body, work with the sector on a UK-wide basis.

1.3 Financing

Overview

The Government, through the Department for Children, Schools and Families (DCSF) and the Department for Business, Innovation and Skills (BIS), provides funds to the various statutory and non-statutory agencies for education including the Learning and Skills Council (for post-16 education) and the Higher Education Funding Council for England (HEFCE). Central government also provides funds to local authorities for education services in the local area. In addition, the Government makes grants available to local authorities to meet specific government education priorities.

Financing of pre-school education

Pre-school education is classified as ISCED 0.

For information on the financing of pre-school education which is provided by a school, see section below on primary and secondary schools.

The Government is expanding and developing publicly-funded early years education by cooperation with the private and voluntary sectors (see 2.1). Voluntary and private providers of early years education in these sectors may be paid a grant for educating three- and four-year-olds in their

immediate pre-school year. To receive this funding, they must have been inspected by Ofsted and found satisfactory in terms of quality.

Financing of primary and secondary schools

Primary schools (children aged five to 11) provide education at ISCED 1. Secondary schools provide education at ISCED 2 (students aged 11 to 14) and ISCED 3 (students aged 14 to 18).

Individual local authorities receive allocations in the form of grants from central government, which they are free to 'top up' with money from other sources, and which they then allocate to the maintained schools in their area. Schools currently receive their funding for sixth forms (students aged 16 to 18+) from the Learning and Skills Council (see below for further information).

The majority of revenue funding for schools (recurrent funding, eg for teacher and support staff salaries, books and equipment) comes from the Dedicated Schools Grant (DSG), which covers a three-year period. The amount of DSG passed from central government to a local authority is calculated based on projected pupil numbers; projected delegated budgets for individual schools; and projected budgets for other local authority services, such as special educational needs provision.

Local authorities (LAs) retain responsibility for setting the overall level of the 'Individual Schools Budget'. Pupil numbers is the most common factor included in the formula for determining individual school funding allocations. Additional factors or criteria which may be taken into account are numerous and vary from one local authority to another. For example, they can include the special educational needs of pupils; the numbers of pupils for whom English is not their first language or salaries at a school. All LAs must however take into account the incidence of social deprivation among pupils.

The Government also provides schools with grants which must be spent on specific education priorities. The main channel for doing so is the Standards Fund. The Government expects schools and local authorities to regard the Standards Fund as making a contribution to their development and improvement agenda, including personalised learning.

Capital funding produces or protects an asset that will last a long time such as a building, machinery or large items of equipment. It falls into the following three broad categories:

- **Funding for local authorities and schools** – Much of this funding is devolved directly to schools. There is a higher rate for schools that are un-modernised and a lower rate (50 per cent) for those that have had 80 per cent or more of their floor areas modernised over the last ten years. This category also includes funding allocated to local authorities to focus on national and local priorities for modernisation, access and pupil places. This is allocated on the basis of relative need, the amount of modernised or un-modernised schools and pupil numbers.
- **Long term strategic programmes** – These include the Building Schools for the Future (BSF) programme for secondary schools and the Primary Capital Programmes. These programmes aim to rebuild and refurbish all secondary schools and at least half of all primary schools over the next 15 years.
- **Targeted programmes** – These programmes support government priorities in local authorities with the highest need. They provide capital funding to support higher standards and diversity of provision including promoter projects, fresh starts (where a school causing concern is closed and a new school re-opened on the same site), new federations of schools and the expansion of successful and popular schools. There is also funding earmarked to support the introduction of kitchens in areas of greatest need. This category also includes

funding for local authorities yet to be involved in BSF, funding to support the introduction of Diplomas (see 4.4.), and funding to improve buildings for children with special educational needs and disabilities.

Financing of further education colleges

The further education sector provides education to school leavers from age 16 at ISCED 3 (see section 4), to adults who may be undertaking basic skills courses at ISCED 1 or general and vocational qualifications at ISCED 3 (see section 7 and 4); and to adult learners undertaking access to higher education courses at ISCED 4 (see section 5).

The **Learning and Skills Council (LSC)** (see 1.2) introduced new demand-led funding models for all post-16 education and training in 2008. There are now separate funding models for 16 to 18 provision, adult learner-responsive provision and employer-responsive provision, as well as a new national funding formula. This formula for all LSC programme funding is based on standard learner numbers, provider factors and additional learning support factors. Standard learner numbers are based on learner enrolments. Provider factors are based on the qualifications/programmes on offer (different programmes have different weightings and additional monies are allocated dependent on achievement and/or retention rates by qualification/programme); on the additional costs of providing for disadvantaged learners; and on local area costs (which are significantly increased in London and the south east of England, for example).

Bodies which provide post-16 education and training must set fees, make awards and recover costs from students, employers etc. in accordance with criteria set by the LSC. Education and training is provided free of charge to 16- to 19-year-olds, but is not usually free for adults. However, 19- to 25-year-olds studying for their first qualification at level 3 of the Qualifications and Credit Framework (QCF) and adults studying for basic literacy and numeracy courses at level 2 of the QCF are entitled to free tuition. (See section 4.4 for further information on the QCF.)

Financing of higher education

Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) (providing education at ISCED levels 5 and 6) receive their funding from a variety of public and private sources, including student tuition fees, with the largest proportion provided by Government. The Government provides funding for teaching and research infrastructure through an 'arms length' body, the Higher Education Funding Council for England (HEFCE), which determines the methodology within broad policy guidelines provided by the Secretary of State. Funding for teaching takes account of the number of students and the subjects they study, student-related factors that recognise the additional costs of recruiting and supporting students from areas with low participation in higher education, disabled students and part-time students; and institutional factors such as the additional cost of institutions in London and those which have old and historic buildings. Recurrent research funding is distributed by reference to quality, as assessed by performance in the most recent Research Assessment Exercise, and volume of activity. Funding for teaching and research infrastructure are combined into a block grant which institutions are free to spend according to their own priorities. The direct costs of specific research projects are funded not by HEFCE but by the seven Research Councils, operating on a UK-wide basis. Research Council funds are awarded on the basis of applications made by individual researchers, which are subject to independent, expert peer review. HEFCE also funds certain higher education courses delivered at further education (FE) colleges.

1.4 Quality assurance

The education service operates within a strong framework of accountability to students, to parents, to the community and to the Government and its agencies. External inspection plays an important role,

as does the publication of performance data and other information on individual institutions and on wider aspects of the education system. Institutional self-evaluation is both an increasingly important part of the quality improvement process and a key input to external evaluation. Another important element in the accountability framework is the role of governing bodies – publicly-funded schools, colleges and universities are accountable for their own performance through a governing body which includes representatives of key stakeholders, such as, in the case of schools, parents, staff and representatives of the local community.

Inspection arrangements for education, children's services and skills

Ofsted is the non-ministerial government department responsible for the inspection and regulation of daycare and children's social care, and the inspection of children's services, schools, colleges, initial teacher training, youth work, work-based learning and adult education. This covers ISCED levels 0 to 4, and in the case of initial teacher training, ISCED 5.

In March 2009, Ofsted published a common framework for inspection and regulation, which came into effect from September 2009 ⁽ⁱⁱ⁾. The framework sets out the principles and common practices which form the basis of all of the inspection and regulation that it conducts. It aims to provide consistency and coherence for inspection and regulation, although there remain separate frameworks setting out detailed inspection frameworks for specific sectors – for example, there is a framework for the inspection of maintained schools from September 2009.

The common evaluation schedule is one of the key elements of the framework and forms the basis of all Ofsted's inspection and regulation judgements. It sets out the structure of the inspection and identifies the key aspects against which judgements are made. The notice period for inspection ranges from no notice to a maximum of 20 days. Grading is made on a four-point scale: outstanding; good; satisfactory and inadequate.

Providers receive one grade for overall effectiveness, based on all the other judgements made during inspection and regulation. They are also judged on outcomes for learners. These are based on the five 'Every Child Matters' outcomes: being healthy; staying safe; enjoying and achieving; making a positive contribution; and achieving economic well-being (see 1.2 for further information).

Leaders and managers are judged on their effectiveness. Judgements are made on value for money; equality and diversity; safeguarding; partnerships; engagement with users; ambition and prioritisation; and self-evaluation.

Self-evaluation forms a key feature in the inspection and regulation of all providers. It is expected that all providers should produce evidence for inspectors of their self-evaluation. It should form the basis of any pre-inspection analysis and should help to identify the focus for inspection and regulation and to plan inspection activities.

For many sectors, judgements are also made on the quality of provision, which assesses the quality of teaching and learning and the impact on learning; the curriculum; assessment and care; guidance and support.

One of the main principles underpinning Ofsted inspection and regulation is 'to be proportionate' – the scale of inspection and regulation should be adjusted according to the outcome of previous inspection. For example, from September 2009 there will be more frequent inspections for schools that are inadequate or satisfactory, and a longer interval for those judged good or outstanding.

Inspection of independent schools

Independent, or as they are commonly known, private schools receive no public funding and are largely financed by fees paid by parents.

All independent schools are required to be registered with the Department for Children, Schools and Families (DCSF). As a condition of registration, they are required to comply with a set of regulations covering a range of areas, such as the quality of education provided; the welfare, health and safety of pupils and the suitability of proprietors and staff.

Following initial registration, all independent schools must be inspected. Most independent schools are inspected either by Ofsted or the Independent Schools Inspectorate (ISI) to ensure that the standards for registration continue to be met. Ofsted inspects independent schools according to a three-year inspection cycle. The ISI is an approved body for the purposes of inspecting registered independent schools and operates an inspection framework which is broadly comparable to the inspection framework operated by Ofsted. ISI inspects independent schools which are members of an association affiliated to the Independent Schools Council. Ofsted maintains a careful scrutiny of ISI inspection systems and the DCSF has reserved the right to request Ofsted to inspect any member school at any time.

Local authorities' responsibilities for school quality

Local authorities (LAs) are responsible for quality assurance in the schools which they maintain and for taking initial action in failing schools. They are expected to monitor schools' performance through the analysis of information about standards and other aspects of school performance already available to them, and through the examination of school development plans and post-inspection action plans.

LAs also collect information through judgments made by schools' own self-evaluation and through direct observation of schools' activity through visits by their own inspection and advisory services. These services provide advice and consultancy to help schools analyse their current standards, identify effective ways of improving, set targets and keep in touch with good practice.

School Improvement Partners (SIPs) are the main link between a school and the local authority. They act as a critical, professional friend to a school, helping its leadership to evaluate its performance, identify priorities for improvement, and plan effective change. All schools have SIPs; how their time is utilised is decided by local authorities, but in general they are expected to devote five days a year to an individual school. The National College for School Leadership (see 1.2) is responsible for accrediting SIPs until 2010.

Quality assurance of the education system as a whole

Information on the performance of pupils and students in national assessments and in qualifications is published nationally. Comparative tables, known as the 'School and College Achievement and Attainment Tables', are published for all primary, secondary, independent and some special schools. The tables also include results for students aged 16 to 18 in further education colleges.

The information published includes:

- the performance of pupils in National Curriculum tests at the end of key stage (age 11 years) (and, until 2009, at key stage 3, aged around 14 – see section 4.4. for further information).
- performance in the main public examinations and vocational qualifications normally taken at ages 16 and 18.

- measures which show how much 'value' each school has added, based on the progress made by individual pupils from one stage of their education to another, and taking account of contextual information including, for example, pupils' prior attainment, gender or any special educational needs they may have.

The information provided in the tables is intended to inform local authorities (LAs) and institutions, and to focus their attention on areas where action is needed, as well as to inform students' and parents' decisions about their own and their children's futures.

The Framework for Excellence (FfE), a new approach to performance management and quality improvement in the further education sector is being piloted during the 2009/10 academic year, with full implementation due to take place from September 2010. The Framework is formed from a set of performance indicators that cover aspects of a college's or provider's provision, such as success rates; views of learners and employers; learner destinations; and finance. Assessment of providers' performance against the Framework will be published on an annual basis. The Framework is intended to help students and employers make informed choices about the quality of FE provision; help providers to improve provision and allow the Government to evaluate the success of their FE policies.

In addition, England takes part in international studies of student attainment such as those organised by the OECD Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA), the International Association for the Evaluation of Educational Achievement (IEA) Trends in Mathematics and Science Study (TIMSS), and the IEA Progress in International Reading Literacy Study (PIRLS).

There have recently been changes to arrangements for assessing the performance of local authorities (LAs). Comprehensive Area Assessment (CAA), a new system for the inspection of local public services (including education) was introduced on 1st April 2009. Combining the perspectives of seven partner inspectorates, CAA will provide a joint assessment of outcomes for people in an area and a forward look at prospects for sustainable improvement. Ofsted's work in assessing the performance of children's services (including education) in each LA will contribute to the CAA.

