

04 - INITIAL VOCATIONAL EDUCATION AND TRAINING

0401 - BACKGROUND TO THE IVET SYSTEM AND DIAGRAM

Schooling is compulsory from age 5 to 16 (4 to 16 in Northern Ireland). All publicly funded schools must provide the National Curriculum. Depending on the Key Stage of compulsory education (1), the National Curriculum comprises different compulsory subjects, with core subjects like English, mathematics, science, ICT, etc., included throughout the studies. At age 16 most pupils take public examinations, the General Certificate of Secondary Education (GCSE) (level 2) in England, Wales and Northern Ireland and the Standard Grade in Scotland. GCSEs are normally taken in a range of single subjects, and a certificate is issued listing the grade achieved in each subject. After completion of compulsory education in secondary schools, young people may choose to continue in school, move to a sixth-form college (2) or a FE college (3), enter employment with training such as an apprenticeship, or enter employment without apprenticeship.

Students remaining in education at a school or a college may choose between general ('academic') and vocational subjects or take a mixture of the two. Normally, the upper secondary phase lasts two years, from age 16 to 18 or 19. The dominant qualification is General Certificate of Education (GCE) A-levels (level 3). A-levels are 'elective' single subject qualifications, which students choose on the basis of GCSE qualifications, interest and intended destination. Students are encouraged to study up to five subjects in the first year of post-secondary education and upon completion; they are awarded the GCE Advanced Subsidiary (AS) qualification. Those who continue in the second year, study more demanding units in three of these five subjects in order to obtain the full GCE A-level on successful completion (graded A to E, A being the highest).

School- and college-based vocational qualifications and pathways are developing. The General National Vocational Qualifications (GNVQs) were phased out in 2007, and vocational GCSEs and vocational A-levels have been introduced since 2000.

The new Diplomas (not Scotland), which combine elements of academic subjects and practical skills have been in development. Diplomas, a new suite of qualifications will be available at levels 1, 2 and 3 in 14 sector areas as a national entitlement as from 2013. The first five Diplomas in construction and built environment; engineering; IT; society; health and development; creative media are being taught to 40,000 students in England since academic year 2008. The numbers of young people, who drop out of education and training at 16, or before completing an upper secondary qualification, is an issue that government reforms are seeking to address.

New diplomas will build on key elements of its VET system's four features:

- The notion of competence, the criteria of assessment being the learning outcomes;
- The use of units of assessment – almost all UK qualifications are modular in delivery and assessment – which creates flexibility for learners, trainers and funding partners;
- The diversity of learning provision – learning need to be adaptable to local circumstances (economic and social) and particularly to the individual;
- The definition of occupational standards systematically using state-of-the-art needs analysis methods and involving stakeholders as much as possible.

The new Diplomas are being developed jointly by the DCSF, UKCES and QCA in consultation with 17 Diploma Development Partnerships (DDPs).

Pre-employment IVET may be undertaken at secondary school, or at a FE college, or with other training providers. There are two forms of IVET:

1. General vocational education is undertaken either at school (for those aged up to 18) or at a FE college (for those aged 16+). Successful completion could lead to direct employment or to further training, within a FE college or with another training provider.

2. Programmes of specific training are undertaken at a FE college and allow entry to a particular trade or profession (such as hairdressing, construction trades etc) This form of VET is a blend of both of initial training (IVET: meeting pre-entry requirements) and continuing training (CVET: providing the recognised vocational qualification for practice within a particular trade or profession).

Within the UK, there is no unified VET structure and provision is profuse. Historically, VET has developed in an ad hoc way, rather than through central planning. Nonetheless, VET provision can be summarised according to the various contexts within which it takes place.

Further education institutions include sixth-form colleges, tertiary colleges and further education colleges (both general and specialist). Colleges of further education (FE) provide both IVET and CVET, catering for young people and adults. Most offer academic and general courses (such as A-levels), as well as vocational ones and some also offer degree courses, in Scotland, Highers and Advanced Highers.

In higher education, universities and other institutions provide initial vocational education. In addition to three- or four-year first degrees, masters and doctorates universities offer a wide range of shorter courses including two-year Higher National Certificates and Diplomas (HNCs and HNDs) and Foundation Degrees.

