



BRITISH INTERNATIONAL SCHOOL RIYADH

UK Schools & Colleges

How to Make the Choice

Choosing a school for your children is one of the most important decisions you will make, and if that decision includes sending them to a boarding school, it may well seem doubly difficult. As well as their education, you will also be trusting your children's day-to-day welfare and happiness to the school. However, by choosing one of the schools featured in this Guide, you can be certain that high standards are assured.

The UK education system

Education in the UK is compulsory for everyone aged 5-16. After the age of 16, many students continue into further education, which encompasses learning usually taken between the ages of 16 and 18. After age 18, many students choose to progress into higher education, which is offered by universities and university-sector colleges.

Compulsory education and some further education is provided either free of charge by the state in some schools, or by independent schools, where parents pay fees for their children to attend. The UK Government sometimes refers to state-funded academies as 'independent', meaning that they are not subject to the control of their local education authority. However, such academies receive state funding and are therefore considered to be state schools rather than truly independent schools.

The state system

In the state system, schools are maintained and funded by central government or by their local education authority. There are currently 35 state-maintained boarding schools, but these only offer places to UK and other European Union nationals and those who have the right of residence in the UK. The education at state-maintained boarding schools is free, but the cost of boarding must be met by parents or guardians. For more information on boarding in the state sector, go to the State Boarding Schools' Association (SBSA) website: www.sbsa.org.uk.

The independent system

In the independent system, schools are not supported by the state, and parents will usually pay the fees for their children's education and living costs if they are boarding at the school. The UK's long-established and highly respected independent boarding schools welcome young people from around the world, and are currently home to nearly 21,000 international students.

There are three main types of independent boarding school for students aged 7-18. These are:

- Preparatory schools (sometimes called junior schools) for students aged 7 (or younger if the school has a pre-preparatory department) to 11/13,
- Senior school (sometimes called secondary schools) for students aged 11/13 to 16/18,
- Independent colleges (which are often referred to as tutorial or sixth-form colleges) for students aged 16 and over.

All of the schools listed in this Guide operate in the independent sector. Most of them are preparatory and senior schools, although you will find some independent study centres profiled in this Guide. Most of these centres are linked to boarding schools, and prepare international students for life at the traditional boarding school.

Independent preparatory schools

Students aged between 7 and 13 can attend their first boarding school, known as a preparatory (often called 'prep') school as the students are being prepared for senior school. Many schools also have pre-preparatory departments that take students from age 5 or even as young as 2. Most pre-preparatory departments are for day students only, but a small number do take boarders. Over 80% of prep schools are now co-educational, but over 70 cater exclusively for boys while about 30 take only girls. There are also choir schools, non-denominational schools and prep schools that specialise in dyslexia or other special educational needs. Some prep schools send their students on to a range of senior schools, while others are attached to senior schools to which most of their students' progress. A small number of schools take only boarders, while most have a greater or lesser proportion of day students.

Accreditation

Most prep schools are members of the Independent Association of Prep Schools (IAPS), which is the leading professional body for prep school leads and deputy heads. IAPS is one of the seven constituent member associations of the Independent Schools Council (ISC). IAPS schools are regularly inspected by the Independent Schools Inspectorate (ISI) in England and by national inspectorates in Wales, Scotland and the Northern Ireland. Accreditation by ISI or a national inspectorate guarantees that the quality of the school has been assessed and confirmed by rigorous inspection. In addition, all independent schools must be registered with the UK Government, and meet minimum legal requirements for the premises, accommodation, staffing, instruction and pupil welfare.

Study

All prep schools offer the highest standard of basic academic education and provide the best foundation for future study. The three main subjects studied are English, Maths and Science, although other subjects such as Art, Geography, Languages, History and Music are also taught in prep schools. The progress of the students may be assessed using a series of national tests and tasks (known as National Curriculum Tests) at the end of Key Stages 1 and 2 (ages 7 and 11 respectively) or may be assessed using an alternative system.

Prep schools, particularly boarding schools, traditionally prepare students for the Common Entrance (CE), which assesses the student's ability in core subjects. The exam is set by the Independent Schools Examinations Board (ISEB) and taken at age 11+, 12+ or 13+, depending on the senior school. Admissions criteria and the CE mark that needs to be attained varies according to the senior school. Special arrangements may be made for students coming from abroad or whose first language is not English.