There is no single body or process responsible for the overall evaluation of the education system. One of the mechanisms for evaluating education includes the Public Service Agreement (PSA) system adopted by the Treasury, the UK's economics and finance ministry. Additional public expenditure is tied explicitly to the achievement of higher national outputs. Targets for education are largely expressed in terms of achievement by learners, and cover all levels from primary education through to adult learning. The progress made by the Department for Children, Schools and Families (DCSF) and the Department for Business, Innovation and Skills (BIS) is set out in an annual autumn performance report.

Quality assurance of higher education

Academic standards for programmes at ISCED 5 and ISCED 6 are established and maintained by higher education institutions themselves using shared quality assurance approaches and structures. These include the universal use of external examiners, a standard set of indicators and other reports, and by the activities of the Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education (QAA). The QAA is an independent body, funded by subscriptions from all UK higher education institutions and through contracts with the higher education funding bodies. The QAA conducts peer-review based audits and reviews of higher education institutions with the opportunity for subject-based review as the need arises. Reviews are carried out using a variety of methods depending on the country and type of institution. The accuracy and adequacy of quality-related information published by the higher education institutions is also reviewed. Standards in professional areas are assured by the relevant professional, statutory and regulatory bodies. The QAA also reviews higher education programmes delivered in further education colleges using a process known as integrated quality and enhancement review (IQR).

2. PRE-PRIMARY EDUCATION

Education at ISCED 0 is known by a variety of terms – ‘early years’, ‘nursery’, ‘pre-school’ or ‘pre-primary’ education.

The School Standards and Framework Act 1998 defines nursery education as full-time or part-time education suitable for children who have not attained compulsory school age (the term after a child's fifth birthday), whether provided at schools or elsewhere. The Act also placed a statutory duty on local authorities (LAs) to ensure the provision of pre-primary education in their area. Under the Childcare Act 2006, from April 2008, LAs have also had a duty to secure provision of sufficient childcare in their area.

Participation in pre-school education is voluntary. Over recent years, the Government has set targets to expand and develop government-funded pre-school education and childcare and all three- and four-year-olds are now entitled to free part-time pre-school places. Free part-time places are also available for some two-year-olds in deprived areas.

Maintained schools, both primary schools and nursery schools, are major providers of pre-school education places. These places can either be provided in standalone nursery schools, or in nursery classes and reception classes (children aged four to five) within primary schools. They are also provided in children's centres, which offer integrated early years education, childcare and related family support and health services. The children's centres are being established initially in the most disadvantaged areas, but the Government intends that one will be available in every community by 2010. The recent expansion of pre-school education has also involved the private and voluntary sectors, which are supported by government funding to provide free places.

The Childcare Act 2006 led to the introduction of a new quality framework for early learning and childcare, the ‘Early Years Foundation Stage’ (EYFS) in September 2008. It brings together learning and development and welfare requirements regardless of the type, size or funding of the setting. It forms a single framework of requirements from birth to age five, thus ending the distinction between education and care and between birth-to-three and three-to-five provision. All registered early years providers and LAs must comply with the EYFS.

These developments in education and care form part of ‘Every Child Matters’, a wider programme of reform which emphasises the integration and improvement of all services for children and families, including health and family support as well as education and childcare. See 1.2. for further information.

There is no general entitlement to free pre-school education and care for children under the age of three. Parents can choose to pay for early education and care in the private and voluntary sector.

2.1 Admission

Parents have a right to express a preference for a particular pre-school institution for their child but, in cases where the demand for places exceeds availability, the institution will follow its published admissions policy to allocate places. The Department for Children, Schools and Families (DCSF) recommends that, in deciding on their admissions policies, local authorities give priority to children with special educational needs (SEN) and to children from socially and economically deprived families. Other admissions criteria may include the proximity to the school of the child's home, and whether the child has any brothers or sisters already attending the school/institution.

Institutions in the private and voluntary sectors set their own admissions policies.

2.2 Organisation of time, groups and venue

Early years providers receiving government funding for free part-time, pre-school places for three- and four-year-olds should offer all eligible children a minimum of five sessions per week, each lasting a minimum of two-and-a-half hours. Places should be available for 38 weeks of the year. There are moves to increase this provision from the current 12.5 hours per week for 38 weeks of the year, to 15 hours per week by 2010, and to 20 hours a week in the longer term.

Providers in the maintained sector (standalone nursery schools and nursery and reception classes within primary schools) tend to follow the same terms as primary schools, and are therefore open for 38 weeks of the year, Monday to Friday. Typically, the year runs from September to July and is usually divided into three terms. Many private providers, for example day nurseries are open all day from 8am until 6pm. Parents (especially those in employment) may choose to pay fees in addition, so that their child can stay for longer than the 12.5 hours each week offered through government funding.

Children aged between four and five are often in the reception class of a primary school. Many of these children will have attained compulsory school age by the end of this year (see introduction to chapter 3).

New legal requirements for ratios of adults to children came into force with the introduction of the Early Years Foundation Stage in September 2008 (see introduction to this chapter). These vary depending on the age of children, the type of early years setting, and the levels of qualification held by staff. The ratio requirements of all registered providers for children aged up to three in group settings are:

- one adult for every three children under 2
- one adult for every four 2-year-olds.

The ratio requirements of all registered providers for three and four-year-olds in any registered early years provision are:

- one adult for every 8 children outside the hours of 8am and 4pm and at any time where a person with qualified teacher status, early years professional status (see 2.5) or another equivalent qualification. At least one member of staff must hold a full and relevant ISCED 3 qualification (see 4.4.) (as defined by the Children's Workforce Development Council, CWDC) and at least half of all other staff must hold a full and relevant ISCED 3 qualification, but at a lower level within the Qualifications and Credit Framework, QCF (see 4.4).
- one adult for every 13 children between the hours of 8am and 4pm where a person has qualified teacher status, early years professional status or another equivalent qualification. At least one member of staff must hold a full and relevant ISCED 3 qualification (as defined by CWDC).

2.3 Curriculum

The Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) framework, which was introduced in September 2008, promotes an integrated approach to care and education and forms a single framework of curricular requirements from birth to age five. It unifies previous welfare and early learning frameworks and requires every registered provider to support children's learning. During the EYFS children work towards 'early learning goals', which cover six learning and development areas: personal, social and emotional development; communication, language and literacy; problem-solving, reasoning and numeracy; knowledge and understanding of the world; physical development; and creative development. There are 69 early learning goals in total, which most children will achieve by the age of

five. The child's development in relation to these early learning goals is assessed through ongoing observations. See 2.4. for further information.

In all pre-school settings which receive government funding, the headteacher and staff are free to decide on teaching methods and on teaching materials, which they purchase from their budget. Local authorities (LAs) may give advice about the organisation of teaching and the teaching programme, but have no powers to impose teaching methods.

2.4 Assessment

Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) Profiles are completed for all pupils at the end of the EYFS (the period of education from birth until the age of five). For most children, a Profile will be completed at the end of the reception class (children aged four to five) in primary school, although Profiles can be completed in any formal childcare setting in which children complete the EYFS. Each child's development is assessed in relation to the statutory early learning goals (see 2.3.) by accumulating observations and knowledge of the whole child. The EYFS Profile is intended to provide a means of summing up each child's development and learning achievements at the end of the EYFS. Practitioners' observations of children's achievement across the six areas of learning are measured against a nine-point scale. Points 1-3 are the 'stepping stones' that describe a child's progress towards the early learning goals; points 4-8 represent attainment within the early learning goals; and point 9 represents attainment beyond the early learning goals. The Profile data is shared with parents and Year 1 teachers (the first year of compulsory primary school, children aged five to six).

2.5 Teachers

All **teachers** employed in maintained schools, including nursery schools must have qualified teacher status (QTS) in order to be authorised to teach. The Secretary of State stipulates the criteria which trainee teachers must meet in order to achieve QTS. Providers of initial teacher training (ITT) must also meet approved criteria to be able to offer programmes leading to QTS, although they are responsible for course planning, content and management. Most ITT providers are higher education institutions (HEIs).

Routes into teaching can be concurrent or consecutive. Trainee teachers choosing the concurrent route follow a three or four-year programme in which general education is combined with professional training, leading to a bachelor's degree with QTS. Intending teachers who wish to take the consecutive route must first take a bachelor's degree, which can be in any subject, and then apply to take a one-year programme of professional training, the Postgraduate Certificate in Education (PGCE) with QTS. The bachelor's degree with QTS and the PGCE both combine academic study with periods of teaching practice in a school.

Participation in continuing professional development (CPD) is part of the contractual professional duties of a teacher. For further information about CPD, see section 3.6.

As part of the 'Every Child Matters' agenda (see 1.2), the Children's Workforce Development Council (CWDC) has developed national standards for achieving **early years professional status (EYPS)**. It will be equivalent to QTS (see above). To be awarded EYPS, candidates must demonstrate that they meet a set of 39 national professional standards, specifically covering child development from birth to age five. Candidates holding a relevant degree, such as a degree in Early Childhood Studies, would probably be able to access the shorter pathways, while candidates holding a non-relevant degree would probably need to join the longer pathway, which would take 12 months of full-time study. The first candidates began assessment for EYPS in September 2006. The Government aims to have an Early Years Professional in every full daycare setting by 2015.

Qualified **nursery assistants** usually need to hold a relevant child care qualification at ISCED level 3. Examples include: CACHE Level 3 Diploma in Child Care and Education; a BTEC National Diploma in Children's Care, Learning and Development; or an NVQ Level 3 in Children's Care, Learning and Development (for general information on these qualifications see section 4.4). Qualifications for nursery assistants are also available at a lower level. See 2.2.

3. PRIMARY EDUCATION

Education at ISCED 1 is known as primary education. It is defined in the Education Act 1996 as catering for pupils between the ages of five and 11 years. Education is compulsory from the age of five. Children reach compulsory school age on a prescribed day following their fifth birthday. The actual prescribed dates are set by the Secretary of State for Children, Schools and Families and are normally: 31 August, 31 December and 31 March. Once they reach compulsory school age, children are required to start school when the new school term starts.

The 1996 Act also divided the period of compulsory education (ages five to 16) into four key stages. Primary education covers key stages 1 and 2; key stage 1 caters for pupils aged five to seven years and key stage 2 for those aged seven to 11 years.

Schools provide a reception class (ISCED 0) for children who reach compulsory school age before the start of key stage 1 (ISCED 1). Reception places may also be available for four-year-olds for all or part of the year. See section 2.2 for further information.

School organisation is determined locally, and although many primary schools are for pupils aged five to 11, in some areas, there are separate 'infant' schools for pupils in key stage 1 (aged five to seven), and 'junior' schools for pupils in key stage 2 (aged seven to 11). In addition, in a few areas of England, schools are organised in three phases: primary or 'first' schools for pupils aged five to eight or nine years, middle schools for pupils aged eight to 12 years or nine to 13 years), and secondary or 'high' schools (for students aged 12 or 13 to 16+ years).

The general aims of primary education are defined in terms of the curriculum. See 3.3 for further information.

Although education is compulsory from the age of five to 16, school is not. Under the Education Act 1996, the responsibility for a child's education rests with their parents. For children not educated at school, the most common alternative is education at home.

The School Standards and Framework Act 1998 defined a new legal framework for maintained primary and secondary schools, which divides them into community, voluntary and foundation schools. The majority of schools are community schools which are established and fully funded by local authorities (LAs). Foundation schools are also funded by LAs, but are owned by the school governing body or a charitable foundation. Voluntary schools were originally established by voluntary bodies, mainly churches, which retain some control over their management. They are now largely funded by LAs. All categories of maintained schools enjoy a high level of autonomy.

There are also independent schools, commonly known as private schools. Independent schools receive no public funding and are largely financed by fees paid by parents.

Virtually all primary schools are mixed sex.

No charge may be made for education provided wholly or mainly within school hours (excluding midday breaks) for pupils in maintained primary schools. Education which takes place wholly or mainly outside school hours, which is part of the National Curriculum, must also be provided free of charge. In addition, charges may not be made for the cost of materials, books, instruments or any other equipment.

Primary schools may however, charge for activities that fall outside the above categories. They are required to have a policy setting out the cases in which they charge for activities. They may also ask parents for voluntary contributions towards any activity which takes place during school hours, school equipment and school funds generally.

All schools provide morning and afternoon sessions with a lunch break between them. Children whose parents receive certain social security benefits must be provided with free school meals. Supervised facilities for pupils to eat packed lunches brought from home must also be provided, as well as paid lunches where parents request them.