SCOTLAND

The qualifications framework and programmes of study in Scotland differ from the rest of the UK (see [here](#)). The Scottish Credit and Qualifications Framework provides a range of academic and vocational courses and qualifications covering hundreds of subjects ([5]) for learners of all ages in schools and colleges. In secondary schools students aged 15-16 normally take Standard Grades but some now take National Qualifications at Access, Intermediate 1 or Intermediate 2 levels at secondary schools. Students aged 17-18 follow National Qualifications courses at one of five levels from Access to Advanced Higher. Students can start at the level, which suits best for their abilities and can progress on to the next level. Each of the units counts as a qualification in its own right, which allows students who don't pass the whole course to get the credit for the units successfully achieved. Pass grades are awarded at A, B and C. Higher and Advanced Higher can be used for entrance into higher education or a workplace. National Qualification courses are also offered at FE colleges.

[1] Key Stage 1 of compulsory education: ages 5 to 7; KS 2: 7 to 11; KS 3: 11 to 14; Key Stage 4: 14 to 16.

[2] Six-form college/school sixth form: post compulsory educational establishment where students prepare for their GCE A-level examination during the final two years of secondary schooling (when students are about 16 to 18 years of age).

[3] Further education (FE) college – full time or part time educational establishment for persons over compulsory school age of 16. Further education courses are generally up to the standard of GCE A-level or NVQ level 3. FE often provides an entry to university or/and full employment.

[5] The framework was reviewed in 2002, with more subjects on offer (i.e., philosophy, politics, care and engineering).

0402 - IVET AT LOWER SECONDARY LEVEL

Some secondary schools provide pre-employment vocational education for 16-18 year-olds. At age 14, students may choose to follow a two-year programme which includes vocational courses alongside compulsory academic subjects leading to a General Certificate of Secondary Education (GCSE) for each course successfully completed.

Vocational GCSEs are available in 8 subjects: applied science, applied IT, applied business, applied art and design, engineering, manufacturing, health and social care, leisure and tourism, with other subjects under development. They offer young people the opportunity to explore a particular vocational area as part of a balanced learning

programme and promote parity of esteem between vocational and more traditional academic subjects. GCSEs in vocational subjects offer a more applied approach to learning. A vocational GCSE is equivalent to two academic (general) GCSEs and enable progression to further education, training or employment.

Advanced level (A-level) General Certificates in Education are also available in vocational subjects with examinations taken at 18 or older. Neither GCSEs or A-levels contain a work-based component. Through the introduction of GCSEs in vocational subjects, the government promotes the parity of esteem between vocational and more traditional academic subjects.

From September 2004 there is a statutory requirement for schools in England to make provision for work-related learning for all pupils, including opportunities for:

- Learning through work (for example, through short periods of work experience);
- Learning about work and careers education;
- Learning for work, by developing enterprise and employability skills (for example, through working on key skills and schemes such as the UK charity Young Enterprise) ([1]).

The National Curriculum governs 14-16 year olds' learning programmes, which is a broad and balanced programme for most students, although greater specialisation towards vocational options was introduced for some students in 2002. The 16-19 year olds' learning programme is governed primarily by the student's main qualification aim. Learners following work-based training such as an apprenticeship or a FE course for entry to an occupation, combine training for specific occupations with work. Training providers can be training or HR departments in firms, further education colleges or private training organisations.

In Wales, a six-year pilot of new Baccalaureate qualification is being implemented, which has a common core curriculum on Wales, Europe and world studies (including a language module), work-related education, personal and social education and key skills.

From 2007, the Welsh Assembly government is running five Work-based Learning Pathways pilots in automotive, construction manufacturing, sport coaching (for 14-16 year olds) and care (16-18 year olds for legal restrictions) sectors. The pilots combine core GCSEs in schools with more practical experience. The learner must achieve an industry recognised VQ, normally at level 2. Some of the Pathways are directly linked to the Welsh Baccalaureate qualification.

Young Apprenticeships (introduced in England in 2004) offer an opportunity for motivated 14-16 year olds to combine practical application of skills and knowledge with studying for vocational qualifications. This allows the learner a flexible programme involving a college, training provider or employer, and is intended to lead on to an apprenticeship at the age of 16. Pupils are based in school and follow the core National Curriculum subjects, but for two days a week (or equivalent) they also work towards nationally recognised level 2 vocational qualifications. The learning experience includes up to 50 days' experience of work over the two years of the programme.

Similarly, the Increased Flexibility Programme for 14-16 year olds programme in England (2002-2007) provide enhanced work-related learning (one to two days per week in vocational learning) through partnerships of local providers and businesses ([2]). Although the programme ended in 2007, school and colleges have continued to offer programmes based on the curricula developed.

