Education in the United Kingdom

an overview about the English (Welsh, Northern Irish) and Scottish system

1. General Facts

a. education in the UK is a **devolved** matter - England, Wales, Northern Ireland and Scotland have own educational authority
b. English, Welsh and Irish system are similar - Scottish system differs *(emphasis on broader knowledge across more subjects, less examination pressure)*
c. national level (England): central government (Department for Education and Dpt. for Business, Innovation and Skills) share responsibility with Local Authorities
d. **freedom of choice:** around 94% of pupils attend state schools and 6% private schools
e. **State schools** (no fees), some **faith schools**, **state-funded boarding schools** and nearly all **universities** (low fees) are publicly financed
f. **Examination Boards** set up and award secondary education qualifications and other qualifications in each member country

2. History

a. **until 19th century:** church and religion predominantly offered education (e.g. Sunday schools, church schools, parish apprenticeships, ...)
b. **19th and 20th century:** introduction of **compulsory education**, independent state schools and secondary education (**Butler Act** 1944: ***Tripartite System***)
c. **end of 20th century**: more competition in education, *National Curriculum*, introduction of *Key Stages*, **comprehensive schools** and other reforms

3. Examination boards

a. offering all kinds of qualifications and certificates assessing each level of skill

<table>
<tr><th>England, Wales, N. Ireland</th><th>Scotland</th></tr>
<tr><td>19th century: first creation of local boards (mostly by universities)</td><td>only SQA (Scottish Qualification Authority) offering all Scottish qualifications</td></tr>
<tr><td>today: 5 exam boards offer a wide range of qualifications</td><td rowspan="2">National Courses (from Access 1 to Advanced Higher) can be taken in many subjects (academic to vocational)

many other certificates (HNC, HND, ...) available</td></tr>
<tr><td>each school / college picks their boards freely
‣ subject-by-subject
‣ mixture is possible (e.g. for GSCE exams)</td></tr>
<tr><td>JCQ (Joint Council for Qualifications) and NQF (National Qualifications Framework)
‣ standard exam rules and statistics
‣ credit transfer system - overview!</td><td>SCQF (Scottish Credit and Qualifications Framework)
‣ similar to NQF + ECTS
‣ assesses as well levels (1-12) for different qualifications</td></tr>
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for example: an EDEXCEL (English exam board) certificate

4. Education in England today

a. 13 years in general, compulsory from 5 to 16 years (2015: 18 years)
b. division into primary and secondary education at the age of 11
c. curriculum based on four Key Stages with different exams (e.g. National Curriculum Test, NCTs after K2) and teachers' assessment to rate attainment
d. lessons take usually from 9-12 and 2-4 o'clock
e. students wear school uniforms

4.1 Nursery school

a. independent schools attended by almost all 3 and 4 years old

4.2 Primary education

a. from 5-11 years, consists of Infant and Junior School
b. private and state schools (co-educational) exist

4.3 Secondary Education

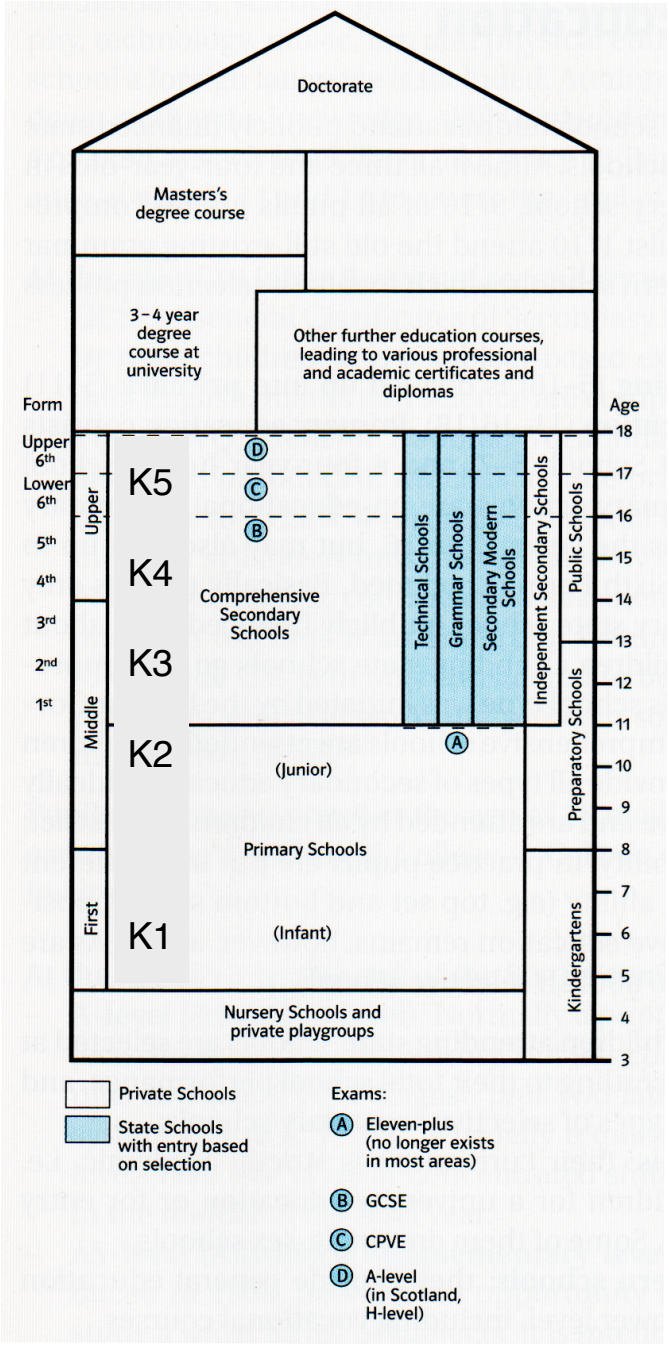
a. formed by Comprehensive schools (non-selective) and *Eleven-plus* exam selecting schools (Technical -, Grammar -, Secondary Modern Schools)
b. alternative: 6% of children attend Public Schools (deemed as élite)
c. important exams: **GSCE** (*General Certificates of Secondary Education* - after K4), **GNVQ** (*General National Vocational Qualification* - "practical GSCE" and **A levels** (during K5)

5. Post-secondary education

a. higher education: universities (graduation usually as Bachelor, Master and Doctor)
b. adult education: access courses (similar to A levels), Open Universities, lifelong learning, other qualifications

6. British Educational trend to more global awareness

National Qualifications Framework NQF (new levels)
Examples of qualifications

Level 8	D (doctoral degrees) doctorates
Level 7	M (masters) masters degrees, postgraduate certificates & diplomas
Level 6	H (honours) bachelors degrees, graduate certificates & diplomas
Level 5	I (Intermediate) diplomas of higher education and further education, foundation degrees, higher national diplomas
Level 4	C (certificate) certificates of higher education
Level 3	NVQ level 3/A-levels
Level 2	NVQ level 2/GCSE (A*- C)
Level 1	NVQ level 1/NVQ1 GCSE (D-G)
Entry	Entry level certificate level

The framework in Scotland (the SCQF) is different again & has 12 levels.