The next step

As your children grow up, the head of the prep school will always be ready to advise you on what the next stage could or should be. If you have chosen the junior department of a senior school the transfer may be a matter of course, but you may decide to look elsewhere as well. A change of environment or a change of peer group may be beneficial and the head will be happy to discuss your options. If you have chosen a prep school where students do not automatically progress to a particular senior school, the head will be able to recommend the sort of senior school he or she thinks might be suitable for your child, and talk over the various alternatives with you.

Specialist schools

As well as mainstream schools, there are a number of specialist schools in the independent boarding sector:

Special needs schools: Boarding can be a particularly beneficial experience for a child with special needs. Some schools aim to bring progress within a mainstream school approach; others are dedicated special needs schools where all the students will have similar difficulties (for example, dyslexia).

Choir schools: There are 44 schools in the UK, educating around 15,000 students, that are members of the Choir Schools' Association (CSA). About 1,000 of the schools' students are choristers who regularly sing in cathedrals, college chapels and churches around the UK.

Music and dance schools: There are nine specialist schools in England and Scotland that receive funding under the Government's Music and Scheme. The schools aim to provide world-class music and dance teaching combined with a broad and balanced education. The music schools are Chetnam's School of Music, the Yehudi Menuhin School, the Purcell School, Wells Cathedral School and St. Mary's Music School, Edinburgh. The dance schools are: the Royal Ballet School, the Elmhurst School of Dance (in association with Birmingham Royal Ballet), the Arts Educational School, and the Hammond School of Dance.

Independent senior schools

Students generally transfer to a senior school between the ages of 11 and 13, and stay there until aged 16 or 18. Senior schools in England, Wales, and Northern Ireland have three main points of entry: age 11 (Year 7 in the academic year numbering system used in education in these countries), age 13 (Year 9) and age 16 (Year 12). In Scotland, independent schools are generally more flexible about points of entry, but most students join senior schools when they are 12 (Senior 1 in the Scottish academic year numbering scheme). Some senior schools accept students on the basis of the Common Entrance examination at 12 or 13 (Senior 1 or 2) and most will also accept students at a later stage.

Like preparatory schools, senior schools may accept boys and girls only, or can be co-educational. Some boys' senior schools accept students from age 11, but most start at age 13. (Many boys' schools have associated prep schools.) Girls' senior schools usually accept students from age 11, although many have their own prep or junior schools. Most single-sex schools ensure that students spend time with members of the opposite sex by sharing activities with other schools. Several schools now offer single-sex teaching up to age 16 and then have mixed education between the ages of 16 and 18 in what is known as the 'sixth form'.

Co-educational schools have increased in number in the UK. This is due to single-sex schools admitting the opposite sex or merging with a girls' or boys' school with which they are linked. In schools that have always been co-educational, the ratio of boys to girls is usually around 50:50. It is possible that a co-educational school that was once single sex may still have significantly greater numbers of that sex.

Accreditation

There are more than 800 independent boarding schools in the UK. Of these, around 600 schools and their heads are members of at least one of the constituent associations of the ISC. For senior schools, these associations are the Headmasters' and Headmistresses' Conference (HHMC), the Society of Headmasters and Headmistresses of Independence Schools (SHMIS), the Girls' Schools Association (GSA), and the Independent Schools Association (ISA). These bodies make sure that all aspects of the education offered – academic, pastoral, financial and administrative – are maintained to a high standard. All of the schools featured in this Guide are ISC members, and are inspected by the Independent Schools Inspectorate or a national inspectorate.

Boarding schools in Scotland belong to the Scottish Council of Independent Schools (SCIS). Its members are registered with the Scottish Executive Education Department and subject to inspection by Her Majesty's Inspectorate.

Study

In England, Wales, and Northern Ireland, senior school students are prepared for and sit GCSE (General Certificate of Secondary Education) examinations, which they take around age 16. (In Scottish senior schools, students sit either Standard Grade or GCSE examinations.) Students who achieve suitable high grades in these examinations qualify for further education at sixth-form level. Many boarding schools have their own sixth form for students aged 16-18 (Year 12 and 13 or S5 and S6 in Scotland), although some do not. In these cases, students may choose other schools or independent sixth-form or tutorial colleges to continue their studies.