In Scotland, SQA developed Skills for Work courses (2005-2007), following the government's call for 'more skills-for-work options for young people', available for pupils in third and fourth year of secondary school (14-16). Skills for Work courses focus on generic employability skills needed for success in the workplace. A key feature is experiential learning linked to particular vocational areas. The courses are intended to provide progression pathways to further education, training and employment.

All the above programmes offer a flexible progression route to student who can progress at their own pace to further training or education.

Table 1: Destinations of school leavers by country (2006)

	ENGLAND	WALES	NORTHERN IRELAND	SCOTLAND
NUMBER OF SCHOOL LEAVERS (THOUSANDS)	751.5	38.8	25.5	56.6
OF WHICH (%)				
EDUCATION	78	76	72	54
GOVERNMENT SUPPORTED TRAINING	6	9	18	5
EMPLOYMENT	6	4	4	26
UNEMPLOYED/ NOT AVAILABLE FOR WORK	7	6	3	13
UNKNOWN OR LEFT AREA	3	4	3	2

NB: Figures for Scotland are not directly comparable due to differences in education systems and data collection. *Source:* Department for Education and Skills - DfES. Statistics of education: education and training statistics for the United Kingdom 2006. Table 4.11.

Available from Internet:

<http://www.dcsf.gov.uk/rsgateway/DB/VOL/v000761/Vweb02-2007final.pdf>

[1] Young Enterprise is run through direct and in-kind funding support from local and national businesses and organisations. It aims at young people aged 4-25 in full or part-time education, teachers/tutors of enterprise education and volunteers who can also develop business skills while delivering learning. <http://www.young-enterprise.org.uk/>.

[2] <http://www.dcsf.gov.uk/qualifications/>

0403 - IVET AT UPPER SECONDARY EDUCATION (SCHOOL-BASED AND ALTERNANCE)

In England, Wales and Northern Ireland upper secondary education begins at age 16. Students may transfer from secondary school to 6th form or FE college choosing from a mix of academic and vocational studies. Again, vocational GCSEs and A-levels qualifications are available as well as a mix of professionally accredited certificates and diplomas. Students at FE colleges may attend full- or part-time. Many of the latter would be in employment and released by their employers to attend their college-based

training in varying patterns from one day per week to block periods of several continuous weeks. Students aged 16-18 may also be pursuing an apprenticeship scheme, which formally combines employment-based training with training provided either by a college or other training provider.

Programmes are normally two years in duration, but a number of students take three years and the phase is generally considered to be ages 16 to 19. Upon completion of the compulsory secondary education, the main routes for young people at this stage are to:

- Continue in full-time general or vocationally related education in a school or college;
- Move on to a work-based training programme, usually an apprenticeship;
- Start work by becoming employed full-time or part-time or doing voluntary work.

The main providers of upper secondary education are:

- School sixth forms (not available in all areas of the country). Traditionally these have a strong focus on general education. Recent local and national initiatives have encouraged partnerships and collaborative agreements with local colleges of further education; elsewhere school sixth forms offer only a narrow range of vocational courses, focusing on those which do not require expensive specialist facilities.
- Sixth form colleges. These provide mainly full time courses to students aged 16-19; much of their offer is academic, but they also offer a small range of vocational courses, especially AVCEs.
- Colleges of further education; this category includes tertiary colleges, specialist colleges (mainly in land-based provision and art and design) and colleges which cater for people who have learning difficulties or disabilities, or both. All of these offer a wide range of courses, for adults as well as young people. Most offer academic courses (such as A Levels), but their focus is much more strongly vocational.

Collectively, FE colleges make up the largest sector of VET providers within state provision for both pre-employment and in-employment training for all, including adults, from the age of 16 upwards. Colleges differ in size and emphasis and the range of trades, crafts, and professions catered for, but all essentially offer a common curriculum of nationally-recognised qualifications. Some colleges are designated by their specialism, as is the case of colleges for agriculture and/or horticulture.

The further education sector in the UK (2006) consists of 476 colleges, 102 of which are Sixth Form Colleges providing mainly full time academic courses to students aged 16-19. The remainder of the sector comprises general further education colleges, tertiary colleges, specialist colleges (mainly in land-based provision and art and design) and colleges that cater for people who have learning difficulties or disabilities, or both. All of these provide both initial and continuing vocational education and training, catering for both young people and adults and normally with a range of both short and long courses.