Local authorities (LAs) must also provide transport free of charge for pupils who do not live within walking distance of the nearest suitable school. Walking distance is defined as two miles for children up to the age of eight and three miles for those aged eight or over.

3.1 Admission

Children must start primary school once they have reached compulsory school age, that is, at the beginning of the term following their fifth birthday. Many start earlier, at some point after their fourth birthday, depending on the policy of the local education authority and the school. The class for children aged four to five is known as the reception class (ISCED 0, see section 2). It forms part of the primary school in that, once admitted to the reception class, a child progress through the school without any further admission procedures. This is not the case for children in the nursery class of a primary school, who are subject to separate admissions arrangements to enter the reception class.

Parents are able to express a preference for the school they wish their child to attend. They also have a legal right of appeal if a place is not offered at the school of their choice.

A school's admissions policy is established by the relevant admissions authority, which is either the LA or the school governing body depending on the legal category of school and the arrangements between the LA and the school. This policy must comply with the mandatory provisions of the *School Admissions Code* (ⁱⁱⁱ).

The admissions policy must describe the application procedure and explain how places will be allocated if there are more applications than places at the school. For example, priority may be given to children who live closest to the school, or to children who already have brothers or sisters at the school. Since September 2007, schools have been required to give priority in their oversubscription criteria to 'looked after children' (children in public care).

Schools designated as having a religious character may give preference in their admissions arrangements to members of a particular faith or denomination, providing this does not conflict with other legislation.

3.2 Organisation of time, groups and venue

Schools must be open for 190 days a year. Term and holiday dates are determined by the local authority (LA) or the school governing body, depending on the legal category of school.

The school year generally runs from early September to the latter part of July. It is divided into three terms with a long summer break of around six weeks in July and August, shorter breaks of around two weeks at Christmas and Easter, and one week in the middle of each term, known as the half-term holiday.

An increasing number of schools are adopting a standard six-term school year. It is divided into six blocks of roughly even length which are more evenly distributed throughout the year: two, approximately seven-week blocks before Christmas, followed by four approximately six-week blocks afterwards. The spring break is taken around the first two weeks of April irrespective of the timing of Easter. The decision to implement the six-term year in schools remains at the level of the LA or school governing body.

Schools normally operate five days a week (Monday to Friday). They are generally open between 9.00 a.m. and 3.30/4.00 p.m. with approximately one hour for lunch. A break of around 15 minutes may punctuate the morning and/or afternoon sessions. The organisation of time within the school day is determined by the school.

There are statutory minimum weekly lesson times for children at primary level. These are 21 hours for pupils aged five to seven years and 23.5 hours for pupils aged eight to 11 years. Most schools provide more hours of lessons than the minimum.

The Education Act 2002 enabled schools to directly provide a range of community services and activities, often out of traditional school hours. The Government has set a target for all schools to offer a full range of core 'extended services' by 2010. It is intended that schools should offer a varied menu of activities, such as homework clubs, sport, music tuition and opportunities to visit museums and galleries, combined with high quality childcare in primary schools; parenting support; swift and easy access to targeted and specialist services; and community access to school facilities.

Most children at primary level are taught in mixed-ability classes with children of the same age, with one teacher in charge of the class. Many schools employ teaching assistants, who work alongside teachers in the classroom supporting pupils on an individual or group basis (see 3.6. for further information).

Some schools teach some subjects, eg maths, in groups organised on the basis of ability. Smaller or rural schools may have mixed-age classes.

All maintained primary schools are required to ensure that all five-, six- and seven-year-olds (in key stage 1) are taught in classes of not more than 30 pupils per single teacher. There are no class size regulations for pupils in key stage 2 of primary education (ages seven to 11).

3.3 Curriculum

The Department for Children, Schools and Families (DCSF) has overall responsibility for the school curriculum. In addition, the Qualifications and Curriculum Development Agency (QCDA) is a non-departmental public body with specific responsibilities in this area. Its remit includes the development and review of all aspects of the curriculum.

The Education Act 2002 states that the basic principle underlying school education is that it should provide a balanced and broadly based curriculum which is suitable to a child's age, ability, aptitude and to any special educational needs that he/she may have. It defines a balanced and broadly based curriculum as one which:

- Promotes the spiritual, moral, cultural, mental and physical development of pupils at the school and of society.
- Prepares pupils for the opportunities, responsibilities and experiences of later life.

All publicly-funded schools are required to follow the National Curriculum, which covers the full length of compulsory education. It includes programmes of study, which set out the minimum statutory entitlement to knowledge, understanding and skills for each subject at each key stage. The National Curriculum is not intended to constitute the whole school curriculum – schools have considerable freedom to determine the character and distinctive nature of their curriculum.

Under the Education Act 1996, the amount of time to be devoted to each curriculum subject cannot be prescribed. The allocation of time per subject is a matter for individual schools.

Compulsory subjects at primary level include:

- **the core subjects:** English, mathematics and science; and
- **the foundation subjects:** design and technology, information and communication technology (ICT), history, geography, art and design, music and physical education (PE).

The Government intends to make modern foreign languages a compulsory part of the KS2 curriculum (pupils aged seven to 11) by September 2010.

Religious education (RE) is also a statutory subject throughout compulsory education, although parents have the right to withdraw their children from this subject if they wish. All local authorities (LAs) are required to adopt a locally agreed syllabus for RE, which must 'reflect the fact that the religious traditions in Great Britain are in the main Christian, whilst taking account of the teaching and practices of the other principal religions represented in Great Britain'. It is also a statutory requirement for all LAs to establish a Standing Advisory Council on Religious Education (SACRE), which advises the LA on matters concerning the teaching of RE and acts of collective worship.

Drug, alcohol and tobacco education is a statutory part of the science curriculum at key stages 1 and 2. It is often delivered as part of a wider personal, social and health education (PSHE) and citizenship programme. Although PSHE and citizenship are not compulsory subjects, primary schools are expected to provide them. However, the Government intends to make PSHE, including sex education compulsory from KS1 to 4 by September 2011.

Sex education is not currently compulsory during primary education. School governing bodies must decide whether and at what stage sex education should be introduced in the curriculum. They must keep an up-to-date written statement of the policy they choose to adopt. Parents have the right to withdraw their children from sex education lessons, if they wish.

Six 'key skills' are embedded in the primary curriculum. These are communication, application of number, information technology, working with others, improving own learning and performance, and problem-solving, which have been identified as the skills needed to succeed in work, education and everyday life. The 'thinking skills' of information processing, reasoning, enquiry, creative thinking, and evaluation are also embedded in the National Curriculum. They complement the key skills and teaching of these is intended to enable children to 'learn how to learn'.

Teaching methods and learning materials are usually decided by the class teacher, in consultation with the headteacher and subject leader (or subject coordinators), who are classroom teachers with additional responsibility for a particular subject area and who give help and guidance to their colleagues within the school. As schools have a responsibility to provide a broad and balanced curriculum for all pupils, there is a need for differentiated teaching methods and learning materials to cater for pupils' individual needs.

Textbooks are produced by commercial publishers and do not require government approval. All schools have computers available for use by pupils.

Although particular teaching methods and learning materials are not prescribed, teacher guidance documents for the teaching of specific curriculum subjects are often provided by DCSF. The DCSF and QCDA also provide non-compulsory schemes of work, based on the programmes of study, which are intended to help teachers in their planning and teaching.

The final report of a comprehensive review of the primary curriculum, published in April 2009 ^(iv), made the following recommendations: six areas of learning linked to the Early Years Foundation Stage Framework (caters for children from birth to age five, see 2.3) and the new secondary curriculum (see 5.3); opportunities to apply knowledge and skills across the curriculum; more focus on

play to enhance learning and development. It is intended that a new primary curriculum will be implemented from September 2011.

3.4 Assessment, progression and certification

The Department for Children, Schools and Families (DCSF) has overall responsibility for assessment and testing in schools. There are also two new non-departmental public bodies with specific responsibilities in this area. Firstly, the Qualifications and Curriculum Development Agency (QCDA) is responsible for developing the curriculum, improving and delivering assessments, and reviewing and reforming qualifications. There is also a new independent regulator of tests and examinations, known as the Office of the Qualifications and Examinations Regulator (Ofqual).

During primary education, ongoing formative assessment is practised by all teachers. There are also some specific requirements for pupil assessment, which are set out below.

For all National Curriculum (NC) subjects, there are attainment targets, which set out the expected standards of student performance in terms of level descriptions or end of key stage descriptions. They provide the basis for judging students' attainment in particular aspects of a subject at the end of each key stage.

There are eight level descriptions per attainment target. Level descriptions indicate the types and range of performance that a student working at a particular level should characteristically demonstrate over a period of time. They have been designed so that a typical student will move up one level approximately every two years. By the end of key stage 1 (age seven), the performance of the great majority of pupils should be within the range of levels 1 – 3, and by the end of key stage 2 (age 11) this should be within the range 2 – 5.

Towards the end of KS1 (children aged around seven), there is statutory assessment in English, mathematics and science, which combines externally provided written tests and tasks in reading comprehension (English), spelling (English) and mathematics, with continuous teacher assessment. Changes implemented in the 2004/05 school year increased the emphasis on the teacher assessment aspect of this process. Reporting to parents is now based on overall teacher assessment – combining test results with the child's overall performance – and schools are allowed more flexibility in deciding how and when to administer the KS1 tests.

At the end of key stage 2, there is statutory assessment in English and mathematics (children aged 11). This comprises:

- externally provided and marked written tests in English (three tests – one in reading one in spelling and one in writing) and mathematics (three tests – one without a calculator, one with a calculator, and a mental mathematics test); and
- teacher assessment in English and mathematics.

Schools must send parents at least one written report every school year. During the course of the year, parents must be sent a required minimum of information about:

- Their child's progress in all NC subjects studied.
- Progress in all other subjects and activities.
- General progress and an attendance record.
- For all children assessed under statutory arrangements at the end of key stage 2 (age 11, see above) the NC assessment results and details of how these compare with results of students

of the same age in the school, and also national comparative information about students of the same age.

- Arrangements to discuss the report with the school.

Information on the performance of all pupils in the end of key stage 2 assessments is also published nationally. This is in the form of comparative tables, known as the 'School and College Achievement and Attainment Tables'. The information provided in the tables is intended to inform local authorities (LAs) and institutions, and to focus their attention on areas where action is needed, as well as to inform parents' decisions about their children's futures.

In June 2009, the Government published a White Paper on school improvement, *Your child, your schools, our future: building a 21st century school system*^(v), which includes a range of proposals to strengthen school accountability. These include from 2011, the introduction of a new 'School Report Card', which is intended to provide clear, regular external assessments of each school's performance for the local community, wider public and prospective parents, local and central government and Ofsted (see 1.4). It will report on outcomes in relation to pupil attainment, progress, and wellbeing; a school's success in reducing the impact of disadvantage; and parents' and pupils' views of the school and the support they are receiving.

Progression to the next year or key stage is automatic and does not depend on the results of assessment. There is an expectation that low attainment of individual pupils should be addressed through differentiated teaching and the provision of additional support, rather than by repetition of a year.

There is no certificate awarded at the end of primary education.

3.5 Guidance and counselling

There are no external services offering vocational guidance to pupils at primary level.

Vocational guidance may be included in Personal, Social and Health Education (PSHE) at key stage 2 (pupils aged seven to 11). The non-statutory programme of study states that pupils should be taught 'about the range of jobs carried out by people they know, and to understand how they can develop skills to make their own contribution in the future'.

3.6 Teachers

All **teachers** must have qualified teacher status (QTS) in order to teach in a maintained primary or secondary school. The Secretary of State stipulates the criteria which trainee teachers must meet in order to achieve QTS. Providers of initial teacher training (ITT) must also meet approved criteria to be able to offer programmes leading to QTS, although they are responsible for course planning, content and management. Most ITT providers are higher education institutions (HEIs).

Routes into teaching for intending primary teachers can be concurrent or consecutive. Trainee teachers choosing the concurrent route follow a three or four-year programme in which general education is combined with professional training, leading to a bachelor's degree with QTS. Intending teachers who wish to take the consecutive route must first take a bachelor's degree, which can be in any subject, and then apply to take a one-year programme of professional training, the Postgraduate Certificate in Education (PGCE) with QTS. The bachelor's degree with QTS and the PGCE both combine academic study with periods of teaching practice in a school.

Programmes for intending primary teachers train teachers to teach across the curriculum as a generalist teacher. However, there are options for studying the teaching of one or more curriculum

subjects in greater depth, which would provide preparation for the role of subject leader/co-ordinator of these subjects.