In the sixth-form, students study for AS- and A-level examinations. Scotland has its own system of qualifications, so student at Scottish schools are more likely to study for Scottish Highers and possibly Advanced Highers. An increasing number of schools throughout the UK are offering the International Baccalaureate (IBB) diploma, which is accepted as an entrance qualification for degree courses throughout the world. You can find out how qualifications from your country compare with those on offer in the UK from the National Academic Recognition Information Centre for the UK (UK NARIC).

The next step

Sixth form at a boarding school is a fine preparation for university life. Although each university or higher education college decides its own admissions criteria, schools and colleges do everything they can to help their students get the best university place they can possibly achieve.

Independent sixth-form and tutorial colleges

Instead of staying on at boarding school sixth form, some students choose to move to an independent college. These institutions accept students at aged 16+ and, like school sixth forms, provide a bridge between school and university. Colleges vary greatly in their character. Some are fully residential with similar sporting and cultural facilities to those you would find in a boarding school, while others are day schools where students live in a shared house or with a local British family. Most are co-educational and many are multi-cultural, offering the chance to study and socialize in the company of a wide range of people from differing backgrounds.

Accreditation

Independent colleges have their own membership scheme, run by the Conference for Independent Further Education (CIFE). CIFE colleges are regularly inspected and accredited, either by the British Accreditation Council (BAC) or by the ISC. A full list of BAC-accredited colleges can be found at www.the-bac.org.

Study

Independent colleges offer the same qualification as boarding school sixth forms: A-levels, Highers and the IB. Increasing numbers of colleges are also offering courses that are not available at boarding schools, such as foundation programmes that prepare students for study at university.

Colleges tend to use an intensive tutorial style of teaching – the small group teaching and regular testing developed at the Universities of Oxford and Cambridge. Cutting-edge learning techniques are backed up by established traditional approaches. College teachers – many of them examiners and authors of textbooks – are proven educational thinkers.

Colleges have a great deal of experience of helping international students to succeed in the UK and can often offer wide-ranging support services, including English language tuition, personal tutors, open access to welfare officers and students councils.

The next step

Like integral boarding school sixth forms, independent colleges provide an excellent preparation for life at university. Non-residential colleges also offer international students a good introduction to life in the UK beyond the educational system.

International study centres

International students who are not ready to enter a mainstream boarding school can attend a course at an international study centre. These centres offer one-or two year intensive courses that prepare young learners from outside the UK for life at a traditional UK boarding school.

Accreditation

Most study centres are linked with long-established traditional UK boarding schools, and many are members of the British Association of International Study Centres (BAISC). Since 2006, the British Council has inspected and accredited international study under a new category for accreditation.

Study

Study centres follow the same curriculum – Mathematics, Science, Information Technology and so on – as traditional UK schools. There is, however, heavy emphasis on developing English Language skills, including pronunciation. Many centres enter their students for English language exams such as the Cambridge ESOL (English for Speakers of Other Languages) exams. Occasionally, other educational institutions such as universities require proof of a certain level of fluency in English and the result from exams such as ESOL can then be very valuable. In every subject, classes are small (averaging around six students per teacher) and teachers experienced in teaching English as a foreign language guide students through carefully prepared programmes of study.

Study centres also prepare students for life in boarding school. All study centre students live at the centre; their houseparents are aware of the possible problems for young people coping with a new culture and help and support students as they overcome difficulties. Typically, after a year (or sometimes two) at a centre, students can pass the entrance exams to enter traditional UK boarding schools.

The next step

Often students go on to the boarding school that has set up the centre, but this progression is not automatic. In many cases, students have to take the same high-standard entrance exams as other students who wish to enter these schools. Sometimes parents and students have their sights set on other schools, and progression to these depends on the student reaching the high standards they expect. Whichever school is chosen, the study centre will prepare each student carefully for the entrance examination. If the student does not reach the high standards demanded, the study centre will suggest another good-quality school that may be more suited to the student's talents.

A- Z Glossary

Music and Dance Scheme: A Government initiative that provides financial support to talented children attending the nine schools that receive assistance under the Scheme.

National Curriculum: This applies to all children under 16 in maintained schools in England, Wales, and Northern Ireland, and is geared towards gaining particular skills by certain Key Stages. It is used as an important guide by independent schools.