At local level excellent Colleges and private training providers can be designated as Centres of Vocational Excellence (CoVEs) for the quality of their vocational education in a given occupational area, mainly at level 3. By 2007, 403 CoVEs have been approved in England. The LSC is also planning to launch a national standard of employer responsiveness for Colleges of Further Education.

In Scotland, fewer young people aged 16-18 are educated in FE colleges but continue in upper secondary education at school to age 17-18.

A qualifications drift has taken place, as employers expect higher levels of qualifications from entrants to the labour market and jobs become more complex. Unless specific qualifications are required – e.g. for a career such as nursing, the law, teaching or engineering - general qualifications are often taken as a sign of 'trainability'. Licences to practice requirements are not common in the UK, so

vocational qualifications are often not seen as a necessary requirement for labour market entry.

ENGLAND, WALES AND NORTHERN IRELAND

As a means of quality control, most IVET courses supported by public funding must lead to recognised qualifications. It is therefore convenient to describe provision in terms of the qualification(s) to which it leads.

Access to A Level and AVCE courses requires five 'good' (grade A*-C) passes in GCSE or equivalent. Pupils who have not reached this level at age 16 may spend an extra year trying to improve their results or may choose a less demanding alternative.

Progression from A levels and AVCEs may be to employment, but is more often to general or vocational higher education. Options for progression may be limited by the subjects taken, with mathematics and science required for progression in scientific and technical subjects. AVCEs are accepted for entry to some general degree courses, but progression options are likely to be more limited than from A levels.

Although government policy focuses on those qualifications which have been developed through its initiatives or which it regulates most closely, there are a large number of other approved qualifications whose influence is also significant, as the following table shows.

*LSC-funded learners (in 000's) on 1 October 2006 and 1 October 2007
by age group and highest qualification level*

Age	Qualification Level	2006			2007			% change 2006 to 2007
		Total ¹	of which FE	of which ASL	Total ¹	of which FE	of which ASL	
Under 19	Level 1 and entry	117.7	95.9	0.3	130.2	105.7	0.1	10.6%
	Level 2	269.6	179.5	0.1	261.1	173.7	0.1	-3.2%
	Level 3	438.0	406.4	0.0	455.4	424.7	0.0	4.0%
	Level 4, 5 and HE	0.9	0.8	0.0	0.7	0.6	0.0	-21.0%
	Level not specified	5.0	1.5	3.5	5.0	1.7	3.3	0.4%
	All levels	831.2	684.1	3.8	852.4	706.4	3.5	2.5%
19 plus	Level 1 and entry	441.7	420.8	18.8	389.0	373.5	12.4	-11.9%
	Level 2	519.4	411.9	3.1	563.9	350.2	1.9	8.6%
	Level 3	355.4	281.5	0.5	345.7	256.0	0.3	-2.7%
	Level 4, 5 and HE	45.9	44.4	0.0	34.2	32.7	0.0	-25.6%
	Level not specified	323.1	34.6	288.4	271.2	29.5	241.5	-16.1%
	All levels	1,685.6	1,193.2	310.8	1,603.9	1,041.9	256.1	-4.8%
All Ages	2,516.8	1,877.3	314.6	2,456.2	1,748.4	259.6	-2.4%	

Notes:

1. Includes FE (including learndirect), Apprenticeships, Train to Gain, Entry to Employment and Adult Safeguarded Learning

<http://readingroom.lsc.gov.uk/lsc/National/nat-ilrsfr15final-apr08.pdf>

Within school- and college-based pathways, a range of qualifications is available. The main strands are as follows.

VOCATIONAL CERTIFICATES OF EDUCATION (VCEs)

The Vocational Certificate of Education (VCE) is an A-level award designed for those wanting to study a broad area of work and the application of a subject. These are known as GCEs in 10 applied subjects: applied art and design, applied business, applied ICT, applied science, engineering, health and social care, media, travel and tourism, leisure, performing arts. Students study a number of units, some of which are mandatory. The total number of units required varies between levels. About two thirds of the units are externally assessed, one third internally. Progression – which is dependent on attainment in AS- and/or A-level – is to higher education including foundation degrees (see Section 0406), or to apprenticeship, or to training and/or professional qualifications.

NATIONAL VOCATIONAL QUALIFICATIONS (NVQs)

NVQs are designed for people to gain recognised qualifications for specific occupations. They are offered mainly at levels 1, 2 and 3. They offer progression routes to further education and training or into the labour market. NVQs were designed as qualifications recognising work-based competences, but are often achieved through study in FE colleges.