Participation in continuing professional development (CPD) is part of the contractual professional duties of a teacher. There is no legal minimum requirement stated for the length of time to be spent on CPD. Participation depends on the professional needs of the teacher concerned and the availability of the resources in the school to meet them. The statutory conditions of service do, however, require teachers to be available for work under the direction of the head teacher for 195 days per year, of which only 190 are teaching days. The five days when school sessions are not required were introduced to support a number of non-teaching activities, including in-service training (INSET).

Responsibility and funding for CPD is devolved to schools. Each school determines its own CPD needs depending on the requirements of the school development plan.

Continuing professional development (CPD) covers a wide range of staff development activities both formal and informal designed to improve teachers' practice. These activities might include:

- within-school activities such as coaching, mentoring, support for individual members of staff arising from performance management interviews, team teaching, sharing good practice, lesson observation and feedback, and whole school development activities.
- school networks such as cross school or virtual networks, for example to share good practice.
- external activities such as training courses, postgraduate study, conferences, industrial placements or work shadowing, international study visits and exchanges and sabbaticals for certain experienced teachers.

The degree to which school subjects are shared among teachers depends on several factors, including how far individual teachers have specialised. For example, although primary school teachers are trained to teach all subjects in the curriculum, the deployment of staff is a matter for the school. Many schools use their staff flexibly, providing for some exchange of staff between classes for particular activities, and/or employ specialists for some subjects, allowing the class teacher time for other tasks such as planning and preparation.

Following the *National Agreement on Raising Standards and Tackling Workload* ^(vi) in 2003, which aimed to tackle teacher workload and enhance the role of support staff, the number of such staff working in schools has expanded significantly. For example, many schools employ **teaching assistants**, who work alongside teachers in the classroom, helping pupils with their learning on an individual or group basis. Some specialise in areas such as literacy, numeracy, special educational needs, music or English as an additional language. The workload agreement also created the new role of **higher level teaching assistant (HLTAs)**. HLTAs are experienced teaching assistants who plan and deliver learning activities under the direction of a teacher and assess, record and report on pupils' progress. They may also manage other classroom-based staff or may supervise a class in a teacher's absence.

4. SECONDARY EDUCATION

Overview

ISCED 2 covers lower secondary education at key stage 3 (ages 11 to 14, school years 7, 8 and 9), and ISCED 3 covers upper secondary education at key stage 4 (ages 14 to 16, school years 10 and 11). Compulsory education ends at age 16. ISCED 3 also covers post-compulsory advanced programmes, whether offered by secondary schools (many of which cater for students aged 16 to 19) or further education colleges (which cater for students aged 16 to 19 and for older learners). Advanced programmes at ISCED 3 typically last for 2 years when followed full-time by school leavers (age 16), but may be of varied duration when aimed at older learners.

Secondary education and further education are defined in the Education Act 1996. Secondary education is defined as covering education designed for young people from age 11 to 19 at school. Further education is defined as covering the education of people over compulsory school age (16) other than at school. It specifically excludes higher education programmes (ISCED 5 and 6) but includes access programmes, as described in section 5, and the continuing education of adults, as described in section 7.

Education for young people aged between the ages of 14 and 19 is currently the focus of reform and reorganisation. The reforms aim to create a flexible qualifications framework for 14- to 19-year-olds, which provides a choice of routes that cater for different learning preferences. In particular, they aim to strengthen the 'vocational offer' for students and encourage more young people to participate in post-compulsory education. Reforms include the introduction of new diploma qualifications, which combine traditional (general) and work-based (vocational) learning (see 4.4) and raising the minimum age at which young people leave education or training to 17 by 2013 and to 18 by 2015.

Secondary education in schools

Some secondary schools only cater for pupils in compulsory secondary education (aged 11 to 16). However, many secondary schools also have a sixth-form providing full-time post-compulsory education (students aged 16 to 19). Full-time post-compulsory programmes are typically two years in duration, but some students complete in three years.

The Education Act 1996 divided the period of compulsory education (ages five to 16) into four key stages. Compulsory secondary education covers key stages 3 and 4; key stage 3 caters for pupils aged 11 to 14 and key stage 4 for those aged 14 to 16. The Education Act 2002 created a legislative distinction between key stages 1 to 3 and key stage 4. This allows for increased flexibility in education for pupils in key stage 4 and provides more opportunities to tailor education to their individual needs.

At key stages 3 and 4, secondary schools offer general/academic education as set out in the National Curriculum (see 4.3); and at key stage 4 and post-16, they provide external qualifications in general subjects along with some courses in vocational/applied subjects (see 4.4).

The general aims of both primary and secondary education are defined in terms of the curriculum. See 3.3 for further information.

Although education is compulsory from the age of five to 16, school is not. Under the Education Act 1996, the responsibility for a child's education rests with their parents. For children not educated at school, the most common alternative is education at home.

The School Standards and Framework Act 1998 defined a new legal framework for maintained primary and secondary schools, which divides them into community, voluntary and foundation schools.

The majority of schools are community schools which are established and fully funded by local authorities (LAs). Foundation schools are also funded by LAs, but are owned by the school governing body or a charitable foundation. Voluntary schools were originally established by voluntary bodies, mainly churches, which retain some control over their management. They are now largely funded by LAs. All categories of maintained schools enjoy a high level of autonomy.

The 'specialist schools programme' allows maintained secondary schools to specialise in a particular area of the curriculum, while still delivering the full National Curriculum (see section 4.3) and delivering a broad and balanced education to pupils. There are now 10 curriculum subject areas for specialist schools – arts, business and enterprise, engineering, humanities, languages, mathematics and computing, music, science, sports, and technology. Specialist schools receive additional funding from the Government and must obtain some funding through private sponsorship.

The majority of maintained secondary schools are non-selective, i.e. they do not select pupils on the basis of ability. However, there are grammar schools in some areas of England. These are the only maintained schools permitted to operate a fully selective admissions policy. In the 2007/08 academic year there were 164 maintained grammar schools.

Outside the maintained sector, there are also academies. These are all-ability schools established by sponsors from business, faith or voluntary groups working in innovative partnerships with central government and local education partners. Each academy is set up as a company limited by guarantee, with charitable status, and the Government meets capital and running costs in full. A board of governors is responsible for the governance and strategic leadership of the school. Academies must be located in areas of disadvantage. They must provide a broad and balanced curriculum, with an emphasis on a curriculum area or areas.

There are also independent schools, commonly known as private schools. Independent schools receive no public funding and are largely financed by fees paid by parents.

Over 90 per cent of publicly-funded secondary schools are mixed sex.

No charge may be made for education provided wholly or mainly within school hours (excluding midday breaks) for pupils in maintained secondary schools or academies. Education which takes place wholly or mainly outside school hours, which is part of the National Curriculum, must also be provided free of charge. In addition, charges may not be made for the cost of materials, books, instruments or any other equipment.

Secondary schools may however, charge for activities that fall outside the above categories. They are required to have a policy setting out the cases in which they charge for activities. They may also ask parents for voluntary contributions towards any activity which takes place during school hours, school equipment and school funds generally.

Sixth-form students can apply for Education Maintenance Allowances (EMAs). These grants are intended to encourage 16- to 19-year-olds to remain in full-time education after the end of compulsory education (age 16). They are means-tested, providing eligible students with a weekly payment of up to £30.

All schools provide morning and afternoon sessions with a lunch break between them. Pupils whose parents receive certain social security benefits must be provided with free school meals. Supervised facilities for pupils to eat packed lunches brought from home must also be provided, as well as paid lunches where parents request them.

Local authorities (LAs) must also provide transport free of charge for pupils who do not live within walking distance of the nearest suitable school. Walking distance is defined as three miles for those aged eight or over.

Post-compulsory education in further education colleges

Full- and part-time post-compulsory education (students aged 16 to 19) may also be provided in further education (FE) institutions. FE institutions vary in their size, mission, subject mix and history. They include:

- **general FE colleges**, which place a greater emphasis on vocational courses, but also offer general courses;
- **specialist colleges**, which provide courses in a specific area of the curriculum such as art, or in a vocational area such as agriculture;
- **sixth-form colleges**, which offer full-time general secondary education courses and also some vocational courses for students aged 16 to 19. Courses are, generally, the same as those offered in school sixth-forms, but sixth-form colleges often offer a wider choice of both general and vocational programmes.

In addition, some colleges combine the functions of an FE college and a sixth-form college.

As well as state-funded FE colleges, there are a significant number of private and third sector providers in the FE sector.

In 2007/08, there were 373 FE colleges, of which 95 were sixth-form colleges (^{vii}).

The purpose of the statutory system of public education, including further education, as originally laid down in the Education Act 1944, now superseded by later legislation, is to contribute to the spiritual, moral, mental and physical development of the community. However, the emphasis is also now firmly placed on preparing students for adult and working life and on providing a skilled workforce which meets the needs of the economy.

Further education colleges are autonomous institutions and have a legal status similar to that of public companies. The institution's corporation (usually called the governing body) is responsible, for all decisions affecting the institution.

Education is provided free of charge for students up to the age of 19.

16- to 19-year-olds attending full-time post-compulsory education in further education colleges or schools can apply for Education Maintenance Allowances. See above section on 'Secondary education in schools' for further information.

4.1 Admission

Compulsory education

The majority of pupils transfer from primary to secondary education at the age of 11.

All secondary schools must comply with the School Admissions Code in their admissions policy. Admissions arrangements are largely the same as for primary schools, see section 3.1.

Most maintained secondary schools are non-selective (that is, they do not admit pupils on the basis of ability) and are commonly known as comprehensive schools.

Maintained grammar schools exist in some areas of England. These schools select all pupils on the basis of their ability.

Specialist schools and academies may choose to give priority to up to 10 per cent of pupils on the basis of aptitude for the specialist subject. However, only a very small minority do so.

Post-compulsory education

Entry requirements to post-compulsory education and training programmes are set by the individual school, college or employer.

All secondary schools must comply with the School Admissions Code for all student admissions, including admissions to school sixth forms. For further information, see section 3.1.

Students must apply for admission to specific programmes even if they wish to continue in the sixth form of their secondary school. Schools set their own admissions criteria, but commonly ask for a minimum of five GCSE passes at grades A* – C for admission to A-level courses (see section 4.4.). Criteria for admission to A-level courses also often include the achievement of GCSE passes at specified grades in the subjects to be studied at A-level.

Students are free to apply for admission to any further education college. As is the case with schools, FE colleges set the admissions requirements on a programme by programme basis.

4.2 Organisation of time, groups and venue

Compulsory education

The organisation of the school year, week and day in maintained secondary schools is largely the same as in primary schools (see section 3.2. for further information). However, the statutory minimum weekly lesson times are higher than for children at primary level. These are 24 hours for pupils at key stage 3 (aged 11 to 14) and 25 hours for pupils at key stage 4 (aged 14 to 16). Many schools provide more hours than the minimum.

Pupils are generally taught in classes with pupils of the same age. The organisation of teaching groups is determined by the school.

Pupils may be grouped by general ability (a practice known as 'streaming'), taught in mixed-ability groups or, more commonly, grouped according to ability in a particular subject (a practice known as 'setting'). Most schools use setting for some subjects only, such as mathematics and languages, and teach other subjects in mixed-ability groups. There tends to be more use of setting for pupils in older age groups.

In general, there are no regulations regarding the maximum number of pupils in a class.

Post-compulsory education

Sixth-forms (students aged 16 to 18+) follow the same school calendar as the secondary schools which they are part of. For further information, see section 3.2.

Sixth-form students are taught by specialist subject teachers, usually in smaller groups than younger students. There are no statutory minimum recommended weekly lesson times, nor any regulations covering class sizes.

The full academic year in further education colleges runs from 1 September to 31 August, although the teaching year is generally shorter. Full-time students usually attend for three terms per year, with holidays at Christmas, Easter and in the summer. However, there is considerable variation in the way

in which courses are organised. Colleges increasingly offer courses throughout the year, including during the traditional holiday periods.

Unlike schools, institutions of further education operate three sessions per day: morning, afternoon and evening. They are generally open from around 9.00 a.m. to 9.00 p.m. The duration of courses varies, as does the mode of study which may be full-time, part-time, day-release or block-release.

4.3 Curriculum

Compulsory secondary education

The national bodies responsible for the secondary curriculum; the curriculum framework; the requirement for schools to provide a broad and balanced curriculum and the situation regarding allocation of time per subject are the same as at primary level. For further information, see section 3.3.