National year numbering scheme: The main organizational classifications for teaching the National Curriculum. Year groups are organized by age and the expected level of achievement. In England, Wales, and Northern Ireland, the groups are arranged from Year 1 (age 5+) to Year 13 (age 17+, the second year of sixth form). In Scotland, the groups run from P1 (age 5+) to P7 (age 11+) and then from S1 (age 12+) to S6 (age 17+).

UK Qualifications

Students go from all over the world to study for the UK's world-class qualification.

Students come from all over the world for the UK's universally known and respected GCSEs, A-levels, Standard Grades, Highers and other equivalent qualifications, such as the International Baccalaureate (IB). These are academic and career-based courses designed to stretch a student's ability and imagination. And an independent school is an excellent place to study for them. Many independent boarding schools and colleges are at the top of the UK league tables for GCS, A-level, Standard Grade, and Higher results.

For many international students, GCSE and A-levels (or equivalent qualifications) are important steps on the road to degree or career-based courses. GCSEs offer the opportunity to explore a range of subjects from sciences, humanities, and arts, and discover a student's real strengths and interests. AS-levels and A-levels allow students to cover a smaller number of subjects in greater depth, and to a level that prepares you for higher study. These courses encourage independent thinking and personal study skills, as well as teamworking on a wide range of projects. Alternatively, if a student is planning to skip further studies and go straight into a career after leaving school, then having highly regarded UK qualifications such as GCSEs or A-levels will give their career search a head start. Employers will be impressed by the skills the students will have gained through thinking for himself or herself, and through research, teamwork, and analysis.

Students are encouraged to combine their academic life with a lively social life, and in all schools and colleges there will be a wide choice of extracurricular activities to get involved in. A student could direct a play, score the school football team's winning goal, develop singing talents or impress tutors with debating skills. Coming to the UK is a great chance for students to expand their horizons, meet people from all over the world, get their first real taste of independence and learn more than they thought possible – not just academically, but also personally and about the individual strengths they possess. When selecting the best candidates for courses, higher education institutions take into account not only academic results, but also all-around personal development. A student's experience in the UK on a GCSE, AA-level or other equivalent course will build character and confidence, broaden outlook and help the individual become a strong candidate for whichever chosen course or career.

GCSEs

Students usually study from eight to twelve GCSE subjects over the years (Years 10 and 11). In Scotland, students usually study for Standard Grades, which are the Scottish equivalent of GCSEs. Most students study a core of mandatory subjects selected by their school or college, and choose additional optional subjects from a list. For example:

- Typical core subjects, of which you might study six, include English, Mathematics, Design and Technology, a modern language, a science, information technology (IT), history and geography.
- Optional subjects, of which you might choose three or four, include art and design, business studies, drama, economics, engineering, health and social care, leisure and tourism, music, physics, another modern language and religious education.

Other subjects such as Latin, politics and philosophy are also available at some schools and colleges, depending on the expertise and qualifications of the teachers. On any GCSE course, you receive formal tuition in the classroom, laboratory or workshop, but also encouraged to work independently and undertake research for projects, often outside school hours. Educational visits, either on your own or as part of a small group, are often included in the timetable. Some subjects take account of the work you do throughout the year as part of the qualification grading, while others are assessed entirely by examinations that are independently graded. GCSE grades range from A* (the highest) to G.

International GCSEs (IGCSEs)

The IGCSE is an international version of the UK GCSE, which has been tailored to meet the needs of students around the world. It is taken in over 100 countries, including the UK, and is internationally recognised as being equivalent to the UK GCSE.

The IGCSE provides a broad study, programme by drawing subjects from five areas: languages; humanities; social sciences; mathematics; creative; technical and vocational. There is a choice of core and extended papers in most subjects and there is a mix of practical experience and theoretical knowledge, which makes IGCSEs suitable for all students. As with UK GCSEs, grades range from A* (the highest) to G (the lowest). Some UK boarding schools make arrangements for their students to sit IGCSE examinations.

GCSEs in vocational subjects

It is also possible to undertake GCSEs in vocational or career-based subjects (which are also known as applied subjects). Vocational GCSEs can take more study time than traditional academic GCSEs and can therefore be counted as a double award (i.e. equivalent to two conventional GCSEs, depending on the options the student chooses.) As with other GCSEs, grades range from A* to G, with two grades (e.g. AB) possible for double awards.