KEY SKILLS

Key Skills qualifications are available to students across all post-16 routes. Key Skills qualifications (levels 1-3) comprise communication, application of number and information technology (IT). Also available at levels 1-3 are the wider key skills units: working with others, improving own learning and performance and problem solving. Assessment comprises a portfolio and (except for wider Key Skills) external tests. They are available and designed to be taken in tandem with the other qualifications described here.

FUNCTIONAL SKILLS

Functional skills are practical skills in English, Information and Communication Technology (ICT) and Mathematics that allow individuals to work confidently, effectively and independently in life.

To ensure that functional skills are readily available to the full range of learners, they are being offered as free-standing qualifications at Entry Level, Level 1 and Level 2 during the three-year functional skills pilot that began in September 2007. It is expected that functional skills will replace existing provision. Functional skills will also be constituent qualifications of new Foundation, Higher and Advanced Diplomas or part of the apprenticeship scheme.

The assessment approach will be primarily task-based scenario questions with a limited duration, delivered in a controlled environment. The assessments will support problem solving, skills-based approaches.

QCA has developed, with a range of partners, a set of standards for the functional skills pilot qualifications. The standards determine the knowledge and skills proficiency required at each level. The standards are available by following the "Functional skills standards" link to the left of this page.

In terms of achievement of attainment, QCA is currently working with DCSF and DIUS to confirm the performance points that will be attributed to the functional skills qualifications.

BTEC INTRODUCTORY, FIRST AND NATIONAL QUALIFICATIONS

BTECs (Business and Technical Education Council) ([\[1\]](#)) are designed for study in occupational areas such as aeronautical engineering and horticulture. They offer a mixture of theoretical and practical work and can be taken at levels 1, 2 and 3. Progression routes can be into the labour market or onto more advanced vocational courses, including to BTEC Higher National Diploma/Certificate, foundation or other degrees at level 4 or professional qualifications.

OCR NATIONAL AWARDS, CERTIFICATES AND DIPLOMAS

OCR (Oxford, Cambridge and Royal Society of Arts) ([\[2\]](#)) Nationals are a new suite of qualifications designed mainly for 16- to 19- year olds. They are available at levels 1, 2 and 3. Progression routes are similar to the BTEC awards.

CITY AND GUILDS [\[3\]](#) GVQs AND IVQs

City and Guilds offers more than 500 qualifications (through its 8,500 centres worldwide) across sectors at different levels, General Vocational Qualifications (GVQs) and International Vocational Qualifications (IVQs), in particular. There are two types of IVQs, Craft and Technician and they are available at three levels, Certificate, Diploma and Advanced Diploma.

WALES (THE WELSH BACCALAUREATE QUALIFICATION REFORM) UPDATE

Reform is under way in Wales. The Welsh Assembly Government has set the target that 25% of students in Wales will be following the Welsh Baccalaureate by 2010.

The WBQ was initially piloted from September 2003 in post sixteen qualification at levels 2 and 3 of the National Qualification Framework (ISCED 2 and 3) and is now being rolled out across Wales. A level 1 qualification (Foundation) has also been

developed and is presently being piloted in 34 schools and colleges. It is awarded to students who complete a programme consisting of the Welsh Baccalaureate Core Certificate and optional studies drawn from existing qualifications. The optional studies element is assessed in line with the existing requirements of examining and awarding bodies. The Core involves students in the preparation of a portfolio of evidence for assessment including Key Skills and an Individual Investigation. The WBQ comprises two components:

- Core - consisting of four components i.e. Key Skills, Wales, Europe and the World, Work-related Education and Personal and Social Education.
- Options - courses/programmes currently offered e.g. GCSE, VGCSE, AS/A levels, VCE (Vocational A levels), GNVQ, NVQ, BTEC.

A key feature of the WBQ is that of the personal mentor who meets regularly with the student and offers advice and encouragement.

KEY SKILLS (ENGLAND, WALES AND NORTHERN IRELAND)

A common complaint of employers is that young people entering employment do not have the basic skills of literacy/communication and number or the attitudes needed for employment. This was the starting point for the Key Skills initiative. Key skills qualifications are available to students across all post-16 routes. Key Skills qualifications (levels 1-3) comprise communication, application of number and information technology (IT). Also available at levels 1-3 are the wider key skills units: working with others, improving own learning and performance, problem solving. Assessment comprises a portfolio and (except for wider Key Skills) external tests.