The curriculum for compulsory secondary education is divided into two key stages: key stage 3 (students aged 11 to 14) and key stage 4 (students aged 14 to 16).

At key stage 3, the compulsory National Curriculum subjects include:

- the **core subjects**: English, mathematics and science; and
- the **foundation subjects**: design and technology, information and communication technology (ICT), history, geography, art and design, a foreign language, citizenship, music and physical education (PE).

At key stage 4, there are fewer compulsory National Curriculum subjects: English, mathematics, science, ICT, PE and citizenship. In addition, there are statutory 'curriculum entitlement areas' which are: the arts, design and technology, the humanities, and modern foreign languages. Schools must provide access to a minimum of one course in each of the four entitlement areas.

There are a number of compulsory subjects outside the National Curriculum framework. As at primary level, religious education (RE) is compulsory at key stages 3 and 4, although parents have the right to withdraw their children from RE lessons if they wish. For further information regarding RE, see section 3.3.

Sex education is also compulsory at key stages 3 and 4. Parents have the right to withdraw their children from sex education lessons, although they do not have the right to withdraw their children from the National Curriculum science programme of study dealing with aspects of human biology and reproduction.

Drug, alcohol and tobacco education is a statutory part of the science curriculum at key stages 3 and 4. It is often delivered as part of a wider personal, social and health education (PSHE) and citizenship programme. Although PSHE is not statutory, schools are expected to provide it throughout the key stages. However, the Government intends to make PSHE statutory from KS1 to 4 by September 2011.

Careers education is also compulsory at key stages 3 and 4. Work-related learning is a statutory requirement at key stage 4.

As at primary level, teaching methods and learning materials are usually decided by the class teacher, in consultation with the headteacher and subject leader (or subject coordinators), who are classroom teachers with additional responsibility for a particular subject area and who give help and guidance to their colleagues within the school.

The secondary curriculum for key stages 3 and 4 has recently been revised and a new curriculum began to be introduced for students in year 7 (ages 11 to 12) in September 2008, with full implementation due in September 2010. Compulsory subjects have not changed, but new features include: less prescribed subject content; greater identification of key concepts and processes underlying each subject; more opportunities for cross-curricular links and activities promoting cultural understanding and enterprise and diversity.

Functional skills and personal, learning and thinking skills (PLTS) are embedded in the revised secondary curriculum. Functional skills are embedded in the revised programmes of study for English, mathematics and ICT and are the core elements of these subjects, considered essential for individuals to operate effectively in life, their communities and work. The PLTS Framework, on the other hand, comprises six groups of skills requiring pupils to be: independent enquirers; creative thinkers; reflective learners; team workers; self-managers and effective participants. The Framework aims to support young people in their learning across the curriculum and to complement the programmes of study for different subjects.

Post-compulsory education

The National Curriculum does not apply to students in post-compulsory education. There are no compulsory subjects at this level. Students choose courses of study from the range offered by the school or further education college depending on the qualifications they seek. An increasingly wide range of academic and vocational qualifications is available in schools and further education colleges. See section 4.4. for more detailed information.

4.4 Assessment, progression and certification

By 2013, as part of the reform of 14 to 19 education, the Government plans to create a more streamlined and understandable qualifications system based on four nationally available qualifications routes:

- GCSEs and A-levels
- Diplomas
- Apprenticeships
- Foundation Learning programmes (for young people and adults working at entry level and level 1 of the National Qualifications Framework, eg entry level qualifications).

See below for further information about these qualifications.

Compulsory education

Ongoing formative assessment is practised by all teachers throughout compulsory secondary education.

At **key stage 3**, pupils are assessed against the attainment targets, which set out the expected standards of student performance in each National Curriculum subject in terms of level descriptions. They provide the basis for judging students' attainment in particular aspects of a subject. There are eight level descriptions per attainment target. Level descriptions indicate the types and range of performance that a student working at a particular level should characteristically demonstrate over a period of time. They have been designed so that a typical student will move up one level approximately every two years. By the end of key stage 3, the performance of the great majority of students should be in the range 3 to 7. Level 8 is available for very able students and, to help teachers differentiate exceptional performance at key stage 3, a description above level 8 is provided.

Until 2008/09, there were also externally set and marked National Curriculum tests in English, mathematics and science for pupils at the end of key stage 3 (age 14). However, in October 2008, the Government announced that the tests would be abolished with immediate effect. The tests are still available for schools to use if they wish, although there are now no arrangements for external marking.

The end of key stage 3 tests are now being replaced by improved teacher assessment and more frequent reporting to parents throughout the key stage. At the end of the key stage, schools are required to report the results of teacher assessment in relation to levels in English, mathematics and science to the Qualifications and Curriculum Development Agency (QCDA). In addition, the Government has established an expert group to advise on the proposed introduction of assessments for a national sample of 14-year-olds, so that the performance of the education system as a whole can continue to be monitored.

At the end of compulsory education (age 16), after two years of study in **key stage 4**, the majority of pupils are assessed by means of external qualifications. These qualifications are developed by independent organisations, known as awarding bodies or awarding organisations, which are regulated by the Office of the Qualifications and Examinations Regulator (Ofqual).

For learners under 19, only courses leading to qualifications that have been approved by the Secretary of State under Section 96 of the Learning and Skills Act 2000 are eligible for public funding. A wide range of qualifications is approved. Qualifications are designed for specific groups of learners, allowing schools to tailor their curriculum offer to the needs of their students. Qualifications approved for learners of compulsory school age are not restricted to this age group but can be taken by learners of any age.

For learners at the end of compulsory education (age 16), by far the most common qualification taken is the **GCSE**, a single subject qualification available in more than 40 academic subject areas. The results are reported on an eight-point scale ranging from A* (highest) to G (lowest). Candidates who fail to reach the minimum standard for grade G are recorded as 'U' for 'unclassified' and do not receive a certificate. GCSEs at grades A* to C are considered 'good GCSEs'. Achieving five good GCSEs, which include English and maths is a key Government benchmark for performance at secondary level. Achieving good GCSEs in English and maths is also usually a basic requirement for progression to post-compulsory education and for many jobs.

GCSEs in applied subjects are also available in nine work-related subject areas, for example, engineering or tourism. Results are reported on the same scale as other GCSEs (from A* to G), but with two grades (e.g. 'BB' or 'DD') to reflect the fact that they are equivalent to two standard GCSE qualifications.

Entry level qualifications are aimed at pupils who are not ready for GCSEs at the end of key stage 4. They are available in a range of general/academic subjects, such as art and design and mathematics, as well as in vocational areas such as retail and leisure and tourism. They are pitched at levels 1 to 3 of the National Curriculum eight-level scale (see above) and are intended to offer progression to higher awards.

In compulsory secondary education, pupils progress to the next class at the end of each school year. There are no legal requirements stipulating this; it generally happens by custom and practice. There is an expectation that low attainment of individual pupils should be addressed through differentiated teaching and the provision of additional support, rather than by repetition of a year.

Schools must send parents at least one written report every school year. During the course of the year, parents must be sent a required minimum of information about:

- Their child's progress in all National Curriculum subjects studied.
- Progress in all other subjects and activities.
- General progress and an attendance record.
- For all children assessed under statutory arrangements at the end of key stage 3 (age 14, see above) teacher assessment levels in all National Curriculum subjects and details of how these compare with results of students of the same age in the school, and also national comparative information about students of the same age.
- Public examination results, including any vocational qualifications and/or credits towards these.
- Arrangements to discuss the report with the school.

Post-compulsory education

Post-compulsory upper secondary education typically lasts for two years, from age 16 to 18. Ongoing formative assessment is practised by all teachers throughout this phase. Students are also assessed by means of external qualifications.

For learners under 19, only courses leading to qualifications that have been approved by the Secretary of State under Section 96 of the Learning and Skills Act 2000 are eligible for public funding. A wide range of qualifications is approved. Qualifications are designed for specific groups of learners, allowing schools and FE colleges to tailor their curriculum offer to the needs of their students. Qualifications approved for learners of compulsory school age (see above) are not restricted to this age group but can be taken by learners of any age, including post-compulsory students.

The most common qualifications taken at the end of post-compulsory education (around age 18) are **A-levels**. These are single subject examinations which may be studied in any combination, within the limit of the school's or further education college's timetable and the range of subjects it offers. Courses usually last two years. A levels are structured as follows:

- **AS** – During the first year of post-compulsory education, students typically take four or five subjects leading to AS-level qualifications. These are standalone qualifications and typically consist of three units.
- **A2** – Taken in the second year of post-compulsory education, this is the second half of the full A-level qualification, consisting of a further three units. The A2 covers more demanding material than at AS level. Students typically pursue three of their four or five AS qualification subjects to A2.

GCEs or A-levels in applied subjects are also available to students in post-compulsory education. These qualifications emphasise knowledge, skills and understanding in broad vocational areas and are intended to offer a comprehensive preparation for employment, as well as a route to higher-level qualifications. Like A-levels, they follow the AS/A2 structure. Double awards are also available.

Passes in both A-levels and A-levels in applied subjects are graded on a scale ranging from A (highest) to E (lowest), with U (unclassified) denoting a fail. Students typically require two or three A-levels for entrance to higher education (HE). Many courses require some or all of the qualifications for entry to be in specific subjects or range of subjects and at specific grades. A-levels in applied subjects are also becoming increasingly acceptable for HE entrance.

Diplomas are new qualifications combining theoretical study with practical experience and are part of the Government's 14 to 19 reform programme (see introduction to this chapter for further information). Since September 2009, Diplomas have been available in ten subjects or 'lines of learning', including IT, engineering and hair and beauty studies. Diplomas in other subject areas will be introduced in subsequent years and, from 2013, all young people will have an entitlement to all 17 diplomas in their local area. Diplomas are available at three different levels: Foundation (equivalent to five GCSEs); Higher (equivalent to seven GCSEs) and Advanced (equivalent to three and a half A-levels – see below). It is also intended that a larger 'Extended' diploma will be available at all three levels from 2011. Diplomas are being delivered by 'diploma consortia' – partnerships of schools, colleges, training centres and employers that have been approved by the Government.

Key skills qualifications are available in the individual key skills of communication, application of number, and information technology. The qualifications are intended to be taken in tandem with other courses, such as GCSEs, A-levels or work-based training programmes.

It is intended that from September 2010, key skills qualifications will be replaced by new **functional skills qualifications**, which are also part of the Government's 14 to 19 reform programme. However, they will be available to learners of all ages. Functional skills are practical skills in English, Information and Communication Technology (ICT) and mathematics, considered essential for individuals to work confidently, effectively and independently in life. They will be available as free-standing qualifications, but will also form part of the new Diploma qualifications (see above) and apprenticeship frameworks (see below).

National Vocational Qualifications (NVQs) enable students as well as employees who have left full-time education to gain recognised qualifications for specific occupations. They recognise work-based competences, as well as study in an education or training provider. They are available in 11 occupational areas at five levels, from foundation skills to chartered and professional. They are assessed on practical assignments and a portfolio of evidence and they offer progression routes to further education and training or employment.

The main Government-funded training scheme for young people is the **Apprenticeship** programme. It is available at several different levels:

- **Young Apprenticeships (YAs)** for 14- to 16-year-olds provide an opportunity for motivated school pupils to spend up to two days a week in the workplace learning a trade.
- **Entry to Employment (E2E) (or Pre-Apprenticeships)**, for young people aged 16 to 18, is designed to support disengaged young people to prepare for apprenticeships and employment.
- **Apprenticeships** are a work-based training option for young people and employers, and are based on National Vocational Qualifications (NVQs, see above). Training frameworks have been developed in over 80 sectors of employment.
- **Advanced Apprenticeships** are a partnership initiative between government and industry to provide a high-quality, work-based route to NVQ level 3. They also aim to provide the broader skills and qualifications needed by industry and employers. Advanced Apprenticeships are intended largely for school leavers aged 16+, but are also open to more mature trainees. Most advanced modern apprentices have employed status and are paid a salary by their employer.

Introductory certificates and diplomas are vocational qualifications, available alongside GCSEs in applied subjects. They are designed to enable young people and adults to take part in full- or part-time programmes of study, which will enable them to enter employment or further/higher education. They

aim to develop the learner's knowledge, skills and understanding in a specialist vocational sector and to encourage learners to develop key skills, personal skills, and adult literacy and numeracy.

BTECs (Business and Technical Education Council) and **OCR (Oxford, Cambridge and Royal Society of Arts) Nationals** are also designed for study in occupational areas, for example, horticulture. They involve a mixture of theoretical and practical work and are available at 3 levels (BTEC Firsts are available for students aged 14 to 16 in compulsory education). They are assessed, either by teachers or an external examiner, through a range of assignments, case studies, a portfolio of evidence and practical activities. They enable progression to employment or higher level vocational courses.