GCCE AS- and A-levels

Students have a much freer choice at AS-level and A-level than at GCSE level, although they are advised to choose subjects that will help their future career and/or university application. The vast choice of subjects on offer includes most of the GCSE subjects listed earlier plus geology, sports studies, electronics, photography, media studies and many others. For some subjects, such as mathematics, students need to have passed a GCSE in the same subject. Others require no specific prior knowledge of the subject. A-levels take a total of two years to complete (ages 16-18, Years 12 and 13).

In the first year, students study four or five subjects at AS-level, which is both the first half of an A-level and a qualification in its own right.

Students usually take AS-levels when they are 17. In the second year, students select two, three, or four of those subjects (usually three) they studied at AS-level to study for the second half of the A-level. This part of the A-level is known as A2. Students usually take their A-level examinations when they are 18. Two AS-levels can be taken as the equivalent of one A-level. In Scottish schools, students usually study for Highers and Advanced Highers instead of AS- and A-levels.

Some subjects take account of the work you do throughout the year, while others are assessed entirely by examination. Examinations are independently marked and graded, with AA-levels ranging from A (the highest) to E. On both AS- and A-level courses, you receive classroom, laboratory or workshop tuition, but you also encouraged to work independently and undertake research for topical projects, frequently outside school hours. Educational visits may also be part of the timetable.

GCE As- and A-levels in vocational subjects

AS- and A-levels in vocational subjects (also known as A-levels in applied subjects) are of the same advanced standard as academic AS- and A-levels, but can take in a range of career-based subjects.

Vocational As-levels (3 units of study) can be taken in business, engineering, health and social care, and information and communications technology (ICT). They are usually completed in one year, but can be taken over a longer period. Vocational A-levels can be 6 or 12 units of study and normally take one or two years to complete. Retail and distributive services is only available as a 6-unit vocational A-level.

All other subject areas, including art and design, business, construction and the built environment, engineering, health and social care, hospitality (communication and production) , performing arts, science, and travel and tourism, may be studied as either a 6- or 12-unit vocational A-level.

As- and A-levels in applied subjects are assessed by a mixture of classroom tuition, practical work and written exams, with about one-third of the assessment conducted by external assessors. They are designed as the basis for entering the workplace, but are also recognised for admission to university. Grades range from A (the highest) to E, with two grades (e.g. AB) possible for a double award.

Advanced Extension Awards (AEAs)

AEAs are designed for the top 10% of A-level students and provide opportunities for them to show a greater depth of understanding than is required at A-level. The qualifications are graded at Merit and Distinction and are accessible to all able students whatever their programmes of study. AEAs are taken at the end of the normal A-level programme and may be used to distinguish between applicants for university courses in high demand.

International Baccalaureate

The International Baccalaureate is an international programme of study for students aged 3-19 at schools and colleges around the world. The IB Diploma, a two-year programme for students aged 16-19, is the most commonly found in the UK. The programme allows international mobile students to transfer more easily between schools, as it combines elements of various national systems, without being based on any one.

The popularity of IB qualifications is growing in the UK – the UK Government hopes to provide students with the option of studying IB locally by 2010 - and is accepted as an entry qualification for higher education by most countries, including the UK. The qualification offers a comprehensive curriculum, covering mathematics, sciences, language, and arts subjects. IB students study six subjects chosen from specified groups, in addition, to three compulsory core requirements. Three subjects are studied to the equivalent of A-level standard and three to the equivalent subject and take part in a course on the theory of knowledge, as well as extracurricular activities. The award of the diploma depends on the student gaining at least 24 points.

Cambridge Pre-University (Pre-U) Diploma

A new post-16 qualification, Cambridge Pre-U provides students with the skills and knowledge they need to make a success of their subsequent studies at university. Students choose up to three subjects from a range of 26 and may study them individually or as an interdisciplinary combination. They also complete an Independent Research Report and a Global Perspective Portfolio. The Cambridge Pre-U is available from September 2008.

Scottish qualifications

Scotland has its own educational and examination system, which is related to, but independent of, the system that operates in England, Wales, and Northern Ireland. Some independent schools in Scotland follow the Scottish system, some the system used in the rest of the UK, with some mixing aspects of both systems. In the Scottish system, the qualifications offered at schools and colleges of further education are called National Qualifications.