Work experience: Most students on vocational courses and many on general courses undertake a short period of unpaid work experience, as enrichment and to learn about a particular working environment. This is often facilitated through local education/business partnerships.

PRE-U COURSE

In 2007, the government approved the pre-U courses for state funding. The course has been devised by Cambridge International Examinations. Thirty institutions, 24 of which are private schools including some of the top schools like Eton, Winchester and Dulwich have already announced plans to offer pre-U's.

This is a two-year course in which students complete three main subjects as in A-levels – they could even opt to choose A-level syllabuses. They also complete a global perspectives and research component which leads to an independent research report on a topic chosen by the student. Above all, students will be assessed at the end of the two-year course, making it more like former A-levels.

SCOTLAND

A new National Qualifications (NQs) system was introduced in Scotland in 1999. One of the main aims of the new system was to bring together academic and vocational qualifications in a single coherent system that promotes parity of esteem and increased employability. There are five levels of awards (Access, Intermediate 1 and 2, Higher and Advanced Higher). Students usually study NQs in fourth, fifth and sixth year of secondary education though a few schools may offer the qualifications at an earlier stage. Schools will not offer the whole range of NQs at every level but will match provision to the needs of students. Schools will work in partnership with other learning centres. NQs offer progression routes into further and higher education and employment. From 2004, all NQs are credit-rated and levelled in the SCQF.

In Scotland, a number of local authorities are using flexibility within the curriculum to deliver work-based vocational learning programmes through the strategy for Enterprise in Education.

CORE SKILLS (SCOTLAND)

Core Skills (Scotland) help people achieve success in many situations in life and work. They provide a basis for learning throughout life, for working effectively, and for handling problems and dealing with issues. Employers, colleges and universities value,

use and develop core skills. All learners can gain recognised National Qualifications for their core skills and these qualifications may contribute to Scottish Group Awards. The Core Skills are: Communication; Numeracy; Problem solving; Using information technology and Working with others.

ALTERNANCE

By the late 1970s, the traditional pattern amongst young people not aiming for higher education was to combine employment with 'day release' at a college of further education. With the increase in full time attendance in post-compulsory education, numbers of part time students have dwindled, but they remain a significant minority. Many of the qualifications taken in full time courses are equally available to part time students, although the latter would normally need to spread their study over a longer period of time.

[1]Former awarding body.

[2]Awarding body.

[3]Vocational awarding body, which awards almost 50 per cent of all National Vocational Qualifications (NVQ).

0404 - APPRENTICESHIP TRAINING

Apprenticeships provide work-based training in a broad range of sectors to people who are learning new skills and gaining recognised qualifications while they are working. They normally last between one and three years. Since its start in 1994, one million apprentices have joined the programme. Apprentices can enter higher education or employment depending on the successful completion of the corresponding apprenticeship training.

60 Apprenticeships (at level 2) and Advanced Apprenticeships (equal to two good A-levels or level 3 qualification) are available in over 80 different industries (retailing, engineering, car manufacturing, construction, banking, to name a few), hotel and catering and business administration being the main sectors where starters for apprenticeships are. By 2008, 50% of British Gas engineer recruits will be apprentices. Relevant Sector Skills Council (SSC) produces a framework for each apprenticeship qualification. The Learning and Skills Council (LSC) in England manages and funds apprenticeships as a national programme through its network of training providers.

An apprenticeship is a mixture of work-based training and education, which includes the following basic elements:

- a National Vocational Qualification (NVQ), an occupationally specific qualification delivered and assessed mainly in the workplace;
- Key Skills, e.g. communication, application of number (11) and ICT at an appropriate level;
- a Technical Certificate, providing the underpinning knowledge of the technical or business areas associated with the job and delivered at a FE college.

There is no single set time to complete Apprenticeships and they vary widely in content and size. Apprenticeships at level 2 take a minimum of 12 months while Advanced Apprenticeships take a minimum of 24 months. Apprenticeships were originally intended for young people, but in May 2004 the upper age limit of 25 for Apprenticeships was removed in England.

Apprentices receive pay and most have the status of employees of the organisation where they work. They typically spend one day per week at college studying the technical certificate and the remainder of their time in training or work with their employer. Apprentices have a contract and also an individual learning plan, which employers develop with the help of local learning providers, who also handle assessment and quality control and help businesses recruit a suitable apprentice.

Selection takes account of school qualifications (especially for more technical occupations) and motivation.