Once external qualifications have been accredited by the regulators in England, Wales and Northern Ireland, they are placed on the **National Qualifications Framework (NQF)** or the **Qualifications and Credit Framework (QCF)**, which is currently being implemented.

The **NQF** includes both general academic and vocational qualifications at nine levels as follows:

- Level 8 – e.g. specialist awards
- Level 7 – e.g. BTEC advanced professional diplomas, certificates and awards.
- Level 6 – e.g. BTEC professional diplomas, certificates and awards.
- Level 5 – e.g. NVQ level 5.
- Level 4 – e.g. NVQ level 4.
- Level 3 – e.g. GCE A-levels, A-levels in applied subjects and NVQ level 3.
- Level 2 – e.g. GCSE grades A*–C and NVQ level 2.
- Level 1 – e.g. GCSE grades D–G and NVQ level 1.
- Entry level – e.g. entry level qualifications.

The **QCF** is a new framework which aims to enable learners to gain qualifications at their own pace along flexible routes by awarding credit for qualifications and units. All vocational qualifications will be placed on the QCF by the end of 2010 and it is expected that academic qualifications will also in the future be placed on the QCF; until that time, the NQF remains the framework for all academic qualifications. The QCF will therefore provide the organising structure for all qualifications available in schools, including general qualifications, but to date the focus has been on vocational qualifications.

The aims of the QCF are to simplify the current complicated system by presenting qualifications in a way which is easier to understand, to recognise more learning through the award of qualifications and to instil more flexibility into the system through the use of units (components of qualifications) and credit awarded for achieving those units. Like the NQF, every unit and qualification in the 9-level QCF has a level between Entry level and level 8 which indicates the degree of difficulty. Level 2 is equivalent to GCSEs (grade A* to C), level 3 is equivalent to A levels, and level 8 is equivalent to a doctorate. Every unit and qualification also has a credit value (with one credit representing 10 hours of study). There are three sizes of qualifications in the QCF: Awards (1 to 12 credits); Certificates (13 to 36 credits); Diplomas (37 credits or more). In the framework, it is possible to have an award at level 1 or an award at level 8, because the qualification type ('award, certificate, diploma') represents the size of a qualification, not how difficult it is. It is also of note that the framework allows for the possibility for all units within all qualifications in the QCF to be achieved through recognition of prior learning (see 7.1).

Ofqual, the Qualifications and Curriculum Development Agency (QCDA) and the Council for the Curriculum, Examinations and Assessment in Northern Ireland (CCEA) have completed the process of referencing the QCF to the European Qualifications Framework for lifelong learning (EQF), which is being established to make qualifications more readable across boundaries. A report for all UK countries showing that the reference process had been completed will be submitted to the European Commission at the end of 2009.

Schools must send parents at least one written report every school year. During the course of the year, parents must be sent a required minimum of information concerning:

- The student's progress in all subjects and activities.
- General progress and an attendance record.
- Public examination results, including any vocational qualifications and/or credits towards these.
- Arrangements to discuss the report with the school.

4.5 Guidance and counselling

Compulsory education

The Learning and Skills Act 2000 provided for the establishment of the Connexions Service. It brought together a range of providers of services such as careers services, youth services and other statutory and voluntary services for young people, to create an integrated and coherent service to provide information, advice and guidance (IAG). The Connexions Service is intended to be a universal service for all young people aged 13 to 19, but it gives particular attention to young people who are disengaged, or at risk of becoming disengaged from education and training.

Local authorities (LAs) are responsible for commissioning and funding IAG, working in partnership with other agencies under Children's Trust arrangements ⁽⁵⁾.

Under the Education Act 1997, schools are required to give careers advisers from the external service – usually Connexions personal advisers (PAs) – access to pupils to provide careers guidance. Schools are also required to work with careers services to ensure that pupils have access to materials providing careers guidance and to a wide range of up-to-date reference materials.

Schools must provide a planned programme of careers education within the curriculum in years 7 to 11 (ages 11 to 16). Careers education is designed to give young people the skills they need to manage their own careers, and to be able to investigate learning and career opportunities; make informed judgements about learning and career options; understand how these choices will help them to achieve their aspirations and enable them to successfully manage key transition points.

The Education and Skills Act 2008 aims to strengthen careers education. On 1st September 2009, it introduced a statutory requirement for schools to provide impartial careers education and to give advice in the best interests of the student.

Schools must also include work-related learning in the curriculum for all pupils in key stage 4 (age 14 to 16). Work-related learning is linked to careers education but is wider in its scope. It is defined as planned activity that uses the context of work to develop knowledge, skills and understanding useful in work. It includes learning through the experience of work; learning about work and working practices;

⁽⁵⁾ Children's Trusts are local area partnership arrangements for bringing together key agencies, with the aim of delivering better integrated and more outcome focused services for children, young people and their families.

and learning the skills for work. In the great majority of schools, key stage 4 pupils undertake a work placement on employer's premises, typically of one or two weeks.

Although both careers education and work-related learning are statutory requirements, they stand outside the National Curriculum and are not subject to statutory programmes of study or assessment arrangements. Non-statutory guidance and frameworks are in place.

Post-compulsory education

The Connexions Service is available for all students in post-compulsory education (aged 16 to 19), whether they attend a sixth form in a secondary school or a further education college. It provides careers services, youth services and other statutory and voluntary services for young people. See above for further information.

Under the Education Act 1997, both schools and further education colleges are required to give careers advisers from the external service – usually Connexions personal advisers (PAs) – access to pupils to provide careers guidance. They are also required to work with careers services to ensure that pupils have access to materials providing careers guidance and to a wide range of up-to-date reference materials.

During this phase, the curriculum for students depends on their choice of nationally-recognised qualifications or training programme. There is no statutory requirement for schools or further education colleges to provide careers education. However, non-statutory guidance is in place to help them incorporate careers, work-related learning and enterprise education in their curriculum.

4.6 Teachers and trainers

Compulsory education

All teachers must have qualified teacher status (QTS) in order to teach in a maintained primary or secondary school. The Secretary of State stipulates the criteria which trainee teachers must meet in order to achieve QTS. Providers of initial teacher training (ITT) must also meet approved criteria to be able to offer programmes leading to QTS, although they are responsible for course planning, content and management. Most ITT providers are higher education institutions (HEIs).

Secondary teachers are generally trained as subject specialists for both ISCED 2 and ISCED 3 levels, to work with pupils aged 11 to 16 or 11 to 18. Although there are some concurrent programmes available, most intending secondary teachers follow the consecutive route, in which a bachelor's degree is followed by a one-year programme of professional training, the PGCE with QTS or eligibility to teach. PGCE programmes for secondary teachers are subject-specific. They focus mainly on developing teaching skills in that particular subject, rather than on knowledge of the subject itself, which will have been acquired during the preceding bachelor's degree.

Participation in continuing professional development (CPD) is part of the contractual professional duties of a teacher. For further information about CPD, see section 3.6.

Post-compulsory education

Teachers in the sixth form of secondary schools

There are no initial teacher training (ITT) programmes specifically for those wishing to teach in the sixth form of secondary schools. Secondary school teachers who teach sixth form classes have normally been trained to teach students across the entire secondary age range (age 11 to 18).

Continuing professional development (CPD) requirements for teachers in sixth forms are the same as those for all secondary school teachers.

For further information on ITT and CPD requirements, see section on compulsory education.

Teachers and trainers in further education colleges

Major reforms to the initial teacher training, status and qualifications of teachers in the further education sector were introduced in September 2007. Prior to this, there were no qualification requirements for teachers in further education colleges, although teachers in sixth form colleges were expected to have Qualified Teacher Status (see above).

The reforms in 2007 included the introduction of professional status as ‘licensed practitioners’ – all new entrants to teaching in the further education sector are expected to be working towards the new professional status of ‘Qualified Teacher Learning and Skills’ (QTLS) for those undertaking a full teaching role, or Associate Teacher, Learning and Skills for those undertaking less than a full teaching role.

New qualifications based on new professional teaching standards were also introduced. These include:

- an initial Award (as a minimum threshold licence to teach);
- a Certificate qualification for teachers in associate teaching roles and leading to ATLS; and
- a Diploma qualification for teachers in full teaching roles and leading to QTLS.

Lifelong Learning UK (LLUK) is the Sector Skills Council responsible for workforce development in the further education (FE) sector. Standards Verification UK, part of LLUK endorses initial teacher training qualifications for FE teachers. Higher education institutions and awarding organisations wishing to offer the above qualifications are required to submit them for endorsement.

Under the reforms, entrants to teaching in the further education sector are also required to complete the post-qualification process of ‘professional formation’ in order to become a ‘licensed practitioner’. The Institute for Learning (IfL), the professional body for teachers in the learning and skills sector, is the organisation with which teachers must register and which oversees the process towards licensed practitioner status.

The qualifications and arrangements for becoming ‘a licensed practitioner’ are underpinned by professional standards. The standards define, generically, the expectations in terms of the overarching skills, knowledge and attributes required of teachers, tutors and trainers.

Responsibility for continuing professional development (CPD) is shared between the individual teacher and their employer, for example, the further education college in which they work. A wide variety of CPD activities are available, ranging from coaching and mentoring to short courses and higher degrees (a degree which follows a first degree).

All full-time further education teachers and trainers must undertake a minimum of 30 hours of continuing professional development per academic year. They must also maintain a record/portfolio of activities which must be provided as evidence to the IfL in order to maintain ‘licensed practitioner’ status.

5. POST-SECONDARY NON-TERTIARY EDUCATION

ISCED 4 applies to one very specific programme – the access course. Access courses are provided by further education colleges and are aimed at mature students wishing to gain entry to higher education. They are designed and taught to meet the needs of adult learners.

As access courses are part of the government's strategy to widen participation in higher education (HE), they are targeted at under-represented groups such as the unemployed; minority ethnic groups; women returning to education; disabled learners; and those from socio-economic backgrounds which do not commonly participate in higher education.

5.1 Admission

Access courses have no formal entry requirements and are aimed at adults aged 19+ who have few, if any, formal qualifications.

5.2 Organisation of time, groups and venue

Access courses typically last for one year full-time or between one and two years part-time. One year courses involve up to 16 hours of study per week in college, in addition to private study outside classes.

5.3 Curriculum

There are many different access courses available and they are designed and developed with the support of higher education institutions. Some programmes may be general, but most are discipline-related and cover a range of academic and vocational subjects. Access courses usually include the following elements: subject modules or units; key skills in information technology, numeracy and communication; study skills; and tutorial support.

5.4 Assessment, progression and certification

Assessment is usually by a combination of coursework and examination, and most courses allow students to accumulate credit towards the Access to Higher Education certificate as they progress through the course.

5.5 Guidance and counselling

See section 4.5.

5.6 Teachers and trainers

See section 4.6.

6. TERTIARY EDUCATION

Education at ISCED 5 and 6 is known as higher education. Higher education is defined by the Education Reform Act 1988 and the Education Reform (Northern Ireland) Order 1989 as education provided by means of a course of a standard higher than the standard of courses leading to GCE A-level.

The great majority of institutions providing higher education programmes are classified as government-dependent private institutions. There are also a very small number of independent private institutions which receive no government funding.

Higher education institutions (HEIs) are diverse, ranging widely in size, mission and history. All are independent, self-governing bodies active in teaching, research and scholarship. Following the Further and Higher Education Act 1992, there is no longer a separate sector providing vocational higher education, and all HEIs are subject to the same requirements with respect to quality assurance and funding agreements. However, the legal basis on which individual institutions run their affairs varies. Most universities established prior to 1992 were established by Royal Charter. A very small number of pre-1992 universities were established by a specific Act of Parliament. The Universities of Oxford and Cambridge, which date from the 12th and 13th centuries, have neither an Act of Parliament nor a charter. Post-1992 universities and certain other higher education institutions were established as Higher Education Corporations under the Education Reform Act 1988. These are sometimes called 'new' universities, even though many of them have their origins in vocational colleges with a long history.

Degree-awarding powers are controlled by Government under the provisions of the Further and Higher Education Act 1992. Degree awarding powers enable institutions to develop their own courses, award their own degrees, and determine the conditions on which they are awarded. There are different criteria for the power to award taught degrees (ISCED 5A) and research degrees (ISCED 5A and 6). Higher education institutions without degree awarding powers offer programmes, with varying extents of devolved authority, leading to the degrees of an institution which does have them.