National Qualifications include Standard Grades, National Courses, and National Units. They are available in hundred of subjects to suit everyone's interests and skills. Schools offer a range of traditional academic subjects as well as new subjects that will be useful in the workplace, such as biotechnology, media studies, and information studies. National Qualifications can be built up over time to encourage students to progress to the highest level they can achieve.

Standard Grades

Instead of GCSEs, most students in Scotland study for Standard Grade qualifications in a broad range of subjects. Like GCSEs, Standard Grade examinations are generally taken by students aged 16 (in Scotland school year S4). Students often take seven or eight subjects, including Maths and English. The courses are made up of a number of different parts called 'elements', with an examination at the end.

There are three levels of study – Credit, General, and Foundation – with Credit being the highest level. Different grades can be achieved at each level. At Credit level, a student can be awarded 1 or 2, with 1 being the highest, at General level, grade 3 or 4 can be awarded, and at foundation level, grade 5 or 6 can be awarded. The aim of this system is to make sure that students have the best chance of achieving as high a grade as possible.

National Courses

Most Scottish students progress from Standard Grades to National Courses, which are available at seven levels – Advanced Higher, Higher, Intermediate 2, Intermediate 1, Access 3, Access 2, and Access 1, with Advanced Higher being the top level achievable. National Courses usually consist of three subject-related National Units and an externally set examination. To achieve a full National Course award, a student must pass all Unit assessments as well as the external assessment, which is usually an examination. However, each National Unit is a qualification in its own right.

Higher and Advanced Highers

After studying Standard Grades, students in Scotland often study Highers. Highers are similar to AS-levels and are recognised qualifications for entry into university throughout the UK. Highers examinations are usually taken in four, five, or six subjects by students aged 17 (in S5).

After taking Highers, some students move on to degree-level study, while others stay on for an additional year (S6) to study for more Highers, Advanced Highers or A-levels. Advanced Highers extend the skills and knowledge gained in a higher and are additional qualifications that help with entry to university or the workplace. Highers are available in academic and vocational subjects.

Intermediate 1 and 2

Instead of Standard Grades, some students at Scottish independent schools opt to take Intermediate 2 or Intermediate 2 qualifications. Intermediate 2 is the higher level of these two qualifications. For some it may be a useful stepping stone towards taking a Higher, as completing a higher in one year can be very demanding. It is possible to study intermediate qualifications in both academic and vocational subjects.

Access 1, 2, and 3

Access 1 is designed for students requiring considerable support with their learning, while Access 2 is for those with more moderate needs. Access 3 is comparable with Standard grade Foundation level. These qualifications are generally taken instead of Standard Grades.

The Education System in England, Wales, and Northern Ireland

An overview of some of the examinations on offer at independent schools in English, Wales, and Northern Ireland:

Age	School year	Key Stage	Examinations
17-18	Year 13	Key Stage 4	A-level (academic and vocational), International Baccalaureate, AEA
16-17	Year 12		AS-level (academic and vocational)
15-16	Year 11		GCSE (academic and vocational)
14-15	Year 10	Key Stage 3	National Curriculum Tests (NCTs)
13-14	Year 9		Common Entrance (13+)
12-13	Year 8		
11-12	Year 7	Key Stage 2	
10-11	Year 6		
9-10	Year 5		
8-9	Year 4		
7-8	Year 3	Key Stage 1	
6-7	Year 2		NCTs
5-6	Year 1		

Qualifications commonly offered by independent schools in England, Wales, and Northern Ireland

An overview of some of the qualifications available in independent boarding schools in England, Wales, and Northern Ireland:

General Certificates of Secondary Education (GCSEs)	
Purpose of the course	Qualifying exams for A-levels, vocational programmes, or career-based courses. Enable students to develop knowledge and understanding in a range of areas
Entrance requirements	General Education
Teaching Methods	Classroom instruction, projects, practical work
Assessment methods	Continuous assessment based on coursework, plus exams.
Duration	Two years

International GCSEs (IGCSEs)	
Purpose of the course	An international version of the GCSE. Qualifying exams for A-levels or equivalent qualifications.
Entrance requirements	General Education
Teaching Methods	Classroom instruction, projects, practical work
Assessment methods	Externally assessed exam and optional coursework submission
Duration	One or two years

GCSEs in vocational/ applied subjects	
Purpose of the course	A career-based version of the GCSE. Students may substitute one GCSE in a vocational subject for two conventional GCSEs.
Entrance requirements	General Education
Teaching Methods	Classroom instruction, projects, practical work
Assessment methods	Continuous assessment based on coursework, plus exams.
Duration	One or two years