In Wales, the age limit on Apprenticeships was removed in 2002. The Modern Skills Diploma for Adults aims to raise skills levels in business, extending the apprenticeship model to those aged over 25. The diploma programme provides structured training at level 4 for people in or out of employment. Modern Apprenticeships (MA) were introduced in Northern Ireland in 1996; arrangements are broadly similar to those in England.

SCOTLAND

Though similar, arrangements in Scotland differ somewhat. Training includes on- and off-the-job training, study for a SVQ level 3 (SCQF level 6) or above and Core Skills in numeracy, communications, IT, problem solving and working with others at a minimum level of Intermediate 1 (SCQF level 4). Training providers must achieve the Modern Apprenticeship standards defined in the Scottish Quality Management System, the quality assurance mechanism used by the Local Enterprise Companies (LECs). Training providers make a contract with LECs on agreed training provision and related funding. There is no upper age limit for taking part in the apprenticeship programmes.

Skillseekers training (Scotland) includes on- and off-the-job training and study up to level 3 (SCQF level 6), for 16-24 year olds in employment or on a training placement (train for a job through work experience). Funding is provided by government and is paid to training providers as a contribution towards training costs, on the young person's achievement of specific milestones of the training plan. Training usually lasts two years. The enterprise network [\[2\]](#) sets funding levels that reflect the age of the individual and importance of occupational sector to local economy.

[\[1\]](#) How to use numbers to solve problems.

[\[2\]](#) Scottish Enterprise is a government-funded network of a government development agency Scottish Enterprise National and 12 Local Enterprise Companies (LECs), which was set up in 1991 to provide a more fully integrated economic development agency.

0405 - OTHER YOUTH PROGRAMMES AND ALTERNATIVE PATHWAYS

ENGLAND, WALES, NI

ENTRY LEVEL

Entry level qualifications are designed for learners working below GCSE level because they lack skills to operate at higher levels. They provide access to NVQ, GCSE and other level 1 qualifications. They are occupationally specific. There are vocational 'taster- courses' that are designed for transition from compulsory schooling to the post-16 phase. Basic qualifications are available in areas such as life or independent living skills, literacy and numeracy.

ENTRY TO EMPLOYMENT (E2E)

Entry to Employment (E2E) is an entry to level 1 work-based learning programme for young people (aged 16-18) who are not yet ready to enter an Apprenticeship, employment or structured learning at level 2. Each programme is flexible but students must undertake learning in three core strands of the curriculum: basic and/or key skills, vocational skills and personal and social development (in formal and informal environments). Although not qualification driven, E2E must provide learners with an entitlement to work towards external qualifications (or units of it) and awards, appropriate to their ability and potential across all three strands. The E2E students are not restricted by time limit to complete the programme. Learners are recruited through referral from Connexions, a guidance service, or directly from the provider or support agencies (Social Services, Youth Offending Teams, etc.). The Learning and Skills Council (LSC) works in partnership with the Sector Skills Councils, local providers including voluntary organisations and awarding bodies on this programme in the context of local needs. The programme has been inspected several times, with its strengths (50,000 young people in first year) and weaknesses (mixed quality provision).

UK NEW DEAL FOR YOUNG PEOPLE

New Deal is a government's programme to help people move into and remain in work. The New Deal for Young People is for those aged 18 to 24 and claiming Job Seekers' Allowance (JSA). It aims to give young people the skills, confidence and motivation to help them find work. Participants enter a Gateway of intensive job search and specialist help, and those still claiming JSA at the end of this, have a choice of options: full time education and training; training/work placement on the voluntary sector; or training/work placement through the Environment Task Force.

Participants can access one or a combination of options. In addition, an employment subsidy is available at any stage of the programme, providing an incentive for employers to employ a New Deal participant. An initiative, StepUp, builds on the New Deal for Young People and New Deal 25 Plus by providing transitional jobs for those who have not secured sustained employment through New Deal.

0406 - VOCATIONAL EDUCATION AND TRAINING AT POST-SECONDARY (NON TERTIARY) LEVEL

The UK does not have a clearly defined sector of initial vocational and training, which can be termed 'post-secondary (non tertiary)'. Courses and qualifications at level 4 and above of the National Qualifications Framework are considered to be part of Higher Education (described in 0407), even where they do not lead to a traditional degree. IVET courses and qualifications at level 3 of the NQF form part of the offer of further education colleges or other parts of the 'learning and skills sector' and are described in 0403 (IVET at upper secondary level) or 0404 (Apprenticeship training).