Prior to 2005, only institutions with the power to award both taught degrees and research degrees were permitted to use the title 'university'. From 2005, institutions in England and Wales that award only taught degrees and which meet certain numerical criteria may also be permitted to use the title 'university'. Institutions that award only taught degrees but which do not meet the numerical criteria may apply to use the title 'university college', although not all choose to do so. Other institutions are often referred to as higher education colleges but this title is not regulated by law and the titles of individual institutions vary.

In England, in August 2008, there were 90 universities, and 133 HEIs in total. This total counts the University of London, a federal institution, as one university but several HEIs. In Wales, there were 3 universities, and 12 HEIs in total. This total counts the University of Wales, a federal institution, as one university but several HEIs. In Northern Ireland, there were 2 universities, and 4 HEIs in total (^{viii})

In addition, a significant number – around ten per cent – of higher education students study in further education colleges. Many such institutions provide some programmes at ISCED 5A, and, more commonly, at ISCED 5B. Qualifications awarded by external bodies such as a university or, for programmes at ISCED 5B only, a national awarding body. The Further Education and Training Act 2007 enabled further education colleges in England to apply for powers to award their own foundation degrees (ISCED 5B). Other awards at ISCED 5B are not regulated by law.

Although the organisation of higher education programmes is not regulated by law, institutions have traditionally structured their programmes along broadly similar lines. There is a three cycle framework,

which conforms to the European Higher Education Area (EHEA) principles. Qualification titles are not regulated by law and can vary between institutions. A five-level framework has been developed by the Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education (QAA) to provide a clear structure to higher education qualifications and to promote consistent use of qualification titles. The framework has been self-certified as compatible with the Framework for Qualifications of the European Higher Education Area (FQ-EHEA), the qualifications framework adopted as part of the Bologna Process.

Framework for higher education qualifications (FHEQ) in England, Wales and Northern Ireland

Typical higher education qualifications within each level	FHEQ level	Corresponding FQ-EHEA cycle
Doctoral degrees (eg, PhD/DPhil (including new-route PhD), EdD, DBA, DCLinPsy)	8	Third cycle (end of cycle) qualifications
Master's degrees (eg, MPhil, MLitt, MRes, MA, MSc)	7	Second cycle (end of cycle) qualifications
Integrated master's degrees (eg, MEng, MChem, MPhys, MPharm)		
Postgraduate diplomas		
Postgraduate Certificate in Education (PGCE)		
Postgraduate certificates	6	First cycle (end of cycle) qualifications
Bachelor's degrees with honours (eg, BA/BSc Hons)		
Bachelor's degrees		
Professional Graduate Certificate in Education (PGCE)		
Graduate diplomas	5	Short cycle (within or linked to the first cycle) qualifications
Graduate certificates		
Foundation Degrees (eg, FdA, FdSc)		
Diplomas of Higher Education (DipHE)	4	
Higher National Diplomas (HND)		
Higher National Certificates (HNC)		
Certificates of Higher Education (CertHE)		

Courses leading to qualifications at **FHEQ level 8** normally require the equivalent of three years' full-time study. There is a broad diversity of doctoral level programmes, including programmes which equip students for the labour market (these generally have significant taught elements and are known as professional doctorates) and programmes which equip students for academia. The titles PhD and DPhil are commonly used for doctorates awarded on the basis of original research. Doctoral programmes that may include a research component, but which have a substantial taught element, lead usually to awards that include the name of the discipline in their title (eg EdD for Doctor of Education).

Courses leading to qualifications at **FHEQ level 7** include master's courses, which typically last at least one calendar year (if taken full-time). Master's degrees are awarded after completion of taught courses or programmes of research, or a combination of both. Some masters degrees in, for instance, chemistry, engineering, mathematics, pharmacy and physics are integrated into first cycle programmes lasting a year longer than bachelor's programmes. Longer, research-based programmes often lead to the degree of MPhil. Also at this level are advanced short courses, often forming parts of continuing professional development programmes, leading to postgraduate certificates and postgraduate diplomas.

Courses leading to qualifications at FHEQ level 6 include bachelor's degrees with honours – commonly known as honours degrees – which form the largest group of higher education qualifications. Honours degree programmes typically last for three years if taken full-time, although they may be longer or shorter than three years. Longer courses include sandwich courses which incorporate periods of practical work in organisations outside the university or college, and courses specialising in modern foreign languages, which normally incorporate a year in the target language country. Shorter courses include accelerated two-year degrees which require students to study during the normal vacation periods.

Although there is no requirement for them to do so, all UK higher education institutions use the same system of classifying (i.e. grading) student attainment in honours degree programmes. There are potentially six points on the scale. Above the Fail grade, institutions award a First, Upper Second (often known as a 'two-one'), Lower Second (known as a 'two-two') and Third Class degree. Institutions may also award a 'Pass' grade which does not carry honours.

Courses leading to qualifications at FHEQ level 5 are intended to take two years of full-time study to complete or the part-time equivalent.

Courses leading to qualifications at FHEQ level 4 are usually offered in a vocational subject and normally take one year of full-time study or the part-time equivalent.

In August 2008, a higher education credit framework was published. It is not mandatory, but institutions that choose to adopt it are expected to have completed the credit-rating of their main provision ⁽⁶⁾.

Higher education institutions are responsible for deciding which programmes to offer and for programme design. Programmes typically focus on a particular subject area, although at ISCED 5 there are also combined studies programmes involving two, or possibly three, specialisations. There is normally some choice within each programme, with a relatively fixed menu of modules covering the core knowledge of the subject, combined with a menu of options in the more specialised aspects of the subject area. A wide range of programmes is available; institutions in England, Wales and Northern Ireland offered a total of around 44,000 different ISCED 5 first cycle programmes for 2009 entry.

6.1 Admission

Overall student numbers are government determined. The higher education funding bodies make allocations to institutions to meet overall student number plans and set targets to institutions for student numbers. The purpose of these targets is to ensure that institutions deliver teaching activity for the funding provided.

For a few subject areas, there is a greater degree of central control. Medical and dental courses are subject to quotas to ensure that the number of students required to meet national needs is delivered. Nursing and midwifery provision is largely funded by the health authorities, which contract with institutions for the delivery of specified numbers of trainee nurses and midwives. In England, the Training and Development Agency for Schools (TDA) sets intake targets for initial teacher training. Similar arrangements exist in Wales and Northern Ireland.

In general there is no central control over admissions. HEIs determine their own admissions policies and the entry requirements for each programme, which are set out in the institution's prospectus. Prospective students must apply for a specific programme. For full-time first cycle programmes at ISCED 5, the minimum entry requirement is typically two or three GCE A-levels (single subject

⁽⁶⁾ For further information about the HE Credit Framework, see: <http://www.hefce.ac.uk/learning/diversity/credit/>

qualifications) or equivalent qualifications. Meeting the minimum requirements does not guarantee a place however; entry is competitive with wide variations between institutions and programmes in terms of the competition for places. Many courses require some or all of the qualifications for entry to be in specific subjects or range of subjects and at specific grades. In 2002, a points scoring system for expressing entry requirements was introduced. The 'UCAS tariff' establishes agreed comparability between different types of qualifications, including GCE A levels for England, Wales and Northern Ireland, some vocational qualifications, the Welsh Baccalaureate, the International Baccalaureate, and Scottish and Irish qualifications. However, HEIs are not obliged to express their entry requirements in these terms. For some highly over-subscribed programmes, such as medicine, dentistry, veterinary science and law, applicants may be required to take an additional admissions test and be interviewed. Most HEIs, with the exception of the universities of Oxford and Cambridge, do not interview applicants for most other programmes. Some institutions may waive formal qualifications for mature students who have had appropriate experience, but others do not. Access courses (ISCED 4) provide an alternative route for mature entrants.

Applicants for full-time undergraduate programmes (ISCED 5A first cycle and 5B) apply online for up to five institutions/courses via UCAS (the Universities and Colleges Admissions Service), which administers the applications process on behalf of the institutions. Applications are usually made in the autumn, a year before the start of the course and before the results of final examinations are available. Institutions therefore make conditional offers, largely on the basis of predicted grades, specifying the grades which the applicant must achieve. Each applicant may hold one 'firm' or first choice offer, and one 'insurance' offer, typically for lower grades. When results become available in the second half of August, institutions confirm offers to applicants who achieve the grades specified. All decisions on individual applications are made by the institution to which they apply.

Applicants for part-time programmes and for most programmes above the level of a bachelor's degree apply direct to the institution.

Prospective students from outside the UK and Ireland can obtain a statement about the comparative level of their qualification to the UK's qualification frameworks from UK NARIC, the UK's national agency responsible for providing this information to individuals who wish to come to the UK to work, study or train. Many HEIs which admit significant numbers of students from EU countries and other countries worldwide provide specific information on equivalencies on their websites.

6.2 Students' contributions and financial support

Tuition fees charged to the following categories of students are not regulated by law:

- part-time students
- overseas (non-EU) students
- postgraduate students, ie students studying a programme above the level of a bachelor's degree.

The information which follows applies only to full-time (ISCED 5 first cycle) home (UK) and EU students.

Under the Higher Education Act 2004, HEIs in England are permitted to charge variable tuition fees of up to £3,000 per year, to rise only with inflation until after an independent review starting at the end of 2009. The Act also provided the legal basis for new arrangements for student support, and gave the National Assembly for Wales new powers over student support and full responsibility for the tuition fee regime. In 2005 the NAW reached an agreement on new financial arrangements, and, from 2007/08, Welsh HEIs have been able to charge variable tuition fees as in England. Students living and studying

in Wales pay less than half of the full amount, with the balance being met by a non means-tested fee grant paid directly to the institution. However, these arrangements will change from 2010.

Full-time students are eligible for a non-repayable maintenance grant (Assembly Learning Grant in Wales). These grants are means-tested, that is, targeted at students from households with a lower income. For the majority of students, it is their parents' income that is assessed; for independent students, it is their own and/or their spouse or partner's income that is assessed. Independent students are those who are over 25, or married, or have supported themselves for three years, or are estranged from their parents.

Some students are also eligible for a bursary from the institution at which they are studying. HEIs charging the maximum tuition fee are expected to pay a minimum guaranteed bursary to those receiving the maximum maintenance grant (Assembly Learning Grant in Wales). Beyond this guaranteed minimum, there is a wide range of additional discretionary support provided by individual institutions, which may be means-tested, or may be targeted at students from local schools and colleges and/or awarded for academic merit.

All students on qualifying courses are eligible for student loans. There are two types: loans to cover tuition fees and loans for maintenance to cover living expenses. The loan for tuition fees is paid direct to the institution, and covers the full amount of the tuition fee. The loan amount available for maintenance is means-tested, ie it depends on the total household income. For independent students the parental income is not taken into account, but their spouse's or partner's income is. The amount also depends on whether the student lives in the family home or in London. The maximum loan available may be reduced for students who receive a maintenance grant. The arrangements for repaying both types of loan are the same. Borrowers are not required to repay the amount until they have graduated and are earning over a threshold income. Payments are collected through the tax system. Interest rates are indexed to inflation rates and borrowers repay, in real terms, broadly the same amount as that borrowed.

Additional assistance is available to students who have family members dependent upon them. All such assistance depends on the student's income and that of his/her dependants. Assistance is also available for students with a disability, mental health condition or specific learning difficulty.

Different arrangements apply to part-time students.

For postgraduate (ISCED 5 second cycle and ISCED 6) study, there is no entitlement to support. Awards or studentships for postgraduate study are available on a competitive basis for approved courses. Awards are available from the Research Councils in England and Wales and the Department for Employment and Learning (DEL) in Northern Ireland. Postgraduate students undertaking a vocational course can apply for a career development loan. They are commercial bank loans but the Government pays the interest on the loan while the student is studying for up to two years. (These loans are not restricted to postgraduate study and can be used for many types of learning that improve job skills.)

6.3 Organisation of the academic year

The academic year for higher education runs from 1 August to 31 July.

Organisation of the teaching year is at the discretion of the individual institution. For first cycle students, attendance is normally required from a date varying from the beginning of September to the beginning of October through to the end of June, with breaks lasting between three and five weeks at Christmas and Easter. The organisation of teaching traditionally reflected this three-term system, although many institutions now organise their teaching according to a two-semester system.

6.4 Assessment, progression and certification

Assessment procedures and the regulations governing student progression within a programme are decided by the individual institution.

Generally, assessment of taught programmes involves a mixture of exams and coursework. Some programmes require a final written dissertation. All institutions make use of external examiners.