GCE AS- and A-levels	
Purpose of the course	Higher-level school-le
Entrance requirements	Four/five GCSEs (grades A*-C) or equivalent
Teaching Methods	Classroom instruction, essays, projects, practical work
Assessment methods	Mainly by exam at the end of each module/the course, with some coursework assessment.
Duration	Two years altogether (AS-levels in the first year, A-levels (A2) in the second)

GCE As- and A-levels in vocational/applied subjects	
Purpose of the course	To build practical and work-related skills. Sometimes taken alongside other A-levels. Recognised for admission to undergraduate study.
Entrance requirements	Four/five GCSEs (grades A*-C) or equivalent
Teaching Methods	Classroom instruction, essays, projects, practical work and work experience. Supported by professional experts and employers.
Assessment methods	Twelve, six, or three units. Two-thirds internally assessed and one-third externally assessed.
Duration	Two years altogether (AS-levels in the first year, A-levels (A2) in the second)

GCE Advanced Extension Award	
Purpose of the course	Designed to challenge the most able A-level students by providing opportunities to develop greater understanding than required at A-level
Entrance requirements	Four/five GCSEs (grades A*-C) or equivalent
Teaching Methods	Classroom instruction, essays, projects, and practical work
Assessment methods	Designed as an extensions to A-levels. No additional coursework required.
Duration	An additional exam at the end of a two-year A-level course (AS-levels in the first year, AA-levels (a2) in the second)

International Baccalaureate	
Purpose of the course	An international course that is an alternative to A-levels and is recognised for entrance into higher education in most countries.
Entrance requirements	Four/five GCSEs (grades A*-C) or IB Middle Years Programme
Teaching Methods	Classroom instruction, essays, projects, and practical work
Assessment methods	Three subjects must be offered at A-level-equivalent standard, and three at AS-level equivalent. An extended essay on one subject.
Duration	Two years

The Education System in England, Wales, and Northern Ireland

An overview of some of the Scottish examinations on offer at independent schools in Scotland:

Age	School year	Examinations
17-18	S6	Advanced Higher, Higher
16-17	S5	Higher, Intermediate 1 and 2
15-16	S4	Standard Grade, Intermediate 1 and 2
14-15	S3	Standard Grade
13-14	S2	
12-13	S1	Common Entrance (13+)
11-12	P7	
10-11	P6	
9-10	P5	
8-9	P4	
7-8	P3	
6-7	P2	
5-6	P1	

Qualifications commonly offered by independent schools in Scotland

Scotland has its own educational and examination system, which is related to the system that operates in the rest of the UK. Some schools in Scotland follow the Scottish system, some the system used in the rest of the UK, with some mixing aspects of both systems.

Standard Grades	
Purpose of the course	Qualifying exams for A-levels/Scottish Highers or career-based courses. Enable students to develop knowledge and understanding in a range of art and science areas
Entrance requirements	General Education
Teaching Methods	Classroom instruction, essays, projects, practical work
Assessment methods	Continuous assessment based on coursework, plus exams. There are three levels of Standard Grades: Foundation, General, and Credit.
Duration	Two years

Intermediate 1 and Intermediate 2	
Purpose of the course	Usually taken as an alternative to Standard Grade Foundation or General, or for those students who want to start a new subject.
Entrance requirements	General Education
Teaching Methods	Classroom instruction, essays, projects, practical work
Assessment methods	Three National Units are usually studied. Each is assessed separately, and there is a final exam.
Duration	One year

Highers	
Purpose of the course	Higher-level school-leaver qualification providing access to career-based or degree courses.
Entrance requirements	Credit-level pass at Standard Grade or an Intermediate 2 pass in the same subject.
Teaching Methods	Classroom instruction, essays, projects, practical work
Assessment methods	Three National Units are usually studied. Each is assessed separately, and there is a final exam.
Duration	One year

Advanced Highers

Purpose of the course	Aimed at the top 10% of students in their final year at school/college and who have passed Highers. Distinguishes the most able students.
Entrance requirements	Pass at Higher level.
Teaching Methods	Classroom instruction, essays, projects, practical work
Assessment methods	Three National Units are usually studied. Each is assessed separately, and there is a final exam.
Duration	One year