0407 - VOCATIONAL EDUCATION AND TRAINING AT TERTIARY LEVEL

In the UK there is no separate identification of 'vocational' higher education. Most institutions offer both vocational and general courses, although in differing proportions. There is a wide choice, with some 50 000 degree and non-degree courses available through the common application body (UCAS).

Increasing numbers of adults take higher education courses at both sub-degree and higher levels. Flexible learning arrangements, including part-time degrees and open learning make it easier to combine study with work. Credit may be given for other qualifications (e.g. professional qualifications or HNDs), reducing the study time required for the degree. Accreditation of Prior Learning (APL) awards credit for demonstrated learning that has occurred outside formal qualifications and can apply to university entry, as well as to other forms of learning.

The sector includes universities, colleges of HE, and specialist institutions, e.g. for art and agriculture. Higher education courses are also increasingly offered in further education colleges. All universities in the UK have independent governance as chartered institutions, benefit from state funding through national funding councils and are subject to quality control for both teaching and research activity. The UK has 91 universities.

The Open University (OU) operates on a different basis compared to other universities. It has been offering degrees and other qualifications through distance learning since the 1970s. The OU is a major national institution that has also developed non-traditional pathways to HE qualifications.

The UK higher education sector has a number of sub-degrees HE qualifications and a three-level system of graduate qualifications: Bachelor, Master and Doctorate. These reflect closely the structures contained in the Bologna process.

SUB- DEGREE QUALIFICATIONS

Until the introduction of Foundation Degrees in 2001, the most usual sub-degree HE qualifications were the Higher National Certificates and Diploma (HNCs and HNDs), which are vocational qualifications in their own right. HNDs are normally offered as full time, two year courses or through a longer part-time route, with HNCs normally two years part time. Well-developed articulation arrangements are in place for HNC/D students to progress to degree courses. A wide range of HND courses are on offer, particularly in Scotland, with some involving a combination of college and workplace learning.

Higher Education Certificates (one year) and Higher Education Diplomas (two years) are also offered and may serve as qualifications in their own right or as stepping-stones to a first degree. Higher Education Diplomas are widely taken as part of the education and training of nurses.

FOUNDATION DEGREES

Since their introduction in 2001 in England, Northern Ireland and Wales, Foundation Degrees have expanded at 25% per annum (20,800 students in 2007). They are shorter than Bachelors degrees, mainly in applied and vocational subjects, and designed to be taught in HE and FE colleges. They are intended to solve skills shortages, preparing more HE students for the world of work and widen participation. Features are:

- Employer involvement;
- Skills/knowledge application in the workplace;
- Credit accumulation and transfer;
- Progression within work and/or to an honours degree.

BACHELOR DEGREE

Bachelor of Arts (BA), Bachelor of Education (BEd) and Bachelor of Science (BSc) courses usually last three years (full-time Some courses last four years, involving placements in industry or periods abroad; these have the same academic standing as three-year courses. Most courses are modular in structure, with a compulsory common core. Courses usually include a project or dissertation based on independent research.

In Scotland it is normal for students to achieve an Ordinary Degree after three years and a more specialist Honours Degree after four years and several of the older universities award the MA as a first degree instead of the BA.

MASTERS DEGREES (MA AND MSc ETC)

These are post-graduate courses and may take one-year full time or two years part time. They are usually self-funded; entry is dependent on results at bachelor level. There is a greater component of independent working, including a dissertation or thesis based on independent research. Some Masters degrees, such as MEng, are first degrees available for more able students. They are at a level between honours degree and Masters degree.

POST-GRADUATE CERTIFICATES (EG PGCE)

Some post-graduate courses are below Masters level and are intended to provide preparation for a specific occupation, following completion of a general degree. One of the best-known examples is the Postgraduate Certificate of Education (PGCE), which prepares graduates for a career in teaching and is a pre-requisite for Qualified Teacher Status for those who do not have B Ed as their first degree.

DOCTORATE (PHD)

Entry onto a PhD is dependent on results at either Masters or Bachelor level. PhDs are funded but it is up to the student to gain that funding. They take at least three years to complete, the first year (or first two years) of which may consist of an MPhil (Masters of Philosophy) qualification. Part time PhDs may take the candidate considerably longer to complete.

PROGRESSION TO EMPLOYMENT

Possession of a relevant first degree is essential for entry to further training and employment in some professions; this is true for doctors, dentists and veterinary surgeons. For engineers there is an alternative, but much less used route; for accountants and lawyers, postgraduate courses following an unrelated first degree are much more common.