Assessment processes for research qualifications are different from those for taught awards. Typically the student is examined on the basis of an appropriate body of work and an oral examination (viva voce) by a minimum of two appropriately qualified examiners, at least one of whom is external to the institution and none of whom has had a substantial direct involvement in the student's work. Examiners submit separate, independent written reports before the viva and a joint report after it.

Holding a qualification does not confer any right of access to a more advanced programme. For entry to postgraduate certificate or diploma (ISCED 5 second cycle), a typical minimum requirement would be a bachelor's degree with honours graded at 2:2 or above. For entry to a master's programme (ISCED 5 second cycle) the entry requirement would typically be higher; a bachelor's degree graded at 2:1 or above.

6.5 Guidance and counselling

There are a number of measures aiming to widen access to higher education for young people from under-represented groups. Some universities work with schools to run outreach activities with the aim of raising aspirations and achievement, for example, by offering campus visits or providing role models through mentoring.

Institutions vary in the guidance offered to their students. It is usual for all students to be assigned to a member of the academic staff of an appropriate department to act as personal tutor. The tutor may arrange to see the student at regular intervals, and the student may at any time approach the tutor for guidance.

All institutions make provision for careers guidance for students who wish to take advantage of it.

6.6 Academic staff

Academic staff are employees of the individual institution and not civil servants. Each HEI determines its own staffing structure and its own requirements concerning staff. A good bachelor's degree in the subject to be taught is normally the minimum requirement and a master's degree or a doctorate is often required. Professional experience may be required for teaching within vocational disciplines, and, in the case of programmes leading to professional registration (such as nursing and social work), current professional registration.

Pay-scales are negotiated on a UK-wide basis. A framework pay agreement defines five academic grades each with a minimum and maximum salary point:

- AC1: research and postgraduate teachers (these are postgraduate students teaching under close supervision)
- AC2: lecturers
- AC3: senior lecturers
- AC4: principal lecturers

- AC5: heads of departments or professor

The framework agreement is not mandatory and is not fully implemented across all institutions.

There is no legal requirement for academic staff to undertake professional development courses, but many higher education institutions provide training for their teaching staff, especially those new to the profession.

7. CONTINUING EDUCATION AND TRAINING

7.1 Policy and legislative framework

Provision for adults returning to learning forms part of the further education sector, which also includes provision for young people aged 16 to 19, who are not studying in school sixth-forms. Chapters 1 and 4 therefore provide much relevant information.

Further education encompasses learning at different ISCED levels: ISCED 1 for basic skills courses; ISCED 3 for the full range of external qualifications and ISCED 4 for access courses. It specifically excludes learning at ISCED 5 and 6 (even when this is provided by a further education college).

Facilities for those aged over 19 includes provision for what is now widely referred to as adult and community learning (ACL). This is an umbrella term for the wide range of learning made accessible to adults including language, basic skills, ICT and leisure courses, most of which take place outside the 'formal' further education sector.

The purpose of the statutory system of public education, including further education, as originally laid down in the Education Act 1944, is to contribute to the spiritual, moral, mental and physical development of the community. However, the emphasis is also now firmly placed on preparing students for adult and working life and on providing a skilled workforce which meets the needs of the economy.

The emphasis on providing a skilled workforce which meets the needs of the economy has increased since the UK-wide Leitch Review of Skills. The Review's final report, published in 2006, stated that the UK must urgently raise its skills levels and recommended increasing adult skills at all levels, and strengthening employers' engagement and investment in skills^{ix}.

In 2007, the Government published 'World Class Skills: Implementing the Leitch Review of Skills'^x. It outlined a range of measures, which included strengthening the employer voice by establishing a new UK Commission for Employment and Skills to advise on the effectiveness of the skills and employment system (see 7.2.) and giving employers a leading role in the reform and development of skills for their sector.

Under the Teaching and Higher Education Act 1998, employees aged 16 or 17 may take paid time off during normal working hours, to study or train for a relevant qualification. This applies to those not in full-time secondary or further education and who have not yet achieved a qualification at level 2 of the National Qualifications Framework (NQF) (which is gradually being replaced by the Qualifications and Credit Framework, QCF – see 4.4.). In addition, when enacted, the Apprenticeships, Skills, Children and Learning Bill, which was submitted to Parliament in February 2009, will give all employees a right to request from their employer time away from their core duties to undertake training.

Over recent years, the Government has also introduced and strengthened adults' entitlement to free tuition. Since August 2007, all people aged between 19 and 25 who are studying for their first qualification at level 2 of the QCF have been entitled to free tuition. In addition, the Education and Skills Act 2008, passed in November 2008, has introduced a new entitlement for adults to undertake basic skills courses and courses leading to a first qualification at level 2 of the NQF.

Informal and non-formal learning is acknowledged by NVQs (see also 4.4), formal vocational qualifications which take account of prior experience and learning in their assessment arrangements in a process called recognition of prior learning (RPL). Typically, this is through a portfolio of evidence of prior learning, indicating the level and areas of expertise. Informal and non-formal learning is also acknowledged (but not actually certified) in the selection process for further and higher education, or in

order to help unemployed adults back in to work by identifying skills obtained through previous employment.

In addition, the QCF (see 4.4.) intends to allow for wider recognition of learners' achievements. Within the Framework, 'recognition of prior learning' (RPL) relates primarily to 'previously uncertificated' learning. All units in the QCF are based on a set of learning outcomes and assessment criteria that clearly show to learners the assessment standard required for successful completion of the unit. All units in the QCF exclude any explicit reference to the method of assessment required to achieve credit through a unit. This means that, in principle, all units within all qualifications in the QCF can be achieved through RPL. The regulatory arrangements for the QCF place obligations on awarding organisations and providers to offer RPL to learners, where appropriate.

7.2 Distribution of responsibilities

Provision for adults returning to learning forms part of the further education sector, which also includes provision for young people aged 16 to 19, who are not studying in school sixth-forms. Chapters 1 and 4 therefore provide much relevant information.

There are also a number of bodies with specific roles and responsibilities for adult education. See below for further information.

The **UK Commission for Employment and Skills (UKCES)** was established in April 2008 following the recommendations of the Leitch Review of Skills (see 7.1.). Working across the four parts of the UK, the Commission is primarily an advisory body, but has some specific responsibilities which include funding and managing the performance of the Sector Skills Councils (SSCs – see below) and assessing progress towards skills targets. An employer-led organisation, UKCES aims to provide advice on the strategies and policies needed to increase employment, skills and productivity.

SSCs are state-sponsored employer-led organisations that cover specific economic sectors across the UK. There are currently twenty five of them and they have four main objectives: to reduce skills gaps and shortages; to improve productivity; to boost the skills of their sector workforces; and to improve learning supply. They do this by contributing to the development of National Occupational Standards, being involved in the design and approval of Apprenticeship Frameworks (see section 4.4) and brokering Sector Skills Agreements (strategic action plans detailing the skills shortages and gaps in each industry, and providing direction on how they can be addressed). They are also playing an increasingly important role in the definition and quality assurance of qualifications. The umbrella organisation, the Alliance of Sector Skills Councils, supports the work of the SSCs and builds their performance capacity and profile.

The **National Institute of Adult Continuing Education (NIACE)** acts as an advisory body and centre for information, cooperation and consultation in the field of adult continuing education. It receives funding from the Department for Business, Innovation and Skills (BIS), the Learning and Skills Council (LSC) and the Local Government Association (LGA). It is also working to find, develop and disseminate good practice in literacy, language and numeracy across all age ranges.

The **Third Sector National Learning Alliance (TSNLA)** is a national alliance of voluntary and community organisations and social enterprises involved in learning and skills. It aims to provide a coherent national voice for such providers across government departments and other important bodies, and to provide a forum for developing third sector ideas and proposals.

7.3 Financing

For information on the funding of the further education sector, see section 1.3.

7.4 Programmes and providers

A very wide range of programmes is available to adults within the further education sector. Providers may offer general, vocational or recreational programmes or a combination of these. See below for further information.

Qualifications designed for young people at school and recent school-leavers are generally approved as suitable for learners of any age. These qualifications are offered to adult learners by **further education colleges** (see section 4.4). For example, they typically offer a range of A levels (single subject qualifications designed for 18-year-olds studying full-time), to adults who may wish to take just one or two subjects on a part-time basis. Colleges also offer qualifications designed specifically for older learners, such as access courses (see section 5) and qualifications in basic literacy and numeracy.

Further education colleges also offer adults a vast range of **recreational courses**, which do not always lead to a qualification. These may include arts subjects (e.g. painting and photography); crafts (e.g. pottery and jewellery design); health and well-being courses (e.g. physical exercise and stress management); humanities and foreign languages courses; personal development; and ICT.

Adult education centres offer part-time education and training, as well as leisure, recreation or 'for fun' courses, to learners over compulsory school age (16 years). Courses vary in length from those lasting a full academic year to short courses, providing a 'taster'.

The Workers' Educational Association (WEA) is a voluntary body which aims to encourage adults to undertake continuing education. It has local and regional centres throughout the UK and provides courses for adults in a wide range of subjects, such as art, history, computing, literacy and numeracy. Courses are mainly part-time and of varying lengths, from weekend seminars to three-year courses.

A network of **National Skills Academies (NSA)** is being established. These are employer-led centres of excellence which aim to deliver the skills required by individual sectors of the economy. NSAs focus on vocational education and skills training and are open to school leavers, graduates and existing employees. Eleven NSAs exist to date in sectors including retail, financial services and sport and active leisure. A further five academies are under development. Sector Skills Councils (see 7.2.) are responsible for pulling together bids and business plans and co-ordinating employer sponsorship for the academies.

'Learndirect' is an e-teaching organisation, which aims to provide high quality post-16 learning for those with few skills and qualifications who are unlikely to participate in traditional forms of learning and to develop the skills they need for employability. Learndirect is delivered through a network of more than 750 online learning centres in England and Wales. Learndirect access points have been set up in a diverse range of settings such as libraries, sports clubs, shopping centres, churches and railway stations. Particular emphasis is placed on using the Internet for flexible online learning. Several hundred online courses are available in information technology, basic skills, general business skills and management skills, and in some more specialist business areas.

Apprenticeships for adults, which cater for those over the age of 25, began to be introduced nationally from September 2007. Learning takes place both in the workplace and with a local learning provider. Apprenticeships for adults belong to the family of apprenticeship programmes available in England (see 4.4. for further information).

The **Flexible New Deal** programme, which aims to help those who have been unemployed for 12 months or more to find a job began to be introduced across the country in October 2009. The programme is delivered for Jobcentre Plus, the government agency responsible for assisting people of working age to find work, by professional organisations which provide individuals with advice and support for finding work. The programme also involves four weeks of work experience.

In September 2006, the Government introduced the '**Train to Gain**' employer training scheme, which aims to help businesses receive training that meets their specific needs. The service gives employers access to a free 'Skills Broker' service, which aims to offer impartial advice and access to quality training, matching training needs with training providers. The scheme also provides fully subsidised training for low-skilled employees. The Department for Business, Innovation and Skills (BIS) is also developing 'sector skills compacts' with the Sector Skills Councils (which represent the different sectors of the economy, see 7.2) to tailor the 'Train to Gain' offer to their specific needs and circumstances.

Another example is **Work-based Learning for Adults**, which provides programmes of work-based training, tailored to meet local needs within a framework set by central government. The aim of Work-based Learning for Adults is to help adults over the age of 25, who have been unemployed for six months or longer, to secure and sustain employment or self-employment through an individually tailored combination of guidance, structured work experience, training and approved qualifications. Several different models of training are offered within the programme, which also offers transitional support to participants immediately following their entry into employment and encourages the use of lifelong learning.

7.5 Quality assurance

Ofsted is responsible for the inspection and regulation of further education and employment-based training. See section 1.4. for further details.

7.6 Guidance and counselling

'Nextstep' is a free careers service for adults, provided through a network of local offices. Personal advisers provide information and advice on searching and applying for jobs, finding funding to support any learning, improving interview and presentation skills and for those in employment, on ways to progress.

Guidance and support is offered to the unemployed through programmes such as the Flexible New Deal (see 7.4).

The 'Adult Advancement and Careers Service', a new integrated advice and guidance service for adults is currently being developed and should be fully operational from 2010/11. It is intended that the new integrated service will identify skills needs through routine 'Skills Health Checks' whilst also providing advice and guidance on matters, such as careers, jobs, skills, housing, childcare and finance. The development of the new service is one of a number of reforms to the delivery and administration of post-19 education and training. See section 1.2. for further information.

7.7 Teachers and trainers

For information on initial training and professional development requirements for teachers and trainers see 'Teachers and trainers in further education colleges' in 4.6.

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